Comparing rural and urban runaway and homeless adolescents: age at first run, deviant subsistence strategies, and street victimization

Lisa Ellen Thrane
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd

Part of the Sociology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/17805
Comparing rural and urban runaway and homeless adolescents:  
Age at first run, deviant subsistence strategies,  
and street victimization

by

Lisa Ellen Thrane

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Sociology  
Major Professor: Danny R. Hoyt

Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa  
1999
This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Lisa Ellen Thrane

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>DATA AND METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>RESULTS AND FINDINGS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>REFERENCES CITED</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the annual number of adolescent runaways has been calculated between 500,000 (Finkelhor, Hotaling, & Sedlak, 1990) and one million (Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1990). Despite the size of the homeless and runaway adolescent population in the United States and myriad social, political, and economic costs, they are a difficult population to study and therefore have often been overlooked by policy makers and researchers alike (Kryder-Coe, Salamon & Molnar, 1991; Wright, Rubin, & Devine, 1998). Much of the research on this understudied population typically has defined them as runaways and consequently focused on the factors that served as the impetus for these youth taking to the streets (Hagan and McCarthy, 1997; Robertson, 1992; Rotheram-Borus, Parra, Cantwell, Gwadz & Murphey, 1996).

Past research indicates that many homeless and runaway adolescents' report that they were subjected to familial sexual and physical abuse (Janus, Burgess, & McCormack, 1987; Robertson, 1992; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999), and that they have run from these abusive relationships. According to Pennbridge, Yates, David and Mackenzie (1990), 46.6% of shelter youth in Los Angeles county reported abuse or neglect by primary caretakers. Thirty-three percent of runaways in Des Moines,
Iowa, left home because of sexual abuse (Simons & Whitbeck, 1991). Zimet and colleagues found that in two Cleveland shelters, 83% of runaway adolescents with a mean age of 15 reported living with one or both parents prior to running away (1995). Of a sample of runaway and homeless youth in Toronto and Vancouver, Canada, who were interviewed in shelters, drop-in centers, and on the street, 60% reported that they had run away from home no more than two times. Respondents first ran away at about 13 years (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). Seventy-three percent of adolescent runaways in Des Moines, Iowa, who ranged in age from 14 to 18 years, had run away from home at least three times (Simons & Whitbeck, 1991). There does appear to be some consistency across place in finding that the majority of these youth have run away from their families of origin at a relatively young age.

When these youth do run, some studies have shown that they remain in the city from which they ran while others migrate to larger cities. Eighty-five percent of the respondents in Whitbeck and Simons' (1990) study reported that they were from Des Moines, Iowa; whereas Pennbridge and colleagues (1990) found that only 40% of Los Angeles County shelter youth were prior residents. These differences may be a reflection of Los Angeles' distinction as a "magnet" city, thereby attracting homeless and runaway youth from all over the country. For runaway and homeless youth, Los Angeles'
appeal could account for the differences in migratory patterns between the two cities (Pennbridge et al., 1990).

Whether they migrate to coastal cities or remain in familiar places, life on the streets is both volatile and dangerous for runaway and homeless adolescents. Twenty-six percent of a sample of shelter youth from Cleveland, Ohio had sex unwillingly (Zimet et al., 1995). One percent of this sample with a mean age of 15 reported survival sex compared to 14% of homeless adolescents in New York City shelters (Rotheram-Borus et al., 1992) while 26% of Los Angeles runaways survived in a similar fashion (Yates, MacKenzie, Pennbridge, & Cohen, 1988). IV drug use was reported by only 2% of the Cleveland sample while the following three California studies: Yates and colleagues (1988), Pennbridge and colleagues, (1992) and Sherman (1992) reported rates between 15% and 31% (cited in Zimet et al., 1995). Seventy-two percent of Los Angeles' homeless youth reported that they had witnessed a physical attack while living on the streets; 50% of these youth themselves had been threatened with serious physical harm (Kipke, Simon, Montgomery, Unger, & Iverson, 1997). Over 25% of runaway and homeless youth in Des Moines, Iowa, reported being sexually assaulted while on the streets (Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). Runaway and homeless youth in this Midwestern city also were quite involved in deviant peer networks. Furthermore, having friends who burglarized,
shoplifted, and prostituted was common, reflecting rates of 58%, 76%, and 29% respectively (Simons & Whitbeck, 1991).

The generalizations that researchers have made about homeless and runaway youth have been based to a great extent on samples from larger urban places with little emphasis on youth from smaller urban areas and to the total exclusion of runaways from rural places (Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). Moreover, much of the research that has been conducted on homeless and runaway youth has been based on samples drawn from a few metropolitan coastal U.S. cities (Kipke et al., 1997; Pennbridge et al., 1990; Rotheram-Borus et al., 1992).

