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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Michael Lee Burford entitled "Running Away from an Adolescent Residential Treatment Facility: Does Adult Involvement Make a Difference?" I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Social Work, with a major in Social Work.

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Running Away from an Adolescent Residential Treatment Facility: Does Adult Involvement Make a Difference?

A Thesis Presented For The Master's Of Science Degree

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on whether running away from adolescent residential care facilities is related to having off grounds passes with an adult resource. It is hypothesized that as off grounds passes increase in frequency and duration, runaway behavior will decrease in frequency and duration. Data were collected from two hundred closed client files. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for finding Spearman's rho correlation and linear regression analysis of the variables. Results show a weak negative relationship exists between number of passes and both number of runaway occurrences and hours spent on the run. Because data are collected from one agency, results should not be generalized to practice and policy making outside the study agency.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Runaway youth are a familiar problem to those who work in congregate care social service organizations. Some adolescents run away despite best efforts of professional and line staff at preventing such risky behavior. In discussing the issue, Deni (1990) reports that "Children running away…are not a new problem, but today children are running in increasing numbers" (p. 1). Finkelhor, Hammer, & Sedlak (2002, p. 1) state that 1,682,900 youth either ran away from caretakers or were thrown away (made to leave home by parents or other primary caregiver) by caretakers in 1999. The National Runaway Switchboard (2004) reports that there are 1.3 million youth on the streets daily. Adolescents who elope from their caretakers place themselves at risk in that they must find food and safe shelter (Kidd, 2003; Baker, McKay, Lynn, Schlange, and Auville 2003), often engage in prostitution, have promiscuous sex with friends, and use drugs (Greene, Ennett, and Ringwalt, 1999; Hagan and McCarthy 1997). Such behaviors increase probability of getting diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis (Booth, Zhang, and Kwiatkowski, 1999;

Rotheram-Borus, Koopman, and Ehrhardt, 1991; Yates, Mackenzie, Pennbridge and Swafford, 1991). Powers, Eckenrode, & Jaklitsch, (1990) report that "these adolescents are at significantly increased risk of serious health problems such as malnutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, and premature death resulting from suicide, murder, and drug overdose". Adolescents who run away may pose serious danger to themselves and others as they may be more likely to have trouble with the law and participate in physical violence. In attempting to address runaway and homeless youth, the 108th Congress of The United States of America concluded such youth "are at risk of developing, and have a disproportionate share of, serious health, behavioral, and emotional problems…endangering themselves and creating a substantial law enforcement problem for communities in which they congregate" (Amendments to Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, Public Law 108-96-Oct. 10, 2003).

Clearly, runaway behavior defeats the purpose of being placed in DCS custody. Running away interrupts or terminates progress toward developing skills useful in resolving troublesome issues that may have contributed to the running behavior (Abbey, Nicholas, and Bieber 1997).

Greene, Ringwalt, and Iachen (1997) further explains that "Because runaway adolescents typically lack the skills and education necessary to obtain and maintain gainful employment, they often are forced into prostitution, drug dealing, and other criminal behavior to survive". Delinquent youths who run from custodial placement miss opportunities to change and grow in pro-social ways through participation in and completion of programs geared towards assisting ex-offenders to successfully rejoin their families and communities. Yet another issue with some runners is that they most likely will be without their prescription psychoactive medications, which may allow mental illnesses to get out of check and contribute to further problems.

Efforts To Prevent Running Away Are Failing

While social services are available and governmental funding exists to help resolve the phenomena of adolescent runaways, only 18 percent of street kids, according to Taylor, Lydon, Bougie, and Johannsen (2004) trust authority. Further, Staudt (2003) reports that barriers exist (such as limited economic resources, cultural and language differences, and disbelief in the value of services, to name a few) which prevent some families from

obtaining needed care. It could be that runaways may also face some of the same barriers experienced by families needing help, especially if they had no parent that modeled decisions and behavior aimed at overcoming obstacles. Plass & Hotaling (1995) go a step further in stating that data "indicate that children with parents who left home are at higher *risk* for running away themselves than are those youths whose parents did not run away" (p. 30); suggesting that not only do some adolescents not have role models that exhibit appropriate problem solving skills, but that their parents may actually perpetuate negative behavior inter-generationally, to include running away. In discussing transitory behavior, Whitbeck & Hoyt (1999) agree, stating that "Often the pattern of multiple transitions is passed across generations" (p. 42), which may suggest that such adolescents are at risk of running away because they are not used to staying in one place for long. Be it distrust of authority, limited economic resources, cultural differences, or poor trans-generational modeling, the end-result of these barriers is that runaways do not use resources available to them.

Social service providers themselves may fall short of ideal practice, and may set barriers that hamper effective

service. Caseloads may exceed human resources in social service agencies, causing delays in service and burned out workers. Funding may be limited, in turn restricting amount and quality of needed services. Nugent, Carpenter, and Parks (1993) suggest that familial problems are best addressed via a multi-systemic approach: problem-solving efforts are based on an ecological perspective and touch all aspects of the client's daily life. Unfortunately, limits on resources mentioned earlier may impede an agency's ability to take a multi-systemic approach.

Definition Of Terms

Following is a list of terms and definitions useful in providing clarity for the reader.

Adjudication: A designation assigned by the court indicating whether a minor placed in the care of the State is dependent and neglected or is found to be delinquent.

Client: The adolescent receiving services from the residential care facility.

