Selected Risk Factors Contribute to Homelessness Among Youth:
A Comparative Study of Chile and the United States

by

Kelly K. Minks

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                                            Dr. Mark Lusk

Youth who are at-risk of homelessness are placed into jeopardizing situations because they are often pushed toward the outer edges of society, disconnected from healthy support networks, involved in illegal activities, and their chances of having successful futures are, in turn, diminished. The goals of this project were to: review current literature of homelessness among youth in the United States and Chile and identify parallel risk factors occurring in both countries; determine causes and effects of selected risk factors; and identify methods cited in the literature that may prevent the occurrence of selected risk factors, and provide them to one social welfare agency in each of the two countries (SEDEJ and JSYSI).

In order to identify these risk factors, I chose to conduct a literature review which resulted in the following: substance abuse, lack of education, single parent household, low social class, childhood abuse, mental illness, involvement in criminal activity, and lack of healthy support networks. I subsequently decided to conduct interviews with Chilean and American social workers so that I could determine whether the literature corresponded with actual experience. These interviews proved there to be a strong correlation between the literature and experiences that the social workers have had while working with youth who are at-risk of homelessness.

Although I discovered many parallels in my research about the populations of at-risk youth in Chile and the United States, I also observed several differences that clearly relate to the cultural values that are distinct to each of these countries.

Bachelor of Arts in International Studies in Human Development and Family Sciences
Thesis of Kelly K. Minks
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Approved:

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Dr. Mark Lusk, Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences

_____
Dr. Carolyn Aldwin, Chair, Human Development and Family Sciences

_____
Dr. Joseph G. Hoff, Academic Coordinator, International Degree Program

I understand that my thesis will become part of the collection of Oregon State University. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request. I also affirm that the work represented in this thesis is my own work.

_____
Kelly K. Minks, Author

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     I would like to thank all of those who have encouraged me to pursue traveling abroad to Chile in order to research and write this thesis. I can honestly say that when I initially began this project, I had no idea what type of commitment I was getting myself into. There were many times that I found myself frustrated and overwhelmed during this process, questioning whether or not I was even cut out for it. However, with these people at my side, cheering me on each step of the way, I was able to successfully complete my thesis for the International Degree:

Joan Minks, Dr. Mark Lusk, Renee Stowell, Joseph Hoff, Angela Palacios, Paola Zamorano, Eduardo Barrios, Servicios para el Desarrollo de los Jóvenes, Jackson Street Youth Shelter, to my wonderful friends and family, and to my Daddy—who I know is watching over me every day.

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Introduction

Youth who are considered to be homeless can be found living in shelters, couch surfing with friends, seeking shelter in vehicles or abandoned buildings, and sleeping on the streets. "They often have no address or identification documents and no parental assistance in financial matters. They may have lost or severed all contact with their parents or extended family." (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) These youth are constantly battling a rollercoaster of emotions and typically lack the support necessary to cope with them, which in turn causes them to feel: poor, poorly educated, at a loss about their futures, disconnected from their parents, depressed, worthless, neglected, and that drugs will help to shelter them from hunger and feeling lonely. (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund)

What causes youth to wind up in such challenging situations like becoming homeless? This essay will investigate the parallel risk factors that are found to be prevalent among the lives of youth living in the United States and Chile. "All young people have the potential for the development of at-risk behaviors. They may move in and out of at-riskness depending on personal, social, educational and family dynamics. No one can be excluded." (Capuzzi 2006) For this reason, it is important to study the causes and effects of these selected risk factors in order to better understand how homelessness among youth may be prevented.

In order to obtain an accurate estimate of the population of homeless youth in the United States, the federal government uses a formula stating that 1 in 12 homeless youth contact a service provider for assistance. (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) Once they find themselves destitute and without a roof over their heads, many youth hesitate to contact service providers because they fear that they will be returned to an unsafe home environment. Many are simply embarrassed to admit that they are homeless. In 2004, approximately 2 million youth were reported homeless in the United States alone. This is an alarming statistic for an industrialized nation, but even more so that "before the age of 18, one youth in eight will run away from home and become a street person…40% do not return." (Raleigh-Durof 2004)

Precise numbers of homeless youth living in Chile are not readily available, but it is acknowledged by the Chilean society as being a serious problem—just as it is within the United States. The street environment that many of these youth are living in is often as bad, if not worse, than that of the home situations that many are trying to escape. (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) However, although many youth

make the choice to leave an unhealthy home environment, there are countless others who are kicked out or abandoned by their families, left to begin a new life alone.

> "We find ourselves in an extreme situation when we are suddenly catapulted into a set of conditions where our old adaptive mechanisms and values do not apply anymore and when some of them may even endanger the life they were meant to protect. Then we are, so to say, stripped of our whole defensive system and thrown back to rock bottom—whence we must carve out a new set of attitudes, values, and way of living as required by the new situation." (Davidson and Kidd 2007)

Is there anything that we, as a global community, can do to prevent such terror in the lives of youth? It is important for us to not only focus on the dreadful effects of homelessness among youth, but to examine what brings them to this point in their lives and create methods of prevention. This essay will conclude with a summary of plausible methods of prevention that have been collected in order to educate the public about the ways in which homelessness among youth may in fact be diminished if not alleviated.

Parallel Risk Factors Found in Chile and the U.S.

Before beginning my field research for this project, I conducted a literature review in order to determine selected risk factors that place youth at-risk of homelessness. It was important to identify parallel risk factors that are occurring in both the United States and Chile so that I would be able to make direct comparisons in my research thereafter. The selected risk factors include: substance abuse, lack of education, single parent household, low social class, childhood abuse, mental illness, involvement in criminal activity, and lack of healthy support networks. Although there are several other risk factors that I found to be prevalent in the literature of homelessness among youth

within both the United States and Chile, I chose to narrow my research and focus on specifically those stated above.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is a problem that can be found in countries all around the world. It cannot be determined or prevented by socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity or gender—it is much more complex than that. Current research illustrates that the abuse of tobacco and alcohol among youth typically leads to experimentation with marijuana and thereafter, with "hard drugs." Salkind states: "Experimentation is considered problematic when substance use occurs at a very young age, with increasing frequency, while the child is alone or in the context of behavioral or emotional difficulties." (Salkind 2002)

Researchers working in the Chilean juvenile system find this to be true as well. (GENCHI 1995) "A 1997 study by Bridget Grant and Deborah Dawson found that more than 40% of individuals who began drinking before age fourteen developed a dependence on alcohol." (Chen and Hoyt 2004)

Researchers have recently reported very high statistics in regards to alcohol consumption among youth. The Chilean government states that 90.2% of Chilean youth drink alcohol, which is a higher percentage than any other country in South America. "The use of legal drugs, such alcohol and tobacco, among Chilean youth had drastically increased while the use of illegal drugs has decreased." (GENCHI 1995) Willwerth claims that 12-20% of the alcohol market in the United States is made up of underage drinkers alone. (Willwerth 2006) Even if the use of illegal drugs is beginning to decrease in Chile, it remains to be a problem in both countries and needs to be given considerable attention.

Although many people believe that marijuana isn't as serious of a drug in comparison to "hard drugs," it is illegal in both the United States and Chile and is prevalently used among the youth populations in both countries. "Out of 16 million drug users in America, about 77% use marijuana, and 60% of teenagers in treatment have a primary marijuana diagnosis. The addiction to marijuana by our youth exceeds their addiction rates for alcohol, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, ecstasy and all other illegal drugs combined." (Willwerth 2006) In Chile, marijuana is directly linked with poverty, yet the populations who consume the most drugs are those of higher socioeconomic classes. (GENCHI 1995)

Aside from marijuana, the illegal drugs that are most often used in the United States and Chile are slightly different. The most commonly used drugs in Chile are: tranquilizers, cocaine, and pasta base (cocaine paste). (GENCHI 1995) In the United States, methamphetamine, cocaine, ecstasy, and prescription drugs are frequently used among youth. The abuse of prescription drugs has dramatically increased in recent years and has become very common. "In 2003, 2.3 million kids ages 12-17 took legal medications illegally in the United States." (Willwerth 2006) That means that approximately 1 of every 10 youth who fall into this age group have abuse prescription drugs.