Recently, there has been an emergence of research drawing from cities in other regions of the country (Whitbeck et al., 1997b; Zimet et al., 1995). The research that focuses on the possible differences between larger and smaller urban areas has been drawn primarily from two studies in midwestern cities (Simons & Whitbeck, 1991; Whitbeck & Simons, 1990; Zimet et al., 1995). Cleveland shelter youth reported lower rates of sexual activity and drug use and higher rates of condom use relative to metropolitan runaway and homeless adolescents (Zimet et al., 1995), although Whitbeck and Simons' (1990) study of homeless and runaway adolescents in Des Moines, Iowa, reflected rates of street victimization more comparable to a sample of Los Angeles homeless youth conducted by Kipke et al. (1997). Based upon the existing research, there does appear to
be some suggestion of differences between larger and smaller urban areas.

However, a cautionary note is warranted because sampling variation could account for the differing rates across place of physical and sexual abuse, deviant subsistence strategies, and street victimization. In actuality, the samples of homeless and runaway youth often are not comparable. Some of these studies have sampled homeless and runaway youth from shelter populations (Rotheram-Borus et al., 1992; Zimet et al., 1995) while others have sampled from the street and service sites (Kipke et al., 1997; Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). A good example of this variation is the aforementioned study by Whitbeck and Simons. Their sample of street intercepts reported higher rates of abuse by adult caretakers than what is found in larger metropolitan areas. Nearly half (45%) reported being beaten by an adult caretaker (Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). In contrast, abuse or neglect by a primary caretaker was reported by 20.8% of adolescents sampled from outreach/drop-in centers in Los Angeles county (Pennbridge et al., 1990). This could be due to the fact that there are differences in how the groups were sampled. Youth on the streets may be different in important ways from those contacted in shelters or other locations.

Depending on the studies that are compared (Pennbridge, Freese, & MacKenzie, 1992; Zimet et al., 1995), there is some
suggestion of differences across place. However, due to the concerns just noted, this conclusion is tentative since sampling differences easily could account for the observed variation. To date, there has not been a systematic investigation of size of place differences associated with runaway behavior. As stated previously, the emphasis on primarily larger urban areas has led to the relative exclusion of runaways from non-metropolitan and rural places. Therefore, relatively little is known about youth that run away in smaller cities and rural areas, let alone a comparison to their metropolitan counterparts. This thesis will examine the lives of homeless and runaway adolescents from smaller non-metropolitan rural areas while investigating whether these runaways leave home for different reasons and at different times than their urban counterparts. This thesis will also address whether place influences use of deviant subsistence strategies and explore whether the consequences of running away are more pernicious for metropolitan runaways than for non-metropolitan youth. Finally, this thesis will consider whether places do in fact create distinct life experiences for homeless and runaway adolescents.

Chapter one has provided a brief overview of the literature on homeless and runaway youth and stated the general direction and goals. Chapter two explores the homeless and runaway literature more thoroughly, the contextual
differences across non-metropolitan and urban places, and how context influences family and community structures. Chapter two will also delineate the theoretical perspective and the hypotheses that will be explored. Chapter three will discuss the data for this study and its methodology. Chapter four will examine the results of the study, while chapter five will draw conclusions and discuss the study's limitations.
This chapter initially will explore the homeless and runaway literature. It then will review the social context literature and see if there is reason to believe that there are differences between urban and rural places that could lead to variation in family and community structures. This chapter will conclude with the study’s hypotheses.

The homeless and runaway literature has been definitive on the notion that adolescents run away not for excitement and adventure but because of negative family interactions (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). The home lives of these runaways plagued with conflict and instability create environments where their physical and emotional well-being is placed in jeopardy (Zimet et al., 1995). Homeless adolescents suffer more from rejecting parents, and their parents have more discord in their marriages than do control groups (Daddis, Braddock, Cuers, Elliot, & Kelly, 1993). Nearly half (48.6%) of adolescents ran away from homes where they believed their parents did not care about them (Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). Runaways most commonly relate that they left because of problems with their families. These family problems range from
dysfunction, disruption, and irreconcilable differences to parental rejection, abuse, and neglect (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997).

Family abuse and neglect are recurring themes reported by runaway adolescents. The rates may be inconsistent across studies; however, the severity is not (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). Evidencing much higher rates of physical and sexual abuse than previous studies, 71.5% of male runaways reported being physically abused while 38.2% were survivors of sexual abuse (Janus et al., 1987). Being forced to engage in sexual activity with a parent or adult relative was reported by 27.1% of runaway adolescents, while 85.4% of them reported being shoved, grabbed, or pushed in anger by these caretakers (Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). The majority (60%) of female prostitutes in the San Francisco Bay area ranging from preadolescent to middle-aged adult reported sexual abuse as juveniles (Silbert & Pines, 1981). Nearly 30% of homeless and runaway youth in Canada reported physical abuse (Kufeldt & Nimmo, 1987).

