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The Affects of Parent Death, Long Term Illness and Divorce on Children Running Away from Home

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THE AFFECTS OF PARENT DEATH, LONG TERM ILLNESS AND DIVORCE ON CHILDREN RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME

by

Robert J. Ackerman

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April, 1980

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My deepest appreciation and heartfelt thanks to my parents who allowed me to be myself and loved me in the process.

Robert J. Ackerman
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with the actual or perceived affects of parents' inability to perform their roles due to death, institutionalization from long term illness, or divorce on youth running away from home. In the theoretical literature there is a sociological concern for runaway children, but a lack of research findings which clearly supports theoretical statements concerning the impact of parent death, institutionalization or divorce on runaway youth.

For youth, their disengagement from the family by running away has been viewed by social scientists at the National Institute of Mental Health as an act of repudiating the family as a source of support, comfort, and parent competence, as a response to a felt crisis on the part of the youth (Shellow, Schamp, Liebow and Unger, 1967). In addition, others assert that for younger members of the family, in times of crisis, the one alternative that may seem viable is running away from home (Robey, Rosenwald, Snell and Lee, 1964; Lowrey, 1941; Ziller, Hagey and Smith, 1969; English, 1973; Homer, 1973; Ambrosino, 1971; Richette, 1969).

The crucial time, from a developmental perspective, for youth to have many crises has been theorized to be during the period of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Others theorize that a loss of parent role performance may be considered a "situational crisis" for adolescents because

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1 Runaway is defined as a youth who leaves home voluntarily with the knowledge that he or she will be missed (Shellow et al, 1967).

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they lack control over the death, illness or divorce of their parents (Hoff, 1978). These two types of crises, developmental and situational, may have a synergistic effect on youth. For example, an adolescent who has a parent die may experience more difficulty during adolescence than a youth who does not experience a parent death.

The crucial period for running away from home in response to these crises has also been theorized by social scientists to be during adolescence, more specifically between the ages of 14 to 17 (Brennan et al, 1978; Shellow et al, 1967).

There is a considerable amount of conjectural literature which alludes to the absence or inability of parents to perform their parenting roles and their children's running away. Much of this literature, however, refers to running away, delinquency, and broken homes (HEW, National Statistical Survey, 1976; Gold and Riemer, 1974; Beyer, 1974; Shellow et al, 1967; Walker, 1975). This investigation focuses upon the types of absence or role inability of parents as a result of death, institutionalization for long term illness, or divorce. Does the manner by which a parent's absence occurs have any effect, or is the absence in and of itself enough? It is not known which, if any, of these three types of absence may be the strongest predictor for youth leaving their homes, or the effects of any combination of these types of role loss on running away. Furthermore, it has not been determined whether there is a difference in effects on running away in relation to whether it is the mother

2 Long term illness is defined as the hospitalization, institutionalization or similar care which removes the individual from the home for six months or longer.
or the father who lose their ability to perform all or certain of their parenting roles. In other words, will it make a difference to the youth whether the father or the mother dies, becomes ill or leaves because of divorce, and their decision to run away.

Also, does the gender of the youth effect running away as a function of the type of parent role loss? Certainly there has been considerable literature on the subjects of youth and parent divorce, illness, or death. However, this literature has not addressed the impact of each type of role loss in relation to youth leaving home.

Theoretical Background and Related Literature

The magnitude of the problem is defined as the extent or frequency of occurrence (Mavis, 1976). The following sections present data on runaway population; extent of divorce, children of divorce, long term parent illness, and parent death.

Estimates of Runaway Population

The U.S. News and World Report (Jan. 17, 1977) stated that adolescent Americans were running away in record numbers and that youth running away was reaching "epidemic proportions." However, what epidemic proportions meant was not explained in terms of the magnitude of the problem. Estimating the numbers of run away youth in America has been a difficult problem. Since the early 1920s, runaways have been studied extensively, but many of these studies have been unable to provide a reliable account of the prevalence of run away youth. Recent estimates on runaways show extreme differences in numbers (Brennan et al, 1978). This is, in part,
due to the difficulty in estimating the numbers and percentages of youth who run away.

Obviously, the fact that these estimates depend on different kinds of data -- official legal reports, child guidance clinic records, and self-reports -- accounts for this variation. The definition of runaway may also contribute to the difficulty in estimating the proportion of youth who run away. Much of this definitional problem results from incorporating specific criteria of what is believed to constitute a runaway into the definition. For example, in many cases a runaway is someone who is missing for at least twenty-four hours and is under the age of 18. Working under definitions of specific criteria limits the amount of runaways who differ from the above criteria.

Another difficulty is that the types of broad samples of subjects in the public media or professional studies vary considerably and there is little assurance that the sample estimates from legal reports, social agency reports or self reports can be generalized to the nation as a whole. Brennan (1978:17) supports this interpretation that knowledge on runaways is extremely limited because of "unsystematic and unreliable knowledge of extent, poorly defined operational definition, and lack of representative sample of population."

From official records, the Opinion Research Center (HEW, 1976) estimated that the proportion of youth in America, between the ages of 12 and 17, who run away for more than 24 hours is approximately 1.7 percent. The Office of Youth Development (HEW, 1975) also using official records, estimated that 1.9 percent of all children run away. When the Opinion Research Center, using official records, focused on households

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with youth their estimates of runaways was 3.0 percent. The National Statistical Survey of Runaway Youth (1976) offered national regional estimates of the percentages of youth who run away and suggested the following percentages: Northeast, 2.2 percent; South 2.7 percent; North-Central, 3.6 percent; and the West, 3.8 percent. Also, in this survey it was found that there was a higher incidence of runaways in cities and small towns with a lower rate in rural and suburban areas. When the researchers considered particular categories of people, it found some variations. For example, single parent households had a higher than average rate at 5.1 percent. Rates for blacks and whites were about equal with hispanics being slightly higher (4.6 percent). Finally, there was little difference in their estimates between blue collar and white collar families.

In a study by Shellow (1967) it was found that the ratio of boys to girls running away was 60-40 and that the median ages for both groups for running away were 15 and 16.

However, research which is limited to official records may indicate only a small proportion of the actual amount of runaways (Hildebrand, 1963; Shellow et al, 1967). Hildebrand (1963:28) in a study of runaway youth using police records of New York City stated "It is recognized that the information contained here is not complete since it is impossible to know how many children run away and are not reported." Central to the problem of estimating the prevalence of run away youth is how many run away and are not reported. Even if they are reported, the report may still be subjected to official criteria and not fit the category of runaway for the agency receiving the report. Parents may report their
children as missing, but they do not become officially listed as runaways until after a specified time has elapsed. A critical issue here is that what constitutes running away by the actual person running away is not considered. The act of running away is being defined by other than the person committing the act. In this manner the subjective definition of running away, i.e., what running away means to the youth, is being ignored.

Recently, there has been an effort in studying runaways to incorporate the child's perspective of running away (Walker, 1975; Brennan et al, 1978; Shellow et al, 1967; Richette, 1969; Beyer, 1974). By using the child's perspective, the problem of the specific criteria attached to the official definition of runaway, as well as relying on reporting to official agencies is alleviated. If youth are asked if they have ever run away, it is believed that a higher incidence rate will be reported than has been found by using official records. In fact, Shellow (1967) estimated from data gathered in a student questionnaire that only one out of six self-disclosed runaways are reported on official records. Walker (1975:198) believes that if the child is asked if he or she ever ran away from home that this is "subjective and global and makes use of the child's own understanding of the term runaway." He feels, as do others, that this is superior to the specific criteria approach.

As mentioned earlier, there appears to be a higher incidence of runaways from single parent households. However, there are many ways by which a single parent home can arise. Most of the studies regarding single parents and runaways come from a broken home perspective, coupled
with a deviancy or delinquent approach. Little has been developed to estimate the magnitude of runaways as a result of the various types of single parent households. This study will examine only three types of single parent households for the effects of youth leaving home. In this manner, although this study does not deal with runaways in and of themselves, (it does intend to show) that runaways even from single parent households are not a homogeneous group, but rather may be strongly influenced by the different effects of parent death, divorce, or long term illness.

By using the self report measure of running away, it is felt that the problem of runaway youth in America is more extensive than the current estimates reveal.

Estimates of the Extent of Divorce

In the United States there has been a long-term gradual increase in the divorce rates and during the 1960s this trend escalated. However, the actual rate of divorce is difficult to determine. This is because of four factors (Stark, 1975:376): 1) many marriages involve persons who are divorced, 2) separated couples are counted in the statistics as married, 3) some couples marry without getting a legal divorce, and 4) many live together as married and separate without contributing to either marriage or divorce rates.

Between the period of 1960 to 1975, many changes have occurred in the structure of the American family. In 1975, there were 71 million households in the U.S. with married couples representing 66% of these households. In 1960, 74.3% of all households were maintained by married
couples (Population Reference Bureau, 1976). During this 15 year period several other changes occurred. Single parent households increased from 10.7% to 12.2% with an increase in female headed homes. In 1960 there were 2.1 million one parent households, while the total in 1975 was 4.8 million. Of these one parent households, nine of ten were maintained by women. Also, there was an increase in nonrelative households from 1.9% to 2.3% during the same period.

The emergence of more one parent households was due to the rising levels of divorce, by 1975 divorces exceed one million for the first time in the U.S. For every 1,000 persons married there were 69 divorced persons. This compares to 35 divorced persons per 1,000 married in 1960.

For the specific time period of this study, 1966-1970, the divorce rate rose consistently. In 1966, the rate of divorce per 1,000 persons was estimated at 2.5% and by 1970 this had risen to 3.5% per 1,000 persons (HEW, Vital and Health Statistics, 1973). For those divorcing during this time, the highest rate of divorce occurred for people in their early twenties. For all divorces, the median age was 33.9 years for husbands and 30.5 years for wives. However, for those in the age categories of 35 to 45 divorce was still high with approximately 31% of males who divorced being in this category and 26% of females. This age group would have a high probability of having adolescent children.

Estimates of the Children of Divorce

From 1960 to 1969 the rate of children of divorced parents increased. In 1969 over 840,000 children under the age of 18 were involved in divorces, representing almost 12% of all children in that age group.
Children 18 years and under who were involved in a divorce represented 84% of all children in divorce cases in 1969 (HEW, 1973). The duration of marriage and the number of children involved was .6, but when the marriage lasted 10-14 years the median number rose to 2.7 children and beyond a marriage of 15 years involved 2.2 children in 1969. Although birth rates could have slowed down at this time, the number of children involved in a divorce was increasing due to the rising number of divorces. By 1970, according to the U.S. Bureau of Census, 69% of all children under the age of 18 were living with their own parents both of whom had been married only once. In addition, at this time 4% lived with both parents, but one or both had a previous marriage, 8% lived with a natural parent and a stepparent and 2% had been adopted by nonrelatives. Thus, in 1970, 83% of the 70 million children under 18 were living with two parents of one of the above combinations. By 1975, this fell to 80% of the 66 million children under 18 years of age.

**Estimate of Long Term Parent Hospitalization**

The prevalence of long term illness for parents of adolescents is hard to estimate. This study is not concerned with the effects of specific types of illnesses only the duration of the illness in that it is sufficient enough to remove a parent from the home for six months or longer. Certainly some illnesses may place more strain on the family than others, but this study does not deal with specific diseases in and of themselves. Rather it deals with the effects of loss of a parent who is unable to perform his or her roles because of illness.

By looking at various health statistics some indication of the
magnitude of illness rates in adults can be estimated. During the 1969-1970 period approximately 11.7% of the population of the United States was reported by health interviews to be limited in some fashion due to chronic disease or impairment (HEW, National Health Survey, 1973). In a HEW study (1973) males, far more than females, were involved in limitations which affected their abilities to perform major role activities. Reports showed that 4.3% of males as opposed to only 1.5% of females suffered major role activity limitations.

