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The Runaways

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The number of children and adolescents who leave home without parental knowledge or permission has increased at a staggering rate over the last decade. The actual number of runaways is difficult to ascertain for a variety of reasons including inadequate reporting, the rather ambivalent legal status of the runaway act, and the fact that a sizable proportion of runaways do not come into contact with the various professional agencies which compile statistics. Estimates of the number of runaways have been as high as 600,000 per year. Prior to 1964 running away was not included in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports but since that year the reports show an annual increase in the number arrested with no year showing less than a 4.6% increase over the prior reporting period. These official figures almost certainly reveal only the most visible surface of the problem. Popular magazine articles, movies, television and newspaper accounts attest to the greatly increased public interest and concern about the problem, yet these sources far outnumber the recent professional contributions to our scientific understanding of youthful runaways. The problem of runaways has been poorly represented in the recent literature of psychiatry and psychology. Professional knowledge and interest have certainly not kept pace with the increasing magnitude of the problem, nor has it encouraged efforts to systematize the clinical and research literature which is available. As a consequence, our professional knowledge of runaway youth appears to be scarcely more cogent, well-defined, or systematized than it was several decades ago.

The social history of America is filled with famous men who as youths ran away from home. In the past it appeared to be a well accepted pattern; indeed, Samuel Clemens, who was himself a runaway, wrote about youthful running away as almost a rite of passage, that any red-blooded boy will sooner or later run away from home on a glorious and exciting Huck Finn-Tom Sawyer adventure. Although accepted and sometimes even applauded by society in the past, the runaway of today is viewed legally as an offender of the law, socially as a problem in terms of other delinquent activities such as drug abuse and prostitution, and psychologically as a potential tragedy for himself and/or his family.
Several major questions have been either implicit or explicit in attempts to provide a classification scheme to deal with runaway behavior. The extent to which classificatory efforts have focused on one or another of these questions, often to the exclusion of others, is reflected in the systems which have evolved. The five significant questions appear to be:

1) Is runaway behavior to be included within the broader classification of juvenile delinquency?

2) To what extent is running away assumed to be reflective of psychopathology and thus subject to categorization within classifications of psychopathology?

3) To what extent are runaways as a group similar to or distinct from other delinquent groups or from other psychopathological groups?

4) To what extent do runaways as a group present a consistent pattern and to what extent are there major differences among them?

5) Is runaway behavior to be considered a symptom or a syndrome?

The delinquent status legally accorded to the act of running away has had considerable influence on efforts to classify runaway behavior. In a number of classificatory attempts there has been a conscious effort either to include running away as a form of juvenile delinquency or to distinguish it specifically from juvenile delinquency. Kanner’s (1957) psychiatric classification includes running away under the category of juvenile delinquency, which in turn appears within the larger heading of behavior problems. An intimate relation between running away and juvenile delinquency has been suggested by psychoanalysts (Staub, 1943) and criminologists (Hildebrand, 1963, 1968) alike. The prevalence of running away in juvenile delinquents has been noted by Foster (1962) and by Hildebrand (1963) and has led both to conclude that study of the runaway will contribute to an understanding of the etiology of juvenile delinquency. Although Hildebrand (1968) argues that running away is “one of the earliest manifestations of delinquency”, elsewhere he noted that its status as a pre-delinquent indicator makes much of juvenile delinquency research inapplicable when it deals with cases in which a definite anti-social attitude has already developed (Hildebrand, 1963). On the other hand, Cramer (1958) has made an effort to distinguish between juvenile delinquency and running away as a behavior problem. He believes that behavior problems, in contrast to delinquency, are diverted more discriminately toward parents and parental sanctions than toward collective substitutes or social sanctions.

A different line of inquiry has been concerned primarily with runaway behavior as indicative of psychopathology, and it has attempted to include runaways within psychiatric classifications. The emphasis on individual and family pathology in the runaway case has come almost without exception from clinical studies and treatment efforts dealing with runaways seen in clinical settings. Armstrong (1937) first argued for consideration of running away as a “psychoneurotic reaction” and concluded that: “The act of running away is at least *prima facie* evidence of factors more or less destructive in the environment, perhaps intrinsic in the boy.” Despite the label she applies to runaway behavior, Armstrong’s sample consisted
exclusively of "delinquent" boys arraigned in juvenile court on a runaway charge, often with concomitant delinquent offenses. Balser (1939) has argued, on the basis of cases seen in the psychiatric clinic of the Travelers Aid Society, that the psychoneurotic individual does not, for the most part, appear to run away from home. He suggests, "It was the feeling in the clinic that the psychoneurotics build their abnormal psychological patterns around their families and homes to such a degree that running away would upset much of that pattern and make for greater uneasiness."

The emphasis on the presence of severe psychopathology in the runaway child or adolescent is suggested by a number of authors. In treating runaways who have repeatedly deserted their homes, Belkin (1940) characterizes them as "neurotic delinquents" and Riemer (1940) points to the presence of a severe "narcissistic" disorder encompassing the needs for love, increased self-esteem, and the expression of hostile aggression. It has been suggested that in the adolescent girl, the runaway act is almost invariably indicative of "extensive and severe" pathology in the girl and in the family (Robey, 1969; Robey et al., 1964). Similarly, Levanthal (1963) suggests "severe" pathology in the runaway, with possible indications of pre-psychotic functioning characterized by some degree of reality distortion and an overly-concerned attitude toward loss of control and ego surrender. There has also been an extensive research effort to link running away in childhood and adolescence with adult psychiatric pathology (Robins, 1966, 1958; Robins and O'Neal, 1959), with the conclusion that running away as a childhood behavior problem is an excellent prognostic index of poor psychiatric status in adulthood.

The second edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-II) of the American Psychiatric Association (1968) included for the first time a diagnostic category for runaways:

308.3 Runaway reaction of childhood (or adolescence):

Individuals with this disorder characteristically escape from threatening situations by running away from home for a day or more without permission. Typically they are immature and timid, and feel rejected at home, inadequate and friendless. They often steal furtively.

The runaway reaction is classified within the broader category of "Behavior disorders of childhood and adolescence". Inclusion in this category accords it an intermediate position, in terms of stability, internalization and resistance to treatment, between "transient situational disturbances" and "psychoses, neuroses, and personality disorders". Despite Jenkins' (1971) caution that the diagnosis of behavior disorder should not be employed when the conviction is present that such a condition already has been deeply internalized in the child, the institutionalized runaway samples on which this classification was primarily based seem potentially to represent such a group. The impetus for inclusion of this category has come in part from research efforts under the direction of R. L. Jenkins, which have focused on efforts to distinguish among three groups of institutionalized male delinquents: socialized delinquents, unsocialized aggressive delinquents, and unsocialized runaway delinquents (Jenkins and Boyer, 1968; Shinohara and Jenkins, 1967; Tsubouchi and Jenkins, 1969). It is interesting to note that in DSM-II, classification categories corresponding to Jenkins' socialized delinquent group and his unsocialized
aggressive delinquent group follow the category of runaway reaction and are
included within the designation “Behavior disorders of childhood and adolescence”.
However, on both the MMPI and the Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire the
unsocialized aggressive delinquents and the unsocialized runaway delinquents were
indistinguishable from each other, although the socialized delinquents did form a
distinct group (Shinohara and Jenkins, 1967; Tsubouchi and Jenkins, 1969). Also
using a sample of institutionalized male delinquents, Baer (1970) was able to
separate three groups (stubborn child-runaway, auto theft and larceny-theft) on
the basis of profile similarities on a biographical questionnaire which emphasized
everyday experiences rather than past pathological behavior. Within the context
of a child guidance clinic, Jenkins et al. (1966) have suggested that runaway
behavior in the case history distinguishes both the “undomesticated” child and
the socialized delinquent child from the over anxious and conforming child, but not
from each other.

The addition of “runaway reaction” to DSM-II has added little to an
understanding of the runaway problem, nor is it likely to in the future. Fish (1969)
has pin-pointed the problem: “Runaway reaction” does not characterize personality
or mental disorder at the same level of generalization as the ‘withdrawing’,
‘overanxious’, and ‘unsocialized aggressive’ reactions. There is no more merit in
including this particular symptom cluster than there is in including a host of other
acts such as lying, stealing, fire-setting, and so on when these acts are performed
by children who feel “timid . . . rejected . . . and inadequate” (as distinguished
from any of these acts when they are part of the “unsocialized aggressive
reaction”). Such partial responses belong to a list of symptoms which could be
added to the primary psychiatric diagnosis.