Abusive families, family relations fueled by distrust and conflict, and the number of family structural changes culminate in creating environments that induce adolescents to run earlier. Running away does not happen abruptly, but comes incrementally. Repetition of abuse and conflict and the succession of caregivers tear the fabric that binds families.
The emotional ties become tenuous, as does the dependency on caregivers. Adolescents learn that they can depend only on themselves. Eventually, the fabric is shredded and the damage irreparable as the chasm between the parent and the adolescent becomes so great that the adolescent leaves and never turns back (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

It is quite evident from these studies (Daddis et al., 1993; Janus et al., 1987; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999; Whitbeck & Simons, 1990) that families have powerful influences on the outcomes of their children. For these runaways, abuse, neglect, rejection, and family instability endure and contribute to the replication of these maladaptive behaviors (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

Intact families are imbedded in the larger society just like street-subsisting homeless and runaway adolescents. The influence of social structures and institutions comes to bear indiscriminately on these vulnerable youth. Hagan and McCarthy would argue that differences between the cities of Toronto and Vancouver pose varying options for survival on the streets (1997). In Toronto, a social welfare program was established that provided overnight shelter and other services to homeless and runaway adolescents. These services were fused with job training and drop-in centers to buffer the youth from the streets. Non-violent street crime was reduced because these youth no longer had to employ theft, drug sales, and
prostitution to meet their basic needs (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997).

On the other hand, Vancouver's homeless and runaway youth did not have the luxury of these social welfare programs and, thus had to resort to non-violent street crime. Being on the street, they were exposed to more criminal opportunity and more trauma and victimization than were the homeless youth in Toronto. Places, by creating structural obstacles or social welfare programs, greatly affect the consequences of living on the streets (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997).

The homeless and runaway literature suggests linkage between familial relations and running away while the lack of institutional support in some cities increases the use of adolescents' deviant survival strategies. The social context literature makes the case that poor adolescent outcomes are not only a reflection of families but also their imbeddedness in the larger social structures. Communities embedded in both urban and rural places have powerful influence on adolescent outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). As stated earlier, studies on homeless and runaway adolescents have not fully explored the ramifications of place; but sociologists have explored how community context, particularly how urban places have influenced adolescent outcomes (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993). At the family level, total family income and mother’s education predicted both adolescent outcomes of
teenage births and non-completion of high school. However, after SES of the families was controlled, affluent neighbors and the neighborhood composition of professional workers remained significant with the adolescent outcome measures. Overall, the results from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) indicated that adolescent outcomes were influenced more by the economic and social structures of the neighborhood than family resources. Possibly more affluent, professional two-parent households provide role models and needed resources for the neighborhood (Brooks-Gun et al., 1993).

Poverty (Elliot et al., 1996), scarcity of jobs, and high unemployment shape community structures in conjunction with culturally diverse, fluid populations (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Furthermore, the industrial base has deteriorated in many urban centers and uprooted those who depended on skilled manufacturing jobs, leaving in its place service sector jobs (Wilson, 1987, 1991). Adding to the instability of the urban economic and social structures is the decline of two-parent families (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994; Wilson, 1987). These factors result in weakening the social institutions and structures and often lead to a deterioration in community norms as well as social control (Elliot et al., 1996).

The economic and social standing of neighborhoods in Chicago and Denver was directly associated with the degree community members felt connected to one another and the
neighborhood as a whole. Interestingly enough, neighborhoods had little direct influence on adolescent outcomes-less than 6%. However, the indirect effects of neighborhood organization on adolescent outcomes mediated by family, school, and peers were not evaluated. These disadvantaged neighborhoods facilitate the amplification of delinquent activities and association with deviant peers (Elliot et al., 1996).

Many of the conclusions that Wilson (1991) draws about the inner city are applicable to rural communities in the heartland. They both contend with similar patterns of social disorganization initiated by out-migration that have the net effect of disrupting good parenting practices (Simons, Johnson, Conger, & Lorenz, 1997). According to Wilson’s study in the inner city, community disadvantage created an environment where parents lost their efficacy coping with the present while future planning was left to chance (1991).

Prior to the farm crisis, farming was the glue that held the economic and social structures of rural communities together. However, today the remnants of the 1980s farm crisis continue to reverberate throughout rural America. Rural communities of the 1990s are plagued with stagnation and pervasive decay of the rural economy and its social institutions and structures. Structures that were once the heart of these communities are now no more than appendages. These external stressors have come to bear on both rural
communities and families (Hoyt, Conger, Valde, & Weihs, 1997; Lasley, 1994) causing a chronic condition for many rural families that spills over into their ability to parent effectively (Conger & Elder, 1994).

Communities that are ravaged by high rates of unemployment and poverty cause financial strain for many individuals. All too often financial strain manifests itself in negative family interactions within the social relationship that most people hold dearest (Coyne & Downey, 1991). Family relationships that are met with hostility or withdrawal can result from financial misfortune and may continue to permeate the relationship even after the economic hardship has dissipated (Conger, McCarthy, Yang, Lahey, & Kropp, 1984; Liker & Elder, 1983). Adolescent outcomes may be affected adversely in rural communities of the 1990s where poverty has become an ever-present reality even for those who are employed (Lichter, Johnston, & McLaughlin, 1994). By focusing on poverty rates by county, Lichter and McLaughlin (1995) reinforce how place plays a vital role in enhancing or constricting opportunities.