During 1969-1970 the leading causes of chronic conditions for those in their forties were heart problems, arthritis, back trouble, lower extremeties impairment, visual impairment, hypertension and mental and nervous conditions (HEW, 1973). From 1966-1970 the percent of the population unable to carry on their major activities due to chronic conditions averaged 2.6% (HEW, 1974). For those in their forties and married, approximately 3% of these individuals suffered limitations of major activity performance.

Another indication of role impairment due to chronic illness is the length of hospital stay by an individual. These statistics are usually recorded in increments of stays consisting of a week or more (i.e., 1-7 days, 8-14 days, etc.) with many statistics examining only up to a month's stay. Stays longer than a month are recorded by HEW as being hospitalized 31 days or more. For the period beginning in 1966, of all people admitted to a hospital only 5.1% stayed longer than a month. Adults in their 40s accounted for 5.6% of the patients staying longer than a month. Males had a higher record of staying in a hospital longer than females in 1966. For all stays of 31 days or more, 7.7%
were by males as opposed to only 3.5% for females. For those individuals who were married, slightly less than the national average of 5.1% of the population stayed more than thirty-one days. Married persons represented only 4.6% of the over 31 day stay population. Of course, in all cases the average length of hospital stay was directly related to age with a positive correlation between aging and the length of stay.

When considering race, in all cases whites had lower incidence rates for limitations of activities from chronic conditions and a lower amount of average days hospitalized than non-whites. Only 4.9% of whites who were hospitalized stayed longer than a month, but for non-whites this rose to 6.4%. This was also true when looking at whites and non-whites with a consideration for sex. Non-white males had the highest incidence of a month or more hospital stay at 11.7%.

In summary the majority of people hospitalized stay less than a month and the percentage of people who suffer limitations of their major activities is low. For all adults in the U.S. during the period of 1966-1970, ages 35-44, the average length of stay in a hospital was 8.6 days (HEW, 1976). Since the data does not account for stays and limitations beyond six months, it is difficult to calculate exact percentages of the population in these categories. It is probably, however, that for adults in their 40s less than 5.6% who were hospitalized stayed longer than six months and no more than 3% of this population who were married suffered limitations of major activities for longer than six months.

Estimates of the Death of Parents

In the U.S. during the first part of the 20th century the crude
death rate showed a downward trend (HEW, 1974). From 1954-1969 the rate was relatively stable except for 1968 with a peak death rate due to epidemics of influenza. Between the period 1960-1969 crude death rates dropped for those below 15 years of age and those above 45 years. However, there was an increase in crude death rates for those between 15-44 years of age. Most of this increase was due to an upturn in the death of men in this age bracket. The death rate for all causes in 1966 for those 35-44 years of age rose from 310.6 per 100,000 population to 322.4 in 1969. When sex was considered, males had a much higher death rate for this period than females. In 1966 for males ages 35-44 the rate was 392.3 per 100,000 rising to 410.8 by 1969. Females, however, had rates of 233.0 per 100,000 in 1966 increasing to only 238.3 by 1969.

In addition, when considering race, death rates varied. In 1966, for white males ages 35-44, the death rate was 339.5 per 100,000 rising to 348.3 by 1969. For non-white males these rates rose to 677.1 per 100,000 in 1966 and 711.4 in 1969 in the same age group. For white females in 1966 ages 35-44 the rate per 100,000 was 193.7 going to 198.9 by 1969. Non-white females in the same age range had higher rates going from 533.3 per 100,000 in 1966 to 524.4 in 1969.

In summary, death rates increased for those age 35-44 during 1966-1970. Males suffered higher death rates than females and whites had lower death rates than non-whites during the same time.

During this time the five leading causes of death were diseases of the heart, malignant neoplasms, cerebrovascular diseases, accidents, and influenza and pneumonia (HEW, 1974).
Theories on Runaways of Previous Research

Research on runaways in the United States began in earnest in the late 1920s. During the last half century this research has not created a clear picture of runaway adolescents. In fact, regarding recent efforts Brennan (1978:25) states, "It appears that over 20 years of research endeavors has netted us little in the way of consistent, reliable, or coherent information regarding the explanation of runaway behavior." Some problems when researching runaways have arisen because of an aggregate fallacy whereby researchers have treated all runaways as a homogenous group. This practice has recently been viewed as quite misleading when attempting to understand runaways (Argyle and Delin, 1965; Borgen and Weiss, 1971). Certainly there are as many differences between adolescent runaways as there are between non runaway adolescents. Also runaways are now being examined in categories of one time episodes as opposed to repeat runaways. However, through much of the literature on runaways the theme of homogeneity has been apparent regardless of the approach to understanding the phenomenon. Some deviation of the homogeneity approach occurred when runaways were studied from an historical perspective. For instance, there appears to be three distinct and unique times of runaways in the U.S. These times were during the Depression, the years of World War II, and during the 1960s particularly for certain areas of the country such as California. For those who ran away during these times other factors have contributed to the uniqueness of the runaways. During the Depression in the U.S., Outland (1938) studied 3,352 boys from the Federal Transient Service of Southern
California during 1934-35. Although 80% of the sample came from broken families, Outland concluded that those who ran away did so mainly for economic reasons.

In a study of over 8,000 runaways in juvenile courts in 1942, economic and social conditions were concluded to be the reasons for youth running away (Skinner and Nutt, 1944). However, the economic conditions were the opposite of those during the Depression. Skinner and Nutt (1944:51) stated "opportunities for work, instead of being hard to find, beckon to youth from all sides.

Certain runaways during the 1960s have been viewed from the counter-culture perspective (Keniston, 1960; Kaufman, Allen and West, 1969). That is, there is an indication in some of the literature on runaways of this time that refers to running away as repudiating middle class values and life styles (Homer, 1973). However, Homer's (1973) research indicates that the middle class idea was a myth reporting that runaways came from all socio-economic levels and backgrounds.

Aside from an historical evaluation, most literature on runaways as well as the theoretical perspectives involved can be placed in one of three categories. These are the psychopathological perspective, the "healthy" behavior perspective, and the situational response perspective.

Psychopathological Perspectives

By far the most dominant theme in past literature has focused on the psychopathology of the adolescent runaway. Under this approach the causes of running away are clearly seen as being within the runaway adolescent. Closely associated with the view of pathology has been the
idea of delinquency among runaways. Thus, much of the literature reflecting psychopathology simultaneously mentions delinquent behavior.

It will be apparent in the literature review here that many of the sample populations of runaways studied have contributed to the psychopathological model. That is, many of the early studies came from sample groups from juvenile courts, probation offices and various forms of therapeutic treatment programs (Robey et al., 1964; Levanthal, 1963, 1964; Wylie and Weinreb, 1958; Rosenheim, 1940; Weinreb and Counts, 1960).

Armstrong (1937) conducted a study of 660 boys and 122 girl runaways from the New York City juvenile court system. Her conclusion was that the average runaway was delinquent, mentally impaired, came from the lower socio-economic level and had experienced family disorganization arising from the separation of parents. In 1935, Aichorn, using a clinical population of runaways, reached approximately the same stereotyped conclusions as Armstrong.

The theme of pathology and delinquency among runaway adolescents was strong in the 1940s. Riemer (1940:211) saw runaways as "...antagonistic, surly, defiant, impulsive, assaultive, disruptive...driven by hostile aggression, a need for self esteem...and that running away indicated a severe narcissistic disorder." Also, Burt (1944:19) viewed the act of running away as "...usually the first step on the downward stair to crime--the first premonitory portent of far more desperate misdemeanors."

In an extensive study involving a clinical population of 17 boys and 11 girls at the Worcester Youth Guidance Center of Massachusetts, the researchers unanimously reached conclusions of psychopathology for
the group studied (Counts et al., 1960; Leventhal, 1963, 1964; Leventhal et al., 1957, 1958; Malone, 1955; Todd, 1959; Weinreb and Counts, 1960; Weinreb and Leventhal, 1961; Wylie and Weinreb, 1958). Of these runaways, Leventhal (1963:127) states "...in contrast with lay and even professional notions concerning the seemingly benign nature of running away, the findings here suggest severe pathology." Much of Leventhal's work was concerned with the perceived lack of control over one's life experienced by the runaway adolescent. In addition to this, he concluded that running away was predictive of future delinquency and thus was in accord with others opinions regarding reasons for runaways (Nye and Short, 1957; Riemer, 1940).

Going into the 1960s the themes of psychopathology and delinquency were still dominant in adolescent runaway research. Foster (1962) in a study of 100 runaway adolescents from the Psychiatric Clinic of the Los Angeles Probation Department found high levels of delinquency in runaway youth and also concluded that runaways suffered from high degrees of family disorganization. Hildebrand (1963) in a similar study saw running away as a "seed of future felons."

Further work during the 1960s by Shinohara and Jenkins (1967), Jenkins and Boyer (1968) and Tsubouchi and Jenkins (1969), led the American Psychiatric Association to include the category of "runaway reaction" in the publication of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (1968).

During the early 1970s in a longitudinal study from the National Survey of Youth from 1967-72, the delinquency aspects of runaways was again prevalent (Gold and Riemer, 1974). However, although the
psychopathology perspective remained, particularly psychological traits believed to be found in runaway youths, the literature continued to be dominated from clinical perspectives (Levinson and Mezei, 1970; D'Angelo, 1974; Jenkins, 1971; Beyer, 1974). Among these researchers, it was felt than runaway adolescents had low self regulation and the inability to delay gratification (Brennan, 1978). Beyer (1974) who used a self report measure of running away concluded a high degree of impulsivity in runaways as compared to their nonrunaway siblings. In addition, she felt runaways had a need for immediate satisfaction.

Central to low self esteem—believed to be in runaways, other researchers concluded that low self esteem led these youth to react more strongly to critical situations such as failure, criticism or stress in general (Ziller, Hagey and Smith, 1969). Weiss (1973) saw runaways as suffering isolation and friendlessness. His position was that runaways were unable to establish peer relationships and became socially isolated which resulted in loneliness. Others have commented on loneliness and the runaway which they felt led to a variety of coping mechanisms one of which was to escape (Weiss, 1973; Ford and Zorn, 1975; Brennan, 1976).

In summary, the psychopathological model of runaway adolescents has been a dominant theme in runaway literature and research. The causes of running away are believed to be within the individual and also this model reflects a belief in a high relationship between running away and delinquent behavior. (The vast majority of studies under this model came from juvenile court systems and adolescent clinical populations.)
Running Away As Normal Behavior

In contrast to the themes of psychopathology and delinquency in runaway youths is the idea that runaways are not pathological or delinquent, but rather are engaging in normal and healthy behavior. Another difference between the healthy behavior approach and the psychopathological view is the method of sampling for the studies conducted. Many of the healthy behavior studies have worked with runaways who were identified by self-disclosure. That is, most of the runaways studied were not from legal or clinical channels of identification.

Several themes are present under the healthy behavior perspective on runaway adolescents. One of these themes is that of rebellious youth. Central to this idea are the runaways of the 1960s and 1970s. As mentioned earlier, some of the runaways of the 1960s were viewed as rebelling against middle class societal values. The idea of a youthful counterculture identified by the press and media plus the writings of Keniston (1960) are applicable to this view. Kaufman, Allen and West (1969) see part of the rebellion of runaways as the rejection of materialism and the idea of "doing one's own thing." To express these opinions these researchers feel that many youth see running away as a means of their showing rejection of and an acceptance of a new life style. Thus, under these ideas the "social meaning" of running away comes into consideration (Ambrosino, 1971).