Far less prevalent than any of the orientations mentioned thus far is the view
that running away represents a transient and situational adjustment reaction rather
than juvenile delinquency or deep-seated and extensive individual psychopathology.
Lowrey (1958) has argued from his experience with the Travelers Aid Society
that “. . . running away is not necessarily a complex psychopathological
phenomenon, but represents in the great majority of cases a simple and primitive
reaction to an uncomfortable situation. . . . In many instances running away seems
to be a healthy mode of response to an intolerable situation.” More recently Shellow
et al. (1966) have moved toward an interpretation of the runaway act as an
adaptive response to situational pressures and the authors feel that it most
frequently represents “a plain, forthright expression of dissatisfaction”. They
found little indication of serious disturbance in the majority of runaways
investigated, with the possible exception of adolescents who had repeatedly run away.

There appear to be two major polarities evident in the efforts to classify the
runaway child or adolescent. First, there has been an emphasis on the delinquency
versus non-delinquency status accorded to the runaway act. On the one hand,
there is the effort by Kanner (1950) to include running away as a form of
juvenile delinquency. Efforts within this line of thought range from the view that
running away is a predelinquent indicator (Hildebrand, 1963) to the view that it
represents more of an established delinquent syndrome (Jenkins, 1971). On the
other hand, there has been the effort by Cramer (1958) to distinguish specifically
between juvenile delinquency and behavior problems such as running away.
Secondly, there have been the attempts to present evidence for the presence or absence of severe psychopathology in the runaway, without specific reference to juvenile delinquency. Here the view of the runaway act ranges from a psychoneurotic (Armstrong, 1937) to a pre-psychotic (Levanthal, 1963) indication of extensive individual or family pathology. In contrast, the view has been expressed that running away is typically a non-pathological response and represents a transient situational reaction not indicative of underlying psychopathology (Shellow et al., 1966).

A hindrance to efforts directed at delineating the runaway pattern has been the frequent treatment of runaway samples as a homogeneous group. While this presumed homogeneity has often been an artifact of particular sampling procedures, it has equally been the result of ignoring potential differences among runaways. Balser (1939) pointed out some time ago that “... there is no exact psychiatric classification for the runaway. These individuals range through all the categories of psychiatric diagnosis.” Similarly, Rosenwald and Mayer (1967) suggest that the symptom of running away is not pathognomic and that their sample of adolescent female runaways cannot be encompassed by any one diagnostic category or pattern. Stierlin (1972) has recently concluded that running away as the basis of classification represents a “diagnostic wastebasket”, and he argues that any complex etiologic or therapeutic considerations will have to await a typology of runaways which outlines the significant patterns of differences among them.

Typological efforts to date have been sporadic, sample-bound, and not very extensive. At present there appear to be attempts to distinguish among runaways on three or four different levels; however, none of the levels has been fully explored or developed. Shellow et al. (1966) distinguish only between single-episode and frequent-repeater runaways as two analytically separate groups in their sample of suburban runaways. Balser (1939) attempted to delineate seven categories of runaways based on the specific reason for the runaway incident. In looking at a sample of adolescent girls referred by the court for clinic investigation, Rosenwald and Mayer (1967) suggest four characteristic patterns of these girls based predominantly on personality features and family dynamics. The dynamic significance attributed to the runaway act has provided the basis for differentiation among runaways for several authors (Paull, 1956; Robins, 1958; Stierlin, 1972). At this point Stierlin’s (1972) typology is perhaps the most inclusive since it attempts to consider delinquent, psychopathological and situational factors. It also bears some correspondence to the relationship which Robins (1958) suggests between particular adult psychiatric diagnosis and runaway incidents differing in motivational significance.
Table 1. Typological Categories Offered to Distinguish Among Runaways

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<tr>
<td>2. Sweet “bad” girl runaways.</td>
<td>2. Hypermature runaways (females).</td>
<td>Running away reflected a desire for adventure, protest against family restrictions, as a response to punishment.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. “Crisis” runaways.</td>
<td>2. Childhood runaways later diagnosed normal.</td>
<td>Running away most often represented an escape from punishment.</td>
<td>2. Single-episode runaways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lonely schizoid runaways.</td>
<td>3. Hypomature runaways (females).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Childhood runaways later diagnosed psychotic. Running away was unrelated to external events or was a dramatic overreaction to them.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Unclassifiable.</td>
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</table>

Table 1 depicts the prevalent distinctions which have been made among runaways, according to the type of pathology which appears to be emphasized by the authors. For the most part, the basic categorical descriptions on the left hand side have been adapted from the clinical typologies suggested by Stierlin (1972), but the characterizations provided by other authors seem to correspond quite closely to these distinctions. Admittedly, at the present stage of development these differentiations are not very extensive but hopefully they will provide an impetus for further conceptual development and greater behavioral specificity.
In conclusion it may be noted that the professional status of the runaway act, as well as the runaway child or adolescent, has suffered a rather tenuous history in both the areas of delinquency and psychopathology. The fact that running away is a violation of a legal code qualifies it technically as a delinquent act. However, the validity and utility of considering it as a form of juvenile delinquency is highly questionable both in terms of what it represents and the implications for treatment (when treatment is in fact warranted). Obviously, by virtue of the nature of the act and the highly variable legal sanctions accorded to it, running away is considerably different from many other forms of behavior characterized as "delinquent". On a very basic level it may be useful to distinguish between delinquent acts which result from sociological determinants and those which are psychologically derived (Weiner, 1970). Within psychologically-based delinquency, and most researchers have at least implied that runaway behavior would be categorized within this group, Weiner suggests that children and adolescents in this broad grouping consist of several sub-groups: those whose anti-social behavior is symptomatic of intrapsychic or familial conflict, those who reflect a characterologically asocial orientation, and those whose delinquency results in part from psychotic or organic disturbance. An awareness of these component groups appears to be beginning in the several typologies which have been suggested.

In historical perspective, it is interesting to note that the emphasis in looking at runaway behavior has not always been concerned so exclusively with the delinquent and psychopathological aspects of the problem. A number of earlier writers have stressed defining the problem as a social and economic one which strongly reflected the social factors involved during the depression years (Minehan, 1934; Outland, 1939) and the war years (Skinner and Nutt, 1944). More recent efforts have suggested a possible return to the view of running away as a broader social and educational problem at least for a sub-sample of the population (Shellow et al., 1966).

**METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS AND PROBLEMS**

The methodological orientations used in the study of runaways are replete with numerous flaws and inconsistencies. Specific criticisms can be levied against each individual research methodology, but the problem becomes even more critical and acute as one attempts to integrate the findings derived from these various approaches. Frequently the studies are relatively to completely incomparable and at best only tenuous conclusions can be drawn.

Three major methodological areas must be considered with respect to the research on runaways: sample selection, comparison and control groups, and data collection. Sample selection remains the single most perplexing and difficult methodological problem; this, despite the relative ease and objectivity with which the runaway incident can be defined. Since a variety of sample sources can be distinguished in the runaway literature, several basic issues must be considered in attempting to relate findings among them:

1) **What is actually required within the different sample sources for qualification as a "runaway"?**

2) **What factors are selectively operating to potentially influence placement within these samples?**
3) How critical a role does the actual runaway incident play in each of these sample groups and is it differentially influential among the groups?

4) How does the type of sample influence the kinds of questions being asked about runaways and reflect the assumptions upon which the studies are based?

5) In what way does sample selection influence the kind and extent of information available and how does this potentially bias the way in which these findings are interpreted?

6) More generally, how representative of the runaway child in general (or specific populations of runaway children) are these samples?

The problems involved in the selection of comparison and control groups are to a great extent an extension of difficulties in sample selection. Faced with the question of determining what constitutes an appropriate comparison or control for runaway samples, several factors appear to influence selection. Most obvious is the influence of the particular type of runaway sample being used. Often this suggests a rather "logical" group to which those particular runaways should be compared, and at other times the choice seems to be based on availability. Less obvious perhaps is the influence of the particular questions being asked about runaways and the assumptions upon which these are based.

Data collection problems again reflect many of the difficulties inherent in sample selection. Particular types of measurement and data collection are deemed suitable for particular types of samples and questions being asked. From clinical case to police records, the differing types of information collected introduces potentially biasing factors specific to that form of data. Questions of reliability and validity are raised as one considers the influence of sample selection on type of information solicited and the manner in which this is interpreted. Generalizability to other samples of runaways must also be considered. The serious limitations of various information-gathering approaches must be appreciated together with a realization of the need for cross-validation and revision of research efforts.

Sample Selection

A major problem facing an analysis of research involving runaways, assuming that we wish to generalize our findings to runaways in general or to specific subgroups of runaways, is the fact that many runaways remain unreported to professional resources and thus are inaccessible for research evaluation. Obviously the impact of this unreported group varies for the different types of samples used, but we must be aware of the fact that those runaways who are represented in a particular sample are probably only those who have come to the attention of particular groups of professionals, for whatever reason. The problem obviously becomes more severe as research efforts attempt to amass a body of data which is applicable to a large population of runaways, but it is an important consideration in all runaway samples.

