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The Sexual Exploitation of Missing Children:
A Research Review

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Foreword

This report fulfills a mandate of the Missing Children's Assistance Act, which instructs the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to analyze, compile, publish, and disseminate recently completed research on the problems of missing children. In addition, it reflects the Office's commitment to respond to the need for more accurate information on the extent and nature of the problem. It is only one of several such research efforts.

The Sexual Exploitation of Missing Children: A Research Review discusses the current research, including books, papers presented at professional meetings, doctoral dissertations, works in progress, and more than 75 articles in professional journals. Once researchers discover the nature of the problem, efforts to correct it can proceed.

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Executive Summary

This paper evaluates current knowledge about the prevalence, dynamics, and short- and long-term effects of sexual exploitation among missing children. It is based upon empirical research findings from books, papers presented at professional meetings, doctoral dissertations, works in progress, and more than 75 articles in professional journals. Most of this research has been conducted during the last 10 years.

This report examines three categories of missing children: (1) runaways, the largest group of missing children and the target of the majority of research attention; (2) victims of parental kidnapping; and (3) victims of nonfamily abduction. Throwaways--children who are forced out of their homes or otherwise abandoned--are usually considered a fourth category of missing children, but no studies could be found that directly addressed sexual exploitation of this group. What follows is a review of findings on sexual exploitation for each category of missing children.

Runaways

- Between 11 and 23 percent of runaways become involved in prostitution; the rate is somewhat higher for females than males.

- Once involved in prostitution, adolescent male and female runaways are vulnerable to other forms of sexual exploitation, including rape and pornography. About 25 percent of male and female juvenile prostitutes take part in the production of pornography.

- Runaways at the highest risk of entering prostitution include the following:

  --Children and adolescents who run away more frequently and who stay away longer during these episodes.

  --Children and adolescents with extensive histories of serious, repetitive sexual abuse.

  --Children and adolescents from disorganized families in which a parent is absent, alcohol is abused, or physical violence is common.

  --Male children and adolescents who describe themselves as homosexual or bisexual.

- Available evidence indicates that runaways are at higher risk of rape and other forms of sexual coercion than the general population of adolescents.

- The effects of sexual exploitation among runaways is probably different and more serious than the effects of sexual abuse among nonrunaways. Some of the results of sexual exploitation upon runaways include traumatic sexualization, resentment and anger, a sense of betrayal, powerlessness, and stigma-producing high drug usage, low self-esteem, maladjustment in adult relationships, and suicide attempts.

- An urgent need exists for a large-scale study of male and female runaways to determine how many become sexually exploited, in what ways, who is at highest risk of exploitation, and what are the short- and long-term effects on personality and social functioning.

Existing studies are retrospective, use samples of prostitutes rather than runaways, and do not answer important questions about the dynamics of the sexual exploitation of missing children.

Victims of parental abduction

- No evidence exists that parentally abducted children are at any greater risk of sexual exploitation than children in the general population.

- The effects of sexual abuse on parentally abducted children are probably similar to the effects of parental sexual abuse on other children. Parental child kidnapping may sometimes lead, however, to additional symptoms indicative of posttraumatic stress response.

- Research is desperately needed on parentally abducted children. We currently know nothing about how much sexual abuse occurs in this group, whether the abuse is a continuation of prior family practices or occurs in conjunction with the abduction, and which parentally abducted children are at greatest risk of abuse.

Victims of nonfamily abduction

- Although sexual abuse sometimes accompanies nonfamily abduction, little information exists on the relation between the two. Public fears probably have exaggerated the connection. Sexual abuse is one of, perhaps, five motivations for child abduction.

- The effects on sexually abused children who are abducted are probably quite severe and long lasting. Research on child kidnapping indicates the presence of symptoms 4 or more years after the trauma. In conjunction with the effects of sexual abuse, kidnapping could produce a severe and chronic traumatization.

- Nonfamily abduction needs much research to explore the extent of sexual abuse of this population. Surveys of police departments, studies of incarcerated child abductors, pedophiles and child sexual abusers, and recovered abducted children are all recommended.

Introduction

This report reviews and summarizes the available research on the relationship between missing children and sexual exploitation. And a complex relationship it is. Both terms "missing children" and "sexual exploitation" have multiple manifestations. Under the label "missing," for example, the literature highlights a variety of experiences and types of children whose whereabouts are unknown. The dynamics of nonfamily abduction, parental kidnapping, running away, and being "thrown away" are quite different. Likewise, the term "sexual exploitation" is an umbrella term for a number of acts and behaviors, each with a specific research tradition.

In addition to some conceptual ambiguity, the literature on this relationship is frequently distorted by emotional biases. Many assume that most missing children are sexually exploited. Nonfamily abduction is often viewed as motivated solely by sexual intent. The runaway child is often portrayed as being forced into prostitution or pornography. The parent who kidnaps his or her child is thought to be sexually abusive (Abrahms 1983).

The basis for these beliefs is understandable. Children are at risk of harm if they spend time away from reliable sources of food, shelter, care, and protection. Yet the evidence that a missing child is also a sexually exploited child is not readily available.

This report focuses on five interrelated issues:

1. **Prevalence.** How many missing children experience sexual exploitation?

2. **Dynamics.** What types of sexual exploitation occur most frequently to missing children?

3. **Risk factors.** What characteristics of the child or features of the situation place some groups of missing children at higher risk of sexual exploitation?

4. **Effects.** What types of short- and long-term effects are experienced by sexually exploited missing children?

5. **Future research.** What are the most urgent questions still unanswered concerning the sexual exploitation of missing children?

This report is based upon published and unpublished materials on runaway youth, nonfamily abduction, parental kidnapping, juvenile prostitution, child pornography, and child sexual abuse. Researchers and practitioners with expertise in these areas were consulted when empirical evidence was difficult to interpret or nonexistent. Although the primary focus of this paper is on forms of sexual exploitation that occur after a child is missing, studies of sexually abused children who subsequently become missing are also reviewed.

Definition of Key Terms

Missing children. In section 403 of the Federal Missing Children's Assistance Act, the term "missing child" means any individual less than 18 years of age whose whereabouts are unknown to such individual's legal custodian if--

1. The circumstances surrounding such individual's disappearance indicate that such individual may possibly have been removed by another from the control of such individual's legal custodian without such custodian's consent.

2. The circumstances of the case strongly indicate that such individual is likely to be abused or sexually exploited.

This Federal definition implies at least four subgroups of children within the "missing child" category. For the purposes of this paper, these four subgroups are defined as follows:

Runaway children. A runaway child is a youth between the ages of 10 and 17, inclusive, who has been absent from home without parental permission at least overnight. This is a research definition that has been used in studies such as the National Statistical Survey on Runaway Youth (Opinion Research Corporation 1976) and Brennan et al. (1978). Several typologies use the above definition or one that slightly revises the term of "time away" (see Nye 1980; Roberts 1981; Dunford and Brennan 1976).

Throwaway children. This category typically has been a subtype of runaway children. It refers to those between the ages of 10 and 17 inclusive who have been forced out of their homes or otherwise abandoned by their families. There are no reliable estimates of current numbers of throwaway children (Children's Defense Fund Newsletter 1985). Little research of any kind has been conducted on this group of children. Major studies of runaways, such as those conducted by Opinion Research Corporation (1976), Brennan at al. (1975), and Edelbrock (1980), did not distinguish between runaways and throwaways. No reliable estimates of the number of throwaway children exist. Often, children who are labeled runaways may in fact have left home involuntarily.

Victims of parental kidnapping. Based on the work of Agopian (1981) and Gelles (1984), parental kidnapping occurs when a parent physically takes, restrains, or does not return a child under the age of 14 after a visit and keeps the child concealed so that the other parent--usually the legal guardian--does not know where the child is. Unlike Federal definitions, this does not depend upon the likelihood of sexual exploitation to define the phenomenon.

Victims of nonfamily abduction. Nonfamily abduction occurs when a person either known or unknown to the child or the parent(s)/caretaker(s) removes that child from its normal or expected routine without parental or caretaker consent. This definition does not specify a time period, since an abduction for purposes of sexual exploitation can be brief.

Sexual exploitation refers to the use of a child under the age of 18 for sexual purposes by an older person for profit or advantage. Such sexual purposes include the use of children in the production of pornography and the performance of sexual acts in exchange for money or other resources.

The term **"sexual abuse"** has been used in a variety of ways (see National Incidence

Study of Child Sexual Abuse and Neglect 1980; Finkelhor and Hotaling 1984). Following the lead of Browne and Finkelhor (1985), child sexual abuse is characterized by two overlapping but distinguishable types of interaction. The first relates to forced sexual behavior imposed by any person on a child; and the second implies sexual activity between a child and caretaker or a much older person, whether or not obvious coercion is involved (a common definition of "much older" is 5 or more years).

How Many Children Are Missing?

Estimates of the number of missing children vary widely. Depending on who is included in these counts, figures range from 50,000 to 1.8 million children labeled missing each year in the United States. Specific estimates for types of missing children also range widely. The following figures are based on estimates, some of which utilized empirical support.

Runaways

Some surveys have attempted to estimate both the nationwide prevalence and incidence of runaway behavior. These figures do not separate throwaways from the general runaway population.

The National Statistical Survey on Runaway Youth (1976) yielded a prevalence rate of 1.7 percent annually for youth aged 10 to 17. Brennan et al. (1975), in a survey of youth also aged 10 to 17, reported an annual prevalence rate of 2.06 percent. Edelbrock (1980) reported a prevalence rate of 1.85 percent for youth aged 4 to 16. There is agreement in these studies on prevalence estimates despite variations in defining runaways, sample selection procedures, and actual data collection. These prevalence figures represent statistics that range from 733,000 to almost 1,000,000 runaways during the year in the United States.