In the Iowa Single Parent Program (ISPP), poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and education tended to culminate in Midwestern communities that lacked social services, funding for schools, and economic opportunities. Single women's parenting practices were related indirectly to community
disadvantage in Midwestern towns through the lack of organization of social services, medical care, schools, viable businesses, and residential stability. A parent's emotional state accounted for several indirect effects, while a direct relationship between parenting and community disorganization remained (Simons et al., 1997). This direct association could reflect parents who are more reactive in their occupational and parenting roles (Wilson, 1991).

In another analysis, Simons and associates evaluated the relationship of rural community structures and family characteristics on adolescent outcomes, finding significant gender differences (Simons, Johnson, Beaman, Conger, & Whitbeck, 1996). The nature of rural places proved to be less than idyllic; the level of conduct disorder was comparable to small cities. For boys, community disadvantage increased the level of antisocial behavior only indirectly through decreasing effective parenting and increasing their interactions with deviant peers. An outcome of community disadvantage was less attachment among neighbors and less monitoring of adolescent groups, which increased the likelihood that males would engage in delinquent behavior with their peers (Simons et al., 1996).

Although for girls maternal parenting was not associated with community disadvantage, girls' conduct disorder and affiliation with deviant peers was related to the number of
single parents in the community. Modeling could account for this finding. Girls may be more likely to model behavior that they see in their mothers and other women (Simons et al., 1996).

In their study of homeless and runaway adolescents, Whitbeck and colleagues (1999) have emphasized a developmental perspective as well as social interaction theory (Patterson, 1982). This interplay of life course developmental and social interaction theories sets the framework for analyzing how developmental patterns are affected adversely by aggressive and coercive family interactions and serve as conduit to reinforce and exacerbate youths' experiences on the streets. When youth leave their homes, they replicate and fine-tune negative familial behaviors and interactions. This replication of family patterns results in association with deviant peers and antisocial behavior that leads to a greater risk of physical and sexual exploitation (Whitbeck et al., 1999).

The Risk-Amplification Model links familial physical and sexual abuse to externalizing behaviors like running away, alcohol/drug use, and association with deviant peers as well as sexual and delinquent behavior (Whitbeck et al., 1999). Adolescents reach a point where their home lives plagued with family disorganization and/or abuse is more deleterious than the costs of leaving. At this point, adolescents are already
psychologically distressed. By running away, they begin to engage in adult-like behaviors but lack the security of their homes and are fully exposed to the precariousness of the streets. They have fled from unsafe homes into even more peril on the streets (Hoyt, Whitbeck, & Cauce, under review).

Early adult-like behavior is hastened by running away and sows the seeds of a developmental trajectory reflected in negative family interactions. The nature of these family environments sets in motion more refined maladaptive street behaviors, although the cultivation of these maladaptive behaviors all too often beckons further victimization and exploitation. Life on the streets further solidifies maladaptive behavior while opportunities slowly fade to affect turning points in their life trajectories as homeless and runaway adolescents become immersed in unconventional behaviors like substance abuse, deviance, and risky sex (Hoyt et al., under review).

The review of the homeless and runaway research, the suggestion of contextual differences across rural and urban places, and how context affects the stability of families and communities sets the stage for testing the following hypotheses. The literature would suggest that rural areas could lack shelters and other financial resources necessary to assist homeless and runaway youth. Abuse could have the net
effect of cutting off these adolescents' personal resources, isolating them even further.

H1. Adolescents from rural places run later.

H2. In the context of abuse, rural adolescents delay running more than their urban counterparts.

Since rural adolescents could have fewer resources available, they might rely on different deviant subsistence strategies. If rural adolescents suffer more abuse, they could become more dependent on the street economy because they lack legitimate social networks.

H3. Rural adolescents will employ more deviant subsistence strategies than urban youth.

H4. The relationship of other independent variables predicting deviant subsistence strategies will be stronger for rural than for urban youth.

It is also predicted that place has no bearing on the rate of street victimization. No matter where these adolescents come from, the streets have a way of leveling the playing field for rural and urban homeless and runaway adolescents.

H5. Place of origin has no effect on the level of street victimization.

H6. Rural youth do not differ from urban adolescents in the factors that predict street victimization.
Sample

The original sample consisted of 602 adolescents from the Midwest Homeless and Runaway Project (MHRAP) who were interviewed between 1995 and August of 1996. The homeless and runaway youth in this sample were interviewed in shelter facilities and drop-in centers as well as directly on the street in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas. Adolescents' participation in the study was voluntary and could be terminated at any time. Respondents received $15 for their participation in the study. The overall response rate was 93%, but ranged from 71% to 100% depending on agency. Their ages ranged from 12 to 22 years. The average age for females was 16 years, while the average age for males was higher (16.6). Sixty percent of the sample was comprised of females (361), leaving 241 male respondents.

