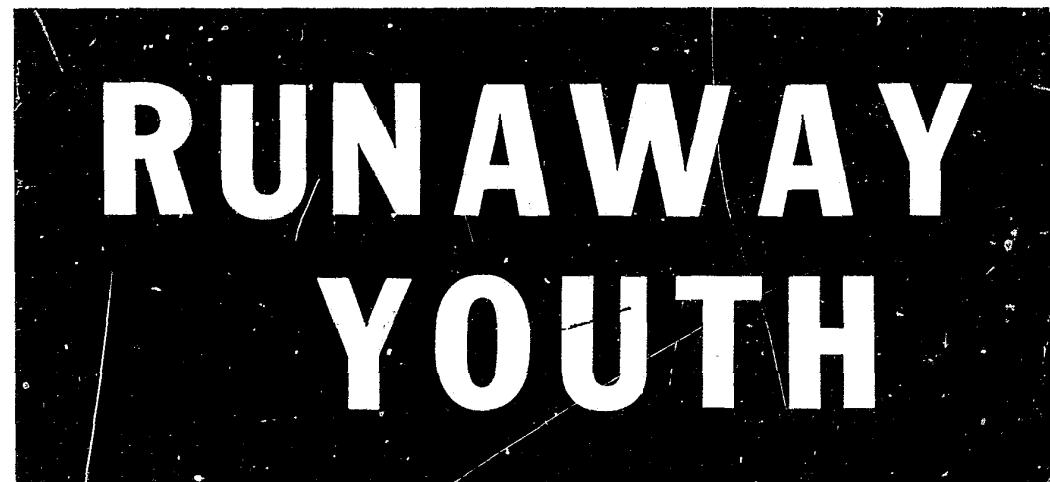


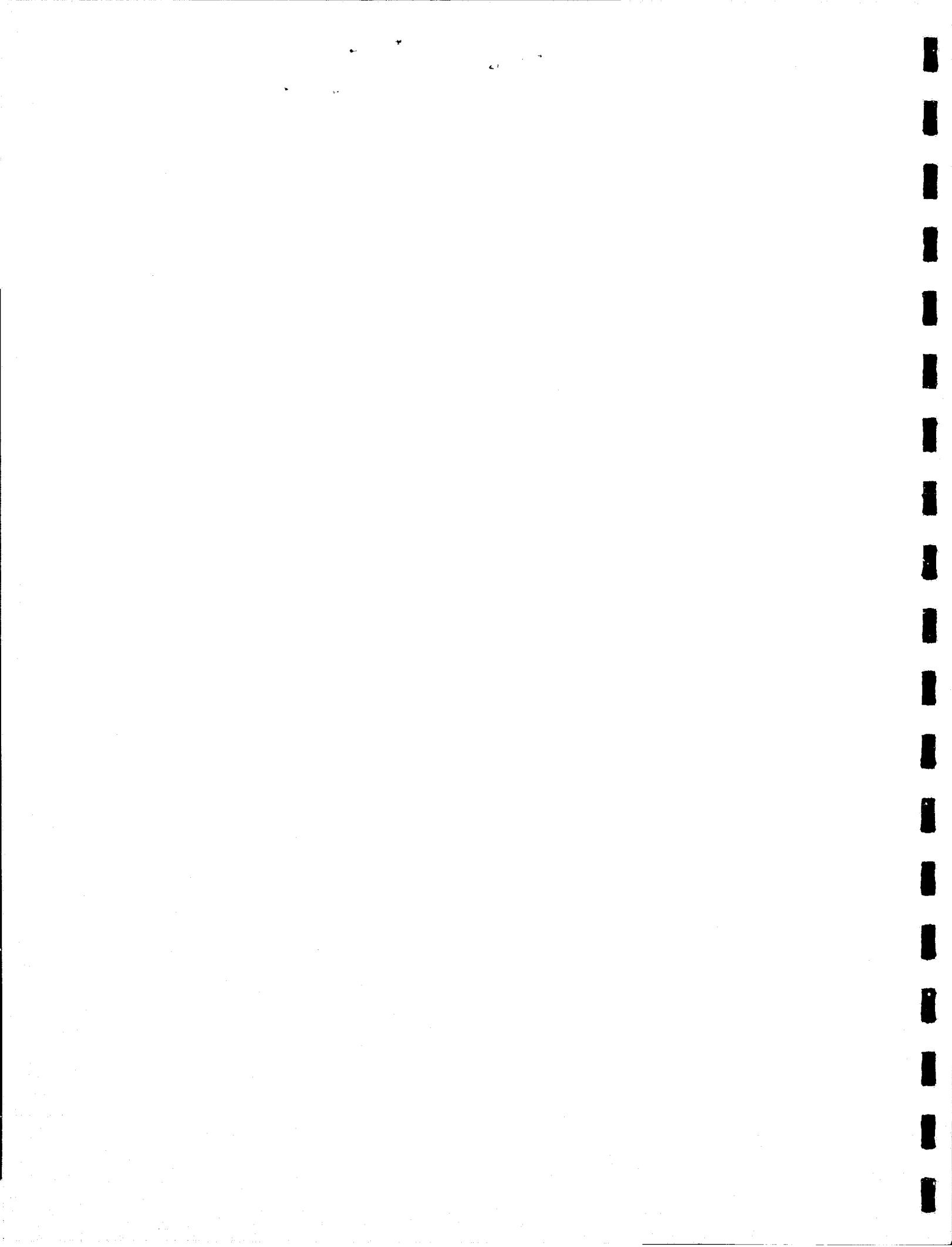
An In-Depth Look at



5/6/99



DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION STATUS OFFENDER PROJECT
Connecticut Department of Children and Youth Services



NCJRS

RUNAWAY YOUTH

FEB 22 1979

and

ACQUISITIONS

FAMILY VALUES

Professor Linda L. Blood

Department of Human Development, Counseling,
and Family Studies, University of Rhode Island

INCEST

Suzanne M. Sgroi, M.D.

Department of Ambulatory and Community Medicine
Mt. Sinai Hospital, Hartford, Ct.

PROSTITUTION

Judy Seckler

National Office of Social Responsibility
Arlington, Va.

JUVENILE STRESS

Elaine S. Kraus, A.C.S.W.

Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute
Portland, Ct.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES
345 MAIN STREET HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06115

ELLA GRASSO
GOVERNOR

FRANCIS H. MALONEY
COMMISSIONER

TO THE READER:

Systematically developed information or research is rare concerning what makes Johnny or Jill run away from home -- or about what would best help them and their parents in terms of legislation, social services, and community support.

Because of this, and because of our concern with the problems of runaway youth, the Department of Children and Youth Services is pleased to introduce to you four important papers by national, state, and regional authorities. The papers, as well as the workshops in which they were first presented, and the document which you are now reading, are part of a major research, planning and action effort sponsored by the Department and focusing on young runaways.

The reader is urged to give thoughtful consideration to these papers. To the layperson and professional alike -- to the parent, businessperson, public servant, friend -- they can be an important catalyst of informed action.

The papers were first delivered at a series of public workshops in June and July, 1978, at the Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute. The workshops were sponsored by the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offender Project (DSO) of the Department of Children and Youth Services, and the Elmcrest Family Institute.

A handwritten signature in cursive ink, appearing to read "Francis H. Maloney".
Francis H. Maloney, Commissioner
Department of Children and Youth Services

WHAT IS DSO?

Connecticut's Deinstitutionalization of Status Offender Project (DSO) is part of a nationwide research and demonstration project designed to explore the alternatives to secure detention or correction facilities for status offenders in order to achieve compliance with the requirements in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974.

The Act prohibits placing status offenders in juvenile detention or correction facilities. Participation in this program is voluntary and requires consent of both status offenders and parent.

Status Offenders are children under 16 who can be placed in detention for having violated those sections of the State's juvenile delinquency law that pertains to running away, truancy, immoral behavior and/or incorrigibility - actions that incur no penalty if done by adults.

The DSO Project is made possible by a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to the Connecticut Justice Commission.

Eight out of every ten youths served by DSO are runaways; approximately 75% of these runaways are female, and almost 30% are chronic runners. Chronic runners are defined by DSO as having run away five or more times.

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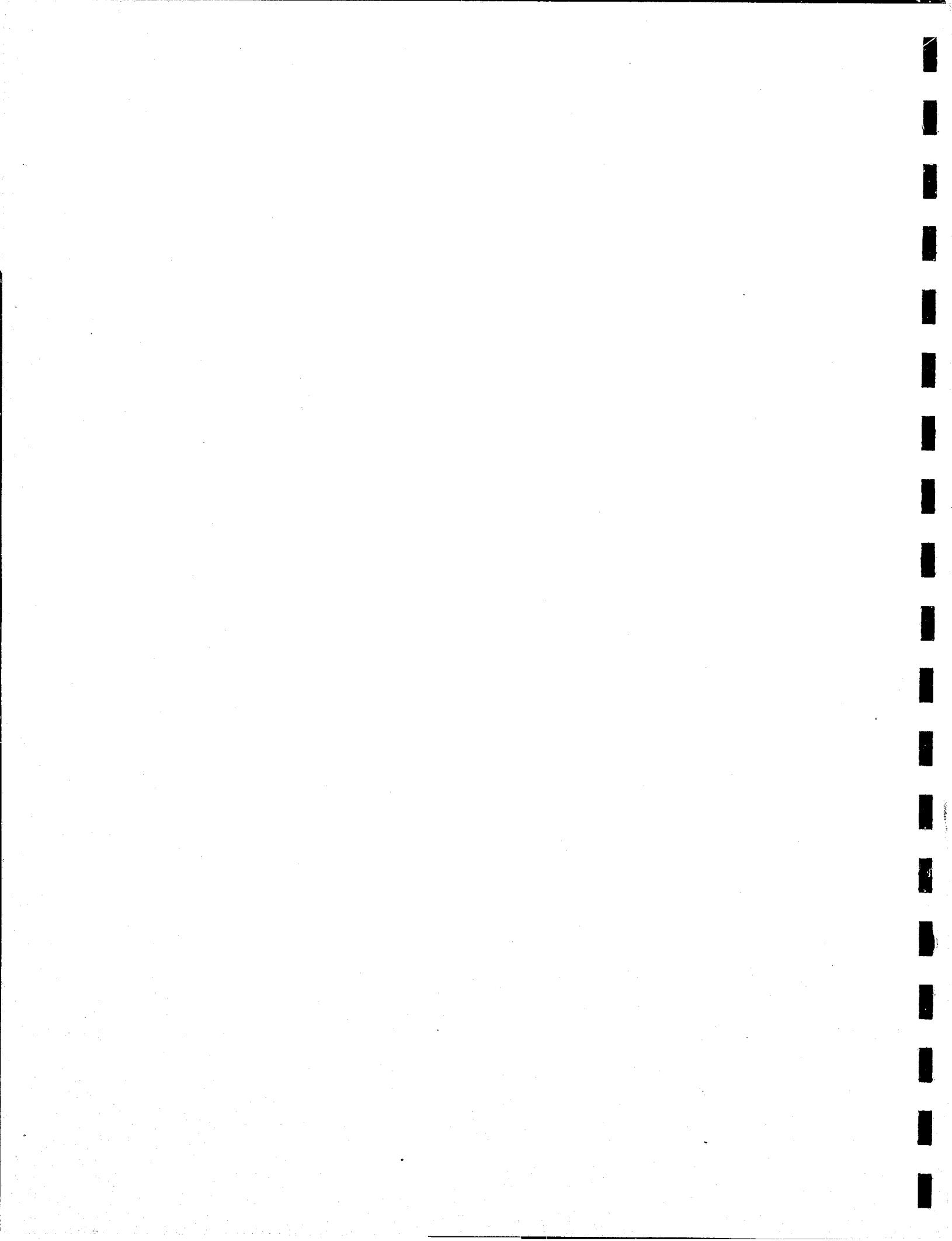
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Department of Children & Youth Services
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Dept. of Children & Youth Services

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RUNAWAY YOUTH AND FAMILY VALUES

Text of Remarks Delivered

by

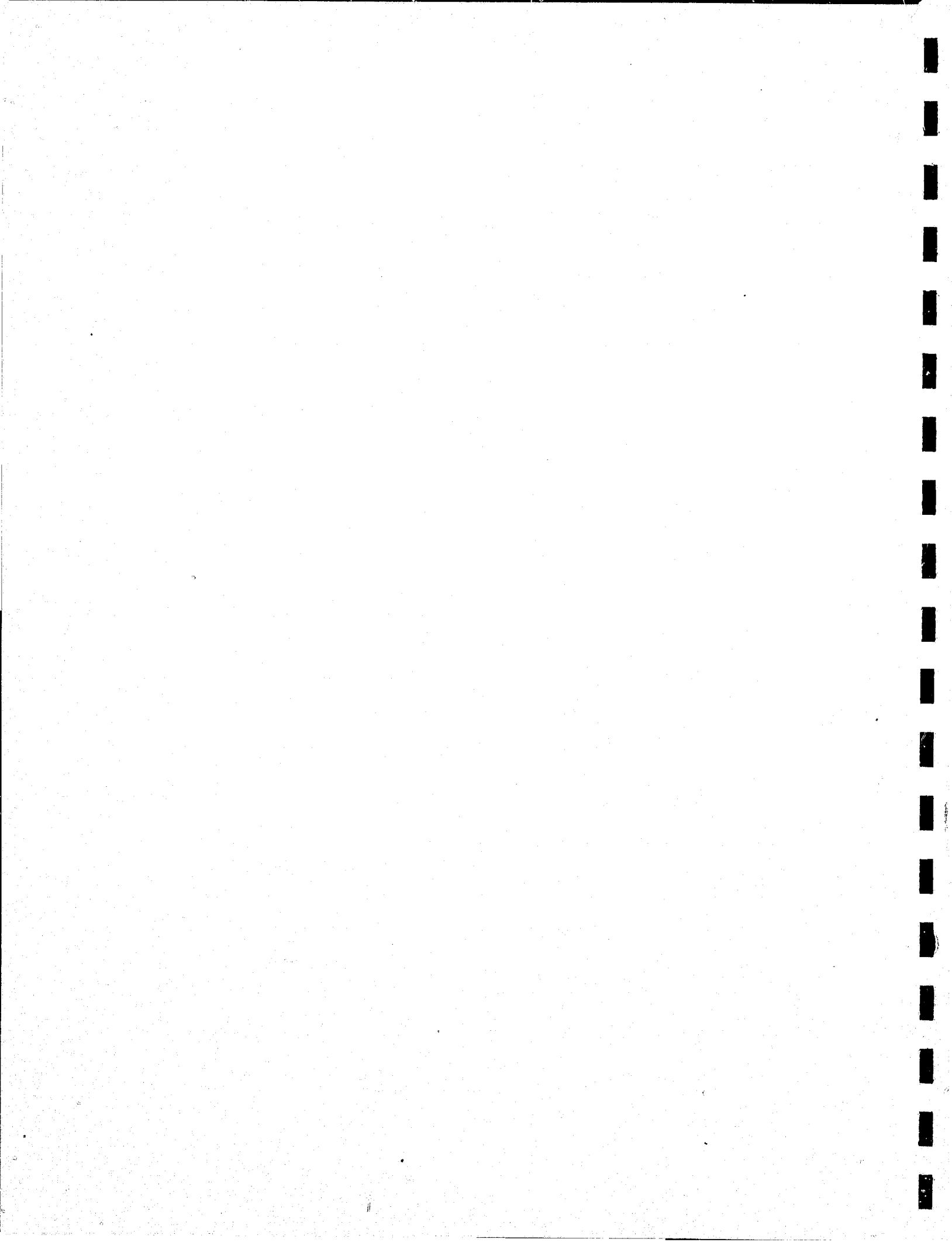
Professor Linda L. Blood

Department of Human Development, Counseling, and Family Studies

University of Rhode Island

June 22, 1978

Prepared by Linda L. Blood for delivery at a workshop on "Runaway Youth and Family Values," at the Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute. The workshop was sponsored by The Status Offender Project of the Connecticut Department of Children and Youth Services, and the Elmcrest Family Institute. It was made possible by a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to the Connecticut Justice Commission.



