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The families of seventeen runaway children seen at the Worcester Youth Guidance Center.

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THE FAMILIES OF SEVENTEEN RUNAWAY CHILDREN
SEEN AT THE WORCESTER YOUTH GUIDANCE CENTER

A thesis

Submitted by
Sarah Ann Malone
(A.B., Oberlin College, 1951)
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science in Social Service

1955
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Running away is a serious and rather common problem that up to the present time has not been much investigated. In the city of Worcester alone it has been estimated by the Police Department\(^1\) that over one-half of all juvenile offenses involve children who are absent from home without the authorization of their parents, and yet up to the present time there has been comparatively little importance attached to this symptom of social or emotional disturbance. It is hoped that some knowledge of the nature of families from which children have run away will be a help in looking at the general problem, which, with its many facets, involves the realms of law, sociology, and the treatment and behavioral sciences.

This study is an investigation of the families of seventeen runaway children seen at the Worcester Youth Guidance Center. The focus is on the nature and constellation, social situation, and interrelationships in these families, with emphasis on the relationship of

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\(^{1}\) Estimate contained in letter of November, 1954, to the Youth Guidance Center from the head of the Juvenile Police Bureau of Worcester.
these factors to the problem of running away.

**Questions To Be Answered**

In studying the families, the focus has been on various factors that on the basis of reading and study were thought to be of significance. Specifically, it is hoped that this study will provide some small answer to several questions about the families. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any common factors among the runaways themselves, in regard to age and sex, health, and intelligence and school achievement?

2. Are there common factors in regard to the nature of the agency contact, including such things as the source of referral, the parent seen, and the nature of the contact?

3. Are there common factors among the families studied, including both physical and socio-cultural factors?

4. Are there common emotional factors or patterns in the families, particularly in the parents and the runaway child?

5. Are there common factors among the families in regard to the circumstances or the attitudes toward running away?

**Methodology**

The study is based on intensive examination of the case records of the seventeen cases chosen, and on the classification and tabulation of data gathered from the records with the help of a schedule (see Appendix A).
The five general questions of the study given above, and the more specific questions employed in the schedule, were developed on the basis of the examination of literature in the field and a preliminary reading of the records themselves to determine their salient features.

The cases used were chosen from the closed files of the Worcester Youth Guidance Center on the basis of three specific criteria. The first was that running away was mentioned as a presenting complaint at the time of application, either by itself or in combination with other problems. The second was that the cases were closed between the end of 1945 and end of 1954. These nine years included the postwar period after World War II and the time of the Korean conflict; it was thought necessary to include cases from this whole period in order to obtain a sample of meaningful size. The last requirement met by the cases finally selected was that they included at least two interviews with a parent or parent substitute and one with the child.

Limitations of the Study

This study is based on the analysis of those case records found to meet the criteria indicated above. Based as it is on case records, it is limited by the records themselves, and dependent for information on the
material that was recorded originally. This difficulty would seem inevitable in any case record study, inasmuch as the focus of treatment and research varies considerably, and the records that may be most valuable for one may not be fully adequate for the other. The use of records is also somewhat limited by the subjectivity of the different workers who treated the cases and wrote the records, and by their variability; like the previous one, this limitation is inherent in the method and must be kept in mind in considering the study.

It must also be remembered that the number of cases studied and analyzed is a comparatively small one, and that any conclusions reached must of necessity be confined to this group itself. Because of the several limitations noted, it is not intended at any point in the study that generalizations be thought to extend, except as possible suggestions for future study, to any group other than the one under immediate consideration in this thesis.

The Nature of the Setting

The Worcester Youth Guidance Center is a child guidance clinic serving the city of Worcester and the surrounding towns. It is supported financially by the Department of Mental Hygiene of Massachusetts, the
Worcester Community Chest, and the fees of its clients. The Center is a community clinic, receiving applications from many segments of the community, and serving as many as it can.

During the period covered by this study, the Center offered two main types of help in the seventeen cases studied. The first, that of diagnostic study, was utilized mainly by the Worcester court as a source of possible help in deciding on the disposition of cases involving youngsters before it. The second service, that of psychotherapeutic treatment, conformed in general to that which is commonly offered by guidance centers, involving interviews with both the child and parent in an effort to help them to understand and ameliorate their problems.
CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Running away has been accorded relatively little study thus far as a significant entity or symptom in itself, and even as a subdivision under "delinquent behavior", where it has been most commonly classified, one finds that there has been infrequent study of this phenomenon. Since running away can be looked at from a variety of foci, including the sociological and environmental as well as the familial and intrapsychic, it is perhaps not surprising that several of the studies that have been made seem to attempt to find causation for the runaway behavior in one or another of the particular areas of focus of the study. We believe, however, that for our purposes it will be most productive to view running away as a symptom and one piece of an ongoing chain rather than as a complete and final act in itself, and that in any given instance one might well find possible explanations for its occurrence in many different areas of the individual's life.

Lawson Lowrey made an extensive study of runaways, and in concluding it made some general points that seem well worth noting. He stated:
In general, running away - that is, actual physical flight - seems to have fairly simple connotations. The most common mechanism seems to be that of fleeing the unpleasant, for a situation known to be or hoped to be more satisfying emotionally and socially. In particular instances the mechanisms are much more complex. In all cases, where there is opportunity for study, there should be careful investigation of the ostensible and real motivations and the personality structure as a whole, particularly the capacity to face unpleasant realities. In many instances running away seems to be a healthy mode of response to an intolerable situation. In adolescents the family drama is especially important, and embedded within it, perhaps reflected by marked deviations in personality structure in the individual, are usually to be found the major causative factors.²

This formulation made several points. Dr. Lowrey spoke of running away as "flight", and as such it connotes both running from something unpleasant and running toward something hopefully more pleasant. In another sense, one might think of flight as an attempt to reduce tension within the individual, and this would apply even to the masochistic person who runs to be punished, since punishment for him is tension reducing.

There is reference to "an intolerable situation", and this implies one in which there are pressures too great to bear. We feel that it is vital to remember that on each individual there are both external and internal pressures, and that it is when all the stresses, from both sources, exceed the strengths, both internal

². Lawson G. Lowrey, "Runaways and Nomads", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XI, 4, 1941
and external, that a situation is felt as intolerable and the individual must take action to change it and reduce the tensions produced. In every situation of running away there are probably many "causes", and while there may be one that seems to have precipitated the flight, it is important to realize that there were also many others that contributed to the emergence of this particular symptom at the particular time.

Dr. Lowrey pointed toward the importance of the family role in running away, and without elaborating on it indicated that not infrequently some of the major causative forces can be found on examination of the total family configuration. Keeping some of these points in mind, we will consider some of the other efforts that have been made to understand running away and its causation.