Ambrosino in her research feels that each generation of runaways has its

3Normal behavior as used here is seen as a typical or appropriate response without any connotation of the behavior of the person being pathological.
own meaning of running away. Brennan (1978) feels that Holden Caulfield in *Catcher in the Rye* is representative of the runaway adolescent who questions and rejects middle class living and values.

However, the idea of rebellious runaways was short lived. The work of Homer (1973) and Chapman (1975) showed that youth of this time who were running away were not of the homogenous group of middle class parents, but came from all levels of the socio-economic strata.

Another theme prevalent in the healthy behavior approach to understanding runaways is the theme of escaping boredom through fun and adventure. In studies by Wattenberg (1956) and Tsunts (1966) the majority of runaways studied had adventure as the primary motivation for running away. Shellow (1967:1) agreed with this and stated "...the idea that life can be better elsewhere—in another city, another job, another relationship, another family,—is a prevalent one, especially in a highly mobile society such as ours." The idea of escaping boredom, finding freedom, and pleasure seeking and adventure are central to the works of Kaufman, Allen and West (1969), Levy (1972) and Ambrosino (1971).

The theme of loneliness also comes into consideration for runaways escaping boredom (Bock and English, 1973; Blum, 1974; Chapman, 1975; Ambrosino, 1971). Several authors see loneliness as particularly powerful in the adolescent's decision to run away (Weiss, 1973; Buhler, 1969; Brennan, 1976). Buhler (1969) feels that the desire for fun and adventure for the runaway may be coming from a condition of boredom and loneliness.

For other researchers who accept a healthy behavior perspective of runaways, another underlying theme is that running away is seen as a
"normal" developmental process for adolescents. Central to the normal developmental approach are the issues of adolescents attempting to establish independence and a sense of identity. Paull (1956) saw running away by youth as being associated with a "sense of selfhood and independence." Other researchers supporting and adapting this theme have been Goldmier and Dean (1973), Kaufman, Allen and West (1969) and Chapman (1975).

In summary, there are studies on runaway adolescents, particularly those of the 1960s and 1970s, that view running away as a healthy form of behavior by youth. This perspective emphasizes three themes. One, that youth who run away do so out of rebellion against middle class living values. Two, that running away is motivated by a desire for adventure with underlying issues of boredom and loneliness. Three, that running away is part of the normal developmental process of adolescence in the runaway's desire to exercise independence and to establish a sense of identity.

Running Away As a Situational Response

By the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s "the search for an explanation of run away behavior moved away from rebellious and political interpretations toward the more fundamental and social structural forces which were impelling young persons to leave their homes" (Brennan, 1978: 25). Throughout the literature on runaways, regardless of the theoretical perspective, researchers have mentioned running away as a response to a situational crisis for the person running away. The most common of the situational crises mentioned in the literature for runaway youth has been

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that of family disorganization. This theme, although remaining constant in the literature, has also remained in an adjunct position to whatever was believed to be the primary cause of running away, such as within the individual in the psychopathological perspective. However, under the situational response perspective, the act of running away is seen as a sensible move or alternative to a stressful situation (Brennan, 1978). Many runaways are thus responding to stress or conflict in the family.

As early as 1941, Lowrey (1941:34) saw running away as having a "fairly simple connotation" for most children, and "in many instances, running away seems to be a healthy mode of response to an intolerable situation." Most of the consideration for family disorganization in runaway cases has been offered in the 1960s and 1970s. In a study by Robey, Rosenwald, Snell and Lee (1964) of 42 runaway girls over a 10 year period from the Juvenile Court Clinic of Framingham, Massachusetts, Robey (1964:763) stated that "Running away, far from being a childish escapade, is almost always indicative of some severe individual or family pathology and may result from a wide variety of intolerable home situations." Foster's study (1962:109) of 100 boys and girls concluded that part of the reason for running away by youth came "from the impact of parental separation or other interfamilial conflict."

In a study of suburban runaways of the 1960s it was found that "...structural and socioeconomic characteristics of the family are probably only indirectly associated with a child's decision to run away and that conflict in the family, which may or may not be a reflection of these factors, should have a more direct bearing on runaway behavior" (Shellow, 1967:17).
Carrying this study further it was found that the child's perception of family conflict was not always in agreement with the parent's perspective. In fact, Shellow (1967:18) found that in only one of three runaway cases was there an agreement between the child's perspective and the parent's perspective that a family conflict existed. In keeping with conflict in the family, Shellow also found that teenagers who ran away had more conflict with parents than nonrunaway teenagers. Others have also found more frequent and serious family conflicts in families of runaways (Blood and D'Angelo, 1974; D'Angelo, 1974). In fact, D'Angelo (1974) suggests that running away by adolescents is symptomatic of the escalating incidence of family breakdown in America.

Richette (1969) sees strong evidence to indict the family in runaway cases. She conducted studies of what she calls "push-outs, throwaways, and runaways." It is her contention that many youth leave for "self-rescue" and that leaving draws attention to the family situation. Similar to this is the work of Hardy and Cull (1974) who see flight behavior in terms of the stresses of coping with adversity. Bock and English (1973) view running away as based on the level of insight into the family problems that a youth may have and that a high level of self understanding leads youth to realize the need to escape for their own benefit. Others agree with this perspective and see destructive environments as major reasons for youth running away (Homer, 1973; Ambrosino, 1971).

Summary

The theoretical and research literature on runaway youth in America
falls, more or less, into three broad theoretical categories. These are the "psychopathological," the "normal behavior," and the "situational crises" perspectives. The predominant theme in the literature has emphasized the psychopathological model, but recently (1960s-1970s) the other two perspectives have had more consideration. The "normal behavior" and "situational crises" tend not to focus on deficiencies within runaway youth as the primary cause of their running away. The perspectives of "situational crises" and "normal behavior" stress the relevance of others in the family.

Theoretical Principles Guiding This Study

The theoretical literature as will be discussed below, supports the following hypotheses: When a child perceives that his or her parent is unable to perform completely the role of parent (because of death, illness or divorce) this produces a crisis situation for the child. Such a crisis among children ages 12 through 17 tends to increase the probability that they will run away from home. Furthermore, there is a cumulative or interactive effect which magnifies the crisis situation for children experiencing two or more of the trauma situations such as parent death, divorce or long term illness.

At this time the literature is insufficient for offering theoretically based researchable hypotheses for the testing about the relative magnitude of influence on running away from home, with or without the experience of a parent's death, divorce or long term illness.

The two primary theories used in this study are systems theory and role theory. These two perspectives are used to assess the phenomenon
of youth running away based on the assumptions that runaways are responding to situational crises. Their behavior is seen from this perspective as not psychopathological, but rather is viewed as a normal response to an undesirable circumstance.

Besides systems theory and role theory various other theoretical considerations are utilized. These include some developmental theories of adolescence and situational and crises theories. Thus when a parent loses or is perceived to loose his or her ability to perform his or her role then it is considered that this creates a strain on the other family members. This loss of parent role may affect the normal family system so that the system becomes dysfunctional, not only for the maintenance of the system, but for the individual family members. It is considered that if a youth of a family feels that his or her position in the family has become dysfunctional for his or her survival or growth that he or she may respond by choosing to leave home.

The Relevance of Crisis Stages of Development Theories

Many theorists have stated that the period of adolescence is an especially difficult developmental stage. The concept of adolescence as a particularly stressful period was first raised by G. Stanly Hall at the turn of the century. He considered the changes of adolescence as catastrophic and upsetting. Since his work several others have shared his view. Stone and Church (1957:369) saw adolescence as "a vulnerable period involving painful adolescent problems and the reawakening of past developmental issues only partially resolved." This is in accord with many other theorists who also view adolescence as a period of stress and
great physiological change (Nixon, 1966; Jersild, 1963; Friedenberg, 1959; Bandura, 1964; Gustin, 1961; Havighurst, 1953; Rogers, 1972; Allport, 1961; Maslow, 1970; Erikson, 1959; 1963; 1968). These theorists assert even though crises occur during adolescence, such crises should be viewed as normal development.

Psychologists such as Allport, Maslow and Erikson played a large role in the development of what is sometimes referred to as "normal" crises theory. Much of their work was concerned with the development and growth that an individual would experience in life. Central to their ideas was that human development was made up of stages through which individuals passed. At each of these stages it was felt that a person was subjected to unique stresses that he or she must resolve. How well these stresses were handled would lay the foundation for the next developmental stage of life. The successful completion of each stage required not only individual effort, but also nurturance from others. Thus, "with appropriate support, a person normally is able to meet the challenge of growth from one stage of life to meet the challenge of growth from one stage of life to another" (Hoff, 1978:11). If, however, an individual does not receive the needed emotional support it is theorized that a developmental stage can become sufficiently difficult such that the individual may attempt to change his social circumstances.

Under "normal" circumstances Maslow and others saw those in developmental crises as being 1) basically normal, 2) capable of helping themselves, and 3) capable of further growth with a little help from friends, family and neighbors (Hoff, 1978:8). When these conditions of development come under added stress what may be a normal adjustment period can become
excessively painful and trying for an individual.

Reasons for this range from the tremendous amount of physiological changes in adolescence, mastery of new tasks, the establishing of identity, and lack of emotional support from family. However, although adolescence can be viewed as a period of time containing stress the impact on each adolescent is different. Rogers states, "adolescence may indeed have distinctive features, but much of its significance depends on the way specific individuals experience it" (Rogers, 1969:155). Thus, according to Rogers, the experiences during adolescence play vital roles in how well an individual grows emotionally during this time of his or her life.

Obviously, many of the experiences of adolescence come from interaction with other family members. These experiences may have positive as well as negative effects on their emotional development. Some adolescents may not be able to adapt within the family to the loss of a parent due to death, long term illness or divorce and as a result they may choose to run away.

Situational Crisis Perspective

If adolescence can be viewed as a stage of normal stress then what are the effects of having the additional unexpected stress of loosing a parent due to death, illness or divorce? It is theorized that the combination of the typical developmental stresses of adolescence plus the added stresses from the crises like the loss of a parent in the family may have a synergistic effect significant enough to cause many youth to leave home.
Restated, "a situational crisis is one that occurs as a result of some unanticipated traumatic event that is usually beyond one's control" (Hoff, 1978:12). Certainly the loss of a parent due to death, divorce or long term illness could constitute a serious situational crisis for some adolescents. Implied is that how an individual responds to the crisis situations of perceived parent loss is very important. Similar to the developmental perspective much depends on each individual and his or her personal and social resources in the family at the time of occurrence. Hoff (1978) feels that the stage of one's development is critical to one's perceptual reactions. As previously stated, it has been theorized that adolescence is a particularly vulnerable time for individuals. A situational crisis, considered in terms of an emphasis on perception, is dependent on 1) the highly subjective nature of the crisis experience, 2) the various factors which influence the development of a crisis state, and 3) the intrinsic relationship between developmental and situational crisis states.

W. I. and Dorothy Thomas (1928) were particularly interested in the effects of certain situations on the development of American children. Others have also utilized a situational approach to understand individual development as well as family crisis (Hill, Rueben, Boulding, 1949; Bossard and Boll, 1943; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1927). Of particular importance for this study, is the Thomas approach, especially the concept of the "definition of the situation" which is defined as being "preliminary to any self-determined act of behavior. There is always a stage of examination and deliberation which we may call the definition of the situation" (Thomas, 1928). From Thomas's point of view a person's
behavior is not only determined by the actual situation but also by how he or she perceives the situation. This is especially critical when considered in conjunction with Hoff's ideas that a situational crisis may not become an active crisis for all, but only for those who perceive it as such. Their perception by adolescents of the social situation of death, divorce, or long term parent illness may contribute significantly to their decisions to run away from the family. Shellow's study (1967:18) of runaways is illustrative of how a situation within the same family can be perceived differently. He found that when runaways were interviewed that most (eighty percent) alluded to conflict within their families. However, he found when he interviewed the runaway's parents that only one-third felt that a family conflict existed. Other sociologists have had similar views to Thomas' in that they were concerned with the subjective meaning of a social situation (Weber, Znaniecki, MacIver).

