GLIE is a child care agency for older children, established in the South Bronx in 1972. It grew out of the Claremont League for Urban Betterment (CLUB), an advocacy group developed under auspices of Our Lady of Victory Roman Catholic Church on behalf of distressed families in the Webster Butler housing projects. Under the dynamic leadership of Sister Lorraine Reilly, GLIE developed three group homes for adolescents, an emergency placement unit for runaway youth, an innovative long-term apartment-living program for older adolescents, and special residential programs for multiply handicapped and autistic youth.

Several individuals contributed substantially to the successful establishment and growth of GLIE. The early protagonists such as Gary Waldron, Carmen Goytia, Ellen Garcia, Father Joseph Fitzpatrick, and Father Tim Collins were all active in the South Bronx community, mostly through Our Lady of Victory Roman Catholic Church and the associated Claremont League for Urban Betterment. But the central character was Sister Lorraine Reilly, a teacher in the Lady of Victory Parish and an active participant and organizer in the Claremont League at the time GLIE began to emerge. Sister Lorraine is a native and lifelong resident of the South Bronx, a fact which has shaped her single-minded dedication to the renewal of this area.

Sister Lorraine's dynamic personality and humanistic orientation combine themselves into an unusual managerial style. She is feisty and independent, and not afraid to call the shots as she sees them. She can also be very demanding of staff, if she sees a discrepancy between their interests and that of the kids. But, as tough as she can be, Lorraine Reilly is not comfortable as an administrator and in fact she disdains this role and sees herself as a creator, catalyst, and enterpriser. For example, she is quick to turn over program responsibilities to people under her and to delegate authority.

Moreover, Sister Lorraine expresses a basic preference for keeping GLIE small, and spinning-off new programs. This orientation is based
partly on Sister Reilly’s distrust of large bureaucratic organizations and her belief that a service organization should be close to the community it serves. But it is also a matter of her personal style and motives. She is “a fast mover” and lack of encumbrance and freedom of action are essential to her way of doing things.

Gary Waldron calls Sister Lorraine a “‘charismatic advocate.’ People tend to want to follow her as a leader. . . . I think she is an advocate of the first order. She believes that the only way the system will change . . . is to make a lot of noise. . . . That is what she does.”

A strong motivating factor in Sister Lorraine’s calculus is indeed community involvement and social activism. She sees herself primarily as a social work organizer, with the South Bronx as her universe. Her career exhibits a consistent activist orientation. The Claremont League, and the beginnings of GLIE, are examples.

Caring about people, especially kids, and about the neighborhoods she grew up in, and being talented and able to do something to organize and help them—especially in view of the dramatic deterioration of the Bronx—is a great energizer for Lorraine Reilly. She says she plans to continue to devote her efforts to this particular corner of the world, and she means it.

THE ORGANIZATIONS

GLIE was born out of the Claremont League for Urban Betterment (CLUB), grew under the wing of St. Dominic’s child care agency in its first three years, and has since evolved as an independent, but still changing, child care agency in its own right.

The relationship of GLIE to St. Dominic’s Children’s Home from 1972–1975 was a short-lived convenience that enabled GLIE to begin operations before it could secure official status as an independent child care agency. Essentially, St. Dominic’s, a chartered foster care institution affiliated with the Catholic Church and the Dominican Order of Sisters to which Sister Reilly belongs, acted as the fiscal agent through which GLIE could be reimbursed for services by the New York City Department of Social Services. Aside from administrative hassles, however, there was little substantive interaction of St. Dominic’s with GLIE. (See Choices below.)

If St. Dominic’s was a temporary foster parent to GLIE, the Claremont League for Urban Betterment was GLIE’s true lineage. CLUB developed as a community action of Our Lady of Victory Church and Parish in the Crotona Park area of the South Bronx. According to Sister Lorraine: “. . . It really starts in ’65 (when we didn’t [even] have a name) within Our
Group Live-In Experience, Inc.