The role of the external environment has been rather commonly thought of in connection with delinquent behavior, and phrases like "broken homes", "slum living" and "underprivileged" are often thought of as possible explanations for such behavior. While it is true that a frequent connection between environmental influences that are generally considered to be unfavorable and apprehended delinquency does seem to exist, the relationship of environmental factors to all forms
of behavior problems has not been so well studied. Research on 400 problem children referred to a child guidance home was based on the premise that "the relative importance of specific types of exogenous factors in relation to the nature and development of trends of antisocial and asocial forms of behavior, and deviations in personality" had not been adequately studied. It was found that the majority of the cases indicated that there were a number of causative factors operative, with, in general, medical factors being outweighed by the sociopsychological ones by four to one, and the dominating medical factors being related to the psychiatric or psychoneurotic condition of family members. Economic status as a causative social factor was found to be of relative unimportance in this study, as in other studies by Silverman and Stevenson.

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In general, after examining the influence of various environmental factors, Dr. Lurie and his associates concluded that it is "the home that is the bulwark and chief resistance point in evading if possible harmful effects of vicious and unwholesome environmental factors." They concluded further that "the child who is blessed with a home in which both the social and medical conditions are normal or approximately normal can, in the great majority of cases, withstand the impacts of vicious neighborhood environmental influences. This was found to be true irrespective of the type of behavior problem presented by the child." These findings seem consistent with those of Henry and Gross who found that only one per cent of 200 youthful delinquents came from homes classifiable as nearly normal.

In line with the emphasis of these findings, there have been attempts to evaluate the role and importance

6. Lurie, op cit, 153
7. Ibid, p. 150
of the home and the family in various types of behavior problems. A strong correlation between the family and the existence and diagnosis of primary behavior disorders has been made:

We invariably find a great amount of disharmony in the patient's family background or its substitute. Hostility and rejection are the most outstanding characteristics in both parents, or in only one if only one is present.... Hostility and rejection in the parents regarding the child are found so often in cases of primary behavior disturbance that we hesitate to make the diagnosis if the history does not reveal these factors or even when their intensity seems inadequate to explain the conduct disturbance.9

In this statement the stress is not on any external environmental factors, but on the intense relationship of the family situation to the child's pathology, which represents his attempt to solve an important conflict — in this case, lack of love and outright rejection. Relating the family more specifically to running away, Dr. Riemer10 concluded that one of the basic causative factors involved in this behavior was the lack of parental love. He felt that parents who are inadequately


adjusted, mentally ill or dissatisfied are unable to give their children the love they need. He postulated the existence in every child of a need for love and a need for hostile aggression, which is originally directed toward his parents. If the need for love is thwarted the child compensates by over-satisfying his need for aggression. Running away is one means of satisfying this need, and in so doing also punishes the parents.

George J. Gardner, connected as a psychiatrist with the Boston Juvenile Court, noted that some children ran away from difficult or intolerable conditions at home, while others, who had suffered real abuse, extreme cruelty and privation, did not run away from situations that were seemingly at least equally intolerable. Gardner stressed the importance not only of the family situation, but of the child's own inner sense of reality, and of his phantasies in regard to seemingly objective factors. Before "we ascribe the act to the reality situation alone and thus content ourselves with merely changing the external focus surrounding the child"11 Gardner suggested that careful consideration be given to the internal meaning of

particular occurrences and relationships to the individual child.

This approach, of considering children's difficulties in terms not of the environment or the family but of their individual meaning, has been employed in some attempts at understanding the problem. It is basic to the conclusion of Healy and others\textsuperscript{12} that the law of pleasurable returns is at work for the small boy who runs away, with the open road promising more satisfaction than anything at home. With older runaways they feel the causative factors included "the spirit of adventure, rebellion against home conditions, dissatisfaction with school life, desire for independence, fear of discipline, etc."\textsuperscript{13}

"Adolescent rebellion", apparently normal in our culture, has been rather commonly mentioned as a possible explanation of running away during this period. It has been suggested that increased physical and psychic pressures, plus the drive for independence

\textsuperscript{12} William Healy and others. \textit{Reconstructing Behavior in Youth}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, p. 34
and adult status, may combine to bring the adolescent into direct conflict with his parents, and that he may run away in an attempt to meet these pressures and assert his independence.

The individual who chooses and manifests the symptom of running away may be found to have psychopathic traits, to be seriously depressed, to be involved in various types of neurotic conflicts, or to present a pattern of delinquent behavior. While we consider running away to be a symptom of an underlying pathology or conflict, in common with other such symptoms, it is not a specific symptom, but rather one that may represent an attempt to reduce tension produced by various types and degrees of conflicts. The occurrence of this particular symptom in no way enables one to predict the underlying pathology of the runaway.

It has been suggested that running away may be considered in terms of the existence in each case of both predisposing and precipitating factors. The predisposing factors, as suggested by the name, are those that make it likely that the individual will show this particular symptom. They may include

14. August Aichorn. Wayward Youth
factors in the environment or in the family that have
had significant influence on the individual's personality patterns, and presumably might predispose to
other symptoms as well. These factors that precipi-
tate the running away may also include a considerable
number of possible ones, including those in the
physical environment as well as the social one of
school and peer activity. In addition, there are
various ways in which the precipitating factors may lie
within the family situation itself, and in which they may
combine with the predisposing maladjustment or pathology
in the individual so that running away results.

The child may identify with the parent and choose
flight as a means of expressing this identification.
One aspect of this can be seen in those situations in
which the parent either habitually flees or has flight
wishes, and in which the child identifies actively with
this aspect of the parent's personality. Running away
may also be precipitated by the tensions produced in
the child because of the parent's acting out of his own
needs and problems with the child. This can be seen in
seductive behavior on the part of the parent, which may
result in tensions in the child so great that he has to
flee from the situation in which they arise. There
also may be a lack of control in the individual, but
this again is related to the inadequacy of controls in
the environment, particularly in the parents from whom
the child’s own inner controls are primarily derived.
Precipitation may also lie in the deprivation of love
or outright rejection of the child, so that his basic
needs for love are not met in the existing situation,
but instead are continually frustrated.

Within the individual, for these and other reasons,
tensions may be produced that he attempts to reduce by
flight from his environment. It would seem that if we
consider the important balance that which includes the
strengths and stresses in the individual and in the en-
vironment, the attempt to gain understanding of the
phenomenon of running away can be best served by the
careful examination of the various areas of an indi-
vidual’s life. Since we think of it as a psychodynamic
phenomenon in large part, however, we feel that
certainly one of the primary areas to be examined in
each case is that of the family and the interfamily
relationships. It is with these considerations in
mind that we will consider the findings of the present
study in the succeeding chapters.
CHAPTER THREE

THE RUNAWAYS, THE AGENCY CONTACT, AND THE FAMILIES

In making this study, it was felt that knowledge of the families of runaway children could best be gained by the gathering of information of two general types. The first is that which lends itself rather readily to quantitative presentation and analysis, as it is concerned with factors that can be readily isolated, and in a number of instances, are commonly recognized and measured in quantitative terms. The second type of information gathered for this study does not lend itself easily to quantification, as it is concerned with factors such as personality and relationship, that can be best evaluated in qualitative terms. The material presented in this chapter will consist of factual information on the seventeen runaway children, factors related to the contact with the Youth Guidance Center, and specific factual information on the family configurations of the children.

