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SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF A GROUP OF COLOURED RUNAWAY BOYS AGED 8 - 16 YEARS AND FACTORS THAT THESE BOYS AND THEIR MOTHERS PERCEIVED AS CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR RUNAWAY BEHAVIOUR

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was of a group of street children who had run away from home. The writer sought to discover factors that led to their running away. Interviews were conducted with both the boys and their mothers (or mother substitutes). Interview schedules with both open-ended and closed questions were used to obtain certain demographic characteristics of the families, the runaway episodes and the causes for the runaway behaviour as perceived by the runaways and their mothers.

The study revealed that multiple interrelated factors within the families, the boys and society seemed to contribute either directly or indirectly to their runaway behaviour. Homes were marked by conflict, instability, alcohol and physical abuse, deprivation and neglect. The runaways in turn responded to their stressful home life by running away. The runaways in contrast to their mothers, predominantly perceived factors within the home as causing them to leave home, whereas the mothers tended to externalize these causes to peer group influences.

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CHAPTER ONE

A REVIEW OF RUNAWAY BEHAVIOUR AS DISCUSSED IN THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Many a young child has, in a moment of anger, announced to his or her parents, that he or she is about to leave home "forever" ! Most do not get much further than the gates before they realise that they are not likely to manage for long without the help of their parents, and so they sheepishly return home in the hope that everyone will have forgotten their so recently declared intention.

It is, however; a fact that many children do leave home and do not return. As a result, many drift to a life of homelessness and destitution, to exist on the streets (Jones 1977:1; International Non-Government Organizations Project Profile No. 1:1).

Runaways have variously been described as adventurers (Justice & Duncan 1976:365); as street waifs (Williams 1943:84); as vagrants (UNESCO Report 1951:1); as throwaways (Gulotta 1979:112); and as street children (Inter-NGO Project Profile No. 1:81). Although these terms often seem to be used synonymously, they do on occasions describe different types of children.

Although most runaways become street children, not all street children are runaways, as will be indicated by the varying factors that are known to produce street children. These include: the loss of a parent through death or desertion; deprivation, abandonment or exploitation by parents (Inter-NGO Project Profile No. 1:8) and homelessness caused by political, economic and social instability (Jones 1977:2; UNESCO Report 1951:17; Inter-NGO Project Profile No. 1:8). These factors are, however,

Not necessarily isolated and may in fact overlap or be interrelated. In this dissertation, however, the writer will address herself to street children who have run away from home for one or other reason.

Running away is not a new phenomenon - it has been known throughout history (Jones 1977:2; Moses 1978:227,239). In 1803, for example, the number of children living on London streets was estimated at 9 288 (Pinchbeck & Hewitt 1973:497). Most of these children were aged between 8 and 12 years. By 1876, the estimated number of street children under 16 years of age, was 30 000 (Williams 1943:78). This author (ibid:84) described now Dr Thomas Barnardo, the founder of Barnardo's Children's Homes, began his work in establishing children's homes in the late 19th century in response to the needs of children he discovered sleeping under the stalls in market places, under bridges, on rooftops and in doorways to London buildings (Williams 1943:84).

In South Africa, street children have been known to exist for some time. An early report of the Society for the Protection of Child Life (Annual Report 1917:14) mentioned that one of the functions of the newly established Place of Safety in Cape Town was to provide temporary shelter for children found wandering the streets. More recently, one report on vagrancy by the Cape Town City Council (Sonnenberg 1979:5) and one by the National Institute for Crime & Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO 1981) have confirmed the existence of vagrant children in Cape Town. These reports simply noted their existence : no statistics or estimates of their numbers were given.

At present, runaways throughout the world, are known to represent every race, creed, socio-economic and family background (Jones 1977:1; Inter-NGO Project Profile No.1:1). The incidence,

however, is difficult to establish as not all runaways are officially reported. In 1975, an American survey by the National Institute of Health Statistics revealed that one out of ten youths in the 12 to 18 year old age group, had run away at least once (Justice & Duncan 1976:364). This accounted for 10,1% of all boys and 8,7% of all girls in that age group, or roughly 2 139 000 youths. Another source gave a "conservative estimate of a million a year" (Jones 1977:1). Whatever the exact figure, the incidence by 1971 had increased by a thousand per cent in less than a decade. This was attributed largely to the many societal changes in attitudes and values that took place in the 1960's and 1970's, especially in relation to family life (Jones 1977:1,5). In South Africa, no statistics of the incidence of runaway children are available but contact with welfare agencies in Cape Town revealed that the phenomenon occurs frequently.

Although girls are known to run away, the incidence appears to be much lower than for boys. This is not uncommon in other countires. Although research has not confirmed it, it is thought that this difference is due to girls being less frequently abandoned; being more useful in helping at home; and because "street girls" drift into beggary, domestic service, or prostitution (inter-NGO Project Profile No.1:2; Report in Sunday Times, London,14.10.84: 43).

So far, research has not revealed one consistent picture of the runaway child; of the causes of his running away; nor of what it means to the child, his family and society. These conceptualizations may also change from one period of social history to another (Jones 1977:2; Shellow 1972:227). Runaways in 19th century England, for example, were mostly seen as criminals and little cognizance was taken of the factors that drove them to the streets, or of the fact that they very often were forced

into petty theft by the sheer need to survive (Williams 1943:84). In contrast, American runaways of the 1960's were mostly seen as adolescents in whom running away from home became one means of resolving adolescent conflicts (Shellow 1972:228).

Definition of the Runaway Child.

In this study, the runaway child will be defined as

> a child under the age of 17 years who leaves home for a period of more than 24 hours without the permission of a parent or guardian, knowing that he or she will be missed by those remaining at home.

This definition is based on others commonly used in the literature (Homer 1973:474; Stierlin 1972:172; Barker 1979:187; Roberts 1982:17). It is similar to that used by the National Institute for Health Statistics in America (Gulotta 1979:111). This Institute's definition differs from that above in that it does not stipulate the time that the child is away. It simply states "at least for some time" and it is assumed that this implies periods longer than 24 hours.

It should be noted that some researchers felt that the above definition was too restrictive. For example, Shellow (1972:216) did not use length of time as an element in his study, as he believed that success in staying away was "merely an accident of circumstances or a reflection of a child's age, skill or resources". In his study he, therefore, focussed on the child's intent to run away from home and not on the length of time that the child was away from home.

Gulotta (1971:111) too, felt that definitions such as the above one, were unsatisfactory. He believed that such definitions

placed the "onus of responsibility" for running away on the child. He was of the opinion that many children did not necessarily choose to leave home but, for various reasons, "were placed out of their homes with the intention that they not return" (ibid:112). He called this category of runaways "throwaways" and stated that by 1977 they represented a quarter of all runaways in America (ibid:112).

The term "throwaway" may be more apt to describe many runaways (street waifs) of 19th Century England as well as many of the street children of Cape Town at the present time. Pinnock (1984:9) quotes a reformatory youth in Cape Town as saying:

> "I was very small, you see, when my father and my mother, they threw me away. There was no more money. And so okay, while the years and months passed by, I found myself in a stoney place of sadness and madness, where each dog was hustling for his own bone, you see. That's why I realised there's only one thing for me. If I will survive, I must play dirty you see - so that's why I became a gangster."

Although many of the street waifs in England drifted into crime by the sheer need to survive or through wrong company (Pinchbeck & Hewitt 1973:497) and although many local youths have become gangsters, it is more common for the chronic runaway to exist on the periphery of gang life (Jenkins 1971:173). This will be more fully discussed later in this study.

Factors that Contribute to Runaway Behaviour

Runaway children have not been extensively researched (Gutierres and Reich 1981:89; Roberts 1982:16; Spillane-Grieco 1984:159).

A careful perusal of the literature, by the writer, revealed that most of the published research was from America and that little could be found from other countries, including the Republic of South Africa. In America, too, although some research was undertaken in the 1920's and 1930's, it was only following the escalade of runaway incidents in the 1960's and 1970's that renewed interest developed in this subject.

Running away is a complex phenomenon which does not easily lend itself to cause and effect explanations. This is largely due to the multiplicity of interrelated factors involved in both the lives of runaways and their parents (Spillane-Grieco 1984: 159). It is often impossible too, to explain why one child leaves home and another, with seemingly similar pressures, remains at home (Blum & Smith 1973:19).

Traditionally studies of runaways attributed runaway behaviour to either psychopathology of the child, of the family, or both. General economic conditions were also often considered to be a contributing factor (Shellow 1972:211; Goldmeier 1972:234). As these factors are not clearly separated from one another, studies are increasingly adopting a wider psychosocial approach which takes into account environmental influences as they interact with the family and the child (Spillane-Grieco 1984:159). For example, one study (Blum & Smith in Howell et al 1973:842) focussed on case histories of runaways to demonstrate that "social policies that fail to support families, hurt children most of all, either directly or by making it difficult for their parents to be wisely nurturant". This may well pertain to South Africa where Atmore (1981:) described social work clientele as being mainly represented by the people who are most discriminated against politically.

Running away tends to be an impulsive act rather than a planned

act (Howell 1973:845; Roberts 1982:15). Often there is no obvious precipitant that the runaway can recall. Most often the runaway incident is preceded by a slow deterioration in the parent-child relationship that culminates in a sudden decision to run away from home (Howell 1973:845). Roberts (1982:15) found that those who could recall a precipitating event, often recalled an incident no more severe or unpleasant in description than previously experienced incidents. What seemed to be different to him, was that this event was only perceived as being more severe and frustrating than previous incidents. In one sense this event was like a match that had been put to a combustible fuse (Roberts 1982:15,19).

Published research of factors that contributed to runaway behaviour fell mainly in three interrelated areas: the family, the individual runaway and society. For the purpose of this discussion, these areas will be discussed separately.

Factors Within the Family That Contribute to Runaway Behaviour

Bock & English (1973:144) commented that most of the runaways they encountered in their study "were in flight from homes in which they were troubled" and that all were afraid of being returned home against their will. These statements would seem to confirm the findings of Roberts (1982:15) that runaways experience their homes as very stressful.

Common stresses in the home to which runaways were exposed were :

- parental and family conflict (Blum & Smith 1973:29; Bock & English 1973:143; Shellow 1972:228; Jones 1977:12; Roberts 1982:15)

families in comparison with non-runaways (Shellow 1972:219)

- neglect, physical and sexual abuse by parents (Jones 1977:3; Helfer & Kempe 1980:xviii; Gutierres & Reich 1981:93)
- emotional abuse in the form of constant negative labelling and criticism with little warmth and positive affirmation from parent to child (Dunford & Brennan 1976:467; Wodarski & Ammons 1981:230; Spillane-Grieco 1984:165)
- parental alcoholism (Roberts 1982:19,25)
- death of a parent, divorce, unemployment and their own or a parent's severe illness (Roberts 1982:25)

Runaways in comparison with non-runaways were found to have a higher incidence of alcoholic parents and/or parents who physically abused them, combined with problems at school (Roberts 1982:19; Shellow 1972:228; Gull & Hardy 1976:9).

Bock & English (1973:146) reported that although many of the conflicts between adolescents and their parents appeared very "normal", much more seemed to be at stake. Fights about relatively simple issues such as dress, often concealed far deeper conflicts between the parent and child. This was confirmed by Justice & Duncan (1976:367). Leventhal (1963: 127) found that runaways were often sensitive to issues involving parental control. Fearing dominance by their parents and loss of control over their own lives, many would be resistant and preferred to run away, rather than complying with parents' expectations of them.

Runaways frequently perceived themselves as being unloved and unwanted by their parents; as being more frequently punished

than siblings; as being unfairly treated and exploited by their parents; and as not being respected by them (Jenkins 1971:171; Leventhal 1963:122,126). What was significant was that parental attributions of badness, immaturity, incompetence, meanness and something being "wrong" with the child, were so implicitly believed by them (Bock & English 1973:144). Stierlin (1972:182) explained this in part by the fact that the parents' and particularly the mother's perceptions of, and expectations for a child, are especially influential because of the child's total dependency on his parents in early childhood. As a result the parents are in a powerful position to mould the child's image of himself as "good or bad; lovable or unlovable; a born winner or loser; or a liar or an honest child" (ibid:182). Parental perceptions he added, therefore can have a generative effect or a negative effect in that they can either free the child to realise his potential or else they can retard this process.

Perceptions, too, are a two way process proceeding from parent to child and child to parent in turn. Where perceptions are wrong, healthy individuals in the course of their interactions usually adjust them to fit reality. In some individuals, however, they remain distorted and a negative cycle of interaction is set up (Stierlin 1972:182). Spillane-Grieco (1984:165) found that this particularly applied to the runaways that she studied. Dunford & Brennan (1976:466) also found that this reciprocal negative interaction with parents and often teachers as well, decreased the likelihood of these children having any satisfying experiences at home or at school. This furthermore increased the probability of their acting out and running away.