Lady of Victory Parish . . . working with gangs and being with kids [from the] city [housing projects]. . . . In 1967, through Catholic Charities, we got a grant of $5,000 to develop an advocacy [program] to work with families having difficulty. . . . We incorporated as CLUB [in 1968] and [began] doing tenant organizing. By '68 [with support of Catholic Charities and foundations—including United Fund] we had two storefronts. One was totally for adolescents—an after school tutorial program, an evening rap session program [with] gang members, teenagers . . . whatever. And the other one was an advocacy storefront. . . . From '68 to '72 we worked so much with gangs . . . setting them up in abandoned buildings [etc.] that we got into the whole syndrome and we decided to try to apply . . . [for child care agency status]."

The founders of CLUB were people active in the Church parish. The parish priest was a key figure, along with Gary Waldron, an IBM manager who grew up in the South Bronx and was active in youth recreation programs, parishioners Carmen Goytia, Ellen Garcia, Sister Joan, and Sister Lorraine. It was both a service organization and advocacy group, which according to Gary Waldron: "... Attempted to service community people, youth, people with welfare problems, outreach services, and all that." It was basically an informal, volunteer operation, with only three paid staff.

As an informal organization, with no steady means of support and no hard-and-fast mandate, CLUB depended on the commitment of a few people. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Claremont League dissolved shortly after the GLIE program began in 1972. Sister Reilly's energies were devoted to GLIE, and, according to Waldron, "When she spun off from CLUB, several things happened. . . . The local pastor left the priesthood and [CLUB] began to become less and less effective because there was no driving force behind it. There wasn't anybody available every day. There were some people working, but they weren't doing very much, and if I were to look back, I think that GLIE was the thing that was beginning to grow on its own, and Lorraine was really off doing her own thing . . . quite apart from anything Claremont had offered at that point."

Indeed, in a very real sense, GLIE is simply the part of CLUB that survived, albeit altered in form and purpose. Many of the CLUB founders became active in GLIE. And, GLIE continues in the same tradition as CLUB—with its roots in the church and dedication to the community of the South Bronx. As Sister Lorraine explains: "We really are [confined to the Bronx Community]. . . . We might help another group get started, you know. But I don't think the Board would go along. . . . Anything within the community . . . fine, but outside the community . . . no."

Since its founding in 1972, GLIE has expanded its board membership
considerably beyond the core group [e.g., Waldron, Goytia] from CLUB. Membership now includes the chairperson of the local community planning board, a nurse and active member of the Baptist Church, a probation officer, a university professor, a bank employee . . . all people with an active involvement in the local community and/or professional interest in youth problems.

However, the selection of board members became considerably more "worldly" as Sister Lorraine describes: "The Volunteer Urban Consulting Group . . . had a book called Candidates for Directors . . . published yearly . . . of graduates of Harvard who are interested in becoming members of boards of directors. So we went through that book and picked [three men] . . . called them up and out of that three, two were interested . . . [eventually one] came on board."

Until 1979, the board of directors had not been particularly influential in setting policy for GLIE compared to the single-minded style of Lorraine Reilly's leadership. But Gary Waldron saw this changing: "... We have gone through some redefinitions of board roles and board memberships and needs of the board. We are getting a lot closer to goals and measurement than we ever were before. We have gathered some very, very interested members to the board. I think these two things alone are going to help to make the board more effective. This is one half. The other half is that as that board becomes more effective, it is going to contend with her [Sister Lorraine] more. . . . There is going to be more contention . . . and she is . . . just not going to be allowed to do some things that she would do in her own pioneering way. Probably it will create some boxes [constraints], some parameters of her actions. . . . It may make her uncomfortable because of the style that she had enjoyed for a long time. . . ."