The Runaways

Of the seventeen cases meeting the criteria for this study, ten involved boys while seven involved girls. This would appear to be fairly typical of the
sex distribution among runaways, although with such a small sample there is no basis for any generalizing statements.

In terms of age upon referral, a spread of some eleven years was found in the cases.

**TABLE I.**

**AGE OF THE RUNAWAY CHILDREN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 - 10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 18</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The youngest runaway was seven years old, while the oldest was eighteen years old. Ninety-four percent of the cases were from eleven to eighteen years of age. In several of the cases of the present study running away had apparently begun before age ten, in some cases by three years of age, but this activity was apparently not regarded as serious enough to warrant psychiatric study at the earlier age. In addition, the conflicts and drives of adolescence, with its urge for independence, would seem to offer a further explanation for the occurrence of serious runaway behavior during the preadolescent and adolescent period.
The average age of the ten boys was thirteen years, while that of the seven girls was fifteen.

The health of the group was specified as "good" in eight cases, and not mentioned in seven. In two cases physical difficulties were reported, one involving menstrual difficulty and one a suspected concussion, which was subsequently ruled out. In one case the child had apparently been ill at a younger age but had recovered at the time of referral. In those cases where no specific mention of health or health problems was made in the case records, it seems fairly safe to assume that there was no serious problem that either the parent or the caseworker felt had importance for the child.

In regard to school attendance, all but three of the group were regularly enrolled in Worcester schools. Those three had left school after reaching the age of sixteen, at which age school attendance was no longer compulsory.
TABLE II.
COMPARISON OF ACTUAL AND EXPECTED
GRADE ACCORDING TO AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Compared to Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three grades retarded</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two grades retarded</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One grade retarded</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In expected grade (based on age six in first grade)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungraded</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not given</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the twelve in school, nine out of twelve, or three-fourths were retarded in school to some extent. Not one of the group was ahead of his expected grade and in Worcester schools children doing superior work are eligible for double promotions. In addition, of the three who had left school, one had apparently been retarded by four grades, while the other two were two grades behind. This material strongly suggests that, for whatever reasons, school difficulties and running away may have some relationship to the basic diffi-
culty of the children who use flight in an attempt to diminish or solve their problems.

Since the basic intellectual potential of a child has a direct and meaningful relationship to his possibility of intellectual achievement in school, and inasmuch as grade placement is frequently the most direct reflection of school achievement, it is interesting to consider the potential of the group of runaway children as measured by standard intelligence tests.

**TABLE III.**

**INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENTS OF THE RUNAWAY CHILDREN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intelligence Quotient</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 90</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 - 100</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 - 110</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111 - 120</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121 and over</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not given</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In almost one-third of the cases, there was no formal assessment of intelligence. The absence of information regarding such a sizeable portion of the group
throws into serious question the value of the information on the remaining portion; this may be lessened somewhat by the assumption that at the Youth Guidance Center, where psychologists are an integral part of the clinic team, the absence of psychological testing might well indicate the clinical impression of the worker on the case that inferior intelligence was not a factor of significance.

In any case, when one considers that average intelligence is commonly thought of as that which falls between 90 and 110 in the tests, it is interesting that of the twelve children on whom information was obtained, eight, or two-thirds, fall in the range of normal to superior intelligence. If test intelligence were the only factor related to school achievement, it would be reasonable to expect that this sub-group could in all cases keep up to the grade expectation, and in several cases surpass it.

This is clearly not borne out by the information on the runaways' actual grade placements, where in spite of the indication from the intelligence tests that two-thirds could at least keep up with their grades, we have seen that actually three-fourths are retarded to some degree. In addition, despite the presence of two children with superior intelligence, not
one of the runaway group was ahead of his expected grade, while one boy, with an intelligence quotient of 121 was in his expected grade but doing almost failing work.

Thus, while no definite or generalizing statement on the relationship of intelligence, school achievement and running away could be borne out by the data, there does seem to be an indication that in the group of runaway children studied, there is a failure to use the intelligence apparently possessed in an acceptable and constructive way in school.

**Summary on the Runaways**

We have seen that in terms of the runaways themselves, the sex and age distribution seem to be not inconsistent with the general expectations for them. In regard to health, there seems to be no significant negative finding, so that one can assume no unusual amount of physical difficulty handicapping the group. However, there does seem to be definite discrepancy between school potential and school achievement, so that apparently the runaway children were not, for whatever reasons, using their actual ability optimally in school.

**The Nature of the Agency Contact**

One of the criteria for the cases in this study was that running away was specified as a problem upon appli-
cation to the Center. However, it has been noted that in the majority of cases additional problems were also cited at the same time.

**TABLE IV**

**PROBLEMS NOTED UPON APPLICATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems Specified</th>
<th>Number of Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running away alone</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running away plus other problems</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School difficulties</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental inability to control</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult personality traits</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that in all cases running away was cited as a problem, and that the other problems were specified in addition to it in every case.

In the six cases in which running away was the only complaint upon application, it was subsequently indicated in two cases that there were other difficulties in the child's adjustment in the family, and in another two cases the worker felt that there were probably other difficulties that the parent needed to deny. In the other eleven cases, almost two-thirds of the total, one or more additional problems were brought
cut at intake. Stealing, a problem with serious social implications, was most frequently mentioned. The number of complaints of school difficulty was actually less than would be expected on the basis of the discrepancy between actual and expected grade placement, and the difference between the number of complaints of stealing and inability to control, on the one hand, and school difficulties, on the other, may lie more in the concern and disturbance caused the parents than in the actual rate of occurrence. It may be easier for parents to accept some school difficulty than the possibly more threatening trait of stealing and rejecting parental controls.

In regard to the parent seen at the Center, there seemed to be an overwhelming majority of mothers.

TABLE V.

PARENT SEEN AT THE CENTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Seen</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (sister, acting as mother)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This would seem to be consistent with the general cultural pattern of the responsibility for the children's development resting with the mother, and with the frequent acceptance in child guidance centers of this pattern and of working mainly or solely with the mother and child. Cases chosen at the present time would probably reflect a somewhat different pattern, since at the Youth Guidance Center there is presently more emphasis on the father's importance in the family inter-relationships and the child's development.

Five sources of referral were identified in the seventeen cases.

**TABLE VI.**

**SOURCE OF REFERRAL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referral Source</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Court or probation officer</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveler's Aid Society</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Service Organization</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In seven cases the running away or other behavior had been serious enough to involve the child with the
Court, and they were referred to the Center for a
diagnostic evaluation in order to assist in the judicial
disposition of the cases. Several parents were referred
by Traveler's Aid, which had assisted in the return of
the runaways, while others had taken their children to
medical authorities to determine whether the source of
their behavior lay in such difficulty. Others had ap-
plied to a family agency, while those in the last
category of Table VI had apparently heard of the Center
through community publicity and had come more or less
on their own. While those in the last four categories
apparently carried through on the application of their
own volition, the seven referred by the Court seemingly
had no choice in applying. However, even in this group,
the records indicated that three of the parents had
originally applied to the Court for help with their
children, and in this sense had requested help just as
much as the ten from non-authoritative sources of re-
ferral.

