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Family Functioning, Substance Use and Related Problem Behaviors: Hispanic vs. Anglo Runaway Youths

Natasha Slesnick, Christina Vasquez, and Joyce Bittinger

Natasha Slesnick, Christina Vasquez, and Joyce Bittinger are affiliated with The University of New Mexico Center on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse and Addictions

Abstract

Runaway youths represent a neglected clinical group, and few studies have examined ethnicity differences within this population. Substance use, family functioning and related problem behaviors were examined in a sample of Hispanic and Anglo runaway youths with substance abuse diagnoses ($N = 145$). Youths, aged 12–17, were recruited from two urban, southwestern runaway shelters. Within single-parent families, Anglo youths reported more marijuana use, and, regardless of family constitution, reported more tobacco use than did Hispanic youths. Overall, Anglo youths reported more externalizing problems and more conflict tactics used in resolving disagreements with their primary caretaker while Hispanic youths reported higher depression and familism scores. Given the differences found between Hispanic and Anglo youths, the findings argue that culturally sensitive interventions for runaway youths and families are warranted.

Keywords

Adolescent; substance abuse; Hispanic youths; runaway; family functioning

Several researchers have noted that parenting values and behaviors differ between Hispanic and Anglo parents of adolescents (Abalos, 1986; Bulcroft, Carmody, & Bulcroft, 1996; Schumm et al., 1988; Vega et al., 1986). These characterizations of Hispanic family differences include a strong cultural emphasis on familism (strong identification and attachment of individuals with their families, nuclear and extended, and emphasis on family goals and mutual support over individual opportunities), male responsibility for family well-being, and higher levels of control over children. Researchers have argued that familism is a core value of Hispanic culture (e.g., Moore, 1982; Sabogal et al., 1987; Triandis, 1982); even highly acculturated Hispanics were found to have more familistic attitudes than those of white non-Hispanics (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). Moreover, Sabogal et al. (1987) showed that Mexican-, Cuban- and Central-Americans held similar cultural values regarding familism, despite differences in national background. Research within samples other than Anglos is necessary so that when therapists intervene with families in crisis, treatment may be sensitive to cultural differences. As such, few theoretically-driven studies have examined ethnic differences within identified groups of problem youths.

In general, family relationship variables have long been associated with individual functioning and healthy adaptation among family members (Jacob, 1987). For example, family conflict and cohesion, parental warmth, rejection and monitoring have been associated with childhood depression, delinquency, and substance use (Ary, Duncan, Duncan, & Hops, 1999; Coombs,

Paulson, & Richardson, 1991; Patterson, DeGarmo, & Knutson, 2000). Although relatively little research has examined mental health differences between Hispanic and Anglo youths (Knight, Virdin, & Roosa, 1994), research to date suggests that the rates of mental health problems are similar among Hispanic and Anglo adolescents (Knight, Virdin, & Roosa, 1994) and adults (Burnam et al., 1987; Cuellar & Roberts, 1984).

Among runaway youths, evidence strongly suggests that youths are running away from a family situation characterized by poor parenting practices, violence, neglect, and sexual abuse (Crespi & Sabatelli, 1993; Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). Kufeldt et al. (1992) surveyed 391 shelter-bound runaways and found that poor communication and fighting with parents was the reason most often given for running away. As family interactional differences between Hispanic and Anglo ethnicities have been widely acknowledged, increasing our understanding of these differences in the face of family crisis will help guide our intervention efforts. There has been a call for greater sensitivity to cultural issues in the therapy context, as addressing cultural differences may lead to more positive therapy outcomes (Kaufman & Borders, 1984).

Indeed, runaway and homeless youths represent a neglected clinical group. This group, with its substance abuse and related problem behaviors, presents a pressing national health concern. The substance abuse problem among runaway youths dwarfs that of their delinquent and non-runaway peers (Forst & Crim, 1994). In fact, researchers have reported that the rates of alcohol abuse/dependence among runaway youths are comparable to those found among adult homeless (Robertson, 1989). In addition, runaway youths begin using drugs and/or alcohol at a younger age and report more impaired functioning due to substance use than do non-homeless youths (Kipke, Montgomery, & MacKenzie, 1993).