Factors Within the Individual Runaway that Contribute to Runaway Behaviour

All children have a need for love and security. This is initially

met by the child "experiencing from birth onwards a stable, continous, dependable and loving relationship with his parents (or permanent parent substitutes)"(Pringle 1977:35). This relationship "forms the basis of all later relationships, not only within the family, but with friends, colleagues and later his own family" (ibid:35). It enables the child to come to a realisation of his own worth and personal identity, and it is vital for the development of a healthy personality (ibid:35).

Security, furthermore, is fostered not only through "stable family relationships where attitudes and behaviour are consistent and dependable", but also through the security of a familiar place and a known routine (ibid:37). These ensure "continuity and predictability in a world in which the child has to meet and come to terms" with much that is changing (ibid:37).

As runaway behaviour is often a response to family stress (Cull & Hardy 1976:4; Jones 1977:8,25; Roberts 1982:15) it would seem that many runaways do not grow up secure in the knowledge of their parents' ability to love, understand and nurture them, or to provide adequate models with which they can identify. As a result many runaways develop personality disturbances and often deal with problems and conflict in maladaptive ways (Jones 1977:8 ; Roberts 1982:25). Jones (ibid:8) reported that runaways often resorted to regressive modes of behaviour in dealing with conflict. He attributed this to the"on-going disturbed interpersonal family dynamics" present in their homes (ibid:25).

In a comparative study with non-runaways, Roberts (1982:25) found that runaways more frequently resolved problems by using escape acts such as taking drugs or alcohol; leaving home temporarily; crying; attempting suicide; trying to forget in one way or other; or simply by running away. Again many of these behaviours reflect repressive and regressive or immature modes of dealing with problems,

especially by withdrawing from or denying them (Mussen et al 1963:356; Cull & Hardy 1976:9).

Roberts (1982:25) noted that runaways seldom attempted to talk to anyone about their problems, a coping technique used more frequently by non-runaways. That runaways were less likely to appeal to others for help in resolving their problems, was also reported by other researchers (Dunford & Brennan 1976:466; Goldmeier 1972:237). Dunford & Brennan (1976:466) reported that runaways increasingly felt alienated and estranged as a result of being negatively labelled by parents, teachers or peers. Goldmeier (1972:237) reported that runaways frequently generalized their distrust of parents to other authority figures and therefore tended "to feel that their teachers and counsellors had little interest in them and were of little help to them" (ibid:237).

Gutierres & Reich (1981:92) in relating runaway behaviour to child abuse, found that runaways were more likely to utilize escape acts such as running away or truanting in preference to using reciprocal acts of aggression. They found this surprising as the parents, after whom the runaways were expected to model themselves, were known to resort to aggressive acts. These authors perceived that these children attempted instead, to resolve their interpersonal problems in ways that were meaningful and relevant to them. Gutierres & Reich (ibid:92) therefore concluded that for these runaways to escape from difficult situations by running away from them, was a better coping technique then the use of reciprocal aggressive behaviour. They commented, furthermore, that emotionally and physically, abused runaways exhibited poor self-esteem with docile and withdrawn behaviour (ibid: 92). In this respect they are not that different from runaways generally, which again possibly reflects the extent of deprivation and interpersonal conflict

present in their homes.

Jenkins (1971:168) coined the term "runaway reaction of childhood" which he ascribed to children who "characteristically escape from threatening situations for a day or more without permission". He saw this as a "frustration response to a grossly unsatisfying home situation" and felt that it represented a "reaction of flight rather than fight" (ibid:172). This typically reflected "a bad self-image; sense of worthlessness; self-discouragement; fear" and "represented personality pathology that was difficult to treat (ibid:172). Treatment often necessitated "substantial modification of the home atmosphere or alternatively removal from the home" (ibid:172). Treatment also required substantial socialization or resocialization in an "accepting atmosphere with gradually increasing expectations of more responsible and mature behaviour" (ibid:170). Jenkins (1971:170) also found that as self-worth increased and fear diminished, hostile responses decreased (ibid:170).

Jenkins (ibid:168) saw the "runaway reaction" as a behaviour that was technically delinquent. He felt it was less easily recognised as such because these children were more likely to be found only on the periphery of gang life.

Researchers, who differentiated various types of runaways, include Dunford & Brennan (1976:459); Homer (1973:473) and Stierlin (1972:171). Stierlin (ibid:176) differentiated between those who were delinquent; those who ran away frequently but "showed little or no delinquent symptomotology" viz. the "crisis runaways"; and a relatively insignificant group who showed psychotic features. Common features in those with delinquent characteristics were truancy, assaultive behaviour, stealing, drug and alcohol abuse and promiscuous behaviour (ibid:174). These behaviours are also listed as symptoms of conduct disorders

in the DSM-III (1982:45). Among delinquent boys, the tendency to run originated in personality problems frequently reflective of psychopathic or antisocial disorders (Stierlin 1977:177). Delinquent girls tended to be impulsive, emotionally immature, physically mature and sexually promiscuous. They reflected hysterical personality disorders with regressive features (ibid: 179). In many respects, these girls were similar to the runaways whom Homer (1973:475) categorized as the "running to" variety.

Homer (ibid:473) studied 20 runaway girls and distinguished between those who were running from situations they experienced as intolerable and those who were running to "places and people that provided a variety of experiences that were forbidden at home: sex, drugs, liquor, truancy and a peer group that usually was involved in other more serious crimes" (ibid:475). These girls interestingly reported little dissatisfaction with their homes and described specific enjoyments and benefits they experienced while on the run. In treating these girls, it was found that they were unable to develop internal controls, and that they required external controls to restrict their behaviour (ibid:478). In contrast, the "running from" group had interpersonal and family problems that they were unable to resolve. Their running was usually precipitated when their problems surpassed their stress tolerance level (ibid:474).

Homer (ibid:477) found no apparent differences in the family structures of these two group. The families in this study represented lower and lower middle income homes, many of whom were on welfare grants and many of whom represented single parent homes (ibid:477). Even though the "running to" group reported no dissatisfaction with their homes, this might not mean that there were no problems. The fact that they ran to join a delinquent group could have reflected on a need for recognition and acceptance by their peers, which is a common

characteristic in delinquent youth, in the absence of warm relationships at home (Kaplan & Sadock 1983:944). Taking cognizance of dissatisfaction at home combined with peer groups, an English study revealed that in a milieu where delinquency is common, "the only effective protection against delinquency appeared to be a strict parental regime, that limits the children's freedom" (Wilson 1974:251). This is not the ideal and, the writer feels, could result in acting out runaway behaviour through which the runaway attempts to become free of parental controls as is common in some of the "running to" groups in Homer's study (1973:475).

Factors within Society that Contribute to Runaway Behaviour

Apart from the influence of family problems on individual behaviour, environmental pressures also are known to influence behaviour. Societal factors that have produced runaways include political, social and economic instability (Jones 1977:2; Inter-NGO Project Profile No. 1:8; UNESCO Report 1951:17). Social policies that obstruct the means of meeting individuals' needs; unemployment; urbanization; the break-up of traditional communities and family life; and changes in cultural norms and values, also have been known to play a role in runaway behaviour (Shellow 1972:212; Howell 1973:842; Inter-NGO Report Project Profile No.1:8, 87; Jones 1977:5).

Since the children in this study are all from lower socio-economic homes, the writer feels that it is relevant to discuss some of the known stresses in such an environment as a background to the study. The families in this study were all very poor, and although poverty in itself is not incompatible with affection and even security, it is often experienced as an ongoing stress which can create additional problems or exacerbate stresses that the family already experiences. (Clegg & Megson 1973:20,47).

In a study (Wilson 1974:247,248) of parenting in poverty in England, stresses correlating significantly with an unhappy home atmosphere were: income below the poverty datum line; disability of either parent; a disabled child; and a family of eight or more children of whom three were under the age of 5 years. Other stresses included living in sub-standard housing; overcrowding; malnutrition; lack of sleep; air pollution; and untreated conditions of ill-health. Mothers, in addition, were found to suffer from the effects of too many pregnancies too closely spaced. The state of being in chronic stress furthermore induced feelings of apathy and depression in many mothers. Mothers living below the poverty datum line, especially, had little time or energy to participate in activities with their children. As a result, children were doubly deprived; they were deprived of emotional comfort and they were deprived of physical comfort due to the sub-standard conditions under which they lived. These factors cannot but adversely affect the quality of nurturance provided. This, in turn, has its affects on family relationships as well as the physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of the child.

The needs of parents and children in a lower socio-economic environment are no different from children in any other environment. Family problems such as scape-goating; rejection of illegitimate and other children; parent-child tensions; marital stress; and mental and physical illness are also likely to exist (Wilson 1974:246). Poor children were also deprived of stimulation from such things as toys, books and other play equipment. This kind of deprivation is known, furthermore, to limit a child's ability and potential scholastically (Roberts 1974:19).

Wilson (1974:246) found in her study of lower socio-economic English homes, that children tended to be independent of parental

authority and supervision at an early age and that they were strongly dependant on siblings and neighbourhood peers but not school peers. Despite this premature independence, they were found at school to be handicapped by an inability to relate to people in authority and by an absence of social competence. Many runaways certainly have been found to have problems at school (Shellow 1972:228; Dunford& Brennan 1976:459; Roberts 1982:19).

Many of the above stresses are to be found in the lower socio-economic housing estates of the Cape Flats. Common characteristics of a typical housing estate include : grossly overcrowded homes and schools; widespread poverty; large scale unemployment with a disproportionate number of young people unemployed; inadequate community facilities such as shops, banks and recreational facilities such as playgrounds, parks and open spaces; and much gang activity with a very high rate of violent crimes (Atmore 1982:255). Crime rates for the Cape Flats are higher than the average figures for South Africa and are among the highest in the world (Cape Times 6.8.1982 in SW/MW 1982:296).

Breakdown in family and community life is common, and legislation such as the Group Areas Act is known to have contributed to this. Theron (in Atmore 1982:256) endorsed this by stating that there was a striking relationship between the removal of "Coloured" persons from one area to another and the development of criminality; deprivation; rootlessness; and social instability. The Group Areas Act, according to Pinnock (1984:55) "fundamentally disturbed the position and role of the working class family. With it were ploughed up the relationships and networks of knowledge, experiences, things - the very supports of their culture". He added that one of the greatest complaints against relocations under the Group Areas Act was that individuals and not whole neighbourhoods were moved. As a result, "the family was taken

out of an environment where everything was safe and known - (and) - put in a matchbox in a strange place" (Wolheim in Pinnock 1984:56). Social norms were suddenly abolished and children, who formerly may have been reprimanded by neighbours when they got into mischief, were now free of these kinds of controls and supports. They were, therefore, not constrained from joining gangs in their attempts to make friends (Wolheim in Pinnock 1984:56).

Pinnock (1984:56) added that stresses caused by these removals frequently resulted in psychological problems and "skewed coping behaviour". Marital relations were upset, and the divorce and desertion rate rose. Difficulties arose in parent-child relationships, often because of the father's sense of inadequacy in the new environment. One way out of "claustrophobic tensions of family life" was the use of alcohol and drugs, especially by the men (ibid:59). Dagga and mandrax use increased as did the number of shebeens supplying illicit liquor (ibid:15). Children attempt to escape these stresses by seeking love and security through early sexual relationships or by joining youth subcultures, which are often in opposition to the parent subculture. The most common of these is the gang subculture of the streets (ibid:59). In 1982 approximately 280 gangs were identified on the Cape Flats, with a roughly estimated membership of 80 000 youths. This equalled 5% of this city's population (ibid:3).

Street life rapidly became the normative experience for youth from these areas. Whether they were toddlers or young adults, the streets offered opportunities for play and company, and for many it "filled the vacuum of boredom and limited choices (ibid:4). In order to escape the pressures of overcrowded homes which offered no space or privacy, street life became "the only life possible" (ibid:1984:4).