The number of interviews seemed to be quite con-
sistent with the referral source, specifically in terms
of the diagnostic evaluation requested in seven cases.
TABLE VII.
NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - 11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The diagnostic reports were commonly completed within five interviews, and those in which there were more interviews were either consultations, some of which extended sporadically over a period of several years, or treatment cases, in which the largest number of interviews was thirty-two.

Summary of the Agency Contact

We have seen that in almost two-thirds of the cases running away plus some other problem was specified at the time of application, that in the overwhelming majority of cases it was the mother who made the application, that referrals to the Center came from a number of sources, with the largest single group coming from the Court, and that there was a rather wide range in the number of interviews held in each case, with
apparently some relationship between the purpose of the contact (e.g., diagnostic evaluation) and the number of interviews.

The Families of the Runaways

We already know something about the individual runaways themselves; we will now consider some of the characteristics of their families. In doing this we will first consider four factors that are commonly thought to be related to socio-economic class status.

TABLE VIII.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF THE FAMILIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost three-fourths of the families indicated their affiliation as Catholics, with a much smaller group being Protestants. The "Other" family in Table VIII refers to one in which there was a mixed Catholic-Jewish marriage with no active religious affiliation. The city of Worcester is just over fifty per cent Catholic, according to its Community Council, and it
therefore seems that a disproportionate number of Catholic families was seen because of runaway behavior on the part of their children.

Racially, every one of the families was white. This was an unexpected development which it is very hard to understand, inasmuch as Worcester has a significant Negro population and one would have expected some representation of this group in the sample.

TABLE IX.

OCCUPATIONS OF THE FATHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factory worker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Navy (enlisted man)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed (pension)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not given or father not present</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest number of fathers was employed in factories, mainly in semi-skilled work but with machinists' positions in two cases. The Navy men were apparently career men, the one entrepreneur owned and operated a small factory, and of the two fathers who were not working, one received Old Age Assistance while
the other received a disability pension from World War I. In three cases the father was not in the home, while in one his occupation was not stated. It should be noted that in all cases where the actual father was not in the home and a stepfather was present, it was the information on the latter that was tabulated.

The fathers' income appeared to correlate rather well with their occupations and the ordinary expectations of earnings from them.

**TABLE X.**

**INCOME OF THE FATHERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$41 - 50/week</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$51 - 60/week</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$61 - 70/week</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $70/week</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not given or not present</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information relating to socio-economic status that could be gotten from the case records was rather sparse, and does not provide a basis for any broad or definite assertion. However, all the indications on
the basis of the occupation and income of the father, and the families' religious affiliations, point in the direction of a predominant pattern of lower and lower-middle class status. This deduction seems to be consistent with the general impression gained from a reading of the records. The one exception to the general pattern in regard to class standing appears to be that of the entrepreneur, whose occupation, income, and family aspirations and patterns as reflected in the record, were all of a definitely different nature that those of the other cases. In general, however, without being able to give more than a few indices to support the statement, we feel that all the available measures point to membership in the lower or lower-middle class on the part of the overwhelming majority of the group.

There seemed to be an almost even division between those families in which both natural parents were present and those in which one was missing.
TABLE XI.
PARENTS PRESENT IN THE HOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents Present</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both natural parents</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One natural parent, one stepparent</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One natural parent only (the mother)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the nine cases in which both natural parents were present in the home, there were four in which both parents worked, with in several instances one parent working at night; it is felt that this may have diminished the availability of the parents to the children, but it is not possible to evaluate the exact effect of it. It is also felt that the health of the parents, which we shall consider next, may also have operated to lessen the benefit that is commonly thought to derive from the presence of both parents in the home. However, it must be stated that the slight majority of cases in which both natural parents were present was felt to be of interest in view of the tendency to blame broken homes for many of our children's difficulties.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents' Health</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active complaint or serious hospitalization (one or both parents)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not given or not present</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reference to the parents' health was rarely made unless there was or had been some significant physical difficulty. Three of the cases in which there was serious difficulty included hospitalization for a psychiatric disorder, while in two others there was a complaint of "nerves" and fatigue. It would seem rather apparent that such disturbance on the part of a parent, whether it was of short duration or continuing, would have had a definite effect on the climate of the home and the availability of the parent to the child. This would also have been true of the one case in which the parent's illness was terminal, as well as that in which the parent was at the time of the application hospitalized for a long period.

In regard to the siblings of the families, several interesting findings appeared from a study of the
records. In general, there was a rather large number of children in the families.

**TABLE XIII.**

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Number of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The greatest concentration of cases was of families in which there were from three to five children; these categories included twelve of the cases. There was not one only child among the runaways, and twelve of the cases were from families in which there were four or more children. This appears to be a heavy concentration of large families in the runaway group, definitely above the cultural norm.

In relation to this, the ordinal position of the runaways in their families is also interesting.
TABLE XIV.

POSITION OF THE RUNAWAYS IN THEIR FAMILIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oldest</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle (any middle position)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all but five cases (those in which there were only two or three children) the chances of being somewhere in the middle would numerically be greater than of being the oldest or the youngest. In view of this, the number of runaways who were the oldest in their families seems particularly large. Whether the difference found in the runaway cases is significant statistically is not known, but it does appear that more of the runaways are the oldest in their families than would have been anticipated in terms of probabilities. In view of the predominance of large families, this may indicate that there were some particular pressures or lacks in the life of the oldest child in the family.

In view of the fact that the seventeen runaways had a problem of concern to their parents, society, or both, the other siblings were considered to determine
whether they also showed signs of some disturbance. The only information gained from the records was of two siblings who had been in reform or correctional school, two who were in a school for the feebleminded, and one who was born armless but who apparently made a very good adjustment to this handicap. It is questioned whether this relatively low incidence of difficulty on the part of the siblings reflects the actual situation, or whether it represents an omission by the parent or by the worker in recording.

Summary of the Runaways' Families

We have seen that in the group of runaways studied with regard to family characteristics and patterns, all were white and the majority were of Catholic religion. Where information was available on fathers' occupation and income, it seemed to lend itself to the conclusion that the families, as judged by somewhat limited criteria, would be commonly thought of as belonging to the lower or lower-middle socio-economic class.