In the runaway literature, only four studies were found that analyzed ethnic differences in substance use among runaway youths. The findings from these studies were mixed. One study reported that Hispanic runaways used drugs more frequently than did Anglo runaways (Koopman et al., 1994). Another study found that Anglo runaway youths were more likely to be diagnosed with an alcohol or other drug abuse disorder than were Hispanic runaway youths (Unger, Kipke, Simon, Montgomery, & Johnson, 1997). Two other studies showed no differences in diagnostic status of substance use disorder or drug use intention between Hispanic and Anglo runaways (Diaz, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Farmer-Huselid, 1997; Kipke, Montgomery, Simon, & Iverson, 1997). These mixed findings show that further research is indicated to more fully understand ethnic difference in substance use.

No studies were found that examined family differences by ethnicity among runaway youths. However, several researchers examined the relationship between ethnicity and adolescent delinquency. As noted by Sommers, Fagan, and Baskin (1993), when Hispanic youths adhere to familism, they are more likely to accept family control and are less likely to involve themselves in deviant behaviors, including drug use. This was supported by the findings of Buriel, Calzada, and Vasquez (1982) who found that even with troubled family relationships and in the absence of fathers, adherence to traditional cultural values insulated youths from delinquency. Clearly, more research is required to elucidate substance use and family interactional differences by ethnicity in runaway youths.

In understanding family relationship functioning and adolescent substance use, some evidence suggests that family constitution (single- versus two-parent households) may interact with ethnic or racial background. Amey and Albrecht (1998) found that single-parent African American families provide greater protection against drug use than do two-parent families. Other studies have found that regardless of ethnicity, single-parent families are characterized by poorer communication and higher conflict (Baer, 1999); and its adolescent members are at more risk for substance abuse (Turner, Irwin, & Millstein, 1991; Baer, 1999).

Other research suggests that the relationship between family constitution, ethnicity, and substance use is more complex. Ricciuti (1999) concluded that in the presence of positive maternal or family characteristics supportive of children's development, single parenthood, as such, need not represent a risk factor for negative child outcomes regardless of ethnicity. Similarly, other researchers have found that family attributes, such as family cohesion, family conflict, and parental substance abuse, were much stronger predictors of initiation of substance abuse among adolescents than family structure, regardless of ethnicity (Piercy, Volk, Trepper, Sprenkle, & Lewis, 1991; Gil, Vega, & Biafora, 1998). Thus, the relationship between ethnicity and family constitution is likely to be mediated by such factors as the quality of the parent-child relationship, parental substance use, economic status, social support, and mental health issues (Brody & Forehand, 1993; Hops, Duncan, Duncan, & Stoolmiller, 1996; Turner, Irwin, & Millstein, 1991; Wills, 1994). The current study addresses the gap in research on the interaction between ethnicity and family constitution, for runaway youths specifically.

Current Study

According to Hardy (1990), most family therapy programs subscribe to and reinforce a model of training that is based on a "theoretical myth of sameness"—the belief that all families are essentially the same. In contrast, multicultural theory is based on the notion that all families are not the same and that therapists need to consider cultural diversity when intervening with families of different ethnicities. Given our expectation of greater family connection and parental involvement—factors shown to buffer youths from deviant behaviors (e.g., Sommers, Fagan, & Baskin, 1993; Buriel, Calzada, & Vasquez, 1982)—we expected that Hispanic runaway youths in both single- and two-parent families would report less drug and alcohol use, greater family connection and fewer related problem behaviors than would Anglo youths.

METHOD

Participants

Runaway youths ($N = 145$) were recruited through two runaway/homeless shelters in a southwestern city as part of two larger studies examining family therapy outcome with substance abusing runaway adolescents (grants R29DA11590 and R01AA12173). All youths in this sample agreed to the possibility of family treatment with a parent or surrogate parent. To be eligible for participation, adolescents had to satisfy DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for substance abuse or dependence, be between the ages of 12 to 17, and reside within a 60-mile radius of the research site. Only five eligible youths referred to the program refused to participate (95% engagement).