The National Youth Study (Elliot et al. 1983), which estimated the prevalence rates of almost 50 forms of delinquent behavior in 1976, found that 4.4 percent of youth aged 11 to 17 run away during a 1-year period. This is a rate more than twice as high as other rates. The study, however, has been criticized for failing to clarify the definition of running away and may in fact be a much broader study than other research efforts.

Victims of parental kidnapping

There are little statistical data on the incidence of parental kidnapping in the United States. Official statistics are usually uninterpretable, since they are combined in multiple offense categories. The FBI does not compile national parental kidnapping data for presentation in its Uniform Crime Reports.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates, on the basis of current research, that the number of parental kidnappings is between 25,000 and 500,000 a year. In 1978 Gill estimated that 100,000 children were taken by divorced parents who were not granted custody. Then in 1984, Gelles found a household incidence rate of 1.5 percent based on telephone interviews with 3,745 adults 18 years or older. This figure reflected the number of people with personal involvement in parental kidnapping. Taking into account sampling error, Gelles estimated that each year in the United States there are approximately 459,000 to 751,000 incidents of parental child snatching.

This estimate seems exceptionally high; "personal involvement" may have an overly broad meaning. In addition to parents, extended family members, acquaintances, social workers, teachers, and friends can become personally involved in any one particular instance of parental child snatching. For this estimate to make sense, data are needed on the number of people who feel personally involved in any single case of parental kidnapping. For example, if four persons feel personally involved in any single case, the denominator that is used must be multiplied by 4. This would result in an estimate range 4 times lower than Gelles found.

Victims of nonfamily abduction

This is the category of missing children in which information is most sorely needed. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (1984), estimates vary widely. The Children's Defense Fund (1985), for example, estimates the number of children abducted each year by strangers as "several thousand."

Professionals in the field of law enforcement and child abuse research, however, are skeptical of this number. Kenneth Lanning, an FBI investigator, estimates that there are no more than 1,000 to 2,000 nonfamily abductions per year in the United States (1985). Lanning cautions that his estimate is limited, however, because the FBI has information only on interstate nonfamily abduction cases.

In the absence of adequate national estimates on the three types of missing children, it is difficult to compare precisely the relative proportions of the three categories. From existing data and professional opinions, however, it appears that the majority of missing children are runaways. Parental kidnappings and nonfamily abductions make up a much smaller proportion of the whole.

The following figures emerge from an examination of the approximate midpoints of estimates on the number of missing children: 900,000 runaways; 100,000 parental abductions; and 2,000 nonfamily abductions. Expressed as percentages, this would mean that 89.8 percent of missing children are runaways; 9.9 percent, parental kidnappings; and .3 percent, nonfamily abductions.

Interestingly, these speculative figures are close to the proportions found in open cases of missing children in the State of Virginia. In September 1984 the State reported 4 cases of nonfamily abduction, 8 cases of parental kidnapping, and 478 cases of runaways. As percentages, 97.6 percent of missing children were runaways, 1.6 percent were parental kidnappings, and .8 percent were cases of nonfamily abductions (Senate Document #7, State of Virginia 1985).

Sexual Exploitation of Missing Children

Research on the relationship between sexual exploitation and the three types of missing children has been roughly proportional to the number of children at risk. The majority of research in this area, therefore, is on runaway youth.

Runaways and juvenile prostitution

Three reports provide a partial answer to the question, "What proportion of runaways become involved in prostitution?"

In Louisville, Kentucky, a police/social work team collects information and jointly investigates reported and discovered cases of sexually exploited children. This team, the Exploited and Missing Child Unit, has produced data showing that approximately 11 percent suffer criminal or sexual exploitation during their time away from home (Children's Defense Fund Newsletter 1985; Rabun 1984). Unfortunately, no further breakdown of data is available to separate criminal (but nonsexual exploitation) from prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation. Also, these data are based on children known to police or social service agencies. The 11 percent figure might be lower if it included a representative sample of all runaways. Estimates are that only one in every four or five runaways is ever arrested or detained (Office of Inspector General 1983), and those involved in crime and sexual exploitation may be more likely to come to the attention of officials.

The 1982 Wisconsin Female Offender Study Project (Phelps et al. 1982) provides further information on the number of runaways who are sexually abused. The study consisted of a sample of 192 young women who were under formal or informal supervision for delinquent acts in eight Wisconsin counties. Eighty-one percent of these young women were runaways; two-thirds had run away three or more times. Among the runaways, 17 percent reported exchanging sexual contact for food or a place to stay, and 14 percent reported having sexual contact explicitly for money.

In a study of 215 runaways, half of whom were known to social service agents, Miller et al. (1980) reported high proportions of youth involved in prostitution. Overall, 19 percent of the boys and 23 percent of the girls engaged in prostitution after running away.

A fourth study possibly bears on the question of the number of runaways who become sexually exploited through prostitution. A research team headed by Ann Burgess studied 149 clients of Covenant House in Toronto, a service center for runaways (Janus 1985). Fifty percent of clients said they had been offered money in exchange for sexual contact. Unfortunately, the study did not ask how many runaways actually engaged in prostitution, only if they had been offered money for sex. It also reported that 65.5 percent of female runaways and 43.6 percent of male runaways are likely to be offered money for sex.

These four studies, based on different types of samples and located in different areas, found that 11 to 23 percent of runaways eventually became involved in prostitution.

Studies on runaways and juvenile prostitution

A number of studies of juvenile prostitution have suggested that running away may be a significant factor contributing to prostitution. But there has been little study on the proportion of runaways who enter prostitution. A large body of literature does exist, however, that suggests that running away is a frequent behavior among juvenile prostitutes. Most related research focuses on juvenile prostitution, which allows for answers to questions such as, "What proportion of prostitutes have a history of running away?" or "Why do children who become juvenile prostitutes run away?"

These questions are important but not central in estimating the extent to which runaways enter prostitution or are sexually exploited in some way. To estimate the relationship of running away to prostitution, studies must rely on samples of runaways, not prostitutes. The more appropriate question for our purposes is, "What proportion of runaways become involved in prostitution?"

Female prostitution and running away

While statistics show that the vast majority of juvenile female prostitutes are runaways, some studies find that virtually all juvenile female prostitutes are runaways:

- The Enablers Study, conducted in Minneapolis in 1978, reported that all 57 juvenile female prostitutes in their sample were runaways.

- The Newman and Caplan study (1981) examined 10 cases of juvenile prostitution and found that all had a history of running away from home, institutions, or foster homes.

- The Silbert and Pine study (1981) examined 200 juvenile and adult prostitute cases and reported that 96 percent were runaways.

- The Report of the Committee on Sexual Offenses Against Children and Youths (1984) found that in a sample of 145 juvenile female prostitutes, 75 percent had run away from home.

- The James study (1980) found that 75 percent of juvenile female runaways engaged in prostitution.

- The Gray study (1973) reported that 64 percent of the females studied were runaways. In this study 11 of 17 females were runaways from homes or institutions when they began prostitution.

Research during the past 12 years has estimated that two-thirds to virtually all female juvenile prostitutes have run away at least once from homes, institutions, or foster homes.

Male prostitution and running away

Empirical evidence on the relationship between prostitution and running away is not as extensive for males as it is for females. The association between the two phenomena, however, is strong and is shown in the following studies:

- Based on data from a nationwide study of 79 male prostitutes conducted by Urban and Rural Systems Associates (URSA) from 1979 to 1981, Weisberg (1985) reported that 77 percent had histories of running away.

- The Canadian Study on Sexual Offenses Against Children (Badgley et al. 1984) reported that 79 percent of the 84 male prostitutes surveyed were runaways.

- The Huckleberry House study of youth prostitution (Harlan et al. 1981) reported no specific percentages but indicated that most of the male prostitutes were runaways.

A much lower estimate is presented by Allen (1980). In a study of 98 recruited male prostitutes, only one-third had histories of running away. The lower incidence in this report reflects the sample, a portion of which consisted of males who were only part-time prostitutes. Many in this group were students or regularly employed; none were runaways. If considering only the street prostitutes in the study, 70 percent had histories of running away.

Risk factors for runaways' entering prostitution

Two bodies of research on the relationship between juvenile prostitution and running away concur on the following point: most juvenile prostitutes are runaways, but only a minority of runaways enter prostitution. This section examines the following question: What factors, in conjunction with running away, place some children at a higher risk for entering prostitution? Initially, separate factors are examined for both males and females. Then, we present a composite picture of the interplay of risk factors. Finally, we apply the risk findings to existing theory to understand what role running away plays in juvenile prostitution.

Child sexual abuse

A large number of studies have examined the relationship between child sexual abuse, running away, and entrance into prostitution. This literature has at least three problems. First, the majority of studies deal with the relationship between child sexual abuse and running away or between child sexual abuse and prostitution. Rarely do studies simultaneously examine the relationship of all three phenomena. Ideally, these studies should address whether victims of child sexual abuse are more likely to run away and whether this group of runaways is more likely to enter prostitution. An additional problem is that all studies are retrospective. This is common in research on child sexual abuse, but it poses problems of subjects' recall and rationalization. Finally, definitions of child sexual abuse vary widely from study to study. Most studies include sexual activities, ranging from fondling to intercourse, between a child and an adult. Some do not distinguish between intra- and extrafamilial abuse; some include only forced experiences, and some include only the most severe forms of sexual abuse.

