HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
California School

in cooperation with

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
School of Social Work

GENERATION ON THE RUN?

A Study of the Runaway in the Jewish Community

A Thesis submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the double degrees

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE

and

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

by

S. Shoshana Hirsh

May 1979

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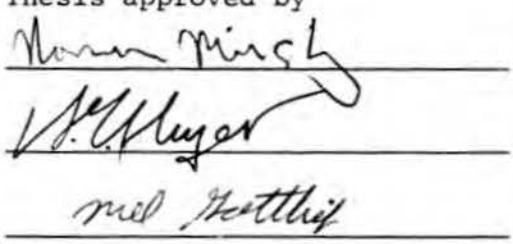

GENERATION ON THE RUN?
A STUDY OF THE RUNAWAY IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

by

S. Shoshana Hirsh

A Thesis Presented to the

FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

May 1979

Digest

The quest for independence and freedom was the basis for the founding of The United States of America. The early pioneers and adventurers were the embodiment of the American Dream. This spirit is still with us. The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that one million youngsters leave home each year. Today, however, this is no longer considered merely the spirit of adventure, but rather a social problem known as running away.

In 1973, after the discovery of the bodies of 27 young boys in Houston, Texas, the Federal government began to take a closer look at the problem, and began to fund programs and hot lines to aid runaways and their parents. In addition, laws concerning juveniles have changed radically in recent years due to recognition of this problem.

If the runaway had indeed become a severe national problem, was it possible that the Jewish community could not be affected? If the Jewish community does experience the problem, why were there no services offered by Jewish agencies to serve that particular population?

Initial contact with community leaders and agency representatives produced the same response, "I feel that it must be a problem among Jews, but I have had no contact

with any runaways or their families." Based on the feeling that there must be a runaway problem within the Jewish community, the following hypotheses evolved:

> Adolescent runaways represent a serious problem within the Jewish community, for which the Jewish community has no specialized services.
>
> The Jewish community provides no services to runaways since there has been no mandate from the community itself nor interest on the part of the agencies.

In order to compile data, numerous professionals from Jewish and non-sectarian counseling agencies, as well as from public schools and law enforcement agencies, were interviewed. Their responses confirmed the second part of the above, while the first part of the hypothesis was disproved.

Runaways are not a serious problem within the Jewish community. The reason for this is that Jewish families have found more socially acceptable alternatives to running away. In many cases, the adolescent simply moves in with other relatives or friends. In other cases, the adolescent sets up housekeeping by himself with the sanction of the parents. While these alternatives mask the existence of problems within the family, they provide a non-stigmatizing solution both for the juvenile and his family.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks to those people who have helped me to arrive at this point in my life: To my parents who instilled me with the basis for my social consciousness and Jewish identity; to my friends, teachers, and colleagues for their suggestions, support, and friendship; to my advisor from Hebrew Union College, Norman Mirsky, for his inspiration and his constantly coming to my defense while I wrote this thesis; to Eli Yomtov for his patience and understanding; and to my friend, brother, and editor, Jody Hirsh, for his invaluable assistance and reassurance not only while writing my thesis, but also for the entire two years of graduate school.

S. Shoshana Hirsh
12 May 1979

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CHAPTER I

THE AMERICAN DREAM

When the first settlers arrived at the new colonies in America in the Seventeenth Century, they gave birth to more than a new nation. They gave birth also to what has become known as "The American Dream." In the best American tradition, these pioneers left their homes to strike out on their own in new territory in order to build new and better lives for themselves, and they succeeded. Throughout American literature, these adventurers were portrayed as romantic and even heroic characters although they might have been running away from friends, family, home, and responsibility. One of the most well known of these runaway adventurers is, of course, Huckleberry Finn. Huck was a youngster who left home and succeeded on his own, living on his terms, "All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change."[1] How, then, are the young runaways of the Twentieth Century different from Huckleberry Finn and his predecessors? Are they not motivated by the same felt need for change, or escape from intolerable living conditions? In 1909, Jane Addams commented on the number of youths who had

left home either due to what she termed "outrages upon the spirit of youth," meaning parental neglect, or due to the need for adventure.[2] Said Bessie in Bread Givers, the 1925 novel concerning lower East Side Jewish life, "I can't stand it in this house. . . . But I haven't it in me to kill myself. I'm going to run away to another city."[3] Or her 17 year old sister, "I didn't care where I was going or what would become of me. Only to break-away from my black life. Only not to hear father's preaching voice again."[4]

America has always lent itself to the runaway culture with its wide open spaces and ready availability of transportation.[5] In the 1930s, adolescents ran from economic hardships. They deserted their struggling parents for opportunities elsewhere. In the 1940s it was the glamour of riding the rails or joining the armed forces. In the 1960s America's youth longed for new experiences and fled what they considered the hypocrisy of their communities and families to search for integrity and meaning.[6] Whatever the expressed cause, every runaway runs away to find a new life.[7]