Causes of Substance Abuse

There are a variety of reasons that youth may experience periods of emotional difficulty or personal problems; however, researchers in the United States and Chile are in agreement that these episodes in their lives may trigger substance abuse to occur. (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2001) Stress and dysfunction occurring within the home is a primary source of crisis, especially in the instance of: death, divorce, or incarceration of parents. (GENCHI 1995) If a youth lacks healthy problem solving skills, he/she may easily find him/herself in a state of depression, and consequently, turn to drugs or alcohol in an attempt to subside negative emotions. (Salkind 2002) (Willwerth 2006) Chilean researchers have found that "when Chilean youth are lonely, they will often turn to alcohol to accompany themselves." (GENCHI 1995)

Why do youth seem to be so susceptible to feeling lonely when many of them appear to be surrounded by people in their schools, homes, and neighborhoods? Often times this can be a result of alienation by their peers or other social problems. (Salkind

2002) American and Chilean researchers report that these youth may also be suffering

from: a personal deficit, conduct problems, troubles with personal development, shyness

coupled with aggression, or the trauma of being physically or sexually abused. (GENCHI

1995) However, a youth may not be the only person in his/her family experiencing

emotional problems, often times one or both parents are as well. The government of Chile

states that the emotionally disturbed parent may self-medicate by abusing substances,

which Salkind reports may cause his/her child to be subsequently set up for a genetic

susceptibility to addiction. (Salkind 2002) (INJUV 2005)

When a youth is raised in an environment where drugs and/or alcohol are readily

used, the youth may perceive that his/her parents are exceptionally permissive toward

drug and/or alcohol use. (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) Even if

this is not true, the youth may spend a lot of time being unsupervised and experience a

lack of consistent parental discipline, so he/she therefore may choose to experiment with

substances. If the youth is lacking the support of a parental role, or is entirely rejected by

a parent, he/she is at a very high risk to begin abusing substances. (GENCHI 1995)

(Salkind 2002)

Outside of the turmoil that exists within many homes of American and Chilean

youth, researchers have begun to focus very strongly on the impact that schools and peers

can have on a youth who chooses to abuse substances. Salkind and the government of

Chile each state that negative communication patterns and conflict arising at school can

tremendously impact a youth. (Willwerth 2006) The effects of ineffective classroom

management and frequent truancy can also place a youth at a higher risk to abuse

substances. Some reasons for frequent truancy among youth are that they may be

rebelling and/or affiliating with deviant peers, which in effect, may cause them to become vulnerable to peer pressure. (GENCHI 1995) (Salkind 2002) Their peers may try and convince them to hang out instead of going to class, and if they are striving to fit in, they will most likely give into this pressure. (Willwerth 2006)

A variety of researchers from the United States and Chile have also noted that youth are at a higher risk of substance abuse if they are: very curious, high sensation seeking, seeking pleasure, and impulsive decision makers. (Willwerth 2006) (Salkind 2002) (GENCHI 1995)

Effects of Substance Abuse

The abuse of substances among youth can lead to a variety of negative effects in relation to their health and wellbeing, and it can also hold them back from attaining future goals if it is left untreated. A major effect of substance abuse among youth in both Chile and the United States is that many end up running away from home. "Juvenile Department staff report that the longer youth remain runaways, the more likely they are to be involved in drug or alcohol abuse." (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) In the Journal of Drug Issues, researchers describe that drug use is reportedly five times higher among runaway and homeless youth than it is among their home-based peers—especially the use of cocaine. (Chen and Hoyt 2004)

Another effect that was apparent in literary sources from the United States and Chile regarding youth who are at-risk of homelessness is that substance abuse can lead to academic failure and a low commitment to school. This is often caused by decreased levels of motivation or interest in the future, which is a common result of substance abuse. (INJUV 2005) (Salkind 2002)

There were two effects of substance abuse that were common in the literature reviews conducted about the youth who are at-risk of homelessness in the United States and Chile, but are distinct to each country. The Chilean government describes the grim reality of addiction that so often follows youth once they begin to readily abuse substances. (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2001) For the most part, it is commonly known that addiction is a risk that follows the substance abuse; however, it is highlighted as a very serious problem in contemporary Chilean society. Capuzzi, an American researcher, states that there is a high prevalence of mental health issues among youth who are homeless in the United States. There is research that describes how substances can detrimentally alter the chemicals in a person's brain, which may cause mental illness, but Capuzzi argues that many youth who are battling mental illness turn to substances for comfort. (Capuzzi 2006)

Lack of Education

Many homeless youth dropped out of school before becoming homeless, which causes researchers to speculate whether or not a lack of education places a youth at risk of becoming homeless, or if it is simply more of an effect. (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) In 2000, the United States Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services reported that 600,000 students drop out of high school each year in the United States and that 25% of all young people are a grade

behind. (Capuzzi 2006) In comparison, the World Bank states that 96.5% of all students who enter the education system in Chile complete through secondary education and that 2.7% of these students repeat at least one grade. (World Bank) Although these statistics allow the Chilean education system to appear much more successful than that of the United States, it is important to focus on the percentages of youth who do not succeed within either system, determine the causal factors, and develop methods of prevention.

Poverty is a very important factor that influences the quality of education that a youth is able to acquire. Schools that provide their students with an overall low-quality education are often located in poor neighborhoods that also experience high crime rates and inadequate housing. (Capuzzi 2006) More often than not, the combination of the day-to-day stress that those who are growing up in this type of environment encounter, along with the lack of support that they receive from their schools, will consequently prompt them to drop out. "In 2000, it was reported that teenagers living in families with incomes in the lowest 20% of reported family incomes were six times more likely than teenagers living in families in the highest 20% to drop out of school." (Capuzzi 2006)

However, some researchers argue that homelessness is not a firm indicator of whether or not a youth will drop out of school. Many homeless youth adhere to the support that their school system provides them with because it may be one of the solitary sources of support in their lives. "In 2004-2005, 1,622 unaccompanied homeless youth were enrolled in Oregon's schools and 45% of these homeless youth were attending school regularly." (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) Although these

statistics are only based on one state in the United States, Oregon experiences very high rates of poverty and homelessness, therefore providing a strong model of comparison.

Causes of a Lack of Education

There are a variety of factors that can prevent a youth from receiving a strong education while growing up. Millions of people around the globe believe very strongly in the idea that youth are our future and that a good education can open countless doors of opportunity for them. However, the problem is that not every youth has the opportunity to receive a good education. If an adequate amount of support fails to be provided to those who are struggling in the education system, these students will consequently be set back and often separated from their goals and idealized future.

Throughout the research of youth who are at-risk of homelessness in the United States and Chile, the strongest causal factor of a lack of education appears to be related to economic difficulties. Capuzzi states that youth living in impoverished neighborhoods in the United States are at a higher risk of lacking an education, due to their economic situations. (Capuzzi 2006) The Chilean government reported that 24.4% of homeless youth have identified personal economic struggle as being a primary reason that they are unable to receive an education. Approximately 19.3% of Chilean homeless youth reported that they chose to work rather than attend school. (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2001)

Aside from the struggles that may prevent many youth from being able to consistently attend school, there are also many problems that exist within the classroom, which can severely set a youth back from learning. During class, lower socioeconomic class students may be ignored and left out of group work by students of higher

socioeconomic classes. If a teacher is not attending to these types of situations when they arise, he/she is also contributing to the lack of education of the excluded student. "Most teachers automatically assume deficiencies in the skills and abilities of lower class students." (Sharp 2003) If a teacher does have this type of attitude, he/she is entirely failing his/her students who are of lower socioeconomic class.

Another major factor that may lead to a youth's lack of education is the overall lack of support that he/she may receive from school, as well as from home. There are often times a lack of resources for low-achieving students, which place those who are in need of extra support at a great disadvantage. Problems may also arise when there is poor communication between teachers and minority or lower socioeconomic class students. (Raleigh-Durof 2004) However, aside from the problems that may exist within the classroom, Capuzzi reports that 56% of students with low levels of emotional support from parents will drop out of school. (Capuzzi 2006)

The influence that peers have on one another is another factor that is deserving of considerable attention. If a youth who is already exhibiting defiant behaviors chooses to associate with friends who display similar negative attitudes and behaviors, their unpleasant conduct will be encouraged to continue and possibly worsen. (Capuzzi 2006) This type of social environment often persuades youth to be frequently truant and/or to have a rebellious attitude toward school authorities. (Salkind 2002) On the other hand, many other youth experience alienation from their peers and will wind up withdrawing and isolating themselves in an attempt to escape this negative treatment. Youth who are experiencing these types of destructive or nonexistent relationships at school may fear

attending classes and as a result, fall behind in their education and possibly fail a grade in school. (Capuzzi 2006) (Raleigh-Durof 2004)

A variety of other factors that effect a youth's education were apparent throughout the research, but were less pronounced than those factors that were previously discussed. The Chilean and American literature sources also stated that substance abuse can lead to academic failure and a youth's low commitment to school. (Capuzzi 2006) (INJUV 2005) Separate from the results found in the American literary sources, the Chilean government focused on pregnancy as being a strong factor that can hold youth back from acquiring an education. (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2001) Raleigh-Durof, an American researcher, investigates the impact that a change in schools can have on a youth and how seriously it can compromise one's education. Other factors that exist within the classroom: boredom in class, inability to tolerate structured activities, and overcrowded classrooms. (Capuzzi 2006) (Raleigh-Durof 2004)

Through her experiences as a teacher in the United States, Mary Sharp states: "Schools operate from middle class norms and use the hidden rules of the middle class to educate." Sharp argues that these norms create many problems for students who are not part of the middle socioeconomic class. She states that lower socioeconomic class students are often looked down upon because their learned speech patterns may be different than that which is taught in the classroom, causing anxiety among these subjugated students. Sharp claims: "The hidden middle-class rules found within the K-12 classroom do not allow for the active participation of all students or the democratic classroom." (Sharp 2003)

Effects of a Lack of Education

The most recurrent effect of a lack of education that has been found in the United States and Chile is that youth will drop out of school. "When they are already very behind in school, they often times feel as though catching up seems like it is impossible, and they decide to just give up." (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) Once a youth has lost faith in him/herself and the school system, his/her future often begins to take a turn for the worst. Salkind discusses the common trend toward delinquency that often follows a youth if he/she ends up dropping out of school, and that this is most definitely one of the worst effects. (Salkind 2002)

Single-Parent Household

In recent years, youth being raised in single-parent households has become a common way of life in many countries around the world. Whether a family has been fractured by death, divorce, separation, or abandonment, effected youth are experiencing the negative repercussions of the breakdown of their families and are left to be raised by

one parent. The United States and Chile are two countries that are continuing to experience high levels of separation and divorce among couples who have children. Are their children being put at-risk?