Truancy, too, is high on the Cape Flats. Staying away from school and "strolling" the streets by day, frequently becomes the first step to staying away at night as well. Truancy results, in part, from a clash of values between homes and schools, which are authoritarian and require adherence to rules and regulations that have little meaning to their pupils (ibid 1984:64; Pringle 1977:115; Mussen 1963:588). Furthermore, schools are overcrowded and many offer double-sessions. This means that teachers teach one group of children in the mornings and another in the afternoons. This not only taxes the resources of teachers but makes extra demands on pupils, who are often already deprived of the intellectual, social and language skills required to progress satisfactorily. For many it means settling down and trying to concentrate on school work after a morning's play. Overcrowded and stressful homes cause additional pressures for school children and many fail to complete homework assignments and are thereby hindered further in their ability to achieve required results. Finding few rewards at school, it is not surprising that many drop out (Pringle 1977:115). In a study of school leavers in Bishop Lavis Township, it was found that the median standard reached was Standard 4 and that only 1 in 3 had progressed beyond Standard 2 (Thomas & Blau 1982:10).

The incidence of social problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse and family violence may be exacerbated or caused by the stresses and strains of living in densely populated poor communities as well as by the political structures that offer few alternatives (Atmore 1981:95). These problems also more frequently have a direct relationship to runaway behaviour (Roberts 1982:25; Gutierres & Reich 1981:93). Abuse of alcohol and other drugs renders parents incapable of caring well for their children (Steele 1980:12). This author added that overuse of alcohol can cause parents' cognitive functioning to be impaired and lead to the inevitable disregard of children's needs (ibid:12).

Furthermore, apart from causing severe distortions in mental functioning and delusional thinking, chronic abuse of alcohol and other drugs can lower the threshold "for the release of violence in many forms including child abuse, homicide and suicide" (ibid:12). These addictions may also cause a disruption of family life through job less and financial hardship (ibid:12).

When violence permeates a family, its consequences are devastating and far reaching (ibid:1). All family members are affected by its emotional repercussions if not by the actual physical abuse (ibid:1). In turn, the effects of the psychological trauma are transmitted from one generation to the next, resulting in a recurring cycle of child abuse. Parents, who were abused as children, are more likely to abuse their own children despite the fact that abuse may be expected to occur simply when parents are overwhelmed by financial and other crises (ibid:11,12; Pickett & Maton 1981:11).

Child abuse and neglect are more prevalent in lower socio-economic communities (Steele 1980:7; Pickett & Maton 1978:11). This was confirmed in Cape Town by Robertson (1981:133). Furthermore, child abuse is known to contribute to runaway behaviour (Helfer & Kempe 1980:xvii; Gutierres & Reich 1981:93). It is therefore likely that family violence may have a bearing on runaway incidents that occur locally and will be one of the factors that the writer will investigate.

In this chapter, the writer has outlined some of the known factors that contribute to runaway behaviour and in particular factors within lower social economic communities. Although discussed in three subsections, viz., factors within the family, the individual and the community, the interrelatedness of these subsections is evident. The writer will in the following

chapter briefly discuss the purpose of this study and runaway behaviour as it presents in the lower socio-economic communities in Cape Town.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Very little is known of runaway children in Cape Town. Their very existence posed questions as to why these children elected to live on the streets and not at home. An investigative study of these children and the factors that led to their being on the street was perceived as useful in order to render a more effective service to them in the future. Such a study would possibly also indicate preventive measures needed to reduce the problem. Furthermore as this study was to be explorative and descriptive in nature, it was considered that areas for further study would possibly be highlighted.

Purpose of the Study

(i) To examine contributing factors to the runaway behaviour as perceived

(a) by the child, and

(b) by the mother or person with whom the child stayed at the time of the runaway incident.

This would enable the writer to see if there was any relationship between the two.

(ii) To investigate various personal and environmental characteristics to establish whether any of these characteristics were common to the group as a whole.

(iii) To collect certain data about the runaways themselves in order to determine the frequency with which they ran away, the length of time that they stayed away

and the manner in which they supported themselves while away.

The Nature of the Problem of Runaway Behaviour as it pertains to Coloured Street Children in Cape Town

As mentioned earlier, the existance of vagrant children in the inner City area of Cape Town is well known (CCC Report 1979:5; Pinnock 1984:69). A walk through the City often reveals groups of urchins sitting huddled together or frequenting areas such as the station, the Parade or Greenmarket Square during the day, or hanging around cafés in the inner city at night. They are usually scruffily dressed, and appear to be small and undernourished for their ages. They seldom hang around one place for very long and may travel between Sea Point and the inner city during the course of a day.

At present, very little is known about these children other than what can be ascertained from speaking to persons with whom they have had contact, or from speaking to the children themselves. The latter can yield very little as these children are often, understandably, distrustful and not willing to give any information about themselves. No formal research has been undertaken to date. An informal survey of 50 children was conducted by a social worker at the Child Welfare Society in 1984. This, however, was not reported. Recently, personnel of St George's Cathedral commissioned a photographic study of street children which was undertaken by 3 photographers from the Community Arts Project. These photographs were exhibited in November 1984, together with a written commentary from interviews that the photographers conducted with about 15 of these children.

Little is known of the exact incidence of runaways in Cape Town and no definitive reasons have been given as to why these children leave home. As regards incidence, one social worker

at Child Welfare Society, estimated that she must have had contact with at least 250 runaways in the past 3 years. A social worker at another agency estimated that they had an average of 10 runaways per month referred to them. This social worker added that the same children could be brought in repetitively and that the estimated 10 per month did not necessarily indicate 10 new children per month. These children were frequently brought in by the police who picked them up for loitering or because they were found sleeping on the streets at night. They were classified as children in need of care in terms of the Children's Act of 1960.

In a pamphlet distributed by Child Welfare Society, it was estimated that there were most probably 100 of these children in the inner city at any one time. This figure was also estimated by a policeman with whom the writer spoke in the inner city area one night.

Conversations held with social workers and runaways revealed that runaways "strolled" from home or from school, or from both. Often it seemed that they began by strolling from school and staying out on the streets with friends. They then stayed away from home a night or two, and this sometimes extended into weeks and months. At other times running away seemed to be a sudden impulsive act which was not precipitated by any particular event, but a build-up of events which left these children feeling unwanted or imposed upon; or which led to ongoing material deprivation such as lack of food or a place to sleep; or where they experienced physical abuse by drunken fathers or step-fathers over a period of time. Most came from poverty stricken homes that were grossly overcrowded.

Once on the streets, they apparently supported themselves by

"parking cars" (guiding drivers to newly vacated parking bays in the hope of a tip); wheeling trolleys at supermarkets; selling newspapers; engaging in petty theft; begging; or occasionally by prostituting themselves to homosexual men (bunnies) or lonely women who would take them home, bath and feed them in return for sexual favours (Altshuler et al C.A.P. 1984).

To escape discomfort such as hunger, cold or fear, they frequently sniffed paint thinners. This is an alcohol based substance in which they soak scraps of cloth, which are then placed in small, empty, plastic milk bottles called "pineys". The euphoria they experienced was often a happy relief from their present misery. At night they slept in parks, in derelict buildings, on building sites, behind old warehouses and in quiet places on the fringes of the inner city area, where they were less easily detected by the police. A police officer informed the writer that they are instructed to ensure that these children do not sleep in the entrances to shops or buildings as owners complain of the litter and refuse which they leave behind. For warmth they often will huddle together in small groups, sniff thinners and cover themselves with newspapers.

A few children are known to belong to or identify with gangs (Altshuler et al C.A.P. Project 1984). Some are apparently used by older gang members to break into buildings through small accesses. Most runaways were reported as existing alone or in small groups on the fringes of gangs.

In 1982 a shelter to provide temporary accommodation for street children was opened in Cape Town. This was initiated by the members of St Paul's and St Barnabas Churches in Cape Town, together with the assistance of the Child Welfare Society.

Since then, an additional shelter which provides some care during the day, has been opened. These children are reported to be settling down well after their relatively unstructured existence. The pull of street life with its easy access to dagga and thinners was apparently strong. Many also found it hard to cope with a set routine. More recently, the need has become apparent for a second stage shelter, to which those who are showing signs of settling down, can be moved. It is hoped that this will lessen the disruptive effects that new arrivals have on those who are beginning to learn new habits and routines, and that it will also release accommodation for new street children. To date there has been a tendency for street children to stay on at the shelters. The subjects of this study were chosen from a core group of those that had stayed on indefinitely.

Subjects

This study was of 18 "Coloured" male runaways aged between 8 and 16 years. Runaways are not easy to locate while on the street. This group was selected as they were all resident at one of the two shelters for street children in Cape Town, during the period that this study was undertaken. As not all runaways visit these shelters, this sample cannot be said to be representative of all runaways in Cape Town. At the most, it could indicate certain patterns in their lives, which in turn could form the basis for further study. Similarities with findings of studies overseas could also possibly emerge.

Subjects included both the boys and their mothers or the person with whom they were staying at the time that they ran away. The shelter at which these boys stayed, normally accommodated 16 youths. As a number had been there for some time, the number of subjects available for selection was reduced and excluded the use of a random sample.

(a) the first 20 runaways available in terms of their consecutive arrival or sojourn at the shelter during the period July 1984 - March 1985

(b) that they and their mothers or other persons with whom they had been staying were willing to participate in the study

(c) that the latter were traceable

During this period, 18 boys and 16 parent figures were seen. The parents numbered two less as there are two sets of siblings in this sample. However, it meant that the parents or caretakers of all 18 boys were traced and seen. Only one child refused to participate in the study. Two others were excluded as their families were not contactable, and two were excluded as interviews were not completed before they absconded from the shelter. At least four others arrived and departed before the writer had had the opportunity to see them.

Method

In view of the explorative and descriptive nature of this study, it was decided to use an interview schedule in order not to over-restrict the material obtained. The interview was designed to obtain certain categories of demographic and psychosocial data about the child, his family and environment and the reasons perceived as contributing to the runaway behaviour. These categories and questions helped to ensure that certain information, basic to the study, was obtained from all participants. Questions were asked in any order that was appropriate to the flow of the interview. This was not unlike the method used by Shellow et al (1972:214) in the pilot study for their research in 1963. They devised a standard set of

questions which helped to loosely structure the interviews. From their initial interviews areas for further research were highlighted.

Data in the present study was later categorized and tabulated according to the information obtained. Social class was determined according to the method used in a study on child development (Molteno et al 1980:730), which endeavoured to establish norms in the Coloured population in Cape Town. The British General Registrar's Stratification of Five Social Classes was adapted into three classes. As Categories I and II appeared very infrequently in the local population, these were grouped with Class III to form a new Class I. Classes IV and V were categorized into Classes II and III respectively. Occupation of the breadwinner was used to determine social class.

The writer personally conducted all the interviews. Children were interviewed at the shelter and parents and others were interviewed in their homes. One mother was interviewed at her place of work. All subjects were requested to participate verbally. They were told that the writer was a social worker who was doing a project about children who ran away from home. They were reassured that information would be kept confidential and that it would not be communicated from the parent to the child and vice versa. They were told that the writer was in communication with the social worker at Child Welfare and, in some instances, the writer was requested to pass on information to her by the parent.

Additional information such as length of stay at the shelter, number of times absconded, behaviour problems at the shelter, were collated from the social worker's files, discussions with house-parents and records at the shelter.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This study was essentially two dimensional. It examined:

(a) Certain socio-economic characteristics of the families, and

(b) factors that children and their parents contributed to the runaway behaviour

In presenting the findings, the characteristics of these families will be discussed first in order to give some perspective against which to examine factors that parents and children contributed to the runaway behaviour. Some additional information about the runaway episodes and the children themselves will also be given.

It is to be remembered that this study was explorative and descriptive as opposed to establishing direct causal relationships in a problem that was clearly multi-complex. Obtaining information was not easy. Families had often moved and children were sometimes reticent to speak of events which some said they would prefer to forget. In no way do the findings begin to reflect the vicissitudes of family relationships, problems and pathologies that might have been present (Jones 1977:8). Time too may have distorted some of the facts for parents and children. However, it was felt that the study was relevant in that some common phenomena were found. These revealed some of the difficulties and stresses experienced in these homes as well as potential areas for future research.

A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Social Class

Social class was determined by the occupation of the bread-winners, who were mostly unskilled labourers. There were 16 families representing 18 children. Of these 18 children, 15 (83,33%) were in Class V (III) and three (16,67%) were in Class IV (III). These families were therefore predominantly from the lowest socio-economic stratum and their earnings were seldom more than R150 per month. In respect to social class they differed significantly with the normal "Coloured" population in Cape Town as revealed in the study of Molteno et al (1980:731). These researchers found that 36% of the "Coloured" population were in Class I - III (or I according to their new classification); 27% in Class IV (or II) and 36% in Class V (or III). The families in this study also differed slightly from those studied by Robertson (1981:133) in his study of 49 families of physically abused children in Cape Town. He found that 23% of his abusive families were in social class IV and 75% in social class V. It would seem therefore that the families of runaway children in Cape Town are from homes that are most deprived economically and that were possibly even more deprived than the families of the physically abused children studied by Robertson (1982).