Perhaps the motivations are still analogous, but societal attitudes and responses are not. By the time the "flower children" of the Sixties invaded the cities en masse, it was illegal for a minor to leave home, and

a crime to aid or shelter a runaway. In most states, a minor could be arrested and detained on suspicion of being a runaway.[8] Although, for the most part, these youngsters were idealistic souls rebelling against the ways of their parents and their parents' generation, and were out to build their own, better society of love and peace, "The Dream" was tarnished by their involvement with drugs and the seedier element of society as well as by the tragedies which befell them. Reports of exploitation, forced prostitution, rape, and illness were commonplace. The most universal of the problems encountered by the runaway, the need for housing, is also a precipitant of the aforementioned consequences. A tired and bewildered adolescent is easy prey for pimps, hustlers, and dope peddlers with a friendly offer of a bed for the night.[9] Other problems encountered are obtaining food, lack of funds, "and police harassment."[10]

Not until 1973 did "The Dream" become a nightmare. With the discovery of 27 graves of young boys in Houston, Texas, new attention was given to the runaway phenomenon as a growing social problem.[11] The nation came alive with horror and indignation. Police switchboards were swamped with calls from frantic parents trying to locate their missing children. The public began to demand action by the government. The American hero had become a tragic figure.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation had estimated that between the years of 1967 and 1972 there was a 70% increase in the number of runaways in the United States.[12] Today, it is estimated that up to one million boys and girls leave home each year in the United States.[13] The current projection is that one of every ten youngsters between the ages of twelve and seventeen will run away from home at some time.[14] Neither is this mass exodus limited to the lower class, but has spread to middle and upper class families as well.[15]

Who runs away? Why do they leave, and where do they go? Some blame the family. The traditional role of the family has been seriously weakened in American society, replaced by institutions and peer groups.[16] The family is no longer providing strong role models for its children. The American family itself is in a state of transition with a forecast that one out of three first marriages will end in divorce.[17]

This obvious collapse of parental authority reflects the hedonistic trend of our society.[18] The work ethic of the original founders of this country has all but disappeared, replaced by a greater emphasis on leisure time, entertainment, and obtaining things the easy way.[19] "To live for the moment is the prevailing passion--to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity."[20]

Middle aged adults have created their own runaway culture where jobs, relationships, and lifestyles are disposable. Is it any wonder that adolescents have created a parallel runaway culture? A culture and society of a more intimate nature, where there is mutual concern and support. When the parents abdicate the responsibility of being parents in favor of obtaining more freedom for personal enjoyment, the child may have to parent himself as well as his parent. To further fuel the fires, the mass media portray the nomadic, "free" way of life as exotic and glamorous through television, movies, and even commerical advertising.

Whatever the causes of the current epidemic of runaways, the fact that the Federal Government has made available millions of dollars in funding for programs for runaways since 1973 is testimony to the gravity of the problem. In 1977 alone, the House of Representatives approved a three-year, $600 million bill for the establishment of Federal delinquency prevention and runaway youth programs.[21] Since 1973, hundreds of hotlines, shelters, and half-way-houses have been established across the country by both public and private (primarily churches) agencies and organizations.

Notes to Chapter I

[1]Samuel Langhorne Clemens, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), p. 399.

[2]Jane Addams, The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1909), p. 51.

[3]Anzia Yezierska, Bread Givers (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1925), p. 108.

[4]Ibid., pp. 135-136.

[5]Helm Stierlin, Separating Parents and Adolescents (New York: N.Y. Times Book Co., 1974), p. 12.

[6]Lilliam Ambrosino, Runaways (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 4.

[7]Ibid., p. 3.

[8]The legal definition for "runaway" is, "a child [minor] . . . who stays away from home without consent of parent." (Louise E. Homer, "Community-Based Resource for Runaway Girls," Social Casework, 54, 8, p. 474, October 1973.)

[9]Ambrosino, Runaways, p. 13

[10]M.C. Howell, E.B. Emmons, and D.A. Frank, "Reminiscences of Runaway Adolescents," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 43, 5, p. 846, October 1973.

[11]John G. Cull and Richard E. Hardy, Problems of Runaway Youth (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Pub., 1976), p. 3.

[12]Franklyn W. Dunford and Tim Brennan, "A Taxonomy of Runaway Youth," Social Service Review, 50, 3, p. 457, September 1976.

[13]Myron Brenton, The Runaways (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), p. 35.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Cull, Problems Runaway Youth, p. 4.

[16]The New York Times, September 24, 1977, p. 7.

[17]Saul Hofstein, "Perspectives on the Jewish Single-Parent Family," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 54, 3, p. 229, Spring 1978.

[18]Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 178.

[19]Cull, Problems Runaway Youth, p. 7.

[20]Lasch, Culture of Narcissism, p. 5.

[21]Cull, Problems Runaway Youth, p. 4.