According to researchers in 2000, the United States Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services reported that 14,000,000 children are being raised by one parent in the United States. (Capuzzi 2006) While the majority of Chilean youth (55.5%) live with both parents, those who do not live in the presence of both parents primarily live with their mother. (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2005) "On average, single fathers have higher standards of living than do single mothers, which decreases potential stresses within the family. Yet single mothers have been reported to have warmer and more structured relationships with their children than do single fathers." (Salkind 2002)

Causes of a Single-Parent Household

There are many reasons that lead to the creation of single-parent households, but separation, divorce, and the death of a parent are among the most common. (Raleigh-Durof 2004) Youth who grow up in single-parent households are often placed at a higher risk of encountering problems that their youth counterparts living in two-parent households are not as threatened by.

The United States has been experiencing a growing rate of divorce throughout recent decades, while the commonality of divorce is much more of a new phenomenon in Chile. This can be largely related to the strong influence that the Catholic Church has in Chilean society because it does not condone divorce whatsoever. Although the United States is based upon Christian principles, it is a society composed of many other religions

and beliefs as well—many of which do not directly oppose divorce. However, divorce rates are beginning to flatten out in the United States.

Effects of a Single-Parent Household

Various researchers argue that youth who grow up in single-parent households are not placed at a higher risk of experiencing problems because they are being predominantly raised by one parent rather than two; however, there are many other researchers who believe that they are. Salkind states that one of the most crucial risks that these youth face is a lack of sufficient parental supervision. Due to the fact that a greater percentage of single-parent families live below the poverty line, there is often an inability to provide childcare while the single parent is at work, which may subsequently increase the lack of overall supervision. (Capuzzi 2006) (Salkind 2002)

Aside from having an excessive amount of freedom and possibly getting into trouble when being left unsupervised, youth in this situation are also at-risk of suffering emotional problems because they are lacking a consistent parental figure in their lives. They are also at a higher risk of: lower academic performance, higher incidence of behavioral problems, abusing substances, and encountering abuse or neglect. (Capuzzi 2006) (Salkind 2002)

Low Socioeconomic Class

Youth who grow up in impoverished environments are placed at a higher risk of enduring many problems throughout their childhood because they often lack the financial means that are necessary to meet their needs. According to researchers in 2000, the

United States Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human

Services, 27,000,000 children live in poverty in the United States and 40% of families

living in poverty have incomes that are well below the national poverty line. (Capuzzi

2006)

Salkind states that the indicators of social class are: money, education, and social

environment. (Salkind 2002) These three indicators are closely linked with one another;

however, education has the power to positively influence one's household income and

social environment. Education is a tool that enables people to access better paying jobs so

that they may have the opportunity to live in safe neighborhoods and free of frequent

criminal activities—two important factors that can impose serious risk on youth and their

families. More often than not, youth of low socioeconomic families are being raised by

parents or family members who have not had the opportunity to receive an education,

preventing them from being able to market themselves to employers and attain a better

livelihood for their children.

Causes of Low Socioeconomic Class

Countries around the world differ in the ways in which their societies view the

causes of low socioeconomic class. Chile and the United States are two countries that, in

many ways, share similar beliefs in terms of low socioeconomic class; however, the

researchers of each of these countries place a great amount of emphasis on different

primary causes. Chilean researchers focus on the following factors as being principal

sources of low socioeconomic status: lack of government support, laziness, alcohol and

drug abuse, and unemployment. (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2001) However, the

Chilean government is in the process of creating many programs that are designed to

provide its people with the support that they have been lacking, in terms of employment and financial assistance.

Capuzzi, an American researcher, argues that falling wages is one of the most crucial factors that is currently affecting the financial situations of Americans. He states that the United States has made a gradual change from a high paying manufacturing-based economy to a low-paying service-based economy, causing people to work longer hours for less pay. (Capuzzi 2006) In contrast, the League of Women Voters of Oregon stress that the lack of affordable housing throughout the nation is forcing Americans into a position of low socioeconomic status. (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) Only one-third of low income renters receive federal assistance and the average American is currently spending up to 50% of his/her income on housing. (Capuzzi 2006)

Effects of Low Socioeconomic Class

Research has shown that youth who are raised in families of low socioeconomic class are at-risk of experiencing discrimination in their neighborhoods, communities, and even in their schools. There are many teachers who choose to favor children of higher socioeconomic status, assuming that those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds are somewhat deficient in terms of learning. This type of discrimination places youth at-risk for lower academic achievement and a lack of education. (Salkind 2002) (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2001)

In Chile and the United States, it is common to find youth who are of low socioeconomic status living in poorer, unsafe neighborhoods and attending low quality schools. "Life in a low-income family and an impoverished neighborhood also increases the probability of at-risk behavior because economically disadvantaged youth often lack

access to quality education and safe environments." Youth from poorer families are more likely to: lack a consistent caregiver, suffer abuse, witness domestic violence in their homes and neighborhoods, and experience residential instability. (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) (Capuzzi 2006) If a youth grows up in an environment where his/her family is frequently experiencing residential instability, the youth is at-risk of continuing this pattern into his/her adult life. (American Planning Association)

Chilean and American researchers have also found the mental illness is a common effect of low socioeconomic class. (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud) (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) The ways in which people of low socioeconomic class are treated, and the negative stigmas that they endure, are often due to the fact that they lack the financial means to invest into expensive material goods like their wealthier counterparts. Youth who grow up in this type of environment may feel angry, resentful, of lesser value, and may experience increased behavior problems—a combination that can place youth at-risk of suffering from mental illness. (Salkind 2002) The League of Women Voters of Oregon states that many youth who find themselves in this position may attempt to lessen their emotions by abusing alcohol and/or drugs. (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund)

It is also important to recognize the effect that socioeconomic class can have on one's access to quality healthcare. (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2001) (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) Although the governments of Chile and the United States are in the process of creating new programs so that the poorer citizens of their countries are able to receive quality healthcare when it is needed, it is a process that is taking quite a bit of time fully establish. In the meantime while Chileans and

Americans of lower socioeconomic status wait for assistance, they continue to be at risk

of needing healthcare attention and not being guaranteed to receive it.

Childhood Abuse

Child abuse is defined by the World Health Organization as follows: "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of relationships of responsibility, trust and power." (World Health Organization) Although child abuse is often interpreted somewhat differently from one culture to another, depending on specific cultural norms, all are nations are expected to abide by international laws and definitions, as stated previously.

Child abuse has been problematic in Chile and the United States for generations; however, government-based and nonprofit programs have been developed in each of these countries in order to combat child abuse. Stromberg reports: "A 2003 study conducted by the Center for Law and Social Policy found that half of homeless youth interviewed reported intense conflict or physical harm by a family member." (American Planning Association) With this in mind, it is important to try and reduce child abuse in order to prevent youth from leaving home—in their attempt to escape it.

According to researchers in 2000, the United States Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services reported that 3,000,000 children are referred for some form of abuse each year. (Capuzzi 2006) UNICEF stated that in 2006: 21.2% of Chilean youth experienced serious physical abuse, 28.6% experienced moderate physical abuse, and 20.8% experienced psychological abuse. (UNICEF) Although these statistics are gradually beginning to decrease, the fight is only beginning. These statistics reveal that millions of children are continuing to experience childhood abuse and that a large amount of work still needs to be done.

One form of abuse that is of serious concern in both Chile and the United States is sexual abuse. Childhood sexual abuse most commonly occurs between the ages of 8-12. (Chen and Hoyt 2004) In a study conducted of American homeless children in 2006, 36% of the homeless girls and 14% of the homeless boys were reportedly sexually abused at home. (American Planning Association) The International Child Resource Institute states: "Child sexual abuse is frequent but hidden in Chilean society." (International Child Research Institute)

Causes of Childhood Abuse

Researchers concur that a primary cause of childhood abuse is due to a lack of positive family interaction and/or overall family dysfunction. Children growing up in large families are at a higher risk of experiencing abuse because their parents are more likely to experience high levels of stress, and as a result, are more likely to take it out on their children. In the United States, children growing up in poorer families that earn less than $15,000 a year are 25 times more likely to suffer abuse. "Children in the lowest income families are more likely to be sexually abused and suffer serious injury from maltreatment." (Capuzzi 2006)

It is important to note that gender often plays a vital role in situations of abuse. In many cultures, women are not allowed to stand up to men or challenge their figure of authority in the household. Although in the United States this has become less and less of a problem since the Women's Liberation Movement, it continues to be very prevalent in Chile. "Chilean research is suggesting that sexual abuse exists in families where the mother does not have sufficient effective power to protect her child, and often herself,

from the excess of power wielded by the offender within his family, if not outside it."
(International Child Research Institute)

Effects of Childhood Abuse

One significant principle that appears in the child maltreatment literature repeatedly is that children suffering multiple types of abuse tend to have a poorer outcome than children who suffer only one type or incident of abuse. (Salkind 2002) These children are at an extremely high risk of encountering mental illness and antisocial behavior. Many of these youth will turn to drugs and alcohol as a means of coping with their psychological problems because it is a "quick and easy way to address the negative emotional effects associated with their histories." A high use of cocaine has been reported among American teenage girls who have a history of sexual abuse. (Chen and Hoyt 2004)

