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Child/Parent Interactions of Five

Multiproblem MexicanAmerican Families

with Adolescents in Crisis

A Research Project Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Social Work
San Jose State University

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Social Work

by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The family is one of the individual's most valued possessions, and a healthy family with positively defined parental roles is one of society's most valued institutions. It is, therefore, essential to examine, identify and research the components of parenting that directly influence and impact the development, the values, and the future of the individual child or children which in this study is adolescents.

The intent of this research project is to describe and analyze the dimensions of the child/parent interactions and attitudes of five multiproblem Mexican-American families with adolescents in crisis. The developmental age of adolescents (12 to 18 years) was chosen due to the increasing number of teenagers nationwide who leave or are pushed out of their families' homes, drop out of school, and/or become isolated individuals with minimal guidance and support. A study of the role of the parents, as well as the child/parent interactions and attitudes becomes significant for promoting the well being of our communities' families. This is especially so in light of the fact that there are decreasing resources that provide alternative living arrangements or services in general for adolescents and parents in crisis.

The Problem

Youth Services is a private, non-profit agency which serves the adolescents and their families in Santa Cruz County. The agency provides crisis and long-term counseling, adolescent and parent

groups, and outreach services to other agencies and hard-to-reach populations within the community. It offers a 24-hour crisis line for teenagers and their parents, and temporary shelter in foster homes for the runaways of the county and the world. As a crisis and outreach counselor in the Watsonville office of Youth Services, I work with a very diverse and difficult population. Watsonville is a small town located in a rich agricultural area and has 20,000 city dwellers as well as 20,000 people living and working the rural outskirts. It is an area of rich cultural diversity with an influx of migrant workers that seasonally follow the crops and a large permanent Mexican-American population that continues to grow at a rapid pace. Youth Services, as well as the other local community serving agencies, is having to learn new ways to meet the needs of this growing population. In my seven years of working in the Watsonville community, it has become apparent that there are many social problems impacting the well being of this population. I am concerned about the future of the Mexican-American families and the adolescents they are producing. As the spanish-speaking crisis counselor, I see many of the families who are having problems coping with their lives and raising their children. Although is is true that economics and politics do affect the quality of life for these families, it appears that they are also struggling with their role as parents to this new generation of adolescents. The job of parenting an adolescent is even more difficult for the Mexican-American family because of the cultural pluralism that exists. The parents generally teach the traditional values found in the culture of their families while the adolescents are simultaneously taught new values by the institutions and peer

relationships they find in the culturally diverse society. These themes of parent/adolescent struggle, culture conflict and misunderstanding are presented over again in the families I see at Youth Services. The parents report feelings of frustration and powerlessness in their role of parenting their adolescents, while the teenagers runaway, attempt suicide, and report feelings of insignificance, isolation and not being heard by their parents. The problems between them appear to be growing and becoming more serious. This agency is seeing more adolescents in crisis than ever before. The family problems and coping strategies are getting worse. For example, during a nine month period beginning July 1, 1985 through March 31, 1986, Youth Services Crisis Team provided intervention and assessment services for eighty-eight (88) runaway and homeless youth. They reunited sixty-five (65) runaway or homeless youth with their family or origin. As well, the agency provided emergency, temporary shelter for sixty-one (61) runaway or "pushed-out" youths. (For more statistics see Appendix A.) The adolescent/parent relationships are deteriorating and many teenagers are suffering or out of control. The future of a healthy community is at stake. It is my intention then, to examine the parent/child interactions employed during crisis situations, in hopes of finding new options and alternatives to use in my work with these families.

Significance

A study conducted by the Education Commission of the States, reports that "at least 15% of Americans between the ages of 16 and 19 are unlikely to become productive adults because they are 'disconnected' from society as a result of substance abuse,

delinquency, unemployment, pregnancy, and dropping out of school. Almost 2.4 million teenagers - up to half the high school population in some major cities fall into this group, and the number is growing." The study found "that drug and alcohol use has risen 6000% since 1969; teenage pregnancy is up 109% among whites and 10% among nonwhites in the same period; a million teenagers become pregnant every year; since 1950, successful teenage suicide has grown more than 150%, and homicides committed by white teenagers have increased by 232% (16% by nonwhites)." The report also states that the affected group includes an "unconscionable disproportionate representation of poor, Black and Hispanic teenagers." [1]

Other reports reflect the statistics relevant to adolescent suicide and support the literature which suggests that parents do have an extremely significant roles in the development of the teenager.

1. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teenagers. Studies show that 12 of every 100,000 people between 15 and 24 committed suicide in 1983. Experts estimate that over 5,000 teenagers commit suicide each year.

2. The potential for suicide is greater for those who run away from home. An estimated 44% of runaways and homeless youth are suicidal. One study in particular showed that 33% of female and 16% male runaways had suicidal intentions.

3. Fifty to seventy-five percent of suicidal adolescents suffer depression. The second largest group have a conduct dis-order. Two factors that are particularly characteristic of adolescent depression are social abandonment and acting out. Completed suicides correlate with significant problems and aggression.

4. An adolescent commits suicide once every 90 minutes. For every one suicide completed there are 120 more attempts. Most suicides occur between Friday evening and Monday morning and in the months of April and May. Ninety percent of young suicide attempters decide to do it at home between the hours of 3:00 pm and midnight.

5. About one-half of adolescents who suicided were known to use and abuse drugs and alcohol. Approximately 60% of the male

and 30% of the females who attempt suicide have been drinking. Problem drinkers and drug abusers have a 58% higher suicide risk.

6. For adolescent suicides approximately 75% live in a home without one or both of their natural parents (due to divorce, separation, or death). [2]

These statistics suggest that there are many families with adolescents in trouble in our society. Since the family, especially the parents, contribute significantly to the growth and development of the child, it is important to examine the role of the family, and the roles taken by the parents of these adolescents in crisis. A review of the literature suggests that a high percentage of adolescents in crisis come from multiproblem families with a variety of stressors that interfere with the job of the parents to provide a healthy environment for the development of the teenager. It is for this reason that the focus of this research will specifically look at the parent/child interactions of Mexican-American multiproblem families with adolescents in crisis.

The multiproblem family is not a family in one or several kinds of trouble, it's a family who's many problems will challenge the survival and development of each of its' members. Life in these families is often blighted by economic disadvantage, separation, child abuse or neglect, drug use and delinquent, violent or criminal behavior. "They seem to be in a state of disorganization, disintegration and chaos. Generally speaking, their lifestyle constitutes a virtually endless series of crisis."[3]

The Mexican-American multiproblem family adds the dimension of cultural influence and language differences to the focus of the study. The research suggests that there are cultural differences in family

structure and in parenting approaches, and as well indicates that there are special needs for the Mexican-American multiproblem family with adolescents in crisis. This population was chosen for this research project because of the increased numbers seen in the community as well as in the agencies which serve it. The following statistics demonstrate the Mexican-American influence on the growth of the nation and the impact it will have on the social institutions.

It has been predicted that by the year 2000, the Mexican-American population will comprise 50% of the population of California and approximately 46 million in the United States. It is the fastest growing ethnic minority in the U.S. (from 9.2 million in 1970 to 10.6 million in 1973).[4] Nationally, nearly half (47.5%) of all Mexican-Americans are under 20 years of age and 43% are under the age of 18. This is a young population represented by astonishing statistics. For example, many Mexican-Americans leave school before graduation, their dropout rate of 1 1/2 times that of Blacks and almost 3 times that of whites. About 85% of all migrant youth are dropouts and the median number of school years completed for those in the 14 - 18 age group is 6.7 years. Also of concern is the fact that there is a greater involvement in the justice system. According to 1982 figures in California, 34% of the juveniles in the justice system are of Mexican origin.[5] There is also a belief that these people have been exploited on the labor market and discriminated against educationally and politically.

The family size and fertility rates of the Mexican-American family are also significant in this discussion. "Fully 83% of Mexican origin household in Los Angeles contain families compared to 73% of

all U.S. households. Over 70% of these Mexican-American families have children under the age of 18 living at home; 43% have children under 6. The fertility rate is quite high. Mexican origin women had a fertility rate of 119 per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44 while the national rate was only 67. One consequence of this high fertility rate is that the average household size for those of Mexican origin in Los Angeles was 3.9 compared to 2.8 for all U.S. households.[6] These statistics suggest that there is and will be in the future a need to understand the Mexican-American family dynamics and parent/child relationships in order to provide services and allow the integration of this population into the existing social systems of our communities.

Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to specially examine and explore the parent/child interactions of five multiproblem Mexican-American families with adolescents in crisis. It will be descriptive case study research focusing on the parents response to the crisis episode of one or more of the adolescents in the family. The families selected for this study are Mexican-American and report experiencing at least two of these four major problems which contribute to the erosion of the family system; they are alcohol or drug abuse, suicide, sexual or physical abuse, and the children who runaway or are pushed out of the home. Those, plus additional life stressors such as economic disadvantage, unemployment and underemployment will be seen in the description of the multiproblem family. This study will specifically look at the parent's characteristics, responses, and reactions in the crisis and runaway situations of their adolescent son or daughter, as well as explore the feelings of the adolescents.

Importance of the Study

The importance of this study is reflected throughout the text and by the previously mentioned statistics which represent the adolescents and Mexican-American youth in this country. More specifically, there is a need for those of us who are professionals in the community to develop an understanding of the parental pressures and behaviors which directly affect the development of the child in the delicate stage of adolescence. This is especially true if we are seen as "helpers" to the families in crisis who are struggling with economic survival, difficult parent/child relationships, and culture conflict. Throughout my seven years of working with these adolescents and their families, I have put a lot of thought into what makes the family dysfunctional and what interventions may be helpful. It has become evident that the parenting in many cases is where the problem lies. Those interventions which empower and support the parents lies. Those interventions which empower and support the parents have been the most effective in crisis resolution and getting the adolescents what they need; more structure and parental attention.

It is the author's hope that this study will be useful to the community and especially the Mexican-American multiproblem families with adolescents in crisis and the professionals who work with them. The information compiled in this project might also suggest ways to improve family relations and parenting techniques, as well as point out destructive parent/child relationships and how parents can take a more active role in avoiding them.

It is the intention of the author to educate herself, her co-workers, and the families she works with on the issues of adolescents, parenting, healthy family functioning and culture, which are known to influence the family dynamics and the development of the individual. If the numbers of these Mexican-American families with adolescents in crisis continue to increase, the professionals in the field will need to acquire even more understanding, skill, and education if they are to intervene successfully, strengthen the family functioning and the individual's well-being, while promoting family health in the community.

Another concern of the author's is that many romantic and prejudicial notions have been written about this population's cultural values and practices, few of these stereotypes, according to the literature, can be supported by largescale methodologically sound research. It is my intent to explore the stereotypes found in the literature and examine their validity and impact on these families. Lastly then, it is the author's hope that this research project will contribute to a better understanding of the complexities which exist and influence the healthy functioning of the multiproblem Mexican-American families in our communities.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The Family and The Family with Adolescents

The family is defined as a group of persons united by marriage, blood or adoption; constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles of mom, father, etc., and creating and maintaining a common culture.[7] It is important to note here that the family will be seen as a system that must grow and pass through life cycles which require that flexibility and change be inherent in the group dynamics. The family is conceptualized as an open system that functions in relation to its broader sociocultural context and that evolves over the life cycle. In order to study the parent/child interactions of Mexican-American multiproblem families with adolescents in crisis, it is important to have an understanding of some "healthy" family characteristics and the role of the parents in maintaining them.

A recent study found six characteristics that strong families had in common. These were the expression of appreciation by family members, spending quality time together, good communication, a high degree of commitment, a religious orientation, and the ability to handle crisis situations positively.[8] These themes are recurring in many of the studies presented on strengths of families. The Circumplex model of the family presented by Olson, Russell and Sprenkle, presents three central dimensions that work together within the system; family cohesion, family adaptability, and family communication. These are also seen as indicators of a strong family.[9]

According to the literature, families possessing these characteristics appear to have greater resources, and marital and family strengths. As well, they have higher levels of satisfaction and are less vulnerable to stress.

Satir, in 1972, presents four indicators of family wellness in yet another study. They are the promotion of positive self-worth, open communication system, clarity of family rules and expectations, and the link to wider society commitment beyond the family.[10] Families function because they are valued in society. They are strong and said to be "healthy" when they possess or learn skills needed to communicate, resolve conflict, appreciate others and themselves, adapt to various life cycles and negotiate as a joint decision is made. The effective functioning of this system, then, requires a hierarchy in the family, the parents for example have the ultimate decision making power. This also provides a sense of security and belonging to the children. According to research, the spousal subsystem, husband and wife, must establish a boundary to protect it from the demands and needs of others. They must take care of each other. Spouses must also establish a strong parental subsystem to have power, perform child rearing task and eventually teach their children independence and parenting. The parental subsystem requires the differentiated use of authority and unconditional love toward each member to maintain effective functioning of the family system.

More recently, family is defined as any group of two or more persons with a legal or biological relationship.[11] Historically speaking, a family has been made up of a spousal (parental) couple and their children. However, with the divorce rate being so high, many

single parent families and blended families are becoming the common in our society. Although there are multiple reasons for single parent families, the increasing divorce rate in the U.S. is probably the most significant and largest contributor. There are currently over 11.3 million children living in single parent homes. The incidence of children being raised in single parent families has increased so that currently almost one-half of the children born in the U.S. in 1977 spend a minimum of several months of their lives as members of a single-parent family. [12]

The Census Bureau reports that in 1975, approximately 84% of all families were headed by a marital couple, 13% were mother-headed, and 2% were father-headed. In the mother-headed families, 44% were separated and/or divorced, 35% were widowed, 13% were never married, and 4% had husbands living in institutions. Regardless of the family composition, it is still the most valued system in our society.