The idea that a history of sexual abuse puts a runaway at risk for entering prostitution is based primarily on descriptive studies finding that female juvenile prostitutes, most of whom are runaways, have extensive histories of child sexual abuse. Such studies report that between 30 and 90 percent of their samples experienced some form of sexual abuse as children or adolescents (James and Meyerding 1977; Silbert and Pines 1981; Enablers 1978; Harlan et al. 1981; McCormick 1985; MacVicar and Dillon 1980; and Newman and Caplan 1981). Variations in estimates reflect the type of sexual abuse focused upon in these studies. Lower estimates come from studies that examined only child sexual abuse in the family (MacVicar and Dillon 1980; Enablers 1978; Newman and Caplan 1981). Higher estimates are from studies including both intra- and extrafamilial sexual abuse (James and Meyerding 1977; Harlan et al. 1981).

Male juvenile prostitutes also frequently manifest histories of child sexual abuse but not as extensively as do female juvenile prostitutes. Descriptive studies provide estimates of child sexual abuse in the histories of 10 to 53 percent of samples. Again, low estimates reflect a focus on intrafamilial abuse (Shick, in Weisberg 1984; Urban and Rural Systems Associates 1982; James 1980), while higher estimates include both intra- and extrafamilial sexual abuse (Janus et al. 1984; Harlan et al. 1984). One obvious problem with much of the

research on both male and female juvenile prostitutes, however, is that it provides no groups of nonprostitutes to which to compare the rate of sexual abuse of prostitutes. The figures for prostitutes, however, appear to be high, compared to what is known about the prevalence of sexual abuse in the general population.

Estimates of child sexual abuse in normal populations vary widely. The most cited figures are based on retrospective surveys of adult women; there have been nearly 20 such studies in the last decade. Among the better studies is Russell's (1983) survey of 930 women in San Francisco. Thirty-eight percent of these women reported a contact sexual abuse experience prior to age 18, and 16 percent reported sexual abuse by a family member. Finkelhor's (1981) survey of 521 Boston parents found that 15 percent of females had encountered an experience of sexual abuse before age 16 by a person at least 5 years older, and 5 percent reported intrafamily abuse. In the first nationwide survey, a Los Angeles Times telephone study, 27 percent of the women reported histories of sexual abuse; 33 percent of that group reported abuse within the family.

Rates of sexual abuse of runaway prostitutes in many studies are even higher than Russell's figures. For example, in various studies the estimates of intrafamily sexual abuse among populations of runaway prostitutes range from 12 to 40 percent. The 12 percent figure (Miller 1980) is based on incest experiences, but the term "incest" is not clearly defined. Higher rates of intrafamily child sexual abuse were also reported. James and Meyerding released findings in 1977 based on a study of a 1970 to 1971 sample of prostitutes. The study reported that 25 percent of the sample had encountered a "forced/bad sexual experience" with family members. In 1981 Silbert and Pines presented a 40 percent figure of intrafamily sexual abuse and in a retabulation of data from the Canadian Study (Badgley et al. 1984), 39 percent of the female child prostitutes reported their first sexual experience was with a father, stepfather, guardian, or other blood relative.

Data on extrafamilial child sexual abuse attest to higher rates among runaway prostitutes than those found in general population surveys. James and Meyerding (1977) reported that 65 percent of one sample of female prostitutes had a "forced/bad sexual experience." In a 1974 to 1975 sample, 57 percent reported being raped. Silbert and Pines (1981) reported that 60 percent of the 200 juvenile prostitutes they studied were sexually abused as juveniles. The Huckleberry House survey reported that 90 percent of the female prostitutes in its analysis had suffered child sexual abuse. Finally, 73 percent of runaways in a 1985 study by McCormick reported episodes of child sexual abuse.

The unusually high rates of sexual abuse among child prostitutes also applies to boys. Among runaway male prostitutes, the rate of childhood sexual abuse is 2 to 9 times higher than the rate reported in general population surveys. Not as many general population estimates of child sexual abuse are available for males as for females. Some figures range, however, from 6 percent (Finkelhor 1981) to 16 percent (Lewis 1985). By contrast, studies of male juvenile prostitute samples reported rates ranging from 39 to 53 percent. In the nationwide URSA survey of male prostitutes, 44 percent reported either intra- or extrafamilial sexual abuse. The Huckleberry Project studying male prostitutes (1981) reported a rate of 53 percent, and Janus et al. (1984), in a sample of Boston male prostitutes, found that 39 percent experienced child sexual abuse, usually by a male relative. Male prostitutes, the majority of whom are runaways, are a subpopulation whose histories are likely to include childhood sexual victimization experiences.

What must be determined is whether runaways who become involved in prostitution have been more sexually abused than

other runaways. Three case control studies have tried to discern the relationship between running away, prostitution, and child sexual abuse. Two reported that runaways who enter prostitution are significantly more likely than other runaways to have a history of child sexual abuse. One study found no significant differences.

Phelps et al. (1982), in a sample of 192 female runaways in Wisconsin, found runaway juvenile prostitutes three to four times more likely than nonprostitute runaways to have been sexually abused as children. Thirty-three percent of the sexual abuse victims had exchanged sexual contact for shelter or food, and 23 percent had done so for money. Among those not sexually abused as children, these figures were 8 and 9 percent, respectively.

Another study analyzed a sample of missing children from the caseload of the Exploited Child Unit of the Department of Human Services in Louisville, Kentucky. Prostitute runaways were found to have a higher rate of sexual abuse as children than runaways who were not prostitutes. Twenty-three percent of the prostitute group--compared to 3 percent of the other group--reported they had engaged in sex with family members.

Crowley (1977) in a dissenting study, found no difference in the occurrence of child sexual abuse between runaways who engaged in prostitution and those who did not. The lack of a significant finding may be because the author only asked about sexual abuse by a male relative rather than asking about both intra- and extrafamily sexual abuse.

Two other studies of child sexual abuse and juvenile prostitution have also used comparison groups, although not of other runaways. Badgley et al. (1984) compared whether "first sexual experience was with a relative" among juvenile prostitutes and a sample of normal adolescents. A higher percentage of juvenile prostitutes (29.3 percent versus 24.8 percent) reported that their first sexual experience was with a family member.

Fields (1980) examined differences in child sexual abuse among female prostitutes known to police and a general population sample of other females from the same geographic region. Forty-five percent of the prostitutes reported a history of sexual abuse compared to 32 percent of the nonprostitute sample. While not statistically significant, the difference is sizeable.

A summary of the conclusion from these studies reveals that--

- Many adolescent prostitutes reveal histories of childhood sexual abuse.

- The rates in the prostitute groups appear somewhat higher than those for the general population.

- Most of the specific case control studies that have compared child prostitutes with other runaways show the prostitutes with higher rates of victimization.

But even if the absolute frequency of victimization of runaways and child prostitutes were only modestly higher, the sexual abuse appears to be more severe than that suffered by the general population. First of all, it seems that rates of abuse by fathers/stepfathers may be higher. This type of abuse is considered one of the most traumatizing. Rates among these particular populations seem noticeably higher than even the high 4 percent figure for general populations reported by Russell (1983). Second, the abuse reported by runaways and child prostitutes starts at an early age. Silbert and Pines (1981) reported that the average age of onset of sexual abuse is 10 years, which is somewhat lower than the average age reported by Russell for her sample. Multiple victimizations also are common among prostitute samples. For example, the prostitutes in the Silbert and Pines survey were abused by an average of two persons each. The sexual

abuse of runaways and prostitutes seems to be both frequent and severe.

It is therefore often assumed that the sexual abuse experienced by prostitutes and runaways contributes significantly to their running away. Even sexually abused children, however, may be running away from family conditions other than sexual abuse. Unfortunately, few studies have tried to pinpoint the role of sexual abuse in the decision to run away. Two that have done so found that sexual abuse is often mentioned as an explicit reason for running away. Silbert and Pines (1981) reported that 70 percent of the sexually abused in their sample cited the abuse as their reason for running away. Miller (1981) reported that all the girls in her sample who experienced sexual abuse said it was their major reason for running away. Other evidence to support this link comes from findings suggesting that runaway sexual abuse victims are those who run away most frequently. The Wisconsin Female Juvenile Offender Study Project (Phelps et al. 1982) found that 38 percent of repeat runaways in their sample had been sexually abused, compared to 17 percent of those who never ran away.

In conclusion, the connection between a history of sexual abuse, running away, and child prostitution is extremely plausible. It is logical in light of clinical knowledge about the three phenomena, and it is confirmed in most of the empirical studies. Sexually abused children are more likely to run away, and sexually abused runaways are more likely to enter prostitution. Nonetheless, further research will refine our understanding of the relationship. The current evidence suggests that a history of sexual abuse makes the subsequent sexual exploitation of runaways more likely.

Sexual socialization

Although a history of sexual abuse places runaway children at risk of further sexual exploitation, other so-called risk factors exist. These can be inferred from studies of the backgrounds of juvenile prostitutes. Many of these factors concern sexual socialization.

Age at first sexual intercourse. The age of first sexual intercourse appears to be significantly lower among juvenile prostitutes than it is in general populations. This is true for both males and females. All studies on female prostitutes find that the vast majority experience first coitus by age 14 to 15 (Gray 1973; James and Meyerding 1977; Enablers 1978; Fields 1980; Rabun 1984). Badgley et al. (1984), in a Canadian sample, reported that virtually all juvenile prostitutes had a sexual experience by age 15, compared to 16 percent of adolescents in the general population.

Findings are similar for male juvenile prostitutes with one exception: males experience first intercourse at even younger ages. Average age found in most studies was between 12 and 13 years (Urban and Rural Systems Associates 1982; Allen 1980; Janus et al. 1984; Badgley et al. 1984).

Despite the consistency of findings on the age of first intercourse, this age is often confused with early child sexual abuse. It is not clear that these findings mean anything except that juvenile prostitutes have been sexually abused.

Family sexual behavior. Evidence indicates that families of juvenile prostitutes are more sexually deviant and more sexually abusive than those found in general populations.