In terms of antisocial behavior, Chen argues the following: "Coercive/abusive families provide 'basic training' for antisocial behavior to adolescents due to the continuous failure on the parts of parents to use effective discipline techniques to control coercive exchanges between family members." Youth who are being raised in abusive households are also more likely to: run away from home, affiliate with antisocial friends, spend more time on the streets, and experience struggles with academic achievement. (Salkind 2002) (Chen and Hoyt 2004)

Child abuse is frequently an intergenerational problem where youth who experience or witness abuse during their childhood are more likely to abuse their own children later in life. Although not all youth who grow up witnessing abuse between their parents or experiencing abuse themselves go on to become abusers, approximately one-third of them do. "Another generation of child abusers is being weaned by today's

abusing parents, and many of these children will never know that children can be treated differently." (The A-Team)

Involvement in Criminal Activity

When you think of the characteristics of homeless youth, what comes to mind? For many it would be that these youth don't have a place to call home, lack a family who loves them, are poor and hungry, and that they use drugs and take part in other criminal activities in order to earn money to survive. Although this is very subjective viewpoint, it is a very common one for many people around the world. While not every homeless youth participates in criminal activities, many unfortunately do. However, it is often a problem that does not begin at the point in which these youth find themselves homeless—it has merely followed them there.

This is a widespread problem throughout the United States and Chile. As families continue to find their children participating in criminal mischief, they are now more likely to kick them out of the house than in recent years. According to researchers in 2000, the United States Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services reported that 500,000 assaults, burglaries, rapes and robberies are committed by youth in schools every year. Capuzzi stated that 22% of all American youth carry some form of weapon on a regular basis. (Capuzzi 2006) "Figures from Chile show that theft and robbery are among the most common crimes committed by adolescents, and that there is a steady increase in the number of adolescents in detention." (UNICEF)

Causes of Involvement in Criminal Activity

There are a variety of reasons that youth choose to become involved in criminal activities; however, American and Chilean researchers have identified the parents of these youth as being a primary source of the problem. Salkind argues that "harsh, inconsistent, and abusive parenting" causes youth to become at-risk for later taking part in criminal activities. (Salkind 2002) As a more direct example as to how poor parenting can lead to a youth's participation in criminal acts, many Chilean youth are being forced into prostitution by their parents. This is a situation that is continuing to worsen in Chile and police investigations are concluding that parents who are choosing this type of lifestyle for one or more of their children are doing it in order to increase the overall household income. (Organización Juvenil de la Red de la Lota)

The Chilean government argues that in recent years, there has been an increase in behavioral tolerance and a liberalization of the distinction between good in bad in Chilean society. (INJUV 2005) There are many youth who suffer from mental illness and who may already be struggling with trying to make positive decisions, but their situations are worsened by this liberalization of values. A large portion of these youth also lack the social skills that help them to determine what acceptable behavior in society truly is, and they are therefore placed at a higher risk of taking part in criminal activities.

Substance abuse and addiction are also important factors in terms of a youth's participation in criminal activity. Once a youth is consumed by an alcohol and/or drug problem, it becomes crucial for him/her to be able to consistently finance it. If the youth has a job, it is very probable that at the point when addiction ensues, he/she is incapable of being able to maintain the job, due to the effects that the addiction are having on his/her health and mental wellbeing. Unless the drugs or alcohol are being given to the

youth without monetary charge, this is the stage that he/she will most likely turn to criminal activities in search of money to support the addiction.

Stromberg, an American researcher, reports that in the United States, some youth let out of the Juvenile Justice System don't have a home to return to and are therefore forced into homelessness. (American Planning Association) There are approximately 12,000 Chilean youth detained in juvenile detention centers that are at-risk of experiencing similar situations when they are released as well. (UNICEF)

Effects of Involvement in Criminal Activity

Youth who are involved in criminal activities are at-risk of continuing to exhibit delinquent behaviors if they do not receive some type of intervention. However, if the youth's parents do not feel as if they can intervene, or if they are in some way condoning their child's behavior, intervention will most likely take place at the legal level. In many cases, the youth will be kicked out of his/her parents' house due to his/her involvement in criminal activity, inhibiting the parents from being able to intervene. If the youth is arrested, he/she will also be at-risk of suffering legal and financial consequences if forced to complete a court sentence—possibly even confined to a jail cell for numerous years.

Lack of Healthy Support Networks

The importance of healthy support networks is prevalent throughout the literature about youth who are at-risk of homelessness in the United States and Chile. Adults who are present in the support networks of a youth are able to act as mentors and positive role models when a youth needs guidance—something that is absolutely necessary in a youth's maturation. "If healthy responsible adults are not available to youth during this critical developmental period, the youths may suffer the rest of their lives from misconceptions about themselves and the world around them." (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund)

Causes of a Lack of Healthy Support Networks

Research has revealed that family problems are a primary source of concern in relation to the presence of healthy support networks in the lives of American and Chilean youth. The Chilean government states that poor relationships between a youth and his/her parents and siblings can have drastic effects. (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2001) "Youth report that their families are in conflict much of the time and their parents often have unstable relationships and unhealthy living circumstances that have diminished their ability to parent effectively or resolve conflict." (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund) Youth are often very aware of what is occurring in and around their home environments, and are apt to leave home if their situation doesn't improve.

For a youth who has grown up in an environment similar to the one which was previously described, it is expected that he/she will lack confidence in adults because his/her parents haven't been able to provide the support that he/she needs. Parents who themselves are at-risk often have a difficult time in displaying affection toward their children, which only reinforces the youth's lack of confidence and trust in adults. (Capuzzi 2006) (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud 2001)

Davidson and Stromberg both state that many parents feel like they can't control their children and it is not unusual for school authorities to feel overwhelmed by these type of youth either. (Davidson and Kidd 2007) (American Planning Association) However, if youth are constantly being told how difficult they are to deal with and are made to feel as though nobody understands or supports them, they are prone to "turning to other youth and adults who they know are unhealthy for them but with whom they are able to bond." (League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund)

A more recent factor associated with a lack of healthy support networks in the lives of American and Chilean youth is that of sexual orientation. (Raleigh-Durof 2004) In 2006, approximately 13.5% of homeless youth in the United States reported being kicked out of their homes due to their sexual orientation. One transgendered youth stated: "My parents just moved away without telling me." (American Planning Association) Even though American and Chilean societies are becoming more accepting of sexual diversity, youth who identify as anything other than straight continue to encounter discrimination—even from their own families.

Effects of a Lack of Healthy Support Networks

Youth who experience a lack of healthy support networks throughout their childhood are at a greater risk for encountering developmental problems. "Parents' ability to provide nurturing and support is closely connected to a child's ability to mature and develop. Parents who are unable to parent in ways that convey a sense of nurturing and support provide barriers to optimal development." (Capuzzi 2006) If the youth does not receive support, these barriers will follow him/her throughout his/her life, only to create further obstacles.

While many youth who lack healthy support networks in their lives choose to run away, research states that 62% of today's homeless youth don't run away at all, but have been turned into "throwaways" by their families, being either kicked out or abandoned. (American Planning Association)

Expansion of Selected Risk Factors

After conducting a literature review to identify primary factors that place youth at-risk of homelessness, I decided to carry out interviews with Chilean and American social workers as well. I interviewed four social workers from SEDEJ in El Monte, Chile and three social workers from JSYSI in Corvallis, Oregon. My goal for this phase of my research was to be able to determine whether the literature corresponded with the social workers' actual experiences. The social workers provided me with a vast amount of knowledge that I was unable to find in the literature, proving this to be a very important phase of my research.

Substance Abuse

I asked the participants to answer questions related to substance abuse and I
encouraged them to expand on their responses. Six of the seven participants agreed that
youth who abuse substances are at a higher risk of becoming homeless. All of the
participants agreed that youth who are exposed to substance abuse while growing up are
more likely to become homeless. The two causal factors that are represented in the chart
below were identified by both the Chilean and American participant groups.
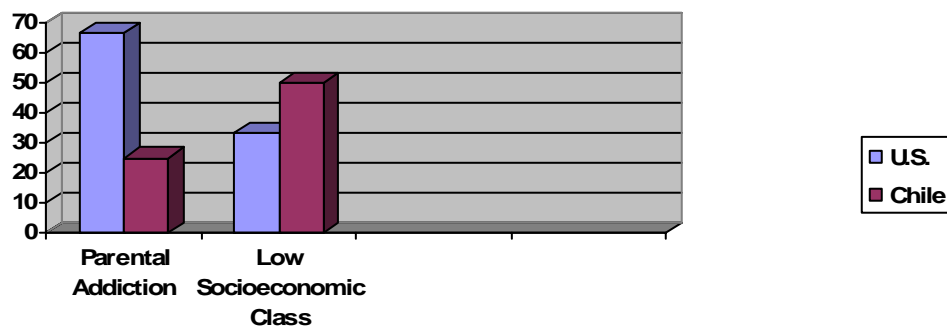
Two participants (one Chilean and one American) stated that families with substance abuse problems cause the youth who are growing up in their households to become at-risk of suffering substance abuse problems in the future. One American participant simply stated that youth who see their parents abusing substances are at-risk of mimicking these negative behaviors. (JB)

While most of the additional causal factors were identified by the Chilean participants, one American participant stated that a lack of support is also an important factor. (BF) The additional causal factors that the Chilean participants outlined in their interviews were: to subside negative emotions; to cope with family problems; community influence; single mothers; influence of the media; a lack of information; and to subside cold weather and hunger.