Fund-raising is one illustrative area, where Sister Lorraine has essentially been a one-woman show. Waldron continues: "... She has done it in the past. You know, she would get wind of a proposal and she would go out there and . . . get our proposal approved. . . . She did virtually all of that. I got some IBM funds, and a lady from Morgan Guarantee [got] a few thousand dollars, but the big funding sources were primarily driven by Lorraine. . . . She is kind of a magic lady. . . . She would come in and be able to sell them stuff. And they would agree with it, and would fund it for her."

General organization and management have also revolved around the personality of Sister Lorraine. As noted above, GLIE is decentralized to suit her own "fast-moving" style and disdain for administration. And GLIE's decentralized style of administration extends into its philosophy of growth, where Waldron notes: "... She believes that there ought to be a series of . . . small programs that grow on their own, eventually spin-off and become independent things."
CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1965—The Claremont League begins informally (without a name) as a community project by Our Lady of Victory Church and Parish. CLUB begins to work with gang youth in the Webster-Butler housing projects.

1967—CLUB receives a $5,000 grant for an advocacy program on behalf of families in difficulty from Catholic Charities.

1968—CLUB is incorporated. By this time it has two storefront operations. One provides tutoring and job counseling services for youth. The other provides day care and recreation programs, and general advocacy activity.

1968–1972—CLUB does considerable work with youth and gangs, including provision of shelter in the abandoned buildings over the storefronts. Funds are received from Greater New York Fund as well as Catholic Charities over this period.

1972—CLUB applies to the city and state to develop a group home for adolescent youth, but the state refuses to grant CLUB status as a child caring agency. The city’s Director of Special Services for Children, Barbara Blum, suggests that the proposed program affiliate with an existing child care agency. As a Dominican Sister, Lorraine Reilly approaches St. Dominic’s Children’s Home (in Blauvelt, New York) for the purpose of obtaining sponsorship.

GLIE opens as a single group home for girls, separate from CLUB, under auspices of St. Dominic’s, which operates as receiver and administrator of funds. The arrangement calls for GLIE to work towards autonomy within three years.

1973—CLUB dissolves.

1972–1975—GLIE develops two additional group homes for adolescents, making a total of three short-term (90 day) residences—one for boys and two for girls.

July, 1975—GLIE incorporates as an independent, nonprofit child care agency, and formally separates from St. Dominic’s.

July, 1976—GLIE is one of three New York City programs to receive federal funds under the Runaway Youth Act (Juvenile Justice Act of 1974). It establishes a 24-hour emergency placement unit (8-bed crash pad) intended for lengths of stay up to two weeks.

December, 1976—GLIE contracts with the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene to provide urban group home care for twelve multiply handicapped and retarded youth from the Willowbrook State Hospital (or similar institutions). Such children were being moved from Willowbrook under state decree. Implementation of that decree was administered by Barbara Blum, appointed as Assistant Commissioner of Mental Hygiene for that purpose.
January, 1977—An innovative long-range program of independent, apartment living is developed for older (16–17 year old) adolescents.

1977—GLIE receives a grant from the Greater New York Fund to establish the groundwork for a program for autistic children. The agency also requests permission of the New York City Board of Education to develop an alternative high school for truant youth.

**CONTEXT**

GLIE has grown up at the intersection of several social crosscurrents. Its roots in the Claremont League recall the poverty program era of the mid-sixties, when community organizing and advocacy on behalf of deprived minorities in the cities were in full bloom across the nation. So, too, CLUB was a manifestation of a new activism of the clergy in bringing about desired social change at home and abroad (e.g., Vietnam). Certainly CLUB was a response to the deterioration of the city, especially the social pathology associated with the large, impersonal, low income housing projects that were built in the fifties and sixties to house the inflow of blacks and Hispanics and to replace older deteriorated housing.