CHAPTER II

A PROFILE OF THE RUNAWAY

Who runs? Runaways come from every socioeconomic level, more girls run than boys, and the average age is dropping.[1] It is not uncommon to find 12 year olds, and those even younger, on the streets. There is no one description of the runaway, but they can be loosely classified as either running from, or running to. Those running from are fleeing poverty, physical abuse, conflict and poor communication with parents, difficulties in school, problems with peers, or involvement with drugs or alcohol.[2]

Most runaways from this category come from broken homes. They are often exposed to violent arguments at home as well as generally destructive ways of handling family conflicts.[3] In some cases, the adolescent cannot attain the image the parent has prescribed for him, resulting in feelings of rejection, inadequacy, and low self-esteem.[4] In other instances, the adolescent's search for identity and autonomy is stifled by overly strict parents.[5] Running is not usually a spontaneous act precipitated by one particular incident, but rather

a statement by the adolescent on what has been building up around him. Among the warning signals are: resentment of authority figures and of discipline, loss of interest in school, anti-social behavior, depression and frustration, and involvement with drugs or alcohol.[6]

Of course, there are more severely disturbed children (such as hyperactive or schizophrenic), but most runaways share some common traits: low self-esteem, negative self-image, poor communication with parents, conflict at school and at home, and lack of control over their own lives.[7] In addition, most runaways seem to have a high level of ambivalence toward religion.[8]

The second type of runaway, the one who is running to, is the adventure seeker. This runaway usually displays no psychological disturbances, but rather expresses the sudden need for a change, or the desire to experiment with something new (often sex, drugs, or alcohol).[9] These kids are generally described as normal, healthy, and from average homes, trying out premature freedom.[10]

In an article written by Franklyn W. Dunford and Tim Brennan, runaways are divided into six classifications.[11] The first is "self-confident and unrestrained girls." These girls have high self-esteem and do well in school. They have poor relations with their parents who display relatively little affection and permit their

daughters a high level of freedom, but the girls generally regard them as being unfair when it comes to discipline. The major theme in their running away is that of independence.

The second, and largest, group is titled "well-adjusted youth." These children have high self-esteem, do well in school, and have good relations with their parents. These runaways, as previously mentioned, are the adventure seekers, and are not usually involved with drugs or illegal activities. They are simply looking for excitement.

The "double failures," the third group, have poor relations with the parents, and do poorly in school. They are the targets of a high level of negative labeling by parents and teachers, resulting in feelings of rejection and helplessness. Involvement in delinquent activities is high.

"Fleeing youth" represent the oldest group of runaways (with a median age of 15), and come from a higher socioeconomic level. These youngsters suffer from a high level of powerlessness and a lack of self-esteem due to the excessive amount of demands and control exerted by the parents. The parents of these runaways have high expectations of their children, but give little emotional support.

The fifth classification, "young, highly regulated, and negatively influenced youth," is the youngest group (with a mean age of 12). While they have very good relationships with their parents, including the affective aspect, they are strictly controlled and punished, although the youngsters themselves do not perceive the discipline as being unjust. Nevertheless, they have high levels of powerlessness and low levels of self-esteem.

The last, and smallest, classification is "young and unrestrained youth." These youngsters generally come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and experience little parental control. Their perception of their parents is that they are willing to help when needed, but the parents make few demands on the children. This group has a high involvement in drugs and delinquent activities.

Whatever the cause, most runaways return within two weeks, and relatively few remain away longer than 100 days.[12] Most runaways report enjoying the experience at the time, but would not advise anyone else to run unless there was no other alternative. In addition, they reported that life was much better when they returned than it was before they ran. They had proved themselves, and maybe even decided that they needed more limits.[13]

Notes To Chapter II

[1]Myron Brenton, The Runaways (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), p. 39.

[2]It is impossible to cite one source for the preceding information since the taxonomy of the runaway is uniformly presented in most sources.

[3]Rocco D'Angelo, Families of Sand (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1974), p. 23.

[4]Maryanne Raphael and Jenifer Wolf, Runaways (New York: Drake Publishers, Inc., 1974), p. 3.

[5]Helm Stierlin, Separating Parents and Adolescents (New York: N.Y. Times Book Co., 1974), p. 10.

[6]John G. Cull and Richard E. Hardy, Problems of Runaway Youth (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publishers, 1976), p. 5.

[7]D'Angelo, Families of Sand, pp. 7-9.

[8]Ibid., p. 24. D'Angelo found that the stronger the religious ties, the more cohesive the family, and, therefore, the likelihood of a child running away is less. This coincides with Emile Durkheim's findings concerning suicide (Emile Durkhein, Suicide, p. 208) in which he found that a higher degree of integration of the religious society resulted in a lower suicide rate. (It is also interesting to note that, in his study, Durkheim found lower suicide rates among the Jews since, in his perception, Judaism is a more compact and cohesive society [p. 160]).

[9]Franklyn W. Dunford and Tim Brennan, "A Taxonomy of Runaway Youth," Social Service Review, 50, 3, The University of Chicago Press, September 1976, p. 466.

[10]M.C. Howell, E.B. Emmons, and D.A. Frank, "Reminiscences of Runaway Adolescents," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 43, 5, New York, American Orthopsychiatric Association, Inc., October 1973, p. 841.