One participant stated that Chilean youth often lack information about the effects of drugs, while others may be aware of the dangers but do not care because they use substances (especially inhalants) to subside the cold and their hunger. (CR) Another participant stated that many mothers in Chile are single and don't protect their children from drugs. This participant also stated that youth don't want to be at home if there is violence occurring and will often leave for the streets and begin to use drugs, as a way to cope. (PZ) However, a third participant stated that this exposure to drugs in the streets can cause problems if the youth chooses to return home (especially if he/she has reached the point of addiction) because he/she will usually be kicked out by his/her family. (NB)

A very interesting factor that only arose once throughout this section of the interview was the influence of the media on youth who abuse substances. The participant who introduced this idea stated: "The media is a huge influential factor because youth are

pressured into feeling like the need to wear and have certain things and they can't—so their fix is drugs." (CR)

When questioned about the effects of substance abuse among youth, American and Chilean participants only provided one similar response—dysfunction at home. One other effect was offered by an American participant, which was that many youth of these youth may also encounter financial problems. (JB) Three of the four Chilean participants reported that youth will often rob in order to buy drugs. "Typically they don't have jobs and so they will end up robbing their families and selling their things so they can buy drugs. Then their parents will kick them out." (EC) Microtrafficking was reported by two Chilean participants as being very common among youth less than 18 years old. Aside from also buying drugs, microtrafficking is a solution that many of these youth use to pay bills when they aren't able to get a job. (CR)

All of the Chilean participants stated that they believe addiction is a given effect of substance abuse among youth because their brains are still developing and they are much more prone to addiction during this period of development. Two of the four Chilean participants stated that youth who abuse substance will also encounter social problems and suffer from a lack of motivation.

Lack of Education

I asked the participants to answer questions related to the lack of education that is evident in the lives of many Chilean and American youth. All participants agreed that a youth's lack of education causes him/her to be at-risk of homelessness. One of the four Chilean participants and all of the American participants agreed that a parent's lack of education similarly influences his/her child. The two causal factors that are represented in the chart below were identified by both the Chilean and American participant groups.
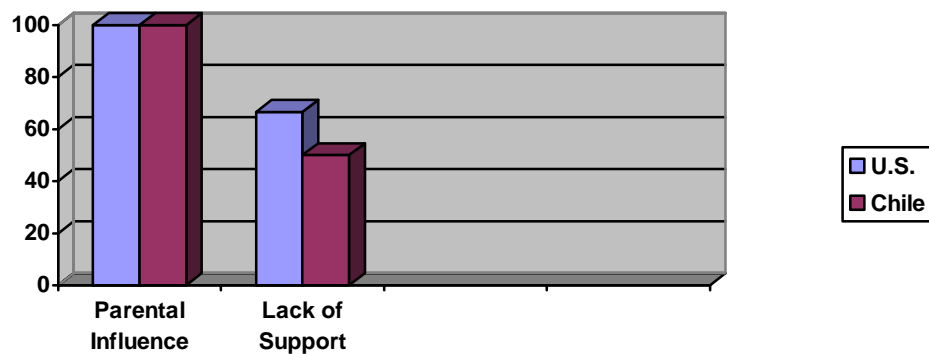
One American participant argued that if a parent hasn't completed his/her education then he/she is more likely to not feel as though his/her child needs to complete his/her education either. "The parent's behavior and ability to assimilate into society are greatly affected when they lack education. If the parent lacks respect or knowledge about the education system, they don't value it so are unable to teach otherwise to their children." (BF) A Chilean participant agreed that many of the parents in Chile lack ethics and values in terms of education.

In contrast, this participant also argued that many parents in Chile don't have an education because they were never provided with the opportunity to receive one. "Many of these parents want their children to succeed and not repeat their own mistakes. This empowers their children to have a better future." (PZ) Two other Chilean participants stated that parents often want their children to go further in life than they were able to. "Many parents don't want their kids to repeat their mistakes because they have suffered the effects of not having an education." (CR)

A variety of explanations were provided throughout the interviews to discuss why a lack of support is an important factor in terms of a youth being at-risk of lacking an education. An American participant stated that youth who have been labeled through the

education system are at an extremely high risk because their educational needs are often neglected. **"**Even if they haven't done anything wrong, their parents or siblings may have caused them to receive a label as being a troublemaker." (KP) A Chilean participant stated that learning problems that are left untreated can also lead to a lack of education. (NB) Lastly, another Chilean participant suggested that if parents abuse substances, they are more likely to not pay attention to whether their children attend school or not. (CR)

All of the additional causal factors were identified by the Chilean participants during their interviews. These factors were: financial, low quality education, drugs, delinquency, and truancy. Two of the Chilean participants stated that Chilean youth will often drop out of school because their families need their help. "In El Monte, many kids need to work to help put food on the table because their parents work seasonally in the agriculture sector. It's usually more helpful to families to have their children help around the house." (CR)

Two of the Chilean participants also stated that basic education is often very poor in public schools in Chile. However, not many families can afford to send their children to private schools, so they are forced to deal with the poor quality of the public education. Like American society, less than a full education isn't usually helpful in Chile, so it is important for Chilean youth to graduate—even if it is from a public institution.

In spite of this, informal education programs are advocated among Chilean youth and those who participate in these programs are more likely to continue attending school. "Both formal and informal educations are important. Often times informal education provides the youth with a chance to expand in other areas besides reading and writing. With the absence of both, the youth is at the highest risk." (NB)

When questioned about the effects of a lack of education among youth in Chile and the United States, the Chilean and American participants provided two similar responses, which are represented below.
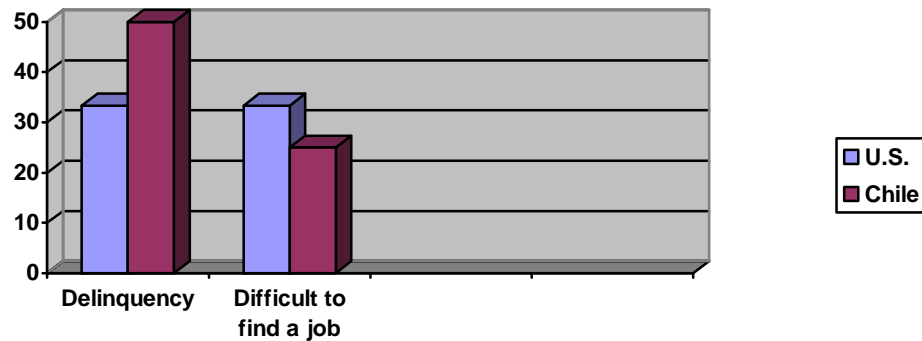
All of the participants who identified delinquency as being an important factor stated that youth who are not in school have more free time to roam the streets and use drugs. In terms of youth having a more difficult time finding a job, one of the American participants simply stated: "A lack of education may set one up for failure in the future because without a diploma, it will be more difficult for them to get jobs." (JB)

A Chilean participant argued: "There's little conscience about the importance of education. Kids may be unable to see the benefit of education because they are not exposed to the effects. They are able to learn about language, respect, values and rules in school. Without an education, they lack these things." (PZ) Two of the three American participants identified a lack of support as being a crucial factor in terms of a lack of education in a youth's life. They both argued that schools provide a support system that keeps youth in some sort of social link. "If they are not attending school they will consequently lack access to counselors, teachers, and peers who they may feel comfortable talking to." (BF)

Single-Parent Household

I asked the participants to answer a question related to whether or not they believed that a single-parent household could place a youth at-risk of homelessness. Two of the four Chilean participants and two of the three American participants agreed that youth living in single-parent households are at a greater risk of becoming homeless. Two

of the three participants who did not agree with this question strongly argued that if the quality of the relationship between the parent and youth are good, then the youth is not placed at-risk.

The Chilean and American participants only provided one similar response in terms of causal factors—poor parenting. One Chilean participant stated that if the single parent is a good parent then his/her child is not placed at-risk of homelessness. However, if the parent isn't able to protect, love, and provide support, then the child will be placed at-risk. (CR) A second Chilean participant stated: "Many single mothers are able to educate their children and their influence is positive for their children. Parents need to also be able to reinforce values when they are present." This participant also argued that if one parent isn't able to adequately supervise his/her children, then he/she is placing them at-risk. (PZ)

When questioned about the effects of a single-parent household in the lives of youth, only two of the seven participants provided responses and both were Chilean. One of the two participants stated that trauma may arise among youth who are lacking one parent. (PZ) The second participant stated that if a poor relationship exists between the parent and youth, then the youth is at a greater risk to run away from home. (EC)

Low Socioeconomic Class

I asked the participants to answer a question related to low socioeconomic class, as it appeared to be a significant factor through the literature review. Five of the seven participants agreed that low socioeconomic class can influence a youth to become at-risk of homelessness. One of the American participants chose to decline the question and one

of the Chilean participants argued that youth are placed at-risk for many reasons that aren't related to money. A Chilean participant stated that low socioeconomic class correlates with typically 80% of the reason a youth is homeless. (EC)

The Chilean and American participants only provided one similar response in terms of causal factors, which was "an overall lack of support." An American participant stated: "If you are hooked up with appropriate services then you may be able to overcome this barrier. However, being in a low socioeconomic class may prevent you from knowing about the variety of services that are available, so you can't grasp them because you don't know." (BF) Nevertheless, a Chilean participant argued that youth of low socioeconomic class are "victims of the system and are treated badly because they don't have nice cars, nice houses, or name brand clothes." (CR) Two of the Chilean participants also stated that youth of low socioeconomic class have fewer opportunities in general.