The family is the natural context for both growth and healing which, over time, has evolved patterns of interacting. These patterns make up the family structure which, according to Minuchin, a well-known therapist, govern the functioning of family members delineating their range of behavior and facilitating their interaction. A viable form of family structure is needed to perform the family's essential tasks of supporting individualism while providing a sense of belonging. [13]

This is especially true of a family with adolescents. Research suggests that no one can "hoist danger signals" more loudly and dramatically than adolescents. Ackekerman says that "on an international scene, storms or adolescent protest are surefire

indicators that governments and societies are sleeping". On the family level, it means "Mom and Dad better get it together before I go out of my own for good".[14] In the stages of the family cycle, the family with adolescents challenges the system daily with new styles, new languages, new mannerisms, and new values for behavior. If families can be flexible and adapt with the new mixture of children and adults represented developmentally by adolescents, then the family will learn from the latest generation and remain in a place of valued significance and belonging for the going out returning of the teenager. If the family remains rigid and unbending, and is unable to partake in adolescent development or comprehend adolescent ways, the loss of emotional support and guidance can lead to breakdown, symptomatic behavior and put the family in a state of crisis.

Research suggests that symptomatic behavior of the adolescent is typical and that adolescence is also a common time for the onset of major mental illness.[15] The parental role during this stage of the family life cycle is very important. Generally speaking, the adolescent is either increasing or decreasing the intensity of involvement with parents. During adolescence, this symptomatic behavior can be labeled as "rebellious" and takes the form of intense involvement with peers, general withdrawal into self, challenging parental as well as societal authority, and individuating. That is to say that whether the teenager is moving toward or away from the family, parental authority and control is always an issue.[16] The presence of problems/trouble in the developing adolescent-parent relationship present special challenges to the family system because the task of being parent to an adolescent differs significantly from a

parent-child relationship. In a family where functioning is not optimal, parental roles are inconsistent and/or unclear, and it appears the adolescent has little support or sense of belonging, the symptomatic behavior becomes more frequent and intense. It is usually a signal that the adolescent is asking for something, or trying to tell someone something is going on. A study by Garbarino contradicts the public stereotypes of adolescents as unreliable and invalid reporters on family function or dysfunction. It suggests that adolescents reports were more likely to show family differences than were the parental reports.[17]

An example of adolescent symptomatic behavior reflecting family dysfunction of a serious nature is physical abuse. "Adolescent maltreatment tends to be associated with problematic acting out behavior of the teenager".[18] Adolescent symptomatic behavior such as running away, attempted suicide, poor academic performance, and assault with or without a weapon have been affiliated with physical abuse in the family.

One finding by the National Incidence Study was that adolescent abuse cases were more likely to be known to professionals outside the protective services system than were cases involving any other age group. This example is especially significant when considering that despite public and professional emphasis on child abuse and neglect, adolescent maltreatment accounts for 47% of the known cases of maltreatment, although teenagers account for only 38% of the population under the age of eighteen years.[19] This, once again, supports the notion that adolescents are reliable and valid reporters of family dysfunction.

In conclusion, the family is important because it shapes us. More than any other force, it determines the kind of people we become. The family will be the most powerful influence in the development of peoples' personality and character.[20]

Adolescence is a delicate developmental stage for the individual, and even more of a challenge for the family in that stage of the family life cycle. Parents with teenagers must negotiate differently with them than they did with younger children. The relationship will change. They give adolescents more authority while demanding more responsibility. The parents, then, have the responsibility to care for, protect, and socialize their children as well as make decision that maintain healthy family functioning.

The Poor, Multiproblem Family

The family and the family with adolescents have been discussed in order to present a definition of the family and the special dynamics that affect a family with adolescents. To build upon that concept of the family with adolescents, and describe the families seen in this study, it is important to explore yet another context of the family, the multiproblem poor family. It is significant in a study done by Curtis (1964) which states that these multiproblem families comprise only six percent of the families in several communities where such studies have been done, but they account for two-thirds of the families receiving correctional, health and mental health services or public relief.[21]

At this point, it is important to clarify that there are many kinds of poor families, there is as much variety among the poor as there is among the wealthy. So despite the fact that being poor

increases the families vulnerability, not all poor families have social or psychological problems. It is the profile of the family with many problems, including low economic status and acting out teenagers that will be presented here.

According to Colon, the multiproblem poor family, like all others, is best understood in the context of the three-generational family system structure that reproduces itself across the family life cycle. This three-generational family system structure is defined as all members, both living and dead who are biologically related to one another. That would include all members of the immediate family, (mother, father, and children) and all members of the extended family on both the mother's and the father's sides (grandparents, siblings, cousins, etc.), as well as the membership of stepfamilies, foster families, and adoptive families who are in contact with the biological families.[22] It is important to state here that whatever the social class, culture, race ethnic heritage or place in the world, every family system structure has to cope with the succession of its generations and their progression through its repeating family life cycle.[23]

These families have been classified by Hollingshed and Redlich as "a Class V in their ranking of the social classes in the American society." According to their study, some characteristics of the class were: "the people had the poorest education in the population: the men in this class were semi-skilled or unskilled workers and some never had a regular job (the jobs were poorly paid requiring long hours for six or seven days weekly); and over two-thirds of the people lived in crowded housing with no privacy, many in tenement areas".

They also encountered five types of families in this class: "the nuclear family (parents and children); families consisting of widows, widowers, or elderly couples; the three and four generation family; mixed families of one parent, children and roomers; and the common-law group."[24] These characteristics seem consistent throughout the literature. These families have a difficult struggle for survival in our society and are often multi-agency families who are known to shelter and protective service agencies, the police, the courts, the clinics, hospitals and the welfare department.

It has been repeated many times throughout the literature that these families have an attitude of hopelessness which consequently raise counter-barriers of hatred, anger, fear, and self-hate. This, on tope of the pervasive absence of adequate jobs and very limited resources, can provide a very harsh environment for development and growth. The children of these families are seemingly destined for a life of struggle for survival, crime, and influences such as can be found in the culture of drugs, prostitution, and poverty. The parents are generally frustrated and all the energies needed for being adequate parents are channeled into a struggle for basic needs usually at the cost of self-esteem and role performance. Many times the parents themselves have not experienced a developmentally adequate childhood and therefore have not learned the skills needed to nurture and parent their young.

At this point it is relevant to discuss a study done by Minuchin and Montalvo that delineates the organization of two kinds of families: the "disengaged" and the "enmeshed". In this project they decide to study a sample of "these disadvantaged hard core families

that produce more than one acting out juvenile delinquent".[25] The findings suggested the following: "The 'disengaged' family is characterized by a profile of isolated persons, each member of the family seems uninterested and unrelated to the other. Their response to each other are delayed and they appear to have no vital contact with each other. The mother is, in many cases, unresponsive, apathetic, overwhelmed and depressed. She is unable to control her children and usually is a parental child often tries to fill this parental vacuum. The family has very little social contact and the parents especially, remain isolated. The "enmeshed" family, on the other hand, is a tightly interlocked system. Attempts of one members to change are quickly resisted by other family members. "Immediate reactivity is the dominant characteristic of the enmeshed family. For example, when the children act up, the mother controls immediately. She appears to have an overwhelming need to have a hold on the children. They seem caught up in a circle of rebellious and counteractive control responses. In this system, power conflicts are continuous and escalation is typical."

The "enmeshed" families tendency toward reactivity and power struggles usually pushes people and helpers away from the families, leaving them even more alienated and powerless.[26] These organizational family profiles are extremely characteristic of multiproblem families. They are also relevant to the population in this study and can be seen in the case studies to follow.

Lastly then it is important to look at some other aspects of the poor multiproblem family and discuss some of the stereotypes found in much of the research. Most studies of these families suggest that

they have this status as a result of some or all of the following; unwillingness to work, lack of skills, ignorance or apathy about contraceptives - hence large families, and laziness. A study by Garbarino states these "high risk" families have significantly more children than low risk families (3.6 vs. 2.7), which may result in greater economic strain because of stretching the resources to cover more dependents.[27] Other research suggests that the cultivation of a large family is a strategy for survival. One such study sees the large family as an "investment portfolio" of the mothers (and sometimes the fathers); a flexible resource for security in both the present and the future, one that will also help establish an economic base so that at least one child can move a step up the economic and social ladder."[28] Essentially, the large family option involves socializing the children into distinct social roles that will be discussed later in the review of this study. The following information is especially significant because it was conducted under a research approach articulated by anthropologist Marvid Harris called "Cultural Materialism". Defined that means "that human behavior is purposive and adaptive and deserves to be observed and recorded ±on the ground'". This research team actually lived in the neighborhood from July 1977 until August 1979. It is important to say at this point that is we look at the concept of the children being considered as a "strategy for survival", it is in part because the other strategies available to the adults have such severe limitations.

Before the details of socializing the children found in this study are presented, it is helpful to know some of the statistics surrounding the population where this study was conducted. The

location represented the highest proportions of households with the lowest incomes. These is an underemployment rate of 60% and two thirds of the households at some point have received public assistance. It is also significant that the neighborhood is full of illegal economic activity and permeated with police undercover operations which supports that fact that there is fierce competition between different drug selling groups and that competition frequently results in violence. There is a high death rate among the young men in particular. (Several other studies report that homicide accounts for more than 20% of the deaths among these groups.) The households in this study have three sources of income: "regular work, irregular work, quasi-legal or illegal activities and public assistance". The regular work is uncertain and means that people can find sporadic and insecure jobs. Since regular work is important for self esteem and status, it means that the conditions contribute to the instability of the individual, the marriage, and the family. In response to constant insecure economic situations, many women with children are lead to apply for public assistance which usually leaves them with deficits of basic need allowances. Because it is so hard for a family to survive on public assistance or meager wages, some of the members resort to "irregular work". The "irregular work" already mentioned refers to several types of activities found in the neighborhoods of some of the families; these are the street vendor of drugs, the freelance work such as stealing, mugging and fencing, and participation in "la bolita", the illegal lottery. The participants in "la bolita" are a street collector, a manager, and a cashier, most of them adults. It is the freelance work that involves adolescents, specially boys, who

are not allowed to engage in the more organized operations. This type of work only contributes between $50 and $90 per week to the family, most of the profits go the outside groups running the operations and fronting the drugs.

This study by Sharff being discussed found that poor people are hard working and do quickly develop requisite skills when reasonable work is available. Although they are forced to compete for scarce jobs, they often share goods and services with one another in regular acts of cooperation. For example, feeding and caring for the children of other families, lending money when able, and caring for a sick person in the community. This study also found that having a large number of children is a useful option pursued by a majority of the households, the large family doesn't keep the poor in poverty, but serves as a mechanism for survival.[29] "It is for the children that all activities are seen as legitimate. Some women for example, may falsely declare themselves as single to the welfare office in order to assure some money to care for their children." Others may take illegal jobs in order to provide some income. The study reports that as well as the mothers contributing to the welfare of the family, there is a pattern that suggest that the children are also socialized into roles that provide income to the family. They are the "street representative", the "young child reproducer", the "wage earner" and the "scholar/advocate".[30] Not every household has all four, but the study concludes that these are characteristic patterns found in these families. The roles described by the research team are as follows: The "street representative" is almost always a young man who has the role of the family protector and avenger. He usually participates in

the already defined irregular work. According to this study, by the age of six he has already begun to participate in risk-taking activities such as climbing fire escapes, biking among cars, and hitching rides on the back of vehicles. As these boys move into their teens, they join with peers and become the physical protectors of their mothers, sisters and younger siblings. These adolescents protect the reputation of the women in the household and avenge any wrong done to the family. It is important to mention here that this learned aggressiveness is not easily tolerated by the schools so those students are usually removed which in turn, could encourage more participation in their street role. The study reports "they leave school completely by the age of 16 or 17 by which time they already had unpleasant encounters with the police, the court system, and juvenile hall".[31]

The task of the "young child reproducer", according to the study, is to take over after her mother's later reproductive years are over. One example cited in the study was a 14 year old girl who gave birth to a baby boy within a year after her brother had been murdered. She named the baby after her brother. This suggests that the role of this adolescent is to replace lost household personnel. It was also noted that this girl helps with the housekeeping and others facets of child care and contributes her assistance money to the pooled household budget.

In addition to the two above roles, a household usually rears a "wage earner". The study suggests that this role is sometimes filled by a girl, but more consistently was a boy who has been socialized in a quasi-feminine mode. The learned aggressiveness of the other boys

is not applied to him. Although the study did not discuss the dynamics of this process, it states "that a sizeable minority of the children are encouraged to develop differently from the stereotypical masculine and feminine roles". This research believed that the training of passive boys may be adaptive in preparing them to fulfill the requirements of subservient wage laborers. Generally speaking, these boys appeared to keep up steady attendance in school and stay away from the street activities.

The "scholar/advocate" is the hope for the future of the family. This role is usually filled by a girl who has been encouraged to develop assertive skills normally associated with the training of boys. According to the study, these "dominant" girls begin their contribution to the household by accompanying their mothers to the welfare institutions and becoming mother's articulate advocate. It states that these girls usually complete their secondary education and if the family has a "wage earner" they sometimes go on to college. The statistics show that these girls do become employed and tend to marry "up" and thus, are the most likely to move out of the families' environment while continuing to contribute to the resources of their families. This study concludes that the large family is a network to which each contributes according to his or her talents and means a kind of social security system for the present and future of the family. [32]

In conclusion of this section then, the multiproblem poor family was discussed, including the characteristics that suggest they are difficult population to reach using the typical intervention systems employed by the helping agencies. As well, the research has

demonstrated that the range of problems will continue to repeat themselves as the life cycles of the families progress. There is yet another dynamic significant to the parent/child interactions of the many multiproblem families in our communities, that of ethnic and cultural influences.

Cultural Variations: Family Life Patterns of Mexican-Americans

The Mexican-American population, the structure and framework of the family, and the cultural influences are important concepts to examine in a study exploring the parent/child interactions of these families with adolescents in crisis. Much of the research found focuses on comparative studies and suggests that several of the stereotypes associated with the Mexican-American family are also evident in the poor multiproblem family regardless of ethnicity. For the purpose of clarifying parental roles and understanding the population presented in the study, it is important to develop a profile of the Mexican-American family and the cultural influences impacting the system. Historically the Mexican-American family has been recognized for its' warmth, the strength of its' nuclear and extended family structure in taking care of its members, the peripheral yet significant role of the father, and the devotion and martyrism captured in the role of the mother.