We have also seen that slightly over half of the cases were of families in which both natural parents were present. The assumed benefits of this seemed to be mitigated against by physical or mental illness on the part of the parents to some degree. The families
seemed to have an unusually large number of children, and it was felt that an unexpectedly high number of the runaways were the oldest child in their families. While relatively few indications of difficulty on the part of other siblings were noted, it was felt that the significance of this was questionable inasmuch as the contact at the Center was focussed on the one runaway child.
CHAPTER FOUR

FAMILY PERSONALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS, AND RUNNING AWAY

In this chapter further information obtained from a study of the case records will be analyzed in an effort to understand more fully the total family situations of the runaway children. The emphasis in this chapter will be on the personality structure of the mother, father, and child, the relationship of the parents and the child, and the nature of the child's running away and the parents' attitudes toward it.

The Personality of the Family Members

Personalities Picture of the Child:

In the process of studying the records in order to understand more about the children, a series of four categories was developed that were felt to include the major characteristics of the large majority of the runaways. These categories are used for the purpose of description of the predominant personality pictures involved, and were developed after careful reading of the records; they are limited by being the result of one reader's impression of the original records, which did, however, contain specific indications of the characteristics involved. The categories are not mutually ex-
exclusive, and instead permit of some overlapping, with several
cases fitting into two or more categories.

Category One included children with characteristics that
were frequently found to fall together: the child showed
indications of being pleasant, likeable, attractive, glib,
evasive, and/or superficial.

Category Two included children with rather negativistic
qualities of personality: they were sullen, defiant, sad-
istic and aggressive.

Category Three included characteristics of a neurotic
depressive group. This group seemed to divide itself into
two separate but related ones. Category Three A included
those who were tense, fearful, anxious and withdrawn.
Category Three B included those described as being moody,
unhappy, depressed, guilty about their aggressive impulses,
and seeking punishment.

Category Four described those who were socially isolated
and had limited ability to relate. In Table XV we shall see
the distribution of the cases in terms of these characteris-
tics. (All case names have been disguised.)
TABLE XV.
DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILDREN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category One</th>
<th>Category Two</th>
<th>Category Three A</th>
<th>Category Three B</th>
<th>Category Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dow</td>
<td>Dow</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Greco</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>Greco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Kaidy</td>
<td>Kaidy</td>
<td>Klayman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Klayman</td>
<td>Klayman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Klayman</td>
<td>Lisk</td>
<td>Lisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pyle</td>
<td>Pyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>Spilley</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hastey</td>
<td>Hastey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gower</td>
<td>Daino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oppen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uncategorized: Mitchell

Those cases in Category One gave the picture of a child who is either quite shallow personality-wise or very guarded. It may be that this category included those subjects who were hard to reach in the interviews, so that what was described in the records was not so much their underlying characteristics as their predominant external defenses. It is also possible that this category included children with immature personalities, and might well describe those with psychopathic
tendencies.

Those described in Category Two displayed a highly negativistic personality pattern with a generally bitter and distrustful attitude. Children fitting into this descriptive category comprised the total group of runaways studied by Morris D. Riemer, and he stressed the diagnostic value of this category to the point of including its characteristics as an essential part of the definition of runaways. However, while in the present study we find it to be an important and numerically frequent descriptive group, those eight children who can be described by it are only one portion of the total group of runaways.

Category Three included those children whose predominant personality characteristics seemed strongly neurotic. In Three A it seemed that the tension and anxiety reflected underlying conflicts in the children, and that in Three B the depression indicated the turning of hostility against the self. Seven of the cases apparently fell in these two subgroups.

Category Four described those children who had difficulty in forming relationships. It is thought by the writer that more children in the runaway group might

\[15. \text{ Morris D. Riemer, op cit} \]
belong in this category, but it was used only when the interviewer had specified it clearly, in four cases.

The one case that was unclassified was that of a mentally defective girl who was immature, docile and inadequate.

While numerically Categories One, Two and Three are used approximately equally in describing the cases, it is felt that in terms of giving some insight into the underlying characteristics of the runaways the latter two are more valuable, inasmuch as Categories Two and Three are more suggestive of definite diagnostic categories than the others.

**Personality Picture of the Fathers:**

In studying the group of fathers the same basis and reasoning were used for the descriptive categories as in the study of the children. Where the natural father was not present, but a stepfather had taken his place, it was the stepfather who was identified in terms of personality characteristics. In the three situations in which the child was in the care of the mother alone, there was one in which the father, although divorced, was still in contact with the child and mother and was a powerful factor in their lives; his personality was therefore included in the categorization. Since in the other two situations in which the natural father was out
of the family picture little information was obtained about him, these two cases were assigned to the unclassified group, with a third in which the father was punitive and yet showed real warmth for his child.

The fathers and stepfathers whose personalities were studied seemed to fall into one of four categories.

Category One included those thought to be strict, punitive, hotheaded, moody, negative and emotionally unstable.

Category Two included those felt to be easy-going, inconsistent, indulgent yet strict at times, and giving little real discipline.

Category Three comprised those described as alcoholic, inadequate, ineffectual and weak.

Category Four included those who were seemingly affectionate and interested in the child.

Table XVI, which will give the information on the categorization of fathers according to personality characterizations, will be found on the following page.
TABLE XVI.

DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE FATHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category One</th>
<th>Category Two</th>
<th>Category Three</th>
<th>Category Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gower</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gower</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spilley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kaidy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mitchell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from the table that there is relatively little overlapping among the fathers' group, with only two who seemed to have predominant characteristics described by more than one category. One of the most outstanding findings from the categorization of fathers' personality characteristics is that the qualities described and included in the first three categories would seem to be pathological to some degree, and give the picture of either inadequate or defective personality structures. The pathological nature of the
personalities is also interesting inasmuch as Category Four, the one which describes a positive and healthy personality insofar as it seems to relate to the child, includes only two fathers, and in both cases they are actually stepfathers who entered the families relatively late. Thus, one is struck by the fact that of the fourteen fathers classified in the above categories, fully twelve seem to show personalities that are defective or inadequate, and would therefore not be expected to function particularly healthfully in relationships, including those with their children.

The three fathers who were uncategorized included two who were not a part of the family picture and one, Oppen, who was a thorough perfectionist who was frequently strict and rather punitive, and yet who had real warmth for his child.

Personality Picture of the Mothers:

The categories used were derived and are employed in the same way for this group as the two preceding.

Category One included those who seemed punitive, negative, dominating, hostile and hot-tempered.

Category Two included those who seemed inadequate, immature, emotionally unstable, irritable, rigid and limited.

Category Three included those who seemed predom-
Inantly cold, distant, emotionally flat, detached and lacking in warmth.

Category Four included those who seemed confused, disorganized, disturbed, showing severe standards, and with inappropriate affect.

**TABLE XVII.**

**DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MOTHERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category One</th>
<th>Category Two</th>
<th>Category Three</th>
<th>Category Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greco</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gower</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kaidy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kaidy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lisk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hastey</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pyle</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spilley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Klayman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>Oppen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In five of the cases it was felt that the mothers were best described by inclusion in two categories. Each of the four categories gave the picture of a mother with definite pathological features, who was either emotionally inadequate or showed signs of various per-
sonality defects. We feel that these indications of inadequacy or defect in the personalities of the mothers, and in large measure the fathers also, are of considerable importance in thinking about and understanding the personalities and problems of the runaway children. Of the three mothers who were unclassified, Oppen was matronly, intelligent and seemingly somewhat negatively identified with her child, Mitchell had been ill for years and had not functioned as the mother, and Long was of dull intelligence, with affection for her child, but complete inability to look at her role in his difficulties.