When I questioned the participants about the effects that low socioeconomic class can have on youth, three of the Chilean participants provided responses. Two of the participants stated that these youth will often lack money for food. (NB) (CR) The third participant stated that many social problems can arise from low socioeconomic status, such as: drug and alcohol use, delinquency, opposition of rules, and violence. (PZ)

Childhood Abuse

I asked the participants to answer questions related to childhood abuse and I encouraged them to expand on their responses. Two of the three American participants and two of the four Chilean participants agreed that youth who have been abused during

their childhood are at a greater risk of becoming homeless. Six of the seven participants agreed that youth who have witnessed abuse while growing up are similarly affected.

One American participant stated that there is more of a detrimental effect if the youth felt powerless to intervene during an abusive situation—especially if he/she was observing the abuse of a parent or sibling. (BF) A Chilean participant stated: "Violence between parents is a type of maltreatment that causes youth to become more vulnerable. Seeing violence among neighbors has a different effect than interfamilial violence." (CR)

The participants also discussed the impact of other causal factors as well. One American participant said that it's especially difficult for a youth if he/she is being abused and lacks a support network. (KP) A Chilean participant stated that youth are at the greatest risk if they feel like they lack love in their lives. (EC) Another Chilean participant asserted that family dysfunction can frequently lead to abuse within the home. (PZ)

When I questioned the participants about the effects that childhood abuse can have among youth, the majority of the participants provided answers. The Chilean and American participants provided one similar response—family problems. One of the Chilean participants stated that abuse may create a bad relationship between the parents and youth, and it may cause the youth to want to spend more time in the streets in order to escape. (CR) An American participant stated: "If kids are abused then they are disenfranchised from the home, which causes even more dysfunction within the family." (BF)

Two important factors that were provided by the three American participants were: substance abuse and mental illness. One participant stated: "To some point, it

instills anger and other negative emotions that cause kids to not care about life at all, not strive to be better." (KP) If these issues are unaddressed then the youth is placed at-risk of suffering self-esteem and other psychological issues. It is also stated that addiction issues may be related to childhood problems because youth will use substances as a way to self-medicate. (BF)

Another effect of childhood abuse was introduced by two Chilean participants—youth running away. One participant argues that many youth will stay home unless the violence or abuse is extremely grave. Those that do leave will leave very quickly. On the other hand, many youth may be too fearful to leave because their situation may worsen afterward. However, girls who are sexually abused are at a greater risk of leaving home. (PZ) "Sometimes living in the streets is just as bad as at home. But many times they are safer in the streets, because they are further away from their aggressor." (EC)

Chilean participants also discuss how childhood abuse can cause youth to become resilient because they become so accustomed to the abuse. This does not alleviate the pain that these youth suffer; it merely masks it and is very destructive to their integrity. (EC)

Involvement in Criminal Activity

I asked the participants to answer questions related to youth's involvement in criminal activity, as the literature review illustrated it to be an important factor. One of

the three American participants and all of the Chilean participants agreed that a youth's involvement in criminal activities causes him/her to be at a higher risk of homelessness. One common causal factor that was reported by Chilean and American participants was that there is often a lack of support in the lives of youth who are involved in criminal activities.

An American participant stated that some youth who are at-risk of being in legal trouble won't connect themselves with available services because they fear being caught. (BF) A Chilean participant stated that youth are especially at-risk if their families are nonexistent in their lives. (NB) Another Chilean participant asserted that if families don't protect their children then it may be in their children's best interest to leave home. (EC)

Two of the participants (one Chilean and one American) also discussed other causal factors very briefly as well. The American participant argued that a lot of the problems that teenagers experience are caused by "teenage angst." "Many people who had issues with the legal system as youth, grow beyond it and are able to be stable adults." (BF) The Chilean participant stated that a youth's involvement in criminal activities is a result of an escalation of problems, such as: lacking respect for others, values, love, and conscience. "Nothing is important to them." (CR)

When I questioned the participants about the effects that a youth's involvement in criminal activities can have on his/her life, all of the American participants and one of the Chilean participants provided answers. Two of the American participants focused on the fact that once youth are "in the system," they are often more supported with services and can overcome their desire to be involved in criminal activities. (BF) "They have an advantage as active criminals because they will always have a place in the system, sadly

enough." (KP) Another American participant discussed the financial problems that can occur for youth who are involved in the judicial system. "Once a kid enters the system, the courts will make them pay back everything. There are fines, victims' losses, UA's, court fees…So they are already starting out broke in some ways. Fines can really add up for a young kid." (JB)

Conversely, a Chilean participant argued that if a youth does not receive some type of intervention or support for being involved in criminal activities, he/she will only continue to commit more crimes. This participant has witnessed Chilean youth who are in this position and have continued into lifestyles of: prostitution, selling drugs, mafia organizations, and gangs. (PZ)

Lack of Healthy Support Networks

I asked the participants to answer questions related to a lack of healthy support networks among youth in Chile and the United States. All of the participants agreed that a lack of healthy support networks can cause a youth to become at-risk of homelessness. One common causal factor that was reported by Chilean and American participants was the occurrence of family problems.

Many at-risk youth have non-supportive parents who are either not regularly present in their child's life, (JB) or are present, but are ineffective parents. (NB) "Their parents are to blame because they often don't have the education, support, or services to stay clean, pay their bills, have a job, or get a degree. They'd often times rather be doing drugs than taking care of their kids." (KP) A Chilean participant stated that many youth experience a lack of a protective role by their families and another argued that many youth are made to feel uncomfortable and unwelcome at home. (CR) (NB)

Three of the Chilean participants discussed two other important factors during the interviews also. One was that a lack of love and affection can cause youth to feel lonely and neglected and be at-risk of homeless. (BF) (NB) The second factor was that low socioeconomic status can often influence a youth's ability to have healthy support networks in his/her life. (EC)

When I questioned the participants about the effects of a lack of healthy support networks in the lives of American and Chilean youth, a variety of answers were given. One Chilean participant stated that abandonment of both parents is a crucial factor; however, approximately 10% of Chilean youth are forced to deal with being abandoned by only their mothers. (NB) Another Chilean participant argued that many youth who are not well supported at home will choose to leave in order to find that support. In Chile

they will often go to: churches, schools, nonprofits, or neighbors. (PZ) An American

participant states: **"**If kids don't have resources like shelters or school counselors, then

they won't have options of who to go to when they are in need of help." (JB) Those who

choose to seek assistance from a nonprofit or school will often enter some type of support

program. "Support programs are able to identify problems and help youth increase their

self-esteem and values." (BF)

Conclusion

In order to clearly illustrate the ways in which the results from the interviews corresponded with those from the literature reviews, I have developed charts for each selected risk factor. Each chart outlines the causes and effects that were present in both phases of my research and indicate whether or not these results were reflected by one or both countries. (The percentages on the side of each graph are insignificant.)

Substance Abuse: Causes
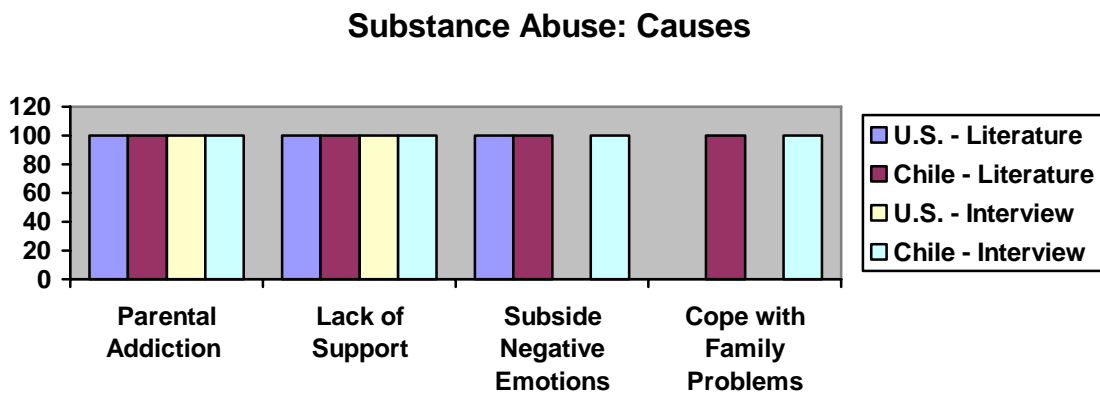
- "Parental addiction" and "lack of support" were clearly present in the literature reviews and interviews of both Chile and the United States.

- "Subside negative emotions" was present in the literature reviews of both countries, but only present in the Chilean interviews.

- "Cope with family problems" was only present in the Chilean literature reviews and interviews.