The stage of the family in the process of acculturation and assimilation is very significant, there are at least five generations of Mexican-Americans living in present day society. Acculturation is the process by which one acquires the culture of a society, it is the intercultural borrowing between diverse peoples resulting in new and blended patterns. The Mexican-American family is seen as having moved

from "disorganization" to a new "culture reorganization"; younger families are comparatively more assimilated; and certain aspects of earlier culture patterns have been retained including Catholicism, teenage dating customs, and family recreation.[33] Keep in mind during this review of the existing literature, that the Mexican-American family will be described at various stages of the acculturation process, meaning that family characteristics present in the immigrant family will differ from those of the third and fourth generations. The longer an individual or a family is exposed to the dominant culture, the more one can expect adoption of the host culture as well as the degeneration and mutation of previously intact cultural systems and personality structures.[34] For example, Mercer (1976) presents evidence that less acculturated Mexican-Americans usually exhibit lower education and occupational status. His study indicates that the least acculturated Mexican-Americans manifest high family solidarity, ethnic identification, and Catholicism. Generally speaking, most studies found Mexican-American families were mixed with regard to "traditional" and "modern" values. Although this review will not explore the process of acculturation in detail, it is seen as an important variable in the description of the Mexican-American family.

In describing the Mexican-American family, research suggests that there is no stereotype that fits for all families of Mexican descent. Instead, it confirms that there are literally thousands of Mexican-American families, all differing significantly from a variety of dimensions. There are many factors which contribute to a multitude of family patterns of living, cultural values, parent/child interactions, and coping strategies. As examples, regional, historical, and

political background, socioeconomic status, language spoken, and as previously mentioned, acculturation and assimilation are all significant factors contributing to the uniqueness of these families. There are several cultural value differences cited by the literature between the Mexican-American family and the dominant culture that are important to mention. A study by Guinn summarizes the value differences between the Mexican-American and the Angle as follows:

Mexican-Americans value:

- being rather than doing

- limited stress on material

- present-time orientation

- simple patterns of work organization and group cooperation

- central importance of the family, personal relations

Anglos value:

- doing rather than being

- material well-being

- future orientation

- individual action and reaction

- impersonal relations[35]

The information from this study suggests that these can be viewed as differences in value orientation. The literature implies that to the Mexican-American, material objects are usually necessity things and not ends in themselves. In contrast to the Puritan ethic, work is seen as a necessity for survival but not as a value in itself. Much higher value is assigned to other life activities in the Mexican culture.[36] In order words, it is much more valuable to experience

things directly through intellectual and emotional awareness rather than indirectly through past accomplishments and accumulation of wealth. According to the research, for the Mexican-American, social status and prestige are more likely to derive from an ability to experience things in a spiritually direct way and share this knowledge with others. The poet, musician, and the artist are more often revered in this culture than the businessman or financier.[37]

Time orientation was also a cultural difference cited in the literature. There appears to be a tendency for the Anglo to live in a future time orientation, whereas the Mexican-American is more likely to live and experience life in the present. This present time orientation could be related to several factors impacting this population. First, a family from the lower socioeconomic portion of society, especially if he is brown or black, will be concerned with immediate survival needs and may experience restrictions on upward mobility due to realistic inequality of opportunity for education or advancement. Secondly then, according to some research, this present time orientation comes from the Mexican Indian heritage concept of "limited good". This concept implies "that there is only so much good in the world and therefore only so much good is possible for any one person's life. It matters not how industrious one is for he will get no more than his share of good during his lifetime. A wise person will not expend his energies unnecessarily but will accept life as it comes, enjoying the maximum each day has to offer."[38] An example of this value difference is noteworthy. In the dominant culture, being responsible is equated with being on time for an appointment. The Mexican-American is not as likely to be locked into the clock in this

respect, to them the concept of responsibility is based on other values such as attending to the immediate needs of the family or friends of the family. Therefore, the Mexican-American may not arrive to the appointment on time, yet is seen in that culture as being as responsible as the punctual Anglo.

Another value difference seen between these two cultures is found in their manner of expression. Courtesy, respect and manners are important concepts in the interpersonal relations of the Mexican-American. While the dominant culture is taught to value openness and directness, the Mexican-American is taught diplomacy and tactfulness when communicating with another individual. "Concern and respect for another's feelings dictate that a screen always be provided behind which a man may preserve his dignity."[39] This screen has also been referred to and called a mask by Octavio Paz in his book Labyrinth of Solitude. For this reason, the Mexican-American's manner of expression tends to be elaborate and indirect, while at the same time it is apparent that the culture takes pride in the art of verbal expression. This also describes why the Mexican-American sometimes appears submissive. To them, direct argument and contradiction are rude and disrespectful. Generally speaking they willnot disagree unless they can take time to tactfully differ. The Anglo who is not aware of this may falsely assume that an agreement has been reached and later be disappointed when a contract is not carried out. This concept of courtesy and respect often causes misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the interpersonal expressions of the Mexican-American.

Lastly then, incorporated in the manner of expression, is another noted difference between the cultures, that of kidding and criticism. Anglo Americans have a style of kidding one another, partly as a means of expressing feelings that could be hurtful to others if said differently. This characteristic is "frequently offensive to the Mexican-American who sees it as a put down, rude and depreciating."[40] It is difficult to understand the Mexican-American's sensitivity to criticism, and there is not much literature describing this difference although it is cited in many studies. One researcher believes "it may be related to another characteristic encountered among the Mexican-American people, which is "sensateness" or a high degree of sensitivity to the environment. He believes that the Mexican-American utilizes their full range of physiological senses to experience things, in other words, they are more likely to want to touch, taste, smell or be close to the person or object of their focus. He reports this phenomenon appears in many forms and gives examples such as their love for sounds, action, bright colors and spicy food.[41] Apparently this researcher sees the Mexican-American sensitivity to criticism as resulting from a sensitivity to the environment. As well, it is seen here as being disrespectful of a person to criticize them or kid them in a way which implies a personal attack. In summary, this was a brief attempt to describe some significant values of the Mexican-American and demonstrate the contrast of culture which exists in our society. At this time, it is important to discuss more specifically some traditional Mexican-American family values and the roles of the parents as a point of departure for understanding the many combinations and blends of culture contributing to the parent/child

interactions and family lifestyles of todays Mexican-American families. "For the Mexican-American, the family is likely to be the single most important social unit in life. It is usually the core of his thinking and behavior and is the center from which his view of the rest of the world extends.[42] This suggests that a person feels first a member of the family and next as an individual. This also implies that the reputation of the family is reflected by the actions and behavior of its members, therefore one must always consider the honor and respect of the family first.

For the adolescent who is developmentally experiencing autonomy, individuation and pressure to conform from peers, this can be a very stressful and difficult demand, creating resentment and conflict in the family. It is also significant that a member of the Mexican-American family in need of emotional or material support expects and is expected to turn to the family first to get these needs met. It is under extreme circumstances and when no alternative exists that a member will seek help outside of the family system. When this occurs, it is usually at the expense of the parent's dignity and the family's pride. This may also be one reason why Mexican-American families generally do not seek professional help. In a study by Griswold (1975), Mexican-Americans were found least likely to consult agencies, services, and printed matter for help in childrearing.[43] Examples were cited in the literature where families whose children had gotten in trouble refused to cooperate with the authorities toward rehabilitation of the person because that individual had brought dishonor to the family and was seen by the family as deviant. It is possible, although it is rare, that a family may sever all relations

with a member whose behavior has brought shame or dishonor to the family. These concepts can only be understood in light of the importance and value attributed to the family system by the Mexican-American culture.

The Mexican-American family, as with other families, can be seen as two interrelated systems, the nuclear family of the parents and children, and the extended family which encompasses grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and godparents. It is important to note here that due to the patrilineal factor sometimes found in the first and second generation of the Mexican American family, relatives on the father's side of the family may be considered more important than those from the mother's side of the family. When this situation is present, it also presents family conflict for the adolescent who, for example, favors a cousin on the mother's side of the family. The Mexican-American family tends to have strong ties and a web of kinship which imposes obligation of mutual respect, aid and affection. These family ties go beyond genetic links to "compadres", who are not blood relatives but assume family obligations, especially toward their godchildren. There will most likely be a different set of compadres for each child in the family. The "compadres" are chosen by the parents because of their close relationship to them as adults and friends of the family. Generally speaking, the relationship between the parents and the "compadres" is similar to that between the parents and other adult relatives where there is mutual respect and interchange of help and advice.[44] The extended family system represents a strong source of support for the Mexican-American family because there is often much communication, visiting, sharing, and

closeness of relationships. This extended family structure is set up such that members are expected to call upon each other for help as well as pitch in to help when it is needed.

The research indicates that the nuclear family, or interpersonal relations among parents and children, display a persistence of traditional norms and are usually dictated by clearly defined patterns of difference. "According to Rubel (1966) who did one of several anthropological studies of Mexican-American families, the pattern that predominates is stated: The elder order the younger and the men The women."[45] This may be interpreted to suggest that there are two dimensions around which interpersonal patterns within the family are organized. The first is respect and obedience to elders and the second is male dominance. Family authority is vested in the father or oldest male. The husband and father is the head of the household, he is regarded the master of the family. The literature describes him as being "aloof" and independent from the rest of the family and free to come and go without explanation. Generally speaking, no decisions can be made in the family without his approval. An important concept that contributes to this stereotype of the father as the master is "machismo" (maleness).

Although the literature questions whether "machismo" is a cultural rather than a poverty or father-absence phenomenon, it is important to define and describe it as a possible cultural factor which affects the father/child relationship and therefore, the parent/child interactions. "Machismo" is seen throughout the literature as an exaggeration of masculine characteristics and belief in the superiority of men. One article based on Oscar Lewis'

anthropological works suggests that "two traits, heterosexuality and aggression, are commonly exaggerated and manifested through the mastery over women and the reciprocal submission to men, as well as the males courage, sexual freedom, affective detachment, physical dominance and excessive alcohol consumption."[46] This same author states that according to Adlerian theory, these traits would be compensation for inferiority feelings. "The origins of the inferiority complex is found in patterns of childrearing and the family education system: the affectionless father, the child's respect for the father (based on fear, separation or distance), hostility in father-son relationships, praise of masculine traits and feminine submission and obedience." This author concludes that "machismo" is a cultural trait aimed at satisfying a psychological need: the inferiority complex which originates in child rearing practices.[47]

This stereotype of the "verdadero hombre" (real man) implies that there are several cultural dynamics of this phenomenon. They are the "conquista de mujeres" (conquering of women), aggression, preoccupation with manhood, lack of displaying emotions, and the ability to drink a lot of alcohol and not get drunk. These appear to be associated with the traditional concept of the Mexican-American man. According to several articles depicting this concept, the pregnant women with kids in the home is a way to secure the wife from going out and being seen as single in the community. The man in this role generally expects to be obeyed and taken care of while seeing his job as that of protector of his wife and children. Aggression and jealousy were also stated as characteristics of "machismo", and may be acted out in the way of violence, defensive character, or use of fowl

language.   A quote from one man in a study shows the emotional front described previously; "If I am afraid inside - outside I appear tranquil."[48]   This excessive preoccupation with manhood which implies insecurity of self, defensive nature and ideas of grandure, is important to mention in this review because of its' noted influence on the parental relationship as well as the father/child relationship. Several studies have found significant correlations between the Mexican-American father's role in the family and its affect on the child's development.   For example, children in some studies of the Mexican-American said they felt a noticeable absence of affection from their father and that the emphasis on the relationship was to respect him, not to give him their opinions. It was also noted by Lewis in 1960 that "most children are subdued and inhibited in the presence of their father and remain so well into adulthood."[49]   One theory explains that since the child feels inferior physically and psychologically as a result of fear of the father, that he is distant more from his parents and may exaggerate traits which are considered to be masculine such as defiance.   The research also speculates that women and girls are more able to feel secure and content in their father's presence while men and boys feel insecure.

Lasting then, the households where "machismo" is a cultural or present phenomenon seem to organize themselves around the very specific male/female roles. For example, the girls of the family are accustomed to serving their brothers, preparing their food, their clothes and obeying them when commanded to do so. The brothers, in return, learn to guard the character of their sisters and stand ready to protect them should the need arise.   These are a few of the

influences that may be attributed to the children growing up in a family where "machismo" may be a cultural trait. It is important to mention here that an important part of this concept of "machismo" is earned respect. If the father does not use his authority in a just and fair manner, he will lose the respect of his family and the community. It is also true that misbehavior by another family member is a direct reflection of the father even though he may not have been present at the time of the misconduct. This puts a great deal of pressure on the father to maintain control and respect in the family.

Whether or not "machismo" is a variable in the family, the role of the father and the mother in child rearing are very significant. One study found that in Mexican-American families, assimilation of the mainstream culture depended on the presence of an effective father. If the father or father surrogate was absent, the child tended to be assimilated into the street culture. According to this study, the Mexican-American mother could not be effective as an assimilator. Her society or her conception of her role as mother demands that she give unconditional love to her children. So no matter what difficulties the children's behavior create for the family, she is expected to continue to love them and welcome them home.[50] Although the mother is the affectional figure who actually does exercise a considerable amount of control within the home, the father frequently is the disciplinarian. The father, during the early years of the child's development, is often permissive, warm and close to them. This appears to change significantly as each child reaches puberty. He becomes more reserved, authoritarian, and demanding of respect for himself as well as his wife. In Rubel's term, "there is a

discontinuity of affective relationship between the father and the children as they enter puberty".[51]   The Mexican-American mother is usually completely devoted to her husband and their children, her role is to take care of the family members and support the decisions and actions of her husband.   If the mother is single and raising the children, usually the oldest male will fill in the parental role of father.   The son usually will do this with his mother's support.   As already mentioned, the mother is the nurturing and serving component of the family, and although she is highly respected and revered, her needs are considered to be secondary to those of the other members of the family.   The literature suggests that her life revolves around her family and a few close friends since the female is supposed to have relatively few contacts outside of the family.   This may be one reason why the relationships between mothers and daughters and other female relatives is usually so close.   Lasting then, unlike the father and his relationship to the children, the mother continues to be close and warm to her children even when they are married and have children of their own.   The mother is really the one who holds the family system together throughout the life cycle.