Since this thesis examines the metropolitan and rural differences between homeless and runaway youth, the sample was divided accordingly. This study defines rural adolescents as those who lived on farms or in towns of less than 2,500 prior to running the first time. Rural youth comprise 7% (N=42) of the total sample. Over half of the metropolitan runaways (93% of the sample; N=557) initially ran from cities with
populations greater than 100,000. Two adolescents failed to provide information about their communities of origin, reducing the sample to 599 respondents.

**Measurement**

The variables measured in this study are gender, neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, geographic changes, and family structure changes all prior to first run, as well as age on own, deviant subsistence strategies, street victimization, and place initially ran.

**Gender**

Gender was coded as a response to one item, indicating sex of respondent. Males were coded as 1.

**Neglect Prior to First Run**

Neglect prior to first run was computed from two items (Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). This scale had a reliability coefficient alpha of .72. It assessed whether a parent, foster parent, adult relative, or any other adult caretaker had neglected the adolescent prior to the first run from home. Dichotomous response categories were computed. Youth who had been neglected at least once prior to the first run were assigned a value of 1, whereas adolescents who indicated that they had never been neglected or that it had taken place after
the first run were assigned a value of 0. These responses were summed and divided by age on own minus 1. Neglect prior to first run was composed of the following items:

1. Punished you by making you go a full day without food, water, clothing, or a toilet.
2. Abandoned you for at least 24 hours.

Sexual Abuse Prior to First Run

Sexual abuse prior to first run was computed from two items (Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). This scale had a reliability coefficient alpha of .95. It assessed whether a parent, foster parent, adult relative, or any other adult caretaker had made a sexual overture or had forced sexual activity prior to the first run from home. Dichotomous response categories were computed. Youth who had been sexually abused at least once prior to the first run were assigned a value of 1. Adolescents who indicated that they had never been sexually abused or that it had taken place after the first run were assigned a value of 0. These responses were summed and divided by age on own minus 1. The scale consisted of the following items:

1. Asked you to do something sexual.
2. Made you do something sexual or messed around with you sexually.
Physical Abuse Prior to First Run

The physical abuse prior to first run scale was computed from 7 items adapted from the conflict tactics scale (CTS) (Straus & Gelles, 1990). This scale assessed how often a parent, foster parent, adult relative, or an adult caretaker had abused the adolescent physically prior to the first run. It had a reliability coefficient alpha of .88. Response categories were dichotomous. No evidence of physical abuse prior to running the first time was coded as a 0 while physical abuse was coded as 1. These responses were summed and divided by age on own minus 1.

The items were as follows:

1. Thrown something at you in anger.
2. Pushed, shoved, or grabbed you in anger.
3. Slapped you in the face or head with an open hand.
4. Hit you with some object.
5. Beat you up with their fists.
6. Verbally or physically threatened you with a gun or knife.
7. Wounded you or physically hurt you with a gun or knife.

Geographic Changes Prior to First Run

This measure was created to obtain the average per year of geographic changes before the first run (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). The total number of geographic changes before running
away the first time was divided by the age at which the child first ran away. The following items are a list of the geographic changes:

1. Parents moved.
2. Moved with one parent.
3. Moved multiple times with one parent or both parents.
4. One/or both parents moved ahead of child.

Family Structure Changes Prior to First Run

Family structure changes prior to first run is a measure of the average yearly number of changes in family composition prior to running away the first time (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). The total number of family structure changes before the first run was divided by the age of the adolescent at the first run. This created a value that represented the average yearly number of family structure changes. These family structure changes consisted of the following:

1. Parental divorce or separation.
2. Remarriage.
3. Death of parent.
5. Evicted.
6. Parents violent or abusive.
7. Boy/girlfriend moved out.
8. Boy/girlfriend moved in.
9. Both parents left.
11. Other.

Age on Own

The age on own measure was computed by subtracting the year that the adolescent was kicked out the first time from the year of birth.

Deviant Subsistence Strategies

The Deviant subsistence strategies' measure was computed from 15 items developed by Whitbeck and Simons (1990). This scale assessed runaway and homeless adolescents' use of deviant street subsistence strategies. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had relied upon various sexual and non-sexual means to get money, food, shelter, or drugs while on their own. Response categories were either "yes" or "no" to the following items.

1. Have you ever thought about trading sex for food or shelter.
2. Have you ever traded sex for food or shelter.
3. Have you ever thought about trading sex for money.
4. Have you ever thought about trading sex for drugs.
5. Have you ever traded sex for money or drugs.
6. Have you ever sold drugs to get money.

Ways to get money:
7. Panhandling or spare changing.
8. Took money or something else from someone.
9. Broke in and took things from a store, house, etc.
10. Drug dealing.
11. Prostitution.

Ways to get food:
12. Panhandling or spare changing.
13. Stealing or shoplifting.
15. Dumpsters.