As an indication of the variety of sample sources upon which our knowledge of "the" runaway is based, Table 2 presents a delineation of the types of populations from which runaway samples have been drawn.
### TABLE 2. RUNWAY SAMPLE SOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Source</th>
<th>Research or Clinical Investigation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missing Persons Report Filed with the Police</td>
<td>Hildebrand (1968, 1963)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shellow et al. (1966)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arrests</td>
<td>Hagedorn (1967)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Goldman (1969)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Uniform Crime Reports (1964-70)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelters</td>
<td>Levinson and Mezei (1970)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lowrey (1941)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Court Referrals</td>
<td>Mayer et al. (1967)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinic Cases Referred by the Juvenile Court</td>
<td>Armstrong (1932, 1937)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canaday (1940)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foster (1962)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robey (1969); Robey et al. (1964)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinic Cases Not Specifically Court-Referred</td>
<td>Rosenwald and Mayer (1967)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balser (1939)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Belkin (1940)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cramer (1958)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leventhal (1963, 1963)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riemer (1940)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robins (1966, 1958); Robins and O'Neal (1959)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rosenheim (1940)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stierlin (1972)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wylie and Weinreb (1958)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gilpin (1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalized Delinquents</td>
<td>Baer (1970)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jenkins (1971)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jenkins and Boyer (1968)</td>
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<td>Shinohara and Jenkins (1967)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsubouchi and Jenkins (1969)</td>
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</table>

As is apparent from the table, the vast majority of runaways who have been investigated have had connections with juvenile authorities or psychiatric clinics, and often both. The monograph by Shellow et al. (1966) stands in noteworthy isolation as the only extensive investigation of runaways who are not involved in the rather intricate legal, professional, and correctional networks. In light of this it is important to consider the particular difficulties inherent in these sampling methods as they affect the types of runaways for whom information is ultimately provided.
The use of missing persons reports provides the most extensive inclusion of runaways in any sample. There is still the problem of unreported runaways, but the potential biases inherent in other samples are minimized and there is the likelihood of obtaining a sample more representative of all those children and adolescents who run away. This method is less subject to the official distortions, misrepresentations, and confoundings which may occur with other more legal or professional focuses. Additionally, it makes the runaway incident the primary consideration for inclusion in the sample, while in juvenile court and clinic samples the actual significance (if it is at all a focus of the investigation) of the runaway episode is many times questionable or highly variable. Utilizing this sampling technique, it is possible that important differences among runaways or sub-groups of runaways may be uncovered. Shellow et al. (1966), for example, have been attentive to the apparent distinctions between single-episode and frequent-repeater runaways; however, the possibility of further differences and delineations should not be ignored.

The use of runaways who have been arrested adds potentially biasing factors which are most often overlooked. For example, it is very seldom that there is any indication of the biasing operative factors involved in official recording such as the notorious unreliability of official statistics, not to mention the highly variable recording procedures used by different law enforcement agencies. Such statistics are plagued by the numerous problems involved in sampling particular agencies. Exactly what factors are responsible for a charge of "runaway" are unspecified and are most likely to vary considerably over time and between different locales. In addition, we have little idea of the factors responsible for such official action in the first place. In future research, the various influences on the police to either make such an arrest or not, particularly in light of the large number of runaways that are not officially recorded, should be carefully examined. Shellow et al. (1966) suggest that of the one-third of their runaways who had had prior contact with the police, only one out of six had had a formal charge placed. Official action may thus take into consideration particular aspects of the family or child, as well as philosophies toward management of the problem, resulting in a sample which has been preselected according to vague and shifting criteria and more importantly criteria which are unknown to the researcher. The importance of this cannot be underestimated since it acts as the initial preselection factor in referral to juvenile courts or court affiliated clinics.

By being referred to juvenile court, the child or adolescent runaway has again been subjected to numerous preselection influences. The decision made in court is open to further influences. Armstrong (1932) provides an example of the court disposition for runaway children brought before the New York Children's Court in 1927. Of 678 cases, 375 were "adjudged guilty" in court of running away, and official action was taken. Of the 375 "guilty" runaways, 27 received a suspended sentence, 234 were placed on probation and 114 were committed to institutions. Most of the remaining 303 runaways were discharged with warning and supervision. Consequently we are faced with the problem of determining what factors lead the runaway to be brought before the court, as well as those which determine his status once seen by the court. Robins (1966) has suggested several factors which determine the child's appearance before the juvenile court: (1) the seriousness of
the antisocial episode which results in police attention; (2) number of previous police contacts; (3) the seriousness of previous antisocial behavior; and (4) opinions about the competence of the home environment. Once the child has been referred, these same considerations influence the decision to institutionalize, with particular emphasis on the factor of parental competence.

One must also be concerned with the point in the juvenile court process at which the research investigation intervenes to obtain runaway samples (e.g., at the point of mere court referral or after continued court attention). There is the issue of varying activity and involvement among juvenile courts, both in general and with respect to specific attitudes toward runaway behavior. Goldman (1969) further suggests four different ways in which juvenile offenders may come to the attention of the juvenile court: (1) cases reported by the police for the information of the court; (2) cases in which official court action has been initiated by legal information filed by police or other citizens; (3) cases referred to the court on petition; and (4) juveniles on parole or probation who commit further offenses. It is particularly interesting to note that in her sample of 660 runaway boys who had been arraigned in juvenile court, Armstrong (1932) found that in 69.5% of the cases either parents or relatives had petitioned the court, while police and truant or probation officers figured less prominently as petitioners (16.5% and 6.8%, respectively). Only 9.11% had no charge other than running away brought against them and the majority were charged with either stealing (57.6%) and/or truancy (85.2%). In dealing with adolescent girls, Robey (1969) has suggested that police prefer not to bring court action unless the girl's attitude is particularly "stubborn" or her behavior is repetitive.

Goldman (1969) has presented evidence for four Pennsylvania municipalities which suggests that runaways are disproportionately referred to juvenile court based on the distribution of arrests. While runaways comprised 3.2% of total arrests, they accounted for 5.3% of all court referrals. He maintains that such behavior was viewed by police as indicative of unsuccessful parental control, since most complaints came from parents, and it was deemed advisable to procure the attention of the professional court staff. Based on a sample of 100 suburban girls charged with delinquency, Mayer et al. (1967) have suggested that while the single most numerous charge was "stubborn child", the single most frequent complaint brought by parents was running away. And although the girl may be brought before court on a runaway charge, complaints might include sexual misbehavior, truancy, and extreme defiance of the parents.

Once having proceeded through apprehension and the juvenile court system runaways may further be differentially selected to be seen for evaluation or therapy in psychiatric clinics connected with the courts. The incidence of referral is highly variable for particular settings. While Foster (1962) reports that approximately 1/7 of the children seen by the court are referred to the clinic, Mayer et al. (1967) report a 41% incidence of referral for 100 consecutive cases of suburban girls who have been charged with delinquency. While Foster concludes that running away way not particularly associated with subsequent referral to a clinic, Mayer et al. suggest that girls charged as "stubborn child", which frequently included running away, were referred more frequently than others to juvenile court clinics. The clinical investigation by Robey et al. (1964) is based on a
clinical subset of runaways which further restricts the population of runaways: of 293 adolescent girls brought before that court clinic for evaluation, 162 (55%) were runaways and of the runaway cases they dealt with 42 (25% of the runaways) were referred for further clinic treatment. The problems involved in selection for psychopathology are obvious. It is also open to question as to the significance of the actual runaway incident in bringing these runaways to the attention of professional services.

Runaway samples selected from general clinic populations, not from court clinic cases, are subject to their own confounding factors. Not only are these cases typically referred by a variety of sources, but very often the composition of the sample with respect to referral source is unspecified. Thus all contributing sources are indiscriminately grouped together. The contribution of police and court referral has been reported as high as 45-50% (Levanthal, 1963, 1964; Robins, 1966). Reasons for referral run the wide gamut of behavior problems and seldom does the runaway incident itself seem to serve as the main factor in referral for most research efforts using clinic runaways. With perhaps the exception of Levanthal's (1963, 1964) research, most of the research interest in clinic cases, where the runaway episode figures prominently in the reason for referral, has been limited to individual case studies (Cramer, 1958; Riemer, 1940; Rosenheim, 1940; Wylie and Weinreb, 1958). For the most part, clinical research investigations have looked at running away as an item in the clinical history (Gilpin, 1930; Jenkins et al., 1966; Robins, 1958, Robins, 1966; Robins and O'Neal, 1959; Stierlin, 1972).