Currently, the Mexican-Americans have one of the lowest percentages of single parent families.   A study done by Eberstein and Frisbie (1976) have compared Mexican-American with Anglo and Black Americans in marital instability rate, controlling for a variety of parameters such as socioeconomic class, geographic area, age of marriage, etc.   They conclude that the Mexican-American population has a lower marital instability rate and there is no indication that the rate is increasing to match that of Blacks and Anglos.   Furthermore,

Mexican-Americans, in contrast to Black Americans, have a lower incidence of families headed by women in spite of only a marginally better economic profile. Seventeen percent of the Mexican-American households were headed by women in 1970 and by 1980, it was only 18 percent.[52] This data suggests that there is a persistence to maintain the family system in the Mexican-American culture.

The experience of the children in the Mexican-American family is also of significance. The literature implies that during the early years of growing up, the family is centered around the child. Both parents generally indulge in spoiling them. Examples of this are the big family baptism parties, the breaking of the piñata at the birthday parties, and the fuss in general around the cute little youngsters. Although the family is child centered, even at the earliest stages of development, the children receive training in responsibility and are not permitted to be disrespectful. Often they are expected to assume tasks according to their age and ability. These tasks may include caring for younger brothers and sisters, doing errands, translating for parents, or taking a job to contribute financially to the family. The literature suggests that this may create a feeling of importance and belonging in the child from an early age. It also demonstrates a pattern of interdependence that will follow the child into adulthood.

Overt sibling rivalry is not generally found in Mexican-American families. Comparative studies state that Anglo children are less cooperative and more self centered than Mexican-American children, and that there is much more sibling rivalry found in Anglo families. This characteristic of cooperation may occur in the Mexican-American family because of the early socialization into roles and the philosophy of

all members working together for the good of the family. This socialization into roles can be seen in the patterns of behavior between male and female children. Early in their development, the boys are taught how to be men and the girls begin to act out their feminine roles. These roles become especially significant during adolescence. For example, the young teenage girl is expected to remain close to home where her innocence will be protected, while the adolescent boy is given much more freedom outside of the house to be with peers and learn the worldly role of men. Needless to say, the trend is changing as the acculturation process continues. The girls begin to feel their isolation as compared to Anglo girls who are expected to use their potential and become independent. Sometimes the boys may even feel threatened by their sister's rebellion to also move out of the family into the world. It is generally very hard for the girls to do this as they are met by much resistance from the family and seen as deviant. The brothers tend to feel responsible for the guarding and protecting of their sister's reputations, and conflict arises when such behavior is met with anger from the girls. The patterns of behavior associated with these roles will be seen clearly in the families to be presented in this study.

Lastly then, to conclude this section on the cultural variation and family patterns of the Mexican American family, it is important to explore a few of the conflicts created by this cultural pluralism. As previously mentioned, the family is very important to the Mexican-American and the needs and demands of the members have highest priority. Many times, conflict occurs when family members forego their school, job, or personal responsibility to meet a family

obligation. This can be seen when children absent themselves from school to go with mother to act as translator, when they replace grandmother, who is sick today, in the strawberry field, and when they are needed to care for younger siblings or cousins from the extended family. One young man was arrested and taken to juvenile hall because he missed his appointment with his probation officer in order to get his mother's car running before she had to be at work. He is seen as being responsible by his family and as irresponsible by the dominant culture. Often times this can and does create confusion for the child trying to develop in the middle of two cultures.

According to the research, the matter of courtesy and good manners may also cause important problems. An example cited by Murillo shows a Mexican-American youth translating at the doctor's office for his mother. The doctor tells mother she should not have waited so long to seek medical attention. The boy found it impossible to convey the message to his mother as it would be disrespectful. Therefore, he deliberately misinterprets what the doctor says and fails to communicate important medical information.[53] In another area, the hesitancy of making decisions without consulting dad or husband is often misunderstood by the dominant culture. This is also a traditional family characteristic that may slow down the process of whatever is under consideration.

Perhaps the most significant problem caused by this cultural pluralism is the conflict between the values that one learns at home and those taught in the schools or social groups of the children. "The most clear contradiction is between the authoritarian structure in the home and the more democratic ideals taught in the school. Not

only is this confusing to the child, but it is threatening to the parents.[54]   Education was seen throughout the literature to be of great value to the Mexican-American, yet at the same time it presents conflict as it tends to influence the family's unity which is their basis for security.   One source states that "Anglo schools tend to make Mexican-American children foreigners to their own parents."[55]

In conclusion then, the most obvious factor creating conflicting among the two cultures is that of language. It is often frustrating and difficult for either culture to communicate in a language which is foreign to them.

Aside from reaching an understanding of the family, the family with adolescents, the multiproblem poor family, and the cultural variations found in the Mexican-American family, it is important to review the literature discussing parenting and explore the findings that are significant to this study.

Parenting

This is the last and perhaps the most important section of the literature review as it will identify several of the author's hypothesis concerning the parenting of adolescents in crisis, as well as some of the special needs of the low-income multiproblem Mexican-American family. It is the author's belief that the quality of interaction in the families to be presented in this study is poor as compared to those interactions found in healthy family systems. It is also believed that the adolescents in these families feel rejected, unsupported, unprotected, insignificant, unwanted and isolated by their parents and that these feelings are related to the crisis or acting out behaviors that brought these families into the Youth

Services agency.   It is also significant that the parenting characteristics, reactions and responses found in these families appear to be related to the sex of the parent in relationship to the sex of the child.   For example, mothers respond to their sons differently than they do to their daughters. Lastly then, it is apparent to the author, and supported by the literature that the parents of these families are experiencing difficulties in coping with the environment, the needs of their adolescents, and their situations.

The ability of the parents to cope and respond to the problems and circumstances of their lives appear to be directly related to the parent/child relationship and the parenting interactional patterns utilized in the family.   A study done in the west side barrio of San Antonio Texas revealed that parent's characteristic ways of dealing with the world were strikingly difference despite the apparent similarity of their environment and life experiences.   The study found that there were varied patterns of adaption or coping.   "Coping included all efforts to deal effectively with one's environment, and to increase feelings of personal satisfaction of family members."[56] This study found two family types, the "copers" and the "non-copers". The "non-copers" were characterized as being suspicious, mistrustful and as having preset attitudes about life and the future of their children, where as the "copers" were found to be interested, curious, and as having high aspirations for the future of their children. It was also found that the "non-copers" were often preoccupied with parental problems.   "Mothers did not seem to accurately assess the seriousness of the adolescent's problems, though frequently described at length their own aches and pains."[57]   Several other studies

indicated that parents in coping families respond to what children need most as love and affection. Parents in non-coping families viewed the expression of love as spoiling the adolescents, making them weak and dependent; to them, most important was food and shelter and to be taught to be neat and clean.[58] Whether or not the parents were capable to showing love and affection was not assessed in any of the studies covering this subject. It is the author's opinion though, that many of the parents were not capable either because of not having experienced this in their own developmental process or because of other factors currently influencing their lives.

Other significant conclusions have been made from the studies looking at "coping" and "non-coping" families. One study suggests that many children in "non-coping" families appeared mature for their age because frequently the old children took primary responsibility for household tasks and caring for the younger children. One example cited by a study was of a "non-coping" mother who lived with her family in a dilapidated rented home. This woman, according to the study, spent many of her days walking the streets with her 11 and 3 year old sons "looking for another place to live". Her 10 year old daughter remained at home to care for seven younger children. The daughter was quoted by the interviewers as saying "she likes to see her mother leave as early as possible on her house-hunting trips so that she could get on with the work of housecleaning, bathing the babies, and laundry". This same study reports that while the older children assume tasks beyond their age level, younger ones related to the world in a more immature manner, often exhibiting fewer than expected age appropriate behaviors. The very significant conclusion

reported by this study was that in these families, "not only was there the characteristic lack of intense parent-child relationships, but it was found that contact between and among children was also strikingly absent".[59]   Examples were given of several families with 10 children, where it was observed that the children functioned in their own worlds oblivious of the other children.   Several interviewers reported abnormal behavior such as talking only to a pair of shoes, or in one case, a 5 month old baby was banging his head against the crib with no family member making a move to intervene or stop the behavior. The findings of these studies support the author's hypothesis that the parent/child relationships in these families are in many cases weak, and the quality of interactions are often poor.

Examples of poor parent/child relations and interactions can be seen in the method of discipline chosen by some parents and by the amount of quality time spent daily and weekly with the children. It has been discussed in the section of the family that parents in an enmeshed family system have a greater need to control their children. According to the literature, this has also been a characteristic attitude of the low income and the Mexican-American family. These parents are seen as more punitive and less supportive than the comparison groups of Anglo and Black Americans. In a study done by A.S. Johnson, findings suggest that poverty income level parents expressed the highest need for control, as did those with less than a 9th grade education, and those who spent less than 2 hours weekly with their child.   Parents who spent more than 2 hours per week with their child showed distinct advantages in creative control methods.   As well, parents who spent more time with their children showed greater

consistency between expressed feelings and observed behaviors.[60]   The authoritarian title associated with the parents of the Mexican-American family can serve to provide a balanced hierarchy for the system or, combined with low educational attainment and cultural misunderstanding, it can reinforce certain types of discipline styles that injure, frighten, degrade, depress, or confuse the child. This control can take many forms of disciplinary action.   Some are appropriate and some are severe.   The following are severe types of discipline that may appear successful methods of control while the children are young, they are seen as destructive and usually are not tolerated by children when they reach the age of adolescence. Frequent and severe <u>physical punishment</u> may include shaking the child; pulling his hair, ear or arms; slapping the face, head or ears; and/or hitting the child with belts, shoes, clothes hangers, electrical cords, broom handles, sticks, or any object.   <u>Degrading punishment</u> may include calling the child stupid, idiot, animal burro; using belittling sermons; scolding and belittling the child in front of friends; indicating the child is bad, rotten, or sinful; comparing him unfavorably with others; and equating him with the family's black sheep.   <u>Frightening punishment</u> may include telling the child that the devil, ghosts, or other magical figures will take him; telling the child he will be given away or no longer loved; locking the child in a closet or dark room, dangling the child out of a window or from another place; and making other frightening threats. Lastly is the type of <u>punishment that discourages the expression of emotions.</u> This would include a parent punishing a child who expresses emotions such as anger or frustration which may be viewed as disrespectful or

contrary to expectations of compliance. As well, the expression of sorrow, grief or sadness (especially by male children) may be discouraged, ridiculed, and punished by the parents who may see this as unmanly or inappropriate behavior for the child.[61] The task of disciplining the children is often a difficult one for parents, especially when combined with additional life stressors. It is when the parent/child relationship and the family interactions are strong that the methods of discipline are more successful and healthy for the child. We will explore less severe methods of discipline in the last chapter of this project.

At this point, since we are looking at the influences of parenting techniques on the child, it is important to look at what families are at risk for destructive parent/child relationships and how those influences impact the adolescent children in the family. One study suggests that "high risk families are characterized by a formidable set of enduring potentiating factors (e.g., chronic internalized developmental problems, positive values and attitudes concerning coercion, and a 'chaotically enmeshed' interpersonal system) and are thus, vulnerable as the child enters adolescence". This same study also measured stressful life events and reveals significantly more recent changes among high risk adolescents as expected.[62] This is attributable, in large, to the much greater frequency of crisis episodes as well as substance abuse among the high risk adolescents. The low risk families in this study, on the other hand, are characterized by more protectors, (e.g., a flexible and connected family system, a disavowal of coercion and a supportive, less punishing style of parenting) and more buffers (e.g., greater

adolescent social competence). It appears that many low risk families can absorb adolescent behavior without precipitating maltreatment.[63] The high risk families are, by the acute challenges presented by adolescent behavior, pushed past the threshold at which maltreatment precipitates. It is also significant that the parents of the high risk family group report twice as many internalizing and externalizing problems in their adolescents as do parents in the low risk group, and that social competence (which is negatively correlated with both external and internal problems) is reported to be greater for adolescents from the low risk families.[64] The findings of this study support the author's hypothesis that adolescent crisis and maltreatment tends to be associated with problematic acting-out behavior of the teenager, poor parent/child relationships and poor quality of family interactions. The study suggests that attitudes and values favoring the use of physical and psychological coercion against adolescents are an indicator of risk for destructive parent/adolescent relations. The conclusions of the study being presented are as follows: 1) Families characterized as high risk on the basis of parental values and attitudes concerning physical and psychological coercion are also characterized as being high risk on the dimensions of adaptability, cohesive support, discipline, and interparental conflict, thus a generalized pattern of family dysfunction is predicted; 2) Members of high risk families exhibit less sophisticated cognitive functioning with respect to social reasoning; 3) Adolescents in high risk families manifest more developmental problems, are less socially competent, and report more stressful life events, even among a total sample referred because of adolescent adjustment problems, and

lastly; 4) Families at high risk in adolescence are more likely to contain stepparents.[65]   Many investigators support this last point which suggests that the step family is a high risk setting especially in adolescence.   One study reports "sociobiological principles (less parental investment in children not having a genetic connection) and social-psychological phenomena (interpersonal challenges of complex, multiple, and often competing patterns of interaction, reinforcement histories, and cognitive attributions) come together to predict that stepfamilies will be especially prone to exceed the threshold for precipitating maltreatment, particularly when the adolescent seems to be malfunctioning.   "It is also significant that these problems may derive in part from the earlier crisis of divorce which was reported by the adolescent as a stressful life event.   The results of this study conforms to the sociogiological prediction that "damaged" children are at special risk when parental genetic investment in them is low.[66]