Incident report: Written notice that a client ran away, provided to state officials such as The Department of Children's Services.

Off Grounds Passes: A period of time in which a client resource (person approved by The Department of

Children's Services that is willing to take the client off residential facility grounds) leaves the premises of the treatment facility with the client. The resource person takes temporary custody and responsibility for the client, usually from eight hours to an entire weekend. There are rare instances when passes are extended, such as when a parent has the client during a school break or holiday. Passes are felt to be therapeutic in that they allow the client to practice being back in their home and community, and in that professional staff are available to help address problems when they arise. The goal is to negotiate such issues while the client is in the midst of his treatment program, allowing a more smooth and successful reunification with the primary caregiver when the client completes the treatment program.

Off Grounds Pass Hours: Hours spent on off grounds pass.

Off Grounds Pass forms: Written requests sent to the Department of Children's Services caseworkers for a client to attend pass with a pass resource.

Off Grounds *Pass Resource*: Parents, relatives, or volunteers that have been identified and approved as being appropriate to take a client on off grounds passes.

Permanency Goal/Resource: The intended permanent placement that the adolescent will reach after successfully addressing problematic issues that currently prevent him from reaching said placement; permanency goals are usually established by a team consisting of the adolescent, his family, and helping professionals from various disciplines; the permanency goal is ultimately determined by client and client family circumstances.

Program: A structured and goal oriented course and environment with the aim and purpose of assisting adolescents to reach their permanency goals.

Residential or Congregate Care: Residential care refers to a program serving a group of adolescents that live on facility grounds, with the goals of meeting basic needs (safety, housing, food, clothing) and offering psychiatric and psychological treatment.

Run Away: This refers to when adolescents leave the congregate care facility grounds without the consent of staff, and for whom a serious incident report as required by State officials is filed.

Runaway Hours: The time spent on runaway status, measured in hours.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Little information is found regarding adolescents who run away from residential congregate care treatment centers. In her study of runners from a runaway shelter, Roe (2000) says that "Much research has been conducted to explain why adolescents run away from home; yet little information exists on why adolescents run from residential care in the child welfare system" (p.6). Kashubeck, Pottebaum, & Read (1994) report that "…there are few published empirical studies exploring the phenomenon of elopement from psychiatric facilities" (p.127).

In accord with Roe (2000), and Kashubeck, Pottebaum, & Read (1994), it appears more research attention on runners from congregate care facilities is due. Such efforts are not only important to finding better ways to help and protect the under-aged, but in some cases will serve to protect communities to which delinquent adolescents run.

While more work on residential care runaways is needed, some formal and published research has been done. As early as the 1970's, Levy (1972) explored running away from congregate care, concluding that it "is a complex of causes, types, impacts, meanings, staff reactions and

management efforts" (p. 1). Kashubeck, Pottebaum, and Read, (1994) report predictors of running behavior that include a prior history of running away, diagnosis of an affective disorder, having parental rights of both parents terminated (this variable alone was found to be insufficient as a predictor and is useful only in conjunction with other variables), a history of multiple residential setting changes, and difficulties with attachment and separation. Findings from a study by Abbey, Nicholas, and Bieber (1997) generally support Kashubeck, Pottebaum, and Reads results. However, Kashubeck, Pottebaum, and Read (1994) did not find a significant relationship between running away and physical abuse or legal offenses; Abbey, Nicholas, and Bieber (1997) did find that "runners were more likely to have a history of physical abuse, both as perpetrator and victim, and to be offenders of property crimes (p. 82).

Similarities And Differences Of Runners And Non-Runners From Residential Settings

What do we know about differences between runners and non-runners? In discussing the results of her study on runners from a residential care facility as compared to non-runners, Roe (2000) explains that:

> There are several significant differences between runners and non-runners. Runners were older, were housed more times at Orangewood, had a higher occurrence of placements and residential moves and had more runs and attempts from Orangewood. The runners also had more psychiatric hospitalizations, were seen by CEGU more often, had more SIRs involving aggression/violence and had lower (poorer) behavior scores. Non-runners had more siblings placed with them at Orangewood. (p.45)

Roe also reports:

> Runners were proportionately more likely than non-runners to have been Caucasian, a victim of neglect, to not have been a victim of physical abuse, had their parent's parental rights terminated, had a history of drug abuse and have had a history of illegal activity. Runners were also proportionately more likely to have average physical health, be placed on observe or at-risk status by CEGU, had been prescribed psychotropic medication while detained and had poor relationships with staff. (p.48)

She goes on to say:

> …the staff plays an instrumental part in the adolescent's decision to run. It is important to look at whether the staff relationship with the adolescent is poor before the adolescent ever runs or as a result of the adolescent running. If it is the latter, then the staff is continuing to feed the running behavior rather than engaging the adolescent in change. (p.59)

Kashubeck, Pottebaum, & Read (1994) report four factors that appear to be associated with running away: " A suspected history of sexual abuse…distinguished the runners from the non-runners" (p. 131); "Long term runners had higher rates of residential instability, as evidenced by their greater number of moves during the last year" (p. 133); "Residents…who had had the rights of both parents terminated were more likely to be runners (p. 132); and "…residents diagnosed with an affective disorder were more likely to be in the runner category…" (p. 132).