Caplan (1964) contends that a crisis becomes an active crisis when
1) internal strength and social support are lacking, 2) the person's problem remains unresolved, and 3) tension and anxiety rise to an unbearable degree. Several studies of the affects of death, divorce or long term illness point out that extreme stress is one result for many adolescents.

During the past ten years research has indicated that long term parent illness has an impact on not only the parent, but also on the entire family (Christopherson, 1968; Anthony, 1969; Power, 1978). Power (1978:72) feels that the chronic illness of a parent leads to three forms of negative reactions for adolescents. First, resentment arises because of the anger over having the parent taken away. Second,
increased hypochondrial symptoms occur as young people react with greater sensitivity to their own bodies as a result of the overall family concern with health. Third, for many adolescents, flight or escape is preferable where the deteriorating bodily functions of a parent are too painful for them to endure.

Children of divorce situations are seen as having many similar problems such as anger, resentment, depression, guilt and loneliness. In addition, Green (1978:33) sees children of divorce suffering the above as well as decrease in school performance, changes in relationships, self image lowered as well as loss of sense of self identity, dwelling on fallacious thinking regarding the divorce and self and changes in their behavior.

Kubler-Ross (1969) has done extensive work on death in our society. She describes stages that the dying experience. However, she also tells of the effects on the family of having a member die. These effects are characterized be denial, anger, depression and acceptance. For youth the crisis of parental death may raise these feelings as well as others. How the adolescents perceive the death and responds to his or her perceptions will greatly influence the resolution of the situation. Many will not be able to satisfactorily resolve the crisis and will take flight.

What happens to a person in a situational crisis? Hoff (1978) feels that basically three things can occur: 1) the person can return to his or her pre-crisis state by way of effective problem solving from internal strength and social support, 2) the person may not only return to the pre-crisis state but can grow from the crisis experience through discovery of new resources and ways of resolving problems, and 3) the person reduces
intolerable tension by engaging in alternative behavior marked by depression from withdrawal and suspicion. For some adolescents this third alternative may involve reducing the intolerable situation by leaving home.

Adolescent Perceptions of Parent Role Loss

**Systems Theory and Parent Role Loss**

Wegscheider (1978) compares the family to a system analogous to a mobile. Just as a mobile is made up of many parts and maintains a balance, so is the family system composed of various members or roles helping to maintain the functions of the family and at the same time equilibrium. As the mobile responds to changing circumstances such as wind so too must the family shift to maintain itself when one of its members is shifted from a particular role. In times of stress shifts by family members may be necessary to maintain the family as a unit.

The use of systems theory in sociology is not new. Forerunners of systems theory prior to sociological application includes such scholars as Pepper, Henderson, Cannon and Von Bertalanffy. It was the early work of Von Bertalanffy, however, which gave much impetus to systems theory. Beginning his career as a scientist Von Bertalanffy was strongly influenced by biological theories and his later philosophical interests. He made it clear in his writings of the unity between the different sciences and felt that systems theory could be applicable to all sciences. Lilienfeld (1978:198) in agreement with Von Bertalanffy states, "general system theory, will be a discipline that develops, tests, and demonstrates laws that apply equally to a variety of fields."
In sociology systems theory has been widely utilized. Notable for their work in systems theory are Parsons, Merton, Buckley, Homans who were heavily influenced by such earlier sociologists as Mead, Weber, Marx, Small, Cooley, Becker, Thomas, Znanieki and Pareto.

Talcott Parsons (1970) views social systems as "constituents of the more general system of action, the other primary constituents being cultural systems, personality systems, and behavioral organisms, ...the distinctions among the four subsystems of action are functions. We draw them in terms of the four primary functions which we impute to all systems of action, namely pattern-maintenance, integration, goal attainment, and adaptation." Parson's and Shils (1951:107) define system as follows: "...the most general and fundamental property of a system is the interdependence of parts or variables. Interdependence consists in the existence of determinate relationships among the parts or variables as contrasted with randomness of variability. In other words, interdependence is order in the relationship among the components which enter into a system." To keep the social order Parsons was concerned with the boundary of a system which was maintained by a harmonious set of norms and values and mutually supporting expectations.

Homan's (1950) work in systems theory strongly emphasizes the notion of equilibrium derived from Pareto. Homan's sees systems as consistently defined in terms of reciprocal interrelationships of all of its parts. At times he feels that systems are in a state of balance or equilibrium, but not necessarily all the time. For most system theorists the concept of balance or equilibrium within the system is critical. In some respects Homan is in disagreement with the criticalness of equilibrium, although he
still offers an equilibrium model.

Lilienfeld (1978) feels that among general system theorists Walter Buckley is the most outspoken. Buckley (1967) is critical of many early writers of systems theory, but feels overall that its contribution for sociology is imminent. He feels that general systems theory is the "next" logical step for sociological thinking based on previous developments. Buckley offers six reasons why a modern systems approach is applicable to sociology:

1. A common vocabulary unifying the several "behavioral" disciplines.
2. A technique for treating large complex organizations.
3. A synthetic approach where piecemeal analysis is not possible due to the intricate interrelationships of parts that cannot be treated out of context of the whole.
4. A viewpoint that gets at the heart of sociology because it sees the socio-cultural system in terms of information and communication nets.
5. The study of relations rather than "entities," with an emphasis on process and transition probabilities as the basis of a flexible structure with many degrees of freedom.
6. An operationally definable, objective nonanthropomorphic study of purposiveness goal-seeking system behavior, symbolic cognitive processes, consciousness and self-awareness, and socio-cultural emergence and dynamics in general (Buckley, 1967:39).

Although the above systems theorists have all received criticisms
for their work, particularly from each other, their concepts are widely employed in sociology. This is especially true in the study of the family.

Using a structure-functional approach to study the family McIntyre (1966:55) mentions the importance of a systems approach for understanding family dynamics. She mentions three areas of this approach for family study: 1) the functions of the family for society, 2) the functions of the subsystems within a family for society and the function of the subsystem within a family for the family or for each other, and 3) the function of the family for individual family members, including the development of personality. Within this framework the family is seen from both a macro and micro viewpoint. That is, the family is viewed as part of the overall system of society making it a subsystem of society. At the same time, the family is viewed as a system in itself, with sub-systems of relationships.

The family is faced with maintaining its position within society while at the same time maintaining itself as a discernable system. The work of Bell and Vogel (1960) is most applicable to these external and internal system responsibilities. They view a social system as an aggregate of persons, or for some purposes, of roles. Thus the family is seen as a social system within itself as well as maintaining relationships with other systems. They view the family system as interacting externally with the economy, polity, community, and the existing societal value system. The internal family system is seen geared toward task performance, family leadership, integration and solidarity, and the family value system. These internal functions and the external functions
are believed to be interrelated in the families' role of personality development.

Bell and Vogel raise the issue of the relationship between the system and personality by stating, "if a social system is to operate successfully, the members must have - to a considerable extent - similar orientations to the group and activities within it, to themselves, and to each other member. They must also have motivational commitments sufficient to maintain the system and to meet its functional requirements.

On the other side of the coin, it has been suggested that personality develops not entirely, but to a considerable extent, within the matrix of the family system and is maintained by the family. From their perspective, personality can be conceived as a system of activities, orientations, motivations, etc., which has some internal cohesion as well as a tendency to have and maintain boundaries" (Bell and Vogel, 1960:29).

Of vital importance for this study is the systems perspective that although the adolescent has not lost his or her ability to perform his or her roles, he or she is affected by a perception of parental role loss. Under a systems perspective, a change in the role of one member of the family will have affects on everyone. Although the individual members may shift their positions or roles within the family system, the system still remains. One question concerns the consequence for individual members under the conditions of these changes.

A new or adaptive system may be seen as dysfunctional, not for the maintenance of the family, but for the growth of its individual members. Dysfunction is defined by McIntyre (1966) as the negative consequences of
an activity for a given system. If youth, who experience parental death, divorce or long term illness perceive the role loss as changing the family system to an unbearable situation, they may consider this dys-functional for themselves and decide to leave the system for self rescue or survival.

Parenthetically this is not to assume that from a systems perspective that a family without a crisis is not undergoing change or is static, but rather that additional or situational stress may cause crisis for the individual members.

Role Theory and the Perception of Parent Role Loss

How the system becomes affected at the individual and interrelationship levels can better be illustrated through the use of role theory.

Despite the issue of whether role theory exists as a true theory, it is applicable for this study by lending a better understanding to the system perspective of a family by allowing for an examination of the various roles that contribute to the system. Biddle and Thomas (1966:14) have stated that it is unfortunate that the label "theory" has been applied to role theory since there is speculation, hypotheses and theorizing about the various aspects of role, but no single theory. They state, "that which is regarded as role theory... appears in essentially three forms: 1) as single hypotheses, 2) as sets of logically unrelated hypotheses on the same topic, and 3) as sets of logically, as well as topically, related hypotheses.

Within sociology there are two traditions of role theory. One, the structural tradition from the works of Linton (1945) and the other, the
social-psychological branch owing its origin to the work of Mead (1934). These approaches share many similarities, but also have some differences.

The structural approach of role theory developed by Linton has been applied extensively by sociologists (Parsons, 1951; Parsons and Bales, 1955; Merton, 1957; Goode, 1964; Homans, 1950; and others). Of particular interest to the structural role theorists are the content, organization (structure) and functions of social statuses and roles (Heiss, 1968: 23).

To assess the impact of roles in this structural perspective would be to discuss the interrelationships among the various parts of a system, i.e. how does role A fit in with role B? Heiss (1968) states that one should also look at the relations between the roles of a system and external forces. An example of a pertinent question from this perspective would be: What are the affects on a family if the father or mother dies? Also, important to the structural role analysis would be to assess how a role contributes to the maintenance of a system or how a particular role helps in the achievement of the goals of a system in terms of problem solving or pattern maintenance. In addition, from this structural perspective one could look at the latent and manifest functions of particular roles. Upon a structural role analysis one might discover that a role is dysfunctional to the system. This may be the case for parent death, divorce or long term illness.

A review of structural role theory literature produces the following propositions which are relevant to this study:

1. Groups do not survive unless their role systems fulfill certain essential functions (goal achievement, pattern...
maintenance, adaptation, integration).

2. Within a system the roles tend toward integration; therefore there is a tendency for certain combinations to be found.

3. Changes in one part of the system lead to changes in other parts.

4. As systems develop there is a trend toward role-differentiation.

The above propositions imply that the use of structural role theory integrates with a systems perspective. In fact, Hill and Hansen (1960) view structural role theory operating on the micro levels of analysis as opposed to the macro levels of systems theory. For the family the use of structural role theory allows for examining the specific roles of each member. When one of these roles becomes impaired or absent, a manifest function, then it is possible to assess the latent functions of the loss by examining the roles of the remaining members.

Of particular interest is: What happens to the roles of adolescents in a family where the parent looses his or her ability to fulfill his or her role? Some theorists have stated that many youth run away from home because of role strain (Cloward and Ohlin, 1969; Elliott and Voss, 1974). Brennan (1978) feels that the erosion of family bonds through certain stresses in parent-child relationships lead some youth to run away. This is similar to Hoff's idea about the resolution of a situational crisis where people are not able to recover or grow from the crisis, but seek an alternative solution (such as running away from home).