There are other studies that imply direct correlations between parent/child interactions and the onset of crisis in children. Raskin, Boothe, Reatig and Schulterbrant investigated this hypothesis and found that diagnosed depressed students had a generally negative recall of their parents' childrearing techniques, as compared to normal controls.   Their strongest findings suggested that depressives saw both parents as having been less positively involved with them (i.e., less positively involved in their child's activities, less expressive of love and affection, less accepting of independence or individuation on the part of the child, and as more likely to use negative means of discipline than did normal controls).   Mothers of

depressives were recalled as having been more lax and permissive in applying discipline than mothers of controls, and as having used guilt-producing techniques as a means of controls, while fathers relied more on withdrawal as a means of control. It is also important that the mothers of both the depressed students, as well as the normal controls, were recalled as more significant figures than were the fathers.[67] This study was unique in that it studies the recall of parental behaviors in depressed students of different racial groups, one of those groups being the Mexican-American. The results suggested that critical, guilt-inducing mothers are antecedents to subsequent depression in Chinese-American, Anglo, and Mexican-American students. These results confirm the hypothesis that child-rearing practices of children prone to depression used more negative control and had less positive involvement with their children. It was concluded that all racial groups indicated significant correlations between depression and reflected recall of guilt-inducing behaviors by mothers, and between depression and excessive criticism by parents.[68]

In addition then, continuing this discussion of parental influences on the development and behavior of the child, it is important to examine the conclusions of a study done on perceived parental acceptance-rejection and children's reported behavioral dispositions. This was a comparative and intracultural study of American and Mexican-American children and the conclusions are extremely significant for this discussion. Throughout the literature, parental rejection has been found to be related to a wide range of personality and behavioral problems such as varied forms of psychopathology (i.e., depression, adolescent adjustment disorders,

etc.), delinquency and conduct problems, poor concept formation, disturbed body image, academic problems, anxiety, and insecurity, (Becker, 1974; Martin, 1975; Rohner and Nielsen, 1978).[69] It appears that not many of these findings have been examined cross-culturally except in one study done by Rohner (1975) who used a holocultural sample of 101 societies. He found that parental rejection is significantly related, the world over, to children's: a) hostility, aggression, or passive aggression; b) dependence, and; c) negative self-evaluation, including negative self-esteem and negative self-adequacy. Drawing from this data, Rohner formulated the parental acceptance-rejection theory which postulates that parental rejection has consistent effects on the personality and behavior dispositions of children everywhere, regardless of culture, ecology, language, and other limiting conditions. The conclusions of this study confirms that parental acceptance-rejection and "culture" do not interact appreciably to product different efforts on children's behavioral dispositions in different cultures. More specifically, the findings reported here suggest that although cultural background is significantly related to children's reported behavioral dispositions, perceived parental acceptance-rejection accounts for a larger portion of the variance in children's self-reported behavioral dispositions than does culture. Lastly then, it was determined that children who perceive themselves to be rejected are likely to become "defensively independent". That means that these children will withdraw into themselves in hurt and anger and act as though they are relatively unconcerned about receiving warmth and support from the people most important to them, usually their rejecting parents.[70] This study

again supports the author's hypothesis that poor parent/child relationships affect the behavior and development of the child.

In this section we are looking at the influences of parenting on the social development of the adolescent in the Mexican-American family. Therefore, it is important to review what has been written on the parental role in the prosocial development of the child. Several theories of prosocial development have been formulated and tested in relation to the Mexican-American family. Hoffman, for example, theorizes that a prosocial orientation results from parental affection, prosocial parental behavior, and disciplinary techniques which emphasize the consequence of one's behavior for others, rather than techniques which rely upon parental power assertion. Consistent with this theory is empirical evidence indicating that a prosocial orientation may result from positive parental attitudes, a prosocial parental model, and parental use of psychological (victim centered and inductive) rather than physical and power assertive discipline styles. These theories appear to be in contrast to the socialization practices among lower income parents and parents from a Mexican Culture background who have been described as punitive and authoritarian. Also, in studies comparing Anglo American parents, Mexican-Americans have been found to express more disapproval when children talk back or interrupt adults, to more often assert their will over their children, and more often give negative feedback.[71] In addition, studies have found that Mexican-American children and lower income children are consistently more prosocial and cooperative than Anglo or middle-class children. This presents a discrepancy between the findings and the theories of prosocial development. Several explanations have been

offered by researchers for this discrepancy. One states that "the apparent contradiction of the presumed socialization antecedents of prosocial behavior and the observed relatively prosocial and cooperative behavior of Mexican-American and lower economic class children could be resolved if parental behavior, which has been described as authoritarian, serves primarily not to mold antisocial behaviors but rather to communicate clear norms and a sense of structure to children".[72] This explanation would be consistent with the literature that describes structure and clarity of norms as components of a healthy family system. In a second theory of prosocial development, Maslow and Diaz-Guerrero speculated that the greater cooperativeness of the Mexican compared to the American children results from a greater sense of structure and security the children feel because of the clear limits and expectations the Mexican parents provide.[73] Again, this supports the findings that structure and security are important factors influencing the development of children. At this point, it is important to note that these theories reflect relatively healthy family systems and are being discussed in order to address several positive family dynamics influencing the development of the adolescent, these are that Mexican-American children are not more prosocial as a result of having more punitive parents, but as a result of having clear and consistent behavioral expectations put upon them and also as a result of being exposed to and having close relationships with other adults through the extended family as seen in the Mexican-American culture.

As an introduction into the final review of the special conditions and needs of the low income multiproblem Mexican-American

family, it is important to clarify several points in regard to societal characteristics, parenting techniques and culture. The extensive review of the literature presented here has helped the author formulate several conclusions; first, social class cuts across ethnicity in determining many child-rearing techniques, yet even when social class is controlled, it appears that there is still some variation in parenting practices. Second, it can be concluded that "social class overshadows ethnicity in determining the nature of family functioning, but that social, economic, and psychological factors interplay. It is not economic opportunity alone but a group response to such opportunity or lack of it...which affect families' ability to carry out their socially expected roles."[74] It is also important to note that specific child-rearing practices which are functional and beneficial to the child's development may differ from one sociocultural context to another. As well, many societal characteristics have direct relationships with child-rearing practices. Some examples of these characteristics may include an increase number of working mothers, an increase in the divorce rate, an increase in teenage parents, a decrease in the traditional extended family, significant economic pressure, as well as additional life stressors impacting the family system of today's complex society.

It is important to state here that the author does not wish to suggest that there is one universal and correct way in which to raise a family. In fact, it is through this extensive review of the literature that differences of culture, religion, economic status, family size, geographic location, educational background, and family dynamics contribute significantly to the value orientations and child-

rearing practices of parents. It does appear that the parent/child interactions and practices are products of parent's personalities, values, and attitudes which were more likely learned from their own parents as well as their life experiences. It is also apparent that all aspects of the family and the parenting practices and responses affect the behavior and development of the child, and can influence the adolescent experience of the child as well as his/her potential for the future. In conclusion, the influence of culture and class determine value systems and parent/child interactions on the socialization of the developing child have been emphasized throughout the literature review. These values evolve and develop according to the parent's experiences of the world and are seen as criteria for parenting practices that assist in selecting alternatives of discipline because they have a directional quality which automatically affects the child.

To conclude this chapter, it is important to review those special conditions which influence the low income multiproblem Mexican-American family and children. Many factors have been attributed to the quality of life for the low income multiproblem Mexican-American family. Factors such as lack of employment; overcrowded and dilapidated housing; low levels of health, health care, and health information; inappropriate and insufficient education; early, frequent and prolonged childbearing; father absence due to incarceration or marital disharmony; and a basic lack of sufficient resources; most definitely have an impact on the quality of family life. Currently it is not known to what degree these factors promote child abuse and neglect, or distort or prevent the developmental progression of the

child. It is known that these factors can and do influence child-rearing practices. Several considerations should be reviewed and examined before the methodology of the study of these families is presented. Certain child-rearing practices may be attributed to cultural and poverty variable. Consider the following. <u>Maternal deprivation;</u> the child is most likely exposed to a higher rate of material deprivation because many mothers are forced to work outside of the home or forced to leave their children in their country of origin with members of the extended family until they have established themselves in this country. Although the irreversible effects of maternal deprivation are not known, disruption of maternal care is likely to have negative effects on the development of the child. <u>Father absence and stressful fathering;</u> the child may experience father absence because of marital instability or incarceration, frequently associated with poverty. Many times the father is the first to immigrate to the U.S. which creates an absence in the family left behind. Again, it is not known the developmental effects of the absent father on the child, but one can logically assume that it places an extra burden on the mother and that this added stress may interfere with healthy child-rearing practices. As well, children may be placed in inappropriate adult roles and deprived of needed parental identification. Also, the child may experience a maladaptive identification by the presence of his father whose powerless social position and damaged role as provider are reflected in the family situation. <u>Excessive attachment between mother and child, combined with detachment between father and child;</u> this pattern is usually associated with marital disharmony or a mother who uses the children

to meet her needs. The mother becomes excessively attached to her children, refusing to leave them even for short periods of time or let them associate outside the home. This affects the process of individuation and creates dependencies that may keep the child home forever. Early burdening of the older child with rearing of younger siblings; because of poverty and high fertility, the older children may be deprived of needed play, school activities, outside involvement, and even regular school attendance because of the need to assist in the care of their younger siblings. Use of child interpreters; low income Spanish-speaking children, even when they are very young, may be used as interpreters by their limited English-speaking parents. Again, these children are kept out of school and deprived of other enriching activities and may be exposed to emotionally sensitive adult matters and concerns. Of course, failure by the various institutions to provide interpreters reinforces this practice. Excessive or inappropriate work requirements; sometimes the family's poverty, high fertility, and low educational attainment make it essential that as many family members as possible work. This usually includes the children. Appropriate work can create a sense of responsibility in the child, however, inappropriate work can discourage, exhaust and prevent the child from participating in other activities. At times, the younger children have been taken to the fields to help the elder family members pick their quota of berries for the day. Lastly, insufficient and inappropriate sex information; material disharmony, insufficiently educated parents, overcrowded housing conditions, and possible father absence may have a profound effect in teaching and perpetuating unhealthy sexual attitudes in the

child. Negative "machismo" characteristics attributed to Mexican-American males and the subassertiveness attributed to the females may represent poverty related sexual attitudes that degrade men and women. Many times, the parent's own insufficient sexual information or traumatic experience encourage them to respond with embarrassment, discourage or even punish the child's inquiries about sex. Lack of resources providing this information in Spanish and English, prevents many parents from improving their own sexual education.[75]

This presentation on the possible variables that could contribute to the functioning of the family and the developmental process of the child concludes this section on parenting as well as this chapter on the literature review. At this point it is important to say that the author's intent is not to degrade the low income multiproblem Mexican-American family, or to imply that their characteristics are all negative; but rather to provide a knowledgable base from which to work and study those components that may interfere with healthy parent/child relationships and family functioning with hopes of working more productively with this population in the the youth serving agency in the community.

CHAPTER III

Research Methodology

Statement

This is a descriptive exploratory research project. Descriptive research is the method to be used because the primary objectives are to be used because the primary objectives are to explore the adolescent/parent relationships and interactions, as well as to identify the feelings, attitudes, and responses found in these families when the adolescents go into crisis. Several hypothesis have been developed as a result of working with these families and extensively reviewing the literature written about them. As previously mentioned in Chapter II, it is the author's belief that the quality of interactions in the families to be represented in this study is poor as compared to those interactions found in healthy family systems. It is also believed that the adolescents in these families feel rejected, insignificant, unsupported, unprotected and isolated by their parents either as a result of the parent's having difficulty coping with their own life circumstances or because they are overwhelmed with the task of parenting an adolescent in crisis. These feelings being associated with the adolescent, appear to be directly related to the crisis or acting out behaviors of the teenager that brought the family into the Youth Services agency. Lastly then, another hypothesis presented by the author and supported by the literature, is that the parenting characteristics, attitudes and responses to be seen in these families appear to be related to the sex of the parent in relationship to the sex of the child. For example,

the parents respond differently to their son than they do to their daughter. This assumption will also be explored in the analysis of the information found in this study.

This investigation is of a descriptive nature and will, with the data collected, draw conclusions and make recommendations. According to Cook, "descriptive research aims at answering the questions of what exists?". This type of research "describes the rudimentary groups of things by comparing the contrasting likenesses and differences in their behavior."[76] The investigator hopes to locate reasons why the adolescents in these low income, multiproblem Mexican-American families go into crisis, and how the parent responds when they do. It is also an attempt to compare "what exists" in these families to what has been written in the literature. The social phenomenon of Mexican-American adolescents in crisis is growing, the numbers being seen by community serving agencies and institutions suggests that this population has special family dynamics and circumstances which require immediate investigation. It is the author's hope that this research will contribute additional information which describes some of the patterns and circumstances reflective of this population.

Also to be included in this chapter will be a discussion of the limitations evident in this type of study as well as a definition of terms to clarify their use and meaning throughout the research project.

Population, Characteristics and Criteria for Selection

The five families selected for this study are open cases at the Youth Services agency and are representative of the population seen there by the Crisis component. They are Mexican-American, although

they represent different stages of the acculturation process as expressed by their ability to speak English and their cultural traditionals. They fall under the low income bracket of the Youth Services sliding fee scale which means they have a gross income of less than $800 per month. These families are voluntary clients that have been referred from the schools, the police, or have referred themselves because of the acute crisis situation they are experiencing with their adolescent. The families contain at least one biological parent, some step parents, and three or more children. The parents in these families range in age from early 30's to early 40's and the adolescents between 14 and 17 years of age. All of the families arrive at the agency with varying degrees of problems. In almost all cases, powerlessness and frustration are reported by the parents, and feelings of insignificance and depression are common among the adolescents. They are seen as multiproblem and were selected for this study because they report having at least two of the four major adolescent crisis criteria chosen for the basis of this research. This crisis criteria means that the adolescent in the family has experienced at least two of the following within the same year period; suicide attempt or ideation, runaway episode or episodes, physical or sexual abuse by an adult, or being displaced or pushed out of their home. Several of the families have experienced as many as three of the crisis criteria. Although only five families are being looked at in this study, it is the author's intent to select those families who's characteristics (identifying information) was most representative of the clientele seen at the Youth Services Crisis component located in the South County office.