Summary of the Personalities of the Family Members

We have seen that the children seemed to be described in four main categories, and that it was felt particularly meaningful to consider the large number in the categories stressing negativistic responses and the neurotic-depressive personality. Of the four categories describing the fathers only one, containing two cases, was felt to be approximately an indication of a normal personality, with twelve of the fathers fitting into categories with strong indications of pathology. This was even more striking for the mothers, where all four categories were descriptive of some form of personality pathology. It is felt that this is of particular inter-
iest in terms of the obvious problems exhibited by their children.

The Parent-Child Relationship

The cases were analyzed in regard to the predominant characteristic of the parent-child relationship. In eight cases it was felt that there were significant indications of an unresolved Oedipal situation, with the tie between the father and daughter or mother and son having remained unusually strong; it seemed that in these situations the parent of the opposite sex had a need to derive from the relationship with the child definite libidinal gratifications that are more commonly satisfied through other relationships.

In five of the eight cases the worker specified that the behavior of the parent seemed to be of a "seductive" nature in the relationship with the child, and this was frequently coupled with a description of the parent as "immature". In two other cases the mother had slept with her son during the absence of the husband, while in another the father was described as being alternately strict and indulgent toward the runaway, his favorite child, and of following her on dates to make sure she told the truth.

In order to make more clear the type of descriptive information that was found in the eight records and which
caused them to be thought of as situations in which there were unresolved Oedipal problems, selections from several of the records will be presented.

Boy, age 13. B. is much more satisfying to mother emotionally, meaning more to her psychologically than the brother...Then, too, father's extremely strict attitude toward B. would almost seem to indicate that he had some feeling about mother's relationship with B. and that it was one other than rejection. (worker's impression)

B. suddenly commented that she (the mother) looked nice laughing with her mouth open that way...and finally kissed her with her mouth open.... Although mother is talking as though she were horrified one again gets the impression that she isn't and that her relationship with this boy in in some way a seductive one.

Girl, age 14. She finally sees quite clearly that it is in relation to her mother that she does her running away...this battle between them has been going on as long as she can remember...as early as four years of age...The mother occasionally threatened to go off and leave her and father alone together...the girl did not run to any particular place but only wished to get out of the house in which her mother was...she feared being punished by her mother....In her relationship with her father he would take her out with his men friends. (This girl subsequently had a child out of wedlock whom she named after the mother.)

Boy, age 12. J is scared to death of his father.... during his father's prolonged absences he slept with mother...she was 'a fool' around him, and told about how he put his arm around her but never around his father. His father objects to a big boy acting so foolish (and since his sister was born has almost completely neglected him). One senses extremely seductive behavior at times and a sort of use of J. in lieu of husband when husband was away....His running away might well be a flight from his Oedipal fears.

While the examples cited represent varying family situations and relationships, they all indicate an un-
usually intense relationship with the parents. Similar relationships were found in the other five cases of the group.

In all eight cases the child's relationship with the parent of the opposite sex was one in which the parent demanded a great deal of the child emotionally in ways in which the child was not actually capable of functioning adequately or comfortably, but which, despite negative features, provided enough gratifications for the child to keep him involved with the parent. Since the underlying needs that might be expected to show in seductive behavior toward the child would seem to relate to an immaturity on the part of the parent, it would seem that in the child there might be the unconscious fear that only in this sort of relationship could he find love to meet his needs.

We feel that when there is runaway behavior on the part of a child whose relationship with the parent of the opposite sex seems to be an intense and seductive one, that this behavior may represent an attempt by the child to escape from various pressures that are too great for him to handle. There are likely to be pressures within the child himself in regard to his normal desires for the development of himself as an independent individual. There may also be for the child a sense of
danger and anxiety since in the seductive relationship there is more opportunity for the expression and increased gratification of the child's own sexual wishes.

In addition to possible pressures within the child, there may be pressures also with regard to the relationship with the parent of the same sex. Particularly in the second illustration cited this strain seemed clear. We feel that both the child and the parent of the same sex may sense, albeit unconsciously, that there is a competition between them, and that for the child this would arouse considerable anxiety since in size, power and rightful position it is the parent who has the advantage. In addition to the fear of harm that the child might derive from this, there is also the fact that it is with the parent of the same sex that he must identify in the process of growing up, and it is this parent who provides the guide that is the child's most natural, and frequently most influential model in growing to maturity.

In addition to these possible pressures for the child in such a position, and the possibility of a disturbance in his relationship with his siblings, we feel that there may well be strains even in his relationship with the seductive parent, besides those relating to his wish for independence. The parent, while on the one hand encouraging the child's libidinal response, may on
the other hand become punitive if the response exceeds in degree or kind that which is acceptable to his conscious standards. At the same time that the child's erotic response is stimulated, its nature must be carefully shaped to the parent's standards of what is acceptable, and this again may produce pressures in the child.

Thus, in addition to the positive gratifications that may accrue to the child through a seductive parental relationship, there are also a number of possible sources of pressure and anxiety. These may be internal or external, but in either case may seem to the child to be so great that he cannot stay within the situation that fosters them. In the second example such a need to flee was indicated, where she "only wished to get out of the house in which her mother was...she feared being punished".

In the eight cases in which there seemed to exist a strong Oedipal situation, we feel that the running away may have been unconsciously related to the nature of the parent-child relationship itself, and represented the child's attempt to obtain relief from the strains involved in and produced by the intensity of the relationship with the parent of the opposite sex.

In considering the tenor of the parent-child rela-
tionship, another group of cases was found in which the most significant characteristic seemed to be that of rejection. In reading these six records the existence and strength of the parent rejection was striking, and was felt to be out of the ordinary by both the interviewers and the writer. While we assume some elements of rejection in all parent-child relationships, these six cases demonstrated it to an outstanding degree. To indicate the nature of the cases, excerpts from several records will be presented.

Boy, age 11. Because of C's truanting and getting into trouble with the law, Mrs. F. feels herself to be near a nervous breakdown - 'because of him'... She cried continuously and felt that there was nothing further for her or her husband to do except to have C. committed....Then I inquired about father, (she) said he was very upset and appealed to her to have C. removed from their home immediately, explaining that 'he's bad for us and bad for the other children too'...(worker) was impressed by the fact that the two younger brothers plagued C. constantly, threw all sorts of things at him, even taking knicknacks from the table and hurling them at him in the mother's presence...Meanwhile the two year old jumped up and down and said 'Goody, now we'll be all alone for Christmas, C. won't be here with us.'