[11]Dunford, "Taxonomy of Runaway Youth," pp. 463-465.

[12]"Metro Help's Profile on Runaways," Los Angeles Times, December 26, 1974, Section 1A, p. 1, col. 1. This information was compiled by Metro Help in Chicago, from 1664 calls received during their first 111 days in operation as a runaway hotline. They also found that 41% of the callers were "repeaters," and 20.5% had run five or more times.

[13]Howell, Emmons, Frank, "Reminiscenses Runaway Adolescents,"pp. 846-849.

CHAPTER III

THE RUNAWAY AND THE LAW

During the Sixties, the era of the flower children, and into the early Seventies, an adolescent who left home without consent of parents was considered a status offender in most states, including California, New York, Massachusetts, and others. This meant that a person who even appeared to be under 18 (or 21 in some states) and was unsupervised could be apprehended for being a runaway. As one Hollywood policeman reported to The Los Angeles Times, "We only have to suspect a minor of possible violation in order to pick him up."[1] A Los Angeles County probation officer recently commented that during the Sixties, the police department and juvenile hall were "wall to wall runaways."

There are two primary sections of the California Codes which govern adolescents:

> Any person under the age of 18 years who persistently or habitually refuses to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions of his parents, guardian, custodian or school authorities, or who is beyond the control [meaning predelinquent, dependent minors who might possibly have a tendency toward delinquency] of such person, or any person who is

> a habitual truant from school within the meaning of any law of this state, or who from any cause is in danger of leading an idle [not occupied or employed, or to loaf or dissipate one's time], dissolute, lewd, or immoral life, is within the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court which may adjudge such person to be a ward of the court.[2]

Section 602 covers the same population, but deals specifically with incorrigible persons or those who have committed actual crimes.

What these two sections meant was that a minor could be apprehended upon suspicion that he may commit a crime, be detained at either the police station or juvenile hall, and be brought to trial. While being detained, although he was supposed to be kept with other juveniles, he often was thrown together with adult offenders, or with minors who were guilty of committing serious crimes. After trial, he could be sentenced to probation, a residential treatment center, or to jail.

Inasmuch as these youngsters were considered offenders, it was illegal to harbor them. Drop in shelters risked legal action if they kept a minor under their roof over night. Fortunately, some law enforcement agencies turned the other way with the condition that the youngster call his parents and at least receive verbal consent to remain in the shelter. This practice became more prevalent after the 1973 tragedy when more Federal money was being funneled into such runaway projects.

By the end of 1976, the law began to take a more humanistic view of the runaway problem, and of adolescents in general. The new outlook was that minors needed to be protected by the law, not necessarily punished. The 1977 revision of Section 601 resulted:

> Any person under the age of 18 years who persistently or habitually refuses to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions of his parents, guardians, or custodian, or who is beyond the control of such persons, or is under the age of 18 years when he violated any ordinance of any city or county of this state establishing a curfew based on age is within the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court which may adjudge such person to be a ward of the court.[3]

In short, this meant that a minor could no longer be apprehended or detained upon suspicion of being a runaway. If a minor was apprehended, the police were only able to attempt to return the youth to his home, but could not detain him.

This policy of non-detention of minors became a frustration to the law enforcement and child protection agencies. As a result, another measure was signed into law by Governor Brown on September 25, 1978, permitting the detention of (runaways) status offenders once again. This time, however, there were very specific guidelines. A minor could be detained for twelve hours to check for outstanding warrants, for twenty-four hours for in-state parents to regain custody (prior to this, the police had

no right to detain a minor long enough for the parent to come and regain custody of the child, if the child did not want to wait), and a maximum of seventy-two hours for out-of-state parents to regain custody. Under no circumstances is a minor detained under this measure to be housed with adults.[4]

Although it is no longer considered a crime to run away, and therefore, no longer illegal to aid a runaway, most runaway drop-in centers and shelters must continue to require that the child call home.

It is interesting to note that California is the contributor of the second largest number of runaways in the United States, exceeded only by Illinois.[5] Los Angeles is also the second largest Jewish Community in the United States.

Notes to Chapter III

[1]"Runaway Series," Los Angeles Times, September 17, 1973, Section IV, p. 1, col. 2.

[2]West's Annotated California Codes, Welfare and Institutions Code Sections 1-39999, 73, St. Paul, Minn., West Publishing Co. Section 601, 1977, pp. 114-116.

[3]Ibid., 1977 revision, p. 90.

[4]"Gov. Brown Signs Bill on Jailing of Runaway Children," Los Angeles Times, September 26, 1978, Section II, p. 6, col. 1.

