Summary

This study is concerned with institutional rearing or treatment of adolescents staying in imposed custody in closed judicial juvenile institutions with different methods of rearing and treatment. It concerns 12-23-year-old male adolescents with a civil or criminal measure. When an adolescent is admitted into a judicial treatment institution the Government interferes actively in the parents’ right to rear their children. By taking over the parents’ upbringing of a child by the governmental authorities it is assumed that institutional rearing will yield better results. Considerable effects of such state rearing may be expected. However, a meta-analysis of the effects of such institutional youth care (Harder et al., 2005) shows that hardly any relation is established between the contents of the treatment and its effectiveness. As a description of the applied interventions is often lacking, it is unclear on what basis the effectiveness is determined.

The study under scrutiny aims at contributing to a practice-based research of effects, or practice-based evidence (Veerman & Van Yperen, 2006). On the one hand the main emphasis is on the description of the interventions, as they are carried out by judicial juvenile institutions involved in the study (descriptive research). On the other hand, however, the attention is focused on the possibility of signalizing distinct types of differences and relationships between the data one might expect from a theoretical framework (explorative research).

In case of admission into a judicial treatment institution (re)rearing, not punishment is the first priority. Distinctive methods of rearing and treatment are being applied in institutions. It is difficult to compare these methods because distinctive targets are proposed without the existence of a common framework. Moreover, institutions employ several interventions of different methods simultaneously. It is difficult to demonstrate to what extent a causal link might be established between a successful or an unsuccessful treatment of these adolescents and a possible relapse.

All youngsters in judicial juvenile institutions have overstepped social and material limits. Social and material limits can be defined as the laws, regulations and expectations of society, based on social standards and values (Dickscheit, 1998). The general objective of upbringing and treatment in judicial juvenile institutions can be established as soon as these youngsters learn how to deal with these social and material limits. Generally it is assumed that humans are consistent in their convictions and that a relation exists between attitude and behavior, so that attitudes – together with other factors – can predict behavior (Vaughan & Hogg, 2002). The central question in this descriptive and explorative study is whether there is a demonstrable difference and/or relation between the manner in which the residential rearing and treatment take shape and the attitude of the youngsters in question with regard to social limits. This research concentrates on three levels: the general management, the middle man-
agement and the group leaders/group rearers of the institutions involved in this study. Preliminary research will be established into the functioning of the adolescents themselves. This concerns a number of background variables (duration of custody, residential title, age, kind of offence, cognitive intelligence and cultural descent) that may influence the variance in the attitude of adolescents. These investigations result in the following questions:

1 What differences can be observed in the youngsters’ attitude towards the social limits between the rearing methods recommended by the general management of the institutions involved in this study?
2 What relations can be observed between the rearing climate recommended by the middle management of the institutions involved in this study and the youngsters’ attitude towards social limits?
3 What relations can be observed between the execution of rearing tasks by group leaders/group rearers of the institutions involved in this study and the youngsters’ attitude towards social limits?
4 What rearing styles are present and what relations can be observed between the rearing styles of the group leaders/group rearers and the youngsters’ attitude towards social limits?

Institutional rearing can be seen as a specific form of rearing (Zandberg, 1990): that is, answering adequately orthopedagogical questions in families and communities of orthopedagogical organizations (Kok, 2003). The emphasis in this study is on everyday rearing situations within an institution, described by Kok as a first grade strategy: ‘all orthopedagogical actions within the community that, in a specific manner, aim at building up relationship, creating atmosphere and dealing with situations – as an adequate response to the needs of a child – in order to start off the process of upbringing and development that had come to a standstill’ (Kok, 2003, 80). The adolescent spends the main part of the day in the orthopedagogical community, so that the (mutual) influence between group leader/group rearer and adolescent can be experienced and executed most intensively within the community.

The research population consists of group leaders/group rearers who are employed at judicial juvenile institutions in the Netherlands as well as adolescents placed in those institutions. It relates to a number of institutions with a distinct method of rearing or treatment, mainly based on:
• learning-theoretical principles;
• psycho-dynamic principles;
• group-dynamic principles; and
• multi-methodical principles.

From the task and the perspective of the group rearer this means that during the first six up to twelve months of the admission of the youngster in question the former
needs to have been involved in the upbringing or treatment of the latter in an intensive and directive way.