MacVicar and Dillon (1980), in an intensive study of 10 female adolescent prostitutes, reported that--

Three girls thought that their fathers visited prostitutes, and two had promiscuous mothers, one of whom was a prostitute herself. Two other girls felt openly encouraged by their mothers in their promiscuity, although the mothers were not promiscuous (p. 148).

Newman and Caplan (1981), in another intensive clinical investigation into the backgrounds of 10 female juvenile prostitutes, reported that 3 of the 10 mothers (30 per cent) had been prostitutes.

James (1980) reported that almost 25 percent of the girls in her study first learned of prostitution from a relative, and 4 percent were with a family member at the time of their first act of prostitution. Silbert (1980) also reported that in 4 percent of her sample, girls were forced into prostitution by a family member, while Allen (1980) noted the influence of family members in introducing males to prostitution. Finally, Barclay and Gallemore (1972) noted the influence of mothers and sisters-in-law on a girl's introduction to prostitution.

Participation in prostitution before running away. The accepted explanation for the link between running away and prostitution is that prostitution is a response to the circumstances of running away. The need for a place to stay, to eat, and to be accepted, along with the opportunity are seen as facilitating the drift into prostitution (James and Vitaliano 1978). While this seems logical, the relationship may be even more complex.

The URSA study (1982) found that 40 percent of male prostitutes began their involvement with prostitution before leaving home. Engaging in prostitution while still at home may be a reason for running away and staying in prostitution after leaving. The extent to which prostitution precedes running away is an important research question that requires attention.

Lack of parental sex socialization. Studies also agree that parents of juvenile prostitutes are poor sources of sex education for their children. For example, James and Meyerding (1978) found in a 1971 sample that 63 percent of the adolescent females learned about sexual intercourse from friends or personal experiences. Using 1976 data James and Meyerding reported that 15 percent of the juvenile females learned about birth control from parents. The figure for general populations is about 35 percent (Sorenson 1973).

The Canadian Study on Sexual Offenses Against Children (Badgley et al. 1984) also reported an absence of parental discussion of sexual matters in their sample of juvenile prostitutes. Seventy-five percent of the boys and 60 percent of the girls stated that their mothers had never discussed sex with them. The fathers of 79 percent of the boys and 77 percent of the girls had never discussed sexual matters with them. Parents in the overall population also generally have poor records in the area of sexual education (Finkelhor 1984).

Sexual orientation. Adolescent homosexuality may put a male at higher risk of running away and getting involved in juvenile prostitution. Because he faces stigma and harassment from his family and community, a homosexual adolescent may run away. This contrasts sharply with an earlier view that most male prostitutes were not homosexual (Coombs 1974; Reiss 1961).

Recent studies have found, however, that from 35 to 57 percent of male prostitutes have a homosexual orientation (Rabun 1984; Weisberg 1985; Harlan et al. 1981) and from 23 to 29 percent label themselves bisexual (Urban and Rural Systems Associates 1982; Harlan et al. 1981).

A large number of male juvenile prostitutes still do not define themselves as homosexual. They consider what they do "business"--a way to survive--not evidence of sexual orientation.

Females also commonly cite this as their reason for involvement in prostitution (Gray 1973). Unlike males, however, the vast majority of female prostitutes identify themselves as heterosexual. In fact, there are more female prostitutes who claim to be asexual than those who claim to be homosexual (Silbert 1980).

The sexual orientation of male prostitutes is an important research concern. The relationship between running away, homosexuality, and entering prostitution needs further investigation. The extent to which male children receive harassment from family and peers because of their sexuality needs study; so does the question of whether this accounts for their running away and their vulnerability to sexual exploitation on the street.

Family structure

A common theme in the literature is that both male and female juvenile prostitutes grow up in homes broken by separation or divorce. This suggests that family problems are another factor contributing to juvenile prostitution. Research on juvenile female prostitutes suggests that from 66 to 90 percent grew up without one or both parents during part or all of their childhood (Crowley 1977; Silbert 1980; James 1980; The Enablers 1980; Harlan et al. 1981; Newman and Caplan 1980; Rabun 1984). A higher than expected number of juvenile prostitutes have also spent time in foster/institutional care (Janus 1984; Urban and Rural Systems Associates 1981; Gray 1973).

One exception to the finding of broken families among male and female juvenile prostitutes is the Canadian study (Badgley et al. 1984). This research found that about 25 percent of the juveniles in the sample spent all or part of their childhood outside an intact family. The figure increased to more than 60 percent of the juveniles, however, when they were asked if one parent was absent from the home for regular or extended periods of time due to employment, hospitalization, drinking binges, or separation.

A stronger theme perhaps than even broken homes is the pervasiveness of poor family relationships during childhood and adolescence. This is the case in the literature on juvenile prostitution, as well as that on runaway children. Almost every study that asks about the reasons for running away finds that the majority of children cite "escaping family problems and conflict" as the primary reason (Badgley et al. 1984; Miller 1980; Phelps et al. 1982).

Among female prostitutes, studies consistently find 60 to 75 percent of their juvenile respondents reporting poor family relationships with mothers, fathers, or siblings (Gray 1973; Silbert 1980; Crowley 1977; Harlan et al. 1981; Fields 1980). In most research reports, poor family relationships refer to parental alcoholism, physical violence, hostility, rejection, a complete absence of parental involvement and guidance, and emotional abuse.

Existing research suggests that in this group fathers are especially likely to be experienced negatively (Silbert 1980; James 1980; The Enablers 1978; Fields 1980). The role of fathers of juvenile female prostitutes has been rarely studied except in reports focusing on child sexual abuse. Newman and Caplan (1981), however, in their study of 10 female prostitutes, found that the father's role is critical. In their study, 8 of the 10 fathers abused alcohol or drugs, were involved in criminal activities, or encouraged antisocial behavior in their daughters. Before they reached puberty, 8 of the girls' fathers were absent from their daughters' lives. These authors contend the following:

> During early adolescence, unresolved Oedipal issues reemerge and must be worked through if successful adult psychosexual development is to be completed. The majority of our subjects had no opportunity to

> complete this important work, and may have turned to prostitution in an attempt to obtain available though inappropriate father-surrogates (p. 133).

High proportions of male juvenile prostitutes also report disorganized family lives and poor relationships with parents/caretakers. In their study of 28 male juvenile prostitutes, Janus et al. (1984) reported that all reported poor family relationships. Subjects' predominant memories were of parental fighting, drinking, and neglect. They described their own relationships with parents as distant and rejecting and described one or both parents as alcoholic.

The role of fathers has also been examined in the childhood histories of male juvenile prostitutes (Allen 1980; Urban and Rural Systems Associates 1982; Ginsberg 1967). The Allen (1980) and Ginsberg (1967) studies concurred that fathers of male prostitutes, more often than mothers, are seen as ineffective, unsupportive, and unstable.

One indication of poor family relationships reported in the literature on both male and female juvenile prostitutes is the extent and seriousness of physical abuse experienced by this subgroup. Among females, severe physical punishment is extensive. Estimates vary that from 50 to 70 percent of adolescents were physically abused by male and female caretakers (Crowley 1977; The Enablers 1978; James 1980; Silbert 1980). In many instances this abuse was quite severe (Silbert 1980) and lasted long periods of time (James 1980; The Enablers 1978). Among female runaways, physical abuse is a common family occurrence. Repeat runaways are more likely to have experienced severe physical abuse (Phelps et al. 1982). Physical abuse is also common in the backgrounds of male juvenile prostitutes. While not as prevalent among males as females, estimates of physical harm range from 34 to 47 percent of male juvenile prostitutes (Harlan et al. 1981; Urban and Rural Systems Associates 1982).

Repeat running and length of time away

There are few case control studies that compare runaway prostitutes to nonprostitutes according to frequency of running and length of time away. Research indicates that frequent running away may be more common among prostitutes than nonprostitutes (Badgley et al. 1984; Harlan et al. 1981; James 1980). For example, in James' 1980 sample of female prostitutes, she found that 52.8 percent had run away frequently. Among male prostitutes, 77 percent had been frequent runaways. Frequent running away, however, is not characteristic of most runaway cases (Opinion Research Corporation 1976).

Little is known about the characteristics of children who frequently run away. One study has found, however, that repeat runaways are more likely to have been sexually or physically abused in the home. Repeat runaways are also more likely to experience much harm while on the run, including violence, involvement in crime, and sexual assault, and are more likely to attempt suicide (Phelps et al. 1982) than nonrepeaters.

Some data are available on the duration of runaway episodes. Crowley (1977) reported that juvenile prostitutes are away for significantly longer periods of time than nonprostitute runaways, and McCormick (1985), in a study of 144 runaways in Canada, found a curvilinear relationship between time away and possible sexual exploitation. McCormick's data revealed that those adolescents away for both very short and very long periods of time were more likely than other runaways to be offered money in exchange for sex. This finding may be due to other factors, such as runaway destination and whether a runaway stays with friends, family, or strangers.

More research is needed on frequency of running away and time away during episodes, as well as other factors that increase the likelihood of entering prostitution. Such factors are the

distance traveled during running episodes and the destination of episodes. For example, Crowley (1977) found no difference between runaway prostitutes and nonprostitutes in terms of distance traveled. Harlan et al. (1981) found, however, that male prostitutes were more likely than other runaways to travel out of their guardians' States.

Demographic profile

It is virtually impossible at this time to develop an accurate demographic description of runaways at high risk of sexual exploitation, including juvenile prostitution. Profiles constructed separately of runaways and juvenile prostitutes are rarely, if ever, random samples of these groups. Many studies of runaways, for example, are based on those recruited from the streets. Many studies of juvenile prostitutes are also nonrandom. Large, representative sample studies of runaways, such as the National Survey on Runaway Youth (Opinion Research Corporation 1976), are also not useful in discerning which subgroups are at high risk of sexual exploitation because of the low incidence of the sexually exploited recruited this way.