Of importance to this study are the children's perceptions of parents
as filling parent roles in the family system. This leads to all kinds of questions such as: Which parent, the mother or father, if lost would be most likely to cause runaway? Based on American socialization patterns of sex roles, Zelditch distinguishes between the instrumental role of a father and the expressive role of a mother (Zelditch, 1955). In agreement with this W. Goode (1964:71) states:

"the parallel between jobs and the major role obligations of father and mother within the family is clear. The mother begins with the nurturance of the child, establishing a close physical and psychological bond because of the gratifications both give one another. Her social relational tasks are expressive, emotional, or integrative. She is to console, to nurse, to bring together those who have quarreled. The father is the instrumental leader, organizing family labor ... because of this division of social labor, a family that has weak or ineffectual mother, or a cold unyielding father, is less likely to fail in its socializing tasks than one in which there is either a cold, unyielding mother or a weak, ineffectual father."

Although parent roles are changing in the U.S.A. and elsewhere, it is still probably that the death or long term illness of a mother will be more dysfunctional for a family than in the case of the loss of a father because of the loss of the mother's expressive role. This should be true though economic considerations could also be relevant. However, Shellow (1967) found that family income was not significantly related to children running away. Parental death, divorce or long term illness can cause family disorganization which is defined by W. Goode (1961:370) as "the breakup of a family unit, the dissolution or fracture of a structure of social roles when one or more members fail to perform adequately their role objectives." In the case of death or divorce Goode feels that the remaining members can be faced with one or all of the following:

1. The cessation of sexual satisfaction.
2. The loss of friendship, love, or security.
3. The loss of an adult role model for children to follow.
4. The increase in the domestic workload for the remaining spouse, especially in the handling of children.
5. The increase in economic problems, especially if the husband has died or left home.
6. A redistribution of household tasks and responsibilities.

In regards to long term illness Parsons (1975) describes what happens to those in the "sick role." He states that those who are sick have two rights and two duties. The rights are that the sick individual is not responsible for the condition and is exempt from "normal" social roles. The duties are to get well and to seek help and cooperate. This exemption from the normal role is not only considered by the individual who is sick, but also by those in relationships with the sick person. Thus, although the sick parent is still a member of the family system he or she may not be able, or is excused, from contributing. This requires others to fulfill the role or to adapt to the loss.

Another consideration is the manner by which the perceived loss of a parent occurs. Virginia Satir (1972:170) states that the manner by which the one-parent family is created can be just as powerful on children as the fact that it happened. In any type of perceived parent loss the affects of labeling the remaining children or the entire restructured family can be detrimental. In this sense, although divorce rates are rising in our society it is being increasingly accepted. However, it is probable that the children of divorce may feel more stigmatized than children of a parent who dies or becomes ill. This added stress may
contribute to more runaways from divorced homes than from the other two types of perceived parent role loss.

Cumulative Effect of Parent Losses

Just as developmental crises and a situational crisis can have a synergistic effect so too can multiple situational crises. Adolescents who experience a combination of death, divorce or long term parent illness may perceive a cumulative effect. It is theorized that this cumulative effect will be greater than for adolescents who experience only a single episode of parent role loss. Youth who experience two as opposed to only one type of role loss will be confronted with more strain and in turn may be more likely to leave home than youth suffering only one type of parent role loss.

Also, certain combinations of the types of role loss may result in more youth leaving home. For example, youth who experience the death of both parents may perceive this as the most stressful form of parent loss and may run away in greater numbers. The combination of all three types of parent role loss is theorized to be more stressful for adolescents than any two or one type of parent role loss.

Study Objectives

Derived Research Hypotheses4

Based upon the above general hypothetical statements the following

4These hypotheses are derived from the use of systems theory and role theory guiding this study.
derived research hypotheses are tested with data acquired by the National Health Examination Survey, Cycle III, from a national sample of 6,768 youth ages 12 through 17:

HR 1:

The death, divorce, or long term illness of a parent between the youth's ages of 12 and 17 will be associated with a higher probability of the youth running away from home, than when death, divorce, or long term illness are not present.

HR 2:

The divorce of parents will be associated with a higher probability of the youth running away between the ages of 12 and 17 than when death, divorce, or long term illness are not present.

HR 3:

The long term illness of a parent between the youth's ages of 12 and 17 will be associated with a higher probability of the child running away than when death, divorce, or long term illness are not present.

HR 4:

The presence of any combination of two of the conditions of death, divorce, or long term illness will have a greater probability associated with it of a youth running away than will be the case when only one of these crisis conditions is present.
HR 5:

The presence of the three conditions of death, divorce, or long term illness will have associated with it a greater probability of a child running away than the occurrence of any two in combination.

(It is not certain at this time whether there will be sufficient subjects in the study with all three conditions present to test this hypothesis.)

Exploratory Questions

This study will contribute to the body of developing descriptive statistical information on runaways. It will also help to provide a base for theoretical development about the relative influence of certain family crisis situations by attempting to answer the following questions:

Q 1:
What proportion of youth in the United States run away between the ages of 12 through 17 and at each age level?

Q 2:
What are the particular probabilities of running away associated singularly and in combination of death, divorce, or long term illness of a parent?

Q 3:
To what extent will the probability of running away be related to which parent has died or suffered long term illness?

Q 4:
To what extent will the probability of running away be
related to the sex of the parent in those families with a single parent?

Q 5:

Of the three types of family crises under study which if any will have the highest incidence of running away for youth?
CHAPTER 2

METHODS

The description of the methods used in this study will include the methodology utilized in the gathering of the data by the National Center for Health Statistics (HEW) as well as the analysis of these data for this particular study.

Sample and Population

The source of the data came from the National Health Survey by the National Center for Health Statistics for American youths age 12 through 17 during the years of 1966-1970. These subjects, as well as the time period, were the second phase of the data collection known as Cycle III by the collecting agency (HEW) for the particular youth studied. During the previous cycle, Cycle II, the youth studied were between the ages of 6 through 11 years and the period was 1963-1965.

Youth involved in this study were part of a national health examination program which began in March 1966 and ended in December 1970. The focus of the examination was on areas relating to the growth and development of youth. The examination was conducted by physicians, dental examiners, and social scientists. In addition, supplemental information was gathered by way of parent and student interviews as well as information from school records.

The Sample

The sample design used by the National Center of Health Statistics
was a multistage, stratified probability sample of clusters of households within land-based segments (HEW, 1969). All eligible youth within the defined population had a known and equal chance for selection into the sample. The steps for drawing the sample were arranged jointly by the Health Examination Survey and the Bureau of Census. Using the 1960 census the United States was divided into 1,900 primary sampling units. Each primary sampling unit was a standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA), a county, or a group of two or three adjoining counties. All of these primary sampling units were put into 40 different groups with the average size for each group approximately 4.5 million people. By using a modified Goodman-Kish controlled selection technique, one primary sampling unit was drawn from each of these 40 groups. (See Table 2.1 for areas.)

Within the selected primary sampling units the selection was carried out in several phases. Phase one consisted of selecting census enumeration districts which were small, well-defined housing units (250 each) from the 1960s population census which had been used to divide the country. From this "each enumeration district was assigned a measure of size equal to the round whole number resulting from a division by nine of the number of children, aged 5-9, in the enumeration district at the time of the 1960 census. A sample of 20 enumeration districts in the sample primary sampling unit was selected....with each enumeration district having a probability of selection proportional to the population of children 5-9 years at the time of the 1960 census data. From each enumeration district a random selection of one measure of size (segment) was taken" (Vital and Health Statistics, 1969:10). At every sampling
Table 2.1
Cycle III Schedule of Stand Operations, HES, 1966-70

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stand Number</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date of Field Operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Charleston, South Carolina</td>
<td>March-April 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ashtabula, Ohio</td>
<td>April-May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Poughkeepsie, New York</td>
<td>May-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Portland, Maine</td>
<td>June-July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Boston, Massachusetts</td>
<td>July-August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>August-September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ottumwa, Iowa</td>
<td>September-October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Denver, Colorado</td>
<td>October-November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lamar, Colorado</td>
<td>November-December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Los Angeles, California</td>
<td>December-January-February 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Los Angeles, California</td>
<td>January-February-March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>San Francisco, California</td>
<td>February-March-April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mariposa, California</td>
<td>March-April-May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Moses Lake, Washington</td>
<td>April-May-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Minneapolis, Minnesota</td>
<td>May-June-July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Neillsville, Wisconsin</td>
<td>June-July-August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>New York, New York</td>
<td>August-September-October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>New York, New York</td>
<td>September-October-November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Baltimore, Maryland</td>
<td>November-December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sarasota, Florida</td>
<td>January-February 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Atlanta, Georgia</td>
<td>February-March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stand Number</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date of Field Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Birmingham, Alabama</td>
<td>March-April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Barbourville, Kentucky</td>
<td>April-May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Cleveland, Ohio</td>
<td>May-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Chicago, Illinois</td>
<td>June-July-August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Grand Rapids, Michigan</td>
<td>August-September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Des Moines, Iowa</td>
<td>September-October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Wichita, Kansas</td>
<td>October-November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Marked Tree, Arkansas</td>
<td>November-December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>San Benito, Texas</td>
<td>January-February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Houston, Texas</td>
<td>January-February-March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Detroit, Michigan</td>
<td>April-May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Port Huron, Michigan</td>
<td>April-May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Beattyville and West Liberty, Kentucky</td>
<td>May-June-July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Allentown, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>July-August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Manchester and Bristol, Connecticut</td>
<td>August-September-October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Newark, New Jersey</td>
<td>September-October-November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Jersey City, New Jersey</td>
<td>October-November-December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Georgetown, Delaware</td>
<td>January-February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Columbia, South Carolina</td>
<td>February-March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Stand locations are cities or towns in which trailers were located. Sample areas from which examinees are drawn for the stand consisted of the PSU's which may have included several counties. Reprinted from Health and Vital Statistics, 1969:10.
location approximately 200 youth were to be examined. They were selected from a master list of all eligible youth. This master list was a listing of "all eligible youths in order by segment, serial (household order within segment), and column number (order in the household by age). After the subsampling rate had been determined, every nth name on the list was deleted, starting with the yth name, y being a number between 1 and n selected randomly" (Vital and Health Statistics, 1969:10).

Besides the sampling used for selection within the various examinations themselves further sampling was utilized in the conduct of the exams. Thirty-five different physicians, five dentists, 12 technicians and 12 psychologists administered the examinations.

In the Cycle III National Health Survey approximately 7500 youth were randomly chosen for examination at the forty locations selected. Of these subjects 6,768 were actually examined. These subjects in the national sample make up the sample for this study.

Population

The target population for Cycle III by the National Health Survey were youth between the ages 12 through 17. Besides the age specification other criteria for the population were (HEW, 1969):

1. Be between the ages of 12 and 17 years inclusive, regardless of whether they were attending school.
2. Married youths of eligible age are to be considered.
3. Not confined to an institution.
4. Be a resident of the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii).

Data Gathering and Instrumentation

Data for the youth population of the National Health Survey was gathered in two categories. These areas were primary physical and psychological examinations and supplemental data from the youth themselves, their parents and school records.

Administration of Instruments

Using teams of medical personnel and psychologists, tests were conducted on each youth for physical aspects of their development (see Appendix IF). These data were gathered at each of the forty selected sites in the United States. At each site those youth chosen for examination were conducted through six examining phases (see Table 2.2). These phases consisted of a physical exam, dental exam, psychological test, and vision and audio exams.