These differences may indicate that children who ran away from home experienced chronic deprivation over a longer period of time and of a more pervasive nature than children who were physically abused on a few occasions but not habitually. However it is also possible that children who are frequently abused physically, may in fact escape from home once they are old enough to run away.

Table I Frequency Distribution of Families According to Social Class in Comparison with the Subjects of Robertson (1981:133) and Molteno (1980:731)

Social Class	Runaways	Physically Abused	Normal "Col." Population
IV (II)	3 (16,67%)	23%	27%
V (III)	15 (83,33%)	75%	36%
	N=18(100,0%)	(N=49) 98%	(N=187) 63%

Running away has not uncommonly been associated with socio-economic deprivation. During the American depression of the 1930's, there certainly was an increase in runaway incidents (Gulotta 1979:112). Shellow (1972:220) found that 28% of his sample of 731 American runaways in the 1960's came from lower socio-economic homes. At the present time, running away is prevalent in many lower socio-economic communities as a discussion of various projects among street children reveals. These include projects undertaken in Israel, U.S.A. (New York), Colombia, Bangladesh and Kenya (Inter-NGO Project Profile No.1:87,81,8,73,61).

Present Marital Status of Parents

Table II Frequency Distribution of Present Marital Status
N=18

Marital Status	Frequency
Married	1 (5,5%)
Cohabiting	9 (50,0%)
Single	1 (5,5%)
Widower	1 (5,5%)
Separated	5 (27,5%)
Deceased	1 (5,5%)
TOTAL	18 (99,8%)

The above table does not fully reflect the pattern of marital relationships present in these families. Most seemed to be unstable and of short duration. They were also marked by much conflict, which was often of a physical nature. Only one mother was living with her lawful spouse at the time when the interviews were completed, and this man was in fact the step-father of the runaway concerned. This couple therefore represented a reconstituted couple as did all 9 of the couples who were cohabiting. Of the latter, 4 families had been reconstituted more than once. Of the mothers who were separated, two had had previous partners. Although only one mother was married at the present time, the mothers of 9 children had been married at some stage in the past.

Thirteen (72,2%) of the 16 families in this sample were known to have been reconstituted at some stage. This might indicate a significant relationship between factors present in this type of family and runaway behaviour. It was not uncommon for the runaways to complain of poor relationships with step-parents, which was often only one additional factor in families that were already stressed. Previous studies, too, have demonstrated that runaways were more likely to come from broken or reconstituted families (Shellow 1972:219; Homer 1973:477; Inter-NGO Project Profile No. 1:81). Interestingly Robertson (1981:136) in his study of physically abused children in Cape Town, commented that there seemed to be a higher risk for child abuse among cohabiting parents. He based this on the fact that there was a significantly higher incidence in the number of cohabiting parents between his index and control groups and that the cohabiting parents often represented reconstituted relationships in his sample.

There was only one mother who reported that she had always been single. This however was debateable as her child spoke as though

his father had lived there in the past. Furthermore, this mother had had various relationships and had had six children by five different men.

The father who had been widowed reported that although he had been living with his wife prior to her death, they had in fact been estranged from one another due to her being involved in an extra-marital affair.

Runaways Living With Both Biological Parents

Only three runaways were living with both their biological parents when they first ran away. At the time that the interviews were completed, none of these parents were still together. One father had been widowed and the parents of two other runaways (a set of siblings) had separated.

Separation From Parents

A common pattern that emerged was that many of the runaways had at one or other time been living with persons other than their parents for periods that ranged from a few months to a few years. Children not infrequently moved back and forth between parent and parent, or parents and others. At least thirteen runaways had lived with an aunt, grandparents or others at some stage in their early lives. The children therefore frequently had had more than one caretaker in their lives and their mothers had frequently not been the primary caretaker. Parents were often vague about details so it is difficult to establish when they lived where. Another common occurence was that one or more of the siblings of these children often lived apart from the family with whom the runaway lived. These children and their siblings, therefore, seemed to live separately for much of their childhood.

Reasons for runaways being separated from their mothers as given by the mothers or grandmothers (2) :

- lack of accommodation (3)
- parental separation (2)
- children being split between parents following parental separation (2)
- child sent to live with father, who had failed to support his child financially (1)
- mother working in domestic service and sending child to live with relatives or friends (1)
- grandmother caring for child while mother works during day (3)
- children requesting to live with relatives (3)
- mother in gaol (1)
- mother too young or irresponsible so that grandmother took over care of children (3)
- mother had no fixed abode and children were removed (1)
- parents' desertion of child (1)

These reasons often overlapped so that some children were affected by more than one of the above.

These findings again reflect the amount of change and instability in these children's lives. The consequence of separation from parents, especially the mother, in the first few years of life are well documented (Pringle 1977:35; Argles 1980:33). Not only may the quality of all future relationships be adversely affected in that the child may fail to develop a sense of basic trust in others and in himself, but the consequences may also lead to child abuse and neglect by the parent (Kennel et al 1976:25; Argles 1980:33; Maier 1978:90). The latter especially may follow if the bond or affectional tie between mother and child is hindered from developing (Kennel et al 1976:29).

Mother's Mean Age at the Birth of her First Child

The mean age of runaways' mothers, at the birth of her first child, was 17,4 years. Ages ranged between 14 and 20 years and only three mothers were as old as 20 years. Thirteen (72,2%) of these mothers therefore had teenage pregnancies. This differs significantly from the findings of Robertson (1981:141) who in his study of 49 physically abused children and their families, found that only 33,3% of the mothers had had teenage pregnancies. Furthermore, their mean age at the birth of their first child was 19 years (ibid:141). The runaways' mothers also differ from the normal "Coloured" population in Cape Town in that Molteno (1980:730) found that only 20% of babies born to 1 000 consecutive mothers in May 1976 were the products of teenage pregnancies.

Eight of the children in this study were first-born children. Another two, although second-born children, were also born to teenage mothers. This may indicate that young and inexperienced mothering may have been a factor that indirectly predisposed some children to run away. Many mothers, furthermore, are anxious in first pregnancies and "any stress which leaves a mother feeling unloved and unsupported or which causes her concerne about the health and survival of her baby or herself may delay preparation for the infant and retard bond formation" (Kennel 1976:28). Poor bond formation may, in turn, place a child at risk for child abuse and neglect (ibid:29). Kempe (1976:122) endorsed this in his statement that "lack of emotional preparation, few support systems, poor personal relationships, inadequate social skills to deal with the difficulties of adult life, all result in an ill-prepared parent".

Many of these mothers were at the birth of their first child:

unmarried; financially ill-equipped to meet the needs of a new infant; living in inadequate accommodation; and not a few went to work within a day to two months after the birth of their children, thereby leaving them in the care of others. Some of these mothers had, themselves, been deprived and neglected as children, which in itself could predispose them to abusing or neglecting their own children (Kempe 1977:121). Kempe (ibid:122) added that such parents often looked to their infants to meet their own unfilled needs for love and security. As a result they often had unrealistic expectations of their children, which led to a reversal of roles between parent and child (ibid:122). Such parents sought nurturance from their children, and failure in their children in fulfilling these needs, frequently led led them to perceive their children as "bad", "unhelpful", "disobedient" and to their being inappropriately punished or abused (ibid:122). Abuse in turn often caused a child to run away from home (Helfer & Kempe 1976:xviii).

Educational Status of the Mothers

As far as could be ascertained from the mothers or other persons interviewed, it would seem that no mother had progressed beyond Standard 4. Six of the mothers were found to be illiterate. Their educational level is similar to that of other findings for persons from lower socio-economic communities on the Cape Flats (Pinnock 1984:66 ; Robertson 1981:141; Molteno 1980:732). Illiteracy rates do, however, seem to be higher if compared with Molteno's study (1980:731) in which only 9 of the 187 mothers randomly selected from the original cohort of 1000 were found to be illiterate.

Lower educational levels in parents are not necessarily related to runaway behaviour. Although they often arise out of deprivation they may in turn cause deprivation in that parents may

lack many skills and resources needed to nurture their children wisely (Kempe 1976:122).

Number of Children in These Families

The families were not as large as perhaps expected in view of the association between lower socio-economic status and large families (Wilson 1974:247,248). The mean number of children in these homes was 4,3 children. The number of children per family, however, ranged from 1 to 9 children. The mean quoted represented the total number of full and half-siblings born to the runaway's mother. Some runaways knew that they had half-siblings by their fathers as well. These half-siblings were not taken into account, as numbers would have been difficult to establish and most had never lived in the same home as the runaway child.

At least 12 of the runaways had half-siblings by their mothers. The presence of half-siblings again reflected the relatively short life of marital relationships in these homes as well as the frequent changes in the family constellation.

Ordinal position did not seem to be a relevant factor as the number of first, middle and youngest children was fairly evenly distributed throughout the sample. There was a slight preponderance of first children (8) which was similar to what Shellow (1972:219) found in his study of American runaways. However, when he compared them with non-runaways on other variables, no clear relationship could be found between ordinal position and runaway behaviour (ibid:219). In this study the number of eldest and middle children totalled 6 each and the remaining 6 constituted youngest and only children. The two only children made up the total of 8 first born children.

One father reported that he felt that the number of children they had (9) was a contributing factor to his son (the youngest) leaving home. His wife apparently had not wanted more children and therefore rejected and ignored this child throughout his life.

Number of Residential Moves per Family

Table III Frequency of Family Moves Before and After the Child Ran Away from Home

N=18

No. of Moves	Frequency per Family Before Child Ran Away	Frequency per Family After Child Ran Away
0	-	7
1	1	5
2	2	1
3	2	1
4	1	4 or more
5 or more	12	
N=18	Family Moves = 75	Family Moves = 26

The families moved frequently. Whether they differed significantly from the normal population in this respect, is not known, as there was no study with which to compare the moves. One of the researchers in Molteno's (1980:729) study to establish some norms for the Coloured Population in Cape Town, commented that her impression had been that families on the Cape Flats moved frequently (conversation with Hollingshead 1985). In America Roberts (1982: 29) and Shellow (1972:220) both found that runaways' families had moved more frequently than non-runaways'. Shellow (ibid:229) commented that a physical move from one residence to another involved changes in school and friendship groupings and therefore possibly had

a considerable impact on a child. Shellow (ibid:226) added that the repetitive runner especially, was more likely to have lived in two or more households.

In this study, at least 17 children had two or more moves and 12 had five or more moves. The impact of these moves, together with the many other stressful events to which these children are exposed would be difficult to evaluate fully. They also, very possibly, have a significant influence in contributing to runaway behaviour. However, they again reflected the instability present in the lives of this group of runaway children.

Type of Dwellings in which Families Lived

Housing generally appeared inadequate. Homes were overcrowded, small and frequently occupied by more than one family. Many homes were dark and dingy. Curtains were often drawn and all conceivable spaces were filled with furniture. Some homes were dark and sooty due to mal-functioning coal-stoves. In one house, it was particularly difficult to breathe due to the smoke that bellowed through from the kitchen. In several homes window panes were missing or broken and a few doors had been hacked in attempts to break in. One family lived in a very primitive make-shift shanty in the bush. Farm cottages often had inadequate toilet facilities (pit toilets shared with other families). In these homes water for domestic purposes frequently had to be fetched from taps that were fifty to a hundred yards away from the house.

Table IV Types of Dwellings Presently Occupied by Families

N=18

Type of Dwelling	Frequency Distribution in Families
Council flat	2
Council house	10
Farm cottage	4
Shanty in bush	2
	N = 18

Occupational Density in these Homes

The Batson Scale (1944) was used to measure overcrowding. According to this scale, gross overcrowding was represented by a score of 144. In 16 of the runaway homes, the score was higher than 144, and the mean score for the group was 196,3.

This score did not begin to depict just how overcrowded these homes were. The Batson Scale measures overcrowding very roughly and is calculated on the basis of the number of rooms used for sleeping purposes in each dwelling. In virtually every dwelling this accounted for all the rooms in the home, including the living room, and in many instances the kitchen as well. This scale does not reflect the needs for recreational space, needs for parents and children to be in separate bedrooms or the needs of opposite sex children over the age of 10 years to be separated.

A common finding was that children and parents slept in the same room, often shared a bed and not uncommonly shared the room with members of other families. Grandparents, parents and children frequently shared the same room, which in some instances was the only room for sleeping in the house. Only four runaways slept

in their own beds at the time that they ran away. Six shared beds with parents or siblings or both, and eight slept on the floor or the ground (in the case of the two children who lived in a shanty).