Burke (1985), using the Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory, found that runners and non-runners (from a residential treatment center in the Midwest) "shared similar personality and psychological characteristics but were different in their behavior and coping methods" (p.105). He goes on to list shared characteristics:

"experiencing loneliness and discontent, exhibited by avoidance behavior" (p. 105), appearing "resistant to social regulation, resentful of authority, impulsive and tend to be delinquent" (p.105). Differential behaviors include:

> The non-runaway youths appear to manifest their avoidance and resistance to social order by escaping through fantasy and appearing stubborn or inept. However, the runaway youths exhibited a more active and aggressive resistance to attempts to control their behavior. They also appeared to more actively respond to their feelings of loneliness and fear of possible rejection. (p. 106)

While social work prefers to focus on strengths and positive traits as opposed to the diagnostics of the medical model of practice, Burke's findings from the The Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory prove to be further informative when used in conjunction with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV. He explains that both groups exhibit characteristics found in Avoidant Personality Disorder: "loneliness, fearfulness, distrusting others and hypersensitivity to the possibility of rejection and shame" (p. 106). Non-runners share features congruent

with Passive Aggressive Personality Disorder. Runners have characteristics common to Anti-Social Personality Disorder. While both disorders center around an unwillingness to conform to social rules, a disregard for authority and engaging in delinquent behavior, anti-social behavior is aggressive and hostile, often resulting in legal charges and failed interpersonal relationships. Of note is that Burke reports his findings were unsuccessful in classifying runners and non-runners based on psychological style, and states "differences in personality and psychological characteristics between the two groups were not sufficiently robust to discriminate between the two groups" (p. 112).

However, Rohr (1996) asserts that runaways have a distinct psychological profile "…which was highly predictive and significantly different from the psychological profile of youth who had not run away…" (p. 7). He goes on to note that while the profiles of runners and non-runners are different, the profile of runners is statistically similar to those who are moderately to severely emotionally disturbed (p. 7).

Concerning educational differences in runners and non-runners, Rogers & Segal (1994) note that runners reported

they often stopped attending school due to fear of being found at school by parents, study less than non-runners (this is not surprising considering runners indicated more family problems to be dealt with than non-runners), had more physical fights per school year, had more school suspensions, and had lower academic scores. Conversely, they go on to report that the runners acknowledged the value of education for future job successes and felt that their teachers were fair (p. 3-4).

Running From Home

Whitbeck & Hoyt (1999), in discussing chaotic families, report that "There are histories of individual and relationship problems that contribute to the lack of stability in location and structure. In turn, these histories lead to problematic interactions and behaviors that erode ties and promote changes on every level (p.42). As discussed earlier, such learned behavior originating in the dysfunctional family decreases opportunities for adolescents to develop appropriate problem solving skills and interpersonal skills, which may ultimately lead them to congregate care and subsequent elopement behavior.

Discord in the home can take many forms. Baker, McKay, Lynn, Schlange, and Auville (2003) list "conflict with

parents, parental drug use, and parental strictness" (p. 85) as contributing reason given by adolescents for being out of their parent's home. According to Deni (1990), kids "run because they are unhappy with the existing environment, sometimes to avoid abusive and intensive parents" (p. 1). He goes on to say "Parental behaviors such as incest, child abuse, and inadequate response to economic pressure may also lead to runaway behavior in children" (p.1). Kurtz, Lindsey, Jarvis, & Nackerud (2000) agree in reporting "For a significant number of adolescents, running away or otherwise prematurely leaving their families is a way of trying to cope with difficult personal and family circumstances (p.382). Whitbeck & Hoyt (1999) also take a family systems approach in reporting that:

> Early independence for children is the result of a long process of events originating within the families from which they leave. The developmental histories of these adolescents point to multiple sources of change in caretakers and in residence. At some point these children become independent participants in the change process, an attempt perhaps to exert more control over their lives

. (p. 41)

They go on to explain that "The more transitions children experience in family structure and residence, the earlier they will initiate change on their own" (p. 41).
It appears that such behavior could carry over to placement residential care, leading to running away.

As Whitbeck and Hoyt (1999) suggest, in some instances it may be that the adolescent is developing into an autonomous being, and as such begins to be in conflict with authoritarian parents. Levy (1972) explains that while some elopements are related to more acute pathological issues, other elopements stem from strivings for independence and self-identity (p. 16). If Levy is correct, it appears reasonable that, like adolescents who run from home, some runners from group homes may also run *to* independence and autonomy. However, Whitbeck and Hoyt (1999) cautions that although youngsters may run in their developmental processes, such paths lead to adolescents that "…progressively become entrapped by the consequences of their own behaviors. The accumulation of negative chains of events diminishes opportunities for change" (p. 12). They go on to state that "As the accumulation of negative experiences grows, options narrow, doors close" (p. 12).

Clearly, elopement as an avenue for individuation and autonomy is a poor choice for achieving these ends, and may ultimately place the runner in residential care that is more restrictive than the home from which the adolescent initially ran.