In the world of urban decay, the South Bronx had become the symbol. National recognition was underlined in 1977 when President Carter personally visited the area and promised a program to rebuild from the devastation. But the deterioration had become obvious and widespread long before that—as early as the late fifties. By the mid-sixties the South Bronx was already in terrible shape, with rapid abandonment of buildings by landlords, soaring rates of crime, frequent fires, and so on. The education system was another victim, and the impacts of deterioration were felt particularly hard by youth.

Some of these youth became “urban nomads,” a particular variety of “runaway” who remained in his community but spent little time with whatever family he might have. Rather, he or she hung out with others in a gang and sought whatever shelter was available. This is the type of youth that was attracted to CLUB, and was ultimately served by GLIE. Thus, another social crosscurrent surrounding GLIE was the phenomenon of runaway youth.

In a photo essay for *U.S. Catholic* magazine in 1977, Sister Lorraine implies that youthful runaways are akin to discoverers and explorers, and are part of a long-standing history of transients in Western civilization. Be that as it may, it is clear that the runaway phenomenon came to national prominence in the late 1960s with the flower children of Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco.

In the early seventies the flow of young runaways into the sex industry, particularly on the “Minnesota strip” in the Times Square area of New
York City, came to light. Through organization and lobbying by people like Rev. Bruce Ritter and Lorraine Reilly, the federal Runaway Youth Act was enacted in 1974, providing funds for information exchange and program development. In New York State, runaway legislation was passed in 1978 to fund sanctuary and other types of programs for runaway youth. From its beginning GLIE has serviced the runaway youth of the South Bronx, especially those that improvised shelter in the burnt-out and abandoned buildings. In 1976 it received one of the earliest allocations of federal runaway funds to establish its emergency shelter “crash pad,” the only existing 24-hour emergency service in the Bronx.

Finally, GLIE has been entwined in the changes taking place in the governmental social services systems at large. For example, GLIE joined the child care system at a time when it was becoming clear that the population of children requiring foster care was changing radically in age composition from younger to older children, and from relatively “normal” to behaviorally difficult youngsters. GLIE proposed to serve this new breed of foster child. Indeed, GLIE’s emergence coincides fairly closely with the establishment of a separate reimbursement rate for group homes by New York City’s Office of Special Services for Children. Despite the reluctance of the State Board of Social Welfare to authorize GLIE as an independent agency in 1972 (see Choices, Constraints below), it was undoubtedly these social imperatives that brought forth support and encouragement for GLIE by the City, especially by Barbara Blum, then Assistant Commissioner in charge of Special Services for Children.

Another crosscurrent, later in GLIE’s history, was the deinstitutionalization movement as it applied to mental hospitals in New York State. Of particular interest, a court decree in 1976 ordered the State to dismantle its Willowbrook institution for the retarded and multiply handicapped, and to place its residents into community-based programs. The job of implementing this decree was given to Barbara Blum, and it was GLIE that responded within its own mandate, with a program to service (largely Bronx-originated) Willowbrook children, in a group home setting.

Sister Lorraine is quick to contend that if those involved in GLIE had not responded to the various social needs emerging in the South Bronx others would have. This hypothesis may be questionable, but the social context certainly inspired and strongly shaped the founding and development of GLIE.

**CHOICES**

The founding of GLIE involved several stages of decision-making. The first stage was based on the realization that current CLUB activities on behalf of local youth were not adequate or sustainable indefinitely, and that more substantial services and support were necessary. Sister Lorraine
explains the need to undertake residential services: "We tried [counseling and referral to other agencies] . . . but [in] the end . . . we found ourselves putting [up] more and more . . . kids [in the abandoned buildings]. . . . Their [problems were] family dysfunction and their needs [were] to get out. . . . [Often it was the] healthiest kid [in a family] who wanted out, even if it was for only a short period of time. . . . Sometimes [when] you really did intensive therapy, it was better to separate the youngster from the problem, so he could look back and see the problem . . . then he could go back in, and do very well. But when we found ourselves setting up so many kids a month in an old abandoned building . . . it seemed ridiculous."