Response categories were coded so that 1 indicated a positive response, and a negative response was coded as 0. A high score on this scale indicates greater use of deviant subsistence strategies. All panhandling, sexual, and non-sexual deviant subsistence strategies were weighted equally. This scale had a reliability coefficient alpha of .81.

Street Victimization

This scale addressed the number of times adolescents had been physically and sexually victimized after running away. Whitbeck & Simons (1990) developed this scale. Response categories ranged from 1 to 4 and were categorized as "never,"
"once," "a few times," or "many times," respectively. Subjects were asked to respond to the following nine items:

1. Beaten up.
2. Robbed.
3. Asked to do something sexual that you did not want to do.
4. Forced to do sexual things that you did not want to do.
5. Sexually assaulted or raped.
6. Threatened with a weapon.
7. Assaulted and wounded with a weapon.
8. Asked to break the law, like stealing or selling drugs.
9. Gone a whole day without eating because you could not get food.

All of the responses to these items were equally weighted, recoded and summed so that a high score reflected more victimization. Responses of "a few times" and "many times" were both coded 2. A response of "once" was coded as 1, and a response of "never" was coded as 0. Physical and sexual victimization was equally considered. The reliability coefficient alpha for this scale was .80.

Adolescent Place of Origin

This measure consisted of a response to the size of place that the adolescent had run from the first time. Rural adolescents had lived on farms or lived in towns of less than
2,500 prior to running. Metropolitan adolescents had lived in small towns (2,500 to 10,000) up to and including metropolitan areas of 100,000 or more. The response to this variable was dummy coded with 1 representing rural youth.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Initially, the urban and rural groups were compared to determine if there were mean differences between the groups (Table 1). Because of the small sample size (N=42), some of the correlations for the rural youth are not significant but are as large as the correlations for the urban adolescents. Bivariate correlations were computed to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the models. Correlations for rural adolescents were computed independently of the urban youth to permit comparison between the two groups. The hypotheses were tested using three linear regression models.

Table 1. Test for Equality of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (1=male)</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Changes</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Structure Changes</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age on Own</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>14.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviant Sub. Strategies</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victimization</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the .05 level
** Significant at the .01 level
χ² computed for gender
As Table 2 indicates age on own is not related to gender for either rural or urban adolescents. However, a significant negative correlation exists with neglect and age on own (-.30) for the urban youth although the relationship is not significant for the rural sample. Sexual abuse is not related to age on own for the rural adolescents either, but it is negatively correlated with age on own (-.25) in the urban sample. For urban youth, physical abuse is negatively correlated with age on own (-.23) although the relationship is not statistically significant for the rural adolescents. The negative correlation between age on own and geographic changes (-.33) for rural adolescents is not related in the urban sample. Age on own and family structure changes continues to be negatively correlated (-.20) for the urban sample but shows no relationship for rural homeless and runaway adolescents. For urban adolescents, the use of deviant subsistence strategies is correlated with gender (.30). This correlation illustrates that males tend to utilize deviant subsistence strategies more than females although there was no relationship between these variables for rural youth. The use of deviant subsistence strategies is moderately correlated with neglect (.10) in the urban sample, but for rural adolescents a strong positive relationship exists between the two variables (.34). The use of deviant subsistence strategies is not related to sexual abuse, physical abuse, or family
Table 2. Correlation matrix for all variables in models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Gender (1=male)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Neglect</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.35*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Physical Abuse</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Geographic Changes</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>-.33*</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Family Structure Changes</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Age on Own</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.43**</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Deviant Sub. Strategies</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Street Victimization</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 M</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 SD</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P < .05, **P < .01.
Correlations for rural runaway and homeless adolescents (N=42) above diagonal.
Correlations for metropolitan runaway and homeless adolescents (N=557) below diagonal.
structure changes for either the urban or rural youth. For rural adolescents, the use of deviant subsistence strategies is positively correlated with geographic changes ( \( .42 \)); however, there is no relationship among urban youth. For the rural adolescents, a strong negative correlation exists between the use of deviant subsistence strategies and age on own (\(-.43\)) although among urban youth no such relationship is evidenced.

For both urban and rural adolescents, street victimization is not related to gender. However, for both urban and rural adolescents, street victimization is positively correlated with neglect (\(.35\) and \(.24\), respectively). Street victimization is positively correlated with both sexual and physical abuse for urban adolescents (\(.20\) and \(.19\), respectively), but has no association for rural homeless and runaway youth. For both rural and urban adolescents, street victimization is not correlated with either geographic changes or family structure changes. For urban adolescents, street victimization is negatively correlated with age on own (\(-.14\)) but is not significantly correlated in the rural sample, although street victimization and the use of deviant subsistence strategies has a strong positive correlation for both urban and rural adolescents (\(.49\) and \(.42\), respectively).
Outlier analysis was conducted by evaluating the DF betas and Cook's Distance diagnostics. The case with the highest value on Cook's D was removed from the models, and the models were run again to detect whether the case was influential. As a further precaution the highest value on Cook's D present in these models was dropped as well. After reviewing these results, it was evident that one case was responsible for the marginal interaction of physical abuse and place as a predictor of street victimization. The final results presented in this thesis have excluded this case from all models: age on own, deviant subsistence strategies, and street victimization.