Procedure

A research assistant approached youths identified by shelter staff as potentially eligible for the project. Youths were engaged and screened for participation utilizing the eligibility criteria as a guide. Those passing the screening criteria were then scheduled for an assessment at the shelter within 24 hours. Assessments began with a review of the nature and conditions of the study, a formal review of the elements of informed consent, and a signing of the consent statement. The procedures for consent were approved by the Institutional Review Board. The interviewer then proceeded to administer the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children (DISC; Shaffer, 1992) sections on alcohol, marijuana, and other substances. Those not receiving an alcohol or drug diagnosis continued with treatment as usual through the shelter. Those meeting the criteria for participation in the study continued with the assessment battery. They were told that the assessment would take up to 3 hours and that they would receive \$25 at the end of participation. Once a youth was found eligible and agreed to participate in the project, the youth's primary caretaker was contacted and consent was obtained.

Materials

Family functioning and substance use were assessed using interview and self-report methods. Adolescents were given the option of completing the assessment at one sitting or breaking it into two shorter sessions. Youths with reading difficulty were offered assistance in completing the self-report forms. Only those questionnaires from the larger project that were utilized in the current study are described.

Demographic Information—The examiners administered a demographic questionnaire assessing a set of core variables used to characterize and compare samples included in this study. These demographic items include age, gender, self-identified ethnicity, parent and sibling information, number times youths ran away from home, and income.

Family Measures—The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979) is a structured, behavioral measure designed to assess the occurrence of various methods of conflict resolution in close relationships. Its three subscales provide information on the extent to which reasoning, verbal aggression, and physical violence are employed as a means to resolve disagreements. Given the high level of conflict among runaway youths and families, this instrument provides relevant information regarding the nature of family conflict. Internal consistency (alpha) coefficients from a large national probability sample ranged from .79 to .83. The total code values of items making up each subscale were summed for an overall subscale score.

The Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos & Moos, 1986) is a commonly-used and well-standardized family assessment instrument. It is comprised of 90 true-false items and consists of ten subscales which measure the following social-environmental characteristics of families: Cohesion, Expressivity, Conflict, Independence, Achievement-Oriented, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Active-Recreational Orientation, Moral-Religious Emphasis, Organization, and Control. Internal consistencies have ranged from .61 to .78 and test-retest reliabilities from .73 to .86. Conflict and Cohesion subscales were used to assess family disturbance as these two areas of functioning have been shown to predict negative communication exchanges in delinquent families (Mas, 1986).

Measures of Substance Use—The Form 90 (Miller & Delboca, 1994) was used to measure adolescent alcohol and drug use. This is a structured interview which utilizes the timeline follow-back method (Sobell & Sobell, 1992) to provide a daily reconstruction of all drug classes used. The instrument yields a percentage of days for each drug used (in the prior 90 days), as well as total number of standard drink units consumed at each drinking episode. The instrument has shown excellent test-retest reliability for indices of drug use in major categories (Tonigan, Miller, & Brown, 1997; Westerberg, Miller, & Tonigan, 1999) with kappas for different drug classes ranging from .74 to 1.0.

The Computerized Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children (CDISC; Shaffer, 1992) is a computerized structured interview containing 263 items pertinent to a comprehensive psychiatric diagnostic interview based upon DSM-IV criteria. CDISC was developed specifically to diagnose children and adolescents and is prominent in the field (Winters & Stinchfield, 1995). The sections on alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco were administered to determine eligibility for the project.

Acculturation and Familism—The level of acculturation of the participants was measured using the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans (ARSMA), developed by Cuellar, Harris, and Jasso (1980). The instrument consists of 23 multiple choice questions which identify four factors of acculturation: language familiarity, usage, and preference; ethnic identity and generation; reading, writing, and culture exposure; and ethnic interaction. The

scale can be scored and used to place respondents on a continuum ranging from very Mexican to very Anglicized. A score of 74–122 indicates that the subject is very Anglicized; a score of 52–73 indicates that the subject is bicultural and a score of 51 or less indicates the subject is very Mexican.