Process and Instrument

As previously mentioned, this study is descriptive and exploratory in nature. The study is designed to explore the adolescent/parent relationships and feelings as well as identify the parent/child interactions that surface when the adolescents are in crisis. The author has developed an instrument for recording the information reported by the adolescents and their parents in the initial intake session and two followup sessions. It is not a questionnaire or a direct way of asking questions and getting answers as the author did not wish to impose a specific structure to the crisis intervention process. Instead, it represents a summary of the attitudes, perceptions, reactions and responses reported during the three sessions in the office and in the homes of these five families. This design does not impose any control factors or comparison groups and exists solely for the purpose of grouping the information relevant to the study. The participants were selected according to the crisis criteria previously described, and also because they were most representative of the population seen in the crisis component of the South County office of Youth Services. In other words, these could be one of many families as the composition, dynamics and circumstances are very similar to the clientele seen daily by the author of this study. The instrument used to group the reported information was created as a result of the assumptions found in the review of the literature as well as from the hypothesis presented by the author. The data was collected from the families face-to-face and was recorded in the confidential case files of each family. The parents and the adolescents were seen separately as well as together, for a total time

of approximately five hours. These five hours include the initial intake session and two follow-up meetings.

In order to examine the parent/adolescent interactional patterns of five multiproblem, Mexican-American families with teenagers in crisis, the following instrument was developed. It has two parts, each of which has six components aimed at providing a scheme by which to examine the recorded data found in the case records. The first part represents the characteristics, responses and attitudes toward the crisis and the adolescent as perceived by the parents. The second part delineates the recorded characteristics, responses and attitudes as perceived by the adolescents toward the parents and the crisis they are experiencing. Also found within the instrument developed, is the multiproblem status or crisis criteria which relates to the adolescent in crisis as well as some identifying information which specifies the sex of the teenager and the marital status of the parents. Lastly then, is a section which states the disposition of the case and implies the current outcome of the families' experience with an adolescent in crisis. (See Appendix B for research instrument).

Identifying Information

It is important in this presentation of the methodology to briefly describe the families selected for this study as well as the nature of the crisis that involved them with the agency. As previously mentioned, all of the families coming into the agency or requesting intervention services, come with varying degrees of problems and very different perceptions of their problems. Included in the identifying information is a description of the family as they reported it, the nature of the crisis on the other hand, is the

author's attempt to report the facts of the crisis as perceived by the family, both the parent's and the adolescent's. In summary then, included in the identifying information is a genogram which maps out the family as well as a brief description of the family and the nature of the crisis. The triangular shape in the genogram represents the identified adolescent(s) experiencing crisis. This information was collected throughout three family meetings, each lasting at least one and one half hours, and is reflective of the facts, feelings, and experiences perceived and presented by the reporting family members.

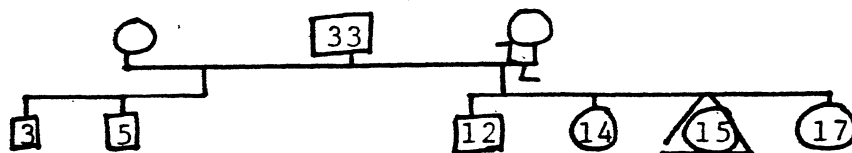## FAMILY #1
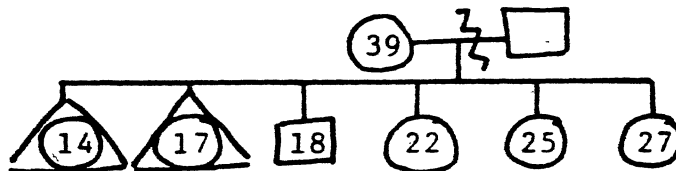
Brief Description of Family

This a single-parent family headed by a Spanish-speaking mother who is a seasonal cannery worker. The three adolescents are "attending" high school students and speak both Spanish and English fluently. They have never been in trouble with the law and report using marijuana and alcohol occasionally, having never experienced any other drugs. The family has high goals of achievement for each member.

Nature of Crisis

Mother came into the agency reporting that her two daughters had runaway to their older sister's house and she could not get them to come back. The daughter's came in reporting that their mother was physically abusive, used them as house cleaners and to brag to her

friends, and had allowed a male friend of hers to stay with her daughters while she (mother) was away on an out of town trip. The male friend took sexual advantage of the 17 year old during his stay. The daughters refused to speak Spanish in the first session which further alienated mother, and all members expressed anger, blame and hopelessness.

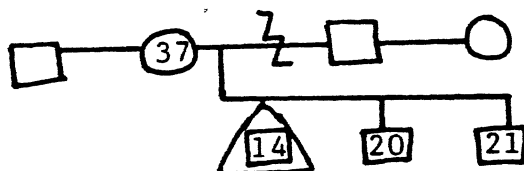## FAMILY #2

Brief Description of Family

Natural father and step-mother of eight years, received custody of the four adolescent children after natural mother shot herself six years ago. The natural parents had been separated for two years when mother committed suicide. Father and step-mother have two younger children of their own. Both of the parents work in a factory and rent a large home in town for the family. They are second generation Mexican-American and speak English fluently. The two youngest adolescents are in school doing well, the 15 year old has very poor attendance and just passing grades. they are considering transferring her to an alternative school. The oldest of the adolescent girls has runaway and been out of the home for three years.

Nature of Crisis

The fifteen year old was brought into the office by the police as she was apprehended attempting to strangle or hand herself with some sort of cord. This was her third suicide attempt. She had runaway

from home two weeks prior to this and had just broken up with her
boyfriend. She reported the home situation as being unbearable
because of her parents use of cocaine and alcohol, and because of
their apparent lack of concern for the welfare of their children. she
said there was never enough food in the house and that she was badly
in need of clothes as she only had two old pair of pants for school.
This client had worked at a fast food restaurant and had put one half
of her earnings into the household. The parents report this daughter
as being out of control, lying, and having not interest in life other
than the boyfriend. They accuse her of manipulating them to get to do
whatever she wants, and all parties agree that client and step-mother
do not get along with or like one another.

FAMILY #3

Brief Description of Family

Natural mother and step-father of 18 months are co-parenting the
14 year old in this family. Natural father is remarried and lives
locally although he has very little contact with the family. I have
never been to this house but it is reported that all members of the
family have their own rooms and that privacy is not an issue. Step-
father is currently unemployed and mother works as an aide in a
convalescent hospital. The adolescent is in an alternative school
program and is going well. Mother and natural father were separated

Brief Description of Family

This is an intact family with mother, father, and five children. The parents are Spanish-speaking only and the children prefer to speak Spanish, although they can speak English. Both parents are employed seasonally at the cannery, and rent a large house in the outskirts of town. All of the children are in public schools. The two oldest boys are in junior high. They are doing passing work although their attendance is very poor. Mother and father have been married for 16 years.

Nature of Crisis

The 14 year old in this family was referred to the agency by his school. He had a bruise on his back from his father hitting him and was threatening to run away. At this point in time, mother had taken the three younger children and left the father, he was threatening to kill her entire family is she did not return. This client was very angry at his father, as well as at his mother for leaving him there. It was also reported by the two older children that father drank "at least one bottle of whiskey a day, sometimes more". They were told by father to call in sick for him, to lie to the landlord about why the rent money wasn't there, and to pay many of the bills with their own money which they had earned at a shoe store after school. Mother was tearful, but absolutely quiet throughout every family session, and father would not give me permission to speak with his wife alone. The 14 year old, with whom I had most contact, behaved like an adult in most situations, but would regress to infant-like tantrums when he didn't get his way or when he became frustrated.

four years ago because she was brutally beaten and threatened with a butcher knife by him. Mother reports children witnessed this type of abusive behavior for eleven years and hate their father as a result.

Nature of Crisis

Client was brought into the office by the mother of his friend. He was barefoot and badly beaten by step-father. The hospital report red bruises and multiple lesions. Step-father had apparently kicked the boy in the back repeatedly with the heal of his boot as well as punching him in the face and stomach with a closed fist. The teenage boy was shaking and very scared. He reported feeling unwanted by his mother who he said was always trying to give him back to his father (who lives in a small trailer with his new family). He also voiced rage against his mother's husband and said "she always listens to him and never listens to me". This incident occurred as a result of an argument about the telephone and the confrontation escalated into a blow-up. The mother reported her son to be out of control and unwilling to listen, she was present during the beating and said "he deserved it". The step-father refused to come into the office but reported to me on the phone that the client must have done it to himself after leaving the house. (The mother reported wanting the boy out of the house as he was disrupting their lives.)

FAMILY #4
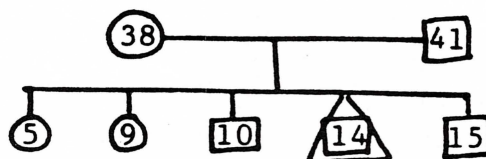
FAMILY #5
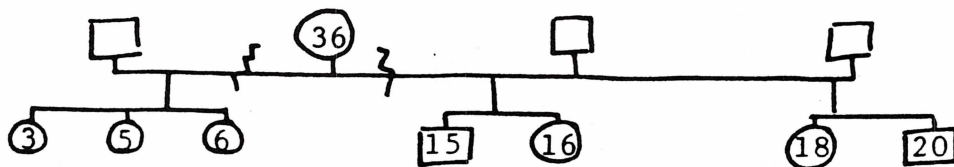
Brief Description of Family

This is a single-parent family headed by a Spanish-speaking mother who works in the fields picking berries. She has been married and divorced once, and has had children with two other men. The family lives in the upstairs of a small house close to the downtown area. The two oldest children were removed from the house and placed with the grandmother five years ago because they were beaten with electric cords and broomsticks by the mother. She has not contact with them. Currently, the five younger children are still considered to be living in the home.

Nature of Crisis

Our office was contacted by the police department and requested to send the Crisis counselor to visit the home. The police had apprehended mother beating the 16 year old on the high school campus. Mother reported that the daughter had runaway from home and would not do her chores. The daughter reported running away, feeling like a slave, not getting along with her mother, and refused to go home ever again. She had been gone from her mother's home for three days and was in school when her mother found her.

Limitations of the Study

It is important to discuss the limitations of this study in order to clarify any conclusions that may be drawn from it. One factor that

must always be considered in any study and analysis of the findings is the personal bias that the researcher brings into the collections and reporting of the data. Although the author has tried to limit the amount of personal bias by creating a fairly objective and specific research instrument, it would be impossible to exclude all subjectiveness completely. The families participating in this study were not aware until the last session that the information they reported would be used to conduct this research, therefore, the participant bias was completely eliminated and only the researchers personal bias is significant to report as a limitation in the study. The author's subjectiveness may be found in reporting the interpretations of the families attitudes, reactions and responses, although many were direct quotes. Also, since much of the data is pulled from the case files, the author's interpretation of that information may have a subjective bias.

Other factors that are also necessary to discuss as limitations of this study are sample size and duration of research project. A sample of five families is very small to make broad and concrete conclusions and generalizations. As was previously stated, the families selected were representative of many of the families seen by the agency, but this alone does not constitute rationale enough for a sample of five families to be conclusive of an entire population. Therefore, sample size in this study is a significant limitation. Generally speaking, the time period of data collection is an important factor in drawing conclusions and producing significant long term results. Since the primary focus of this study was crisis episodes, the total time spent with each family did not exceed five hours,

making the total time of the study only twenty-five hours. This is considered to be a brief study and not conclusive of long term data analysis. The information presented in the findings of this research project does not represent or track the families after the three preliminary sessions and therefore, represents a limitation in itself as the information is not as conclusive as the data available in many studies.

Lastly then, seen as a limitation by the author, is that there was not a before, during and after data collection process which would have helped determine the effectiveness of the crisis intervention and problem solving adjustments made by the families as a result of the crisis experience. Although the author's main focus was to collect information about the parent/child interactions during an adolescent crisis situation, the problem solving techniques utilized by these families is seen as a significant contributor to the information found in this study.

In conclusion, the limitations found in this study are; researcher's bias, too small of a sample for conclusive findings about the population, and too brief of a study to determine actual long term parent/child interactions. This a qualitative research project and a before, during and after data collection process would have made the findings and analysis of the project more concrete.

Definition of Terms

Crisis - One of four traumatic events which effects the life of the
        adolescent as well as the relationships within the family.
        These traumatic events are:

1. Suicide - ideations and attempts, no adolescent completions are

reported in this study.

2. <u>Runaway</u> - episodes and behavior patterns, the adolescent leaves home for one or more reasons.

3. <u>Physical and/or Sexual Abuse</u> - as reported by the victim who was an adolescent in this study.

4. <u>Pushed out</u> - the adolescent is receiving a message that he/she is is not welcomed in the home. This can be verbal or symbolic.

<u>Parents</u> - are seen here as having biological ties or having married into or joined the family as step parents or significant others.

<u>Families</u> - are seen as intact, both are natural and biological parents; blended, one biological and one step parent; and single, one parent only, who in this study is the biological parent as well.

<u>Adolescent</u> - in this study is a male or female within the ages of 14 - 17 years of age.

<u>Parenting techniques</u> - variety of interactions utilized by the parents in order to control or modify the child's behavior.

<u>Parent/Child interactions</u> - are the mutual or reciprocal actions or influences between the parent and the adolescent.