The case that was removed from all models was a female (age 15) who initially had run from a rural community. She was interviewed at a shelter in Wichita, Kansas. Compared to other rural adolescents running at 14 years, she had left at age 7. The rural mean for the neglect variable was .03, although her value for neglect was .17. She had been sexually abused more than other rural adolescents (.33, compared to the overall rural mean of .02) and had suffered more physical abuse (.50) compared to other rural youth (M .20). Her family had moved more than twice as much as other rural adolescents (.29 and .11, respectively) although she did not encounter any family structure changes. She used more deviant subsistence strategies than other rural adolescents (.13 and .08) and was victimized a little less than the average rural adolescent.
(.22 and rural mean .24). This case looks much different than other rural runaways. She had endured much higher levels of abuse and neglect and had employed more deviant means to survive. She was victimized less than her counterparts even though initially she had run away at age 7.

The dependent variable age on own is normally distributed while deviant subsistence strategies and victimization are highly skewed. Natural logarithm transformations of each of the latter two variables were used for the following models.

After reviewing the literature on the significance of context and place, three linear models were tested. The first model predicts age that adolescents run the first time and if age differs by size of place of initial run. As Table 3 indicates, females ran at an earlier age \( b = -0.400 \). As the level of neglect by the primary caretaker increased, adolescents ran at a younger age \( b = -8.83 \). Sexual abuse had a similar result \( b = -5.88 \). Family structure changes also led to youth in this sample running earlier \( b = -3.01 \). Neither the amount of physical abuse nor the number of geographic changes were significant predictors of age on own.

After controlling for these variables, the analysis showed no main effect for size of place of initial run. Therefore, the first hypothesis was not supported. The size of place that adolescents had run from initially had no main effect on their ages at first run. Since there were not any
main effects, tests for interactions between size of place of initial run and abuse were conducted. Size of place of initial run and sexual abuse failed to produce any significant effects. Nevertheless, as Figure 1 indicates, there was a significant interaction between size of place of initial run and physical abuse (b = 5.70). Adolescents from rural areas delayed their runs in the context of physical abuse. The second hypothesis was supported. Rural adolescents that were physically abused run later than their urban counterparts.

Table 3. Multiple Regression of Age on Own for Total Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (1=male)</td>
<td>-0.400</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
<td>0.047*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>-8.831</td>
<td>-0.203</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>-5.875</td>
<td>-0.157</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>-0.789</td>
<td>-0.056</td>
<td>0.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Changes</td>
<td>-0.562</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>0.450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Structure Changes</td>
<td>-3.012</td>
<td>-0.165</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse*Place</td>
<td>1.945</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse*Place</td>
<td>5.703</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>0.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Changes*Place</td>
<td>-2.548</td>
<td>-0.062</td>
<td>0.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place (1=rural)</td>
<td>-0.398</td>
<td>-0.041</td>
<td>0.534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (metro)</td>
<td>14.714</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² 0.160
Adjusted R² 0.145

* Significant at the .05 level
** Significant at the .01 level

The second model that was tested explored the relationship between the employment of deviant subsistence strategies and the role of the community size of adolescents' first runs (Table 4). Males were more likely than females to use deviant subsistence strategies (b = .087). Neither prior
Figure 1. Interaction of physical abuse and place for model 1.
familial neglect, sexual abuse, nor physical abuse predicted adolescents' use of deviance to survive on the streets. Neither geographic nor family structure changes had a net effect on the means adolescents used to get money, food, or shelter while on the streets. The age that adolescents initially ended up on the streets did not predict the means of street survival either. There was not a main effect of place on the use of deviant subsistence strategies. The third hypothesis was not supported.

Table 4. Multiple Regression of Deviant Subsistence Strategies for Total Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (1=male)</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Changes</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Structure Changes</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>0.470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age on Own</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>0.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age*Place</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>-0.771</td>
<td>0.011*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse*Place</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td>0.039*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Changes*Place</td>
<td>0.119</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place (1=rural)</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td>0.553</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (metro)</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.027*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the .05 level
** Significant at the .01 level

However, there were two significant interactions. As indicated by Figure 2, younger rural adolescents employed more subsistence strategies than urban adolescents of the same age did, but as rural youth aged they used fewer deviant means
Figure 2. Interaction of age on own and place for model 2.
than their urban counterparts ($b = -0.030$). The interaction of physical abuse and place (Figure 3) also played a role in the use of deviant subsistence strategies ($b = 0.329$). Urban adolescents' use of deviance remained fairly constant across levels of physical abuse. Higher rates of physical abuse for rural youth increased their use of deviant subsistence strategies. The fourth hypothesis was supported.