Running From Placement

It may be that improper placement plays a significant role in the decision to run. Levy (1972) states runaway behavior "is widely felt to be related to treatment style and policy" (p.6), clearly suggesting that if the adolescent finds the treatment program unacceptable or too challenging, he may be more likely to run from placement. Changes in treatment style can also serve as impetus to run away, according to Levy (1972, p.6). In discussing inappropriate placements, Glisson, Hemmelgarn, & Post (2002) assert that oftentimes:

> …case managers do not use standardized mental health measures in conducting assessments of the children they serve or in monitoring the outcomes of the service they provide. The consequences of case managers omitting standardized mental health measures are that mental health plays a limited role in case

> management decisions and children receive inappropriate placements and referrals. (p. 82)

Many mental health programs working with youth recognize the need for continuum type services, meaning that when a client comes into a program, they are moved toward a less restrictive environment via stages that are more streamlined and seamless. Removing barriers to progress includes allowing one therapist and caseworker to follow the client through the system and into the home community (as opposed to starting a new therapeutic relationship and style each time a move is made to a less restrictive environment), and getting the family or other permanency goal resource involved from the very initial stages of assessment and treatment. Kurtz, Lindsey, Jarvis, & Nackerud (2000) explain that "Reaching youths who are at risk requires an investment in human capital, i.e., helpers who have the time and talent to form trusting stable relationships and address the multiple needs of youth" (p.400). They go on to say:

> …what seems counterproductive and even detrimental to these youth are well intended helping encounters that are short term and focused on a single categorical need. Mounting distrust seems to be a consequence for

> youth who experience one such helping encounter after another. (p. 400)

The value of continuum type practice appears to be becoming clearer, and more commonplace. However, caution must be exercised in moving clients toward their permanency goals. According to Kidd (2003), several participants in his study on street youth "spoke of being moved numerous times to group and foster homes, being abused and trapped in environments in which people did not care about them" (p.251). Kidd's study appears to support the importance kids place on feeling like someone cares about them; they seem to need at least one stable, nurturing relationship. Unfortunately, it appears that many kids do not have such relationships. It is also becoming more apparent that movements in terms of placements should only occur if they clearly are directed toward reaching the permanency goal. Responsible social work practice will help address the problems of disconnect and distrust between kids at risk for running and authority figures, as well as multiple movements over placements.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Description of the Study

Does having someone actively involved (via off grounds passes) in their lives really make a difference in terms of whether an adolescent runs from a residential facility? The purpose of this study is to analyze differences and similarities between adolescents who run away from congregate care and those who do not run away from congregate care; more specifically, it answers the question as to whether a relationship exists between running away and attending off grounds passes (such passes are an indicator of an actively involved adult).

It is believed that adolescents who have active, positive relationships (measured by frequency and duration of off grounds pass occurrences with the adolescent and the involved adult) with a dependable person are less likely to run away (or will be absent shorter periods of time if they do run away). Hypothesis number one states that as off grounds pass occurrences increase, frequency of runaways decrease. Hypothesis number two states that as the number of hours spent on off grounds passes increases, the frequency of

runaways decrease. Hypothesis number three states that as off grounds pass occurrences increase, runaway hours decrease. Hypothesis number four states that as number of off grounds pass hours increases, runaway hours decrease. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data.

Data Collection

Case files of former clients who received services at a southern residential agency were used in this study. Data was collected from 200 closed case files of clients who resided in any one of nine residential facilities belonging to the mental health treatment agency. Some of the homes housed females, some housed males, and two specialized in working with sex-offenders.

Files for this study dated from 1988 to the present time. The total population from which a sample size of 200 was pulled is 2,130. Files used for the sample were chosen at random: a coin was tossed twice to determine a number from one to three that was used to pull charts for data collection (the first toss indicated one for heads, two for tails, and the second toss indicated a one for whichever number was selected by the initial toss and a three for the opposite side of the coin). In this study, the number three

was randomly selected. Agency files have been stored in numbered boxes, which were not consistently placed in sequential order. An alphabetized card catalogue served as the only means to locate particular files, as client names were associated with box numbers. From each letter of the alphabet, every third file was selected for data collection until seven files were collected from each letter (there were no names beginning with the letter "X", so no files existed for use from the letter "X"). One hundred seventy five charts were selected for data collection in this manner. For the remaining files, a repeated systematic sample was used. The number 26 was obtained by blindly putting a finger on a random numbers chart (two digits between the numbers ten and 50 which were closest to the finger were selected). Beginning with the first card, every twenty-sixth card in the catalogue was selected until enough cards had been pulled to bring the sample size up to 200.

Data were obtained from agency "face sheets" containing demographic information, permanency plans (a document from The Department of Children's Services that contains general background information, indicates permanency resource, and delineates treatment

requirements), agency serious incident reports (Appendix B) that indicated if a client ran away and the date (date of return, if any, was determined by daily progress notes that indicated active runaway status or post-runaway status), substance abuse and addiction assessments that evaluated drug abuse history, and agency therapeutic off grounds pass forms (Appendix C) that recorded off grounds passes resources, frequencies and length of off grounds passes. Data were recorded by the principal researcher on a data collection sheet (Appendix A), which lists variables of interest. Runaway frequency was recorded, as were runaway hours. Frequency of off grounds passes and off grounds pass hours were also recorded. One data collection sheet was used per chart.

No one other than the data collector has access to the case names from which data were collected, and the data collector is an employee of the agency from which data were collected. Subject names were listed and assigned a number, and that number appeared on data collection forms. These identifiers were necessary in case the principal investigator (data collector) needed to revisit a file to clarify data, while simultaneously protecting identity of subjects. Data were collected at the agency records office

and subject lists will be destroyed upon completion of this project.

Permission to proceed with the study from an ethics standpoint was gained through the master's thesis committee members, The University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board, and through administrative review at the agency.