<u>Abbreviations</u> -   ◯ - Female
                        ▢ - Male

CHAPTER IV

Characteristics of the Data

The five families selected for this research project represent the following characteristics: Five out of five families contained a runaway adolescent, four out of the five reported physical abuse as a crisis criteria, two out of the five had a sexually abused adolescent, three report having a drug or alcohol abusing parent or parents, two report being pushed out of their home or asked to leave, and one family contained a suicidal adolescent and a parent who successfully completed suicide. Although the families were selected according to the criteria of having at least two of the above mentioned crisis precipitators, it was found in the study that each family contained at least three, and two of the families reported experiencing four. A runaway adolescent being a common characteristic of all five families.

Of the five families, one family is intact, having both biological parents living in the home. Two are single parent mothers, both speaking Spanish only and having four or more children in the household. Two of the families are seen as blended with one biological parent and one step parent or significant other living in the same residence. The adolescents responsible for bringing the family into the Youth Services agency, either directly or indirectly, are from 14 to 17 years of age, two being 14, one 15, one 16 and one is 17. Of the five adolescents, three are girls and two are boys. Even though several of the families have more than one adolescent experiencing some level of crisis, the data only represents the

parents and the adolescent directly involved in the crisis that brought the family into the agency.

Although the intent of this research project is not to measure the outcome or effectiveness of the crisis intervention process, it is important to report the dispositions of each case as it may reflect the serious nature of dysfunction either in the family or with the adolescent, as well as provide some closure for the reader about what in fact happens to these adolescents. Of the five adolescents that came in with their families, only one is currently back in the home. Two returned home after the first two sessions, but only one remains at home with his mother. The other adolescent stayed home only three weeks. Of the four adolescents currently not living at home with their families of origin, one is living with her sister. She is the only one staying with a member of the family or extended family. The other three are living in the homes of other adults, either paying rent by working or contributing in some way to the households of these other families. Of the four families with their adolescents living out of the home, only one single parent mother is actively trying to get her daughter back into her family. Four of the five adolescents are still involved with the agency, and only one of the parents continues to seek help with Youth Services to get her daughter back home with her. This concludes a brief presentation of the characteristics representing the five families found in the data collection process.

Presentation of the Data

The data to be presented consists of twelve categories and is divided into two parts. One part reveals the data collected as

perceived by the parent or parents, and the second part illustrates the characteristics, attitudes and responses as perceived by the adolescents themselves. As was previously mentioned, this study was not designed as a direct question and answer instrument, but rather as a way to record the feelings, attitudes, and responses of the participants in order to explore the parent/adolescent relationships that exist during a family crisis. The instrument is designed to examine how the parents see themselves, their adolescent and how they respond to the crisis, as well as to investigate how the adolescents feel about themselves and their parents, how they view their parents attitude toward them, and their responses to the crisis. Some of the data collected overlaps in several of the categories. It is the opinion of the researcher that this serves to emphasize the themes which are reoccuring in these families. Several examples of these themes are denial and anger. Although they are expressed in different ways, they represent two defenses often used by families experiencing frustration, inability to communicate, feeling overwhelmed, or undergoing problems related to alcohol or drug abuse. The data will be presented by categories and is divided into two parts, a discussion and interpretation section will follow the presentation.

The first category is labeled "Characteristics of the Parent" and refers to how the parents are feeling about themselves in this situation. All of the parents reported feeling angry, three reported feeling frustrated, one feels hurt, one is bothered, and one feels hopeless in controlling her adolescent. The second category is "Attitude of the Parent toward the Adolescent" and refers to the parent's perception of the adolescent in the situation. Four of the

parents see the adolescent as having a problem, four see the adolescent as out of control and wanting to do as they please. Three report that the teenager doesn't respect them, one says she is defiant, one says he demands too much, and four report being angry at the adolescent. The general theme appears to be the adolescent has a problem and won't listen to me. Category three is the "Response of the Parent to the Crisis" as perceived by the parent. All five parents blame the adolescent for the crisis, two report telling the adolescent to leave if they don't like the situation, two are unwilling to respond (giving up control), two report that there really isn't a problem (denial). One parent says she hit her daughter and one says she came to Youth Service. Category four still of part one is "Characteristics of the Adolescent", or how the parent sees the adolescent. Three see their adolescent as lazy, two feel they are out of control and have no respect for them, two feel that their adolescent lies and can't be trusted, one feels their teenager is influenced by her peer group, and one says she doesn't understand her daughter. Category five is "Attitude of the Adolescent toward the Parent". This looks at how the parents think their children feel about them. Three felt their adolescents didn't respect them, three reported that their teenagers thought they were too strict and were angry at them, and three said they felt their adolescents thought they were mean to them and verbally abusive. The last category of the first part is "Response of the Adolescent to the Crisis". This is again as the parents perceive it. All five reported their son or daughters response was to leave or runaway. Three said their adolescent gets verbally abusive, two say they hurt themselves, two

say they lie and call the authorities, one says her son won't listen, and one says she escalates her acting out behavior. That concludes a summary of the data collected from interviews with the parents. This instrument does not take into account the many other factors influencing the lives of these parents such as unemployment, language barriers, economic status, education level, or other family circumstances which compound the family dynamics and crisis situations. The instrument was designed to strictly look at the relationship between the parent and adolescent in a time of crisis.

The second part of the study looks at the characteristics, attitudes, and responses of the parents and the adolescents as perceived by the adolescents. It is divided into the same six categories and the information collected is that which was recorded from the three sessions with the adolescents. Part two, category one is "Characteristics of the Parents"; how the adolescent sees his or her parents. Five adolescents report their parents don't listen to them, two report the parents don't understand. Two felt they were used as slaves to babysit and do the housework, two felt their natural parents cared about the step parent more then them, (their were only two blended families) and two felt their parents were substance abusers. Category two is the "Attitude of Parents toward the Adolescent" which refers to the adolescent's perception of how their parents feel about them. Three teenagers felt their parents don't respect them or trust them. Three also felt their parents didn't care about them. Two felt the parents saw them as having a problem, and two felt their parents were angry at them. Category three is "Response of the Parents to the Crisis", again this is how the

adolescents see their parents responding to the crisis. Four say their parent responds by making them feel guilty, three said they got hit, three say their parents respond with anger, two say their parents told them to leave, two say they were threatened, one says her mother calls her names, one said her parents don't do anything, and one says her mother tells the world and seeks help. The fourth category is the "Characteristics of the Adolescent", how the teenager feels about him/herself. Two reported feeling they could make it on their own, they didn't need their parents (powerful, in charge of their own lives). Three felt rejected and hurt, two felt they were the problem, two felt lonely, two felt depressed, and two felt unwanted by their families. The fifth category is the "Attitude of the Adolescent toward the Parent", how they felt about their parents. Three report caring about their parents and trying, but feel that the parent will never change. Three feel angry toward parents and reported wishing they had real parents. Two of the adolescents felt that the alcohol and drugs were more important than they were to the parents, two see their mothers as mean, two see their parents as wanting to control their lives, and two felt that their mothers just wanted them so they could do all of their work. The last category of the second part is the "Response of the Adolescent to the Crisis", or what the teenagers say that they did. All five said they ranaway. Three said they looked for help to find a new place to live, two said they went to authorities for help, two said they tried to avoid their parents, one said she tried to kill herself and one said he was really scared. This concludes a summary of the information recorded from the interviews with the adolescents. The intent of the data collection

was to specifically look at how the parents and their teenagers saw themselves and each other in a crisis situation. This study does not take into account whether the adolescent is in school, is in trouble with the law, or his or her previous life experiences or behavior.

It is difficult to look at the data presented here and understand how it is relevant to Mexican-American multiproblem families with adolescents in crisis; therefore, it is important at this point to clarify and interprete the significance of the data and the substantiality of the findings.

Interpretation of the Data

The intent of this section is to interprete and analyze the findings of this study as they relate to the five families with adolescents in crisis. It is the goal of the author to explore the dynamics of these families and how they compare to the literature written about them as well as assess the previously formulated hypothesis in order to provide some conclusions and recommendations that will benefit the professionals who work with these types of families. It is important at this point to keep in mind that this study is exploring the parent/child interactions of five multiproblem Mexican-American families with adolescents in crisis, and must include an analysis of the impact of the multiproblem status as well as the cultural influences on the parenting of these adolescents.

It is appropriate to begin then, with how these five families and their patterns of interacting compare to what has been written about the characteristics found in healthy families. According to the literature, the characteristics found in healthy functioning families include; expression of appreciation by family members, spending

quality time together, good communication, a high degree of commitment, and the ability to handle a crisis situation positively. The data collected in this study, although by no means conclusive, demonstrates these five families are weak in all areas of the characteristics important for healthy family functioning. Neither the parents nor the adolescent in this study showed or expressed feelings of appreciation for each other. Instead, the parents expressed frustration, hurt, anger, and helplessness, while the adolescents expressed resentment, anger, and wishes for real parents. Although the amount of quality time spent together was not directly assessed in this study, it was the author's hypothesis that the quality of interactions found in these families was poor as compared to those in healthy families. This hypothesis was supported in the findings by the lack of respect, trust and by the many misunderstandings reported by both the parents and the adolescents. It is also significant that three out of the five adolescents reported feeling their parents didn't care about them, and that verbal abuse was one means used to describe the parent/adolescent interaction in a time of crisis. Good communication, also seen as a characteristic for healthy families functioning, was clearly not apparent in these families. All five adolescents report that their parents don't listen to them, while the parents, four out of five believe the adolescents had the problem, wouldn't listen and just wanted to do as they pleased. The general overtones presented in the findings, of mistrust, no understanding, no respect, and no time for me, provide significant evidence that good communication is not happening. Another characteristic of healthy families is a high degree of commitment. The obvious fact that the

adolescents runaway and that the parents, with the exception of one, don't go get them and try to work things out at home, indicates that lack of commitment, at least between this adolescent and his or her parents, is a characteristic of their interactional pattern. Lastly then, seen as characteristic of healthy families, is the ability to handle crisis situations positively (family adaptability). It is interesting to note, that in these five families, all responses except for seeking help, were negative. The adolescents responded to the crisis by becoming verbally abusive, hurting themselves, and running away. The parents responded with anger, threats, namecalling, and beating. It appears that problem solving and conflict resolution skills, which are needed in time of crisis as well as for healthy family functioning, are not being utilized by these families. In conclusion then, the findings of this study suggest that these families possess very few of the characteristics found to be important in healthy family interactions and functioning.

In this analysis of the parent/adolescent interactions in a crisis situation, it is important to review the issues of adolescents and the life cycle of the family with adolescents. As was mentioned in the literature review, the stage of adolescence is a difficult time for the adolescent as well as for the parent. The family must adapt in certain ways to allow for the growth and development of their child's transition into adulthood and independence. Adolescence is a normal stage, often labeled as "rebellious", where the teenager becomes intensely involved with peers, withdraws into self, challenges authority and limits, and works on being a competent individual. If parents are not aware of the impact of an adolescent on the family,

they may misinterpret the teenagers behavior and be unprepared to deal with it. The author believes that the families of this study are not prepared to accommodate the developmental stretching and growing of an adolescent, either because they are too rigid (not adaptable enough), or because the parents are unable to cope with the new demands of the individuating adolescent. This hypothesis will be discussed further when examining the multiproblem stressors that effect the ability of the parents to cope with the task of parenting.

The multiproblem family, and its struggle for survival have been described in the literature review. The families chosen for this study fit the criteria presented for multiproblem in that they are low-income, have jobs that are seasonal or sporatic, all except one are single parent or blended families, and they may also be categorized as high risk for adolescent maltreatment. As well, it is significant in the findings, that these families have reported experiencing physical and sexual abuse as well as drug and alcohol related problems. In analyzing the parent/child interactions of these families, it is important to delineate the organization of the family interactions either as "disengaged" or "enmeshed". These terms represent two organizational family profiles that are characteristic of multiproblem families. It is the author's opinion that all five of these families fit into one of these organizational profiles. It appears that two of the families are "disengaged", suggesting a profile of isolated persons who seem uninterested in one another and who's responses to each other are often delayed. The remaining three are seen by the author as "enmeshed", meaning the family system is tightly interlocked and attempts to change are quickly resisted by

other family members. Immediate reactivity is a characteristic of the enmeshed family. The purpose of this discussion on organizational profiles of the family is to create an awareness that these parent/child interactions which are the focus of this study, may also suggest a pattern by which the whole family deals with one another. It is the author's assumption too, that these patterns of interaction have been reflected in the findings exploring the parent/child interactions in a crisis situation.

Lastly then, it has been repeated many times throughout the literature, as well as presented in the literature review here, that multiproblem families may have an attitude of hopelessness which would consequently raise counterbarriers of hatred, fear, anger, and self hate. This would definitely have an impact on parenting and the development of the parent/child relationship. It suggests that the parents are generally frustrated and all of the energies needed for being adequate parents are channeled into a struggle for basic needs, usually at the cost of self-esteem and role performance. Taking these factors into account, as well as the findings of this study which suggest that the parents feel frustrated and angry, and are not aware of the needs of their adolescents. One can assume that the parent's ability to cope with their lives, and their job or parenting is very difficult. To conclude this discussion on the multiproblem family, as reflected in this study, the findings, as well as the literature support the author's hypothesis that the parents are having trouble coping with their role as parents, and with the needs of their adolescents.

The cultural traditions and influences found in the Mexican-American family are also very significant in the analysis because of the "cultural pluralism", culture conflict, and language barriers which exist. It is the opinion of the author that many of the attitudes, feelings, and responses expressed by the families of this study are reflective of the "cultural generation gap" (so to speak) that is found in the acculturating families of today's society. This cultural pluralism provides an especially delicate situation for the adolescent who is bound by the cultural traditions of his/her family, while at the same time exposed to the more individual focus of today's dominant culture. It is difficult for the parent as well, who is struggling to understand the new language, environment and the behavior of their adolescent child. In order to interprete several for the findings of this study, it is important to review some of the concepts discussed in the literature and their impact on the parent/child interactions of the five families. Since three of the five families are Spanish speaking, and the other two are Mexican-Americans, there appears to be several cultural concepts that are significantly related to all five. These are: 1) that the honor of the family, obeying and respecting the elder family members is important, 2) a child's behavior is a direct reflection on the family, especially the father, 3) and male/female roles and behaviors are clearly defined. Although the mothers in all five families are working, it appears that the children are being raised into the traditional male/female roles. The author has made this assumption from the findings of the study which suggest it is the female clients who report feeling like slaves and are labeled "lazy" by the parents.