Of particular importance to this study was the collection of supplemental data to the physical exams. These supplemental data were collected by the National Health Survey for the following reasons (Vital and Health Statistics, 1969:28):

1. To provide a demographic frame against which the examination findings may be viewed.
2. To assist the physician in his examination of the youth by alerting him to certain conditions necessitating further
Table 2.2
Health Examination Survey – Cycle III

Examinee Flow Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>A. M.</th>
<th>P. M.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I¹</td>
<td>II¹</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o hour</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st hour Psychology</td>
<td>Physician and Nurse</td>
<td>Dental and Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st hour Psychology</td>
<td>Dental and Vision</td>
<td>Physician and Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-1</td>
<td>T-2</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-2</td>
<td>T-1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd hour</td>
<td>Physician and Nurse</td>
<td>Dental and Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd hour</td>
<td>Dental and Vision</td>
<td>Physician and Nurse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹I and II will be boys.
²Temps., change clothes (except I and II who change clothes after the psychological tests).

NOTE: T-1 = treadmill, body measurements and grips, X-ray, height-weight.
T-2 = audio, spirometer, ECG and phonocardiogram, secretor specimen.
special examinations or to limitations requiring special handling in one or several of the procedures in the overall examination.

3. To facilitate subsequent survey operations. (An example of this is information on grade and school of the youth.)

4. To relate health history, achievement, behavior, and other questionnaire data to specific findings of the examination.

5. To verify such information as date of birth or grade placement obtained from another source.

These data were collected by using household questionnaires by a census interviewer and youth medical questionnaires completed by parents and separate questionnaires completed by the youth themselves. Also utilized were health behavior questionnaires completed by the youth, a marital history questionnaire given to parents by the household interviewing team and a school record questionnaire completed by the youth's teacher or other school officials who knew the subject.

The supplemental data were gathered by various methods. The household questionnaire was administered by a member of the Bureau of Census in an interview situation. This questionnaire was concerned with the gathering of demographic data. The Medical History of Youth questionnaire was completed by the parent or guardian of the subject youth for the purpose of gathering information of health history. A Health Habits and History questionnaire was completed by the youth at home for purposes of gathering information felt to be best known by the youth. A Health Behavior questionnaire was completed by the youth at the examination center and parallels many of the questions asked of parents or guardians.
School information was gathered for purposes of assessing the youths' accomplishments as well as their aspirations (for questionnaire see Vital and Health Statistics, 1969:10). These supplemental data provided the variables used in this study.

**Coding of Instruments**

The instrumentation for these variables were coded in the following manner by the National Health Survey:

**Variable:**

**Sex**

1 - Male  
2 - Female  

**Race**

1 - White  
2 - Black  
3 - Other  

**Age**

12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  

**Parental Relationship to Youth of Parents**

1 - Father and Mother  
2 - Father without Mother  
3 - Mother without Father  
4 - Both Foster Parents  
5 - All other  

**Total Family Income (Annual)**

1 - under $500  
2 - 500-999  
3 - 1000-1999  
4 - 2000-2999
5 - 3000-3999
6 - 4000-4999
7 - 5000-6999
8 - 7000-9999
9 - 10,000-14,999
10 - 15,000 plus
11 - don't know
12 - blank or refusal

Marital Status
1 - married more than once
2 - married only once
3 - married, number of times unknown
4 - divorced
5 - widowed
6 - separated
7 - never married
8 - blank

Has anyone in family been unable to work or carry on his usual duties for more than a six month period because of ill health? If yes, who?
0 - no episodes
1 - mother
2 - father
3 - brother
4 - sister
5 - grandmother
6 - grandfather
7 - other adult (relationship unknown)
8 - blank

Has any relative died while living in your household? If yes, who?
0 - no episodes
1 - mother
2 - father
3 - brother
4 - sister
5 - grandmother
6 - grandfather
7 - other adult
8 - blank

Number of times run away from home
1 - once
2 - more than once
3 - never
4 - blank

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Analyses

Using the eleven variables selected and the 6,768 youths in the study, three types of analyses were used. These were t tests, contingency table analysis, and cross tabulations. It is felt that these procedures were best suited for the data and at the same time would provide an understandable analysis.

Fundamental to the type of analysis used is the level of measurement of the data. For the variables for this study, they are used as nominal data. The variables in the study fit the criterion of nominal..."as long as the categories are exhaustive (include all cases) and non-overlapping or mutually exclusive (no case in more than one category), we have the minimal conditions necessary for the application of statistical procedures. The term nominal scale has been used to refer to this simplest level of measurement" (Blalock, 1972:16).

The use of contingency tables was used to analyze the data because of the need for frequency distribution of cases on two or more variables. As stated by Nie..."the display of the distribution of cases by their position on two or more variables is the chief component of contingency table analysis and is indeed the most commonly used analytical method in the social science" (Nie, Hall, Jenkins, Steinbrenner and Bert, 1975: 218). In addition, by using cross tabulation analysis statistical tests of significance could be incorporated into the contingency tables. In this manner t tests were used on all cross tabulations and incorporated into the contingency tables. In this way a measure of association in the cross tabulation tables of possible relationships could be portrayed.

The measures of association used were t tests, which indicate how
strongly two variables are associated with each other. It indicates to what extent characteristics of one sort and characteristics of another sort occur together (Nie et al, 1978:222).

Cross tabulation was also utilized because of the two logical extensions of a basic table which involved the addition of two variables as controls and the addition of categories within the variables (Nie, 1975:220). Thus the category of runaways was cross tabulated with other variables and simultaneously contained a test of significance where applicable for each table. Cross tabulation was also used to assess for the occurrence and effects of any cumulative role losses from parent death, divorce or long term illness and running away.

There were several reasons for using t test in this study. One type of t test is the independent sample where cases are classified into two groups and a test of proportions of difference is performed for specified variables. In this study the two primary groups are runaways and non-runaways. In addition, as stated earlier, the purpose of this study does not look at the specific type or reasons for parent role loss, but rather, this initial study is concerned with the presence or lack of parents due to one or more of three conditions and whether or not youth run away. This is some rationale for using the t test. As stated by Nie (1975:267)"... in many investigations the researcher is primarily interested in discovering and evaluating differences between effects, rather than in effects themselves." Also a t test can be used for large or small samples. Since this study has a large sample size, a t test is applicable if a normal distribution of the sample is probable.

Because of the random sampling procedures used by the National Health
Survey in getting the sample it is fairly well estimated that a normal distribution occurred in that populational data is presumed to distribute normally. As stated, "...as the number of observations increases, the sampling distribution of the t statistic changes from a leptokurtic distribution to the normal distribution. With an infinitely large sample size, the distribution of the t statistic becomes the normal curve. As a practical matter, as the sample size becomes larger than 30, the sampling distribution of the t statistic is close enough to the normal curve so that almost no error is introduced by using the normal curve for the decision to reject or not reject the null hypothesis" (Kolstoe, 1969: 198,199).

Control Variables

Control variables selected for this study are sex, race and family income of the runaway. These control variables are chosen based upon previous studies and literature on runaways.

Sex

The question of concern is: Are there substantial or significant differences in the proportion of adolescent males and females who run away from home? As can be seen in Table 2.3, 8.4% of females run away from home as compared to 9.7% of adolescent males. This puts females slightly lower than the sample norm of runaways of 9.1% and males slightly above the norm. This difference between males and females is relatively small, and therefore, sex is eliminated as a further control variable.
Table 2.3

Proportion of Adolescents Who Run Away
By Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females (N=3223)</th>
<th>Males (N=3545)</th>
<th>Total Sample (N=6768)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Runaways</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Race

The concern with race as a control variable is whether or not there is a difference between the proportions of white and black adolescents who run away. As indicated in Table 2.4, more white adolescents, 10.0%, run away than black adolescents, 8.1%. Both white and black adolescents run away.

Table 2.4

Proportions of Adolescents Who Run Away
By Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White (N=5735)</th>
<th>Black (N=999)</th>
<th>Total Sample (N=6768)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Runaways</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Other races are not examined because there are only 34 youth who are not white or black in the study.
are only .9 of a percent away from the total sample norm of runaways of 9.1%. Because of the relatively small difference between the proportions of white and black adolescents who run away the control variable of race is eliminated from the study.

Family Income

Are there any differences among lower, middle and upper income youth in the proportions who run away? Family income is divided into three groups based upon the level of yearly earnings. Salary ranges during 1966-70 were used. Those in the low income group contained families with an annual family income of less than $5,000. The middle income group contained family incomes from $5,000 to $10,000. The high income group had a family income of more than $10,000 per year.

Table 2.5
Proportion of Adolescents Who Run Away
By Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low ($)5,000</th>
<th>Middle ($5,000-$10,000)</th>
<th>High ($10,000)</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>2640</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>6768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runaways</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 2.5 there are differences between income groups of the proportion of adolescents who run away from home. The proportion of youth from the low income families who run away is 7.9% as compared to 9.3% for the middle income families. The proportion of run away youth
from high income families is 11.0%. These findings indicate not only a significant range in proportions of youth who run away as family income increases. For these reasons family income is retained as a control variable.
CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS

This chapter is organized into two main sections. The first includes findings relevant to the exploratory questions. The second includes findings regarding the major hypotheses.

Findings of Exploratory Questions

This study also attempted to answer the following questions:

Q 1: What are the proportions of youth ages 12 through 17 in the United States who run away from their families?

As shown in this study, the proportion of self-reported runaways in the United States, ages 12 through 17, is 9.1% (see Table 2.3).

Q 2: What are the particular probabilities of running away associated singularly and in combination of death, divorce or long term illness of a parent?

As indicated in Table 3.1, the probabilities of the death of a parent and youth who run away is 8.4%. The proportion of youth who run away and experienced parent divorce was 13.3% and the proportion of runaways whose parent suffered a long term illness was 9.7%. As seen in Table 3.2, combination affects were not possible to examine because of the few occurrences of the combined crisis of death, divorce or long term illness of a parent.

Q 3: To what extent will the probability of running away be related to which parent has died or suffered long term illness?
Table 3.1

Proportion of Adolescents Who Experience Parent Death, Divorce or Long Term Illness and Run Away

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Number (N)</th>
<th>Runaways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Death</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Divorce</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Illness</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 3.2, in both the conditions of parent death and long term illness a higher proportion of youth ran away if the mother died or became ill, than if the father died or became ill. In both cases the subjects who experienced the role loss of a mother were more likely to run away than the subjects who experienced the role loss of a father. It was found that the probability of running away by youth was associated more with the role loss of the mother than the role loss of the

Table 3.2

Proportion of Adolescents Who Experience Parent Death or Long Term Illness and Run Away by the Sex of the Parent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Male (Father)</th>
<th>Female (Mother)</th>
<th>Runaways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Death</td>
<td>N=183</td>
<td>N=73</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Illness</td>
<td>N=355</td>
<td>N=125</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Runaways |
8.4%     |
13.3%    |
9.7%     |
father for conditions of death or long term illness of a parent.

Q 4: To what extent will the probability of running away be related to the sex of the parent in those families with a single parent?

As seen in Table 3.3, there is little difference between youth of a single parent mother or a single parent father who run away. Of significant difference in Table 3.3, is the proportion of youth who run away when both parents are unable to fulfill their roles. For youth living with guardians only the proportion who ran away was 15.0% as opposed to youth living with both parents who ran away at only 8.8%.

Q 5: Of the three types of family crises under study which, if any, will have the highest incidence of running away by youth?

As indicated in Table 3.1, the highest incidence of youth running away is associated with parent divorce. Of the youth whose parents divorced 13.3% ran away from home. Parent illness and running away by

Table 3.3

Proportion of Adolescents Who Run Away By the Presence of Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presence of Parents</th>
<th>Runaways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother &amp; Father</td>
<td>N=5237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Only</td>
<td>N=157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Only</td>
<td>N=1127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardians</td>
<td>N=247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sample</td>
<td>N=6768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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youth was second highest at 9.7%. Parent death was the lowest proportion of youth running away at 8.4%.