[5]"Metro Help's Profile on Runaways," Los Angeles Times, December 26, 1978, Section 1A, p. 1, col. 1. Next in line of states contributing large numbers of runaways are #3, Michigan, #4, Ohio, #5, Pennsylvania, #6, New York, and #7, Missouri.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUNAWAY AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

If the problem of runaways is indeed of epidemic proportions, and if it is also a major problem of the middle and upper classes as well as of the lower classes, can the Jewish community be exempt? Is the Jewish community immune to the ills of society? Despite Durkheim's perception of the cohesiveness of the Jewish community, it is still susceptible to society's problems.[1] One case in point is that 30% of Jewish marriages end in divorce,[2] and the number of single parent families in the Jewish community coincides with the national average.[3] Inasmuch as broken marriages are rampant in today's disposable society, and also figure prominently in the problem of runaway youth, it would seem a natural corollary that the problem of runaways would also be reflected proportionately in the Jewish community. Since running away and aiding a runaway has been decriminalized, and since Federal funds are available from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, what prevents the Jewish community from establishing services to youthful runaways? (As stated before, a runaway is a juvenile

under the age of 18 who stays away from home without the consent of a parent.)

The hypothesis and subhypothesis which evolved are, therefore, as follows:

> Adolescent runaways represent a serious problem within the Jewish community, for which the Jewish community has no specialized services.
>
> The Jewish community provides no services to runaways since there has been no mandate from the community itself nor interest on the part of the agencies.

In a preliminary survey concerning the existence of runaways in the Jewish community which involved Vista Del Mar, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Jewish Family Service Valley Store Front, and a leading rabbi in the Los Angeles community, the responses took a few different forms. Only Vista Del Mar, a Jewish residential treatment center, presented an indictment that runaways are indeed a major problem, but the Jewish community has no solutions or resources. The Sheriff's Department acknowledged that they had served a very small number of Jewish adolescent runaways, however, they represented a small percentage compared to other minorities. Both the rabbi and the Store Front had had absolutely no contact with the runaway problem although they strongly suspected that it must be a serious problem within the Jewish community. When these answers were

reported to other Jewish professionals (among them a rabbi who is a chaplain for the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, a sociologist and faculty member at Hebrew Union College, and a rabbi of another major congregation in the Los Angeles area), they too responded that although they have never come in contact with the problem, they felt that there must be a problem of Jewish runaways.

When searching the literature for material specifically pertaining to Jewish runaways in late Twentieth-Century America, I found that although there was no lack of information regarding the runaway in general, there was a dearth of material concerning this topic in both the Jewish and secular literature.[4] If the runaway is a problem in society at large, and the Jewish professionals I had contacted felt strongly that there must also be a problem in the Jewish community, why was there such a lack of information?

In the past, the Jewish community has been known to deny or camouflage problems which surface within its ranks. As the director of "Sojourn," a shelter for battered wives, related, "It took the Jewish community one solid year to give us any support. They refused to believe that there were battered Jewish wives." (In fact, a large number of her clients were Jewish.) In researching her thesis on Jewish alcoholics, Marcia Spiegel

uncovered instances in which Jewish doctors would fail to diagnose alcoholism among their Jewish patients.[5]

As D'Angelo said in Families of Sand, communities tend to deny problems despite their recurrence.[6] Is this, then, what is happening in the Jewish community?

The American College Dictionary defines "runaway" as, "one who runs away; a fugitive; a deserter."[7] In line with the perjorative tone of this definition is the former practice of treating all runaways as emotionally disturbed children. "Mentally ill behavior is that which prevents the individual from achieving harmony with others in his social context. . . ."[8] Whose harmony? For an adolescent, running away could be a very normal way of dealing with the tensions of growing up.[9] The title of nonacceptability (deviance) is not inherent in the act, but rather is awarded to it by society.[10] By the same token, the title is also conferred upon the actor. What does this say about the child? The child is then treated according to the label he has received, which is in itself a negative term, regardless of the reality of the situation.[11] This results in the child's "altered identity" in which he feels rejected and inadequate.[12] What does it do to the parent to say that one's child has run away? It says, "My child has rejected me, I am inadequate as a parent."[13] Furthermore, the stigma does not disappear.[14]

If the Jewish community cannot tolerate the act of running away, it certainly would not want to establish institutions to deal with it. Not only would the institutions verify that the problem does indeed exist, but also encourage the problem.[15] In order for the institutions to function, perhaps a broader definition of the problem would be used, which would encompass more people. Or, perhaps upon seeing that a service to runaways does exist, more adolescents would be willing to enter the runaway culture knowing there was some place to go.

To answer any of these questions, to whom must I go, and what must I ask?

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]Emile Durkheim, Suicide (New York: The Free Press, 1951), p. 160.

[2]Gerald B. Bubis, "The Contemporary Jewish Family Implications for Jewish Centers," JWB Year Book, Vol. 23, p. 66, 1977.

[3]Ibid., p. 62.

[4]This was later verified by the staff associate research director of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston, who has compiled extensive indices on subjects relevant to the Jewish Community, but has nothing on runaways since the 1920s or 1930s.

[5]Marcia C. Spiegel, "The Heritage of Noah: Alcoholism in the Jewish Community Today," Master's thesis in preparation.

[6]D'Angelo, Confrontations with Youth, p. 4.

[7]The American College Dictionary (New York: Random House, 1966, p. 1063.