Connecticut was one of the very first states that has moved in the positive direction of establishing a system of juvenile justice that separates criminal offenders from disadvantaged, maladjusted boys and girls who need help.

Imprisoning young people for noncriminal behavior is, I feel, unwarranted, unjust, and cannot be justified under either a treatment or a punishment rationale. It makes much more sense to divert these people from the juvenile-justice system into programs that rehabilitate: family counseling, educational and employment opportunities and other forms of community treatment. I am pleased to read of your fine efforts in Connecticut. You are doing a splendid job of developing support programs for individual status offenders and thereby minimizing the possibility of the young person committing further status offenses. It is also good to see that your services include the entire family. Developing the maximum potential of young people and families in our society is a very important goal for our society. Assisting, not replacing other adults in this task is extremely important. Collaboration and interaction among all adults concerned with the status offender in particular and young people in general is imperative and should happen more often. All people concerned with the adolescent runaway should probably be here today - professionals working in human services, parents, school personnel, young people, and especially runaways.

In discussing runaways, we must be careful not to create scapegoats. In other words, we must not blame the family, the schools, the adolescent or the agencies. For none of us are doing our jobs very well or working to our maximum potential, and much more interaction between these groups is needed. Families, especially parents, have been harshly blamed for the adolescent flight tactic. We have even gone so far in some parts of the country as to jail parents for the deed committed by their children. This practice and mode of thinking was produced partially by the rightful understanding that children are not totally responsible for their acts. It was understood that there is a reason for behavior, and that much of the dynamics of behavior have their roots in the family because it is the closest human association in our society. Yet, to make the parent totally responsible means overlooking: (1) the pressures lying on the parents also, the economic and social circumstances under which they act and the crises of the middle-adolescent years; (2) the many other human and environmental influences on the child; and (3) the personality and psychological aspects of the child himself or herself.

Surely parents and family relationships have a major impact on the child's view of the world. Many runaways come from economically deprived families where the parents themselves live with frustration, where poverty means not only a lack of money, but also means ignorance, rejection, fear and degradation. Children are often no joy to these harassed parents. They are often a nuisance and another source of frustration - especially when they get older and begin to assert them-

selves. The child is the only handy object on whom anger and frustration can be vented. Whatever may be generalized about adolescent runaways, each runaway must be seen and heard, separately and clearly, for each is unique and different. No generalization will ever apply to any specific adolescent runaway.

In 1973, I participated in group research (The Teenage Flight Project) in the College of Social Work at Ohio State University. My purpose was to explore the issues causing conflict between parents and their runaway adolescents and, in particular, to ascertain the intensity of conflict in relation to major and minor issues. From my interviews with sixty runaways, I realized that for the most part these are youth with family problems. Their acts seem indicative of family pathology and may result from a wide variety of intolerable war-like home situations. All of my subjects had acted out their conflicts sufficiently enough to come to the attention of the courts or private and public social agencies.

My aim was to design an instrument that could discriminate between minor as opposed to major themes in conflictual behavior found in parent-child interaction. Such information, I felt, could lead to the identification of specific issue - response patterns in runaways and would be useful in designing early detection and prevention strategies. The range of conflictual topics increased with each study I investigated.

The adolescent, like the adult, views his needs in a hierarchical order. John Horrocks (1962) identified a group of basic psychological

needs that the adolescent has to fulfill before adulthood. The first of these needs is acceptance; the adolescent needs to feel that others respect and approve of him and that he is a worthy person. In addition, the adolescent has a need for achievement; he needs to do things, prove himself and reach objectives. The third is for recognition; the adolescent needs to become known to become an individual in his own right, and to be identified by others as distinct from those who surround him. A fourth need is for affection, or being loved unconditionally for one's own sake. Related to this need for total acceptance is the need to be understood, to communicate with other people and to express one's innermost thoughts and problems to others without loss of status. And last is the need for belongingness; it is vitally important that the adolescent be part of an ongoing group, institution or movement.

Based on research investigated, it was possible to dichotomize adolescent needs into two broad categories which, if interfered with, transposed issues into a confrontation incident. Major issues are considered to stem from difficulties arising from frustration of the following concrete needs: acceptance, achievement, recognition, affection, belongingness, conformity to peers and attainment of worthy goals. Minor issues are related to interference with meeting the more mundane or surface desires related to: hair styles, keeping certain hours, use of the family car, spending money, leisure time activities, and others. Having identified two different levels of issues, it was then possible to test the displacement theory of

conflictual behavior as it applies to runaway situations by operationalizing these issues in an instrument that measures conflict associated with each issue.

An instrument was designed to measure perceived conflict by adolescents on a number of topical issues frequently cited in the literature. The scale consisted of thirty-nine items dichotomized into eighteen major issues and twenty-one minor issues. The major issues correspond with Horrock's (1962) concept of essential psychological needs. The minor issues were developed from the findings of investigators such as Kinloch (1970), Sebald (1968), Kimball (1970), Shellow et al (1967), and others. The scale was administered to the adolescent who indicated by appropriate check marks, whether there was a presence or absence of conflict on the specific items. An attempt was made to test the instrument's power to distinguish between runaways and non-runaways.

The Value Issue Scale was designed in conjunction with research in progress at The Ohio State University during the 1972-73 academic year. The study involved a sample of runaways (eighty-two) and a matched sample of adolescents without runaway experience. The runaways interviewed in my study (50) were drawn from the major study. However, a special group had to be selected to serve as the "controls" in the pilot study due to scheduling problems which precluded the two projects from operating concurrently. A total of 110 subjects participated in the pilot study, 50 runaways and 60 non-runaways.

It was not feasible to select respondents by a random process. Because students were drawn from classes to participate in this "experiment" and required parental permission, the subjects were essentially volunteers. The runaways were drawn from three institutional settings, namely: Huckleberry House, the Juvenile Diagnostic Center and the Juvenile Detention Home - all in Columbus, Ohio.

Four hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis I: There is no significant difference between proportions of runaway and non-runaway adolescents perceiving conflict on value issues.

Hypothesis II: There is no significant difference between the proportions of perceived conflict found in major and minor issues within both samples.

Hypothesis III: There is no significant difference in proportions of perceived conflict in major and minor issues between each sample.

Hypothesis IV: There is no significant difference in proportions of items perceived by runaways and non-runaway samples as major issues.

The study produced some interesting and unanticipated results.

Table 2 contains the list of fifteen items on which statistically significant outcomes were obtained using proportions of no-conflict scores as the basis of comparison. These results led to the rejection of Hypothesis I. The consistently high proportion of no-conflict scores in the control group should be noted with the single ex-

ception of the "going to college" item. Tables 3 and 4 indicate that small differences were found in proportions of no-conflict scores in major vs. minor issues within and between both samples, thus leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis implied in Hypothesis II and Hypothesis III.

In Table 5, fifteen items are listed for which significant differences were found between the proportions of study samples identifying the item as a major issue. Consequently, Hypothesis IV was rejected. It should be noted that only six of the fifteen items with discriminating power corresponded with the scale's "major issues." This outcome inevitably tempted me to ask the question: which one is right, the scale or the subject? There are other attributes worth commenting upon. A consistently higher proportion of runaways were found to label issues as major. I found not only more intensity of conflict among runaways, but conflict was evident on a broader range of issues. When the proportions of both groups which labeled items as major issues were compared, item by item, a correlation coefficient of .706 (significant at .001) was found, indicating a parallel correspondence in response patterns of both samples. Referring to Table 6, a scan of the percentages listed for comparison samples will clearly show the runaways exercised a greater range of values and a higher order of values. Thus, while runaways and controls identified the same conflict issues, the control group responses were less intense.

TABLE 1. PROFILE OF PILOT STUDY SAMPLES

	Runaways			Controls	
Sex					
Male:	23	46%		15	25%
Female:	27	54%		45	75%
Race					
White:	37	74%		36	60%
Black:	13	26%		24	40%
Age					
Male:	15.63			15.89	
Female:	16.13			15.33	
All:	15.86			15.47	
Parents					
Married:	24	48%		41	68%
Divorced:	13	26%		10	17%
Separated:	8	16%		5	8%
Widowed :	5	10%		4	7%

TABLE 2. SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES OF "NO CONFLICT" PERCENTAGES
EXPRESSED ON EACH ISSUE BY RUNAWAYS AND CONTROLS

ITEM	CONTROLS N=60	RUNAWAYS N=50	Z
My school attendance (minor) ^a	63	22	4.36***
My selection of same sex friends (major)	61	22	4.26***
My parents accepting me as I am (major)	65	28	3.89***
My parents have trust in me (major)	55	20	3.76***
My experimentation with drugs (minor)	76	42	3.76***
The hours I have to be home (minor)	41	12	3.49***
What I do with my friends (major)	40	18	3.33***
My use of tobacco (minor)	71	42	3.01**
Obeying my parents (minor)	41	16	2.99**
My personal cleanliness (minor)	78	54	2.70**
My parents listening to me (major)	51	28	2.58**
My selection of opposite sex friends (major)	48	28	2.15*
My going to college (minor)	50	70	-2.15*
Spending my money my way (minor)	61	42	2.11*
My parents showing love for me (major)	65	46	2.02*

***.001 level of significance, two-tailed test

**.01 level of significance, two-tailed test

*.05 level of significance, two-tailed test

^aMajor and minor issues in parenthesis as defined by the researcher

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE OF NO CONFLICT EXPRESSED ON MINOR AND MAJOR ISSUES WITHIN THE CONTROL AND RUNAWAY GROUPS

GROUP	% MAJOR ISSUES	% MINOR ISSUES	Z*
Control N=60	51	54	-.263
Runaways N=50	35	44	-.918

*.05 level of significance= ± 1.96 , two-tailed test

TABLE 4. PERCENTAGE OF NO CONFLICT EXPRESSED ON MINOR AND MAJOR ISSUES BETWEEN THE CONTROL AND RUNAWAY GROUPS

ISSUE	% CONTROLS N=60	% RUNAWAYS N=50	Z*
Major	51	35	-1.70
Minor	54	44	-1.05

*.05 level of significance= ± 1.96 , two-tailed tests

TABLE 5. DIFFERENCE PERCENTAGES OF CONTROLS AND RUNAWAYS
ON IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS AS MAJOR ISSUES

ITEM	CONTROLS N=60	RUNAWAYS N=50	Z
My experimentation with drugs	5	30	-3.57***
My selection of same sex friends	33	66	-3.47***
My dating	25	56	-3.33***
My expression of sexuality	20	48	-3.15***
My use of tobacco	8	40	-3.04**
Spending my money my way	35	62	-2.84**
The clothes I wear	36	64	-2.84**
Obeying my parents	26	52	-2.69**
My selection of opposite sex friends	45	70	-2.66*
Doing my household chores	11	30	-2.37*
My school attendance	23	44	-2.36*
What I do with my friends	38	60	-2.32*
What I choose to eat	21	42	-2.27*
Doing things my way	40	60	-2.11*
The hours I have to be home	38	58	-2.11*

***.001 level of significance, two-tailed test

**.01 level of significance, two-tailed test

*.05 level of significance, two-tailed test

TABLE 6. PERCENTAGES OF COMBINED GROUPS, CONTROLS AND RUNAWAYS, IDENTIFYING ISSUES AS MAJOR

	% COMBINED N=110	% CONTROLS N=60	% RUNAWAYS N=50
*My parents have trust in me	60	58	64
*My privacy	60	53	70
*My parents accepting me as I am	58	53	64
*My selection of opposite sex friends	56	45	70
*My parents listening to me	51	46	58
*Doing things my way	49	40	60
The clothes I wear	49	36	64
*My selection of same sex friends	48	33	66
*What I do with my friends	48	38	60
My school grades	47	45	50
Spending my money my way	47	35	62
My personal cleanliness	47	38	56
The hours I have to be home	47	38	58
*My parents recognizing my feelings	46	43	50
Having confidence in myself	45	38	54
*My choice of future occupation	45	43	48
*My parents showing love for me			
*My dating	39	25	56
My amount of spending money	39	33	46
My hair style	39	33	46
Obeying my parents	38	26	52
*Parents appreciating my personal achievements	38	38	38
*The social events that I can attend	37	31	44
*My expression of sexuality	32	20	48
My school attendance	32	23	44
My use of the telephone	30	28	34
What I choose to eat	30	21	42
My going to college	30	38	22
My sleeping habits	29	26	32
My attendance at church or temple	26	23	28
My use of the car	25	23	28
My study habits	25	26	24
My religious ideas	24	23	26
My use of tobacco	24	8	44
*Being like my friends	21	16	28
Doing my household chores	20	11	30
My experimentation with drugs	16	5	30
My reading about human sexuality	14	13	16
*The clubs I join	10	10	12

*Major issues identified by researcher in Value Issues Scale

It was found that the instrument was able to differentiate runaways from other adolescents on fifteen out of thirty-nine scale items. On each of these issues, except for "going to college", runaways reported more conflict than the control group. Eight of these items had been classified as minor issues and seven had been classified as major issues. While problems affecting parents and adolescents include refusal to honor requests, resistance to parental selection of friends, attending school, spending money, smoking and experimenting with drugs, this does not preclude such conflicts from serving as proving grounds to test parental love, acceptance and trust.

The most important issues for both groups were: (1) my parents have trust in me; (2) my privacy (mail, phone and room); and (3) my parents accepting me as I am.

Results from my study confirmed findings by other investigators concerned with significant areas of conflict between parents and adolescents who resort to flight. One of these key issues for runaways has to do with parents not expressing love. Robey (1964) found that a runaway situation might result when a mother does not provide her daughter with love and affection. Allen and Sandhu (1967) reported that feelings of alienation seem to predominate where affective ties are weak. Expressions of affection, it appears, are demonstrations of love giving. Consequently, the absence of demonstrations of love are interpreted by the adolescent to signify that there is no love. The higher intensity of conflict expressed by runaways in my study, and the greater incidence of conflict with parents found in this group suggest a deficiency in such positive reinforcements.

The adolescent has not outgrown his need for parental love - though he'd rather be caught dead than admit it! Honest communication between parent and teenager is a demonstration of love giving. Of course, it may not be enough. Love giving between parent and child can be increased through sharing enjoyable (mutual) experiences, physical gestures that are genuine, and verbal assurances. Frequently, in their acutely sensitive state of preoccupation, adolescents interpret the absence of such demonstrations as an absence of parental love, or rejection. Although it would be unreasonable to attribute all adolescent acting out behavior to this felt deficiency in love, many teenagers are not above generating a crisis to put their parents to the test.

Another aspect on which much has been written is the concept of acceptance. A relatively high proportion of runaways reported conflict over the issue of parental acceptance in this study. Cervantes (1965) discovered that eighty percent of the dropouts in a study did not feel accepted at home as compared to twenty percent of the graduates. Coopersmith's (1967) finding suggests that children who are happy and enjoy high self-esteem have parents who respect their ideas and judgments. Similar findings were reported in the Ohio State's Teenage Flight Project. Runaways reported a greater incidence of academic failure and had achieved lower scores on a self-acceptance scale than a control group. It appears that parents who recognize the adolescent's right to self-expression and dissent are demonstrating a form of acceptance.

The data showed that more non-runaways felt accepted and had more intensive relationships with their peers; also, they were significantly more involved in a variety of formal and informal social activities with their peers. Thus, as with runaways, the control group of non-runaways experienced conflict, but the associated tension was dissipated through normal channels of expression and through the supportive network of peer relations.

As the adolescent ventures forth on his own to assert his independence from the parent-dominated nest, conflicts are generated which tend to alienate him from his parents. Even in a healthy home environment, the increased frequency of conflicts during the adolescent years is the rule.

While some conflicts are inevitable, their resolution - when feasible - is a desirable and gratifying objective for both sides to achieve. In addition to clearing up different points of view, communication can be used to reinforce points of concensus.