Three research instruments are used for the collection of the research data:

1. The adolescents’ attitudinal reactions towards social limits are gathered with the aid of the Attitudinal Scale Social Limits (ASL), (Boersma, 2004a).
2. The COM-MV (Van den Bogaart et al., 1989) is meant to register methodical aspects of the help offered on the level of the assistance unit (an institution or department). In this study the nine variables of the COM-MV list are used as influencing aspects of the social climate on first grade strategic level. The COM-MV is submitted to the members of the middle management team (group leaders and heads of department) of the involved institutions because they can be expected to be well acquainted with the social climate in the group.
3. For the collection of data from the group leaders/group rearers the Questionnaire Rearing tasks for Group leaders/Group rearers (VOVG), (Drost, 2000a) is used. In this questionnaire ten rearing tasks are made operational in 134 items representing rearing activities, in which a number of rearing styles have been incorporated as well.

Results

1. For adolescents who have stayed in an institution for one year, there is a significant increase of knowledge of adaptation, withdrawing and evasion reactions compared to those who resided there for six months only. Moreover, in this research group the number of preferred adaptation- and negotiation reactions increase and the number of overstepping reactions decrease. The aforementioned findings are in accordance with the expectations. As was expected, no statistically significant differences are found in the attitudinal reactions between the groups of adolescents under scrutiny, on account of different residential titles.

As adolescents grow older their knowledge of negotiation reactions increases and they wish to negotiate further on bordering situations. The adolescents from the research group who have not committed an offence have more knowledge of adaptation reactions than those who have committed an act of violence.

As their intellectual faculties increase, their knowledge of adaptation, overstepping and the entire number of known reactions increases as well. With highly intelligent adolescents the preferred reactions increase in number for overstepping reactions, whereas they decrease in number for negotiation reactions. Against expectations no statistically significant differences can be perceived between groups of adolescents under scrutiny in relation to their cultural background.

2. The research of the attitudes and the four methods of rearing or treatment (on the level of the management) shows that the results regarding the known reactions of the youngsters are systematic the lowest in the multi-methodical approach, while
the preferred reactions (what they would choose themselves) are systematic high in the group-dynamic approach, with exception of increasing and the motivations with low abstraction. The youngsters in the group-dynamic approach would choose themselves less for overstepping, which seems in agreement with their stronger preference for adaptation, negotiation, and withdrawal. Their stronger preference for motivations with a high abstraction is in contrast to the low abstraction results in the psycho-dynamic approach.

Testing with the ANOVA results for the known reactions adaptation and overstepping (and also total) in significant differences with for the multi-methodical approach the smallest means. The group-dynamic approach has the highest means for the known reactions adaptation and the motivations with a high abstraction, but the smallest means for the known reactions overstepping. When the covariant duration of custody is taken into analyses, there is found a change in the significance in an number of scores: the results regarding the known reactions (adaptation and overstepping) of the youngsters are systematic the lowest in the multi-methodical approach, while the preferred reactions (what they would choose themselves) are systematic high within the group-dynamic approach in adaptation and the motivations with an high abstraction and low regarding the preferred reactions overstepping.

For understanding these results in the right way one must consider the fact that the information of the ASL has been gathered in other conditions by the youngsters of the group-dynamic approach than by the youngsters of the other approaches.

3 Concerning the analysis of the pedagogical climate on the level of the middle management it appears that only with the variable ‘group directedness’ there are statistically significant differences between some judicial juvenile institutions. An analysis of the relations between the aspects of pedagogical climate and the adolescents’ attitudes to the social limits especially show the striking positive relationships between the variable ‘care’ and the various reaction and motivation types. A good ‘care’ for the adolescents can be seen as an important basic – non-specific method – variable which can be counted among the basic human needs (Maslow, 1954, Vinke, 1996) and which is of great importance for the adolescents’ further development.

4 Because all institutions are of the closed type and are subordinated to the Law of Principles for Judicial Juvenile Centers (2001), and because this study concerns the first six up to twelve months of the rearing/treatment, during which the main emphasis is on adaptation to the daily structure, the similarities in level of averages on the ten rearing tasks between the various methods of education or treatment outnumber the differences. No statistically significant correlation is found between the various rearing tasks and the adolescents’ attitude towards social limits within the entire group under scrutiny. Only little correlation is found
as far as the various rearing methods is concerned. In accordance with the expectations the group leaders/group rearers put more emphasis on the dimension of ‘supervision’ than on the dimension of ‘support’ during the first six to twelve months of the stay in the judicial juvenile institutions, because maintaining rules, confrontation and the directive attitude on the part of the group rearers are necessary to regulate the adolescents’ behavior and to urge them to change (Klomp, 1995). However, the mutual differences, can be ascribed entirely to the method of rearing or treatment based on group-dynamic principles, because of the smaller emphasis on the rearing tasks ‘communication’ and ‘acceptation’ with this approach. Likewise, the number of preferred overstepping reactions decrease as the rearers put more emphasis on ‘supervision’, whereas the adolescents show less willingness to adapt when the rearers put more emphasis on ‘support’.