Independent variables to be analyzed were length of stay in congregate care, type of permanency goal, availability and number of off grounds pass resources (whether such a resource exists for that particular client), number of actual off grounds passes that occurred, duration of off grounds passes (in cumulative hours), and number of off grounds passes approved by DCS that did not occur. This work also investigated links between running away and client demographics (age, sex, ethnicity), adjudication (dependent and neglected or delinquent), history of drug abuse, spiritual/religious affiliation, and use of prescription psychoactive medications. Dependent variables were number of runaways, and runaway hours.

Ages, length of stay in days, number of pass resources, number of off grounds passes attended, number of times an off grounds pass resource refused off grounds pass activity, number of times off grounds pass was denied by a

judge or DCS, and cumulative off grounds pass hours were entered for SPSS analysis. Non-numerical data were coded to allow that data to be included in SPSS analysis. In each category, the numerical code was entered under the heading to which it applies. A designation of one for males, two for females indicated sex. Ethnicity was assigned a one for white, two for African American, three for Latino, and four for other. If clients were adjudicated as being dependent and neglected, a "one" was entered. The number "two" was entered when a subject has been adjudicated as delinquent (juvenile justice). The number "one" was entered if a subject takes prescription psychotropic medications, the number "two" was assigned if no psychotropic medications were prescribed. Record of religious affiliation was indicated by the number "one", with the number "two" representing no affiliation. "One" was entered for drug abuse, "two" indicated no drug abuse. Permanency resources were coded "one" for parent, "two" for relative, "three" for foster care or adoption, "four" for independent living, "five" for parent or relative (dual resource), "six" for parent or independent living, "seven" for multiple resources, and "eight" for emancipation. Pass relationships were coded "one" for parents, "two" for relatives, "three"

for volunteers, “four” for State workers, “five” for parent and relative, “six” for parent and volunteer, “seven” for multiple resources, “eight” for foster family, “nine” for parents and foster family.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

The client sample consisted of males (69.5 %) and females (30.5 %) between the ages of 10 and 19 years, with a mean age of 15.5 years (S. D. = 1.71). The sample showed an ethnic mix, with the predominant ethnicity represented being Caucasian (81.3 %) and African American (16.1 %). Latinos accounted for 2.1 % and "other" was .5 %. It also consisted of wards of the State, with 60.6 % having been placed in State custody by the court system and adjudicated as being delinquent, and 39.4 % as having been found to be dependent and neglected by their primary caregiver. Forty-six point five percent of the sample had a record of being prescribed psycho-active medications, and 64.5 % had a history of abusing drugs (including alcohol). Forty-five and a half percent reported having religious or spiritual beliefs.

Concerning permanency resources, 47 % of the sample had a goal of reunification with parent(s), nine percent had relative placement indicated, ten percent had foster care or adoption listed, 15 % had independent living goals,

and four percent had emancipation as a goal. The remaining 15 % of the sample consisted of cases where no single permanency resource had been identified, meaning that several permanency options may have existed and the best would have been utilized as it became apparent based on developing information and opportunity.

The mean length of stay in residential care for subjects in the sample was 159 days, with a minimum of one day and a maximum of 797 days (S. D. = 149 days). One-hundred-twenty clients in the sample did not run away, 49 ran once, 18 ran twice, eight ran three times, three ran four times, one ran seven times and one ran seventeen times. Hours spent on runaway status had a mean of 93 hours (S. D. = 265.5), a minimum of 0 run hours and a maximum of 2,016 hours (This number was high as information from the file indicated the client ran away but was not removed from the census for an extended length of time, which precluded more recent policy concerning bed-holds and running away). The next highest number was 852.). It was noted that 75 % of all runners were absent 48 hours or less.

Regarding off grounds pass resources found in the sample, 44 % did not have off grounds pass resources, 25 % had one, 22 % had two, seven percent had three, one percent

had four, and .5 % had five off ground pass resources. Off ground pass resource information existed for 198 subjects in the sample, with a mean of .96 (S. D. = 1.05). Of clients that went on off ground passes, 28 % were taken by parents, six percent by relatives, .5 % by volunteers, .5 percent by employees of The Department of Children's Services, seven percent by parents and relatives (each served as a resource and engaged in pass activity at different times), three percent by parents and a volunteer, two percent by a foster family, .5 % by parents and foster family, and three percent had multiple people of varying relationships that served as pass resources.

Forty-eight percent of the sample did not attend off grounds passes, twelve percent had one off grounds pass, five percent had two off grounds passes, five percent had three off grounds passes, and three percent had four off grounds passes. The mean for off grounds pass attendance was 4.40 (S. D. = 7.9), with a maximum number of off grounds passes for a case having been 44. Although the maximum number of off grounds pass hours was 4703, the mean was 157 hours with a standard deviation of 444.78. Two and a half percent of the sample had one instance of an off grounds pass resource that refused pass activity, and .5 %

(one case) had 14 instances of a resource that denied off grounds pass activity. Such neglected off grounds passes in the sample had a mean of .0950 (S. D. = 1.00). Five percent of the sample had off grounds passes denied once by authorities such as judges and State caseworkers, .5 % had off grounds passes denied twice, and no record exists of off grounds passes having been denied more than twice for any case in the sample. Denied off grounds passes had a mean of .06 (S. D. = .29).