Can all this be reduced to the issue of communication? The results tended to show that the differences between the two groups were partly a reflection of different communication patterns used by the runaways as compared with the non-runaways. Among runaways, the higher levels of tension and parental conflict were accompanied by a greater reliance on indirect forms of communication to settle disputes. Indirect approaches included such behavior as walking out on a person in the middle of a dispute, ignoring the other person as if there were no dispute, and repression by threatening to use brute force. Runaways

characteristically report conflicts with parents for their failure to "listen to me." The issue of non-communication can hardly be separated from love and acceptance. The higher rate (nearly three times) of physical abuse reported by runaways in the Ohio State University research suggests avoidance of communication on the part of their parents. Avoidance can take a passive as well as aggressive form. In any case, adolescents are very sensitive to it. When they feel that they can talk with someone, the message they get back goes something like this: "You are somebody worth listening to; therefore, you must really be okay!" It seems obvious then that the most important help a parent or helping professional can give to a troubled adolescent is to listen. This is the beginning of communication. The least constructive action is to suppress expression by aggression or disengagement. Without it, the conflictual impulse is likely to engineer a crisis as a desperate venture to engage the adult in communication through shock treatment. This is most frequently the operating motive for adolescent flight.

In the acute situations described by runaways, they generally reported a breakdown in communication with parental figures. This problem also extended beyond parental figures. Runaways reported a higher number of conflicts with their peers than did non-runaways. In addition, they seemed wary about entering new relationships and making commitments. In contrast, non-runaways were more likely to confront their parents in disputes. While these "stay-at-homes" had some parent-child conflict in these same identified problem areas, there was no great stockpile of resentment because feelings were apparently discharged by active communication. Whether issues had to do with hours at home, clothing selection, dating behavior, selection of friends, or

what have you - there was a better focus on solving problems. There was also less severe tension and conflict in the peer group sphere.

My study implies the need for more work in the field focused on understanding the interaction process between parents and adolescents. The information generated by this research has some relevance to practice, even though it presents one side of the coin. In the future, it would be useful to provide parents with a comparable scale in order to ascertain the extent of their concurrence with adolescent perceptions.

It does appear that adolescents resort to the flight tactic as a request for help, direction, structure, and purpose. If we listen, we may learn how to help them. Consider the words from the Beatles' song "Try to See it My Way". . . .

Do I have to keep on talking 'til I can't go on?
While you see it your way,
Run the risk of knowing that our love may soon be gone
Think of what I am saying
We can work it out and get it straight.

Some specific factors within the home that often lead to adolescent flight are:

- A. Parental separation intensifies fears of rejection and abandonment.
- B. Delinquent parents - runaway is often a second generation delinquent.
- C. Lack of affection displayed in family - adolescent needs warmth and affection. The adolescent has not outgrown his need for parental love - although he'd rather be caught dead than admit it. Some flight behavior can be contributed to a felt deficiency in love and this may generate a flight crisis to put their parents to the test.

- D. Sexual abuse - One 14-year-old was the youngest of five children - all born before the mother's 20th birthday. The family finally broke apart when the father raped Peggy's older sister. Incest is probably greater in foster homes - also in homes where there is a step-parent. Recently, in Rhode Island a married man wanted to adopt his girlfriend as a daughter - violation of the law against incest.
- E. There is a high level of parent-adolescent conflict - "life-style conflicts with parents". Defeat on issues is a devastating experience for the adolescent whose values differ from their parents. Dr. Margaret Mead has said that adults in our society are immigrants to the present from a past that is largely irrelevant to coping with many present realities. There appears to be a lot of displacement of conflict from major to minor issues.
- F. There is a greater reliance on indirect forms of communication - walking out, ignoring, repressing; there is more physical abuse among runaways indicating a breakdown in communication with parental figures. The tension is not dissipated through normal channels of expression and through supportive network of peer relations.
- Mothers and fathers are often guilty of the very shortcomings they sometimes criticize in their own children. They perhaps would rather fool themselves than face the facts. Most parents will answer "yes" when asked if they have a good give-and-take communication with their children. Yet those same parents when listing major parental worries, will rate noncommunication and rebellion against authority above such problems as illegal drugs and the new morality.
- Both youth and non-youth have worries and concerns which they are finding more and more difficult to communicate to one another. The "grownups", when scared, begin to pontificate and hand out ultimatums - and the response on the part of youth is quick and sure resistance and withdrawal. And what Fritz Redl refers to as the "choreography of the dare" begins to unfold to its ultimate conclusion - a total stalemate with both sides frustrated and further apart. We often do not really hear and understand nor do we teach others how to do so.
- G. Social Class - Those from relatively affluent homes with traditional middleclass orientations and an emphasis on the nuclear family often experience great difficulty in establishing their independence. Their parents are often socially and professionally ambitious and often the runaway is written off as a hopeless case for the parents feel threatened and humiliated.

Runaways from lower-class backgrounds have a much more extended family and a closer knit community. The lower class parents often view the flight tactic as simply a part of growing up. We should consider the loss of the three-generation family and its consequences.

- H. Parents on the run - Adults run to alcohol, professions, drugs, gossip, social life - many housewives are in flight.
- I. Rootless Situation - The family is mobile and isolated - many do not know their neighbors - an impersonal situation.

I would suggest the following in relation to helping runaways and potential runaways:

- A. Parents need skills for dealing with conflicts with their children such as Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.). Also, they need to learn about the developmental needs of the adolescent. Training in parenting skills is needed - training in high school curriculums - give information before serious trouble occurs. What are the warning signs of troubled behavior? Too much emphasis in the family is on harmony and not enough emphasis is on conflict and how to deal with it. Conflict within the family and dealing with it in a healthy way is a source of growth. In the final analysis, how conflict is dealt with may be more important than the manifestation of conflict. Help parents set themselves up for the return of the young person - Abandoned Parent Programs are needed.
- B. The flight process itself has not been adequately explored from the parental point of view. Parents are in as much need of help as the adolescents. We must be careful of not being too partial to the individual needs of the child.

- C. Unless intervention of some type occurs, adolescents will return to home environments that are not conducive to readjustment. Only when the family as well as the patient is involved in treatment will family stress be immunized and opportunities for the child's successful return home be maximized.
- D. It would be interesting to see if parents and offspring can discuss important issues in an adult manner and thereby determine if open communication on these conflicting issues will decrease the incidence of runaways.
- E. Youths from homes with open, warm communications will probably not become dropouts. To reduce this gap more effective dialogue and rapport with youth must be achieved by educators, counselors, and parents. And, there must be better opportunities to understand feelings and attitudes on both sides of this equation. Troubled families make troubled people and thus contribute to crime, mental illness, alcoholism, drug abuse, poverty, alienated youth, and many other social problems. Develop the family and make people more human. Help troubled families become nurturing - and nurturing ones even more nurturing.
- F. We must give human help instead of professional help. Keep in touch with youth and runaways. Identify and publicize the agencies so both youth and parents know where to turn for help.

- G. Could provide a "People's Center" to deal with the whole family since runaways are from runaway families - the crisis is a family problem. Reduce the high cost of family counseling and promote family counseling as a preventative measure.
- H. Crisis-oriented services should be provided to parents of runaway children or prospective runaways where motivation to receive help is high.
- I. Reach-out programs should be created specifically for one-parent families and step-parent families which seem to be especially prone to stresses in family situations.
- J. Schools should offer seminars to parents after school hours on topics related to family life and child development. Churches, civic organizations, and others can do the same. Seminars should include general facts about family life in the United States, and discuss case illustrations and available treatment opportunities. These recommendations were stressed by the student monitoring panel.
- K. Other numerous valuable observations made by high school participants included the following: (1) parents need to be more involved and informed on school matters; (2) parents should individualize their children rather than attempt to treat them all alike; (3) as children grow, less reliance should be placed on force or punishment and more on explanation; (4) parents and children should get together to discuss their relationship problems; (5) just as adults, teen-

agers are concerned about family life and have a vested interest in it; consequently, they should share some responsibility in making family life as enjoyable and viable as possible.

L. Group houses, foster homes, and shelters in the local community should be established to provide temporary and long-term care for runaways and adolescents estranged from their families. Incarceration of adolescents in primitive institutions for running away and other arbitrary "charges" is more likely to contribute to a child's negative self-image and reinforce a delinquency pattern.

Both the adolescent and the parents seek help, as evidenced in this letter:

" I am from Providence and I have a 16-year-old daughter. In the past year or so, I've lost all ability to communicate with her. We can't talk about anything without fighting. About a month ago she ran away after threatening to do so for quite awhile. I know my lecturing and scolding were the reasons she left, and I feel very responsible. I don't know how to get in touch with her to let her know that I really care about her. I think we could make a go of our mother-daughter relationship again if she'll give me the chance. Can you help?" (Providence Journal, 8/19/77).

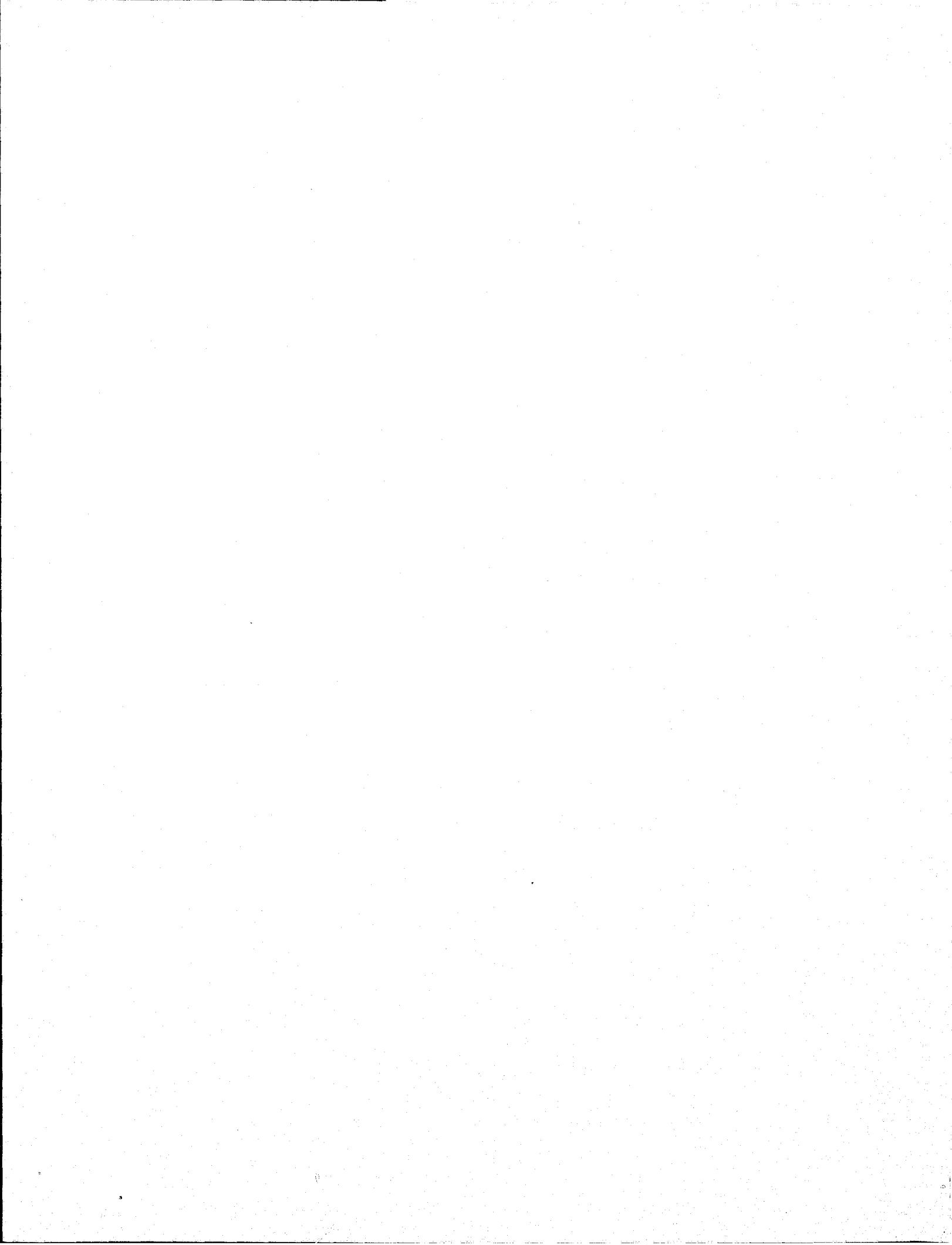
The question is: has a sincere effort been made by each side really to understand the thoughts and feelings of the other? Or have the people on both sides of the widening gap been so absorbed in their own lives, their own frustrations, that they have been unable to see the world as the others do or are unwilling even to try? Neither generation is wholly blameless when family communications break down.

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RUNAWAY YOUTH AND INCEST

Text of Remarks Delivered

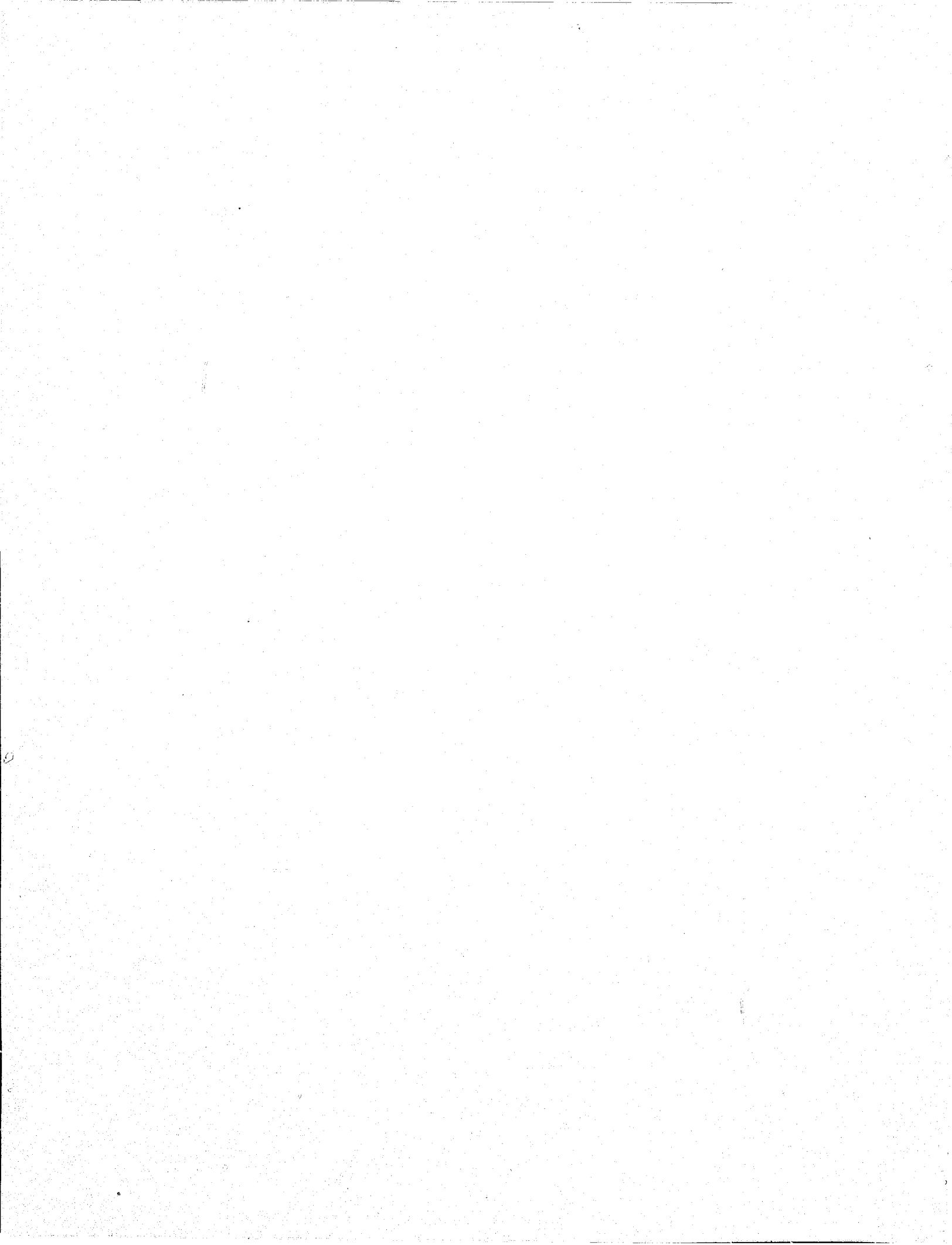
by

Suzanne M. Sgroi, M.D.