[8]Andrew Slaby, and Laurence Tancredi, Collusion for Conformity (New York: Jason ARonson, 1975), p. 3.

[9]M.C. Howell, E.B. Emmons, and D.A. Frank, "Reminiscences of Runaway Adolescents," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 43, 5, New York, American Orthopsychiatric Association, Inc., October 1973, p. 840.

[10]Kai T. Erikson, Wayward Puritans (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1966), p. 6.

[11]Franklyn W. Dunford, and Tim Brennan, "A Taxonomy of Runaway Youth," Social Service Review, 50, 3, The University of Chicago Press, September 1976, p. 460.

[12]Nanette J. Davis, Sociological Constructions of Deviance (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1975), p. 186.

[13]D'Angelo, Confrontations with Youth, p. 9.

[14]Erikson, Wayward Puritans, p. 16.

[15]Ibid., p. 14.

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

Inasmuch as I did not anticipate locating actual runaways--if a runaway is serious about his running he will not be found--I felt it better to study the agencies which deal directly with children and families, and which provide support systems within the Los Angeles and Jewish communities. Furthermore, my intention was to restrict the study to the Los Angeles area since it is both the second largest Jewish community in the United States, and also the second largest contributor to the national runaway population.

My first targets were Jewish agencies which counsel youth and families; agencies which have a less formal, drop-in structure; and major synagogues whose rabbis have a reputation of being involved with youth and/or their congregations. In addition, I contacted the Los Angeles Police and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Departments since I assumed that they would be more familiar with the runaway problem in general than any of the Jewish agencies. From thisinitial core of eleven agencies, I expected not only acknowledgment of the

problem, but also expected to obtain names of more agencies.[1] In each case, I was interested in interviewing either the director of services or the line worker with the most contact with adolescents or the families of adolescents.

When constructing the questionnaire, I needed to know who had contact with the runaway or the family, and in what capacity. In addition, I was interested in the interviewee's perception of why a Jewish youngster does (or does not) run away, and where the interviewee felt the runaway did go. I wanted to know also at what point the runaway or the family came in for services. The questionnaire itself was loosely constructed of several open-ended questions. The interviewee was encouraged to expound on any of the questions, or simply to discuss personal opinions concerning the subject of runaways. Most of the interviews were conducted by phone although a few were done in person. (See Appendix A)

After contacting these eleven agencies, I found only one which had substantial contact with runaways or their families. The other agencies reinforced what I had found in my preliminary survey: They rarely had actual contact with the problem, but they all <u>felt</u> that it existed. In most cases, they suggested that I contact Jewish Family Service (which had no idea where one would find Jewish runaways).

Since there was such a strong feeling that there must be Jewish runaways somewhere in Los Angeles, but a tremendous lack of concrete knowledge or experience, Professor Gerald B. Bubis, of Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, suggested I contact agencies in large cities with sizable Jewish populations. The agencies to be contacted were either children and family service organizations or the primary Jewish planning body in the city. From these organizations I acquired names of more Jewish and non-sectarian agencies which were more likely to serve runaways. In the meantime, the list of agencies in Los Angeles was also expanded to include more agencies (primarily non-sectarian) which were either designed as drop-in centers, runaway services, or which did primarily child and family counseling, including residential care. The final list had thirty-two agencies. (See Appendix B)

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

[1]The initial agencies were: Chabad Lubavitch, Jewish Big Brothers, Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles-Central Office, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Los Angeles Police Department Probation Department, Temple Isaiah, University Synagogue, Congregation Valley Beth Shalom, Valley Beth Shalom Counseling Center, Valley Storefront (JFS), and Vista Del Mar.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Los Angeles Area

Of all the agencies contacted in the Los Angeles area, only Vista Del Mar, a residential treatment center for adolescents, acknowledged contact with a substantial number of runaways, but even they felt that the numbers did not warrant the establishment of a local "crash pad." Upon further inquiry it became clear that most of the runaways at Vista had been referred by the Probation Department's Diversion Program, a euphemism for an alternative to jail. In other words, most of those adolescents had been apprehended on charges of delinquent acts and not just for running away. A probation officer of the Los Angeles Police Department Probation Department said that although they may come in contact with a Jewish runaway, "It's a small percentage compared to other minorities." A probation officer with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department searched his records of 601 violators apprehended as runaways back to September 1968 and found not one Jewish surname.

The remainder of the agencies had had no contact with runaway as the presenting problem (although a family may come in with a child who had at one time run away), but most felt that it must be a problem. Some of these suggested that most runaways and their families probably go to Jewish Family Service. Others simply answered that they did not know if it was a problem of where runaways would go.

Outside of Los Angeles

These findings were also consistent outside of the Los Angeles area. Rarely did a Jewish agency have contact with the runaway problem and most did not know if it was indeed a problem within the Jewish community. Several felt Traveler's Aid would be more in touch with the problem.

The Boston agency claimed that, "Boston is not a haven for runaways," while, since the Sixties, it had been a mecca for strays of all kinds. The New York agency said that the Jewish agencies were the best services in town, that there is no place else to go and that runaways were not going to them. Furthermore, the clientele of their Lower East Side runaway program was 95% non-Jews and they were considering disbanding it from lack of necessity.