Overcrowding certainly affected the quality of life in these homes and seemed to be more directly related to the drift to the streets. This was partly demonstrated in some of the reasons given by children as to why they left home, as well as in the things they said they liked about the shelter. A few, for example, commented that one of the things they liked at the shelter was having a bed of their own in which to sleep.

Pinnock (1984:4) partially attributed overcrowding to the spill over of life into street playgroups and gangs. He also attributed overcrowding to the Group Areas Act which relocated thousands of persons, many of whom already had adequate homes, to new housing estates (ibid:55). This, furthermore, created a backlog in the number of units available for housing and necessitated that families take in relatives and friends who were unable to obtain housing due to the long waiting lists.

Some of the families in this study had been evicted from Council houses through failure to pay rent. This had followed the break up of the family, resulting in the loss of the additional income from the father or step-father's salary. Maintenance was usually irregularly paid, if paid at all.

Alcohol Abuse by a Parent or Step-Parent

Alcohol was abused in the homes of all 18 children. In only one home was it abused by a relative and not a parent. Not all parents admitted to alcohol abuse and this information was derived from social work reports as well as from accounts given by parents and

children. Alcohol was abused by 14 mothers and 17 fathers. Most step-fathers also abused alcohol but the incidence was more difficult to establish because some children had had more than one step-father.

The incidence of alcohol abuse by mothers appeared to be high for the "Coloured" population. Louw (1978:8) reported that the incidence for women was generally much lower than for men. This was partly attributed to the fact that the women had to take over the role of breadwinner because of not receiving any income from their partners. They, therefore, frequently despised all alcohol usage (Louw 1978:8). Gillis, too, (in Robertson 1981:149) in 1973 found the incidence of alcohol abuse amongst women to be much lower than among men. This was also confirmed by Robertson (1981:149) who found the incidence of alcohol abuse to be low among mothers of the physically abused children that he studied.

Alcohol abuse among the mothers in this study may therefore be a significant cause of children leaving home as a result of their mothers' inability to care adequately for them while intoxicated.

Parental Fighting and Physical Violence

The incidence of parental fighting and physical violence in this sample seemed to be high. There was, however, no comparable sample against which to measure the incidence of fighting and family violence. The Theron Commission (v.d. Horst 1976:76) was impressed that although violence was high in the lower socio-economic communities of the Cape Flats, and that although family life was often disrupted by socio-political factors, there were many parents who managed to "succeed in creating a happy married and family life under difficult conditions". Parental violence in the families studied could, therefore, relate significantly to runaway behaviour.

Robertson (1981:154) found fathers of physically abused children to have a significantly higher incidence of criminal behaviour and alcohol abuse than his control group. He found, too, that the mothers of physically abused children came from families with high rates of crime, alcohol and drug abuse and felt that this pattern was similarly being perpetrated from one generation to the next in these multi-problem families. Similarly Pringle (1977:86) commented that parental hostility "perpetuates itself from one generation to the next". This could account for a higher incidence in violence and other problems in these families.

In this study family violence seemed to be linked with alcohol abuse. Mothers of runaways frequently reported being fearful of their partners, and at least four mothers were seriously injured on a few occasions. Seven mothers reported being physically assaulted by their partners. One step-mother reported two abortions in the last trimester of pregnancy as a result of being severely kicked by her husband. At least two houses were damaged in attempts by estranged husbands to break into these homes. One mother complained that she had frequently been evicted because her ex-husband visited her and fought with her, causing trouble at the homes to which she had moved.

The effects of these fights are likely to have had a detrimental impact on these children. It has been found that quarrelling parents not only make poor role models but that parental hostility may in turn affect a child's ability as an adult to give unselfish loving care in the parental relationship" (Pringle 1977:86). The impact of these fights would also add to the levels of insecurity and stress experienced in these homes.

Stress-Producing Events in the Lives of These Runaways

Originally, it was not intended to record stress-producing events as a separate category and parents were not specifically asked to list these. It soon became apparent, however, that these children had experienced many stressful life events. In order to facilitate a quick overview of these stresses, the stress-producing events were collated in Table V.

The list of stress-producing events was compiled largely from that used by Roberts (1982:20) in a comparative study of runaways and non-runaways. A few categories were added to his list and those that were not applicable to local runaways were removed. For example, a "youth's broken romance" was one category that was excluded.

Roberts (1982:18) found that runaways had a mean score of 4,33 stressful events in comparison with a mean score of 2,53 for non-runaways. These scores seem quite low, for the children in this study had a mean score of 14,72 stressful events per child.

As not all stress-producing events were necessarily recalled by the children or the parents, the following table is merely an indicator of the number of stressful events these children experienced. Furthermore, events such as parental fighting, being beaten by a parent, or being separated from parents, occurred so frequently that it was impossible to enumerate each incident. It is not clear whether Roberts (1982) recorded each similar event either. The stresses in the Table below do, however, demonstrate the general instability in these homes. They also form a backdrop against which to evaluate the factors that both parents and their children perceived as contributing

to the runaway behaviour.

Table V Stress-Producing Events Reported in Runaways' Homes

NO18

Stress-Producing Events	Frequency Reported	No. of Runaways
Residential moves	75	18
Parents' separation or divorce	24	14
Mother's boyfriend moves in	21	15
Overcrowding/inadequate housing	18	18
Financial difficulties	18	18
Alcohol problems in parent	17	17
Parental fighting	17	17
Youth frequently beaten by parent	15	15
Separated from parent for period longer than 2 months	13	13
Parent physically assaulted by parent resulting in injuries	8	4
Father/step-father unemployed	6	6
Death of a parent	5	4
Youth caught stealing	5	4
Runaway placed in children's home/ place of safety	4	4
School problems	4	4
Serious illness or hospitalization of parent	4	4
Mother marries person other than father	3	3
Youth placed in foster care by parent or other	3	3
Youth thrown out of house by parent	2	2
Serious illness or hospitalization of youth	2	2
Death of grandparent with whom child stayed	1	1
Sexual abuse by parent	1	1
N=18	265	185

No. of Events = 265

Mean No. of Events per Child = 14,72

B. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE RUNAWAY BEHAVIOUR AS PERCEIVED BY THE MOTHER (OR MOTHER SUBSTITUTES) AND AS PERCEIVED BY THE RUNAWAYS

The mean age of the boys, when they first ran away, was 10,6% years. Length of stay was not easy to determine, as boys and mothers were often vague about details concerning time. For many a period of 18 months to 3 years had lapsed since they first ran away. It was therefore feared that time may have distorted some of their perceptions of the circumstances surrounding their runaway behaviour. As perceptions, however, are frequently long-lasting, especially when related to events that are striking (Vernon 1966:34), it was felt that time distortions would not greatly affect the study.

Events that Immediately Precipitated their Runaway Behaviour

Fifteen boys could recall no specific precipitating event that led to their decision to leave home. Fourteen mothers also reported no precipitating incident. There was no correlation between the parents and boys who reported the precipitating events. This possibly indicated that more precipitating events occurred than were actually reported, or that they had merged with other events or that the boys and/or that their mothers were reluctant to mention them.

That runaway episodes were less frequently attributed to a specific precipitating event would support Roberts' (1982:18) finding that running away was more commonly caused by a "stressful pattern of living" than by an isolated event. This very likely applied to the boys in this study, who were all subjected to various stresses throughout their lives. Roberts (ibid:19) commented that the precipitating events described by his subjects were often not very different in nature from

stressful events they had previously experienced. With the boys in this study it seemed thatthey had nothing worth staying at home for, and experiencing little but stress, they eventally simply abandoned their homes.

Precipitating Events That Were Given by Four Boys

- being severely beaten by a step-father the night before he ran away;
- fear of going home after truanting from school, for fear of being beaten by his father. (This boy had a history of physical abuse by his father);
- fear of going home after losing money while on an errand, for fear of being beaten by step-father;
- beaten by a sibling.

Precipitating Events That Were Given by Four Mothers (or Mother Substitutes

- fear of being beaten by step-father after misbehaving;
- child ran away after seeing sibling sexually abused by father (This was a very violent father who had frequently beaten mother, step-mother and runaway);
- fear of being beaten by father after truanting from school;
- child ran away after stealing money from a neighbour.

It was interesting that although the incidents given by the boys and the mothers were almost identical, they applied to different families. This again may be indicative of the quality of interactions in these families, which were often characterised by fear and abuse.

Mothers' Perceptions of Factors Contributing to the Child's Runaway Behaviour

The persons interviewed included 11 mothers, 1 step-mother, 1 paternal grandmother, 1 maternal grandmother and 1 father. The step-mother was interviewed in addition to the mother as the runaway concerned had lived with both for substantial periods before running away. All those interviewed were the persons with whom the runaway had lived at the time that he ran away. Two mothers were interviewed twice as there were two sets of siblings in the study.

In the table below the writer has ranked the contributory factors according to the frequency with which they were given by the mothers. The factors reported were not ranked in any order of significance by them. They were freely given by the mothers who often contributed more than one factor to their children's runaway behaviour. All the factors given were seen to have some bearing on the runaway behaviour and some were seen to have more influence than others by some of the parents. A few mothers initially found it quite difficult to identify why their children had run away, but they were able to contribute more information when asked if there were possibly any problems in the home or factors that may have made their children want to leave.

Table VI Mother's Perceptions of Factors Contributing to the Child's Runaway Behaviour

Factors Reported	Frequency in which reported
Child truants	13
Child influenced by peers	9
Child beaten by father, step-father or step-mother	7
Frequent parental fighting	7
Alcohol abuse by parents	7
Mother frequently beaten by father/step-father	7
Child frequently scolded by father/step-father	6
Child difficult to control especially re school attendance	6
Father/step-father disliked child	4
Mother/step-father physically injured by father/step-father	4
Child unwanted by mother	3
Child neglected by mother	3
Lack of accommodation	3
Child steals	3
Fear of being beaten by father/step-father	2
Separation of parents	2
Death of parent	1
Mother in gaol. Failed to respond to child's letters	1
Child expelled from school	1
Child saw sibling sexually assaulted by father	1

N=18

Total Number of Perceived Factors = 86

What was striking was that most mothers perceived the factors that related directly to the runaway behaviour as being external to themselves. Parents tended to attribute peer group influences, behaviour of their partners, others, or the child himself as being primarily responsible for the runaway behaviour. In instances where they, themselves, had been negligent, the mothers failed to perceive the negligence or to link it to the child's behaviour. A few mothers, for example, admitted alcohol abuse but did not associate it with their children running away, whereas they did attribute alcohol abuse by their partners to their children leaving home. This may have been because they frequently linked alcohol abuse to physical violence in their partners. In contrast, however, a number of children attributed alcohol abuse by their mothers to their leaving home.

Previous studies (Stricklin 1982:1103) have similarly found that negligent parents externalised the cause for the neglect of their children, and that they seldom perceived themselves as negligent. The interviewees thereby largely absolved themselves of responsibility for any neglect of their children. Pickett & Mason (1978: 11) stated that the use of defences such as projection and denial are often due to the low self-esteem and poorly integrated sense of self that negligent parents have. They, therefore, often shift responsibility from self to others or to a variety of external forces. Other researchers too have found neglectful parents to use projection, denial and rationalization as a means of reassigning responsibility to others (Stricklin 1982:1108).

Whether negligent or not, the mothers in this study certainly did not seem fully to perceive the part which they played in their children's dissatisfaction with life at home. To this extent, their ability to empathize with their children also seemed limited, a factor which was also commonly ascribed to negligent parents (Stricklin 1982:1108).

Where neglect or rejection were perceived as contributing factors, these were cited by persons other than the mother. In one instance this was reported by a widower, and in another two instances by grandmothers who had cared for their grandsons for much of their lives. Parents not only perceived contributing factors as being external to themselves, but as discussed above, they predominantly perceived the contributing factors to be external to the home. Runaway behaviour therefore was linked mainly to truancy and peer group influences. In regard to ten children, parents reported that truant behaviour preceded the runaway behaviour. Mothers viewed their children's truant behaviour as disobedience which they felt they were unable to control. They did not perceive their children as disobedient in other areas. The mothers, therefore, tended to see the peer group as exerting strong influence on their children.

It has also been documented that youngsters from disadvantaged homes, having been thrown back on their own resources, "come to look at their siblings and their peers in the street for emotional support and as model figures" (Pringle 1977:114; Pinnock 1984:9; Kapland & Sadock 1983:945). Kaplan & Sadock (ibid:944) added that parents often accurately recognised the role of the peer group in their children's behaviour, but used it to "discount the predisposing factors within the family and the community that underlie the child's selection of unsuitable companions". This was a likely occurence in some of the parents in this study.