Department of Ambulatory and Community Medicine
Mt. Sinai Hospital, Hartford, Ct.

June 29, 1978

Transcript of remarks by Dr. Sgroi delivered at a workshop on "Runaway Youth and Incest," at the Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute. The workshop was sponsored by the Status Offender Project of the Connecticut Department of Children and Youth Services, and the Elmcrest Family Institute. It was made possible by a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to the Connecticut Justice Commission.



RUNAWAYS AND INCEST

June 29, 1978

Suzanne M. Sgroi, M.D.:

My own experience with child sexual abuse has been partly gained at Mount Sinai Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut in the Department of Ambulatory and Community Medicine, with a population of children and adolescents who have presented to us in the emergency room. As Medical Director of the walk-in Venereal Disease Clinic jointly run by the Hartford Health Department and Mount Sinai Hospital I have seen many children under the age of 13 who present to us with gonorrhea infections that they have certainly not acquired from toilet seats. Since 1975 I have served as a consultant to the Department of Children and Youth Services' Child Abuse and Neglect Demonstration Center, a project funded by a demonstration grant from the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect. During the last year I have served as Chairman of a Sexual Trauma Treatment Program with the DCYS' Child Abuse and Neglect Demonstration Center that was specifically funded to try to provide more light on how the statutory child protection agency can best help child victims of sexual abuse and their families. These cases get into the system when somebody reports that a child is a suspected victim of sexual abuse to DCYS' Child Protective Services.

The program has been in operation informally since August

of 1977, and formally since October 1, 1977. We now have had the opportunity to look at some ten months of experience working with a total of 75 cases, two-thirds of which have been incest cases.

I think I need to describe my experience with child sexual abuse in order to put some of my remarks in better perspective. I am going to stand here and say to you, unabashedly, that my approach and my ideas about this problem are quite child-oriented. Now, there are several programs in the country to deal with the problem of incest which, I think, pretty much reflect the sponsoring agency that approaches this problem. For example, in June of 1977, when the DCYS' Child Abuse and Neglect Demonstration Center sponsored the first statewide Child Sexual Abuse Conference in Connecticut, we had as two of our guests, Henry and Anna Giarretto from the Santa Clara County Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program. From them we learned how their program, which operates out of a department of probation and operates from within the criminal justice system approaches child sexual abuse. In retrospect, it is probably fair to describe the Santa Clara County program offender-oriented. That is, its reason for being is to work with offenders who have been convicted of sexual abuse or sexual assault of a child.

This past year, in April, 1978, we received consultation from Mrs. Lucy Berliner of the Harborview Sexual Assault Center in Seattle, Washington. Mrs. Berliner shared with us some of the experiences of that particular program which is based within a

rape crisis center and deals with victims of child sexual abuse and their families. I think that it is quite fair to describe the Harborview program as child-oriented and mother-oriented. The principal emphasis is on working with the child victim who is usually, but not always, female, and working with the mother of that child and attempting to build up these two key individuals. Their goal in most incest cases is to build these individuals up sufficiently so that mother will be able to make a separation from the perpetrator (usually the child's father) and be able to provide parenting and protection for, not only the target child, but also the other children in the family on her own, or with another partner.

In contrast, I think that many of my perspectives on child sexual abuse are deeply influenced by the fact that my own experience with children and families for the last three years has been primarily in association with initiatives and responsibilities of the statutory Child Protection Agency in Connecticut. When outsiders look at our program and assess it I believe they will say, "These people are primarily child-oriented in their approach".

In order to talk about incest and runaways, I think we need to spend a few minutes reviewing some of the basic dynamics and mechanics of child sexual assault. How do children become engaged in sexual activity with others? By what process does this happen?

What actually goes on between the child and the perpetrator? How does the child deal with this and resolve it, or live with it from then on? What sort of continuum of exposure are we talking about? And what is our framework for evaluating a runaway child to learn if possibly incest may be a factor contributing to the child running away? Without this framework it is very difficult to make any kind of assessment of the behavior of the runaway child in relation to the incest factor.

Let us briefly run through my perception of the dynamics and mechanics of the engagement process in child sexual abuse and what happens thereafter. These perceptions, again, are drawn from my personal case experience, from the works of Drs. Ann W. Burgess and Linda Lytle Holmstrom, from Boston College, from the work of Dr. A Nicholas Groth in working with pedophiles at the Massachusetts Treatment Center for Sexually Dangerous Persons and also at the Forensic Mental Health Center in Southbridge, Massachusetts; from the work and experiences that have been shared with us by Mrs. Berliner, among others, and by some of our consultants over the last year. I also feel that the description by Drs. Elva Ponanski and Peter Blos, from the University of Michigan, about the dynamics of the incestuous family, in an article published in 1975 in Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, is probably the best I have seen.

How do kids get sexually abused? I think that we all have to ask ourselves this question. How, in our society, can this

thing happen? Children are victimized in this way because they are children. Because they are little. Because by definition they have a tendency to be weak, as opposed to strong. Because they live in a society that puts them in a position, at least for a portion of the time when they grow up, of being subservient to adults in terms of doing what adults want them to do. They become victimized in this way because, in our society, an adult who wished to exercise power and dominance over a child has a variety of opportunities to do so. Children are most often sexually abused by adults who are related to them, within the family circle, or else by people who have access to them by virtue of what we allow children to do in our society. In other words, the perpetrators are almost always people who are known to the child and who have some established power relationship over the child already. Thus the perpetrator is most likely to be dad, or an older brother, or a step-father, or a grandfather, or an uncle, or mother's commonlaw husband. Or, moving outside the family circle - a babysitter, a teacher, a neighbor, an organizational leader in some group that we permit children to attend. If you really think about it, we pretty much restrict the activities of small children. Most of the time small children are where they are because a relative or somebody that was given access to the child by a relative let them be where they are going to be. So, the perpetrators of sexual abuse of children are most often people who are in this kind of power position, and

almost always somebody who is known to the child.

I will apologize to the men in the audience if I seem to be anti-male and super feminist in my bias because I have mentioned only male perpetrators. I mention only male perpetrators because it is mostly male perpetrators we know about. It is male perpetrators of child sexual abuse whose acts are most likely to come to our attention. I believe that, in the next ten years, as we learn more about sexual abuse of children, we will learn more and more about the female perpetrator. I believe the female perpetrator is out there. Thus far, in my personal case experience, I have encountered very, very few child sexual abuse cases with female perpetrators - a half a dozen or so, no more. The female perpetrator was always mother, and in those six cases, mother was always either psychotic or mentally retarded. A very, very small case experience, and one I share with you only in terms of explaining why, from now on today, I am going to speak only about male perpetrators. I think that, again, in the next ten years, we are going to learn much more about this very shadowy figure - the female perpetrator of child sexual abuse.

How does the child wind up getting engaged in sexual activity? There have to be a number of key ingredients. There has to be access to the child. Again - known perpetrator, usually somebody within the family circle, usually at home. And there has to be opportunity. And what the opportunity usually translates out to

is privacy. In other words, this interaction between the adult and the child is usually something which is not shared with others and requires that there be privacy and nobody else around to see. So, once again, in terms of where we let small children be, this very much delimits where this act is going to take place. Most often it is going to happen either at home or in the child's general neighborhood or where the child is permitted to be by his or her parents. The perpetrator is, once again, almost always somebody who is known to the child and somebody who can present this activity in a non-violent, non-threatening, non-forcible way to the youngster. Sometimes verbally, sometimes nonverbally. If it is verbal, the child usually is engaged by the perpetrator proposing the activity and beginning the activity and the child goes along.

Why does the child go along? The child goes along because the person that is proposing this is an adult, somebody who is in a power position. Children usually want to please adults. The child goes along because the child may very well be young enough not to have much notion of what society thinks of this kind of behavior, so the child accepts the adult's moral standards which are obviously being misrepresented as being appropriate. Again, we very much encourage children to do this. We encourage children to accept what adults tell them to do or say is ok, as ok. The child goes along frequently because the child is bribed and promised some kind of reward for this very intimate kind of activity.

And again, the adeptness of the perpetrator is going to be very much reflected in that perpetrator's ability to engage this child in a non-threatening, non-violent, non-scary kind of way. If the child gets frightened, the child is likely to come away from that encounter quickly telling somebody about it, and this is probably the very last thing that perpetrator is going to be interested in. So the child gets engaged in this sort of way.

What happens? What happens between this adult and child? Initially, probably the encounter begins with exposure. The perpetrator undresses. The perpetrator exposes at least the genitals. The perpetrator persuades the child to undress.... They may just look at each other. The initial sexual encounter may not go beyond this - may not go beyond mutual inspection. The perpetrator literally may never touch the child in the initial encounters.

The next most frequent kind of behavior one could expect to be occurring is in the area of autostimulation - masturbation. The perpetrator masturbates himself. The perpetrator persuades the child to masturbate himself or herself. Again, they may have one of these encounters literally without ever touching each other.

The next most common, and when I say most common, please don't think I'm giving you a strict kind of laundry list where number three can't ever come before number one. It's obviously not that way. But in terms of talking about frequency of behavior, next most common we can expect to be fondling, touching, stroking -

gentle, repetitive, external contact, stroking of the child's body. It may be stroking all over the child's body - pleasurable stimulation. Stroking the breast area, abdomen, buttocks, genital area, with gradually more and more emphasis on the genital area and on stimulating the child externally. The perpetrator may persuade the child to fondle or caress or stroke him in this way and vice versa. Again, always the possibility of both male and female victims.

The encounter may stop there and never proceed any further. Or the behavior may stay at that level, repeated over time, and never proceed to penetration. If there is going to be penetration, the most likely area of the child's body to be penetrated is most obviously the mouth. And, again, we are talking about very young child victims. If you were talking about a child victim who was four or five, six, seven years old, the only body opening that is going to be amenable to this kind of penetration readily will be the mouth. The perpetrator may persuade the child to fellate him - contact between the child's mouth and the perpetrator's penis. The perpetrator may persuade the child to take his penis into the child's mouth and suck the penis.

In Connecticut this is termed in our sexual assault laws as fellatio, as sexual intercourse, as sexual penetration. Or the perpetrator may fellate the child, contact between the perpetrator's mouth and the child's penis, if we're talking about a male child

(which is still called fellatio), or contact between the perpetrator's mouth and the female child's genital area (our law calls this cunnilingus).

If there is going to be penetration of another area, it will most probably be the rectum. Again, the rectal opening is potentially very distensible, very stretchable, and if, indeed, we are talking non-violent contact, with a known person who engages the child in a non-threatening way, the opportunity to be able to dilate the rectal opening and penetrate it is very great and very possible. An usually this begins with digital or finger penetration, then followed sometimes by penetration with the penis. This, also, in our sexual assault law is considered to be sexual intercourse, whether the penetration of the rectum occurs with a finger or an object manipulated by the perpetrator into the rectal opening of the victim's body or by the penis. Once again, it is possible for this to occur with the right setting and with the right circumstances without there being a large amount of physical trauma to the child, or, indeed, without there being any physical trauma at all.

Up to this point every form of child sexual abuse that we have discussed is equally true for male victims as well as female victims. If you read the literature about child sexual abuse, you will read that female victims outnumber male victims by a factor of approximately 9 to 1. I would put it to you, ladies and gentle-

men, that that is part of a cultural bias in the United States of America, that little boys are not victims of sexual assault. We do not look for them. We ignore them when they are right under our noses. We are enormously reluctant in child sexual abuse cases where the suspected perpetrator is the father, even, to do adequate interviewing and examination of all of the children in the family. We have these blinders and this tunnel vision that focuses down on the female victim who frequently will be identified as the first target child, and we ignore the little boys. And because we don't look for them, because we don't interview for them, if they haven't been hurt, we usually never find them. I will make another prediction for you, that in the next ten years, we are going to learn more and more about male victims of sexual assault, as we begin to look for them more and more.

Lastly, there may be penetration of the vaginal area in a female child. And once again, this probably will start with external contact, and, in our state, contact with the breasts, buttocks, inner thighs and the genital/rectal area of a child's body. This contact, even if it is external, is identified as sexual contact and it is considered to be a violation of the sexual assault law. Our law makes the distinction between sexual contact or external contact with the so-called intimate parts of the body, and sexual intercourse - penetration of the rectal, vaginal and oral openings. There may be vaginal contact, there may be vaginal penetration by the perpetrator's fingers or an object manipulated by the perpetra-

tor into the vaginal opening of the victim's body, or there may have vaginal penetration by the penis.

Now we come to another bias in our culture, and that is that little girls are not only made of sugar and spice, but also, at least on the books, they should not be capable of vaginal intercourse until they reach the age of majority, at which point, on their wedding night, they will have a very negative first sexual encounter with their beloved and their intended and their lawfully married husband which will result in blood on the bedsheets. Right? Isn't that pretty much the way the scenario goes? It has been that way since the days of King Arthur, and it is my impression that our society holds this up as an ideal to this day. The men who wrote about King Arthur knew relatively little about female genital anatomy, and most people who cope with child sexual abuse to this day know relatively little about it. I'm not here to give you an anatomy lesson. Let me simply remind you that the hymen is a thin membrane of tissue that goes from the outer edge of the vagina toward the center and usually the child is born with a hymenal opening. The opening may only be pinpoint at birth, but it quickly enlarges as the child grows older and as vaginal secretions accumulate and drain, and as the child walks and moves around and as the child masturbates (they do that, you know). So that by the time a child is old enough to be in the age range of children who are most likely to be victims of child sexual assault, there is

an opening in the hymen, and that opening obviously can be enlarged by finger penetration. The notion that an eight year old girl cannot be a victim of vaginal intercourse is based on a bias that assumes that the anatomy somehow looks like a closed door. Instead, depending on the experience of that child, she may be fully capable of vaginal penetration at the time of the first encounter, particularly, once again, if the sexual assault behavior is non-violent, non-traumatic and if the perpetrator is adept and takes time at what he is doing.

Now, I'm not going to comment any further on this except to say that until we have, in this country, a majority of physicians who know how to examine little girls, and who do not have to depend on the services of a pediatric gynecologist to tell them whether or not immature female genital anatomy is normal or not, we are going to continue to have very many, many problems in this area, because, unfortunately, most practitioners do not do these exams routinely. They don't know what normal looks like, and they can't give you good examinations when you ask for them.

Back to our framework for child sexual assault. After all of these various forms of behavior which may occur in combination or singly, and which most often occur with repeated incidents over time, we now have a child victim remaining. How is that child victim going to behave? It is going to be one hundred percent dependent on what happened and how it happened. And if the child

victim was not scared, not hurt and not subjected to negative pressure, I will put it to you that most of these child victims are going to come away from these initial encounters non-traumatized. So that the perpetrator can then readily engage the child in the next phase of the process which is the secrecy phase - swearing the child to secrecy and getting the child to look upon this encounter as something that is going to be a private interaction between the child and the perpetrator from then on.

The perpetrator wants the child to keep it a secret for obvious reasons. He doesn't want to get caught; doesn't want to take the flak if people find out what happens, but also wants to engage the child in this way so that there can be continued contact over time. So the perpetrator tries to get the child to keep the secret, and this may take the forms of bribes or mild threats or very negative kinds of threats. We look very carefully at the mechanism for engaging the child in secrecy. The more negative it was, the more violence threatened, the more concerned we become about the child's potential danger in the future from the perpetrator. I do not know if this is an appropriate benchmark, incidentally. It is the tack we are taking. Only time will tell if that was what to look for or not.

The child most often keeps the secret. Why? The perpetrator was probably a known and valued person; the child was probably not hurt; the experience was probably positive; the child doesn't

know any better; rewards were given; and the behavior itself is self-reinforcing frequently. Why? It felt good. Kids get messages from their bodies all the time and this kind of stimulation, all of the things that I described, can come across to the child as very positive, or if not positive, at least neutral. So for some combination of all these reasons, the child keeps the secret.