Substance Abuse: Effects
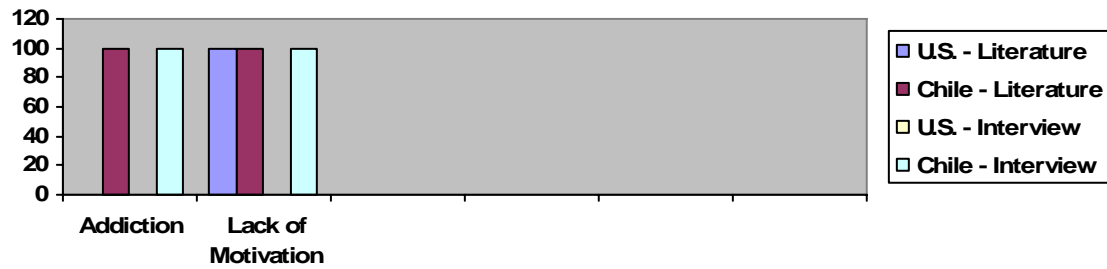
- "Addiction" was only present in Chilean literature reviews and interviews.

- "Lack of motivation" was present in the literature reviews of Chile and the United States, but only present in Chilean interviews.
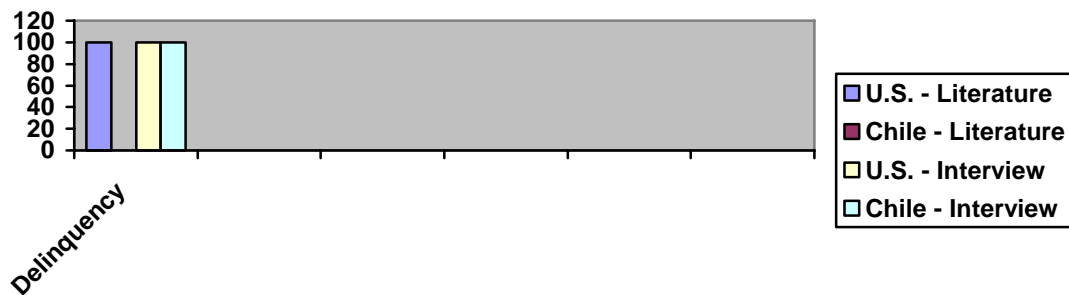
Lack of Education: Causes
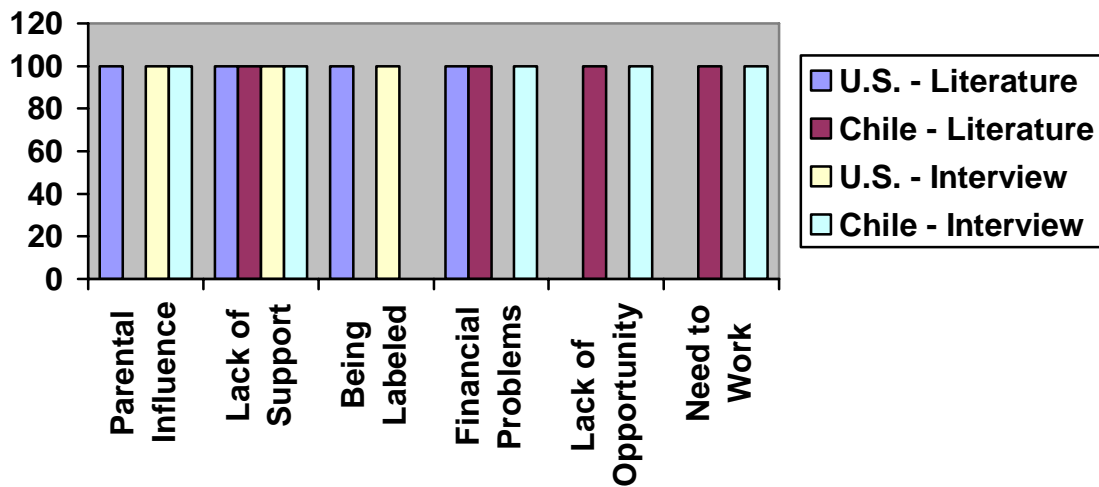
- "Parental influence" was present in the interviews of both countries, but only present in the American literature reviews.

- "Lack of support" was present in the literature reviews and interviews of both countries.

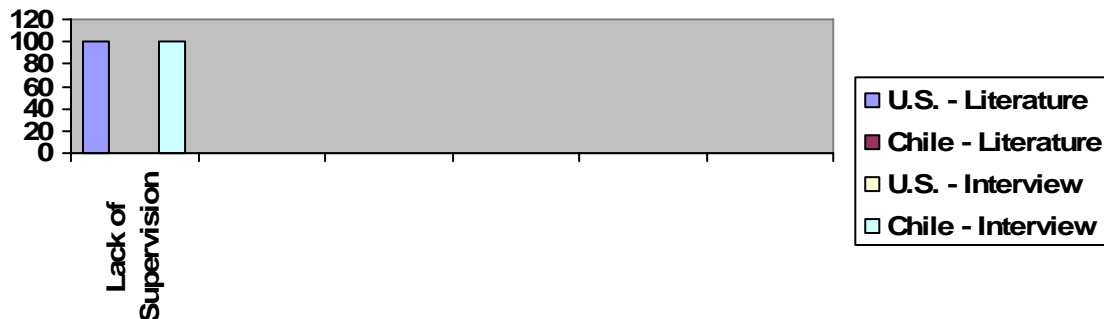- "Being labeled" was only present in the American literature reviews and interviews.

- "Financial problems" was present in the literature reviews of both countries, but was only present in the Chilean interviews.

- "Lack of opportunity" and "need to work" were both present in the Chilean literature reviews and interviews.

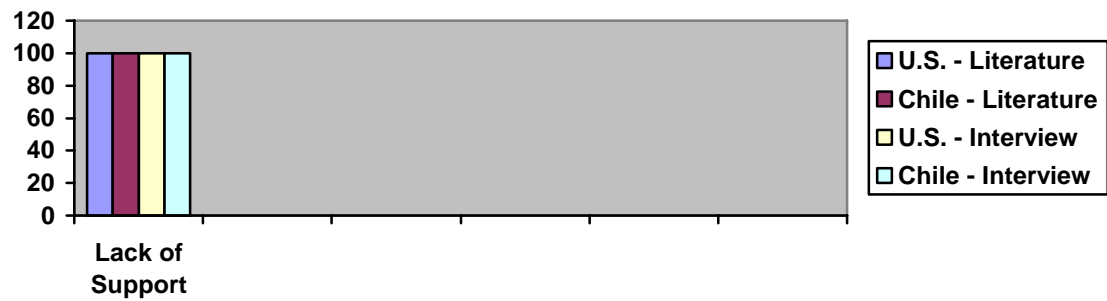### Lack of Education: Effects

- "Delinquency" was present in the interviews of both countries, but only in the American literature reviews.
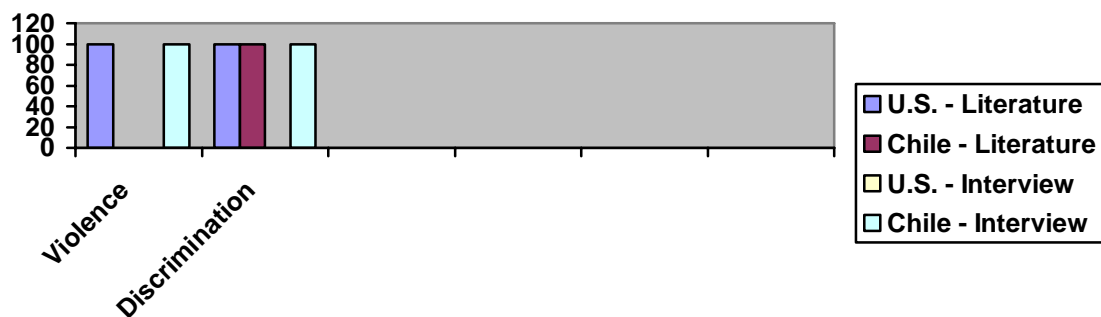
Single-Parent Household: Causes

- "Lack of supervision" was only present in the American literature reviews and Chilean interviews.

- There were no effects that were present in both phases of my research.
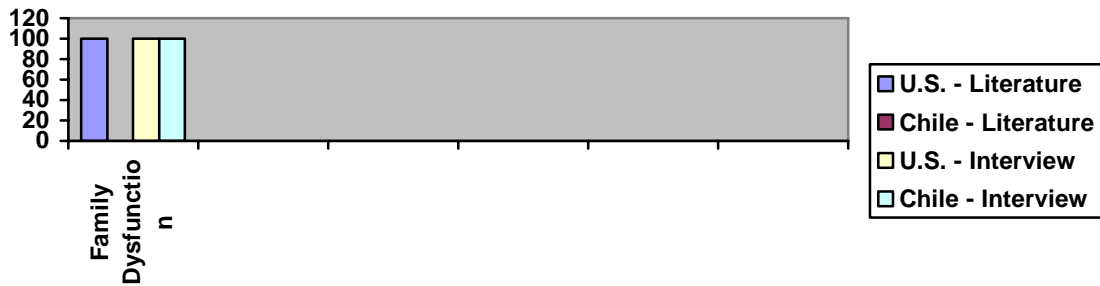
Low Socioeconomic Class: Causes

- "Lack of support" was present in the literature reviews and interviews of both countries.