The loss of both parent roles had the highest proportion of youth who ran away from home at 15.0%.

Findings of the Major Hypotheses

HR 1: The death of a parent between the youth's ages of 12 and 17 will be associated with a higher probability of the youth running away from home, than when death, divorce or long term illness are not present.

As indicated in Table 3.4, the proportion of youth who experience the death of a parent and run away (8.4%) is lower than the proportion of youth who do not experience the death, divorce or long term illness of a parent. Also, the proportion of runaways who experience a parent death is lower than the total sample norm of runaways (9.1%).

Table 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Death</th>
<th>No Death, Divorce or Illness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=256</td>
<td>N=5033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Runaways</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not in predicted direction, HR 1: rejected.
To test the hypothesis further, the control variable of family income is introduced. As seen in Table 3.5, there are differences among the income groups for youth who have a parent die and who run away. In the low income group the overall proportion of runaways is 6.4% as compared to 12.1% in the middle income group. The high income group has 8.3% of the proportion of youth who run away. Of the three income groups only the middle income group has a higher proportion of youth who run away and have a parent die than youth who do not have a parent die, become ill or divorce. The hypothesis cannot be accepted that the death of a parent between the youth's ages of 12 and 17 will be associated with a higher probability of the youth running away from home than when death, divorce or long term illness are not present. If anything, the death of a parent indicates a lower probability of a youth leaving home.

HR 2: The divorce of parents will be associated with a higher probability of the youth running away between the ages of 12 and 17 than when death, divorce or long term illness of a parent are not present.

The findings in Table 3.6, indicate that 13.3% of youth whose parents divorce run away. This 13.3% is higher than the 9.3% of youth who run away but do not have parents who divorce, become seriously ill or die. This 13.3% is a higher proportion of runaways than the total sample norm of runaways which is 9.1%.

The hypothesis is further tested by using the control variable of family income. As can be seen in Table 3.7, when income is considered the overall proportions of youth who run away is 10.8% in the low income
Table 3.5

Proportion of Adolescents Who Run Away Who Have a Parent Die Controlling for Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Number (N)</th>
<th>Proportion of Runaways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low ($5,000)</td>
<td>1749</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Death, Divorce</td>
<td>5033</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle ($5,000-$10,000)</td>
<td>2626</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Death, Divorce</td>
<td>5033</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High ($10,000)</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Death, Divorce</td>
<td>5033</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In two out of three tests, data opposite to direction hypothesized; hence, HR 1: rejected.

Group, 18.2% in the middle income group, and 15.2% in the higher income categories. Although not a consistent increase, youth who have parents who divorce are much more likely to run away if they come from middle and high income groups than from low income groups. Based on the overall increase and the increase in all three groups of having divorced parents and running away from home the hypothesis is accepted that the divorce of parents will be associated with a higher probability of youth running away than when divorce, death or parent long term illness are not present.

HR 3: The long term illness of a parent between the youth's ages of 12 through 17 will be associated with a higher probability of the youth running away than when death,
### Table 3.6

Proportion of Adolescents Who Run Away Who Have Parents Divorce
And the Proportion Who Run Away Who Do Not Have Parents Divorce, Become Ill or Die

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Divorce, Death or Illness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>N=564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Runaways</td>
<td>13.3% (sig)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=5033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig = Significant beyond .05 level (± test for difference in proportions)
HR 2: accepted.

### Table 3.7

Proportions of Adolescents Who Run Away Who Have Parents Divorce
Controlling for Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proportion of Runaways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low ($5,000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Divorce, Death or Illness</td>
<td>N=1749 10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=5033 9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle ($5,000-$10,000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Divorce, Death or Illness</td>
<td>N=2625 18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=5033 9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High ($10,000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Divorce, Death or Illness</td>
<td>N=1924 15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=5033 9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance for two out of three categories at the .05 level (± test for difference in proportions). HR 2: accepted.
divorce or long term illness are not present.

As seen in Table 3.8, the proportion of youth who experience a parent with a long term illness and run away is 9.7%. This proportion is higher than for youth who do not experience parent illness, death or divorce. It is also higher than the total sample norm of runaways (9.1%) but not significant. Therefore, family income as a control variable is used to further test the hypothesis.

As can be seen in Table 3.9, the proportion of youth in the low income family group who experience parent illness and run away is 9.9%, in the middle group 11.1%, and in the high income group 9.1%. Only two of the three income groups have higher proportions of youth who run away and experience an ill parent than the proportion of youth who run away and have not experienced an ill parent, death or divorce.

Because of the findings of family illness and running away when controlling for income a further control variable is introduced to see if sex of the parent who becomes ill will make a difference. As can be seen in Table 3.10, the illness of a mother has a higher proportion of youth running away than youth who run away when the father is ill.

Under the testing, the hypothesis is rejected that illness of a parent will be associated with a higher probability of youth running away than if illness, death or divorce of a parent are not present. However, when the control variable of sex of the parent is introduced there is some support for accepting the hypothesis when considering the effects of the mother's illness on youth running away.

HR 4: The presence of any combination of two of the conditions

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Table 3.8

Proportion of Adolescents Who Run Away Who Have a Parent Become Ill and the Proportion Who Run Away Who Do Not Have An Ill Parent, or the Death or the Divorce of Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illness</th>
<th>N=480</th>
<th>No Illness, Death or Divorce</th>
<th>N=5033</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Runaways</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NS = Not significant at the .05 level (+ test for difference in proportion).

Table 3.9

Proportions of Adolescents Who Run Away Who Experience Parent Illness Controlling By Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>N=1749</th>
<th>Proportion of Runaways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low ($5,000)</td>
<td>N=5033</td>
<td>9.9% (Sig)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Illness, Death or Divorce</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle ($5,000-$10,000)</td>
<td>N=2625</td>
<td>11.1% (Sig)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Illness, Death or Divorce</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High ($10,000)</td>
<td>N=1924</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Illness, Death or Divorce</td>
<td>N=5033</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig = Significant beyond .05 level (+ test for difference in proportions).
Table 3.10

Proportion of Adolescents Who Experience Parent Long Term Illness and Run Away By Sex of the Parent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Illness, Death or Divorce</th>
<th>Mother N=125</th>
<th>Father N=355</th>
<th>Divorce N=5033</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Runaways</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance for mother at the .05 level. (t test for difference in proportions). HR 3: accepted only in the case of illness of the mother.

...of death, divorce or long term illness will have a greater probability associated with it of a youth running away than will be the case when only one of these crisis conditions is present.

As can be seen in Table 3.11, there were only three subjects who had experienced both the death and divorce of their parent. Hence, it was impossible to test Hypothesis 4 regarding the cumulative effects of having parents who died and were divorced.

However, the data reported in Table 3.11 indicates that there were thirty-two subjects out of 6,768 who experienced parents who were institutionalized for long term illness and had one or more parents who died. Of these thirty-two subjects none ran away from home.

There were 52 subjects who had both a parent institutionalized for long term illness and who were divorced. Of these 52 subjects, 17.3%
ran away from home. As indicated in Table 3.11, divorce already had a probability of 13.3% for youth running away and the addition of illness increased the proportion of youth running away by 4%.

In summary, the hypothesis for the cumulative effects of parent death and divorce is not testable due to the few cases. The cumulative effects of parent death and long term illness produced no runaways and the hypothesis is rejected. In the case of illness and divorce the hypothesis is accepted. In only one out of 3 cases (cumulative) is the hypothesis true.

Summary of Findings

It was found in this study that the proportion of self reported runaways is higher than the proportion of runaways reported from official record data. Of these self reported runaways, many experienced the loss or the perceived loss of a parent role because of divorce, death or long term illness. In this study, it was found that the loss of a parent by divorce resulted in a significantly higher proportion of youth who had run away than the proportion of runaways in the total sample.

The death of a parent did not increase the probability of youth running away. In fact, slightly less ran away when a parent died (8.4%) than did those of the total sample (9.1%). The proportion of runaways who experienced the long term illness of a parent (9.7%) was just slightly higher and not significantly higher than the sample norm of 9.1%. In the cases of parent illness and death it was found that the runaway was more likely when the mother became ill or died than if the father became ill.
or died. And finally, it was found that youth living with guardians had the highest proportion of runaways of any group studied (15.0%).

Table 3.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combinations</th>
<th>Proportion Who Run Away</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Death and Divorce</td>
<td>N=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Death and Illness</td>
<td>N=32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Illness and Divorce</td>
<td>N=52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Death and Illness and Divorce</td>
<td>N=0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parent Death and Divorce HR 4: not testable.
Parent Death and Illness HR 4: rejected.
Parent Illness and Divorce HR 4: accepted.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first includes a discussion of how the findings of this study support, contradict or add to the theoretical and descriptive conclusions of prior work. The second section suggests implications from findings in this study for the construction of theory, new research that is needed and programming to remedy the problem of large numbers of young people running away from home.

Relationships of Findings To Previous Studies

The Prevalence of Runaways

The proportion of youth who reported that they had run away from their home at least once, was found to be 9.1%. This is a much higher percentage than the 2 or 3% reported in studies of official records data. However, Hildebrand (1963) and Shellow (1967) both felt that by using self reported measures of runaways a higher proportion of runaways would be found than had been previously reported from official records data. In fact, Shellow (1967) estimated that only 1 out of 6 runaways are reported. If the data of this study are correct only 1 out of 3 runaways are reported. This is in accord with the National Statistical Survey of Runaway Youth (1976) which estimated the proportion of runaways as being about 3%.

The lower estimates of previous studies of the proportion of runaway youth were largely dependent upon data from official records and clinical
populations. Clearly then, a problem of previous estimates of runaway youth is a failure to incorporate the child's perspective. By using a youth questionnaire this study closely parallels the recent ideas of several researchers for examining runaway youth (Walker, Brennan, Shellow, Richette, Beyer). In this manner the method of self reporting for measuring the prevalence of runaways is in accord with Walker (1975: 198) who believes that if the child is asked whether he or she ever ran away that the subjective meaning of running away for the child can be better understood.

The Sex of the Runaway

Up until the 1960s most studies of youth who run away dealt primarily with males or they included in their samples only a few females. However, Shellow (1967) found with 1963 data that the ratio of male to female adolescent runaways was 3 to 2. This study using data from 1966-70 found only a small difference between adolescent males and females who run away from home; the ratio being 1.15 to 1.

The Racial Identities of Runaways

This study found little difference in the percentage of white and black youth who run away from home. This lack of difference is in agreement with a recent finding of the National Statistical Survey of Runaway Youth (1976) that reported the rates for white and black youth who run away as being about the same.

However, the proportions of white and black youth who run away is higher in this study than is the case in the National Statistical Survey.

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of Runaway Youth. Their estimate was only that 3.0% both of white and black youth run away. The findings of this study are that 10.0% of white youth run away and 8.2% of black youth run away.

Family Income Level of Runaways

Homer (1973) found that runaways come from all socio-economic levels and backgrounds. The National Statistical Survey of Runaway Youth (1976) also found little difference in the proportion of youth who run away from home from blue collar and white collar families. Similarly, Shellow (1967) found no differences among runaways from lower, middle or upper income families.

In a much earlier study than the ones above, Armstrong (1932) concluded that the average runaway, among other things, came from the lower socio-economic level. The findings of this study support the conclusion that runaways come from all income levels, but that as family income increases the proportion of runaway youth also increases.