Runaway samples of institutionalized delinquents have obviously gone through considerable preselection, probably through both legal and clinical services. The mere fact of having run away is less likely to play a critical role in determining their status, particularly as other delinquent offenses come into the picture. It is interesting to note that the study by Tsubouchi and Jenkins (1969), which preselected specific delinquent groups on the basis of case records, does not even mention running away as a criterion for inclusion in their "runaway delinquent" group, although it outlines a number of other behaviors required for inclusion.

In addition to the above factors a variety of other controls have been levied on the selection of particular runaway samples. Armstrong (1932, 1937) eliminated from her sample those runaway court cases who were being held as neglected children or for improper guardianship. Shellow et al. (1966) attempted to control for runaway episodes which were "questionable" attempts. Both Canaday (1940) and Robins (1958, 1966; Robins and O'Neal, 1959) controlled for race by eliminating Negro subjects. Canaday (1940) restricted her sample by eliminating runaways older than 12 years, while most studies have focused on the adolescent runaway. Several investigations have explicitly attempted to control for the possible complicating factors of mental retardation by eliminating subjects below a certain level of proficiency (Baer, 1970; Canaday, 1940; Robins, 1958, 1966; Robins and O'Neal, 1959; Shinohara and Jenkins, 1967). Institutionalized delinquents with a history of violence, assaultive or sexual offenses were eliminated by Baer (1970), as were those with evidence of severe psychopathology. Levanthal's (1963, 1964) clinic sample restricted inclusion to runaways for whom there was no history of delinquent acts which brought the child to police attention prior to the
runaway act. And finally, in his clinic sample Robey (1969) and Robey et al. (1964) eliminated runaways who were not living with both parents or one parent and a step-parent.

While the research efforts of Shellow et al. (1966) have attempted to include a broader range of runaways that has been accomplished before, there still remain a number of runaway groups about whom we know very little. As a separate group, those runaways who leave home for extended periods of time and find housing at the emergency shelters located in many large cities have been understudied. There is little information available concerning the individual and family pathology among these runaways and the extent to which they represent a group similar to or different from the clinic runaways typically studied. While these runaways may be included in samples based on missing persons reports, they may be quite different from the many runaways who return home after only a day or two. Hopefully federal legislation designed to allocate funds for the establishment and research investigation of runaway shelters (*Runaway Youth*, 1972) will help to make accessible this little-known group.

Little systematic work has been done to distinguish among these various sample sources on the basis of personality differences, family status, socioeconomic level, *etc.* Very often these problems are simply ignored. Using interview analyses, however, Levanthal (1964) has made the interesting speculation that runaways referred by the police and other correctional agencies have significantly lower lack-of-control ratings on interview data than do runaways who have been referred by parents or non-punitive agencies. His conclusion that police referrals have less difficulty with control over various areas of their functioning leaves unanswered the question of why this is true, or what it represents in terms of the personalities of different sub-groups of runaways, or the effect of various agencies on the self-presentation of these individuals.

**Comparison and Control Groups**

The criticisms and cautions applied to the selection of runaway samples also apply to the variety of groups to which they are compared. Frequently the issue of appropriate control or comparison groups is not raised in particular studies which merely present frequency data (*i.e.*, Balser, 1939) or compare runaways with other runaways on the basis of sex or socioeconomic differences (*i.e.*, Armstrong, 1932; Hildebrand, 1963 1968; Lowrey, 1941). Frequently comparisons are made with other delinquent groups (Armstrong, 1932; Baer, 1970; Jenkins, 1971; Jenkins and Boyer, 1968; Mayer *et al.*, 1967; Shinohara and Jenkins, 1967; Tsubouchi and Jenkins, 1969) or they are made with non-runaway clinic groups which are either delinquent (Foster, 1962), non-delinquent (Stierlin, 1972) or undesignated (Levanthal, 1963, 1964; Robins, 1958; Robins and O'Neal, 1959).

It appears that those working with runaways in an institution compare their runaways with other institutionalized delinquents and those working in clinic settings look to other clinic patients for comparisons. The various populations of "runaways" are rarely compared with each other and as a result we have little idea of their similarities much less their differences. Our knowledge of runaway adolescents appears to be as discrete as the sources of our samples, and little
research has been done to unite or distinguish these samples. As a result we are able to say very little about each of these populations individually, perhaps even less about the "meaning" of running away as it might be represented across these groups, and nearly nothing about it against normal control subjects.

Data Collection

The procedures used to gather information about runaways and the uses to which this data has been put vary widely. The assumptions upon which data collection is predicated and the particular samples used to exemplify the runaway have had considerable impact on the type of information solicited, the way in which it is measured, and the resultant interpretations and conclusions. Once again the question is raised as to how representative the data are in terms of runaways in general, if such a group is even conceivable, and to what extent the findings are applicable only to specific subsets of the runaway population.

For the most part clinical descriptive data appears to predominate in investigations of the runaway. Often this involves the retrospective interpretation of clinical case records after a group of runaways has been selected as a target for study (Armstrong, 1932, 1937; Gilpin. 1930; Stierlin, 1972). Levanthal's (1963, 1964) work provides an exception to the prevalent tendency of a posteriori identification of a group of "runaway" clinic cases and then to work backwards in assessing the clinical records of these cases. Levanthal selected a priori a target population of runaways and obtained interview data within one month of the runaway episode. This procedure has the distinct advantage of forcing the researcher to suggest specific hypotheses and relationships, and of discouraging the groping and searching for indeterminate "interesting" findings. The importance of clinical descriptions, whether found in single-case studies (Cramer, 1958; Riemer. 1940; Rosenheim, 1940; Wylie and Weinreb, 1958) or more extensive multiple-case studies (Robey, 1969; Robey et al., 1964), should not be minimized even though such reports have not appeared to fulfill their potential as a viable base for stimulating specific research hypotheses.

When dealing with clinical case material there is a strong bias toward soliciting information which emphasizes maladjustment or interpreting the information obtained in these terms, particularly to the exclusion of less pathological data and conclusions. Mental health professionals appears to be overly sensitized to the selection of this kind of information and the interpretation of even relatively orientations often focus selectively on the specific types of deviant behavior appropriate to their perspectives. In order to correct some of these problems, Baer benign material in psychopathological terms. Both psychiatric and delinquent (1970) has argued for the utility of a taxonomic analysis of delinquent behavior in terms of common everyday experiences of those youth. With the possible exception of the research by Shellow et al. (1966), however, he stands in relative isolation in emphasizing this point. Thus, clinical data, by nature of the data solicited and the samples from which it is drawn, may well be attempting behavioral distinctions which are applicable and relevant only to clinic populations and the runaways represented within them. From a delinquency standpoint the same criticism may be made of the case record analysis of institutionalized delinquents.
The frequent use of parent-report indices is also open to the possibility of considerable distortion. This type of data is usually a major contribution to clinical records (i.e., Jenkins et al., 1966) but it has also been assessed by missing persons reports (Hildebrand, 1963, 1968) and interviews unconnected with clinical assessments (Shellow et al., 1966). Less often actual interviews with the runaway himself have been the specific focus of research investigations (Foster, 1962; Levanthal, 1963, 1964), although Shellow et al. (1966) have included an interview with these subjects. Robins (1966) has included an interview with her subjects as adults. The use of police records (i.e., Goldman, 1969; Shellow et al., 1966), juvenile court records (i.e., Shellow et al., 1966), and the reports of probation officers (i.e., Foster, 1962; Mayer et al., 1967) have characterized a large portion of the accessible data.

Psychological tests have been infrequently used. Shinohara and Jenkins (1967) and Tsubouchi and Jenkins (1969) have reported test data on the MMPI and Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire for a group of “runaway delinquents” who were preselected on the basis of institutional case records. Foster (1962) indicates that half of the runaways in his sample had psychological test data available, but little was done with the data. Two studies have used self-report questionnaires administered to runaways (Baer, 1970; Goldmeier and Dean, 1972), and Shellow et al., (1966) administered a written questionnaire to their control subjects. Unfortunately the runaway subjects were assessed with interview techniques. Levinson and Mezei (1970) gave the Osgood Semantic Differential Scales to a group of runaways housed at an emergency shelter, but their study provides no group with whom these subjects are compared. Thus, relatively little information of a standardized test nature has been provided for runaway samples.

In summary one can only conclude that the existing literature is seriously marred by numerous methodological problems; fortunately these problems are not inherently related to the issue of running away and can be easily corrected in future research by careful, competent investigations.