Missing Data

Missing data found in variables were as follows: age, 1 %; sex, 1.5 %; ethnicity, 3.5 %; adjudication, 3.5 %; length of stay in care, 1 %; runaway absence measured in hours, 4 %; permanency resource, 8.5 %; number of off grounds pass resources, 1 %; off grounds pass relationships, .5%; off grounds passes denied by authorities, .5 %. The variables of number of runaways, off grounds passes attended, off grounds pass hours, off grounds passes declined by off grounds pass resource, age, religious/spiritual beliefs, and drug abuse had no missing data. As data were missing for some variables, a missing indicator variable was created for all variables where the

number “one” was designated for a missing variable and “zero” was given for data that was not missing.

Simple Correlation

As variables in this study were not normally distributed (when shown on a histogram, they did not reflect a normal bell-shaped curve), Spearman’s rho was used to determine correlations (see Table 1). While the p-values given in the following tables are two tailed, the p-values are converted into one tailed in the text because the research hypotheses are one directional, and to add power to the statistical tests of the correlations.

Table one shows that a negative correlation was found between number of runaways and number of off grounds passes attended, with a correlation coefficient of -.17 and a p-value of .01. The number of runaways was also negatively correlated with off grounds pass hours, with a correlation coefficient of -.16, and a p-value of .01. These results were consistent with the research hypotheses.

Runaway hours had a negative correlation of -.18, and a p-value of .01, with number of off grounds passes attended. Runaway hours and off grounds pass hours were also negatively correlated, with a correlation coefficient

Table 1, Simple Correlations

Correlations

			runaway_ incidences	runaway_ hours	pass_ frequency	passhours
Spearman's rho	runaway_ incidences	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.961*	-.167*	-.155*
		Sig. (2-tailed	.	.000	.018	.028
		N	200	192	200	200
	runaway_hours	Correlation Coefficient	.961*	1.000	-.177*	-.166*
		Sig. (2-tailed	.000	.	.014	.022
		N	192	192	192	192
	pass_frequenc	Correlation Coefficient	-.167*	-.177*	1.000	.961*
		Sig. (2-tailed	.018	.014	.	.000
		N	200	192	200	200
	passhours	Correlation Coefficient	-.155*	-.166*	.961*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed	.028	.022	.000	.
		N	200	192	200	200

**·Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*·Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

of -.17 and a P-value of .01. These results were also consistent with the research hypotheses.

As discussed above, number of runaways and runaway hours were negatively correlated with number off grounds passes attended and off grounds pass hours, although these variables were only weakly correlated. However, a weak correlation and significant p-value could have been the result of artifacts. As such, regression analyses were needed to help establish whether a relationship existed

between dependent variables and independent variables, controlling for possible confounding variables.

Multiple Linear Regression

Several covariates may have influenced the correlations between the independent and dependent variables. Multiple linear regression was used to control for the covariates of age, adjudication, and drug abuse. Age was controlled as it appeared reasonable that older adolescents may have been more likely to run away as they may have wanted autonomy and been less afraid of defying authority. Adjudication was controlled as delinquent adolescents may have been more prone than non-delinquents to defy authority and run away, especially considering they already had a history of using deficient problem solving skills. Drug abuse was also controlled as some clients may have run away to satisfy strong cravings to use drugs. Any or all of these covariates may have influenced the correlations between off grounds passes attended, off grounds pass hours, runaway frequency, and runaway hours.

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one states that as off grounds pass occurrences increase, runaway numbers decrease.

After controlling for age, adjudication, and drug abuse, the relationship between number of off grounds passes attended and runaway numbers was statistically significant, b=-.02, t=-2.05, p=.021,(see table two). These results suggested that, after controlling for covariates, there was an inverse relationship between numbers of off grounds passes attended and number of runaways, and the relationship was in the predicted direction (as off grounds passes increased in frequency, runaways decreased). However, as can be seen in table two, the change in number of runaways in relation to number of off grounds passes attended was small, as was the proportion of variance of number of runaways uniquely explained by number of off grounds passes, .021 (or 2.1 %; see table three).

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two was not supported, as the relationship between off grounds pass hours and runaway frequency was statistically non-significant, b=.000, t=-1.4, p=.09, (see table four). These results were not consistent with the hypothesis of a relationship between number of off grounds pass hours and runaway frequency.

Table 2, Runaway and Off Grounds Pass Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.271	.768		1.654	.100
	age	-.036	.044	-.060	-.815	.416
	adjudication	.224	.155	.107	1.442	.151
	drugabuse	-.258	.156	-.120	-1.651	.100
	pass_ frequency	-.019	.009	-.150	-2.046	.042

a. Dependent Variable: runaway_incidences

Table 3, Model Summary, Runaway and Off Grounds Passes

Model Summary

Model	R	Change Statistics				
		R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.190[a]	.036	2.338	3	187	.075
2	.240[b]	.021	4.185	1	186	.042

a. Predictors: (Constant), drugabuse, age, adjudicatior

b. Predictors: (Constant), drugabuse, age, adjudicatior frequency

Table 4, Runaway and Off Grounds Pass Hours Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.986	.751		1.312	.191
	age	-.025	.044	-.041	-.569	.570
	adjudication	.253	.155	.121	1.630	.105
	drugabuse	-.246	.157	-.115	-1.563	.120
	passhours	.000	.000	-.098	-1.354	.177

a. Dependent Variable: runaway_incidences

Hypothesis Three

However, the relationship between number of off grounds passes attended and runaway hours, controlling for covariates, was statistically significant, b=-3.43, t=-1.75, p=.04 (see table 5), and the proportion of variance of runaway hours uniquely explained by number of off grounds passes was .016 (see table 6). Number of off grounds passes appeared, in this sample, to be related to runaway hours. These results supported the research hypothesis.