Mothers did not seem to perceive ways in which the home life adversely affected their children's satisfactory scholastic progress and social integration at school, factors well documented in the literature, especially in low income families (Pringle 1977: 110; Wilson 1974:346; Pinnock 1984:64; Kaplan & Sadock 1963:942).

Deprived physically, socially and emotionally, such children are

not only handicapped intellectually, but also by an "inability to relate to people in authority and by an absence of social competence" (Wilson 1974:246). They, therefore, are frequently perceived as unresponsive and unrewarding by teachers who view them with disapproval and meet their difficult behaviour and lack of progress with punishment. In addition, factors such as overcrowding hinder the completion of homework assignments. Many of these factors would have applied to the children in this study, and it is therefore not surprising that some of the children perceived no rewards at school; lost interest; and dropped out.

In the home the mothers (or mother substitutes) attributed physical abuse, neglect, or alcohol abuse by their partners, to the child's departure from home. This was seldom attributed to a specific event but rather to a chronic pattern of negative interaction between the parent or step-parent and the child concerned.

Physical aggression and abuse were common in these homes. Frequent parental fighting and physical assault by the men in the homes contributed, directly or indirectly, to the runaway behaviour. Several mothers perceived their partners as being very aggressive and admitted being fearful of them. The mother of one child admitted feelings of chronic stress as a result of her husband's behaviour; she had, in fact, left him on that account. His new wife described how she had lost two babies in the latter stages of pregnancy after being severely physically assaulted by this man. The step-mother had also, on another occasion, needed hospitalisation after being stabbed by him. This same man had also sexually assaulted his nine year old daughter on several occasions, which was particularly stressful to the boy who ran away. At the time of the interview, the husband had been absent for about a week. The step-

mother lived in fear of his return and had strategically placed cupboards before the windows of their farm cottage in an effort to keep him out.

The mothers of 7 boys admitted being assaulted by their present or previous partners, and 4 mothers reported that they had been stabbed by a partner. Two mothers complained that their estranged husbands harrassed them at the new homes to which they had moved, and one mother attributed this to her being evicted on several occasions.

Four mothers attributed their partners' aggressive behaviour towards their sons as being primarily responsible for their running away. It appeared however that there were other factors in these particular homes that could have been relevant, but which these mothers either did not perceive or chose to withhold. Two of these mothers, for example, made no mention of their own alcohol abuse, and a third did not mention that both she and her ex-husband had previously received a suspended sentence for the desertion of their children.

A few boys had not been by their mother's present partner, but had a history of being physically abused by previous partners. Although these events were not perceived by the mothers as influencing the runaway behaviour, they may well have predisposed the child to being insecure or vulnerable in any current situation in which they experienced stress, and to which they may have reacted in terms of past stressful experiences.

What was striking was that most mothers perceived the factors that related directly to the runaway behaviour as being external to themselves. Parents tended to attribute peer group influences, behaviour of their partners, others or the child himself as being primarily responsible for the runaway behaviour. In instances where they, themselves, had been

linked indirectly to the runaway behaviour. They were associated more with lack of accommodation and loss of income following on a separation, and as further proof of unco-operative behaviour in a spouse, rather than as causing any emotional response in a child coming to terms with the absence of a parent, or the events that led to the separation.

Death of a parent was cited as contributing indirectly to one child's recurrent runaway behaviour, by a widower whose son had initially run away prior to his wife's death. This father perceived peer group influences as exerting a more predominant role in his child's behaviour and he ascribed the primary contributing factor to his son's fear of being beaten by him after having truanted from school. Other contributing factors mentioned in this home included the mother's rejection of her son, even prior to his birth; she apparently resented having another child. Alcohol and dagga abuse by the boy's brothers, which caused frequent fights between family members, were also seen as contributing factors.

Lack of accommodation was often seen as a factor that contributed indirectly to a child's runaway behaviour in that a few mothers were unable to have their children live with them. Inadequate accommodation caused several mothers to move regularly, and this meant that the child's care was shared with anyone who was able to accommodate them. Some children therefore drifted back and forth between mother and other relatives or caretakers. Two mothers used this factor to absolve them of responsibility for a child's behaviour and, therefore, apportioned the blame on the current caretaker, in one instance a father and step-mother. This particular mother had many unresolved angry feelings towards her ex-spouse which she expressed very vociferously.

The subjective impression of the writer, while conducting the

interviews, was that the mothers or mother substitutes seemed to have little insight into their children's behaviour. A few seemed to be overwhelmed by the deprivation and problems that they experienced, and some expressed feelings of helplessness in knowing how to handle their children. On the whole, they did not seem to be very perturbed by their children's absences, and other than asking a few questions as to where their children were, and how they were progressing, they generally went on to talk of other things. Some seemed relieved to know that their children were safe and being cared for, and a few felt that it would be better if they remained at the shelter as opposed to coming home. These mothers felt that financially they would not be able to provide as adequately for the physical needs of their children as the shelter staff could. For a few, this could have been interpreted as making a responsible choice in requesting that their children remain at the shelter, but in others it seemed to reflect apathy and lack of any strong bonds with their children. It was very apparent that there were many interrelating factors contributing to the runaway behaviour and when parents gave prominence to a specific event as a contributory factor, further discussion invariably revealed other problems within the home.

Children's Perceptions of Factors Contributing to Their Runaway Behaviour

Table VII Factors the Children Perceived as Contributing to Their Runaway Behaviour

Factors Reported	Frequency Reported
Alcohol abused by father/step-father	12
Alcohol abused by mother/step-mother/foster-mother	10
Beaten by parent or step-parent	10
Parents fought frequently	10
Did not get on with parent, usually father	9
Did not get on with step-parent, usually step-father	9
Father/step-father frequently beat mother	7
Did not like living at home anymore	6
Truanted	6
Frequently scolded by parent	5
Home overcrowded	5
Did not like school	4
No place in home in which to sleep	3
Went strolling with cousin/siblings	3
Feared being beaten by father after truancy	2
Child placed in care of others following death of parent or grandparent (caretaker)	2
Child felt afraid at home	2
Feared being beaten by step-father after losing money	1
Frequently thrown out of house by drunken father	1
Father verbally abused mother	1
Mother left father, leaving child behind	1
Expected to care for younger siblings while mother worked	1
Afraid of returning home late at night after truanting	1
Fought with a sibling	1
Nothing nice at home	1

Number of Runaways = 18

Number of Responses = 113

The above factors were ranked according to the frequency with which they were reported by the group as a whole. For many boys it was difficult to articulate what they did not like at home, and it was often only as the interview progressed that they slowly shared the things that had made them unhappy enough to leave home. One was totally unable to express anything beyond the fact that there was "nothing nice at home" and another only revealed what he did not like at home through the three wishes he was granted by the interviewer. Most were unable to recall any specific event that precipitated their departure from home, and it appeared that they had abandoned their homes due to an accumulation of unsatisfactory experiences as well as a pervasive feeling of not having their needs adequately met. The interviews revealed that they all came from homes which were troubled and unhappy. This confirmed previous studies which found that runaways were in flight from homes in which they were troubled and that their actions were often precipitated by a slow deterioration in parent-child relationships and an accumulation of unhappy experiences as opposed to one specific precipitating event. (Bock & English 1973:144; Howell 1974:845; Roberts 1982:15). Certainly many of the responses indicated dissatisfaction in their relationships with either their parents or step-parents. Not a few complained of being frequently scolded or of not getting on with one or other parent or step-parent.

In contrast to the mothers, the children perceived factors within the home as being primarily responsible for their running away. They most frequently perceived alcohol, physical abuse, and parental fighting as contributing factors, whereas their mothers most frequently contributed their children's behaviour to truancy and peer group influences. This was especially evident in the interviews with the mothers, who often began by saying that their children ran away because they were

influenced by friends or because they had truanted from school.

Most children perceived more than one factor as contributing to their decisions to leave home. Here again they are not unlike the subjects studied by Roberts (1982:19) who especially reported a combination of alcoholic parents, physical abuse by parents and school problems in runaways.

The children seemed fearful of their parents, and in a few instances their running away arose more out of the fear of anticipated punishment, than because they felt they had displeased their parents. They generally seemed insecure in their homes which became more evident in the things that they identified as being the things they liked at the shelter. These have been listed and will be discussed more fully below.

A few of the children attributed factors in the environment to their being fearful. One nine year old boy related different stories about the gangsters who frequented the shebeen at the house where his family were sub-tenants. He was afraid that his family would be robbed, and he described how persons were often robbed and stabbed to death en route to the bus stop. Interestingly, he denied any fighting or alcohol abuse on the part of his parents, whereas his older brother contributed physical abuse and alcohol abuse by his father and parental fighting to his running away from home. The mother of these two boys, although partly contributing her children's leaving home to acts of physical violence and alcohol abuse by their father, felt that their peers were primarily responsible for their leaving home. In some respects all three of these persons were correct, and yet each one of them seemed to perceive events in terms of the stage of his or her own personal development and in the way in which these events made most sense to them.

Unrealistic parental expectations were reflected especially by one nine year old boy who complained that he had had to care for his younger siblings while his mother worked. If he did not care for them properly he was scolded by his mother. When this boy initially arrived at the shelter and was interviewed by a social worker, he, in fact, requested that the home be visited, as he felt that this mother did not properly care for his sisters. The main reason for his leaving home was his mother's abuse of alcohol and her rowdy behaviour. She also frequently fought with his step-father who, on a few occasions, had severely physically abused him, a fact that he did not mention as a contributing factor, but which his mother did. This particular family also moved frequently with the result that his schooling had been interrupted. They were also living in grossly overcrowded conditions at the time that he ran away. What this boy particularly liked at the shelter was that he was scolded less frequently than wnen at home, and that he had a "father" in the person of the house-father at the shelter. It seemed that despite the fact that he had many factors that he could have attributed to his running away, he seemed to focus on the fact that he did not perceive his mother as caring for either himself or his siblings in the way that he wanted. Perceiving nothing to be worth staying at home for, he then decided to leave.

Lack of physical care and comfort was a factor that some children contributed to their running away from home. Overcrowding and having nowhere to sleep, in addition to other factors, caused some children to leave home. Perhaps this indirectly led to their feeling that they were somehow in the way and unwanted, a factor that they did not directly express but which may have been covertly present in statements such as "I did not like living at home anymore" or that there was "nothing nice at home". Certainly several children expressed liking the shelter because

there was more space than at home (despite the fact that it is actually not spacious) and that they had their own bed to sleep in.

Where truanting was perceived as a factor that led to their "strolling" the streets and eventually staying away from home, it was qualified by the fact that it had been preceded by problems with a teacher, or simply because they did not like school. Several had difficulty with school work or felt that their teachers reprimanded them unjustly. Having no means of redress, they simply dropped out of school. This again confirmed previous research finds that runaways often perceived few rewards at home or at school (Shellow 1972:228; Dunford & Brennan 1976: 459: Roberts 1982:19).

That children found it difficult to express what troubled them at home was demonstrated by one child who said he could think of no reason for leaving home other than that he had left home to go "strolling" with his cousins. Further conversation with this child revealed that his parents were divorced; that he had no contact with his natural father; and that he wished to have no contact with him in the future. In asking this 12 year old boy what he would like if he could be granted three wishes, he very readily stated that he wished: that his mother would get well (she apparently had ulcers on her legs which he found unpleasant to observe); that his mother would not drink anymore (a fact which he had not perceived as contributing to his running away); he had no third wish. This boy had been away from home for more than a year and had previously asked his mother if he could live permanently with an aunt. Although consciously unaware of it, it was likely that he left home as a result of deprivation. His decision to go "strolling" with his peers was very possibly an attempt to gain what he lacked at home.

Things which the Boys Liked at the Shelter

The boys were all asked what they liked at the shelter. No suggestions were made to the boys as to what they might like. Initially, several found it difficult to express what they liked and several found it difficult to elaborate beyond the fact that they liked it very much. The things that they liked clearly seemed to indicate a need for security and stability, as well as the provision of certain basic necessities in life.