**THE RUNAWAY EPISODE**

Surprisingly little attention has been accorded to the actual runaway incident as a source of information about the runaway child’s personality dynamics or his environment. To a large extent this has occurred as a result of the way in which runaways have been investigated. Often running away, or a specific incident of it, has not been a primary factor responsible for the runaway’s inclusion in particular clinical or legalistic categories. Thus specific information concerning the act was not recorded as it may not have been deemed relevant at the time. Even more prevalent perhaps is the assumption that the dimensions of the runaway incident are not particularly significant, and instead the focus is turned immediately toward the analysis of the runaway’s deeper psychopathology and delinquency. Again, the types of sample sources suggest that their runaways may represent individuals for whom concerns of pathology and delinquency are in fact more pressing.

Stierlin (1972) reports the collection of data on frequency of runaway attempts, age of onset, duration of episode and distance traveled for his runaway sample of students referred for clinical treatment of underachievement. And yet he
does not report these findings but instead combines the categories to form a single (mean) score by which he assigns each runaway to categories of varying "severity" severe, moderately severe, moderate, mild. Thus he acknowledges the importance of these dimensions of specific runaway acts and of general patterns of running away, and yet they have been equated in significance with little explicit rationale for such a decision. Furthermore he assumes the various categories combine additively so that one obtains a single mean score, which is most doubtful.

Based on missing persons reports, Hildebrand (1968) has indicated that through the age of twelve runaways were usually absent from home for a day or less. Those absent for longer periods were for the most part recidivists. Even with the thirteen year and older group those runaways who stayed away for longer periods tended to be the recidivists. Furthermore, by the age of twelve a definite recidivist pattern had been established by boys, while such a pattern did not occur among girls until the age of fourteen. Most of the runaways also returned home of their own accord. In contrast, Armstrong's (1932) sample of court-arraigned runaways presents a much more extreme picture. Of 660 runaway boys, 79% had run away more than once and 71% had been gone for at least three consecutive days. Only twenty-four of the 660 returned home on their initiative. While 87% of these boys ran away alone, only 60% of the girls from a comparable sample (Armstrong, 1937) left home alone. Shellow et al. (1966) provide a much more extensive delineation of the runaway incident based on missing persons reports. They provide information regarding seasonal variations (little variation), day of departure (slight increase on Fridays), time of departure (70% between noon and midnight), and how soon the incident was reported (60% within six hours). From both their objective data and subjective impressions, the authors conclude that the runaway act generally appears to be impulsive and poorly planned.

The motivation for running away is most often described in general terms which attempt to encompass personality factors and family dynamics that are considered to be relatively stable aspects of the runaway's personal and social life. Much of this emphasis has resulted from clinical and sociological assumptions about what constitutes relevant data. Scant attention has been paid to any extensive investigation of the specific situational antecedents to the actual runaway act. Most often these data have been collected only in passing and are presented as frequency counts of rather broad categories. However, it does appear that the response of running away may be a much more viable behavioral solution to difficulties for some individuals than for others. On a self-report questionnaire, Goldmeier and Dean (1972) found that runaways indicated a greater tendency to feel like running away when faced with problems (72%) than did a sample of non-runaway high school students. Stierlin (1972) associates the running away of two of his four runaway “types” with a generally impulsive life style. Levanthal (1963, 1964) emphasizes the runaway’s general lack of control over major areas of his functioning. It may be suggested that for at least a portion of runaways the runaway act itself may fit into a broader response style characterized by impulsive actions aimed at averting or dramatically changing situational conditions.

By far the most significant precipitating factor involved in the runaway incident is attributed to the family sphere. For example, Jenkins (1971) says of the “common etiology” of the runaway reaction that it can be explained as an attempt
to escape from a rejecting or disturbing home situation by running away. Specific family situations which result in this form of behavior have not been well-delineated empirically, and few studies have attempted to relate specific antecedent familial events to the occurrence of the particular runaway act. In addition, very often this information is assessed via parent report rather than directly from the runaway himself or other sources of information. As an index of the usefulness of the parental report alone, one might note Hildebrand's (1968) finding that on missing persons reports 75% of the parents stated "unknown" as the cause for the runaway.

Typically the research investigations which have concerned themselves at all with the stated reasons for leaving home have done so on the basis of rather broad, all-inclusive categories such as "family conflict" or "school conflict" with little delineation within these categories. Levanthal (1963) has attempted to be somewhat more explicit, but provides only a few more delineations of "family conflict" (e.g., fear of punishment, rejection by parents, unfair treatment). All too often the researcher is left with rather global impressions upon which to base his conclusions about the meaning of the runaway incident. While it seems generally accepted that factors in the home environment operate as the primary antecedents to running away, we have little indication or suggestion of the specific family factors involved. Also to be contended with are findings such as those of Armstrong (1932), which suggest that runaways from unbroken, intact families report a smaller percentage of family conflicts but a greater percentage of school conflicts than do runaways from broken homes.

Finally, different historical periods have been marked by the influence of different social economic factors in considering the runaway incident. During the depression years considerable significance was attributed to economic motives in runaway behavior (Outland, 1939; Minehan, 1934), and during the war years the significance of a wartime economy and environment was emphasized (Skinner and Nutt, 1944). However, the emphasis on the family environment has been a constant in the evolution of thought about the etiology and meaning of the runaway act, although without very much elaboration. No one has given thought to the consequences of the act of running away in terms of its instrumental value in changing the family or school environment. How do parents react to the first incident? What is the role of peers and friends? Where does the child go? Do runaway children differ in terms of some going to versus some going away from certain kinds of environments? These are exciting and challenging questions that could be answered and may provide some of our best insights into the runaway problem.

THE RUNAWAY CHILD AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

The research literature which has dealt specifically with the personality and family dynamics of the runaway has been quite limited in specificity if not in scope. Statements about the personality and family functioning of runaways have most often been gleaned from an inspection of frequency counts or statistical comparisons on a number of demographic variables which have been selected according to their presumed association with delinquency or psychopathology, whereas, research investigations that have looked extensively at particular areas
of personality functioning are almost non-existent. For the most part, analyses have involved only an indication of how many runaways show the presence of this or that demographic variable or behavioral characteristic. The way in which these factors are to be incorporated into an inclusive picture of the runaway is frequently quite superficially suggested and the reader is often left to draw his own conclusions about the meaning, significance and relationships among these variables.

The Child

Foster (1962) has suggested that the runaway delinquents in his sample are characterized by a limited ability to accept awareness of or to find socially acceptable ways of expressing aggressive impulses. The presumption is that runaway behavior reflects another of these socially unacceptable aggressive expressions. The roles of impulsivity and aggression have been emphasized by a number of investigators, particularly those who have dealt with frequent-repeater runaways (Riemer, 1940; Rosenwald and Mayer, 1967). Much of this emphasis, however, appears to result at least in part from the view of the runaway act itself as an impulsive and defiant expression. Research has provided little substantial information to suggest that the runaway is a generally impulsive, acting-out or antisocial individual in terms of the manner in which he responds to his environment and attempts solutions to his problems. Although their study deals with runaways from institutions rather than the runaway from home, Kessler and Wieland (1970) note that in a game situation their runaway subjects were significantly poorer risk takers than were institutionalized non-runaways. They suggest the possibility that these girls may be more desirous of security and stability than comparable non-runaways. Another study of institution runaways has suggested that on TAT measures, aggression against parents and parent surrogate, self-aggression and the need for love are characteristic themes of the runaways (Gothberg, 1947).

The picture of the runaway as a child or adolescent who is socially inept, emotionally immature, seclusive, and low in self-esteem has also been presented. Levinson and Mezei (1970), using a sample of runaways housed in an emergency shelter, found that their subjects showed significant differences between actual- and ideal-self reports in all areas of functioning on the Osgood Semantic Differential Scales. However, the actual significance of these results is somewhat suspect since the authors failed to provide any sort of comparison or control group! The work done by the Jenkins group with institutionalized runaway delinquents has suggested a pattern of maladaptive and frustrated delinquency rather than the adaptive delinquency supposedly characteristic of the more "socialized" delinquents. Using behavioral characteristics, Jenkins and Boyer (1968) found that runaway delinquents exhibited greater emotional immaturity, apathy and seclusiveness than did either socialized or unsocialized aggressive delinquents. On the basis of MMPI profiles Shinohara and Jenkins (1967) suggest that runaway delinquents show greater evidence of anxiety, self-discouragement, unhappiness and poor self-image than do socialized delinquents. In a validation study, however, Tsubouchi and Jenkins (1969) reported more similar test profiles for the three groups, although socialized delinquents still showed evidence of being the least deviant in terms of psychopathology. Again, however, we have little idea of how these institutionalized delinquent runaways compare with those found in the more general population.
The research by Levanthal, which attempts to investigate the runaway’s behavior and feelings on dimensions of control and uncontrol, are perhaps the most in-depth investigations of the runaway’s personality. Levanthal (1963) applied three rating scales to the interview analysis of clinic runaways and comparable clinic non-runaways. Using a median split, he found that runaways were significantly different on the three scales, which focused on:

1) the expectation of being compelled, restrained or affected by external forces (“external influence” scale)

2) the reaction to being externally influenced (“counteracting influences” scale)

3) the experience of having no control over others (“no influence over others” scale)

From this Levanthal suggests that concern with the factor of external control is strongly reflected in their behavioral responses, and also differentiates runaways from most other disturbed children. His later research (also based on rating scales and using the median split) further suggests a significantly poorer inner control shown by runaways in several areas of functioning (Levanthal, 1964). Runaways showed significantly greater lack of control in the following areas: drive and affect (emphasis on impulsivity and aggression); social behavior, awareness and judgment (focusing mainly on irresponsible behaviors); and conation (energy). The areas of cognitive functioning, motor behavior, and self-awareness were not significantly different. Levanthal (1964) characterizes the runaways as being concerned in general with how much control they have rather than with specific “drive conflicts”. Their perceived lack of control over external factors results in impulsive discharge-behavior, deficient regulatory mechanisms for their behavior (particularly with respect to judgment), and a self-image of being helpless and uncontrolled. As a result runaways anticipate an even greater spreading and intensification of behavior over which they have no control and consequently become highly sensitized to control as an issue (Levanthal, 1963). Control becomes such a major issue as to potentially distort any form of parental criticism into an encounter signifying overpowering control. Such reasoning appears to be consonant with Hildebrand’s (1963) suggestion that by age thirteen parental discipline emerges as the most significant motivation for the runaway act.

Gilpin (1930) found “neurotic traits” such as enuresis, temper tantrums, nail-biting, night terrors, speech defects, and food idiosyncracies to be common among seventy-five runaways. Only eleven children in this sample showed no traits. However, with no adequate control data and the dubious status of such behavioral characteristics as “neurotic traits”, it would seem appropriate to question a neurotic basis for running away in children. As cited previously, Lowrey (1941) reported no instances of neuroses among his studies of runaways. He believes that the psychoneurotics build their abnormal psychological patterns around their families and homes to such a degree that running away would upset much of the pattern and make for significantly increased anxiety.

At this point, there are only a few studies which suggest behavioral and personality dimensions in the child which may be related to running away. Some of these hypotheses could be more rigorously tested, such as the notion of control via
some of the laboratory and field study techniques using Rotter's Locus of Control conception.

The Family

Many of the children and adolescents in the studies described in this section are considered to be emotionally disturbed, but the main emphasis is upon family disorganization. The research relating specific parental factors to the runaway act has been gleaned mostly from superficial comparisons involving factors like intactness of the home, incidence of pathology in the parents, etc. Most investigations have emphasized the role of family pathology in the etiology of runaway behavior, and the samples used have often provided researchers with evidence indicative of considerable family disorganization and pathology. On the other hand, Shellow et al. (1966) suggest that only with their group of frequent-repeater runaways was there any sufficient evidence of personal and familial disorganization; for their larger group of single-episode runaways there appeared to be a greater emphasis on the school as a problem area. Nonetheless family pathology has predominated as a primary etiologic factor.

The greater incidence of parent-child separations and broken families has been repeatedly noted, particularly when runaway delinquents are compared with other delinquent groups (Armstrong, 1932; Foster, 1962; Jenkins, 1971). A more significant emphasis has been placed on the considerable frequency with which runaways are characterized as being rejected by their parents. Foster (1962) notes a marked and overt rejection by runaway delinquents' parents, and Riemer (1940) suggests the lack of parental love due to parents' inadequacies as a basic factor in frequent-repeater runaways, and characterizes these runaways as involved in an "incessant quest" for parental affection. Diggs (1949) reports on twenty-five court cases that revealed considerable pathology, for example, more than one-half of the runaways were either illegitimate or had been born shortly after the marriage of their parents and there were numerous physical defects in the girls which was taken to be indicative of the poor care and treatment they had received from their families.

On the Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire, Tsubouchi and Jenkins (1969) emphasize the contribution of inadequate mothering to the development of the frustrated, maladaptive delinquency characterizing the runaway delinquent. Similarly, in an analysis of clinical groups, Jenkins et al. (1966) suggest that for a broader group of "undomesticated" children (in which running away figures prominently) the parental failure involved particularly a failure of maternal functioning from the earlier years. This is in contrast to socialized delinquent children who most often appear to suffer from a paternal failure of control over the older child.

In a delinquent sample, Armstrong (1932) found a considerably greater incidence of psychopathology in the mothers of runaways than in the mothers of incorrigible or unlawful-entry delinquents. Paternal psychopathology was equal to that found in the incorrigible group but considerably greater than in the unlawful-entry group. Robins (1966) has suggested that running away is a significant indicator of the adult psychiatric diagnosis of sociopathic personality, since 33% of the childhood runaways ultimately received this diagnosis as adults. For this
group she indicates several predominant factors which characterize the parents. Most often the father was characterized as an anti-social person, while the mothers’ problems were typically not anti-social ones. When mothers alone had problems, this did not seem to result in sociopathy. The lack of discipline and supervision appeared to be prominent ways in which the anti-social father had a significant impact on the child, but we should also consider the possibility of learning the adult sociopathic behavioral role through modeling of the father’s behavior.

Robey (1969) has provided perhaps the most extensive characterization of the family dynamics of the runaway child. It is unfortunate that the cases upon which this was based were typically runaways who had had considerable involvement with law enforcement agencies and may represent a sample with relatively severe pathology. Robey states: "... in a large proportion of cases, there is considerable indication that the girls run away from home to ward off the unconscious threat of an incestuous relationship with her father, the fear of the resultant dissolution of the family, and the concurrent depression" (p. 127).

The dynamics involved suggest to Robey a mother who is incapable of providing the daughter with sufficient warmth and affection; instead the mother uses material incentives to force the daughter into gradually assuming increased responsibility and ultimately the maternal role. In doing so she encourages a warm, close and highly eroticized relationship between father and daughter and further abdication from the role of wife.

Finally, unlike most dynamically-oriented studies, Lowrey (1941) believes that running away is not necessarily a complex psychopathological phenomenon, but represents in the great majority of cases a simple and primitive reaction to an uncomfortable situation. The vast majority of the children are running away from situations in which they are unhappy, feel unwanted and rejected, or feel frustrated in achieving their ambitions. Shellow et al. (1966) report little evidence of family pathology in runaways obtained via missing persons reports, the fact that the major part of their information on the status of the family was obtained by parent interviews may have influenced the degree to which family problems were indicated. Using a self-report questionnaire for runaways drawn from a variety of agencies, Goldmeier and Dean (1972) suggest that runaways are significantly less likely to characterize their home situation as favorable when compared to non-runaway public high school students. Specifically, the runaway reported feeling less at ease in the home, less warm toward both parents, that parents were not warm toward them, that they were excessively and undeservedly punished and that the parental relationship was an unhappy one. Goldmeier and Dean further suggest that runaways are more likely to turn to peers with their problems and are more likely to restrict help-seeking only to peers.

The School and Peers

The least extensively studied domain of the runaway has been school life and peer relations. Armstrong (1932) noted the significant amount of school misgrading which occurred in her runaway sample, with the usual result that a majority of these runaways were placed in grades beyond their level of capacity and functional ability. Hildebrand (1963) reports that starting at age twelve and continuing through fifteen, the runaway experienced increasing difficulties characterized by truancy,
poor grades, and misconduct in school. Shellow et al. (1966) state: “Three-quarters of the parents of repeaters reported their child to be having trouble in school, as opposed to one-half of the parents of one-timers. And examination of school records showed that repeaters . . . were absent more often, had lower grade averages, were retained more frequently, attended more junior high schools, and were more likely to drop out of school. . . .” It was further indicated that runaways from intact homes, when compared with those from broken homes showed fewer cases of family problems but more instances of school problems. Goldmeier and Dean (1972) have also found that runaways reported poorer school grades, less interest in a college education, more difficulty in getting along with teachers, less help from school counselors, and less liking for school than did non-runaways.