One obvious alternative was referral to existing agencies and institutions, all of which were some distance from the South Bronx—usually in upstate New York. But this proved not to be viable: "Kids whom you finally convinced to go . . . [wouldn’t stay there]. You’d take them up there and tell them; ‘Look at the beautiful trees. Ah, it’s great!’ [But] by the time you’d get back to New York, they were sitting here on the steps. They hitch-hiked back. They couldn’t deal with it."

In any case, referral to other agencies did not, for the most part, represent a viable solution: "We thought of . . . not developing [our own program and] sending the kids into the other recognized child care agencies. But these were . . . older adolescents. The child care agencies didn’t want anybody over 14 in 1976. Now they’ll take them up to 16, but then they didn’t want to hear about them. So we . . . had no place to go with our kids. . . ."

The first inclination of Sister Lorraine, and others involved in GLIE, was to seek private funding, which would preserve flexibility: "Originally . . . in ’70, we put in a proposal to the National Campaign of Bishops. . . . They were going to fund us . . . because it was a good idea. This was minority kids, gang kids, the whole list. Then they sent it back to the Archdiocese of New York and said, you fund half of it and we’ll fund the other half. [But] it was the Archbishop [of New York] . . . who said, ‘No, we are not going to fund that program because there’s a [government] system in child welfare that they can get into. . . .’" The lack of church support was certainly a factor in turning to government sources, especially in 1972 when church resources for the Claremont League itself were precarious.

Having resolved to seek governmental support, there was another basic choice for GLIE promoters to make. The issues of stigma and labeling of children were of paramount importance: "We didn’t want to go into juvenile justice money. Kids have to have a name on them. . . . They would be branded. . . . We didn’t want to go after drug money because a lot of the kids had brothers who were already into drug rehab programs and it also meant that they had a stigma attached to them. . . . So, we felt that
Group Live-In Experience, Inc.

the city, whose foster care system . . . should have been providing some kind of prevention programming for kids living in the ghetto . . . [was the appropriate choice].”

The intent to seek support through the public foster care system strongly influenced a number of subsequent organizational choices. For one thing the effort would have to be organized on a nonprofit basis. This was no problem since CLUB was already an incorporated nonprofit organization. However, passing thought was given to the possibility of direct public provision through city government. Sister Lorraine recalls, “. . . The City has a program for hard-to-place youngsters . . . [but] . . . it’s been closed since. It was known to be a horrendous place . . . all kinds of atrocities were going on there. They had two settings, one for boys and one for girls . . . . Two short-term facilities . . . and they were really in bad shape. . . . There was no reason to think that the City was going to put on a better show . . . . [But] I don’t know that that might not be a [good] thing. You see, one of the underlying goals of GLIE is to employ community people and to make sure that that is stable employment. That’s very important to us. So I’m not so sure that would have been a bad idea, if the city government was a little more avant garde and progressive. It could really pull off an awful lot of good programs.”

The fact that CLUB was nonprofit was not qualification enough for status as a child care organization eligible to receive public (per diem) funding for residential child care services. The founders would be forced to choose between CLUB and the GLIE program, and between an independent GLIE and one affiliated with an existing authorized agency. The initial application did envision CLUB as the organizational auspices, but the broad mandate and informality of CLUB became an issue: “. . . As a child care agency we couldn’t do the kinds of advocacy work [that CLUB did] . . . and we [couldn’t] set up an umbrella agency in that way. . . .” Indeed, CLUB would have had to be radically changed in terms of mission and structure to conform with Board of Social Welfare licensing requirements. Even with the willingness of CLUB to do so, however: “The State of New York would not recognize us as the Claremont League for Urban Betterment and refused to amend the charter . . . .”