A few studies present case control designs that allow for a comparison between runaway prostitutes and runaway nonprostitutes. Rabun (1984), for example, found that runaway prostitutes are more likely to be from blue-collar backgrounds, and female runaway prostitutes are more likely to come from families with a high degree of racial prejudice. Crowley (1977), using the same case control design with a sample of female runaway prostitutes and nonprostitutes, reported no demographic differences between groups.

There is no reliable data on socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity of runaways and juvenile prostitutes. Differences among studies reflect sample biases that do not explain the risk of certain social groups of entering prostitution due to running away.

Summary of risk factors

We can only speculate about the most significant reasons why some runaways become involved in prostitution and others do not. More case control studies that would detail comparisons between groups of runaway prostitutes and nonprostitutes are needed.

Based on the existing literature, several factors are important in explaining runaways' entrance into prostitution. Runaways who become prostitutes have more extensive histories of sexual victimization. Compared to the general population or to groups of runaway nonprostitutes, runaway prostitutes have a background of severe, negative sexual experiences. They also have more disorganized family backgrounds, are likely to repeat running away, and are more likely than other runaways to stay away for longer periods of time. Among males, sexual orientation appears to be a key variable: a disproportionate number of homosexual male youth fills the ranks of runaway prostitutes.

Runaways and Other Forms of Sexual Exploitation

Prostitution is the main type of sexual exploitation of runaways about which research literature exists. Other studies also examine runaways' involvement in pornography and other forms of sexual abuse.

Participation in pornography

People assume a link between runaway behavior and pornography, but reliable data is limited. Densen-Gerber and Hutchinson (1978) stated that at Covenant House in New York City--a group of shelters for runaway children--the first 10 children who entered one shelter had all been paid to appear in pornographic films. The popular media also point up the vulnerability of runaways to engaging in pornography (U.S.A. Today, January 24, 1984, p. 8). Valid data are not available, however, to estimate the number of runaways involved in pornography. Rabun (1984), in a study of 239 runaway prostitutes and nonprostitutes, provided the only data on this issue. He reported that 15 percent of runaways are involved in pornography; among runaway prostitutes, both male and female, 37 percent admitted to having been involved in pornography. This study also found no difference between males and females in these groups in involvement in pornography.

Three other studies establish some relationship between juvenile prostitution and pornography:

- The URSA survey of male prostitutes (1982) reported that 27 percent of the sample had been photographed. Of this group, 76 percent were photographed for private collections; 33 percent said the photographs were to be circulated among friends; 43 percent were photographed for magazines; and 24 percent, for pornographic movies.

- James (1980) found in her sample that, overall, 17 percent of the male juvenile prostitutes participated in pornography. Approximately 10.6 percent had participated on one occasion, 4.3 percent on more than one occasion, and 2.1 percent, several times.

- In a survey of 832 law enforcement agencies during 1980, 19.7 percent reported one or more investigations of pornography and child or adolescent prostitution (Belanger et al. 1984).

One exception is a study by Janus et al. (1984) of 28 male street youths involved in prostitution. They reported that all 28 had been asked to participate in a variety of pornography, and 75 percent actually did participate. Most participants posed for pictures for the private use of the photographers. The high proportion of youth who participated in pornography may reflect the sample, which was comprised of street hustlers, a group most vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Other forms of sexual exploitation

Research indicates that male and female juvenile runaways or prostitutes are susceptible to violence and sexual abuse in addition to prostitution and pornography production.

Phelps et al. (1982), in a study of female runaways in Wisconsin, reported that 50 percent experienced rape or sexual assault while on the run. Rape was also common among juvenile

prostitutes. Janus et al. (1984) reported in their study of male street hustlers that more than 50 percent had been raped, often repeatedly, while hustling. Over half this sample had also been involved in sadomasochistic sex--some as victims, some as victimizers.

The URSA study of male prostitutes (1982) argued that sexual and other forms of exploitation were more likely to occur to adolescent prostitutes working habitually as hustlers in the sex-trade zones. These types of male prostitutes were likely to be runaways, and it was in this environment that most violence and sexual abuse occurred. Clients who frequented these areas were more likely to be more conflicted about their sexuality, more disturbed, and more prone to sexual assault.

Female runaways and prostitutes were also likely victims of coerced sex. Silbert and Pines (1981) reported in a study of 200 female street prostitutes that 78 percent were victimized by forced perversion an average of 16.6 times each. Seventy percent were victimized by customer rape an average of 31 times each, and approximately 40 percent reported being forced into sex without pay by police and beatings by police or other prostitutes. Sixty-five percent reported being physically beaten by customers an average of 4.3 times during a sexual encounter. These results are particularly disturbing because more than 60 percent of this sample was under 16 years of age. Gray (1973) also reported on the high vulnerability of female prostitutes to physical and sexual exploitation.

Other harmful experiences

Runaways or juvenile prostitutes are prone to a number of harmful experiences while on the street. Several studies have detailed the risk of involvement in criminal activity such as robbery, burglary, and drug use (Phelps et al. 1984; Weisberg 1985; Boyer and James 1983).

Boyer and James also reported that male and female juvenile prostitutes risk a number of health problems, including poor nutrition, venereal disease, depression, and suicidal tendencies. Females face miscarriage, abortion, high drug use, and alcohol dependency. Males experience the particular problems of hepatitis and rectal injuries. Both males and females are susceptible to contracting AIDS.

The risks for male street hustlers are severe, according to Janus et al. (1984). Exposure to disease, robbery, arrest, high amounts of violence, rape, murder, and psychological injury are common.

Drug and alcohol use is high among juvenile male prostitutes. More than 70 percent of the males in the URSA study (1982) reported using drugs while involved in prostitution. Many reported that drugs helped them to deal with the upsetting and frightening aspects of their work. Allen (1980) reported in his sample of juvenile male prostitutes that 30 percent used hard drugs (other than marijuana), and 42 percent were heavy drinkers or alcoholics.

Drug use among female juvenile prostitutes is also high. Studies reveal that from 20 to 50 percent of them use drugs all the time (The Enablers 1978; Silbert 1980).

Weisberg (1985) summarized some of the short-term mental health difficulties of both male and female juvenile prostitutes. Both groups have high rates of suicide, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts. Both groups, in approximately the same numbers, report feeling entirely negative about themselves. Most have received psychological services in the past, including about 13 percent who have received inpatient treatment.

Two important differences show up in the mental health of male and female prostitutes. First, females are

significantly more likely than males to have attempted suicide, and second, male prostitutes report a much more extensive social support system than females. Most female prostitutes report having no friends, but male prostitutes evince a kind of comradery and can name several persons whom they rely upon as emotional, material, and social resources.

Runaways are also at risk for harmful experiences while on the run. Phelps et al. (1982) reported that high percentages of runaways in their sample encountered a lack of food, shelter, and frightening drug experiences, including drug overdose, physical violence, rape, and attempted suicide. Runaways with a history of early sexual abuse were particularly prone to these experiences.

Long-Term Effects on Runaways of Sexual Exploitation

It is a complex matter to evaluate the long-term impact of sexual exploitation on runaway children and adolescents. One obvious reason for this is that little direct research has been conducted on this issue. But even if data were available, interpretation would be difficult, because of the multiple levels of victimization and differences in age and sex of sexually exploited runaways.

This population suffers the effects of several noxious and traumatic events. For example, many runaways and juvenile prostitutes have histories of child sexual abuse, which has short- and long-term effects. Many runaways and juvenile prostitutes experience rape and other sexual assaults, with associated short- and long-term trauma. Also, real traumatic consequences are associated with running away and entering prostitution. How do these various phenomena interact and what are their combined short- and long-term effects? To complicate matters further, runaways and juvenile prostitutes are a diverse group: boys are affected differently than girls, and young children differently than older children.

A review of the literature on the impact of sexual abuse in general can illuminate the subject to some extent. Browne and Finkelhor, in a 1985 review article, chronicled the short- and long-term effects of female child sexual victimization. According to these authors, empirical research has found some fairly consistent initial effects in some portion of the victim population. Some of these effects include fear, anxiety, depression, anger and hostility, aggression, and sexually inappropriate behavior. Often reported long-term effects (defined as those present 2 to 4 years or more after the termination of abuse) include depression and self-destructive behavior, anxiety, feelings of isolation and stigmatization, poor self-esteem, difficulty in trusting others, a tendency toward revictimization, substance abuse, and sexual maladjustment.

Which children are at greater risk of experiencing short- and long-term effects of child sexual abuse? What is remarkable about the Browne and Finkelhor review is that their profile of the more seriously victimized female is almost identical to the profile of juvenile female prostitutes. These authors found that sexual abuse by fathers or stepfathers has a more negative impact than abuse by other perpetrators. Experiences involving genital contact seem to be more upsetting, and trauma is increased when force is used. Also, when the offenders are males, rather than females--and adults, rather than teenagers--the effects of sexual abuse appear to be more disturbing. These characteristics of sexual abuse are ones that are most common among female juvenile prostitutes. For example, female prostitutes are 4 to 10 times more likely than nonprostitutes to experience father or stepfather incest, much more likely to experience forced sex, and are more likely to be victimized by adults. All this suggests that, according to a continuum of sexual abuse of children, runaway child prostitutes are likely to experience the most trauma.

Sexually abused boys may experience many of these same effects. Some research suggests that an additional response by boys to sexual abuse is antisocial behavior and confusion about sexual identity. A boy's concern about whether he may be homosexual prompts attempts to reassert masculinity. Often this results

in picking fights, bullying other children, confrontational behavior with adult authority figures, and property destruction (Rogers and Terry 1984).