There are apparently no systematic studies in the clinical literature which have examined peer relationships. Such a gap in the available information is almost unbelievable in light of all of the evidence indicating the critical role of peers for normal (and for some deviant) development. Weiner (1970) speculates that the act of running away in adolescence is part of a conformity to the pop culture of the younger generation. The mass media have created a situation in which it suddenly becomes fashionable to live in the slums, communes, the fringe of college campuses, the drug scene, and running away even for short time periods is one way an early adolescent can gain status among his friends. Natural observations suggest that: friends often aid and shelter a runaway, friends accompany one another, peer rejection appears to drive some children into running, need for peer recognition influences the run, good peer relationships can compensate for school and familial difficulties and prevent the run. All of these areas should be carefully examined. It is apparent that at least for a significant number of runaways, their personality and the family situation alone should not be considered as the only, or perhaps even the most important, problematic area resulting in runaway behavior.

**PROGNOSIS, TREATMENT AND PREVENTION**

*Prognosis*

Running away has often been associated with future delinquency on the basis that most delinquents have run away from home at one time or another. Hildebrand (1963) notes that 70% of all delinquents have a history of running away, which leads him to conclude that running away is an important “predelinquent indicator.” This would suggest that running away may figure prominently in a larger pattern of antisocial behavior, but it obviously excludes from consideration a broad range of other children and adolescents who have run away. Robins (1966), in her clinic population referred primarily for antisocial behavior, found that of 200 cases (out of 524) who showed this symptom in childhood 33% were diagnosed as “sociopathic personality” at follow-up in adulthood. Again, it should be noted that her sample consisted of 45% juvenile court referrals. Of these 200 cases with a runaway history, the following percentages were reported for several other adult psychiatric diagnostic categories: 11% alcoholism, 6% schizophrenia, 3% anxiety neurosis, 3% chronic brain syndrome. Perhaps even more interesting are Robins’ reported findings of those eventually diagnosed in various psychiatric categories and the percent who showed running away at some point in their childhood histories. These data are summarized in Table 3 and point to the fact that running away does
not appear to be predictive of a particular type of adult psychiatric status, although it is represented in some adult psychiatric diagnoses with greater frequency than in others. From the data it is strongly suggested that running away figures more prominently in some adult diagnoses than in others. In particular, it appears to be considerably related to the diagnosis of sociopathic personality which suggests that it may often represent a symptomatic feature of an early antisocial or characterological disorder pattern and it seems far less prevalent in the neurotic disorders. But again the significance of running away must be assessed in terms of the broader pattern for runaway behavior which occurred to some extent in nearly half of the original sample, and occurs to some extent in all categories of later adult adjustment. Robins (1958) makes the general statement that the number of runaways without psychiatric disorder at adult follow-up was relatively small, but her sample is a clinic one and appears to be characterized by a considerable amount of pathology.

### TABLE 3. ADULT PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSIS AND INCIDENCE OF CHILDHOOD RUNNING AWAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult Psychiatric Diagnosis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Adult Psychiatric Diagnosis</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>Hysteria (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholism (29)</td>
<td>Other Neuroses (30)</td>
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<td>Sociopathic personality (14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociopathic personality (80)</td>
<td>No disease (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No disease (75)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Significantly different from no disease. **Significantly different from sociopathic personality.


Furthermore, Robins (1958) makes the interesting assertion that the clinical and judicial disposition of these runaways turned out to be roughly related to the adult psychiatric diagnosis. Sociopaths typically had been sent to reformatories, psychotics usually went to mental hospitals or reformatories, and neurotic and normal runaways (at adulthood) had received little official attention. Although noting the possible effects of this treatment on the adult psychiatric diagnosis, Robins attributes this for the most part to a sifting process based on the presumed severity of the childhood runaway episode.

Other clinical investigators have been equally grim about the prognosis for the frequent-repeater runaway. Canaday (1940) investigated twenty-eight young runaways under the age of twelve who were seen in therapy. Treatment effectiveness was deemed relatively unsuccessful: two showed no improvement and five dropped out of treatment. Of eleven cases referred for running away, Belkin (1940) indicates that only one was successfully treated. Looking at behaviors reported by
parents in the child's clinical history, Jenkins *et al.* (1966) indicate that in the case history running away was associated with a rating of no improvement at follow-up, while not having runaway behavior in the history was significantly related to improvement at follow-up. Dealing with runaway girls who appeared to manifest considerable personal and family pathology, Robey (1969) indicates a generally poor prognosis. Even with treatment the most frequent outcome was early marriage, many of which showed considerable instability and eventually ended in divorce, and without treatment, most of these girls leave school at the earliest possible age. In looking at frequent-repeater male runaways, Riemer (1940) suggests that those who first show the symptom after puberty or in later adolescence do not appear to have the marked character defect of the younger child runaway, with the implication of a much poorer prognosis for the latter group.

No data is currently available to indicate the prognosis for the numerous runaways not characterized by the degree of disturbance typically reflected by clinic samples.

*Treatment and Prevention*

The treatment suggested for the problem of running away has ranged from psychotherapy to broad programs of social intervention. The former approach can only hope to relieve or remedy some of the current problems for individual runaway youth; on the other hand, social intervention approaches have recently begun to focus on a number of potential preventatives for the problem.

In considering psychotherapeutic treatment it may be suggested that runaways have probably been treated within all of the various therapy orientations. The issue which appears to be most prominent in the relatively sparse literature specifically dealing with this problem is whether the runaway child is to be seen alone, in conjoint family therapy, or not at all. Many clinicians maintain that treatment should be handled solely through the parents and that no professional time should be spent in child therapy in these cases. For example, Cramer (1958) emphasizes this approach for several reasons: first since the child will probably be particularly resistant to therapeutic intervention, it will take inordinately long to establish a relationship conducive to behavioral change, and secondly, the parents are considered major determining factors in the evolution and maintenance of the problem. Obviously, requiring the parents to become actively and often solely involved in the treatment processes may result in numerous problems, particularly when the runaway comes from a highly inadequate home situation. In considering the successful treatment of only one of eleven cases treated predominantly for running away, Belkin (1940) suggests that work with the parents is frequently quite difficult since many of them are so "neurotic" themselves that little can be accomplished for the child in therapy. Canaday (1940) analyzed twenty-eight runaway cases; in three-fourths of the cases the child himself had no active part in the treatment situation. In two-thirds of these cases the parents had a "rejecting attitude" toward therapy, which Canaday associated with the significance parents attached to the runaway behavior. Parents appeared most likely to reject therapeutic intervention when they viewed running away: 1) as a symptom of the child's maladjustment, 2) as incomprehensible behavior, 3) as a result of a pattern of delinquency, or 4) as a family trait. Parents were more likely to cooperate to some extent in therapy when they interpreted running away as evidence of their own failure in parental roles.
Even those clinicians who advocate at least some individual treatment for the runaway emphasize the importance of the simultaneous treatment of parents. Dealing with adolescent female runaways, both Robey (1969) and Rosenwald and Mayer (1967) feel that successful treatment of the runaway girl of necessity involves simultaneous treatment of the mother and an effort to change the established relationship between mother and daughter.

Typically it would appear that relatively little, if any, emphasis in therapy is directly placed on the runaway act. In clinical settings the act itself is nearly always viewed as a surface symptom of underlying and often deep-seated relational problems within the family. For example, Cramer (1958) emphasizes the importance of opening the lines of positive communication within the family. Levinson and Mezei (1970) emphasize the counseling goals of the development of self-esteem and self-acceptance in the runaway. The view of runaway behavior held by Levanthal (1963, 1964) places therapy emphasis on the runaway’s feelings of little control over internal and external events and the interpretation of these experiences. The implication is that such an approach will increase the ability to tolerate specific and temporary lapses of control. Following a decrease in the significance attributed to control as an issue, the child or adolescent should be able to develop more of a sense of generalized control, with the effect of greater control over his own behavior and less behavioral reactivity. Other approaches emphasize the parental capability and responsibility for exerting control, influence, and supervision which they have lost in managing the child (Rosenwald and Mayer, 1967).

In the more severe runaway cases treatment perspectives must take into account the extremely inadequate home environment which is often present, as well as the fact that by the time these runaways reach clinic services the runaway pattern is often well-established. Robey (1969) notes that even after brief symptomatic treatment, returning the child to the home usually results in a rapid reactivation of the previous situation and often results in another incident of running away, and yet most treatment approaches emphasize returning the child to the home situation. In contrast when dealing with runaway delinquents, Jenkins (1971) suggests that effective treatment of the “runaway reaction” requires consideration of two basic factors: 1) Either the home environment must be modified or the child must be removed from the house; 2) A substantial period of socialization or resocialization must be provided for in an accepting but firm surrounding. Such a socialization program attempts to gradually increase expectations of more responsible behavior, construct a sense of self-worth, and provide a recognition of reciprocal obligations.