Girl, age 15. (In response to a question about whether she liked M.) Mother said 'she works on me and I could take her and swing her by the hair sometimes....I wish you had to live with her - she rubs me the wrong way'. Her brothers are ashamed of her... and the other children are 'at it all the time with her.' (In regard to difficulties) with father she agreed, saying that they all 'go at her'...Mr. S. has big mood swings and favoritism toward certain of the children with rejection of M.

Girl, age 13. Mrs. B. described Mr. B. as being in-
credibly brutal to herself and to S. He would frequently beat the child so that she had welts all over. (S. and her sister were placed by the mother in a boarding school she thought was poor for two years, and for two years have lived with the maternal grandmother while mother has her own apartment.) S... was just like her father. This 'mean streak' was so 'like father, like daughter'. S. enjoyed hitting and pinching her sister...just like Mr. A.

For the rejected child the fact of his rejection poses many difficult problems. Since each family situation is in some ways unique, however, the specific nature and extent of these problems will vary, but the effects of any considerable amount of rejection on the child will be basic and significant. It is in the family, after all, that the child's basic feeling about himself, his feeling of worth or worthlessness, and his ability to form meaningful relationships with others, is first determined. Optimally, the child of normal parents who have mature love for him develops with a sense of himself as a distinct and worthwhile individual, and, having received love is able to love others in return. For the child who has experienced considerable rejection, however, this ideal development is not possible. He cannot feel himself worthwhile and lovable, for his "mirror image", that picture of himself that he sees reflected from those around him, is that of a child who is not fully loved and therefore apparently not lovable.
Rejection by the parents is likely to cause another significant response in the child, and that is of resentment and anger at their negative attitude toward him. This response would seem likely to some degree in all situations, although the way the child might handle it or express it would vary. The anger might show itself in sullen or hostile behavior, which was seen in several of the cases. In a somewhat reversed form, the child's resentment might be turned into a negative attitude toward the self, if he felt unable to express it in its direct relationship toward the parents, and in several of our cases the runaways showed signs of self-deprecation and depression. In either case, running away in order to punish the parents or get their attention might fit into the particular needs of these children.

Three of the cases seemed to fit in neither of the categories mentioned. One was that of a seventeen year old boy whose father had been a neuropsychiatric patient at a Veteran's Administration hospital several times and who wandered away from home frequently. The father could provide no strong male figure for the boy to identify with, while the mother was very protective and evidently helped the boy to avoid the demands of reality; it was questioned whether this case belonged in the
Oedipal group but this could not be substantiated by the material in the record. In the second case, that of a dull thirteen year old girl, the father had been out of the home since she was five, and the mother had been seriously ill for a number of years, with a sister taking over her role. The third situation was that of a fourteen year old boy, the son of educated middle class parents, whose father's attitude tended to be strict and punitive although at the same time with clear indications of some warmth and interest. The mother was concerned and loving, with some negative identification with the boy on the basis of his difficulty in school which she had also experienced in her own childhood. It was felt that these three cases did not fit into the classification that seemed to be rather helpful in regard to understanding the other runaways.

**Summary of the Parent-Child Relationship**

We have seen that in the seventeen cases there seemed to be two significant classifications, that describing a strong and unresolved Oedipal situation between the parents and the runaway, and that describing a situation in which the child was strongly rejected, usually by both parents. Eight of the cases fell into the former category, while six were felt by the writer
to be best described by the latter. In three cases, either because of insufficient information or basic differences, neither categorization was thought to apply.

The Nature of the Running Away and Attitudes Toward It

Material in this area was analyzed separately for the ten boys and the seven girls and then for the group as a whole. Where it was felt valuable to do so because of significant seeming differences, it will be presented separately for the sexes.

It was felt that there was a generally earlier time of the first episode of running away and a greater number of episodes in all for the boys than the girls. For the boys the range of the first episode was from as early as the child could walk to age thirteen, with five of the ten boys running away before they had reached the age of ten. For the girls the time of the first episode ranged from eleven to eighteen years, with most occurring when the girl was thirteen or fourteen. For the boys there were four cases in which the child had run away from one to five times, three cases involving six to ten episodes, one in which there were many episodes, and two in which there were "innumerable" ones. For the girls all but one of the cases involved from one to four episodes, with that one being described as "innumerable".
In the group as a whole, eight runaways gave no reason or "didn't know" why they had run away, while three cited a dislike of school, five gave reasons involving their parents, and one wanted to "see the city". Eight had been returned by the police at some time, while four boys were returned by the Traveler's Aid Society after an episode, and the other times the runaways either returned themselves or were found by their parents.

It was originally thought that it would be helpful to determine both parents' views on the runaway behavior, but in practice it was found extremely rare that any impression could be gained of the father's views. Even though there was more information gained about the mothers' attitudes, we feel that this is of limited usefulness inasmuch as it was quite sparse and there was often no real exploration by the original worker in the areas. However, of the ten cases involving boys, in seven the mother felt that the runaway behavior was related to other problems of the child, while in only three was it described as the main or only problem. This contrasts with the findings for the girls, where in five of seven cases the mothers said the running away was the main or only problem, one expressed no opinion, and only one mother felt it was part of a larger problem that the child displayed. It seemed that the mothers of
the boys for whatever reasons, saw the running away as being related to other problems, while those of the girls were much more likely to speak of it as their daughter's only problem.

Eleven of the total expressed a desire for outside control of their children, and in some instances specifically for placement outside of the home. The desire for outside control and for placement was expressed slightly more often about the boys than the girls.

Ten of the mothers "didn't know" why their children had run away, while two said the runaways were "crazy"; two blamed the spouse's behavior with the child, one thought it might have been because of her own working but did not want to stop, one thought maybe she had overworked the child, and one saw it as an indication of the child's emotional upset because of generally disturbed relationships in the family.

Summary of the Nature and Attitudes in Regard to Running Away

It was found that on the whole the boys had run away earlier and more often than the girls, and that there were very noticeable differences in regard to these things. Almost half gave no explanation for their running away, while five gave reasons involving their parents, and three cited school as the cause. Almost half
had been returned by the police, with other means of returning home being through Traveler's Aid, the parents or the runaway himself. Of the mothers, more of those of the boys related this specific behavior to other problems their children displayed. Eleven mothers expressed a wish for outside control, and over half gave no explanation of their child's behavior. It is felt that the findings in this whole area are rather sparse, and therefore of questionable value.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was directed toward several questions about the runaways and their families, and before considering the findings of the study it seems well to review the questions themselves. The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any common factors among the runaways themselves, in regard to age and sex, health, and intelligence and school achievement?

2. Are there common factors in regard to the nature of the agency contact, including such things as the source of referral, the parent seen, and the nature of the contact?

3. Are there any common factors among the families studied, including both physical and socio-cultural factors?

4. Are there any common emotional factors or patterns in the families, particularly in the parents and the runaway child?