Now we have scenario for continued sexual contact over time, and the child is unlikely to tell the secret unless something happens to upset the balance. What could happen to upset the balance in a scenario where we are talking about incest, with a perpetrator who is the father or father figure in the home, or strong dominant male power figure in the home, and a child who has continued exposure over time? Why does that child keep the secret and when the child tells the secret, why does the child do it? We have just looked at a data analysis of our first 53 cases and have found that 62% of the time in our cases, the child eventually tells the secret. Why?

Well, I would put it to you that the child tells the secret either because he or she eventually got hurt, or something negative happened. The negative thing may very well have to do with a continuum of sexual assault occurring over time, and the child growing up into adolescence and beginning to be interested in peer sexual relationships, certainly the child's maturation and emerging sexuality is going to play a role in this.

We now are most likely to have a situation where we have a child victim becoming interested in outside things and a perpetrator at home, who has a very strong interest in maintaining what one of our colleagues, Barry Baker, has called the family fortress - an ingrown, inward-turning kind of family circle where people have few relationships with outsiders, and where they depend very much on each other for social interaction. In several of our families we have noticed that father acts pretty much like a jailer for everyone in the family; strongly delimits things like telephone calls, even for older adolescent children in the family; is very disinterested in having anybody in the family have outside relationships, group activities, social activities and so on.

Now there is a setup for our adolescent female victims, in particular, to do what? To try to stop, what? The incestuous sexual activity? Not necessarily. Probably she is mostly interested not so much in stopping the sexual activity at home, but rather in being allowed the freedom to do the kinds of things she wants to do with outsiders. She will be under pressure from the perpetrator to refrain from outside social contacts, from peer relationships. Sometimes the pressure and the limitations are so great that she runs away from the family fortress and eventually encounters one of the professionals here in this room today.

How is that child likely to look to us? Well, again, I think we have to remember what has happened to her prior to running away.

Let us make the assumption that, by the time she reaches adolescence and gets interested in outside things, and gets interested in having more freedom, she has already told somebody at home about the sexual activity. Who is she most likely to tell? She is most likely to tell Mama. And what is Mama most likely to do? In our experience, Mama puts her off, refuses to hear, or when she hears, calls it something else and disbelieves the child. And again and again and again we get the scenario - when the case presents to us, when the situation has blown up - we hear from mother initially, "I didn't know a thing about it. Hadn't the slightest idea this was going on.". And almost invariably, when we really have an opportunity to establish an alliance with different family members and find out more information through good interviewing and through that level of communication that only comes after you have an opportunity to establish a relationship, almost again and again we find out later on, Mama did know about the incest. Somebody in the family circle did tell. But the issue was put aside and was not addressed at all, or else was ineffectively addressed. And again and again and again, we find that mothers were either consciously or unconsciously denying what is happening and that in some cases, they were active participants. They knew about the situation; they were letting it happen; sometimes they even set it up. Also, sadly, we frequently find out that the child had told siblings, or that siblings were aware, and that frequently part of the whole family

interaction and part of the scenario included other family members knowing about the incest, stepping aside, turning aside, and letting it happen.

These girls frequently present to us as pseudo-mature; girls who frequently are not only physically mature at a relatively early age, but also behavior-wise, superficially, seem four or five years older than their actual chronological age. And in many cases, frequently unconsciously, without the words ever being said, have moved into the role of a wife figure/mother figure in the home. Now, once again, when you talk about how you protect that child, you have to figure out where the child is in the whole spectrum of what is happening. You have to ask what does the child want? If the reason you find out about the incest is that the child has run away, and you really want to help her, you better find out why she ran away. Even if incest is presented as the up-front reason why the girl ran away, you had better try to learn what the child now wants.

Again and again we move into these situations assuming that the child has run away because she wants to be separated from the family forever and no longer wants any contact with the perpetrator. In other words, we assume that the reason for running is to stop the incest. When we move toward permanent separation, we find out later that the child doesn't seem to be "cooperating." Frequently the child isn't cooperating because that's not what the child

wants at all. The child would really like to be home.

The child probably doesn't want the family circle to be disrupted that much. The child, maybe deep down, even though she probably will never admit it to you, might even be willing to service dad, or the father figure, every now and then, if what it really meant was no hassles. The trade off for resuming incest would be that the child would be allowed to do what she really wants. Most frequently what she really wants are the things that most adolescents want as they are going through that process which, when disrupted, we call adolescent adjustment reaction. The child wants some independence, some autonomy, wants to come and go, wants to do things, wants to socialize, wants to have peer relationships and wants to get on to the business of being an adult.

And, I think, most frequently we fall flat on our faces because we don't figure out what that child wants. We think that what the child wants is to stop this horrendous thing, and we convey to the child that we think that what she has been engaging in frequently over time and frequently deriving some sincere enjoyment from is awful. ("My God. What an awful thing has been done to you!") That's really not very helpful to the child who enjoyed the incest relationship, who has some very, very positive feelings toward the perpetrator (who may very well be her father) and who probably does not want any of the negative kinds of things that happen in our society when dad gets charged with first degree sexual

assault and/or incest actually to happen.

So how does the child respond when we make overtures, assuming that she is going to go along with everything we want to do to tidy up the situation, and the child finds out very soon that that is really not what she wants to happen? Well, I would put it to you that very frequently the way she responds is to come back to you and say, "Hey. I lied. This thing really didn't happen. I was upset and I ran away, and I figured that would be just about the best way for somebody to really understand how bad things are for me at home." And then she withdraws the whole allegation. And again and again we find ourselves in situations where we have built our "case" for the statutory intervention and the authoritative incentive for change that we want to happen on one thing and one thing only, since very, very frequently there is no physical evidence, there is no corroboration by witnesses. We have built it on the victim's allegation and because we are not presenting to the child what she would really like to happen as a consequence, and because she is now under enormous pressure from family members and neighbors and just about everybody else to get rid of this terrible problem by recanting the whole thing, she does the logical thing. She recants. And she tells us it was all a lie. And our case disappears.

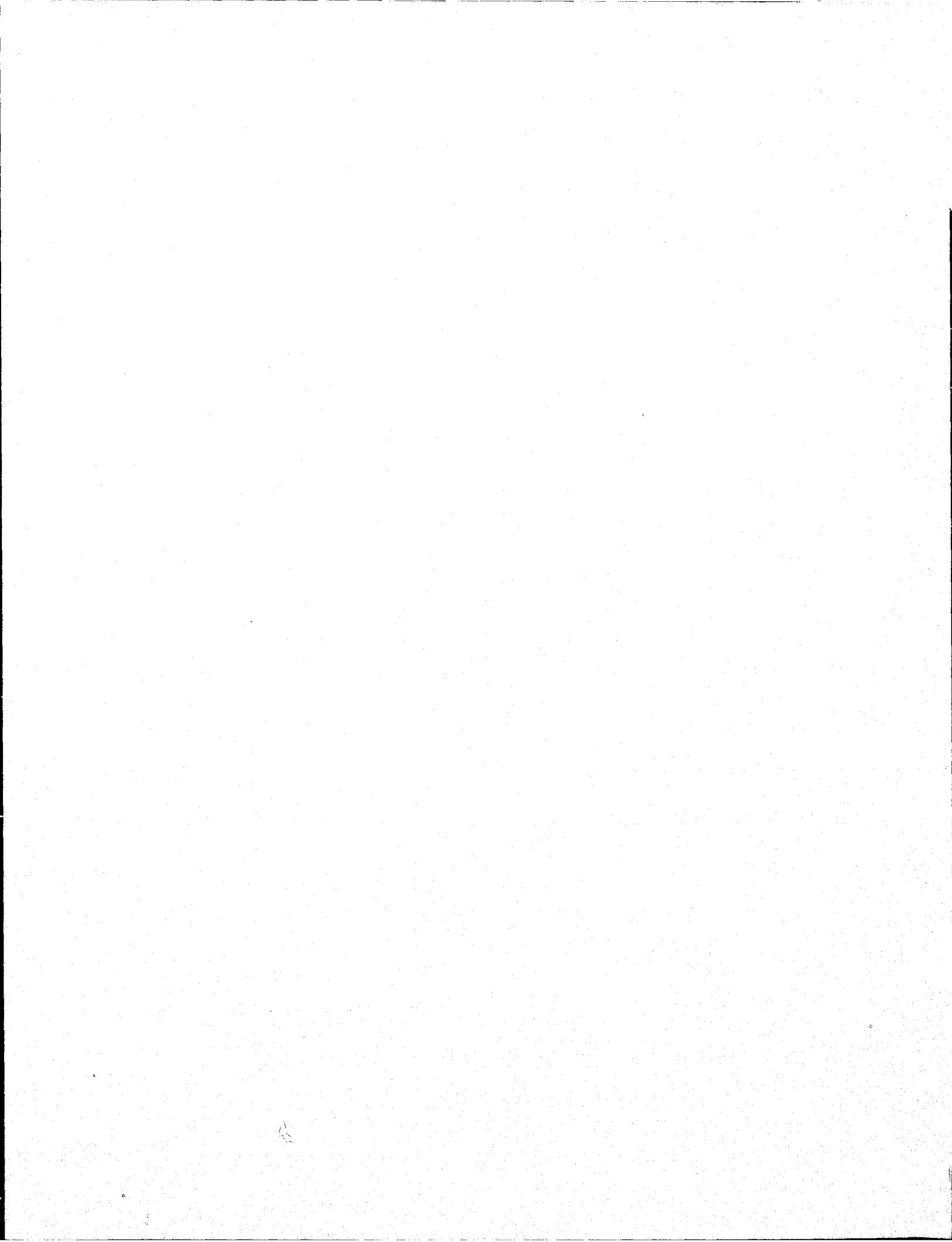
Meanwhile, of course, she knows one hell of a lot about sexuality, and probably during this same period of time as the run-

away situation, she has been engaging in sexual realtionships on her own - frequently peer sexual relationships. In our society she is a "set-up" for getting involved with all of the acting-out kinds of things adolescents get into, i.e. drugs, alcohol, the whole thing. And what does that do? Well, that makes her a slut on the witness stand, ladies and gentlemen. That makes her a highly in-credible witness, because she's done all of these "bad things" and we look, again, at that behavior, and we say, well, you know, regardless of what she says happened in the past, the real problem now is what she's doing right now, and we very frequently miss the boat.

So I would suggest to you that, although I can't give you any capsule package for how to identify and how to make the diagnosis in these cases, I can say to you that without an awareness of some of these basic dynamics and mechanics, without the capacity to have good physical examinations done on all child victims, looking for the trauma, looking for the evidence of penetration; looking for the sperm in the vagina of the seven-year-old who had an opening in her hymen large enough so that when the perpetrator ejaculated against her genital area without penetrating her, the sperm got inside; looking for the gonorrhea of the throat, of the rectum, of the urethra, of the vaginal and genital area and cervical area in a mautre victim; without that capacity, we are going to miss an awful lot and we are going to have some very incomplete diag-

noses.

Without the capacity to do skilled diagnostic interviewing over time, accomplished by people who know how to do the interviewing, who have bothered to practice themselves before they try to do their first one - before, as adults, they walk into a room confronting their very first kid whom they need to interview for child sexual assault, without having people who have the skill to read everything they can get their hands on, to role play, practice saying the words out loud, do the kinds of things to help them kind of purge themselves those ingrained reflexes that kill ya in the first three sentences because nonverbally you communicate to that child how upset you are, how terrible you think this is, and by implication, how terrible his or her behavior must have been. Without all these capacities, I would say we are not going to get very far with identification and diagnosis. And without the basic kinds of identification and diagnosis, I think we are not going to be in very good shape to talk about protecting these children and helping them work through their trauma and move ahead in other tasks.





JUVENILES ON THE STREET

RUNAWAY YOUTH AND PROSTITUTION

Text of Remarks Delivered

by

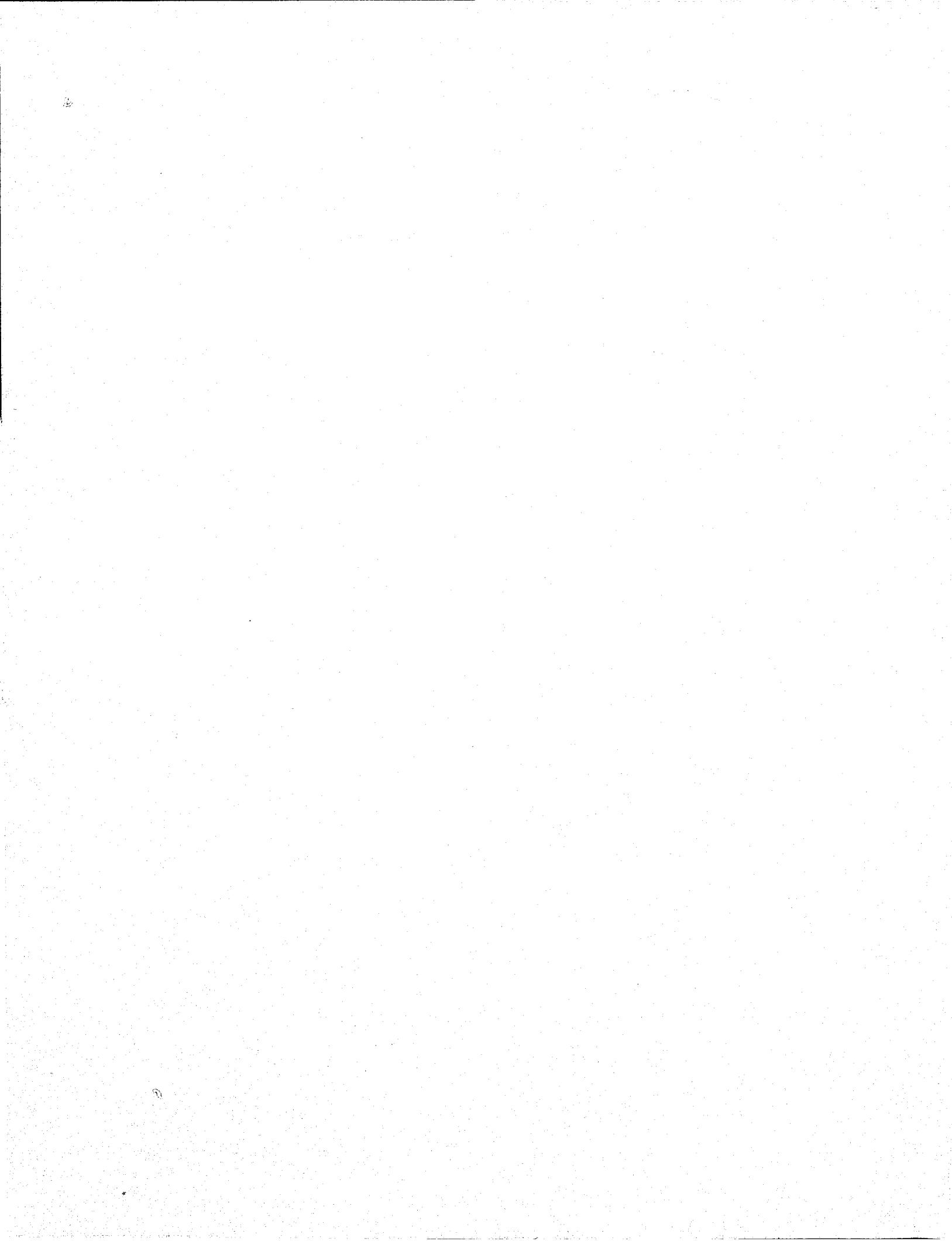
Judy Seckler

Technical Assistance Director

National Office for Social Responsibility

July 6, 1978

Prepared by Judy Seckler and Deborah Johnson for delivery at a workshop on "Runaway and Prostitution," at the Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute. The workshop was sponsored by the Status Offender Project of the Connecticut Department of Children and Youth Services, and the Elmcrest Family Institute. It was made possible by a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to the Connecticut Justice Commission. Ms. Seckler's talk was made possible by Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Technical Assistance Contract #J-LEAA-008-77.



STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Young people in every major American community are being drawn into commercialized sex (prostitution and pornography). Some are deeply involved in a lifestyle of prostitution. Others are on the fringe or occasionally sell their bodies for a variety of reasons. All are seriously abused by customers, pimps, and societal institutions and few social services exist which reach out with help for these young people.