It is also the female clients that see their parents as being strict and wanting to control their lives. The boys on the other hand, see their mothers as weak and not standing up to the men in their lives, and see the men in their families as hating them and competing for mother's attention. It is also significant that "lack of respect" was reported by both the parents and the adolescents in the findings of the study. It does appear to the author, and was supported by the literature that the female adolescents are expected to stay close to the home, where the male adolescents are able to come and go with the expectation (theirs) that they protect their mothers (mostly from their fathers). This assumption was not directly implied as a result of the information gathered from the families, but rather as an indirect message given to the researcher. It is difficult though for the adolescent girls to stay at home when their friends are going out and participating in school activities.

The literature describes the relationship between the mother and the daughter of the Mexican-American family as being "close". This does not seem to be the case in this research project. Instead, the opposite was found to be true. Perhaps because there were no father figures in two of the families with female adolescents and a stepmother in the third. The findings show that the mother/daughter relationships are poor, and that in both cases, the daughters refused to speak Spanish with their mothers. This appeared to further alienate them from each other as well as confirm the mother's belief that their daughters had no respect for them. The relationships between the adolescents and their fathers were somewhat different. The findings support the literature saying that the adolescent sons

were distant from their fathers but in these families it was because of fear more than respect. The adolescent boys report not respecting their father and step father because of alcohol abuse and the way in which their father treated their mother as well as the boys themselves. The findings show that in the four families were physical abuse had taken place, it was the mothers who hit the daughters and the father and stepfather who hit the boys. This supports the author's hypothesis that the parenting characteristics, attitudes, and responses found in these families appear to be related to the sex of the parent in relation to the sex of the child. Although the mothers were not extremely supportive or protective of their sons, they were more so than the father and stepfather. The mothers toward their daughters were found to be very unsupportive and hostile, which is in contrast to the literature describing mother/daughter relationships in most Mexican-American families.

Another significant issue that came out of the findings was that four out of the five adolescents reported their parents using guilt (making them feel guilty) as a response to the crisis. Four also report their parents hitting them as a response to the situation. The literature suggests that physical punishment is a severe and destructive type of discipline that is usually not tolerated by children when they reach the age of adolescence. Guilt, on the other hand, is seen in the literature as a primary antecedent to depression in adolescents. Neither types of discipline was effective in controlling the teenagers in this study.

Lastly then, to conclude this section of data analysis, is the discussion of the author's hypothesis that the adolescents in these

families feel rejected, unsupported, unprotected, insignificant, unwanted and isolated by their parents, and that these feelings are related to the crisis or acting out behaviors that brought the families into the agency. The findings do not conclusively support this hypothesis, although there is significant evidence which supports that three out of the five adolescents feel rejected, two feel unwanted and insignificant, and one feels isolated. Throughout the literature, parental rejection has been found to be related to a wide range of personality and behavioral problems such as various forms of psychopathology, delinquency, and conduct problems, etc. The fact that three of the five are experiencing hurt from parental rejection is enough to suggest that there may be a correlation between these feelings and the acting out behaviors that brought them in. What is still a factor which does not support the author's hypothesis is that two of the five adolescents feel powerful and in charge of their lives. These two teenagers admit they need financial and emotional support to survive, but have been successful in getting it outside of the family system while continuing to feel good about themselves. In summary, it is the author's belief and supported by the literature and the findings, that these five families are high risk for destructive parent/child relationships because they are characterized by positive attitudes toward coercion, and a chaotically "enmeshed" or "disengaged" interpersonal system, thus making them extremely vulnerable as the child enters adolescence. It is also significant that families at high risk in adolescence are more likely to contain stepparents. There were two stepparent families in this study. The following chapter will include conclusions and recommendations that

were made as a result of interpreting and analyzing the findings of
the study.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

This is the last and perhaps the most important chapter of the research project as it will identify several of the author's conclusions and recommendations as they relate to the findings of the study and the significant information found in the literature review. As was previously mentioned, this study is by no means conclusive, it does though, provide some valuable information for the professionals who work with multiproblem Mexican-American families who have adolescents in crisis. The conclusions to be reported directly relate to the four hypothesis formulated by the author throughout the text of this research project, and are a result of exploring the parent/child interactions of five multiproblem Mexican-American families with adolescents in crisis. The conclusions are as follows:

The quality of interactions found in these families are poor as compared to those found in healthy functioning families. Those characteristics of appreciation for one another, quality time spent together, good communication patterns, a high degree of commitment, and the ability to handle a family crisis positively are not found in the five families of this study.

The families of this study are not prepared to accommodate the developmental stage of adolescence in the family life cycle and are unable to cope with the intense job of parenting a teenager. It appears that because of the struggle to survive, these parents are generally frustrated and all of the energies needed for being adequate parents are channeled into the battle of attaining the basic needs for the family, personal satisfaction, and coping with the environment.

One can assume then, that the parents ability to cope with their lives, and the needs of their adolescent, is very difficult.

The Mexican-American culture, and its' influences, have a direct impact on the parent/child interactions, and the relationships between the mothers and their daughters, the sons and their fathers, as well as the relationships between sons and mothers, and fathers and daughters. The author's hypothesis that the parenting characteristics, attitudes and responses found in these families appear to be related to the sex of the parent in relationship to the sex of the adolescent was supported in the findings. It is also important to state that culture conflict, the cultural pluralisms, and the language barriers which exists, contribute significantly to the developing relationships between the parents and their children. The emphasis on respect, family honor, sex, appropriate behavior, and obedience are characteristics reflective of the "cultural generation gap" between the parents and their adolescents found in the five acculturating families of this study.

The negative manner in which families respond to crisis situations contributes significantly to the adolescent feelings of not being head, wanting more from their parents, feeling unwanted, blamed, neglected and hurt. It appears that when parents respond to a crisis by blaming, seeing the child as the problem, or by verbally abusing or hitting, the adolescent counter responds by verbally abusing the parents, running away, or hurting themselves. Although the findings of the study do not conclusively support the author's hypothesis that all of the adolescents in these families feel unsupported, unprotected, insignificant, and isolated by their parents, there is

significant evidence to support that parental rejection and negatively handled crisis situations, relate to the adolescent's behavior and their development of conflict resolution and problem solving skills. It is also possible to assume, as a result of the findings, that coercion, either guilt inducing or physically applied, is not tolerated as a method of control once the children reach the delicate age of adolescence.

This study, although limited and not conclusive, has several implications for family therapy. The results suggest that the parents in these families feel powerless and that the adolescents feel unsupported. This implies a need to strategize for successful interventions which include empowering the parents and helping them be supportive of their children. As well, the results of this study support the existence of a cultural generation gap and suggest that there is a need to identify it within these families and look for interventions which bring the adults and adolescents closer to understanding each other.

After many years in direct practice, the author of this research project has become more prevention oriented. The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study. The community at large be called upon to focus on family wellness, providing information as well as developing programs to deal with the social problems that severely impact the ability of families to be healthy. These would include adequate housing, creating jobs and vocational training programs, health clinics and family planning services, as well as drug and alcohol treatment facilities, all of which would be in proportion to the needs of the community and

available in the various languages represented by the population. Poverty and oppression have always existed in our societies, it is the job of the communities to create effective and ongoing social programs to deal with the needs of the people and lessen the burdens of survival on the family, so they can focus their energies on being effective parents.

The Hispanic population in this country is rapidly growing. An awareness of the culture and language is essential in providing services for these families and should be encouraged in all areas of social development and individual growth.

For the families who find themselves in crisis situations with their teenagers, agencies and the professionals who deal with them need to provide education on the issues of adolescence, as well as programs which teach conflict resolution, problem solving, stress management, and communication and negotiation skills. These are basic skills needed by both the parents and the adolescents to perform in their significant family roles. An awareness of adolescent development and the job of the parents in developing a competent and independent young person needs to be the focus of the youth serving agencies. Adolescents need help in developing creative ways to socialize, be active and productive, as well as develop resources which will help them to communicate and negotiate with their parents to get their needs met.

Lastly then, the author cannot stress enough the importance of a healthy family on the development of the individual child. Studies looking at family functioning and successful intervention methods must continue to be a priority. Research conducted for the purpose of

understanding and clarifying the role of the parents and the behavior of the adolescent is essential in the development of intervention and programs created to meet the needs of these multiproblem Mexican-American families with adolescents in crisis which continue to represent a growing segment of the population.

FOOTNOTES

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APPENDICIES

SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY COUNSELING CENTER, INC.

Youth Services Progress Report

Health and Human Services

July 1, 1985 through June 30, 1986

REPORT PERIOD: July 1, 1985 through March 31, 1986

Goal I: To provide comprehensive services to runaway and homeless youth in Santa Cruz County. Services to include 24-hour crisis line, counseling, temporary shelter, facilitation of out-of-home placement.

Objective A: To provide 24-hour crisis line services and respond to 5,000 crisis calls per year.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
3750	3867	103%

Objective B: To provide crisis and short-term face-to-face counseling to 300 youth and 150 parents/ significant others on-site in crisis office.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
# of Youth: 225	433	192%
# of Parents/SO's: 113	689	610%

Objective C: To provide crisis and short-term intervention for 250 youth seen on the street, at school or other off-site locations.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
188	381	203%

Objective D: To provide intervention and assessment services for 100 runaway or homeless youth.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
75	88	117%

Objective E: To provide emergency, temporary shelter for 75 runaway and homeless youth.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
56	61	109%

Objective F: To reunite 75 runaway or homeless youth with their family of origin.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
56	65	116%

Goal II: To provide improved access to chronic runaway youth in order to increase their safety, reduce their delinquency and assist their successful emancipation.

Objective A: To maintain one halftime outreach counselor in the City of Santa Cruz service area to perform 200 hours of specialized outreach in areas attracting chronic runaways and other disaffected youth.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
150	204	136%

Objective B: To maintain one full time bilingual counselor in the Hispanic areas of the City of Santa Cruz and the City of Watsonville to perform 200 hours of specialized outreach in areas attracting runaway and other disaffected Hispanic youth.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
150	187	125%

Objective C: To provide onsite counseling services during weekend and evening hours.

In addition to our 24-hour, seven-day-a-week hotline, our Crisis Office is Open Monday through Friday from 9AM to 9PM. and on Saturday and Sunday from 12 to 5PM.

Goal III: To ensure access to appropriate aftercare services for 120 youth and families engaged in reunification and 30 youth seeking emancipation.

Objective A: To refer 120 youth and their families to aftercare treatment involving family therapy either at our own program or at other appropriate programs.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
90	105	117%

Objective B: To provide individual and family counseling as well as information and referral to ancillary support services for 30 youth seeking emancipation.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
23	61	265%

Goal IV: To maintain youth participation in crisis line services.

Objective A: To train 12 youth to serve on crisis line reception and screen emergency calls for immediate counseling services. To recruit these youth through street and school outreach, and to provide 96 staff hours of training and supervision of youth counselors.

3rd Quarter Objective		Provided	% of Objective
# of youth:	9	32	355%
# staff hours:	72	108	150%

3

Goal V: To provide training and coordination support to foster
           parents in our youth shelter care network.

Objective A: To provide monthly training meetings for new and
                continuing foster parents.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
9	9	100%

Objective B: To provide 24 additional hours of supervision to
                foster parents during phone and site visits.

3rd Quarter Objective	Provided	% of Objective
18	20	111%

Goal VI: To ensure public awareness of program services.

Objective A: To   advertise   services   through   public   media
                including hot-line posters in public buses

                          Hotline   posters   are   in   Santa   Cruz
                          Metropolitan Transit District buses. Hotline
                          (tear-off) pads are at a variety of private
                          businesses   and   public   service   agencies.
                          Public Service Announcements are on local
                          radio   stations.   Peer   counselors   are
                          distributing hotline pads to alternative,
                          less   traditional   places   where   youth
                          congregate.

Objective B: To provide annual orientation to services and
                procedures for local law enforcement agencies and
                school personnel.

                          The Crisis Program Manager is an appointed
                          member   of   two   ongoing   community
                          organizations: Student   Attendance   Review
                          Board,   and   Child   Abuse   Interagency
                          Coordinating Task Force.   The Youth Services
                          Director regularly attends monthly meetings
                          of   the Santa Cruz City School District
                          counseling staff.   These memberships enable
                          them to informally provide networking with
                          law enforcement and school personnel on a
                          monthly basis.

4

Objective C: To inform parents and students of service
                 availability through notices in school bulletins
                 and presentations at local schools.

                     Through our agency-wide outreach contacts at
                     school sites, our services are being
                     advertised in a variety of ways. Three
                     notices in school bulletins were published
                     this quarter, and peer (youth) counselors
                     have made seven presentations to local school
                     classrooms.

5

FAMILY # _____

Crisis Criteria

RA   DA   PO

PA   AA

SA   S

Family Information

Intact   _____

Separated   _____

Blended   _____

Sex of Adolescent

Age of Adolescent

14   15   16   17

Disposition

As perceived by Parent

Characteristics of Parent (how parent feels about self)	Attitudes of Parent Toward Adolescent	Response of Parent to Crisis
Characteristics of Adolescent (how parent feels about adolescent)	Attitude of Adolescent to Parent	Response of Adolescent to Crisis

As perceived by Adolescent

Characteristics of Parents (how adolescent sees parent)	Attitude of Parent to Adolescent	Response of Parent to Crisis
Characteristics of Adolescent (how adolescent feels about self)	Attitude of Parents toward Adolescent	Response of Adolescent to Crisis