5. Are there any common factors among the families in regard to the circumstances or the attitudes toward running away?

In regard to the runaways themselves, it was found that in the seventeen cases, ten, or fifty-nine per cent, involved boys, while seven involved girls. In the total group the youngest runaway was seven, while all others fell between the ages of eleven and eighteen years. The average age of the ten boys was thirteen years, while that
of the seven girls was fifteen years. There was no significant negative finding for the group in regard to health, so that no unusual physical handicap could be thought to exist for the group. Of the twelve for whom intelligence ratings were obtained, two-thirds were found to possess average or superior intelligence, but in school the group as a whole did poorer work than the actual intelligence ratings would have suggested. Of the twelve in school (excluding two on whom information was not given), three-fourths were retarded in school to some extent, and not one of the group was ahead of his expected grade. Thus, there did seem to be a discrepancy between school potential and school achievement, so that apparently the runaways were not, for whatever reasons, using their actual ability optimally in school.

In terms of the nature of the agency contact, we have seen that in almost two-thirds of the cases running away plus some other problem was specified at the time of application. In the overwhelming majority of cases it was the mother who made the application and was seen. Referrals to the Center came from a number of sources, with the largest single group coming from the Court. There was a rather wide range in the number of interviews held in each case, with apparently some re-
relationship between the purpose of the contact (i.e., diagnostic evaluation or treatment) and the number of interviews.

In terms of the families themselves, all were white and almost three-fourths were of the Catholic religion. Judging by somewhat limited criteria, it was felt that in general the families fitted into the lower or lower-middle socio-economic class group. In nine cases both natural parents were present in the home, but the assumed benefits of this seemed to be militated against by physical or mental illness on the part of the parents to some degree. The families seemed to have an unusually large number of children, with the largest number of families having three to five children, and twelve of the cases coming from families in which there were four or more children. Just under half of the runaways were the oldest child in their families, and in view of the generally large size of the families, it is thought that there may have been some particular lack or pressure on the oldest child in these families. Relatively few indications of difficulty on the part of other siblings was found, but it was thought that this might not be actually representative of the actual situation.

The personality of the family members was considered.
The runaways were considered individually and assigned to four descriptive categories; it was felt that two of the four categories contributed the most toward understanding of the children. These two, to which a large number of cases were assigned, stressed in one category the strong negativistic response of the runaways, and in the other elements of a predominantly neurotic-depressive personality. Of the four categories descriptive of the fathers, there was only one, containing two stepfathers, that was felt to be approximately consistent with normal personality, while twelve of the fathers fitted into categories in which there were strong indications of some kind of personality pathology. The existence of serious pathology was even more striking in the mothers, for whom all four categories were clearly descriptive of some form of personality disturbance. It is felt that the clear and overwhelming indication of serious disturbance in the parents is of particular interest in terms of the obvious problems exhibited by the seventeen runaway children.

In terms of the predominant characteristic of the parent-child relationship, it was thought striking that in eight cases there seemed to be clear indications of the existence of a powerful and unresolved Oedipal relationship between the runaway and the parent of the oppo-
site sex. It is suggested that the child may have resorted to flight in these situations in an attempt to relieve the tensions produced in him in such a situation. In six other cases the outstanding characteristic of the parent-child relationship was one of rejection of the child, usually by both parents. We feel that this would deeply affect the child's concept of himself, and also that he would be likely to develop strong resentment and hostility toward the parents, and might run away to escape from the rejecting and frustrating situation and also to punish the parents. Three of the cases fitted into neither category, and were merely described.

In terms of the nature of the running away there seemed to be definite differences between the boys and girls. It was found that in general the boys had begun running away earlier, and had run away significantly more times than the girls before being seen at the Center. Four of the boys and none of the girls were returned by the Traveler's Aid Society, and an equal number were returned by the police. No explanation for running away was given by the children in the group as a whole in almost half the cases, while school difficulties or fear of parental punishment was mentioned by more than one runaway. The mothers saw running away as being related to other problems most often with the boys, but as the only one
with the girls in most cases. In both groups there was a desire for outside control of the children, slightly more so in the boys' group. Just over half could offer no reason for the runaway behavior of their children, with this being more pronounced on the part of the mothers of boys. It was not possible to learn from the records the attitudes and opinions of the fathers in the vast majority of cases.

In considering the personality of the runaways themselves, it was found that they could be described best in several rather distinct categories. In addition to the fact that we found two main categories, the negativistic and the neurotic-depressed, we feel it is important to keep in mind that these seventeen runaways seemingly were of many different personality types, rather than of any one particular type. This would seem to fit in with our initial feeling that running away can be a symptom of various types of disturbance, and that each situation must be regarded individually. In order to gain understanding of this phenomenon, the dynamics of each situation must be thoroughly explored.

The pathology in the personalities of the parents was striking. We found that in almost all cases there was strong evidence of disturbance of various kinds in both parents. While we cannot demonstrate that this was
related causally to the difficulties of the children, we feel that there is a probability that this is so. On the basis of general knowledge about human development and relationships it seems reasonable to feel that there must be a strong connection between the personalities and problems of the parents and those of the children, and we feel that in this particular regard the idea deserves further investigation.

In view of our findings of pathology in the parents, it is not surprising that there seemed to be disturbance in the parent-child relationship in most cases. However, the existence of eight cases in which there was a strong unresolved Oedipal situation, with acting-out in a seductive fashion by the parent of the opposite sex, has not been indicated in other studies made. While the existence of parental rejection in a number of cases is not surprising, we feel that the large number in which there was a definite Oedipal disturbance is of considerable interest inasmuch as this particular problem has not previously been noted in other research or discussion.

Finally, we feel that further, more extensive and intensive, study of the families of runaway children would be of considerable interest and help in the attempt to understand this phenomenon more fully. We feel that in particular there would be value in considering the prob-
lem in terms of its psychodynamics, and that a good deal could be learned from further study of the personality and relationship patterns of the parents and children for whom running away is not only a problem but also the indication of some other underlying difficulty.

Approved 9/27/59

[Signature]
APPENDIX

SCHEDULE:

1. Name    2. Nr.    3. Age
4. Parent seen    5. Date of closing
6. Religion
8. Referred by
9. Problem

FAMILY

10. Father
    Age    Occupation    Income
    Education    Health
    Previous marriages
    At home? Why not?

11. Mother
    Age    Occupation    Income
    Education    Health
    Previous marriages
    At home? Why not?

12. Children:
    Name    Sex    Age    Education    Occupation    Health
    Difficulties

PERSONALITY

13. Brief picture of child
14. Brief picture of father
15. Brief picture of mother

RELATIONSHIPS

17. Parents' relationships
18. Parent-child:
    Father:
    Mother:
19. Children

RUNNING AWAY

20. First episode
    Frequency
    Duration
    Reason given by child
    Now returned
    Consistent patterns
21. Mother's view
   Is running away seen as separate from other problems
   Attitude toward it, including its seriousness
   Cause of running away

22. Father's view
   Is running away seen as separate from other problems
   Attitude toward it, including its seriousness
   Cause of running away
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