The Youth Development Bureau (HEW) reports that one million juveniles leave home each year.¹ Community-based programs funded by HEW provide temporary shelter and supportive services to approximately 33,000 youth, or 3.3% of the total number of "known runaways."² What happens to the remaining 967,000 young people? A few may receive services in their local communities from walk-in crisis centers, friendly clergy or concerned individuals. Some may be apprehended by the police and processed through the court system or released back to their families with no follow-up or supportive services. FBI statistics for 1976 reflect over 75,000 juvenile arrests for running away, a figure believed to represent less than 50% of the number of youth actually centering their lives and activities on the streets.

The number of youth involved in commercialized sex has not been documented; however, testimony before Congressman Biaggi's committee estimates that over 300,000 young people between the ages of nine and

¹ Federal Register, February 23, 1978. Youth Development Bureau (HEW)

² Ibid.

seventeen were involved in the production of pornographic material in a period of 1½ years.³ Available statistics are not adequate in determining the actual number of youth on the streets as they do not include those youth not reported by their parents as "missing" or those who avoid police contact.

Often, youth on the streets have been forced to abandon the family and school supports that normally provide a foundation for coping in society. Consequently, they find themselves in a situation of premature economic independence which they cannot handle without turning to criminal activities such as prostitution, stealing, and selling drugs or stolen goods. Generally, the youth on the streets are confused, despairing and disconnected from community and family.

Research on juvenile involvement in commercialized sex is almost nonexistent. Most studies on prostitution are retrospective from adults and do not include males. Recent media coverage, including ABC's "Sex for Sale: The Urban Battle," (April 22, 1977) has increased the visibility of the problem. The public has responded by voicing alarm and concern over the extent of juvenile exploitation in the sex industry.

Juvenile justice personnel, law enforcement officials and youth workers are concerned about the lack of uniform enforcement practices, inconsistent prosecution of known pimps, and the (seeming) lack of resources to identify, intervene and provide services to this population of young people.

³Congressional Record, June 2, 1977. Hearings on Child Pornography, E 3463.

Identification of juveniles as juveniles is a problem for police.

In New York, for example, a 16-year old girl was arrested 40 times for soliciting without her real age or identity being ascertained.

In cases where a juvenile passes as an adult, he/she can usually post bail and be back on the streets in less than three hours.

Minneapolis police have responded to the identification problem by detaining every young person arrested for prostitution unless he/she can prove conclusively that he/she is at least 18-years old.

Many juveniles arrested for prostitution are often charged with a status offense such as running away, truancy or loitering. Thus charged, many juveniles are released back to their parents with no follow-up or supportive services. In Minnesota, statistics reflect that 46% of the juveniles involved in prostitution are runaways. In the District of Columbia, seven out of ten runaways become involved in prostitution.

A (repeated) incident may result in the juvenile being charged for a delinquent offense. Fifty-five percent of youth in secure detention in the District of Columbia have previous arrest records as status offenders. Often, recategorization results in secure detention, followed by possible commitment to a state-run group home, institution, or release home; again, in many cases, with no follow-up or supportive services. Thus, it is not unusual for a youngster to go through the juvenile justice system without his/her problems and conflicts being accurately identified, responded to or resolved.

Identifying youthful prostitutes has not been a high priority within the police departments in most areas because of the lack of visibility of the problem, the (small) number of youth in comparison to those involved in other delinquent offenses, and the difficulty in the age identification.

A common complaint of police and service providers is that, while there may be sufficient pressure to identify and apprehend the pimp, the courts are not consistently prosecuting the pimp. Judge Taylor, in New York City, in his recent court decision involving a 14-year old prostitute, stated that prostitution is a "victimless crime," and that "recreational commercial sex threatens no harm to the public health, safety or welfare."⁴ While many people share this view, it is interesting to consider a fact presented by Father Bruce Ritter of Covenant House in New York. He states that, "Over a two-year period, 200 prostitutes were killed in this city" and asks what the public's reaction would be to 200 murders among any other group.

It should also be looked at in terms of the risks to young people involved in prostitution. The following is taken from an article which appeared in the New York Times, Monday, October 3, 1977.

VERONICA'S SHORT, SAD LIFE-PROSTITUTION AT 11, DEATH AT 12

By Selwyn Raab

The first time Veronica Brunson was arrested she was 11 years old. The charge was prostitution. Before another year passed, the police, unaware of her real age, arrested her 11 more times for prostitution.

⁴ Time Magazine, November 28, 1978.

At the age of 12, Veronica was dead - killed in a mysterious plunge last July from the 10th floor of a shabby midtown hotel frequented by pimps.

Veronica's death, which is being investigated as a possible murder, is one more grim crime statistic to the police. But Veronica's life, and her encounters with the city's social service and criminal justice systems in the last year, illustrate the problems and dangers confronting thousands of runaway girls and boys who turn to prostitution to survive alone on the streets of New York.

Six public and private agencies were partly aware of Veronica's difficulties and were supposedly providing aid. But none of the agencies knew her entire history and none intervened quickly enough to rescue her.

"The Brunson case is a classic example of how a kid can float through the entire system without getting any help," said Officer Warren McGinniss of the Police Department's Youth Aid Division, a specialist in runaways. "Even a baby-faced obvious child who claims she is 18 can parade through the entire process - arrest, finger-printing, arraignment - without anyone asking any questions."

The six agencies - the Department of Social Services, the Board of Education, the Probation Department, the Corporation Counsel's Office, the police and the Brooklyn Center for Psychotherapy - now cite bureaucratic barriers and communication breakdowns for their failure to act more effectively.

Veronica is a victim.

As a result of recent hearings and public pressure, New York will consider a bill requiring judges to sentence all convicted pimps, Johns and prostitutes to the minimum jail sentence under existing state laws. Chicago police are cracking down on pimps, charging them with felony crimes of "soliciting for a juvenile prostitute" and "juvenile pimping."

Traditional youth service agencies, both public and private, tend not to provide services to youth involved in commercialized sex.

A young person hustling on the street is likely to have a crisis in the evening, early morning or on weekends - a time when most traditional agencies are not accessible. Some typical responses to youth tend to be judgmental. It is often difficult for service providers to see beyond the moral issue. A young street person in Washington, D.C., when asked why she didn't seek help responded, "I did! I only got told that what I was doing was wrong." Often, traditional agencies have restrictive eligibility criteria which can mean that they tend to work with youth "most likely to succeed," excluding those with multiple or severe problems. Referral mechanisms are not well coordinated. Often a youngster seeking services from an agency will be referred on and on and on. Little is done to assist the young person in identifying and locating services which meet their immediate needs. Scores of young people are virtually lost in the cracks of the social service system.

A trend in the mental health system has been to decentralize services making them more accessible to the community, but in some cases their capability to respond has not increased. A young runaway from Maryland stumbled upon a mental health center. She was scared and wanted help. She'd been on the street for a week, had stayed with a pimp and run away from him. The mental health center explained their intake procedures which included a group interview and two individual interviews. The interviews would have to be arranged at least 24 hours in advance.

During the late '60's, many "alternative" human service agencies sprang up. Free clinics provide routine exams, diagnostic services, contraceptives, abortions, and venereal disease treatment. Clinics are open to anyone and in lieu of fixed fees, most accept donations from those who can afford to contribute. These clinics exist in major metropolitan areas and are an excellent resource for youth requiring emergency or ongoing medical treatment. Twenty-four hour hotlines responding to youth in crisis often act as a broker, linking youth with available resources such as runaway houses and other community based emergency shelter facilities.

However, many runaway houses require that the young person call his/her parents within twenty-four hours (some shelters insist that youth agree to call home before coming to the program) which prohibits many youth from seeking services. Runaway houses known in the community cannot always provide protection from the pimp. In addition, young people are usually required to "buy into" the total program, making an immediate commitment to work on their problems. Without this type of requirement, runaway programs would have no "program" and would risk becoming free hotels. However, many youth, having been on the streets for a period of time, often have tremendous conflicts about getting off the streets and experience difficulty in conforming to prescribed "programs."

Many community based programs have outreach components. Programs attempt to make their services known to vulnerable youth by posting flyers and alerting other social service agencies to program avail-

ability. Traditional outreach methods are not sufficient to effectively respond to youth on the streets. Very few programs do actual street work - providing on-site crisis intervention, counseling and referral.

WHO ARE THESE YOUNG PEOPLE?

They come from all economic levels. Most are runaways (over 1 million reported yearly), throwaways and self-emancipated children. They frequent the streets, hang around bus depots and amusement arcades. Some characteristics which repeatedly emerge in the stories of these young people are wide-spread parental abuse or neglect, limited education and/or vocational attainments, associated reliance on alcohol and drugs, and general low self-esteem.

The Metropolitan Council of Governments estimates that 5,000 youth wander the Washington streets each year. Two thousand youth were reported to the police in 1976 as "missing." The remaining 3,000 are habitual runaways and/or youth who have been pushed out of their homes. Statistics do not reflect the numbers of youth who may sleep at home but attend school irregularly and center their lives and activities on the streets.

Many youth come in contact with and are recruited by sex merchants in their own neighborhood, school environment or nearby hangout. Adult prostitutes participating in one research effort indicated that girlfriends, relatives and the neighborhood were the most important sources of initial information about prostitution.

Many youth on the streets have a history of school failure and often lack the basic skills necessary to find and secure employment. Training and job opportunities are often not available to juveniles. Many youth resort to prostitution or pornography in order to survive financially and attain (an illusion of) independence.

Life on the Street. Although most youngsters do not keep their earnings, financial rewards are far greater than the amount they could earn even if a job were available. Additionally, to many young people, involvement in prostitution and pornography offers glamour and excitement such as driving in expensive cars, evading law enforcement officials, and wearing expensive and sexy clothes.

Ironically, the emotional needs of youth are often met by pimps who provide attention, affection and intimacy which is frequently interpreted as love. The young person begins to feel needed and useful. Herman Kagan, writing about sexual promiscuity among adolescent female offenders, states that in order for individuals to absorb and live by the values of their society, the needs of the individual must be fulfilled by the family unit or social institutions, and the values must be fairly consistent and satisfying.⁵ Kagan further states that today's role for the family unit is not fulfilling youth's needs of feeling useful and of feeling a sense of accomplishment. Kagan concludes that young people depend on their

⁵ Prostitution and Sexual Promiscuity Among Adolescent Female Offenders, Herman Kagan, 1968, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

peers and others to fill the void, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation. The neglect, rejection, or abuse by parents that many young people experience produces a lower sense of personal worth and security. The relationship between an adolescent and the parent(s) figure can greatly influence his or her decision to become involved in commercialized sex. A study conducted by the Minneapolis Police Department found that 75% of adolescent prostitutes had experienced incestuous relationships.⁶ A similar study found that 50% of known juvenile prostitutes had been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused by a family member.⁷ Among other consequences, an incest victim learns reward for sex favors - learns to use his or her sexuality to please, which makes involvement in prostitution a logical extension.

Recruitment of Youth. Runaways and transient youth are often met by pimps and other juvenile prostitutes in bus and train stations. They may be offered a ride, food, a place to stay, and perhaps money. Juveniles already involved in commercialized sex may receive money from the pimp for finding a new recruit. Adult prostitutes often claim that their introduction to prostitution came from family members, friends of their family or peers (including boyfriends).

⁶Hennepin County Annual Report, Minneapolis Police Department, 1976.

⁷Ibid.

Juvenile detention centers, training schools, privately run camps and regular schools are also fertile recruiting grounds for vulnerable youth, particularly for participation in the production of pornography. The Chicago Tribune (May 17, 1977) reported that a boy's farm program in Tennessee, providing services to runaways and neglected youth, was producing pornographic movies featuring the residents. In the same article, the Tribune exposed several foster home families in Illinois as utilizing youth placed with them in the production of pornographic films. Many such examples can be cited. There also is evidence that loose networks of pimps exist which recruit juveniles in various cities and transport them from place to place in a nationwide circuit.

Introduction to the Life. Most youth begin working with little or no prostitution-related training or advice. As they gain experience the pimp or another prostitute is likely to brief them on specifics of how to wash customers, how to check customers for venereal disease, and in the case of females, how to persuade their male customers to wear condoms. As youth become more experienced, they become aware of how to avoid police contact, how to avoid pregnancy, how to pick up customers, and how to locate trick houses. Special sexual techniques are usually taught by customers who request them.

The price per trick can range from \$15 to \$100, with the average being \$25, depending on the city, how busy the street

is, the weather, the current demand, and if the supply of prostitutes is limited or abundant. Few youth work the streets without a pimp, although it is not as rare for a boy to be without a pimp. For many, surrendering most of the day's earnings to the pimp is expected and youth learn quickly that they will receive reinforcement from their "man" when they are able to provide him with large sums of money. Positive social reinforcement, it appears, offsets the unpleasantness of having to surrender the money. Most youth seem to accept the social/financial structure that exists.

Stealing money from customers is a common practice and is encouraged by pimps and other prostitutes. If there are two youth with one customer, the task becomes relatively simple. One youth can take the money while the other diverts the customer's attention. Some prostitutes consider "rip-offs" as desirable - especially if it can be accomplished without performing sexual services for the customer.

Customers can be female or male, of any age, and occupation. The typical customer tends to be a white man in his mid-thirties to early forties who is usually married and employed. The usual encounter takes approximately thirty minutes for the entire transaction. The youth and the customer agree to a "date" and reach an understanding on the price. In the case of male prostitution, restrooms in nearby restaurants are

often used by the customer (chickenhawk) to inspect the boy (chicken) before the deal is settled. The couple then walk, take a taxi, or drive in the customer's car to a vacant parking lot, an apartment, or a local trick house (an inexpensive hotel located in the red light district used primarily by prostitutes working the streets). Experienced youth having worked the street for some time can develop a steady clientele.

The Pimp/Prostitute Relationship. For most new female prostitutes, having a pimp is a prerequisite to surviving on the streets. Without her "man," the girl can become a victim of harrassment and physical abuse by other prostitutes and pimps, especially if the street is overworked and the demand is low. Some girls stake out their own corners or territories in red light districts. Girls without pimps are usually thrown off the streets. The pimp is essential if the girl is to acquire status and respect from other players (mostly pimps, prostitutes and drug dealers) who populate the streets.

The control and authority of the pimp and the respect and obedience shown by the prostitute toward him is an interesting phenomenon. Pimps may have stables of several women (usually three or four). The girls work the street alone. Pimps do not generally follow them or solicit clients for them. There are two reasons for this: first, the pimp would soon encounter

legal problems; and second, the pimp normally wants to avoid the details of the girls' work. Occasionally, pimps have runners who check the girls out during the course of the night to see if they are working. If any legal problems occur, the pimp usually takes care of them quickly.

Female prostitutes tend to switch from pimp to pimp. This can occur for various reasons: a) the prostitute is not happy with her position in the stable; b) affections for her pimp may diminish as feelings for another pimp strengthen; c) a bad financial deal; d) the prostitute may be treated badly - either beaten or given no attention; e) she may hear good reports about another pimp. The process for switching to another pimp is called "choosing" and may just involve leaving one to go to another, if the two pimps are in different cities. Choosing is more difficult if the two pimps work in the same city. The prostitute in this case must make a deal with another pimp, directly or indirectly, through another prostitute, all of which must be kept secret from the girl's original pimp. It is then up to the new pimp to seek an agreement with the current pimp.

If the deal is to be made, it usually involves a financial arrangement or other favors in return. Pimps have been known to pay up to \$1,000 to buy a prostitute from another pimp.

If the fact that the prostitute is choosing becomes known to the original pimp, the prostitute will most likely suffer punishment and beatings. Once the deal between the two pimps is finalized, though, it is less likely that the girl will be beaten by her original pimp.

Most juvenile prostitutes fail to gain permanent social or emotional attachments with their pimps. Normally, where teenagers are involved, the relationship is characterized by conflict and instability. Mutual attraction, similar to an adolescent crush, may exist in the beginning of the relationship but will later change to fear and anger.