Literature analyzing the traumatic impact of sexual abuse provides further understanding of how running away, prostitution, and sexual exploitation affect a child. Finkelhor and Browne (1984) have constructed a four-factor model of the traumatic elements of child sexual abuse that separates different aspects of the experience that have lasting effects. These traumatic elements "traumagenic dynamics" ... "alter the child's cognitive and emotional orientation to the world and create trauma by distorting a child's self-concept, world view and affective capacities" (p. 2). Briefly, these elements are traumatic sexualization, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization.

Traumatic sexualization refers to a process in which a child's sexuality is shaped in an inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional way due to sexual abuse. Research on female juvenile prostitutes indicates that they are often victims of dysfunctional and highly inappropriate sexual encounters. For example, they experience more forced sex (James and Meyerding 1977), more adolescent rape (James and Meyerding 1977; Fields 1980), and more group rapes and other multiple sexual victimizations (Silbert and Pines 1981). They are also likely to be sexualized at a significantly earlier age than youth in general populations (Badgley et al. 1984; James 1980; Rabun 1984; Fields 1980); and in some cases they've been encouraged--or even forced by family members--to enter prostitution (Silbert 1980; MacVicar and Dillon 1980).

Betrayal occurs when such children discover that someone on whom they vitally depended has caused them harm. A common theme in the lives of both runaways and prostitutes is the sense of betrayal they feel toward parents or caretakers. Often, but not always, the sense of betrayal centers on sexual abuse.

In the Canadian Study of Sexual Offenses Against Children, Badgley et al. (1984) asked juvenile prostitutes about their home lives. More than 75 percent of the females and 65 percent of the males reported extremely negative and painful recollections of family life. Those events that they felt had most negatively affected their lives were growing up in homes with continuous fighting, physical abuse, alcoholism, and sexual abuse (almost one-fourth of the females in this sample reported vividly negative recollections of sexual abuse). Many felt these events left a lasting effect on them. The Canadian report concluded the following:

> The majority of these youths had grown up in homes that had left them scarred with negative and painful memories, conditions that had prompted many of them to run away from home, to drop out of school early, and ultimately, to turn to prostitution as a means of earning their livelihood.

Many studies have also chronicled juvenile prostitutes' reasons for running away. These reveal a great deal of resentment toward family members about early experiences. Family problems were the most prevalent reason for juveniles to run away. Runaway prostitutes and nonprostitutes felt cool toward their parents, felt their parents were distant toward them, evidenced much resentment about parental treatment, felt they had been punished excessively and undeservedly, and reported high frequencies of beatings, forcible restraint, sexual abuse, and low self-esteem (Ambrosino 1971; Goldmeier and Dean 1973; Libertoff 1976; Englander 1982).

Many who have attempted to understand the personality development of female runaways/prostitutes emphasize the difficulties experienced by these juveniles in relating to parental or authority figures; their hostility, rage, and resentment; their strong distrust of

human relations; and their feelings of emptiness (MacVicar and Dillon 1980; Newman and Caplan 1980; Weisberg 1985).

Child sexual abuse also produces a feeling of powerlessness among victims: such a child's will, desires, and sense of efficacy are continually contravened. Finkelhor and Browne (1984) contend that powerlessness is inherent in sexual abuse when a child's territory and body space are repeatedly assaulted. The acts of running away or entering prostitution appear to be symptomatic of powerlessness. Also, running away and prostitution often promote and reinforce a sense of powerlessness.

The few studies that examined the long-term effects of running away found a pervasive sense of powerlessness among subjects, especially among repeat runaways. Olsen et al. (1980), in a 12-year followup study of 14 runaways, found that subjects had a significant number of life adjustment problems, a pervasive sense of helplessness, and a tendency to see themselves as victims of early family experiences. Using their siblings as a control group, these authors report that runaways were less likely to graduate from high school, more likely to experience serious academic problems while in school, and significantly less likely to be employed or employed regularly. Of the 14 runaways, 5 never married; 9 tried marriage, but only 4 were married at the time of the study. Four were divorced and another separated. All reported past and current resentment about parental behavior while growing up. Thirteen of fourteen reported trouble with the law, and most had some contact with mental health services. Siblings reported little contact with the law or mental health services. The authors contended that subjects' childhood experiences and feelings about parents are played out in adult relationships:

> Another recurring theme was that of exploitation. In their relations with members of the opposite sex, the runaways saw themselves as vulnerable and innocent victims in a confusing and dangerous world. The opposite sex is ever ready to take advantage of them ... (p. 181).

The problems of runaways adjusting to adulthood was a major concern of a study by Robbins (1958). This 30-year followup study of children seen in a child guidance clinic between 1924 and 1929 found that former runaways had higher rates of adult mental illness, more frequent arrests, incarcerations, divorces, and diagnoses of sociopathic personality. It is not known how many of these subjects were sexually abused as children, but the theme of powerlessness and its effects were common among adult ex-runaways.

Powerlessness is also a theme in the literature on juvenile prostitution. Studies report that juvenile prostitutes are likely to express a sense of entrapment in a hopeless situation (Silbert 1980). Many feel they will never be able to leave prostitution (The Enablers 1978).

Male prostitutes seem better able than females to leave prostitution. While some male prostitutes die young or become involved in criminal activities and are imprisoned, a surprisingly high number make a successful adjustment to adult life.

Another mitigating factor in child sexual abuse is stigmatization. This refers to the negative connotations, such as badness, shame, and guilt, that are communicated to children through these experiences and that they incorporate into their self-images. Stigma is communicated by the offender, the victim's family, friends, and the larger society. Older children, who are more aware of the negative views about sexual abuse may be more likely to experience stigma than young children.

Prostitution and to some extent running away are highly stigmatizing. James and Meyerding (1977) discussed the irreversi-

bility of the stigma prostitution inflicts on females. According to Boyer and James (1983), many male prostitutes suffer the stigma of homosexuality in addition to that associated with prostitution.

It would seem that runaway juvenile prostitutes are particularly vulnerable to certain trauma-producing dynamics of sexual victimization. Many juvenile prostitutes have histories of sexual abuse, and running away and prostitution seem to contribute to the potential for trauma. Traumatic sexualization, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigma are all aspects of the long-term effects that these children suffer.

Sexual Exploitation of Parentally Kidnapped Victims

No available evidence exists that children who are kidnapped by noncustodial parents or agents of these parents face an increased risk of sexual exploitation. Some activists and at least one popular writer claim that sexual exploitation occurs frequently in this population, but this assertion lacks empirical support. Nonetheless, Abrahms (1983) believes that physical and sexual abuse is quite common:

> The psychological and physical scars inflicted by "loving" abductors are commonplace, rather than rare. Sexual or physical abuse is standard fallout from the war between the parents.... A New York support group for victims of child snatching maintains that the majority of snatched youngsters are beaten, sexually molested, or neglected, with fathers most likely to be violent and mothers neglectful (Abrams 1983:15; reported in Agopian 1984: p. 513).

Agopian (1981; 1984 September 1985), however, one of the few researchers who has empirically examined parental child abduction, contends that sexual abuse is rarely, if ever, an outcome of parental kidnapping. He cites several reasons for this:

- There are many other more important, more common, and more plausible motivations than sexual exploitation for parental abductions. These are (1) the belief that the child is being or is apt to be neglected by the custodial parent, (2) the desire to continue a full-time parenting role, (3) the desire to punish the other parent who may be blamed for the marital failure, or (4) the effort to induce the withdrawal of a divorce action or initiate a reconciliation.

- A profile of offenders indicates that most are young, employed, and have no criminal history, including no prior history of known sexual abuse.

- The number of female kidnap victims is proportionate to the number of male kidnap victims. Parental sexual abuse usually involves fathers and daughters, so if sexual abuse were an important motivation for parental kidnapping, more females than males would be snatched by their fathers. A profile study of parental kidnappings reveals that, while fathers commit most of it, boys and girls are equally likely to be kidnapped, reflecting no disproportionate interest by fathers in female children.

- Parental kidnappings do not provide the secrecy and isolation necessary for sexual abuse. Family sexual abuse is usually a clandestine activity, and offenders generally employ elaborate tactics to keep it so. Parental kidnapping, by contrast, draws unusual attention to the offense. When it occurs, the custodial parent almost always contacts the police, who begin an investigation. Parents wishing to abuse would want to avoid this.

- Lastly, in an examination of a large number of cases of parental abduction, Agopian (1981; 1984), the most experienced researcher in this area, found no evidence of sexual abuse in any case.

It is not true, however, that parental kidnappings never involve sexual abuse. Sexual abuse probably occurs in the population of parentally abducted children to the same extent that it does in the general population. No evidence and no particularly good reasons exist, however, to assume that sexual abuse is a major motive for parental child abductions, that sexual abuse is more likely to occur after the abduction, or that kidnapped children experienced a disproportionate amount of sexual abuse before the abduction.

Short- and Long-Term Effects of Sexual Victimization on Parentally Kidnapped Children

Little is known about the specific effects of sexual victimization in conjunction with a parental kidnapping. Agopian (1981, 1984) provided the only empirical data on the effects of parental kidnapping itself, and it does not refer specifically to sexually abused kidnapped children. Since it seems that many of these children are not sexually abused, no empirical or anecdotal evidence exists on the effects of sexual abuse specific to this group. If sexual abuse did occur, these children would experience many of the same effects as other sexual abuse victims, in addition to coping with parental abduction.

In a series of five case studies, Agopian (1984) provided preliminary data on the effects of parental kidnapping. Interviews were conducted 4 to 16 months after children had been returned, so many of the observed effects could be considered short term. Common reactions among all victims were fear, worry, and crying. Reactions among the children depended to some extent upon age, length of abduction, and treatment experienced as an abductee.