Table VIII What the Boys Liked at the Shelter

Things the Boys Liked	Frequency Reported
Likes everything very much	8
Provision of schooling	6
Provision of certain basics - bed, shower, food	5
Things provided on time (a specific time to get up, go to bed, wash, eat)	4
Have a "father" in the house-father	4
Get scolded less frequently than at home	2
Have friends	2
Provision of videos, T.V., electricity	2
Can do what you like	2
Prefer additional space at the shelter	2
Regard it as "my new home"	1
Get "learning for life" - learn not to smoke dagga, or do things that land you in gaol	1
Like house-mother	1
Can play inside when it rains	1
Can invite friends in to play	1
Feels safer than in home neighbourhood	1
Have you everything you need	1

Number of children = 18

Number of responses = 45

Sixteen boys stated that they preferred living at the shelter to living at home. Only one was ambivalent and one, who had been placed at the shelter on Retention Orders, stated that he preferred living at home. The fact that quite a number of the boys stayed at the shelter for a prolonged period of time, despite periodic absences, seemed to indicate that the shelter was meeting certain of their needs. Having not had their needs met at home, and having found a place which more adequately provided the things they needed, it could be interpreted that for some boys running away from home was in fact an adaptive response to stress. The fact that some children seemed to have stayed and to have bonded to shelter personnel would seem to confirm Lowry's (in Shellow 1972:212) findings that in some instances running away is an adaptive response to dealing with stressful experiences at home.

Having a father or mother figure, having an adult to appeal to when things got out of hand, being scolded less frequently, and the provision of a set routine for meals, bed and other activities, were important to a number of children. The provision of a set routine especially surprised the writer as she expected that runaways would partially be escaping such structures; however, that they expressed this need would perhaps confirm Pringle's (1977:37) observation that a known routine; stable family relationships where attitudes and behaviour are consistent and dependable; and the routine of a familiar place all help a child to feel secure. Enjoying the provision of certain basic commodities such as having meals on time, their own beds to sleep in, showers and electricity, and adults on whom they could rely, possibly indicated the beginning of an ability to trust and depend on others. Simultaneously the provision of these commodities fostered feelings of security in some of the boys and increased their desire to stay at the shelter where these needs were met. Some of their responses also indicated the

lack of space and overcrowding in their environments. For one child, the fact that he could play inside when it rained and that he could have friends with whom to play at the shelter, seemed to emphasize the lack of recreational space present in many of their homes.

C. THE RUNAWAY EPISODES

The Number of Times the Boys Ran Away from Home

Most of these children ran away from home more than once. In this respect they were more like the chronic runaway as discussed in the literature (Jenkins 1971:169; Bakwin 1972:594; Shellow 1976:226). Jenkins (1971:169) stated that such children characteristically ran away from home to escape situations they experienced as threatening. He added that they were less likely to be living with both parents; were more frequently living with other families either in the past or the present; and that they more often felt unwanted and experienced rejection by their parents. They were also frequently illegitimate. Shellow (1972:226) added that the chronic runaway tended to stay away longer; experienced problems at home, at school and in the community; tended to have lived in two or more households; and were more likely to have withdrawn from school after running away. Many of the boys had been away from home for a few years. Their concepts of time were often vague and it was impossible to determine the length of time that they stayed away on their various runs.

Table IX The Number of Times that These Boys Ran Away from Home

Number of Runaway Incidents	Number of Boys
Once	2
2 - 4	10
5 or more	6
Number of Boys = 18	

At least nine of the boys had been returned home by the police or by social workers on previous occasions, only to run away again. At least two boys ran away from Places of Safety to which they had been taken. It seemed that once they had perceived that it was possible to exist away from home, most of the boys became resolved to break away permanently. Several expressed an interest in visiting their homes again, but only one expressed any desire to live there again, and then at a future date. For most, the ties with their families seemed very tenuous, and in this respect they were like the throwaway children described by Gulotta (1971:112). Such children often had no alternative but to leave home due to the fact that the breakdown in family functioning was so severe and emotionally damaging that the bonds between parent and child were broken (ibid:113). Gulotta (ibid:114) emphasized that "the bonds were broken by the parent to the child and not the child to the parent" and relationships were marked by "an absence of caring, and emotional neglect by the parent of the child".

Places in Which Runaways Sheltered While on the Run

Once they left home, most would doss down wherever they could find shelter. This could be a derelict house, the entrance to a building, an old car or a hollow under some bushes. Often they would encounter other street children and huddle together for warmth. Being with others made them feel safer, but many reported that they were unafraid most of the time. One reported that if he slept in an area where he felt unsafe, he would overcome his fear by sniffing paint thinners. Most alternated the places where they dossed down each night and tended to sleep on the periphery of the inner city and in Sea Point so as to avoid harrassment by the police.

The places where they slept are similar to those used by street children world wide (Inter-NGO Project Profile No. 1:7,43,81).

Table X Places in Which Runaways Sheltered

Places	Number of Boys who used such Places
Taken in by people (including relatives and friends)	8
Slept in shop entrances	6
Slept on Cape Town station or in trains	5
Slept under bushes	5
A shelter for street children	3
A vacant plot/derelict old house	3
Under stair wells of blocks of flats	2
In big road construction pipes	1
In an old car	1
In a parking garage	1

Number of Places = 10
Number of Children = 18
Number of Responses= 35

Ways in Which They Supported Themselves While On the Run

By sheer necessity most children became skilled in meeting their basic physical needs. Most found legal means to support themselves but a few admitted that they resorted to petty theft on occasions. This was usually the stealing of food. Below is a list of ways in which these boys reported that they supported themselves. It very likely is not inclusive, but it does indicate the methods they employed. Two or three seemed to be taken in by persons for varying periods prior to their meeting boys from the shelter. One boy distributed pamphlets and earned R24 per week. He often took money home to help his parents. For the rest their earnings were indeterminate and were generally spent as soon as they had enough money to buy food. In this way

They are similar to the street children in Zaire (inter-NGO Project Profile No.1:55) who are described as tending to "turn their earnings into proteins and calories at the first opportunity". In this latter group a common reason was that they had nowhere safe to leave their money and were afraid of being robbed. Again the ways in which local street children earn money are fairly universal.

Table XI Ways in Which Runaways Supported Themselves

Methods	Numbers by which employed
Begged	9
Sold newspapers	5
Parked Cars (i.e. guided drivers to vacant bays)	4
Pushed trolleys at supermarkets	4
Taken in by people	4
Petty theft (food)	3
Supported by runaway siblings	2
Distributed pamphlets	1
Washed cars	1
Obtained food from shelter for vagrants	1
Did garden jobs	1

Number of boys = 18
Number of responses = 36

How the Boys Arrived at the Shelter

At least 50% of the boys were brought to the shelter by runaways who were living there already. Street children recognise each other fairly easily and not infrequently will enquire of one

another if they have somewhere to sleep. Often they will group together in small bands. It was not unusual, therefore, that those who had found suitable accommodation, approached runaways and informed them about the shelter's existence.

Table XII Manner in Which They Arrived at the Shelter

Manner	No. of Runaways
Brought by a boy from the shelter	9
Brought via a social work agency	4
Informed of shelter's existence by a "good citizen"	4
Self-discovered	1

Number of Runaways = 18

Length of Stay at the Shelter

Table XIII Length of Time That the Runaways Stayed at the Shelter

Number of Years	Number of Runaways
Less than 1 year	7
1 - 2 years	3
2 - 3 years	8

Number of Runaways = 18

Most of the boys in this study tended to stay at the shelter for indefinite periods of time, punctuated by periodic absences. In this respect these 18 boys were not typical of most runaways as records kept at the shelter revealed that at least 50 boys were known to have resided there for a day or more during the first

two and a half years that the shelter was open.

Of those who stayed at the shelter for less than a year, three stayed for periods varying from a few days to a few weeks or months, with absences of a few months to a year in between their periods of sojourn. The remaining 15 runaways, however, continued to stay indefinitely despite their having absconded periodically. This was very likely due to the fact that they perceived their needs for security and stability were more adequately met at the shelter than at home or on the streets. Whether there were any other factors that differentiated those boys who stayed from those who ran away, only further study would reveal. It could be that there were differences in temperament, or that those who stayed formed a core group that overtly or covertly left new comers on the outside. One post-study observation is that nine of those in the study left the shelter during the course of 1985. (Three others were placed successfully in children's homes; two in foster-care and three of those who ran away have since returned to the shelter.) A possible contributing factor seemed to be that the person who had been a house-father at the shelter since its inception left at the beginning of 1985. The following few months saw changes in house-fathers, and this seemed to have unsettled the boys, causing them to feel insecure and resentful and to act out their feelings by running away.

Running Away From the Shelter

Table XIV Number of Times That the Boys Ran Away from the Shelter

Number of Times	Number of Boys
0 - 3	5
4 - 7	4
8 or more	9
Number of Boys = 18	

Behaviour Problems as Observed by the Shelter Staff

Initially the writer did not intend to include a breakdown of psychopathology present in these children. As discussions with parents and house-parents in particular revealed many behaviour problems present in these boys, it was decided that an overview of these problems would be of interest.

The behaviour problems mentioned by the parents and house-parents seemed to indicate that many of the boys, if not most, had symptoms of Oppositional or Conduct Disorders especially of the under-socialized, non-aggressive type (DSM III:48).

The parents mainly complained of their inability to control their sons' truant behaviour and occasionally stealing, whereas the shelter staff complained of the following problems: attention-seeking behaviour; jealousy; tale-bearing; lying especially to defer blame or responsibility for misdeeds to others; poor impulse control; manipulative behaviour often demonstrated in superficial relationships with exploitative behaviour for self-gain; argumentativeness; defiant oppositional behaviour; bullying of younger boys and physical aggression; passive aggressive behaviour such as slyness. provocative behaviour, stubbornness, procrastination, disobedience, carelessness and sulking behaviour was common; truancy (16 boys) absconding periodically especially when scolded by staff or when angry with staff or other boys; substance abuse (mainly prior to admission to the shelter or when away "strolling") in the form of inhalation of paint thinners (13 boys) or dagga (cannabis sativa) smoking (6 boys). Case records revealed that 7 boys had been involved in theft (usually petty), and that 8 boys had had police contact. Many were also precocious sexually and homosexual behaviour occurred in at least half of the group.

Other behaviour problems included poor scholastic performance, poor frustration tolerance, irritability, low self-esteem, being easily influenced by peers, hypersensitivity to criticism and bed-wetting. Some of these latter problems are frequently associated with Conduct Disorders (DSM III:46; Kaplan & Sadock 1983:941). Kaplan & Sadock (ibid:942) stated that the basic cause of these problems is rejection in the home. They added that treatment was difficult as such boys lacked empathy and trust and the "capacity to develop emotional attachment". Again this would reflect the tenuousness of the bonds that such children have with their parents and the effects thereof on all future relationships and behaviour. Their rejection was manifest in their wariness of others (Maier 1978:90); their hunger and rivalry for attention which confirmed Cull & Hardy's (1976:4) observation that runaways who had been rejected showed considerable sibling rivalry; and their ability to delay need gratification which was evident in their demanding behaviour and poor impulse control. Often their behaviour seemed to regress when frustrated and they seemed to carry over unfulfilled needs from earlier development stages.

It is noteworthy that those who absconded fewer than four times were those who left the shelter permanently after a relatively short stay, or those who were recent arrivals at the shelter. Of those who ran away on 4 to 7 occasions, only two were at the shelter for two or more years. The majority of these children ran away fairly frequently, staying away for two or three days to a few weeks. A few visited their homes of origin during these absences, or occasionally were taken in by people for a night or two. The majority explained their whereabouts during these absences simply by the fact that they had gone "strolling", that is walking and sleeping on the streets. Sometimes they left alone and at other times they left in small groups of two to four children.

Reasons for leaving were not obtained from each boy. A few absconded permanently and were not available for comment, and some declined to give their reasons for leaving or were unable to verbalize them. Reasons that were given varied from their deciding to accompany peers who wanted to go "strolling" to having fought with their peers or house-parents. Sometimes they felt angry with their peers or house-parents especially when they perceived that they had been unfairly judged or discriminated against. A few went "strolling" after truanting from school for one or other reason.

That some left the shelter when experiencing difficulty in their relationships there, seemed to confirm previous findings that runaways had fewer adaptive responses to problems and that they tended to respond to frustration maladaptively by acts of flight such as running away (Roberts 1982:35; Jenkins 1971:172,173).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study confirmed that running away is indeed a complex phenomenon, which is not easily interpreted in direct cause and effect relationships (Spillane-Grieco 1984:159). There were many interrelated factors present within the families, the individual runaways and society, which contributed to these boys' leaving home. In this respect they were like the repetitive runaway in whom running away was bound up with individual and family pathology as well as with difficulties at school and in the community (Shellow 1972:227; Jones 1977:3; Dunford & Brennan 1976:467; Gull & Hardy 1976:9). This study, furthermore, supported previous findings that running away tended to be impulsive rather than planned and that in the chronic runaway it generally arose out of a deterioration in the parent-child relationships (Shellow 1972:218; Howell 1973:845; Roberts 1982:15). This frequently was attributable to a life-long pattern of stress in their homes and was seldom due to one specific precipitating event, again supporting the findings of previous researchers (Bock & English 1973:144; Jones 1977:8; Roberts 1982:15).