Obviously many of the adolescents who run away from home, particularly those leaving for only a single brief period, do not show the severe personal and family pathology which would necessitate the intensive individual and family therapy suggested by those who have worked with the more disturbed groups of runaways. In addition, many of these never come to professional clinical attention. And yet the runaway act, although not viewed as a manifestation of severe psychopathology, is seen as an indication of at least some dissatisfaction. Even if it is characterized as one of several potential responses which may be used to express this dissatisfaction (Shellow et al., 1966), it is usually agreed that this is not the most constructive of problem solutions. Some efforts to deal with the runaway problem have focused on larger social systems involved in the adolescent’s life, which
may be approached in an effort to modify potential problem areas. Shellow et al. (1966) have characterized the problem in the broader scope. For single-episode runaways they state: “In part, their difficulties lie outside themselves, in the different social systems in which they move, in their relations with their parents, with the school system, and with their peers.” In an effort to anticipate and prevent problems which may contribute to general adolescent difficulties, as well as to the specific problem of running away, they suggest several broad programs. Within the school system they advocate broader vocational programs for the many students who are not college-bound and thus find few satisfactions and many frustrations in the traditional college-oriented programs. Interestingly, many of these students are the ones who will ultimately leave home, drop out of school, etc. These authors also suggest the development of peer-relations programs designed to facilitate adequate peer relationships for the many students who do not have them. On a community level, the development of a youth board is suggested as a means by which to represent the concerns of adolescents. More directly related to those involved directly in the runaway problem, the authors point to the need for emergency-aid services to families who could benefit from immediate counseling and aid in handling the runaway incident.

In noting the runaway’s typical reliance on the peer group for solving problems and the usual dislike for adult figures of authority, Goldmeier and Dean (1972) emphasize the potential of working through the peer group as a means of extending support to the adolescent runaway. It was further suggested that the possibility of professional intervention may best come through self-help agencies since the runaway or the potential runaway is reluctant to approach adult professionals.

The introduction of the congressional Runaway Youth Act reflects the increasing sentiment that local, state and federal efforts must be coordinated if the present runaway problem is to be dealt with adequately. The bill is characterized in the following terms: “A bill to strengthen interstate reporting and interstate services for parents of runaway children; to conduct research on the size of the runaway youth population; for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of temporary housing and counseling services for transient youth, and for other purposes” (Runaway Youth, 1972, p. 3).

The view that running away should be considered as a social problem is reflected in the Senate Subcommittee’s declaration of policy: “... in view of the interstate nature of the problem, it is the responsibility of the Federal Government to develop accurate reporting of the problem nationally and to develop an effective system of temporary care outside the law enforcement structure” (Runaway Youth, 1972). In addition to highlighting state and federal responsibility, the Runaway Youth Act provides guidelines for the establishment and maintenance of private and local runaway shelters which will have access to federal funding. Also considered is the allocation of funds for the purposes of statistical tabulation and definitive research investigations.

The Runaway Youth Act became effective July 1, 1975. Grants will be made on the basis of the number of runaways in the community; the present availability of services for runaways; and a priority is given to private organizations or institutions who have had prior experience dealing with runaways. The Act is
administered by the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and has an annual authorization of $10 million for the first three years.

The introduction of the Runaway Youth Act is particularly intriguing in an historical perspective. The problem of runaways is not a new one although the dimensions of the problems are likely to vary considerably with the active social and economic conditions present at different historical periods. Perhaps in previous times the social implications and determinants were more readily apparent and encouraged an earlier definition of the problem as a social one. During the depression years of 1931-1936 the country was swept with a wave of "wandering youth" (Minehan, 1934; Outland, 1939). The war years provided a different sort of economy which was suggested as facilitating running away (Skinner and Nutt, 1944). Following the war, numerous European countries were faced with the problem of bands of wandering youth. These earlier periods, despite the many different dimensions of the runaway problem, were characterized by many of the suggested courses of action as are included in present efforts to unite local, state and federal levels in combating the problem. Minehan (1934) suggested: "What we need precisely is a national plan of youth camps . . . which do not force youth to remain at home when there is in the true sense of the word no home in which they can remain." He makes the further speculation that: "Perhaps one of the best ways in which we could furnish youth with this opportunity would be to initiate a colonization project on land now unused."

Outland's (1939) book provides a compilation of articles which he wrote during the 1930's in response to the runaway problem during the depression years. Particularly salient is his interest in the various local, state and federal efforts to deal with the problem. Although the general scope of the economic situation was quite different then, in a 1936 article entitled "The Federal Transient Program for Boys in Southern California", Outland presents some of the major concerns in dealing with runaways. Then, as now, the majority of runaways were induced to return home either by furnishing immediate transportation, by obtaining necessary funds from parents, or by placement in "transportation camps" which provided the runaway with a place where he could earn the money needed for transportation. In those cases where the runaway was not forced to return home, efforts were made more actively to integrate him into the community than perhaps is the case today. Federal efforts to intervene were also present. In 1933, the National Committee on the Care of the Transient and Homeless, in the development of a transient program, advocated the use of advisory committees formed on federal, state, and local levels. In a 1936 article entitled "Transient Service Advisory Committees in Los Angeles," Outland (1939) provides a very explicit definition of the functions to be assumed by local community agencies, which included "fact finding" about the extent of the problem and its needs, coordination of community resources, development of community resources to meet the present needs, establishment of self-help groups, and perhaps most importantly, the stimulation of public interest and involvement. Again in the 1940's, with a reactivation of the problem, many of the same concerns were expressed. Skinner and Nutt (1944) state: "For the runaways, adequate facilities for temporary care are called for, together with funds for transportation to their home communities and social services to facilitate their return home or to make such other plans for them as their needs may indicate."
intervention was again attempted when in 1943 a bill was introduced into the
Senate to authorize the use of funds which had been appropriated under provisions
of the Social Security Act for Aid to Dependent Children. This attempted to allocate
funds for the temporary housing of runaways and the return of interstate runaways
under the age of sixteen.

Efforts to deal effectively with the runaway problem have ranged from
psychotherapy to societal intervention at the federal and state level. With federal
funding comes the potential for developing broad-scale programs to deal directly
with the present national problems and to develop potential preventive measures.
However, the essential problem still remains of encouraging the cooperation of local
agencies to assume responsibility for dealing with the runaway problem on that level.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

At the present stage of development, the varied literature on runaway children
and adolescents provides little basis for firm conclusions. The apparent
heterogeneity of runaways has yet to be fully realized in conceptual or research
attempts, although efforts in that direction are beginning. There appears to be
little utility or meaning in assigning runaway behavior solely to categories of
delinquency or psychopathology. Such efforts have done little to clarify the
meaning of running away or to define the important environmental factors and
personality features involved in running away. To some extent their greatest impact
has been on the restriction of runaway samples to particular delinquent or clinical
groups. From the available literature it appears that runaways represent a
varied group which cuts across delinquent, clinical and normal groups. A singular
emphasis on any of these groups does not do justice to the multifaceted nature of the
runaway problem.

Contrary to some of the suggested characterizations of the runaway (e.g., the
diagnostic category of “runaway reaction” in DSM-II), it would appear that
running away best represents a symptom rather than a syndrome. Although the
runaway delinquent has been well-delineated as a behavioral syndrome by the
Jenkins group, the extent to which running away occurs in numerous other groups of
children and adolescents makes such a category of limited usefulness.

In spite of the wide variety of runaways who appear in the literature, there
has not been a single or consistent group to which classificatory or research efforts
have been directed. The result has been a conglomeration of relatively limited
investigations. The recent emphasis on developing typologies to distinguish among
runaways has been important, and yet these too have been relatively limited by the
particular samples under consideration. Research investigations at this point must
consider the similarities and differences among runaways from different populations.
There is almost no evidence to suggest definitive ways in which runaways from
delinquent or clinical groups or from various levels of law-enforcement agencies are
different from each other or are similar. Also relatively untouched are samples of
runaways who find shelter in various youth-service agencies, or are unreported, or
incidents which occur in “normal” children.

The research literature provides little clarification of what the running away
of an adolescent really means, particularly to the runaway himself. Most likely
running away assumes a variety of meanings from an instrumental act designed to elicit concern to a highly frustrated and reactive impulsive response. Neither do we know how prominently running away figures into a broader personality pattern and the extent to which it reflects a characteristic pattern of dealing with difficult situations, which may be more or less viable as a problem solution for particular individuals in damaging social environments.

The further specification of important behavioral and environmental variables to be investigated is necessary. There has been little indication of the specific antecedents to the runaway episode either in terms of personality dynamics or family interactions. Without such specification it is difficult to anticipate or explain the runaway incident, and the potential for preventive intervention is considerably hindered. The increasing impetus for redefinition of the runaway problem as a social problem, the emphasis on coordination of local, state, and federal programs, and the expenditure of considerable amounts of money make such information necessary if we are to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and treatment techniques.
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