Internal reliability is reported to have a coefficient alpha of .88 for normal populations, suggesting a favorable level of internal consistency (Cuellar et al., 1980). A test-retest analysis of reliability conducted a month apart was found to be .80. Factor analysis using a varimax rotation method was used to estimate the construct validity. Four distinct meaningful factors were identified. In validation samples, the scale was able to make significant discriminations among Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and Anglos, as well as among generations of Mexican-Americans. Cuellar et al. (1980) reported that concurrent validity was estimated by comparing scores of the ARSMA with two other acculturation scales. The Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients ranged from .76–.81.

The Bardis Familism Scale (1959) was used to measure attitudes toward familism. This Likert scale consists of 16 items and is divided into two subscales: Nuclear Family Integration and Extended Family Integration. Scores on this scale range from 0–64 with a higher score on this scale indicating an attitude more oriented toward familism. Validity and reliability of this scale have been tested repeatedly and have proved satisfactory with a Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient ranging from .84 to .904 (Bardis, 1959a; Bardis 1959b; Rao & Rao, 1979).

Related Problem Behaviors—The Youth Self-Report (YSR) of the parent-reported Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1982) provides a standardized format to quickly elicit reports of children's behavior across a wide range of problem areas. The 120-item scale includes an assessment of behaviors in children associated with withdrawal, somatic complaints, anxiety/depression, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, delinquency, and aggression. The YSR provides factor scores for internalizing, externalizing as well as total behavior problems. The measure is highly reliable and effectively discriminates between children referred to clinics for problem behavior and nonclinic children.

Given the high incidence of depression among runaway youths, the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck et al., 1961) was utilized. The BDI is a widely used self-report instrument for the assessment of mood, cognitive and somatic aspects of depression, and has shown good psychometric properties. Estimates of internal consistency and test-retest reliability are high, and the measure appears sensitive to depression severity across community and clinical populations (Norman et al., 1983; Rush et al., 1986).

As a measure of delinquency, the NYSDS is a structured interview that has displayed adequate test-retest and criterion validity (Elliott & Huizinga, 1983) and is considered a highly respected self-report assessment of delinquent behavior (Krueger et al., 1994). Test-retest reliabilities for periods between 2 weeks and 6 months range from .75 to .98, internal consistency alphas range between .65 and .92, and criterion correlations between self-report and police or parent data hover near .40 (Moffitt, 1989). As noted by Lochman (1992), self-report methods of assessing delinquency have the potential disadvantages of concealment and forgetting, but have the advantage over official records of indicating undetected offenses, and are regarded as reasonably valid (Farrington, 1987). The NYSDS includes the following scales: general theft, crimes against persons, index offenses, drug sales, and total delinquency. Each scale is scored by summing the reported frequency for items within that scale. The overall total delinquency scale score was utilized as a dependent measure in this study.

Overview of Analyses—Dependent variables were clustered into three a priori domains of interest in order to minimize the risk of Type I errors: family relationship functioning,

adolescent substance use, and related problem behaviors. Any one dependent variable may not alone measure the construct of interest and these clustered dependent measures help synthesize findings. The following lists the dependent measures within each factor:

1. Family functioning (5 dependent measures): Total conflict tactics score for parent and youth (CTS); conflict and cohesion (FES); familism total (Familism Scale).
2. Adolescent substance use (3 dependent measures): Percent days of marijuana, alcohol and tobacco use in period (Form 90).
3. Related problem behaviors (4 dependent measures): Depression score (BDI); delinquency score (NYSDS); externalizing and internalizing scores (YSR).

Three separate 2 x 3 x 2 multivariate analyses of variance were conducted with each separate clustered domain as the dependent variables, with ethnicity (Hispanic vs. Anglo) and family constitution (single vs. two parent) as the independent variables. To further examine differences between groups, significant omnibus tests were followed by univariate analyses with Bonferroni adjustment (maintaining familywise alpha at .05) to control for Type I error associated with multiple tests.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

The sample of 145 youths included 63 males and 82 females. Youths were between the ages of 12–17 ($M = 15.1$, $SD = 1.3$) and ethnicities were reported as Anglo ($N = 62$) and Hispanic ($N = 83$). Among Hispanic youths, reported cultures included Mexican ($N = 35$), New Mexican ($N = 40$), Puerto Rican ($N = 2$) and Hispanic-other ($N = 6$). The average number of runaway episodes was 3.4 ($SD = 6.3$) and 70 youths reported single-parent households while 75 reported two-parent households. Of the single-parent families, five youths reported that the father was the primary caretaker, indicating that mothers were the predominant primary caretakers. Adolescents reported 44.2% days of alcohol or drug use (excluding tobacco) in the 90-day pre-intake assessment window.