Family Psychopathology

The families of the runaways studied were disorganized and psychopathology included :

- parental conflict;
- parental separations which resulted in homes being broken and families being reconstituted often to be broken again;

- poor parent-child relationships especially between the runaways and their fathers and/or step-fathers;
- alcohol abuse by both mothers, fathers and step-fathers;
- family violence evidenced in physical assault of mothers by fathers or step-fathers; physical abuse of sons by fathers and/or step-fathers; damage caused to homes as a result of violent acts; verbal abuse and sexual abuse;
- emotional abuse due to negligence and rejection by parents;
- negligence to provide adequately for children's needs by young and inexperienced parents. Mothers tended to be more poorly educated and younger at the birth of their first children than was the average for their communities (cf Molteno 1980:730,731; Robertson 1981:136,141);
- unpredictable behaviour by parents evidenced in inconsistent and erratic discipline, inappropriate punishment and physical abuse;
- runaways were frequently reared by more than one caretaker;
- financial problems and unemployment.

Other problems within the homes included gross overcrowding, inadequate housing and frequent residential moves. Families were trapped in a cycle of deprivation, which perpetuated from one generation to the next and which was a likely predisposing factor in the incidence of child abuse (Kempe 1977:121).

Most of the above factors were experienced as stressful and were perceived as contributing to the runaway behaviour, by both parents and boys, but especially by the boys. This characteristic was not untypical of negligent mothers who seldom perceive any personal responsibility for their children's behaviour (Pickett & Mason 1978:11; Stricklin 1982:1103). The above factors, furthermore, reflected instability not only in family relationships but in virtually every area of family functioning. Examples of the latter were the frequent residential moves and

the numbers of caretakers which these children had. Many of these factors, particularly the early and frequent separations from mothers, very likely also retarded the bonding process between mother and child (Kennel et al 1976:28,29; Kempe 1977: 122; Argles 1980:33). This very possibly contributed to the lack of warmth observed in the mother-child relationships, and the fact that these relationships appeared very tenuous. Pringle (1977:134) commented that it was stressful for a child to be moved to an unfamiliar environment, especially when unable to understand verbal explanations which might help to restore some sense of security. She added that the most damaging effect of such separation was most probably in the growth of self awareness and the development of a sense of identity. Pringle (1977:115) also stated that precarious relationships with parents along with inconsistent discipline, result in a child's being insecure. Mussen (1963:744) reported that this circumstance decreased the likelihood of children identifying with their parents and internalizing their norms and standards. This was particularly so with youths who exhibited delinquent behaviours (Mussen 1963:744). Fear of punishment certainly was a common feature that children perceived as attributing to their running away from home.

As discussed in the previous chapters, on-going family disturbances and stress adversely affect the development of a healthy personality (Pringle 1977:35). Instead, these factors frequently result in the development of personality disorders (Jones 1977:25) and maladaptive patterns of behaviour in order to meet needs or as a means of handling conflict and stress (Jenkins 1971:168; Jones 1977:8; Roberts 1982:25; Gutierres & Reich 1981:92).

Individual Psychopathology in the Runaways

The behaviour problems that these boys manifested, were mostly symptomatic of Oppositional and Conduct Disorders of Childhood and Adolescence (DSM-III:46; Kaplan & Sadock 1983:924,942). Symptons included substance abuse, truancy, poor impulse control. aggressive or passive-aggressive behaviour, attention-seeking behaviour, manipulative behaviour, running away, lying, theft, stubbornness, argumentativeness and delinquent acts. These behaviours are associated with parental rejection (Kaplan & Sadock 1983:942) which is not surprising when the pathology of these children and their families is taken into account. Among all the children running away seemed to be an act of flight from homes which they experienced as being stressful and without comfort. (See Tables V and VII). This was particularly evident in the factors which they perceived as causing them to leave home (See Table VII). These factors, furthermore, were attributed mostly to a negative pattern of interaction with their parents which frequently resulted in their being physically and emotionally abused and deprived.

That the children not infrequently ran away as a reaction to criticism or correction by shelter home-parents or to anger with peers, the act of fleeing seemed to indicate that most were habitually resolving their problems maladaptively. Lacking the social skills needed to resolve conflicts more adaptively, most children seemed to act out their frustrations by attempting to withdraw. In these respects, they are not unlike most chronic runaways (Jenkins 1971:168; Jones 1977:8; Gutierres & Reich 1981:92; Roberts 1982:25).

That most of the runaways in this study had stayed at the shelter for a prolonged period, and that some encouraged other runaways to stay there too, seemed to indicate that they were capable of

some adaptive behaviour. The fact that they perceived that their homes offered them little, and the fact that they perceived that the shelter offered them something worth staying for, would be interpreted by some authors as an adaptive response to handling the intolerable situations at home (Lowry in Shellow 1972:212; Gutierres & Reich 1981:92). The fact that some, however, then left when they experienced difficulties, could on the other hand have been indicative of the exploitative and superficial nature of many of the relationships they form (Kaplan & Sadock 1983:941). That most runaways were able to survive on the streets, albeit frugally, again was indicative of their ingenuity and ability to exploit situations to their own advantage.

Factors in Society that Contributed to Runaway Behaviour

All these children came from very socio-economically and emotionally deprived homes in communities that were politically discriminated against. Overcrowding, inadequate housing, low wages, poverty, poor education, substance abuse and inadequate community facilities were common characteristics of the communities and homes from which they came (Atmore 1982:255). As their parents were poorly educated and poorly equipped to provide them with the necessary stimulation and skills to cope at school, it was not surprising that these runaways dropped out of school at an early age. Their parents expected them to attend school and often complained of their own inability to control the truant behaviour of their children. They also perceived peer group influences as a factor in their truant behaviour. The parents, however, failed to mention that they had often enrolled their children late, or that their schooling had been disrupted by family moves, or that their children failed classes. The house-parents reported that several children performed poorly at school and had limited ability to concentrate.

Schools in the communities from which these children came were generally overcrowded. It was, therefore, not unexpected that several of these children did not like school or clashed with their teachers and that they ultimately dropped out. Truanting became for some a first step to staying away from home permanently. A failure on the part of educational authorities to provide more adequately for their educational needs through the provision of nursery schools, additional adaptation classes for slow learners or alternate educational programs which would equip many more adequately with skills for adult life was indicated to be a need-area. Schools, instead, seemed to concentrate on academic subjects in the primary years. Smaller classes would also have made it easier for teachers to cope with these children's attention-seeking and distracting behaviours. Improved relationships between these boys and their teachers could have served as substitute parental role models for the children, especially in view of the absence of adequate models at home. This, in turn, might have slightly decreased the use of escape acts, such as runaway behaviour, as a means of handling difficulties.

It is only in recent years that attempts have been made to address the problem of street youths, mainly through the establishment of non-governmental organisations such as the shelter in which these children stayed. Society has, generally, ignored the problem or taken a punitive stance and treated runaways as delinquents who were either sent to Places of Safety or Schools of Industry. Emphasis in such institutions is often on discipline and not love, acceptance or mutual respect, attitudes which facilitate the rehabilitation process. A few of the boys in the study had previously been in Places of Safety and one had absconded prior to being sent to a School of Industry. He was adamant that he would never be sent to such an establishment. In the face of runaways' clashes with and distrust of authority figures, it is possible that some would be rehabilitated more effectively in a

less structured environment where they could be contained without force. It seems to be the responsibility of society to provide a suitable framework to receive such children at times of crisis and need. In America, for example, it was found that the State Departments and judiciary were totally incapable of dealing with the problems of runaway youth in the 1970's. As a result, runaway houses emerged, providing non-punitive shelter, food, counselling, medical aid and mediation between parents and youth (Moses 1978:230). Very often it is the non-governmental organisations which take the initiative in using new and more flexible approaches to age-old problems. These social contributions should be recognised and encouraged by this State as an effective means of providing aid to such youth.

Further research would perhaps be useful to see whether there are any significant differences between runaways who choose to stay at shelters and those who elect to stay for very short periods or not at all. Perhaps it would also be useful to do a comparative study between runaways and non-runaways from the same communities in order to establish if there are any significant differences in child-rearing practices in their homes.

In summary, it would seem that street youth are the casualties of multi-problem families and a society that does not relate to their problems imaginatively. Street children commonly had multiple factors that contributed to their runaway behaviour, many of which they were not consciously aware or which they did not necessarily attribute to their runaway behaviour. Many factors may also have been repressed by these children. The runaways and their parents differed in the areas that they emphasized as attributing to the runaway behaviour, the runaways tending to emphasize factors in the homes, and the parents emphasizing factors external to the homes. Both groups seldom

saw their own behaviour as contributing to the runaway incidents and more frequently perceived themselves as victims within the homes. The mothers saw themselves as badly treated and as unsupported by their husbands or partners, as disobeyed by their children, and as less influential than peers. The boys, in contrast, perceived their mothers and fathers as treating them unfairly and abusively, and as being unable to provide for their needs due to their frequent state of inebriation. Few saw the reciprocal effects of their own interactions on the other's behaviour, and both were more frequently absorbed in their own needs, thereby displaying their egocentricity and marked inability to empathize as well as their own varying degrees of emotional deprivation and individual pathology.

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH THE MOTHER

Parents were asked to elaborate on the following questions. These were not necessarily asked in the order of sequence listed below and some were only asked if the relevant material had not been covered in response to earlier questions.

1. Runaway Episodes:
   How often has _____ run away from home?
   Why do you think that he ran away from home?
   Did anything in particular happen that may have caused him to run away from home?
   Have any of your other children ever run away?
   Was there anything that caused them to run away?

2. Relationship with Child:
   How do you get on with your child?
   How does his father/step-father get on with him?
   Is he an easy child to manage?
   Does his behaviour ever cause any problems?
   Do either you or his father/step-father ever have cause to hit him?
   Does his father/step-father ever hit him at other times?

3. Relationship between parents:
   How do you get on with your husband/partner?
   What kind of difficulties do you experience?
   Is he ever aggressive towards you?
   Have either you or your children ever been injured by your present or previous partners?

4. Alcohol Abuse:

   Does anyone in the family drink?

   Do they drink occasionally/every weekend/more often than that?

   Does alcohol ever cause any problems in the home?

   Did alcohol abuse by your husband/partner or yourself play any part in your child running away from home?

5. Early Childhood of Runaway:

   Where was _____ (runaway child) born?

   How soon after his birth did you begin to work?

   Who looked after your child while you worked?

   Was he a healthy child?

   Has _____ ever lived with persons other than yourself?

   If so, for what length of time?

   What were the circumstances that led to your living apart?

   How old were you when _____ was born?

6. Family Composition:

Name	Age	Occupation	Income
Father:			
Mother:			
Step-father			

   Number of Children:

Name	Age	Father

7. Other Relatives:

8. Marital Status of Mother:

   Married/Divorced/Separated/Never married/Cohabiting.

9. Previous Mariages/Relationships:

10. Housing:

    Council flat/house farm cottage other

Number of room:

Number of occupants: Adults: Children:

Are the parents tenants or sub-tenants?

Where does _____ sleep?

Where do the other children sleep?

11. Residential Moves:

How long have you lived at the present address?

How often have you moved since _____ was born?

How often have you moved since _____ rn away from home?

12. Schooling:

Did _____ attend school?

At what age did he start school?

What standard was he in when he last attended school?

Did he ever fail?

Did he ever truant?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH CHILD

1. Runaway Episodes:

   How often have you run away from home?

   Why did you run away from home?

   Did anything in particular happen that caused you to leave home?

   Are you the only child in your family that has ever run away?

   Was there any reason why your brother/sister ran away from home?

   How long have you been away from home?

   Where did you sleep while on the streets?

   How did you support yourself while on the streets?

   When did you arrive at the shelter?

   How did you hear about it?

   Do you like it at the shelter?

   What do you like about the shelter?

   Do you prefer living at the shelter to living at home?

2. Relationship with Parents:

   Do you get on with your mother?

   Are there any specific problems?

   Do you get on with your father and/or step-father?

   Are there any specific problems?

   Do your parents ever hit you ? or scold you?

   Is there any reason for this?

3. Relationship between parents:

   How do your parents get on with each other?

   Do they ever fight with one another?

Does anyone ever get hurt (physically) in these fights?

4. Alcohol Abuse:

   Does anyone in your family ever drink?

   Do they drink occasionally/at weekends/more often?

   Does anyone get drunk? What happens?

5. Is there anything at home that makes you unhappy?

6. Schooling:

   What standard are you in?

   Did you go to school regularly before you ran away?

   If not, was there any specific reason?

   Did you enjoy school?

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