Previous Theories on Runaways

In past research on runaways the predominant theoretical perspective was a psychopathological model of runaways. This study is not directly relevant to the psychopathological model for two reasons. One, individual runaways were not studied for psychological or personality characteristics. Two, the model theorized for this study was more aligned with the situational response perspective.

Throughout most of the previous research on runaways it was often theorized that runaways may be responding to a crisis as a partial reason
for leaving. A family crisis, however, was rarely considered as a primary reason for youth running away from home until just recently. Even when the situational perspective was considered, the major type of situational crisis was classified as "family disorganization" (Lowrey, 1941; Shellow, 1967; Blood and D'Argelo, 1974; Richette, 1969; Bock and English, 1973; Homer, 1973; Ambrosino, 1971). This classification of family disorganization was not defined as to the type of disorganization perceived. Usually the above studies referred to family disorganization as being of a "broken home" of conflict existing in the family.

This study, based largely upon the situational crisis response events, attempted to examine the affects on youth of only three types of situational crises. Although it is true that two of these three crises, death and divorce, can create a broken home it does not treat all single parent families the same. Rather this study examines for its affects on how the single parent family was created. In other words: Is there a difference in the proportion of youth who run away as a result of parent divorce, long term illness or death as opposed to treating all families who have lost a parent role as the same? In this manner this study has not compared families without a parent with those containing both parents for the proportion of youth who run away. By examining for the separate affects of parent role loss and running away, this study is somewhat different from previous research on runaways which treated all families who had lost a parent role as the same.

Analyzing for separate effects of parent role loss and running away by youth is in agreement with Virginia Satirs (1972) theory that the manner by which the single parent family is created may be more devastat-
ing for youth than the creation of the one parent family per se.

A strong implication for a description of runaways in relation to crisis situations concerns estimating the prevalence of running away. The limitations of previous studies which use only official records for estimates are not sufficient to accurately assess the proportion of youth who run away from home. The use of self report measures in addition to or in lieu of official records should also be considered.

There are several implications for theory and research. Since this study did not use a psychopathological model there are no comments for this area. However, indirectly by using the situational response perspective the implications are that the psychopathological model alone may not be able to account for the environmental or situational factors which lead youth to run away. One implication of this study is that the situational response perspective from the recent research on runaways in the 1970s should be continued.

However, prior employment of a situational response perspective tended to treat all situational crisis as being of the same impact on youth. It is apparent from this study that certain situational crisis have led to less and at other times more running away. These different levels of runaway response to a crisis by youth again indicates that all situational responses should not be considered to be equal in impact.

One bit of conjecture is that the subjective meaning of a situation for youth needs to be considered in the situational response perspective for understanding runaways. In other words, not all youth will respond the same way to the same situational family crises. For example, it appears from this study that the situational crisis of the loss of a
parent is not in and of itself going to cause youth to run away.

Implications for Theory, Research and Practice

The Development of Theory

There are no adequate coherent theories which explain runaway youth. At best, three general theoretical orientations have been applied in a nonconsistent manner. The three general theoretical orientations as previously discussed are the psychopathological approach, the "healthy" behavior approach and the situational response approach. These approaches have not been applied as a coherent set of principles for explaining runaways.

This study has examined four different theoretical perspectives -- developmental theory, crisis theory, systems theory and role theory to consider propositions that may need to be considered for the eventual development of a limited range, situational crises theory to be used in understanding runaway youth. The data of this study indicates two major propositions for the development of theory on runaways. The first concerns the manner by which a single parent family is created. The second, concerns the question of which parent is lost due to death, divorce or institutionalization due to long term illness.

The Creation of the Single Parent Family

In this study of the three types of parent role loss only one contributed significantly to youth running away from home. In other words, the loss of a parent in and of itself did not increase the probability of
youth running away. If this finding holds up in further research, the loss of a parent without regard to the reason for the loss of a parent should not be the bases of a theoretical proposition for explaining runaway youth.

The type of parent role loss in this study that contributed to youth running away was that due to divorce. This is probably because that with divorce a high degree of family disorganization involving husband and wife conflict is usually present. This disorganization and conflict may produce sufficient strain on adolescents which inhibits their ability to adjust to changes in their families after divorce occurs. Divorce may be a long term process in coming, whereby role strain for children is present for a long period. Once divorce occurs there is little energy left for many children to begin new adjustments. It may be perceived by youth that it requires less energy to leave after the divorce of their parents than to remain and start over.

In summary, divorce under conditions of conflict may be a viable factor for propositions concerning the likelihood of running away. Of course, this depends on the replication of the findings of this study in future research.

The Importance of Which Parent is Lost

One of the findings of this study is that in cases of parent role loss by death or illness it was the loss of the mother that resulted in a higher proportion of youth running away than when there was a loss of the father. In the development of a theory on runaways the roles of a mother or a father will need to be assessed separately. If the findings of this
study are replicated in future research the impact of both parents should not be considered equally relevant and this should be built into propositions.

Although parent roles are changing with some contending that mothers and fathers are converging more and more to serve the same function, the findings of this study indicate that mother and father clearly have different effects, particularly in regard to their influence on their children's decisions to run away. Therefore, and by implication, conditions which foster a mother role loss should be included in future theory on runaways. For example, in situational crisis theory what is it about the loss of the functions of the mother's role that may exacerbate the crisis for youth?

In addition, if the mother's role is lost how does this effect the father's role? For example, in systems theory if roles are shifted due to the loss of the mother, does this shift create role strain on the father which will simultaneously contribute to youth leaving home? In other words, in future explanations and study of runaways it should be considered that the loss of one parent will have reciprocal impact of the remaining parent.

Other Theoretical Considerations

There is also a probable theoretical need to include a proposition regarding the relevance of family material resources for situational crises. Further research may show that those who have money can run away on public transportation; that only the poor are reported on official records data; or that affluence leads to a desire for changing one's
environment. Of course, this is speculative. Even so, the data of this study suggests that a higher life style, i.e. middle or upper class, lends to a higher proportion of youth running away than does lower class living.

Another proposition relevant to future theory is that the absence of both parents should have an effect on youth running away. One of the findings of this study is that the category with the highest proportion who run away is subjects who live with guardians. This is particularly important given that the number of youth living in non-relative homes is increasing in the U.S. (HEW, 1975).

Methodological Research Needs

Concept Clarification

There is a need to be concerned for developing reliable and valid estimates of runaways. In order to more accurately assess the total numbers of youth who run away further study using both self report and official record measures are needed. Although, this study used self report measures the data was for 1966-70. A newer study would give updated information. In addition, further research needs to examine the reliability and validity of self report and official records data. At this time we have no concurrent or predictive validation studies of measures of runaway. At this point, all we have are measures with face validity and perhaps some logical validity.

In order to attempt these new estimates of runaways certain concepts will need to be clarified. There is no universal definition of runaway or
types of runaways. The definition of runaway needs to be operationalized. Many definitions include specific criteria, i.e. time away from home. These criteria need to be examined for their relevance to what constitutes running away from home. In addition, if self report measures are maintained how are questions to be asked about runaways and how many questions are needed for reliability purposes?

This study, using self report measures, was limited to a single question about whether youth had run away. In addition, this question was asked on a student questionnaire. I doubt that all runaways are in school. If so, this study underestimates the numbers and proportions who run away from home.

Other concepts that need to be clarified should be "loss of a parent role" and "situational response." What does loss of a parent role mean? A parent role can be lost by death, the inability to perform duties, absence, or merely the perception by youth that "they don't care about me."

A situational response can include a variety of factors. One can respond to a situation by doing nothing which can still be interpreted as responding. What is it that is being examined for in a situational response?

Data Collection

This study used data from a national sample. However, the data was considered supplemental data to the primary research tasks. As a consequence important information on the dynamics of family life in relation to running away from home was not collected. Further research needs to ask
many more questions than could be addressed in this study.

Currently there is not much data on runaways. That which is available still comes mostly from official records. If better studies are to be done on runaways better methods of data collection are needed. Obviously, this is a problem for all social science research. For runaways however, the concern is how to reach them, particularly if one is interested in self report measures.

One strategy could make maximum use of high populations of concentrations of youth such as in schools or other institutions. Another method would be to interview those that ran away after developing valid and reliable instruments questions. A third approach could be to use case studies. Case studies should allow for studying runaways in depth who leave more than once. Previous studies indicate differences between one time runaways and repeat runaways.

In addition, data on family impact on running away is needed especially the role of the mother in the family. If theoretically more useful and currently valid descriptive data are collected the validity of the findings of this study could then be assured. Since nine years have passed since the collection of the data for this study it is possible that social changes have occurred which warrant different conclusions than those reached in this study.

Analysis Needs

In this initial study it was not possible to look at the interactive effects of a family system and outside influences on youth running away.
Certainly, from a systems perspective, internal and external family factors affect youths' decisions to run away. Within the family what are the attributes of individual members that lead a youth to leave home? In addition, the attributes of a system contributing to youth running away need to be assessed. It is possible that a synergistic effect may account for the interaction of individual attributes and a family system leading to youth running away.

Due to the limited amount of pertinent variables available this study was not able to analyze for interactive effects. In fact, in examining those who experienced all three or even two types of parent role loss there were not enough cases to warrant analysis or conclusions of any import. The testing for interactive effects will not be appropriate until better instrumentation is developed and more effective data gathering procedures are available.

Further Hypotheses

Social Needs

Runaway Facilities

If the proportion of runaways remains constant or continues to increase then facilities for these youth will need to be established. Current facilities are probably based on official record estimates of the proportion of youth who run away and then the question is: Are they sufficient? Since official estimates are usually low current facilities will be unable to handle the actual amount of runaways.
Family Crisis Intervention

Another possible social implication may be the need for intervention in families in times of crisis. Imperative for family intervention will be to work with not just the entire family as a system, but also with each individual.

The subjective meaning of the crisis situation for each youth will need to be assessed. Running away for many in a crisis situation may be indicative that the crisis is not perceived as resolved or resolvable. In other words, running away is seen by many as a solution to the problem by youth.

If intervention is to be effective then the number of youth who run away may be reduced. One implication for intervention is to avoid a situation from going so far that youth view self rescue as the only viable solution.

Divorce and Guardians

There are at least two important implications for social needs from this study which result from findings regarding divorce and guardians. As indicated in Chapter 1, the rate of divorce in the U.S. is increasing and the proportion of youth who run away may also be increasing. As indicated in this study, the high proportion of youth who run away are those whose parents divorce. This implies that as divorce rates continue to increase so will the proportion of runaways. Therefore, if the rate of divorce continues to be high then intervention for a large number of youth will also be necessary to avoid the need for them to runaway.
Similarly, if the number of runaways are to be reduced then those youth living with guardians must also be considered. The findings of this study are that youth without both parents have the highest proportion of runaways. As indicated in Chapter 1, the proportion of youth residing with non-relative guardians in the U.S. is increasing.

What is it about divorce or guardians that lead some youth to run away? On the other hand, what is it about divorce or guardians that does not cause others to run away? In both cases more youth run away than the norm, but in both cases the majority of youth do not leave. We need to examine not only the family dynamics which lead to runaways in both of these situations, but also the family dynamics that do not produce runaways even though divorce or guardianship occurs.

The assessment of these dynamics will involve an understanding of the interactive effects that are occurring between individuals and the systems in which they live.

Restated, we need to examine not just runaways, but those who do not run away. What is it about non-runaway youth that is different from runaway youth? Is it just that some run away and others do not, or are there interactive effects that make differences in their lives?

This study is a beginning in trying to understand runaways and their family environment by suggestion propositional needs that should be included in future theory on runaways. It is hoped that future studies will be able to incorporate these propositions for the eventual development of a viable theory on runaways.
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