Among children who were abducted for short periods, prominent reactions were fear and worry. During the abduction, fantasy episodes were common. After recovery, symptoms included nightmares, fear of strangers, and fear of a second abduction. These children also did not like being left alone.

Children abducted for 6 months or more tended to develop an affection for and an identification with the abducting parent. Upon their return, these children became secretive, lied frequently, and had difficulty interacting with other children. Many remained loyal to the abducting parent.

Younger children have particular difficulty after their abductions because many do not remember the custodial parent upon return. Older children are likely to display resentment toward both parents. Many older children are angry at the custodial parent and feel betrayed and unprotected.

Children's reactions varied according to the type of treatment they experienced during the abduction. Some, who were always moving from one site to another, experienced neglect, while others were treated quite well and entertained and lavished with gifts.

Some of the symptoms produced by parental abduction, like fear and nightmares, seem similar to effects noted in other kidnap victims. We assume that most effects differ, however, when the kidnapper is a parent. Obviously, more research is needed using larger samples to reveal other similarities and differences between family and nonfamily forms of abduction.

Sexual Exploitation of Nonfamily Abducted Children

Little is known about missing children who are abducted by strangers. The extent to which they are victims of sexual exploitation is unknown. Many assume that nonfamily abductions occur primarily for the purpose of sexual abuse. Section 403 of the Federal Missing Children's Act, for example, defines the term "missing child" by referring to the likelihood that sexual exploitation will occur. This assumption, however, is unsubstantiated and questioned by some highly knowledgeable law enforcement officials.

For example, Kenneth Lanning, a special agent with the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit and an expert on sexual exploitation, thinks that sexual exploitation is overemphasized as a factor in nonfamily abductions (1985a, 1985b). Lanning (1985b) developed a typology of nonfamily abductions, according to a perpetrator's motivations. Although the typology is based upon cases known to the FBI, which are biased toward the most serious, it shows that many other prominent motives exist for nonfamily child abduction besides sexual exploitation. The typology comprises five kinds:

- **The emotionally disturbed abductor.** This is usually a woman who has lost a baby or cannot conceive and steals a child to fill a maternal void.

- **The profiteer.** An individual who abducts and sells babies to childless couples, adoption rings, and sometimes pornography rings.

- **The ransom collector.** The person who kidnaps a child and later calls the family demanding a ransom for the child's return. The motivation is usually financial.

- **The sexually motivated abductor.** The person who abducts a child primarily for sexual purposes. This includes a person who abducts a child for a day or only a few hours, in addition to one who tries to keep a child indefinitely.

- **The child killer.** This person abducts children for the purpose of killing them. This situation occurred in Atlanta in the early eighties when 29 young blacks aged 7 to 27 were abducted and killed.

Lanning does not know how many cases are in each category, nor does he speculate about which children may be at high risk of abduction involving sexual exploitation. He uses the typology, however, to point out that many motives for nonfamily abduction do not involve sexual abuse.

Lanning has other reasons for believing that sexual exploitation among nonfamily abducted children is less than perceived. He points out that pedophiles, for example, actually have little need to kidnap children. What is remarkable in the literature on pedophiles and child pornographers is how easily such offenders interact with children without resorting to kidnapping. Many case reports reveal that pornographers and pedophiles interact with hundreds of children in relatively short time periods for sexual purposes simply through deceit, kindness, and socially legitimate channels. Moreover, considering the abundance of runaways and unsupervised children, and most pedophiles' desire for cooperation from children, it's not necessary or preferable for such offenders to kidnap simply for sexual exploitation.

Short- and Long-Term Effects of Sexual Exploitation on Nonfamily Abducted Children

Virtually nothing is known about the impact of sexual exploitation on nonfamily abducted children. But kidnapping and sexual abuse--even when occurring separately--have been found to produce serious consequences in children.

In a series of research studies, for example, Terr (1979; 1981; 1983a) chronicled the short- and long-term effects of nonfamily abduction on a group of 25 schoolage kidnapping victims. The children, while riding a school bus home from summer school, were kidnapped in 1976 in Chowchilla, a rural California community, by three men wearing stocking masks. The children were held for 27 hours, after which they and their bus driver escaped.

Terr's research, conducted over a 4-year period, uncovered symptoms characteristic of posttraumatic stress syndrome. The trauma experienced by these children was purely psychological with no concomitant serious physical injury. All children showed some degree of posttraumatic stress; and many symptoms were still present 4 years after the trauma.

Short-term effects (present 5 to 13 months after the event) included fears, both kidnap related and mundane. Of the 23 children in the study, 20 feared being kidnapped again, 12 were afraid of a "fourth kidnapper," 6 thought the arrested kidnappers were coming back, and 10 believed there would be a second unrelated kidnapping. Twenty-one children feared common experiences; 10 were afraid to be left alone, 15 feared vehicles, 9 feared sounds, 3 feared confined spaces, and 3 were afraid of open spaces. Eight children expressed attacks of such acute anxiety that they screamed, ran, or called for help (1981:18).

Other short-term effects included a fear of omens; children thought about a specific event prior to the kidnapping that to them explained why it occurred. For example, one child took part in a school play called "We Must Be Free" the day of the kidnapping. Disturbances in cognition, primarily in perception, time sense, and thought also occurred. No child employed massive denial during the kidnapping.

Repetitive behavior, including traumatic dreams, talking about the traumatic event, and unbidden daytime visions of the traumatic event, were also common. Many children also replayed the traumatic event monotonously. Psychophysiological symptoms that began during the kidnapping persisted. Such symptoms included urinary urgency, incontinence, fainting, asthmatic attacks, worsening of preexisting physical conditions, and weight loss and gain.

One long-term effect (present after 4 years) was fear (Terr 1983a). Every one of the children reported fears associated with the kidnapping or mundane fears. Panic attacks still occurred 4 years after the event, and many of the children reported profound embarrassment about the kidnapping: they were mortified by their vulnerability. Eighteen of the twenty-five youngsters employed suppression or conscious avoidance of thoughts about the kidnapping.

Several children experienced time skew--remembering events that came after the kidnapping as having occurred before--and distortions in duration of time. Omen formation, repetitive nightmares, playing kidnapping, and personality shifts were common 4 years later. Every child was found to suffer some degree of posttraumatic stress response syndrome as late as 4 years after the incident.

Certain children suffered more severe responses than others. Symptoms were more severe among children with past personal and family problems than they were among children in families that participated in community activities.

This research suggests that nonfamily abduction produces long-lasting effects on its victims. Children sexually abused in the course of such abductions undoubtedly suffer these effects also.

Perhaps the situation experienced by sexually exploited nonfamily abducted children is most similar to that of children involved in extrafamilial sex rings. The impact of involvement in sex rings and pornography on children has been the focus of a few investigations. Burgess et al. (1984), in a study of 62 child and adolescent victims of sex rings and pornography, charted childrens' responses after disclosure of such involvement. Children ranged in age from 6 to 16, and the majority were boys.

These authors reported that the children displayed the same symptoms of acute posttraumatic stress response. Forty-five of the children reported reexperiencing the events through intrusive thoughts and flashbacks. Many had vivid memories and dreams. Forty-one children showed diminished responsiveness to others and the environment, lack of trust in people, withdrawal, and periods of autonomic arousal, especially hyperalertness. Acting out was common among many of the children and included such behavior as fist fighting, loss of temper, and risk taking.

According to these authors, signs of internal tension, such as somatic complaints, bed wetting, and general malaise, increased. Sleep disturbances were common, as were crying spells, reported difficulty in concentration, and increased daydreaming and fantasizing.

About 25 percent of the children successfully integrated the events. These children openly discussed the sexual exploitation and overcame anxiety about it. They believed the adults were wrong and were responsible for initiating the behavior. Such children had a future orientation, established friendships, and made adjustments to family, peers, and school that were appropriate to their ages.

Fully 75 percent of the children studied, however, were unable to integrate the sexual exploitation 2 years after disclosure. Twenty-seven percent of the children avoided dealing with the event, denying and refusing to recognize that it even occurred. These children still feared the offender and had a present orientation. Symptoms of depression and self-destructive behavior were present. Twenty-five percent of the children had repeat symptoms from the time of disclosure. The posttraumatic stress disorder became chronic. Anxiety, guilt, and self-blame were common responses; such children were oriented to the past and hopeless about the future. Twenty-three percent of these children were classified as identifying with the exploiter. This type of child minimized the exploitation and maintained emotional, social, or economic ties to the offender and felt sorry or angry that the adult was exposed and convicted.

These authors found that children's adjustments after disclosure of the exploitation depended on the length of time in the sex ring and involvement in pornography. Children who were exploited for more than a year and those used for the production of pornography were more likely to experience deviant and symptomatic behavior and to identify with offenders.

Other research has also reported the tendency of children involved in sex rings to identify with offenders (Schoettle 1980; Hartman et al. 1984; Knuckman 1984). Hartman et al. (1984) argued that involvement in sex rings was a complex socialization process that bound children to perpetrators and other victims in the ring. Following disclosure, many of these children identified with the offender and were suspicious of and aggressive toward adult authority.

A Research Agenda for Examining the Sexual Exploitation of Missing Children

Because of the dearth of research on the sexual exploitation of missing children, we recommend a program of future research to answer some of the most important questions in the field. Some of these questions and suggestions for research designs that would answer them follow.

Sexual exploitation and runaway children

Determining the complex relationship between juvenile sexual exploitation and running away is a high research priority. The following are among specific questions that such research should address:

- What percentage of runaways suffers from sexual abuse and exploitation before actually running away? What types of abuse and exploitation do they suffer? How does this abuse and exploitation relate to the decision to leave home? (It is not necessarily true that all sexually abused children run away to escape the abuse. It may be the restrictions on their activities or other maltreatment that are the primary reasons for leaving.)