Table 5, Off Grounds Passes and Runaway Hours

Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	123.342	161.953		.762	.447
	age	-3.375	9.348	-.027	-.361	.719
	adjudication	52.327	32.609	.121	1.605	.110
	drugabuse	-39.707	33.036	-.089	-1.202	.231
	pass_ frequency	-3.431	1.958	-.132	-1.752	.081

a. Dependent Variable: runaway_hours

Table 6, Model Summary, Off Grounds Passes and Runaway Hours

Model Summary

Model	R	Change Statistics				
		R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.178[a]	.032	1.971	3	180	.120
2	.219[b]	.016	3.070	1	179	.081

a. Predictors: (Constant), drugabuse, age, adjudication

b. Predictors: (Constant), drugabuse, age, adjudication, frequency

Hypothesis Four

The relationship between off grounds pass hours and runaway hours, controlling for covariates, was statistically non-significant, b=-.04, t=-1.11, p=.135 (see table seven). These findings did not support the hypothesis that increased off grounds pass hours were negatively associated with runaway hours.

Table 7, Runaway Hours and Off Grounds Pass Hours Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	71.728	158.421		.453	.651
	age	-1.376	9.282	-.011	-.148	.882
	adjudication	57.710	32.543	.134	1.773	.078
	drugabuse	-37.890	33.240	-.085	-1.140	.256
	passhours	-.038	.034	-.082	-1.106	.270

[a]. Dependent Variable: runaway_hours

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Reviewing the data and analysis, simple correlation suggested that frequency of off grounds passes and length of time, measured in hours, spent on off grounds passes were negatively related to runaway frequency and runaway hours. However, when the covariates of age, adjudication and drug abuse were controlled, there appeared to only be a relationship between number of off grounds passes attended and runaway incidences, and between number of off grounds passes attended and runaway hours. As frequency of off grounds passes increased, runaway frequency and duration decreased. No relationship was found between hours spent engaged in off grounds pass activity and runaway frequency and duration. As such, it was reasonably concluded that there may be a relationship between involvement of a pass resource, be it parent, relative, or volunteer, and runaway occurrences.

Implications of these findings were specific to the agency from which data was obtained, and practitioners from other agencies should not generalize these results to their work. However, in addressing the problem of running away, practitioners from the agency providing the data will need

to continue a focus on facilitating off grounds passes, as there is a small relationship between off grounds passes and running away.

Agency policy is geared toward moving clients toward families, and utilizes off grounds passes as a tool to allow clients and their permanency resources an opportunity to practice being together in their community. While agency policy regarding off grounds passes is appropriate in helping clients reach their permanency goals, the results of this study indicated that agency policy regarding off grounds passes may also impact practices of running away. In terms of research, because this work suggested that off grounds pass activity with an involved adult is related to practices of running away, further studies considering these variables and using data from other agencies are needed.

Limitations

A limitation concerns the generalizability of this study sample to the national runaway population. While this study used a sample of client charts from eight congregate care homes, caution is advised in inferring generalizations as these homes are all part of the same agency, and are not necessarily representative of other populations. Whitbeck &

Hoyt (1999) concur, pointing out that "Because research reports tend to be bound to single shelters or cities, we cannot make generalizations about characteristics of runaway and homeless youth with great confidence" (p. 7).

Another limitation is the measurement of adult involvement. This work has defined adult involvement as taking a client on an off grounds pass. It appears reasonable that there are other ways that adults may be involved in a client's care, excluding engaging in off grounds pass activity. Caution must be taken in assuming adult involvement is limited to taking clients on off grounds passes; simply visiting clients may be meaningful to clients in such a way as to influence behavioral changes.

Further limitations include issues of consistency in the way data were originally recorded. Records were produced by different employees that worked with the clients, which may reflect variation in the way data were recorded. Also, as some client files used in this study date back 17 years, records reflect that recording methods and policies used by staff to record information have changed numerous times. While every effort was made to maintain integrity and consistency when collecting data, it

is possible that differences in recording methods and policies impact findings in this work.

Further, other variables that have not been identified or tested in this paper likely play a role in running away, and may potentially show that no relationship exists between the dependent and independent variables.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Placement in residential care can be a challenging experience. Not only are new clients placed in a new environment, but they are expected to follow rules and to interact appropriately with a number of residential peers and staff; new clients may not be used to following rules and may have poor interpersonal skills. These deficit areas may make elopement appealing to new admissions. Lindsey, Kurtz, Jarvis, Williams, & Nackerud (2000) offer guidelines for treatment programs that will better facilitate the needs of clients at risk for elopement:

> Early intervention programs should include components that facilitate some of the learning the participants in this study have found beneficial, e.g., learning about themselves and their relationships with others. This type of learning has to take place within an environment that holds youth accountable for their actions but does not communicate negative judgments of them as people. Such programs must also take into account the fact that youth learn at different paces. Short-term programs that focus on very specific skills or attitudes may not make much difference in the lives

> of young people if they do not see the relevance to their lives. An individualized approach to working with at-risk youth would identify areas in which they are ready to grow and learn, and then target those areas with interventions (p. 139).

These guidelines are based on information coming from ex-runaways in terms of what they have learned, experienced, and on personal characteristics needed to redirect their lives in a positive manner.