The man can offer control, authority and discipline - qualities which a young girl may respect, especially if she sees herself as being necessary, important and admired within the context of the relationship. The pimp may be viewed as a substitute father/authority figure who cares for his girls and can meet all of their needs. On the other hand, it has been suggested that elements of the pimp/prostitute relationship parallel elements of more traditional marital relationships. In both instances, the woman may use her sexuality to get material goods from a man who controls "family" finances and who is an authority figure. Likewise, a physically or mentally abusive situation may exist in both settings, and conversely, a supportive or even caring attitude may, at times, prevail.

The relationship between a male prostitute and his pimp can be very similar. The pimp may act as a father figure to his boys. Many times, one of the boys will live with the pimp while the others live home or elsewhere. The pimp also receives the money the boys earn in exchange for material goods, such as a stereo, food and clothing.

Although it is common, the pimp is not a necessity for the male prostitute as he is for the female prostitute. These youngsters may have a few regular customers who compensate the youth with money, clothing, shelter, food. The male prostitutes who have regular customers never trade customers with other male prostitutes. The protective ring of secrecy around the boys and men is strong and difficult to break. It is not unusual for young boys to return to previous customers later in life simply for help or advice. There seems to be a bond or a desire to develop a long lasting relationship (not necessarily dependent on sexual activities) between males.

Relationships between Prostitutes. Relationships between prostitutes on the street are usually not close, except between girls working for the same pimp. Jealousy is common among the "sisters" but they may assist or support one another if they are being harrassed by the police or by a customer. They may also help each other turn tricks.

Since stables are not as common for male prostitutes, they do not usually develop close relationships with other prostitutes. Male prostitutes appear to be more independent of each other than female prostitutes.

WHAT IS A REASONABLE RESPONSE?

When efforts are made to take a look at the needs of any specific population of people in need, there is a tendency to try and describe the group as totally different from all others. NOSR's experience leads us away from that direction. We have found that these young people on the whole have the same needs as other troubled youth; any youth for that matter. The problem is that the systems which we service providers have established are unresponsive to the needs of many.

Emergency housing exists. Counseling exists. Job development exists as do most of the services or resources for services which we need to call upon. But it is our networks and mechanisms for being responsive and responsive in a timely fashion that we lack.

We are competing for our youth on the street. Our competitors, the pimps, view our children as economic assets. If we don't get to them fast, our competitors will. It is ironic that they have developed a system without the benefit of public funding. Outreach, intake, orientation, job development and on the job training, housing, peer support, role models, and incentive programs are all parts of what he offers.

We've got to at least match what he provides. What is required is finding a way to face turf problems head on and link existing resources. Your community, as most other communities, does not have the funds to create a totally separate group of services designed for juvenile prostitutes. Nor should you. Most of the required services are the same as those already being provided in Hartford.

The hardest job we confront is to motivate our own agencies to cooperate. The majority of children who are involved in prostitution are there by default. There was nowhere for them to go. One of the young girls I interviewed told me that if she could get out of the life she would like to tell other girls that they don't have to work on the street. She wanted them to know that there were other things they could do to live. They could go on welfare. We often tell ourselves that kids really know that help is available. They just don't want it. This young girl, like many other young boys and girls didn't know. They see their alternative to selling their bodies as welfare. Our systems are failing to reach these children.

There are some specifics that we should take into account when we examine our services. From our interviews and experience with programs and youth on the streets, our traditional services have to place emphasis on some key areas. These include:

- Outreach. We have to provide intervention on the street.

This requires street counselors at the bus stations and in

areas where transient youth congregate. Youth entering urban areas have the idea that so much goes on in a city, surely it will be easy for them to find a place for themselves. When the reality of the situation hits, resources in terms of people and help should be visible and accessible. This is a critical point because it often means the difference between a runaway and a prostitute.

Intervention at a later point, although important, is more difficult. Once a young person has entered into prostitution, what you have to offer might not look very good. The youth may have been warned about you by pimps and other players on the street. They have often had experiences with "the system" that have let them down and at this point, the pimp need only reinforce those feelings of distrust in order to hold the child in the life. Youth are also very quickly indoctrinated into prostitution. Much of their initial fear of turning trick is gone.

Your intervention at this point may have to be a casual conversation or an offer for a service not directly dealing with getting them out of the life, (i.e., Gyn care, a cup of coffee, etc.). You should remember that their discussions with you might result in difficulty between the child and the pimp thereby increasing their resistance to your help.

. Timeliness. When you get the opportunity to offer refuge for one of these children, an appointment next week or even tomorrow won't work. You've got to be able to respond on the spot. Your network must be geared up to help when it is requested. You may not get a second chance. Your potential client may be exhibiting a fleeting interest in leaving the street or may be in a state of crisis brought on by a frightening experience with a trick or an abusive experience by the pimp. The lure of the familiar returns quickly especially when you have nowhere else to go.

Timeliness is important in terms of the length of involvement with prostitution. Most youth experience great conflict about prostitution. The faster you get to them, the better the chances are of getting them out.

NOSR is presently working with the Department of Transportation to enlist the help of personnel at the bus and train stations to distribute information about local youth resources to kids who appear to be at risk. Intervention prior to their actual recruitment is obviously the best time to intervene.

. Protection from the Pimps. When you remove a child from the street who's working for a pimp, you're hitting him in the pocket. Pimps have been known to show up at homes where youth are being offered refuge. They will also send in other

youth to try and get the child out of the house. Your staff has to be prepared to intervene for the protection of the child. If the child goes back, which often happens, they are usually severely punished. Minnesota has opened a safe house whose location is not revealed. Young people are taken there after they have given a commitment not to reveal the house's location back to the street.

. Housing. This is the most obvious of all needs. If you remove a child from the street you must have a safe place for them to stay while the rest of their needs are determined and a plan for help can be constructed.

. Child Care. A surprising number of the young women report that they continue prostituting because it is the only way they can care for their children. While this raises the need for a broad range of services, the immediate concern is for child care and facilities that can handle both the woman and her child. Scapegoat, which is located in New York, has developed a program with a child care component and it has resulted in many more women being able to come for help.

There are a few additional points which I believe are necessary for successful programming. They are:

. Public Information. It is important to make the public aware of the problem for their support in terms of services, legislation and funding.

- Police/Court Relationships. Police and court personnel see many of these young people and need the services of the private sector if the private sector demonstrates a concern for the public sector's needs. Police and courts should be asked about their experience with this population and what services they feel are necessary. They should also be asked which existing programs they feel comfortable utilizing. Keep them posted on a regular basis about the programs' operation and solicit their feedback for planning efforts.
- Assistance. Many communities around the country are beginning efforts to respond to this problem. NOSR will be functioning in the role of serving as a clearinghouse for existing programs and program models. As you proceed in addressing the needs of these youth, NOSR will be glad to help you formulate plans and provide you with specific program information and research findings as they emerge.





RUNAWAY YOUTH AND JUVENILE STRESS

Text of Remarks Delivered

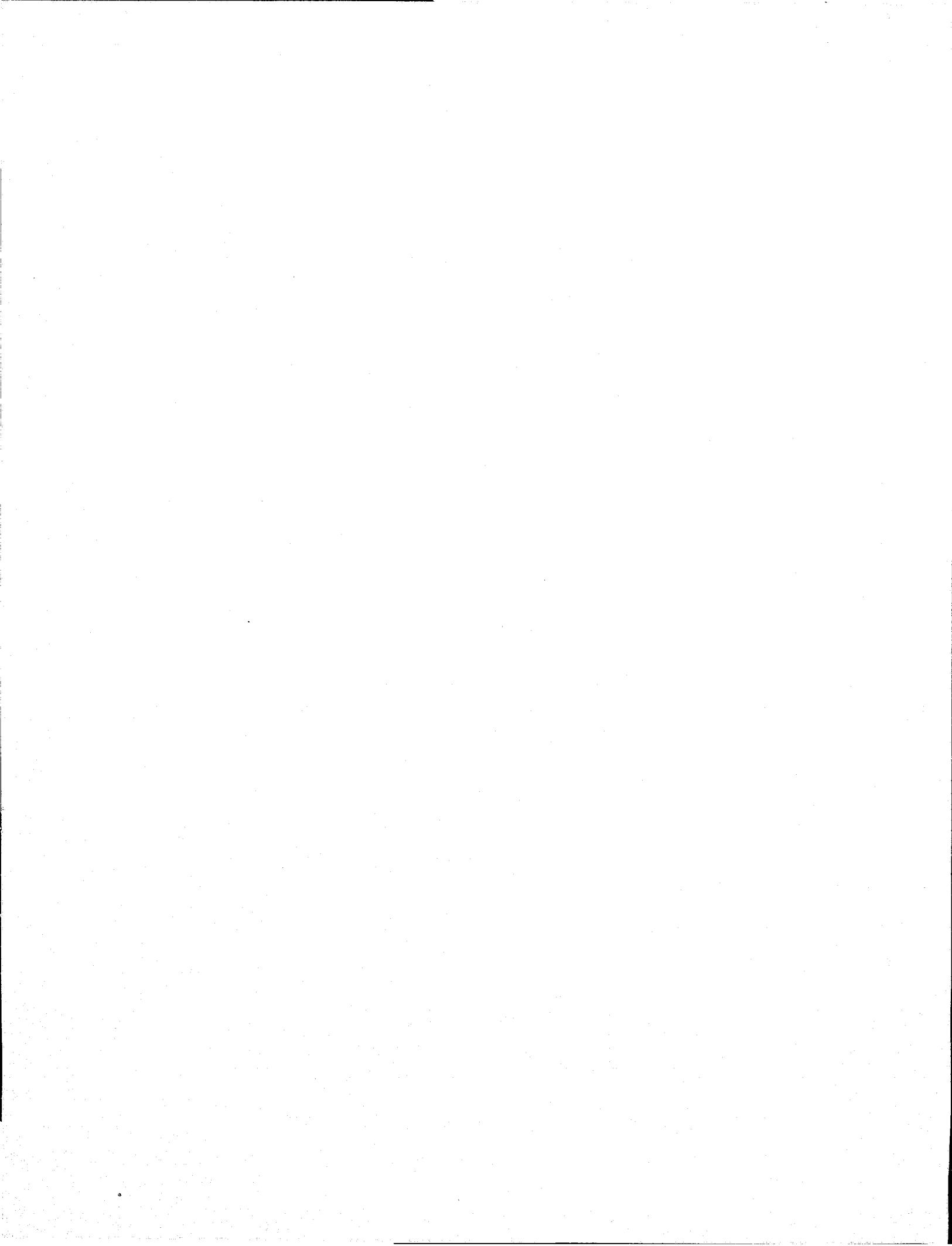
by

Elaine S. Kraus, A.C.S.W.

Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute

July 20, 1978

Prepared by Elaine Kraus for delivery at a workshop on "Runaway Youth and Juvenile Stress," at the Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute. The workshop was sponsored by the Status Offender Project of the Connecticut Department of Children and Youth Services, and the Elmcrest Family Institute. It was made possible by a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to the Connecticut Justice Commission.



Running away is not a new phenomenon. It has always been a favorite threat and fantasy of childhood years. What is new and puzzling is the number of adolescents living out this childhood refuge. The current national estimate of young runaways totals anywhere from 600,000 to 1,000,000 annually.¹ In spite of the growing numbers of juveniles leaving home, and the complexity of the problem, little scholarly attention has been given to the runner, his reasons for running, or his choice of this form of behavior. In most of the speculation about this problem, the implications are of individual and family pathology, school failure or lawlessness. Many runaways end up on contact with the juvenile justice system, presenting yet another dimension of this intricate phenomenon.

As local communities, funded by state and federal monies, prepare to address the runaway by the creation of facilities, programs and legislation, it becomes more imperative to view this in a systematic, multifaceted way, with input from all disciplines and systems that have had experience addressing the problems of runaways and their families. This includes both concrete and theoretical/philosophical perspectives. Runaways themselves should be included, for they are valuable primary information sources. Integrating their experience into the deliberations creates a holistic approach to the knowledge-building process. It is in this spirit that I have sought a sociological perspective on the problems of the runaway adolescent. What is not important in this discussion is the distance these young people travel, the amount of time they spend away from home, individual or family pathology per se, or the response of any social or

governmental agency. What I am addressing in this paper, is to what extent this form of behavior, leaving home without permission, whether or not the runner has any stated or avowed purpose or destination, is an historically and sociologically determined response to a situation of real or perceived stress, disadvantage, or alienation.

This assumption does not exclude any other factors that might be in operation, such as intrapsychic dynamics, family discord, peer or school difficulties. It only hopes to explore the thesis that this particular response to the above-mentioned conditions has its antecedents in past and present historical and sociological factors in American society.

There are three areas that are closely interconnected in this discussion of the runaway. Primary is the values and norms that dominate the operation of the nuclear family. Second is adolescence and what that means at the present time in terms of values and functions in our society. The third is the interface of the first two areas with the values, myths, and historical perspectives of the general American culture.

The United States is unique among nations because its population from the beginning has consisted of travelers, people who left other places to solve a variety of problems by setting off for this unknown new land. This principle has become further extended in our technological culture. "A lot of problems are solved by migration, but movement becomes a positive value in its own right, an assertion of freedom, not merely a response to or escape from outside pressures."²

Mass migration has translated into more than just a way to solve problems but has become a way of expressing assertiveness and freedom. Our culture places a high positive value on mobility.

The nuclear family as a form arose to meet the needs of an industrialized society. There is a peculiar "fit between the conjugal family pattern and the needs of an industrializing economy."³ This family has strongly incorporated the ethos of geographical mobility, and the unimportance of place to its functioning, as the price for economic and social mobility. William White, in The Organization Man, wrote that, "the man who leaves home is not the exception in American society, but the key to it." The professional and technical populations are the most mobile of all, but they are increasingly being joined by the working class laborer, who is becoming migratory in order to obtain jobs in the projects and industries created by technology. These people constitute the populations of suburbs all over the country. It seems that coming of age in our society is directly connected to moving. "The distribution of mobility rates by age show a strong association between maturation, becoming an adult in our society, and mobility."⁴

It does not seem unnatural that the adolescent dealing with rolelessness, alienation and the fullness of growing to adulthood in a suburban nuclear family should seek to end this protracted state of frustration by trying to step quickly into an adult role. Leaving home, getting out in the world, being on your own, has been implicitly

sanctioned as a means of obtaining maturity by society, and demonstrated by the family.

The Nuclear Family

The nuclear family has developed as an ancillary unit to the industrial society. In order to achieve the class mobility that would provide economic security, the American family dropped its extended kinship ties. It has evolved into a self-contained unit, with few ties to kin or specific place. "In the middle class subculture, life revolves around the nuclear family and the career by which the breadwinner achieves his way into the larger society."⁵ Several major family functions changed as a result of this emphasis. The family and all its members were no longer an economic unit, in the sense that all members were necessary for making it economically viable. This removed a major function from the family and changed the roles within it, especially for the elderly and adolescent members, who no longer had a work role.

Attention centered on a few specific needs of the family, predominantly the rearing of children, which defined the woman's role; growing up became the major role for children; and providing an income, which is the central role and generally considered the adult male role. This is the most important role within the family because other factors are determined by it, including the class status of the family. Hence, the nuclear family structures itself to the needs of the male as he competes for the economic rewards and class status for the unit. A high premium is placed on the ability to move quickly and often.

The family has structured itself externally so that it is not heavily tied down by property or affiliations to any one place. Internally, intimacy is diffused by the need to relate to many people. "Geographic mobility not only speeds up the flow of places through our lives, but the flow of people as well."⁶ Mobility limits the amount of time family members have to develop deep relations and to get to know other people.