Cleveland, on the other hand, is considering establishing a center for troubled kids who must leave

home. They felt that most agencies are insensitive to the problems of juveniles and accused New York of this insensitivity which caused them to feel there was no problem.

Why would runaways or their parents not use existing Jewish agencies? The agencies interviewed presented four possible reasons:

> The adolescents themselves are unaware of the agencies since there is no outreach.
>
> When a parent is trying to locate the child, he is not, at that time, interested in psychological assistance, but rather simply interested in locating the runaway--they go to the police for assistance.
>
> Health insurance is structured in such a way that people would rather go to private practitioners in order to receive reimbursement.
>
> Kids shy away from "establishment" and adult-oriented organizations.[1]

Many of the interviewees, gentile and Jew, felt that Jewish children do not run away: They felt that the Jewish family is more stable and cohesive than most families. Jewish families have better communication and, therefore, the problems never become that serious. The Jewish parent, they felt, is more open and goes for help (psychiatric or other) before problems become serious. Jewish kids are too soft and lack the necessary survival techniques.[2] In addition, they felt that Jewish children are sophisticated enough not to want to relinquish a

better life style. Jewish adolescents wait until after high school and then run away to college. Any or all of the above may be true, but there is no way to verify them.

Another interesting thing emerged from the study, however; the concept of the "emancipated minor."[3] A high school social worker commented, "I don't see many runaways, but I certainly see a lot of living away from home." While in every city, agencies had no contact with runaways, every city did experience a number of juveniles who either were living with relatives other than the parents, or with the families of friends, or were setting up housekeeping at a very early age. In some cases, the parents did not know the whereabouts of their child, but in other cases they not only knew but contributed financial support.[4]

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

[1]The above were reasons proposed by the interviewees. In addition: M.C. Howell et al, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1973, p. 852. The unwillingness of adolescents to use establishment agencies was also verified in this article.

[2]Lillian Ambrosino, Runaways (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 27. When speaking about runaways from middle class, and affluent, homes, Ambrosino suggested that they are "creatures of comfort" and may not be able to rise above the affluence.

[3]The American College Dictionary, p. 391. According to the above, emancipation is the termination of parental control. Here, I use the term "emancipated minor" to mean a child under the age of 18 who has established a formal residence away from the parents, with or without the financial support of the parents, without guardianship or supervision of an adult.

[4]This phenomenon was reported by school guidance counselors and family counselors interviewed.

CHAPTER VII

LIMITATIONS

This study does, of course, have limitations. The first is that the number of runaways in the entire nation is really a hidden statistic since only a fraction are reported.[1] If there are Jewish runaways, this fact would affect that population as well. Part of this is due to denial. A family may not wish to identify the problem.

Since running away is no longer an offense in the State of California, either no record will be kept on a child being temporarily detained before being returned to the parent, or no distinction is made when the record indicates a 601 between a runaway or another offense. In addition, the Police and Sheriff's Departments, as well as other non-sectarian agencies, keep no records of religious preference and are reluctant to make the distinction between those they feel are Jewish and those who they feel are not, even for an informal informational purpose.

Finally, it seems that the act of running away is being redefined. What do you call it when a child goes

to live with someone else? If he is just down the street at a friend's or relative's house without his parents' knowledge, or with full consent, is it much different from leaving town and going elsewhere?

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

[1]Franklyn Dunford and Tim Brennan, "A Taxonomy of Runaway Youth," Social Service Review, 50, 3, University of Chicago Press, September 1976, p. 47.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

For many families, the shame and stigma related to a child's running away is perhaps unbearable.[1] A parent may feel inadequate as a parent, or hurt from rejection by the child. However, running away may not necessarily be an indication only of ineffectual parenting, but also a statement that the family is in turmoil. It is true that Jewish families seem more receptive to counseling, but they rarely indicate a runaway as a family problem. Perhaps it is not a problem within the Jewish family. If the Jewish family is compared to other families in the middle class (as indicated by the divorce rates cited earlier), the assumption is that they too are experiencing turmoil. However, while the nuclear family may be in turmoil, the extended family is not.

Geographic distances between family members has necessitated redefining the extended family to include additional significant others in order to maintain a homeostasis. Instead of grandparents living on the next block, there is a family whose parents a child adopts as

his own although he may remain at home. And if he does leave his own home and move in with another family, it is socially acceptable since they are part of the extended family. In other words, the Jewish family has developed a safe, socially acceptable alternative to running away, and has also been forced to redefine the extended family in order to maintain that alternative.

However, does the practice of sending the child to live with a friend or relative indicate denial of a problem? Is it the parent's way of saying, "It's not my problem, it's the child's." Similarly, emancipating a child early may also be a means of denial, or abdication of responsibility.