According to Sister Lorraine, the basic problem was the South Bronx itself: “At the time, there were . . . no group homes in the South Bronx, not one . . . because the City and State officials felt that this was a deteriorating neighborhood. Nothing could be done here. . . . Listen, let me tell you we had one commissioner who wouldn’t even walk down the street. “We were talking about . . . opening up in a very deteriorated community . . . for that community’s stability. We were trying to tell them that you would stabilize the South Bronx [this way, but] . . . they could not see. . . .”
Gary Waldron sees the issues in a somewhat different perspective: "As a separate group home, it was indeed an experiment. . . . There were two issues as I understand it: [First] the credibility of community agencies in general. . . . There was a lot of scandal and a whole lot of reverends and the like ripping off monies. . . . Secondly, the novelty of the program. There was not universal agreement that that type of a program [urban group homes] would be acceptable. . . . Most of the eggs were stored in the other basket . . . kids went somewhere else in an institution setting outside of New York City."

Fortunately, the founders of GLIE had a receptive ear in the City’s Director of Special Services for Children, Barbara Blum. Mrs. Blum wanted to see GLIE get off the ground, and suggested another alternative to Sister Lorraine — affiliation, at least temporarily, with an established agency. With that suggestion things began to fall into place in 1972. Sister Lorraine says she really had not previously seriously entertained the notion of using the services of another agency, must less formal affiliation. But, given the idea, Sister Lorraine pursued it effectively. As Waldron described it, "... Only because she was a Dominican nun dealing with a Dominican home, was [she] able to convince them to take a shot at trying it this way . . . a different approach than used in the past. . . . It was indeed an experiment. . . . St. Dominic’s was an established agency. If it would support the experiment, then the City would fund [us] through St. Dominic’s. . . ."

Sister Lorraine elaborates on the arrangements, "... If we could display to the City and the State what we were talking about . . . then we could get our own charter. . . . We would have three years to do it. . . . If within three years we did not [secure] our own charter, St. Dominic’s would claim any group homes that we had opened. . . ."

Affiliation with St. Dominic’s was not the preferred arrangement for the founders of GLIE. Indeed, if Sister Lorraine had it to do again, she says, "... We definitely would not have gone to St. Dominic’s. We would have fought for our charter. . . . That was a mistake." Nonetheless, the arrangement did allow the GLIE program to get started. Gary Waldron questions whether it would have been possible otherwise. But Sister Lorraine is proud to point out that independence was achieved within two and a half years.

The arrangement with St. Dominic’s was, from the start, intended as temporary. And the operation of this arrangement strongly reaffirmed this initial preference. Sister Lorraine bristled under the wing of St. Dominic’s, and the feelings of officials of the parent agency were probably mutual. A large part of the problem was money since St. Dominic’s claimed a good fraction of GLIE’s reimbursement for overhead expenses. In addition, St. Dominic’s tended to impose its policies on staffing and other program parameters.
On the other side of the argument, an official of the State Board of Social Welfare indicated that St. Dominic’s might actually have been losing money, because of loose bookkeeping and reporting by GLIE, i.e., that reimbursement was not being made for all children actually in care. Gary Waldron, who was GLIE’s Treasurer at the time, gives a more balanced appraisal. “. . . The [problem was] over an allocation [of funds] which was very fair in St. Dominic’s eyes. . . . It turned out to be 50 percent of her [Sister Lorraine’s] reimbursement that St. Dominic’s was keeping, in effect. . . . [Sister Lorraine] was fair in believing that she was not getting the right end of that deal. However, on the other side of the coin . . . [they] were providing some accounting services and support services. It was an accounting and billing process. They were going through the direct billing from the City. . . . I’m sure they were sharing a part of the cost of their whole office staff.” In any case, ultimate separation from St. Dominic’s was never in question, as far as the two principals were concerned.