In order to examine level of acculturation among Hispanic clients, ARSMA total was compared between youths who identified themselves as Mexican or New Mexican (as only 5 identified themselves as either Puerto Rican or other Hispanic). No difference between Mexican ($X = 113.17$, $SD = 29.22$) and New Mexican ($X = 117.21$, $SD = 11.23$) youths was found on the ARSMA, $F(1,46) = 0.47$, $p > .05$, and both groups are very highly acculturated.

One-way analyses of variance were employed to examine family income, age, and number times youth ran away between Hispanic vs. Anglo families and between single- vs. two-parent families. Hispanic youths did not differ from Anglo youths on these measures, nor did single-parent families differ from two-parent families. Refer to Table 1 for means and standard deviations on selected demographic variables.

Family Functioning

No interaction between ethnicity and family constitution was found, $F(5,86) = 0.12$, $p > .05$, for family relationship functioning. A main effect for ethnicity was found $F(5,86) = 3.12$, $p < .05$. Univariate follow-up analyses (with familywise alpha .05/5 = .01) indicated that Hispanic youths reported higher familism $F(1,94) = 10.86$, $p < .001$, and tended to report less conflict tactics used by the youths, $F(1,94) = 5.08$, $p < .03$, compared to Anglo families. No main effect was found for family constitution, $F(5,86) = 1.53$, $p > .05$, that is, single- and two-parent families did not differ on the family measures. Refer to Table 2 for means and standard deviations.

Adolescent Substance Use

An interaction between ethnicity and family constitution was found ($F(3,139) = 2.88, p < .05$) for the substance use measures. Univariate follow-up results (with familywise $\alpha = .05/3 = .02$) indicated that the interaction between ethnicity and family constitution was significant for percent days of marijuana use, $F(1,145) = 7.23, p < .02$. The interaction was not significant for percent days of tobacco use, $F(1,145) = 0.01, p > .02$, or percent days of alcohol use, $F(1,145) = 0.97, p > .02$.

Simple main effect tests were conducted to assess the interaction with percent days of marijuana use as the dependent variable. Within single-parent families, Hispanic youths used marijuana on significantly fewer days ($X = 28.47\%$ days, $SD = 31.67$) than Anglo youths ($X = 52.11\%$ days, $SD = 36.01$; $t(68) = 2.92, p < .01$). No differences were found in two-parent families between Hispanic ($X = 33.72\%$ days, $SD = 34.72$) and Anglo youths ($X = 26.51\%$ days, $SD = 31.89$, $t(73) = 0.89, p > .05$). Among Hispanic youths, no differences were found between single- ($X = 28.47\%$, $SD = 31.67$) and two-parent families in percent days of marijuana use, $t(81) = 0.71, p > .05$. However, among Anglo youths, those in single-parent families used marijuana on significantly more days than those in two-parent families, $t(60) = 2.91, p < .01$.

A main effect for ethnicity was found, $F(3,139) = 4.49, p < .01$. Univariate follow-up analyses (familywise $\alpha = .05/3 = .02$) showed that Anglo youths used tobacco on significantly more days than did Hispanic youths, $F(1,145) = 9.47, p < .02$. No differences between Hispanic and Anglo youths were found for percent days marijuana use, $F(1,145) = 2.04, p > .02$, or alcohol use, $F(1,145) = 1.09, p > .02$. No main effect was found for family constitution, $F(3,139) = 1.10, p > .02$, in which youths, regardless of ethnicity, in single-parent families did not differ from youths in two-parent families on the substance use measures. Refer to Table 3 for means and standard deviations.