To paraphrase Marcia Spiegel, segments of the Jewish community believe in the stereotype which portrays the Jews as not succumbing to the same family problems as the rest of the population, as in the example of Jews and alcoholism.[2] In addition, a number of the interviewees indicated that they felt that Jews are better parents, they communicate more openly, and have stronger, more cohesive families. But it is just that, a stereotype.[3] Jewish families are also susceptible to problems which appear in the society in general, although they may be handled differently. The fact that the majority of agencies interviewed had no contact with runaways per se

but did indicate a knowledge of a high number of emancipated minors or minors living away from home indicates that a serious problem exists in the Jewish family. Unfortunately, until a problem is identified, it cannot be alleviated, but the Jewish community seems to deny problems within its ranks.

What then can be done? Perhaps prevention techniques can be employed. If drop-in centers designed for adolescents and with active outreach in the schools were established, it is possible that youngsters would come to work out their problems before they reached a crisis.

What about the parents? The Jewish community, through the Bureau of Jewish Education, Jewish Family Service, and other institutions, already offers highly effective Family Life Development and Parent Effectiveness Training programs, but they are limited in number. If more of such programs were made available, accompanied by intensive publicity and outreach, there is no doubt that the response would be substantial. Although there has never been a mass parent-training movement, parents today seem to be even more bewildered by the rapid changes taking place in today's society. There is no longer rigid structure or familiar values to use in child rearing. The parent is on his own, while at the same time he is struggling to define his own identity. This is further

aggravated by the facade presented by the Jewish community that there is no crisis in the Jewish family, except for divorce.[4]

The Jewish community has the responsibility of honestly recognizing problems within its boundaries, and addressing itself to those problems. Besides developing solutions, it also has the responsibility to present preventative measures. It has the knowledge and resources to do both.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

[1]Charles Zastrow and Ralph Novarre, "Help for Runaways and Their Parents," Social Casework, 56, 2, p. 76, February 1975. These two researchers indicated a high level of refusals by parents to participate in the study. Nor is this an isolated case, but rather seems to have been a common occurrence, as seen when reviewing the literature.

This was also borne out in personal experience. When a Jewish friend, whose 21-year-old had at one time been a runaway, was told how much difficulty I was having finding runaways, she said that she knew some people, but that it was "such a touchy subject" that she would not mention it. When her husband entered the room, she related the difficulty of my study, and he promptly changed the subject.

[2]Marcia C. Spiegel. "The Heritage of Noah: Alcoholism in the Jewish Community Today," thesis in preparation, Hebrew Union College, School of Jewish Communal Service, Los Angeles, 1979.

[3]Molly Lawrie, personal interview.

[4]Gerald B. Bubis, "The Contemporary Jewish Family--Implications for Jewish Centers," JWB Year Book, 23, New York, 1977.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a double master student at Hebrew Union College, School of Jewish Communal Service, and University of Southern California, School of Social Work, doing my Master Thesis on Jewish adolescent runaways. In particular, I am interested in exploring the involvement Los Angeles agencies, Jewish and non-sectarian, have with the runaways themselves and their families. So far, I have found that very few agencies have experience with Jewish runaways.

Do you think there are runaways in the Jewish Community?

Do you think there are enough runaways to constitute a problem within the Jewish Community?

Does your agency have contact with Jewish runaways?

In what capacity?

Does your agency have contact with the families of Jewish runaways?

In what capacity?

Have you personally had contact with Jewish runaways either in your agency or outside of the agency?

In what capacity?

Have you personally had contact with the families of Jewish runaways either in your agency or outside of the agency?

In what capacity?

Are you familiar with any services offered to runaways by the Jewish Community?

What gave rise to these facilities?

Why do you feel that runaways do/do not come to the Jewish agencies?

Do you feel they are going to other agencies?

Why do you feel they are going to other agencies?

To what agencies do you think they would go?

Why do you feel that Jewish adolescents do not run away?

Are there any questions about runaways I have not, but should, ask?

APPENDIX B

AGENCIES

Association for Jewish Children - Philadelphia
*Beverly Hills High School
*California Community Services Center
Chabad Lubavitch
Combined Jewish Philanthropies - Boston
*Council of Jewish Women (El Nido)
*Detour
*Fairfax High School
Federation of Jewish Agencies - Philadelphia
Federation of Jewish Philanthropies - New York
*Irene Jossilyn Clinic - Chicago
*Jewish Big Brothers
Jewish Children's Bureau - Chicago
Jewish Children's Bureau - Cleveland
Jewish Family and Children's Services - Miami, Florida
Jewish Family Services - Detroit
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles
    Central Los Angeles
    Eastern Area
    Southern Area
    Valley Storefront
Jewish Federation Council - Cleveland
*Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
*Los Angeles Police Department Probation Department
*Ocean Park Community Center
*Pacific Lodge
Temple Isaiah
*University High School
University Syyagogue
Congregation Valley Beth Shalom
Valley Beth Shalom Counseling Center
Vista Del Mar
*Youth Network Council - Department of Health, Education
    and Welfare - Washington, D.C.

*Denotes non-sectarian or non-Jewish agencies
(All agencies are located in Los Angeles unless
otherwise indicated)