This factor has particularly strong implications for the adolescent who finds strength in interacting with a peer group, and gaining a sense of identity from interaction. These ties of necessity must be loose ones, and the young person learns not to invest too much emotion in one place or in any group of people, if the needs of the family are to be served. An interesting aside to this is that even the children of the relatively non-mobile people in a community are affected by the mobility of other units, for their children may wave goodbye to a succession of friends whose families pack up and go elsewhere. The quality that is being described is impersonality, which has become a characteristic quality of postindustrial society, and the conjugal family in particular. In order to be successful economically, the family must be mobile, and to be comfortable with mobility, the family must have an impersonal outlook. "Neighborhood and community ties are not only optional, but generally growing less strong, and along with them is disappearing the network of intimate, formal social contacts, traditionally associated with living close with others."⁷



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It has become easier for Americans to give up places and relationships in order to move on in the quest of the approval and rewards of the economic system. The family must become nobodies in a personal sense by giving up past primary ties to kin, friends and permanent place, in order to become somebodies in the struggle to obtain material gains. Philip Slater wrote in The Pursuit of Loneliness, "Americans have created a society in which they are automatically nobodies, since no one has any stable place or enduring connection. The village idiot of earlier times was less a nobody in this sense than the mobile executive or academic."⁸ This description has a grim sound, yet this is the outcome of the mobility that is often essential in the striving for success of the family breadwinner. In American life, whether it is on the production line, in politics, business, or academia, there is no concern if you are a "nobody" in the sense of place or connection, since it does not matter where you come from. There is a general erosion of regions and towns, and postindustrial mass society supports the impersonality of life.

The incorporation of this norm has made the nuclear family itself an easy unit to disassociate from, and this is an important factor in the adolescent's ability to loosen familial ties in order to run away. "The family has less relevance because it no longer fulfills the many functions it once did."⁹ Many of these functions have disappeared or been taken over by other institutions, such as the school. "Politically, membership in the family is superfluous, economically it is regarded by many as an outright hindrance to success, competitive position, and competitive position may be more favorable without it."¹⁰

Ortega Y Gasset wrote, "People do not live together merely to be together, they live together to do something together." With the loss of its economic and educational functions, its ties to kin and place, and its inability to confer viable roles on its adolescent members; there is little that the family comes together to do that is absolutely necessary.

The adolescent must sense that, "there may be little of substance to the various relationships within the family system."¹¹ When the family no longer has an economic function, and the emotional ties are weak, and mobility is high, it becomes easy for the members of the nuclear family to loosen their physical ties to each other.

Although not the subject of this paper, it seems highly plausible that these qualities of impersonality and lack of roles and functions may also be contributing factors to the high divorce rate that has come about in the last several years. Divorce has had the effect of further reducing the size of the family. In a single-parent household, there are fewer people, more emotional stress and more unclarity around roles and functions; this would be an even more likely family for an adolescent to want to leave. There may be a strong correlation between this recent change in the American family and the increase in the number of youths who are leaving home.

Adolescence in the Post-Industrial Society

Adolescence is a relatively new stage of development, as a result of the disappearance of an agrarian-based economy and the abolition

of child labor. It is also connected to the emergence of the nuclear family as the dominant family structure in the United States. In technologically advanced cultures, the no-man's land between the child role and the adult role is called adolescence. Ideally, it is often conceptualized as a period during which children can "try on" some of the roles of adulthood, differentiate themselves from others and their environment, achieve competence in some of the skills they will need in life, and gain an identity and ego strength with this new competence. It is also theorized to be a time when young people begin to build meaningful and feeling relationships with others.

The biological changes a child is undergoing in preparation for adulthood have always been the same. It is the period of storm and stress that we presently associate with adolescence that is relatively new. The effects that ensue from this period of struggle are the ones that often become classified as pathological or delinquent behavior.

The descriptions of the psychological integrative tasks to be completed by the adolescent seem somewhat idyllic when viewed in the context of the realities that exist in society. Contrary to what is supposed to happen, there are actually few opportunities for the young person to learn how to become an adult.

This is a result of the values inherent in the post-industrial society that have significantly altered the structure of the family: "This structural change in the family has had a definite influence on

the development of adolescents in American society - it has had the effect of intensifying the discontinuity between the status of child and adult."¹²

There have always been some natural barriers between childhood and adulthood, "but these became formidable only in a society where responsibility for making adults has devolved almost exclusively upon the small and isolated conjugal family."¹³ As discussed earlier, it is not only isolated but geographically mobile, locating in one suburb, then another, lacking fixed roots and providing little opportunity for the repose that is necessary for the acquisition and integration of skills.

The adolescent has little chance to achieve competence. In other times, family life and occupational responsibilities were closely related, and were often the same. "A youngster in a nuclear family setting may grow into his or her teens and never observe the father at his vocational task."¹⁴

In school, most adolescents are given little chance as part of their school curriculum to observe, to identify with, or to have a program of developmental steps in learning the skills of adult roles. "The post-industrial society uses educational institutions as warehouses for the temporary storage of adolescents."¹⁵ This prolongs the period of transition to adult status, as well as providing few opportunities to achieve competence.

The achievement of competence within one's self, the attainment of respect for competence from others, is a difficult task to accom-

plish with the conjugal family structure, the modern school, or the homogenized, undifferentiated, mass-produced culture of suburbia. Respect for competence in one's self and others is crucial to self-definition - "a youngster who does not know what he is good at will not be sure what he is good for; he must know what he can do in order to know who he is."¹⁶ The conditions are right when such a situation arises for the intense feelings of alienation, rolelessness and lack of identity that are associated with adolescent pathology and lawlessness.

The change in the structure of the family and the conditions under which it exists offer little in the way of security and companionship for the young. If relationships outside the home are superficial, the nuclear family, "because of its structural features, limits the degree of security and companionship that can be given to the young."¹⁷ This is more so among single-parent families where one parent is asked to provide what two did in a nuclear family. There is a norm in suburban life which highly advocates privacy and a separateness, and insures a lack of companionship between members of the family.

The communication gaps that result from this life style become "family problems." The situation is a frustrating and painful reality for the adolescent and his family. Curiously though, it is a mode of living that is seen as highly desirable, and is well marketed through the media and striven for by many families. It is firmly entrenched and there is little likelihood of changing this value orientation of the family.

As adolescents grow to adulthood, there is often little support; they remain locked in a profoundly lonely struggle. The only observable role that the emerging young are granted and approved of is that of consumer. The youth population of today is largely responsible for dictating many of the prevailing clothing styles and fads in society. This defines a certain type of sexuality, which in no way coincides with a real sexual role of identity. It is as if the intensity involved in true sexual relationships was being diverted and spent in the passion of consuming; but this role is a useless one in terms of providing the adolescent with any real identification as an individual, or any meaningful roles in the community. "To accumulate possessions is to deliver pieces of one's self to dead things. Possessions can absorb an emotional cathexis; but unlike personal relationships, they feed nothing back."¹⁸

The post-industrial society provides little opportunity for the young to have experiences that will allow them to complete the tasks of adolescence outlined previously. What seems more observable is the tremendous difficulty of learning how to become an adult, and the protracted time period that is spent in a state of rolelessness. The impetus to escape from this position and the problems and conflicts it generates must be powerful.

The Nuclear Family, Adolescence and American Cultural Myths about Mobility

From the beginning, this has been a nation of movers. American culture has always had a romantic attachment to the wanderer. This

positive attitude toward movement is reflected in survey findings that Americans tend to admire travelers.¹⁹ American folk heroes like Daniel Boone, Johnny Appleseed and the pioneers are all in this tradition. The greatest of our cultural heroes, the one that still lives on in television and movies, long past his time in history, is the cowboy. He is seen as the man who does his job and fights the forces of evil. He is a tough, rugged individualist, but a person who makes few enduring ties to people and doesn't stay long in any one place. There is a great admiration for these qualities.

Americans have always been a frontier people, even today we carry a mental image of the frontier as a place where people, by pulling up stakes, can get away from problems and make a fresh start. The connotation of "go West, young man," is that movement is positive and will be rewarding. The message in Horace Greeley's words is still meaningful for many people. As a nation, we are in love with the open road, and the vehicles we use to travel in. Our cars are the transportation we use to get to the mini frontiers that we carry in our heads, the legacy of the past. The wagon trains no longer roll west across the prairies, but the spaceships left from their launching pads to new frontiers. It is no surprise that the first man on the moon was an American. We continue to esteem movement and confer admiration and status on those who venture out.

As the nation industrialized, deeply embued with this cultural value, it was not difficult for people to break their ties to places and people in order to secure the gains of a new economy. Our cultural

myths have always supported the idea of mobility because that is what the country needed. The structure of the nuclear family is ideally suited to the nomadic life that is necessary in this period of our history and the culture and economy reward and reinforce this pattern.

The family stripped of many of its former functions and ties, has freed its adult members, especially the males, to sell their skills in the technological-industrial marketplace, and reap the benefits of the system. The family has become an isolated unit that integrates with other isolated units to form the basis of the suburban society. This creates a uniform culture that is affluent but sterile, and psychologically burdensome to the individual. The industrialization of the country created adolescence as a developmental stage, and the post-industrial society finds the adolescent in large numbers, but with little power and in a state of prolonged rolelessness. The suburban milieu offers them little diversity or challenges from which they can gain competence and a sense of self-worth. The educational institutions serve as storage bins for this period because their curricula are standardized, also bearing little relationship to needs at this time. The members of the family have become more isolated from each other because their functions are so separate. The space available in suburban homes allows for privacy, but creates distance, and it is easy for people living together to avoid contact with each other. This cuts down on interaction and support among family members.

* As investing emotion in places and people is not rewarding when they

have to be given up regularly. There are virtually no rights of passage that mark the transition from child status to adult role, as is the case in simpler societies. In the past, this passage was often connected with a work role, and today there are few regular jobs for teen-agers. "Society no longer bestows status at any one point. Religious and social ceremonies have lost their meaning as puberty rights; therefore, the adolescent himself must struggle on his own to attain the desired adult status."²⁰

Conclusion

Our society from its early stages has considered geographic mobility as a highly positive action. It has been seen as the road to individual freedom, security and attainment of maturity or adult status. Accordingly, there is a sound basis for the suburban adolescent, raised within a family and society that has this attitude, to assume it, too. When beset by problems that are often related to a sense of alienation, frustration, boredom and rolelessness, they choose running away, leaving home, as a quick solution to this dilemma. It becomes a means of passing into an adult role, in a way that has been sanctioned by this culture for others. I do not see this behavioral response to problems as necessarily pathological. There are often many healthy strivings within it. The problems an adolescent or his family presents may be pathological, but considering our cultural traditions and values, there appears to be a strong socio-logical and historical precedent for choosing running away as a response

to these problems. The family itself often has tenuous emotional ties between members, further loosening the hold on the adolescent. There are reinforcements for this choice throughout the culture. The folk music of the past and folk rock and country-western music of today idealize the rambling man, the hitchhiker, the person on his own, "doing his own thing."

However, there are significant differences between the adolescent who leaves home and his parents, the mobile professional, technocrat, executive or skilled laborer. These people have the skills that society wants. They are able to sustain themselves during their moves and in their new locations with jobs that pay well.

The runaway adolescent is trapped by the fact that he does not have a marketable skill with which to support himself, either in transit or once he decides to stay anywhere. In reality, the goal of independence is not actually achieved. In the early days of our society, during the periods of mass immigration, it was possible for a young person to achieve adulthood by leaving home; there was a huge market for unskilled labor and apprentices. Today, this is a myth for the adolescent. What often occurs is that runaway youth find themselves without means of support, and they frequently become the prey of unscrupulous and dangerous people. It is not uncommon to have prostitution, drug pushing and forced labor and life in unsanitary hovels among teen-agers who have left home and cannot sustain themselves economically. Faced with the fact that life in our affluent

suburbs is often meaningless or emotionally unhealthy for many of our adolescents, it becomes important to look for ways to make significant changes in the environment.

It is imperative to revise laws and institute new legislation in order to allow communities and institutions to deal realistically with the changes that have taken place in the American family. The idealized version of the American family and child that is reflected in current legislation is a hindrance to effective solutions. Realistically, a high divorce rate and the single-parent family is a fact of life. Supportive, mental health, legal, educational and medical services should be made available to these families as a way of reaching children who are particularly stressed.

This is a group created as a result of a large societal change. They are not being responded to or if so, the responses are inadequate because of their outdated, unrealistic orientation. These are families whose children experience intense pressures and conflicts. More research is needed, directed toward discovering the significance of changes in society, such as the new status of women, divorce, altered lifestyles and the realities of family life that have affected the roles of children and adolescents.

We must acknowledge the fact that large numbers of our youth leave home; and find ways in which to either help them leave their families and situations or to re-enter them with safety and dignity.

FOOTNOTES

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15. Social Change and the Mental Health of Children, op.cit., p. 227.
16. Edgar Z. Friedenberg, The Vanishing Adolescent (Beacon Press, 1959), p. 17.
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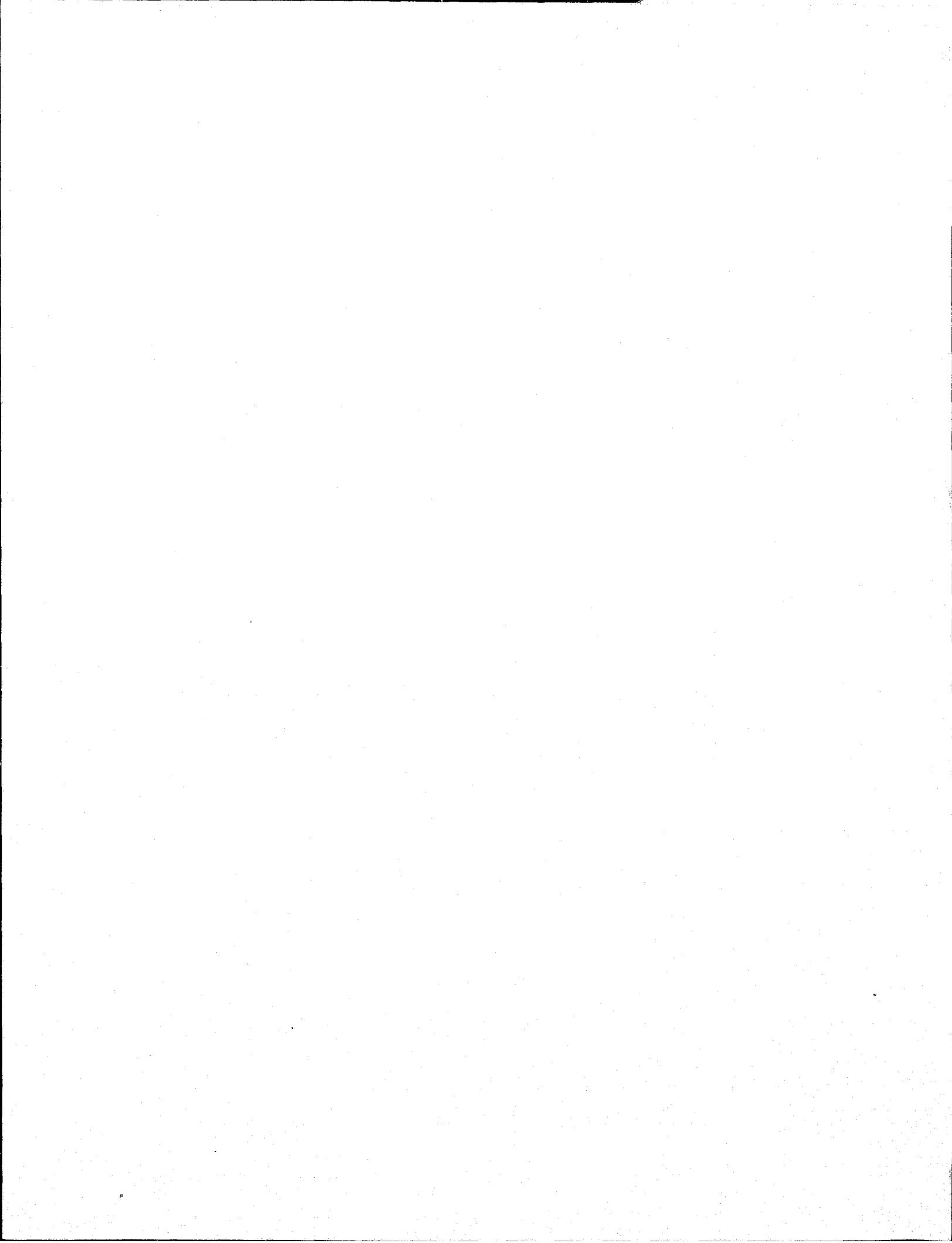
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