In terms of programmatic content, GLIE’s apartment-like group homes were pretty much an outgrowth of the impromptu activity begun under CLUB. But design parameters were influenced by child care regulations. According to Sister Lorraine, “. . . We were . . . obliged to listen to what the bureaucrats wanted. . . . For instance, for us to open a group home, we never thought of boys separate from girls, or six year olds not in the same apartments as their mothers . . . or single parents and a boyfriend not living in the same apartment. . . . Whereas immediately all those host of rules came in, so all the types of apartment development we had gotten [into] with young people in abandoned buildings . . . was now thrown out. . . .”

Later programmatic decisions of GLIE were shaped by a combination of unanticipated opportunities and an underlying desire to escape the narrowness of the conventional child welfare system. The program of group care for the multiply handicapped was a response to solicitation under the Willowbrook decree. A new program for autistic children follows a similar scenario: “The Bronx Chapter for the Autistic came to our open house [for] the two units for handicapped kids. . . . We hadn’t thought of . . . ever doing anything like a program for the autistic] but we said we would help. . . . The board said, ‘Look into it, Lorraine. Do a little research . . . and tell us what you think. . . .’ My research [showed that] a large number of autistic children in the Bronx were out of state. Wasn’t that a good enough reason to develop a program, if their families were asking that they be close [by]? . . . [So we went to] look for a grant. . . .”

Another example is the runaway program. “Once we got the temporary houses [group homes] going, we realized we could only take in those children that the Bureau of Child Welfare decided we could take in, which still left out a lot of gang members . . . a lot of really nomadic,
homeless youth . . . which were words the City didn’t even know. So we went after [funds under] the National Runaway Youth Act . . . in '74 when it first came out. We did it again in '75 and we got the grant in '76, [and] . . . opened the Crash Pad . . . [Now we could say], ‘City, we don’t need your bread. No, we’ll show you, who you should be caring for.’ . . . We’d take in a kid and we’d call up and say, ‘Listen, this kid has bruises all over him; it’s an abuse case, and you have to accept the case.’ . . . We had the federal grant to help us . . . .”

In sum, the choices made in establishing GLIE and developing its program have been pragmatically designed to ensure success. A preference for autonomy was temporarily subdued to achieve operational status. Constraints were accepted to secure resources, but additional resources were sought to loosen the constraints. In no case were the restrictions crippling, and/or indeed permanently oppressive. And while the choices have produced a variety of programs, there is an underlying consistency in terms of semi-autonomous organizational units each servicing a real need for youth in the South Bronx.

**RISKS AND CONSTRAINTS**

Sister Lorraine’s basic style of enterprising is bold and tilted toward risk. It is an orientation that was apparent from the beginnings of her GLIE-related activity: “My own religious community thought that it was crazy, and I knew I was at risk . . . Becoming politically involved for me was very risky. I really didn’t know anything about politics . . . [although] I think I’ve enjoyed . . . becoming involved politically and feeling that’s really where the change has to happen . . . If you don’t get to that, than whatever you’re stirring up will definitely die.”

The risk-taking behavior of Sister Lorraine has been precipitated largely on her perception that that is how you get things done in a world of pernicious bureaucratic constraints and subterfuge. With respect to the establishment of GLIE, the conservatism of government officials was manifested in skepticism about the viability of any enterprise in the South Bronx. Another barrier that Sister Lorraine cites is the existence of some eighty other child care agencies in the City, and hence the official reluctance to approve “yet another one.” But at the core of Sister Lorraine’s perception, and the barriers she and the others who founded GLIE faced, is the system of Catch-22 regulations in which the developers of a new child care agency in New York seem to be caught: “. . . Once we decided to go [for child care status], then we had to go by all their regulations in forming a board and bylaws and what not. As a matter of fact, we had the bylaws sent back to us . . . three times because in the charter . . . we put . . . things like ‘advocating for community youth.’ They didn’t understand that. You don’t have that in a child care charter [so] we deleted all that kind of stuff. . . .
"[Then] ... we took building commissioners to thirty-three apartment dwellings here ... before they would allow us to open up one single group home. They said [there] was a major violation to every apartment ... [but] when I asked them to write down those violations on behalf of [a] number of families living in the building, they refused. No, they were only there because of child care, looking [at] the group home!