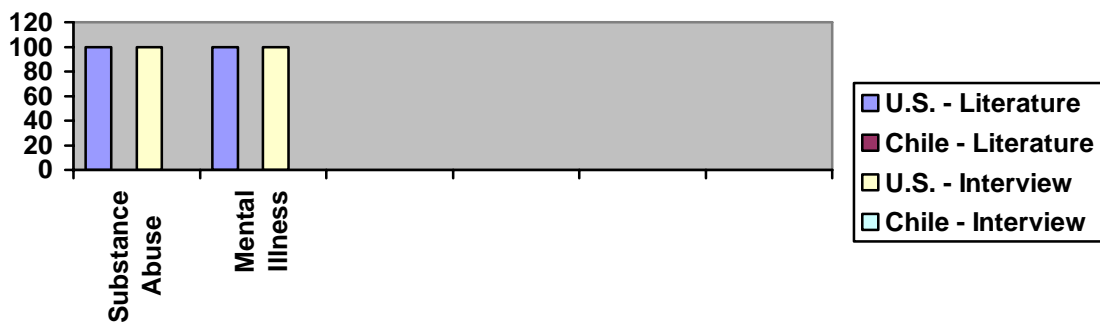## Low Socioeconomic Class: Effects

- "Violence" was present in the American literature reviews and Chilean interviews.

- "Discrimination" was present in the literature reviews of both countries, but only in the Chilean interviews.
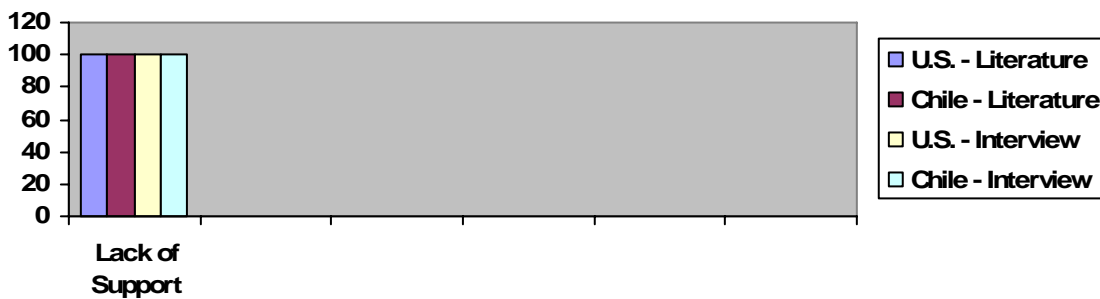
Childhood Abuse: Causes

Chart showing "Family Dysfunction" category with bars at approximately 100 for U.S. - Literature, U.S. - Interview, and Chile - Interview. Legend: U.S. - Literature, Chile - Literature, U.S. - Interview, Chile - Interview.

- "Family dysfunction" was present in the interviews of both countries, but only in the American literature reviews.

Childhood Abuse: Effects

Chart showing "Substance Abuse" and "Mental Illness" categories with bars at approximately 100 for U.S. - Literature and U.S. - Interview. Legend: U.S. - Literature, Chile - Literature, U.S. - Interview, Chile - Interview.

- "Substance abuse" and "mental illness" were only present in the American literature reviews and interviews.

Involvement in Criminal Activities: Causes

Chart showing "Lack of Support" category with bars at approximately 100 for all four: U.S. - Literature, Chile - Literature, U.S. - Interview, and Chile - Interview. Legend: U.S. - Literature, Chile - Literature, U.S. - Interview, Chile - Interview.
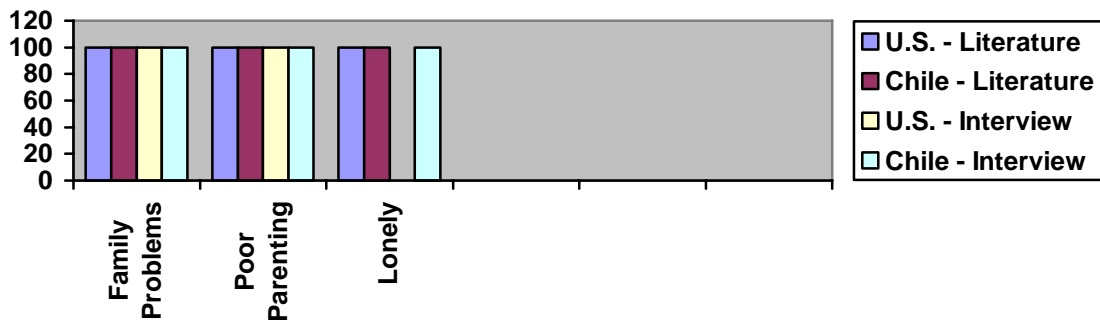
- "Lack of support" was present in the literature reviews and interviews of both countries.

## Involvement in Criminal Activities: Effects
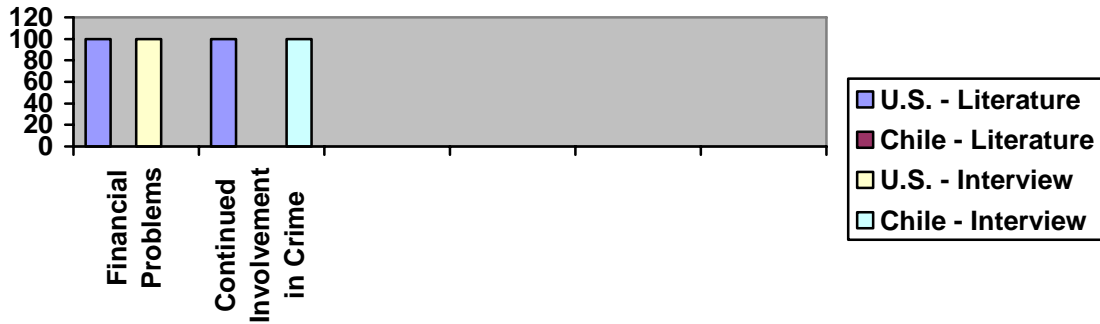
- "Financial problems" were only present in the American literature reviews and interviews.

- "Continued involvement in crime" was present in the American literature reviews and Chilean interviews.

Lack of Healthy Support Networks: Causes

- "Family problems" and "poor parenting" were present in the literature reviews and interviews of both countries.

- "Lonely" was present in the literature reviews of both countries, but only in the Chilean interviews.

Lack of Healthy Support Networks: Effects
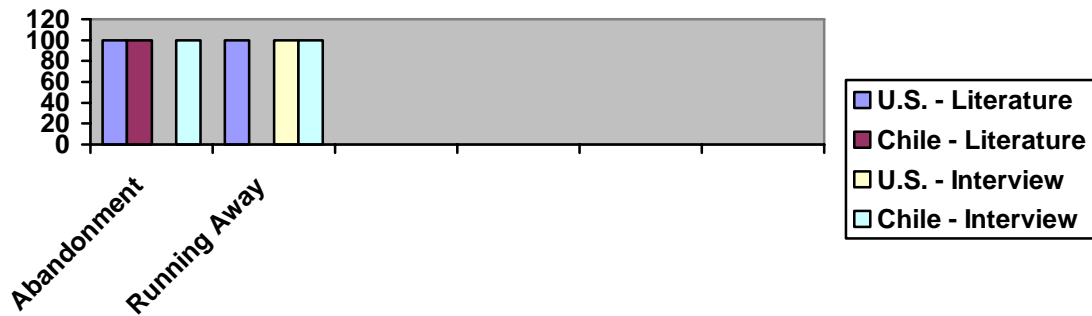
- "Abandonment" was present in the literature reviews of both countries, but only in the Chilean interviews.

- "Running away" was present in the interviews of both countries, but only in the American literature reviews.

All of the selected risk factors proved there to be a correlation between the literature reviews and results of the interviews. However, the results of "single-parent household" showed that there was no correlation between the literature reviews and interview results in one specific country—as the literature reviews were from the United States and the interview results were from Chile. One other important result of this research showed that the effects of childhood abuse were only prevalent in the literature reviews and interview results of the United States.

Aside from "single parent household" and "childhood abuse," the results of the other selected risk factors (substance abuse, lack of education, low socioeconomic class, involvement in criminal activities, and a lack of healthy support networks) proved there to be a correlation between the literature reviews and interview results found in the United States and Chile. These five factors place youth at-risk of homelessness in the

United States and Chile and the following methods of prevention should be adhered to in

order to decrease the population of homeless youth in these two countries.

Methods of Prevention

- **Counseling**
  - Support groups
  - Individually focused preventative counseling
  - Teach coping skills
  - Self-esteem enhancement

- **Peer Mentoring Programs**
  - Peer helping with homework, projects, and activities
  - Presence of a positive role model

- **Education**
  - Community focused
    - Educate the professionals who are working with at-risk youth so they are better prepared to help them.
  - Provide social and life skills training
  - Parent focused education
    - Encourage strong bonds with the family
    - Define clear rules of conduct within the family unit
    - Involvement of parents in the lives of their children
    - Provide information about how drugs and alcohol can affect the futures of their children.
    - Provide a structured environment
    - Empower families to help themselves

- **Police Patrol**
  - More police need to be patrolling neighborhoods and schools to prevent the sale and distribution of drugs and alcohol.

- **Home Visiting Programs**
  - Pairing new parents with someone trained or experienced in child development so that the new parents can learn how to care for and respond to the needs of their infants.
  - Parent monitoring

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