- Under what conditions do sexually abused children run away? Only some sexually abused children leave home, and this may happen only under certain specified circumstances. When sexual abuse is combined with other kinds of maltreatment, for example, or when it continues past a certain age, children may run away.

- How often are children involved in prostitution and organized sexual exploitation before actually leaving home? As indicated earlier, some children may actually leave because they are already involved in prostitution--not to start prostitution because they have left. If this occurs in some cases, it is important to know how often.

- Can we distinguish between sexually abused adolescents who are runaways and those who are throwaways or pushaways? No doubt many children who are classified as runaways have been forced out of their homes, and this may well include many sexually abused and exploited children. The characteristics of this population may differ noticeably in age, socio-economic background, family characteristics, race, and behavior.

- Can we distinguish among the types of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation that confront runaway youth? For example, it is plausible to distinguish between runaway children who become involved in organized prostitution for money and those who are sexually abused as a result of their unprotected and vulnerable condition. A division of this sort is needed because without it, it might be presumed that one type of sexual exploitation of runaway youth, such as prostitution, is the major type of sexual exploitation, and this may not true. We recommend an inventory be established of the relative frequency of the different types of sexual abuse and exploitation that runaways suffer.

- Is the sexual abuse and exploitation suffered by runaways a function of sexual abuse that they experienced prior to running away? It seems probable that those more seriously abused prior to running away would be equally abused after running away.

- How do the effects of sexual exploitation and running away differ for boys and girls? Based on the literature

on running away, juvenile prostitution, and child sexual abuse, it seems clear that boys and girls face different hardships and dangers. Dynamics for each must be described in greater detail.

A second set of research questions concerns risk factors that increase the likelihood of runaways becoming victims of sexual abuse or exploitation. Among those factors that need explicit attention are (1) gender, (2) sexual orientation, (3) prior sexual experience, (4) the amount and kinds of resources that a child possesses in a runaway situation, (5) the length of time away from home, and (6) the geographic area of the country to which the youth has run. A tentative hypothesis places girls or boys at higher risk when they have a homosexual orientation, extensive prior sexual experiences, have been absent from home for a long time, and have run to large urban areas where extensive markets for child prostitution exist. Other factors for consideration are the child's age, physical characteristics, race, religion and ethnicity, employment skills, and a variety of personality characteristics.

Another research area requiring attention is the long-term effects of sexual abuse in conjunction with running away. Undoubtedly, the long-term experiences of sexually abused runaways may differ significantly from children who do not run away. Therefore, the following questions must be addressed: (1) Does sexual abuse or exploitation increase the probability that runaways will stay away permanently? (2) Does sexual abuse or exploitation increase the likelihood that runaways will suffer from debilitating physical or mental problems? (3) Are children who are sexually abused or exploited less likely to be recovered and identified by police or runaway shelters?

The literature lacks information about the long-term situation of children who are sexually abused in the course of running away. How many runaway youths who get involved with prostitution continue the involvement into adulthood? For what length of time do youth involved in prostitution stay with such a life-style? What percentage of sexually abused runaway females become pregnant, have abortions, or carry children to term? What are the subsequent marital and family situations of sexually exploited runaway youth? Are their lives characterized by early marriages and frequent divorces? Finally, what are the educational and employment situations of runaway and sexually exploited youth? What percent eventually receives a high school diploma? What percent receives public welfare? What percent develops a stable history?

A variety of investigations employing different methodologies must address these questions. We urge priority for three types of studies that may answer these questions in the most direct and scientifically useful fashion.

First, we recommend random sample surveys of large numbers of American adolescents, focusing on those who have run away and the experiences they encountered. Elliott and colleagues (1983) executed large-scale national probability samples of youth aged 11 to 17 on self-reported delinquent behavior and other related matters. According to their findings, a sample would have to be drawn of approximately 5,000 adolescents to find 200 who had run away. Intensive followup interviews would be required. The testimony of this random sample of runaways could, among other things, provide information about how frequently youth experience sexual exploitation and abuse in the course of running away and which youth are at highest risk. This group of runaway youth, as well as others in the survey, would have to be questioned extensively on sexual abuse matters. This would reveal information about the connection between prior sexual exploitation, prior sexual abuse, and the motives for running away.

It may also help to question this sample about other sexual issues, including

sexual orientation. In fact, another group that should be targeted for special research, aside from runaway children, are those with a homosexual orientation. Their runaway experiences bear special scrutiny, as do their inclination to leave home, and the kind of sexual abuse and exploitation they may have suffered.

Second, random samples of young adults aged 18 to 28 also warrant study. One of the problems with the type of survey described above is that it's difficult to include adolescents who do not live in homes or institutions. Surveys of young adults in the community, however, would reveal the identities of some who left home early. Many of the same types of questions posed to the adolescents would apply to the young adults. Special focus could be placed on those young adults who have run away. In addition, a sample of young adults could be studied to assess long-term effects on family, health, and mental health of the runaway experience.

Third, we recommend studies that recruit sizeable samples of runaway youth through as many sources as possible, including shelters, street contacts, bus stations, and hot lines. Such recruiting will help to prevent a biased sample with respect to such important characteristics as the experience of sexual exploitation or abuse. Histories of these runaways, with careful attention to family background and the experiences of sexual abuse and exploitation, must be examined. A great deal of attention must also focus on the timing of these events, together with the history of running away. This kind of study can establish the prevalence of sexual abuse and exploitation of runaways, as well as the connection between prior sexual abuse and running away. Such a study will also be extremely useful for establishing typologies of sexual abuse and exploitation among runaways. Following up the runaway youngsters identified in the study is recommended. A guarantee of a payment 1 year later may encourage these youths to recontact researchers.

In addition to these studies, we propose a number of other investigations:

- A study of adolescent prostitutes, with the particular objective of replicating in the United States the kind of thorough study that was conducted in Canada (Badgley et al. 1984). That study used a multicity sample, interviewing more than 200 adolescent prostitutes, and focused on the process of induction into prostitution.

- An effort to standardize, systematize, and use for research purposes the information that agencies and police gather routinely when they encounter runaway youth. Development of standard history-taking forms for such encounters and creation of a national clearinghouse or data bank on identified runaways.

- A study of mental health agency clients that canvasses for histories of running away and sexual abuse to be used as an information base on long-term effects from this combination of events. Although not necessarily representative of individuals with such a history, these samples indicate the types of mental health problems that the subjects later encounter.

- A study on adolescent pregnancy and histories of running away and prostitution, identifying subjects through the hospitals or clinics where they deliver their babies.

- A study of youth in the juvenile justice system, with special attention to their histories of running away and sexual abuse. A good example of such a study was done by the Wisconsin Female Juvenile Offender Study Project (1982). This project conducted a random sample survey of all young women on formal or informal supervision for delinquent acts or status offenses within the Wisconsin juvenile justice system. Once again, it was not necessarily a representative sample of runaways and sexually abused youth, but it was a relatively accessible sample.

Sexual abuse and nonfamily abduction

The relative infrequency of nonfamily abduction limits the variety of studies that can be done. The following are some approaches, however, that merit attention:

- An attempt to establish the incidence of nonfamily abduction through a survey of U.S. police departments. A survey to collect information on whether sexual abuse was known to be part of the abduction or was suspected to be part of the motivation for it.

- A study of a sample of incarcerated child abductors, probably enlisting the cooperation of several States and penal institutions to obtain a sample of even two or three dozen nonfamily abductors. Study should focus on backgrounds and personalities, as well as gather extensive histories on the abductions that these individuals performed, to determine if offenders admit to any sexual motivation and whether any sexual acts were perpetrated in the course of the abduction.

- A study that recontacts abducted children and performs periodic psychological followups to determine the effects of abduction. A comparison of children who were molested during their abductions with those who were not by recruiting a sample of such children using police records in a variety of jurisdictions. Examination of the families of the abducted children, including families in which the abducted children have not yet been returned or are presumed dead.

- A comparison of children who were abducted in the course of their molestation with those who were not. The large adult retrospective samples of sexually abused children that are now being done may be able to identify such a subgroup for study, or samples drawn from courts for such a comparison might suffice. If it is not possible to identify enough abductees in retrospective samples of adults, a comparison of children who were molested by strangers with those molested by nonstrangers would be useful.

- A study of incarcerated pedophiles and child sexual abusers to find out how many of them have histories of abducting children in the course of molestations and to compare those who had abducted children to those who had not.

Sexual abuse and parental abductions

Because so little information is available about parental abductions, research on this topic is an extremely important priority. The following are among the types of questions to be addressed:

- In what portion of parental abductions is some form of sexual abuse involved?

- When sexual abuse occurs in conjunction with a parental abduction, is it generally a continuation of abuse that was occurring under prior family circumstances, or did it start in the course of the abduction?

- Are there any characteristics of parental abductions that might differentiate those that are at high risk of concomitant sexual abuse? Examples include abductions of older girls, abductions after long paternal absences, and abductions of children who were known to have been previously sexually abused.

- Are the effects of sexual abuse in the course of a parental abduction different from the effects of sexual abuse in general?

In answering these questions, one of the most important needs is to compile a sample of cases where sexual abuse occurred in conjunction with parental abduction. Several research strategies might be adopted to obtain such a sample:

- Canvass a large series of child protective service case records in search of cases that involved parental abduction.

- Monitor and review court records for custody cases in which sexual abuse was alleged to occur.

- Conduct a national incidence study of parental abductions using police departments as the basis for data collection, focusing special attention on those cases in which sexual abuse is alleged.

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