Related Problem Behaviors

No interaction was found for ethnicity and family constitution on related problem behaviors, $F(4,137) = 0.53, p > .05$. A main effect was found for ethnicity, $F(4,137) = 3.47, p < .05$. Univariate follow-up analyses (familywise $\alpha = .05/4 = .013$) indicated that Hispanic youths tended to report more depression compared to Anglo youths on the BDI, $F(1,144) = 5.46, p < .02$, and Anglo youths tended to report more externalizing problems compared to Hispanic youths on the YSR, $F(1,144) = 3.76, p < .05$. No main effect was found for family constitution, $F(1,144) = 0.62, p > .05$, in which overall, youths in single-parent families did not differ from youths in two-parent families on related problem behavior dependent measures. Refer to Table 4 for means and standard deviations.

DISCUSSION

There is a paucity of research identifying ethnic differences within clinical populations. The aim of the current study was to help address this lack of research by investigating ethnicity differences within a sample of southwestern runaway youths. Cultural competence is required if family therapists are to effectively intervene to engage and retain Hispanic families with runaway youths into treatment. Our hypotheses were partially supported. Several ethnicity differences were found, but few differences were found between single- and two-parent families.

Family Functioning

Hispanic youths reported higher familism scores than Anglo youths overall. Although reports of level of family conflict did not differ (conflict subscale of the FES), the means of resolving conflict did. Hispanic youths reported that they used less conflict tactics measures to resolve

disagreements than did Anglo youths (e.g., hitting, slapping, name calling, storming out, etc.). Findings also noted that Hispanic youths in the study were highly acculturated. Given the cultural emphasis on familism, even in highly acculturated Hispanic families (as reported by Sabogal et al., 1987), youths may be less likely to use highly conflictual problem resolution strategies to resolve disagreements. With a highly familistic attitude (as noted in the current study among Hispanic youths) in which youths embrace both strong attachment, loyalty, and commitment to nuclear and extended family, it follows that they would be more likely to resolve conflict using less aggressive conflict resolution measures.

Substance Use

In support of our hypotheses, Anglo youths in single-parent families reported more frequent use of marijuana than did Hispanic youths and two-parent Anglo youths. Overall, Anglo youths smoked tobacco more frequently than did Hispanic youths. However, no differences were found between Hispanic and Anglo youths for alcohol use. As noted by previous researchers (Buriel, Calzada, & Vasquez, 1982; Sommers, Fagan, & Baskin, 1993), it is possible that the greater reliance of Hispanic families on family support, including extended family support, serves to buffer Hispanic youths from illicit drug use. In addition, Anglo youths in single-parent families used more marijuana than those in two-parent families, indicating that these runaway youths may be particularly vulnerable to risk factors associated with being in single-parent families. These risk factors may include less parental monitoring, fewer significant adult role models, less bonding to prosocial institutions, and parental drug use (Liddle, Dakof, & Diamond, 1991).

As is the case with adults (Escobedo & Remington, 1989; Marcus & Crane, 1985; Marin, Perez-Stable, Marin, Sabogal, & Otero-Sabogal, 1990), Anglo youths, regardless of family constitution, used tobacco more frequently than Hispanic youths. Marin et al. (1990) noted that Hispanic smoking may be more socially motivated rather than habit-related. Future research will need to more fully explore this finding.

Related Problem Behaviors—Overall, Hispanic youths reported more depression on the BDI, and less externalizing problems on the YSR than did Anglo youths. This finding supports previous research showing that Hispanic youths engage in less delinquent activities than do Anglo youths perhaps because Hispanic parents are more restrictive of their youths and use more authoritarian means to control them (Bulcroft, Carmody, & Bulcroft, 1996). Hispanic parents may work harder than Anglo parents to set boundaries and limits using more strict and firm parenting measures, utilizing whatever means are necessary to prevent acting out behaviors. However, this greater parental control has been shown in previous research to be associated with higher depressive symptoms among youths (Pettit et al., 2001; Gjerde, Block, & Block, 1991).