It is also believed that adolescents placed in residential care need to be helped in making goals that are both rewarding and realistic. These goals are the foundation of the adolescent's successes, as they serve as motivation to work through their treatment program. Common goals set by adolescents in congregate care usually center around reaching their permanency goal, such as returning to a parent's home or joining independent living programs. Achieving such goals requires more than individual and group therapy in the residential setting. In keeping with an ecological perspective espoused by good social work practice, all areas of the client's life need to be addressed, beginning with the family. In speaking of social work practice for families with an adolescent who is a

status offender (which by definition includes elopement behavior), Nugent, Carpenter, & Parks (1993) state:

> …the social worker should approach each family as a unique entity and tailor services to meet its unique set of needs and difficulties. Service plans involving a wide range of services beyond counseling and therapy should be included, although clearly family therapy services should be included among the services provided. The importance of individual and group counseling with the identified client should, perhaps, be downplayed in favor of the provision of family therapy sessions. Further, if at all possible, these services should be provided in a nonresidential setting, possibly the home. Interventions aimed at keeping the identified adolescent client in school would also seem to be important components of a complete and comprehensive service plan. (p. 65)

Comprehensive practice is appropriate for adolescents (and their families) in congregate care and those remaining in or returning to their communities. Even while in congregate care, mental health providers should be visiting the adolescent's family and schools in the community, paving the way for successful reunification. There is much work to

be done, not only with the adolescent, but with his ecological system. If adolescents in residential care are not invested in their treatment goals and if ecologically based actions aren't in place, adolescents may see running away and other negative behaviors as their only alternative.

> Levy (1972) leaves us with the following thoughts: It may be useful to remind ourselves after Rapaport that the full understanding of human behavior requires attention from a number of points of view: empirical, Gestalt, organismic, genetic, topographical, dynamic, psychological, economic, structural, adaptive, and psychosocial. All of these points are important, all are necessary, and all have been referred to in one way or another as contributing to our understanding of runaway behavior. (p. 15).

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Appendices

Appendix A Mike Burford

Data Collection Form

Chart/case # _____

Age: Sex: Ethnicity:

Adjudication (dependent and neglected or juvenile justice/delinquent):

Psycho-active medications (yes/no)? :

Religious/spiritual affiliation (yes/no)? :

History of drug abuse (yes/no)? :

Length of stay in care in days:

Number of elopements:

Length of absence (s) in hours (per instance and cumulatively):

Permanency resource:

Pass resources (numbers):

Pass resources (relationships):

Number of actual passes attended:

Cumulative pass hours:

Number of passes that resource denied:

Number of passes that DCS or judge denied:

REGION:

Appendix B

Department of Children's Services

Serious Incident Report

For use by DCS Contracted Agencies and DCS Foster Homes

Agency _____ Program _____ Contract # _____

Reporting Person _____ Phone # _____

OR

Foster Home _____ County _____ DCS Case Manager _____

Address _____ Phone # _____

Child's Name _____ DOB _____ SS# _____

Race _____ Sex _____ Adjudication _____

[ ] Dependent Neglect
[ ] Delinquent
[ ] Unruly
[ ] Other

Class of Incident [ ] A
[ ] B

Type of Incident: _____

Location of Incident: _____ Date & Time of Incident: _____

Detailed Description of Incident: _____

Action taken/Follow up: _____

Person Notified: _____ Job Title: _____ Date Notified: _____
Person Notified: _____ Job Title: _____ Date Notified: _____
Person Notified: _____ Job Title: _____ Date Notified: _____
Person Notified: _____ Job Title: _____ Date Notified: _____
Person Notified: _____ Job Title: _____ Date Notified: _____

NOTE: Please attach additional pertinent information as necessary.

Appendix C

Department of Children's Services

TEMPORARY CUSTODY AGREEMENT

Name of Facility:

Youth: _____ **Date:** _____

This is to certify that I have received on temporary basis the above named vouth for the purpose of permitting him/her to visit the address listed below.

I agree to be totally responsible for his/her supervision while said youth is in my temporary physical custody. I further understand that I am to know at all times of his/her whereabouts and activity. I fully understand that I am to immediately notify authorities at the facility if any problems or misbehavior occur while the youth is under my care.

I agree to personally return the youth to the jurisdiction of the above facility no later than the agreed time as indicated below. **I AM AWARE THAT I AM TOTALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY EXPENSES INCURRED IN HIS/HER RETURN TO THE FACILITY SHOULD I FAIL TO RETURN THE YOUTH AS PER AGREEMENT.** I also accept fiscal/personal liability for any expenses incurred during this pass period for any unauthorized medical treatment or other expenses incurred by the youth.

I understand that I may be charged with a Class E felony in Criminal Court if my child commits a felony while on pass or while having failed to return from a pass.

I have read, and fully understand, the above statements and indicate this by attaching my signature below.

_____ _____

Signed (Staff Member Checking Youth Out) Signed (Approved Relative)

Date/Hour Beginning Pass: _____

Date/Hour Returning from Pass: _____

Address of Parent/Guardian/Approved Relative: _____

Places to be visited: _____

Telephone Number Where Youth May Be Reached During Temporary Pass Period: _____

Date/Hour Returned from Pass: _____

Staff Member Checking Youth In: _____

Vita

Michael Burford earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology in 1996, and a Master of Science degree in educational psychology in 2001. He has worked in the social services field for eleven years.