"I think we have one house still in operation that the State Board [of Social Welfare] has not licensed. You just can't wait for them ... and their regulations as to square feet between beds, and square feet in rooms, and number of full bathrooms and number of half bathrooms. You know, if they would tell you actually that we don't want you here because [our] worker is afraid to stay on the street ... then I would live with that. ... Okay, we'll put a bodyguard next to your working people. That's a fine way to keep you from achieving what is in need!

"It's horrendous! Some of these laws are ridiculous. [For example, to open] ... these two units [for multiply handicapped children], their funding source would be different. They would be called ICFMRs ... Intermediate Child Care Facility for the Mentally Retarded. Now the regulations for an ICFMR are all institutional regulations. We have these youngsters living in two apartments on 149th Street. There's no way I can make that apartment building meet the code for an institution. And at any rate, none of those kids lived in an institution that met those regulations, anyway. You know [it's as if] ... it's wrong for the community to be doing it and yet the State and City never do it. So it's Catch-22. You have to work through it. You know, you have to either ignore them and keep on going, or try to work through as much of it as possible."

OUTCOMES

GLIE is a success story, having rooted itself in a devastated urban area, and grown from a single group home and budget of $75,000 to a multifaceted, million dollar program over six years. The program has diversified from its original focus on gang-oriented youth, growing somewhat by happenstance in a decentralized mode into new dimensions of services. But the themes are still fundamentally troubled youth and the community of the South Bronx.

ANALYSIS

The social chemistry which results in the birth of a new agency is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon—usually a combination of conscious intent and fortuitous circumstance. In the case of GLIE, there were some fortunate occurrences, most particularly a timely suggestion that GLIE could begin operations by affiliation with an established agency.
This idea, although accepted with reluctance, accelerated (if not simply made feasible) the birth of GLIE. However, it had little influence on its eventual form.

The environment in which GLIE developed, on the other hand, was inauspicious. Certainly there was a host of legitimate social problems to address in the South Bronx, and there were new opportunities emerging for support of child care services to older, runaway, and handicapped youth. But there was a great distance to be bridged between the opportunities and the reality of services.

Primarily, therefore, the emergence and early growth of GLIE is attributable to the bold and risk-taking, yet pragmatic behavior of its primary entrepreneur, Sister Lorraine Reilly. Her willingness to force the issues and test and challenge the bureaucratic constraints, sometimes overstepping the bounds of technical legality, was instrumental in overcoming the odds against successful enterprise in the devastated environment of the South Bronx. This risk orientation is a product of the distinctly and intentionally independent and unencumbered style that Lorraine Reilly personified.

Much of GLIE's organizational form also reflects Lorraine Reilly's style. Program units are small and decentralized because this allowed Lorraine freedom of action, and keeps each unit close to the grassroots, where Lorraine thinks they belong. A variety of programs have emerged because GLIE has been attuned from the beginning to expressions of need from the Bronx community, but also because some sources of funds (e.g., federal runaway funds) offer the prospect of loosening the bind of current funding agents (e.g., the local child welfare system) and permitting more discretion.

Finally, the GLIE experience reflects the tensions that inevitably arise when an enterprise founded in advocacy enters the regulated, bureaucratic environment of social service delivery. For GLIE the trade-offs between the advocacy and service delivery missions were apparent from the beginning, as GLIE was forced to separate from CLUB and drop its explicit advocacy orientation. Subsequently, the leaders of GLIE had to swallow hard many times, accepting constraints such as oversight by St. Dominic's and compliance with rules and regulations on services and facilities that inhibited a quick response to perceived service needs in the community. In essence, GLIE had to learn how to become part of the service producing establishment without losing the energy that had sprung from its idealistic roots.