Several limitations of the current study should be noted. First, perception of youths' family environment and substance use were obtained solely from adolescent self-report which may or may not reflect "reality." Youths' and parents' perceptions of the family environment have been shown to differ, with one study reporting that adolescents perceived their family environment more negatively than did parents (Schumm et al., 1988). Home observations with independent coders as well as sibling and parental reports of family functioning would provide more points of reference for understanding the family environment. Second, youths may over- or underreport their level of substance use. Although great care was taken to explain the limits of confidentiality and the purpose of the project, youths may have feared that parents or probation officers would obtain information that they provided, leading to underreporting. Alternatively, some youths might overreport substance use to "fake bad" and to seek attention. Third, the cross-sectional design of the study precludes conclusions regarding causality.

Longitudinal work will be necessary to increase our understanding of the etiology of runaway behavior and associated risk factors in Hispanic versus Anglo families. Finally, the single parents in the sample were primarily mothers. The findings may not generalize to single-parent families with the father as primary caretaker. More research is needed to examine interactional patterns among families with the father as the single-parent.

In spite of these limitations, this study has several implications for practitioners and researchers. Differences in substance use, family functioning and related problem behaviors were found between Hispanic and Anglo youths. Moreover, Anglo runaway youths in single parent families may be at particular risk for illicit drug use (e.g., marijuana). Areas of risk associated with ethnicity and family constitution should be examined so that culturally appropriate intervention measures may be tailored to the specific needs of families. Therapists might best serve families of substance abusing runaway youths by using a multicultural perspective that considers the role of the nuclear and extended family in Hispanic and Anglo cultures. Running away from home presents a family crisis regardless of ethnicity or acculturation. Future research may indicate that both youths and parents respond differently to that stress depending on ethnicity.

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TABLE 1
Demographic Profile

	Hispanic Youths (<i>N</i> = 83)	Anglo Youths (<i>N</i> = 62)	Single-Parent (<i>N</i> = 70)	Two-Parent (<i>N</i> = 75)
Average Age				
Mean years	14.93	15.3	15.1	15.1
SD	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.3
Gender (<i>N</i>)				
Male	31	32	31	32
Female	52	30	39	43
History of Sexual Abuse (<i>N</i>)	25 (30%)	27 (43%)	24 (34%)	28 (37%)
History of Physical Abuse (<i>N</i>)	46 (55%)	33 (53%)	28 (40%)	51 (68%)
Ever Attempted Suicide (<i>N</i>)	27 (32%)	28 (45%)	31 (44%)	24 (32%)

TABLE 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Family Functioning Variables

	Hispanic Youths	Anglo Youths	Single-Parent	Two-Parent
CTS Total Score				
Youth				
Mean	25.7	31.4	27.1	29.2
SD	11.8	12.3	12.0	12.6
Parent				
Mean	24.8	30.4	26.5	27.9
SD	16.4	14.3	15.9	15.6
FES				
Conflict				
Mean	5.5	5.7	5.9	5.2
SD	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.7
Cohesion				
Mean	4.4	4.0	4.4	4.1
SD	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.6
Familism Total	36.8	30.8	35.1	33.3
	9.7	7.3	9.1	9.3

TABLE 3
Means and Standard Deviations for Adolescent Substance Use Measures

	Hispanic Youths	Anglo Youths	Single-Parent	Two-Parent
% Days Marijuana Use				
Mean	31.5	40.9	40.3	31.1
SD	33.3	36.3	35.7	33.7
% Days Alcohol Use				
Mean	16.5	13.2	15.2	15.0
SD	21.6	14.7	17.2	20.7
% Days of Tobacco Use				
Mean	59.7	80.4	69.6	67.5
SD	42.0	31.3	39.4	42.3

TABLE 4
Means and Standard Deviations for Adolescent-Related Problem Behaviors

	Hispanic Youths	Anglo Youths	Single-Parent	Two-Parent
Beck Total Score				
Mean	14.3	10.4	12.4	12.8
SD	10.7	8.9	10.1	10.2
Total Delinquency Score				
Mean	314.7	514.3	400.3	401.2
SD	555.9	1174.3	620.7	1067.8
Youth Self-Report				
Externalizing				
Mean	25.5	28.9	27.2	26.7
SD	10.9	9.5	11.7	9.3
Internalizing				
Mean	19.6	17.3	17.7	19.5
SD	11.2	9.7	11.0	10.2