The final model (Table 5) was predicated on the anticipated result that the size of place of the initial run would have no bearing on street victimization. Gender did not have a significant impact on the level of street victimization. However, increased rates of neglect led to significantly more victimization ($b = 0.598$) while sexual abuse by a primary caretaker also increased the risk of being victimized while on the street ($b = 0.513$). Physical abuse and the age that the adolescent ran the first time did not predict street victimization. As the number of family geographic changes increased, street victimization declined ($b = -0.198$). The number of times that families had been uprooted led to more victimization while the adolescents were on the streets ($b = 0.152$). Adolescents' reliance on deviant subsistence strategies while on the streets increased their risk for victimization ($b = 0.942$).

After controlling for these variables, place did not have a main effect on victimization. The fifth hypothesis was
Figure 3. Interaction of physical abuse and place for model 2.
supported. Living on the streets is perilous for adolescents regardless of the size of the cities of initial runs. Interaction effects were also tested but none were significant. There were no differences in the predictors that led to victimization for urban and rural youth. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis was supported.

Table 5. Multiple Regression of Street Victimization for Total Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (1=male)</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td>0.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>0.598</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>0.003**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Changes</td>
<td>-0.198</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
<td>0.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Structure Changes</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.038*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age on Own</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>0.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviant Subsistence Strategies</td>
<td>0.942</td>
<td>0.492</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse * Place</td>
<td>-0.370</td>
<td>-0.089</td>
<td>0.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place (1=rural)</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (metro)</td>
<td>0.170</td>
<td>0.009*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R²: 0.316
Adjusted R²: 0.303

* Significant at the .05 level
** Significant at the .01 level
One of the primary goals of this thesis has been to assess whether runaway and homeless adolescents in metropolitan areas experience life differently than their counterparts who have run from non-metropolitan, rural places. This analysis makes clear that there are not base differences in age of running away, involvement in street subsistence strategies, nor rates of street victimization. However, rural adolescents delayed running in the face of abuse and navigated their lives on the streets differently. Interestingly, the rate of street victimization remained comparable.

This study explored whether youth from non-metropolitan areas differed in the timing of their first runs. Adolescents who had run initially from rural areas or from farms had run at the same age as adolescents who were from larger urban areas. Urban adolescents tended to run a few months earlier as the level of physical abuse increased. However, as the level of physical abuse increased in the rural homes, rural adolescents delayed running nearly a year and a half.

This could indicate that rural environments offer fewer options for adolescents trapped in abusive familial relationships. Many rural areas lack shelters and resources to assist this vulnerable population. Even when shelters are
available, the interconnectedness of the community severely threatens confidentiality and so may not be seen as a realistic option for abused adolescents (Hoyt et al., 1997).

Community resources play a role, but so do personal resources. Physical abuse could cut off adolescents' ties to others. Because of the close ties in rural communities, people may not want to involve themselves in their neighbors' family matters. Physically abused adolescents could realize that they are even more vulnerable in these places because community resources are not in place and their social networks are tenuous; so they delay running until they can find a way to survive on their own (Hoyt et al., 1997).

This point of departure sets the adolescent on a peripatetic path requiring immediate adaptation to the rigors of homelessness interlaced with early independence. Adaptation is essential to survival, but survival is intimately tied to the options that are available (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). Adolescents are navigating a new terrain on the city streets that has at its core an underground economy that in many instances provides the means of support for homeless and runaway youth.

This study found that the use of deviant means of support did not differ across urban and rural youth. Equally important, in the context of physical abuse and age on own, these means of support differed markedly for rural and urban
adolescents. Physical abuse had little bearing on urban adolescents' survival by way of the street economy. What is most interesting is that rural youth were more embedded in street subsistence when they had suffered higher rates of physical abuse.

The logic that could underlie this finding might suggest that abuse cuts off adolescents from their legitimate social networks and forcefully plunges them in the battle of survival by way of the underground economy. The street economy becomes their only means of survival, with abuse serving to isolate families from social networks that could have served as a protective shield from the ways of the street.

The use of the illegitimate economy was fairly stable for urban youth regardless of the age that they found themselves on their own. This was not so for rural adolescents. Rural adolescents became less involved in deviant means of survival as they got older. One possible explanation might be that survival initially necessitates the use of the street economy. Rural adolescents may learn through the street network that there are institutions specifically geared toward their needs. This could account for some of the aging out process that seems to occur because shelters and drop-in centers do not present the threat of discovery that institutions in their own communities had. They now have the privilege of anonymity and may gravitate to cities that provide these resources.
The final hazard for runaway and homeless youth is the further victimization that they find on the street. In predicting the rate of street victimization, place has absolutely no effect. These adolescents have equal risk for further exploitation. The streets exact their own justice and level the playing field for rural and urban adolescents alike.

Some of the limitations of this study must be addressed. They include the sampling technique, single-reporter accounts, and the use of cross-sectional data. One of the limitations is this sample was drawn from the Midwest, which restricts the nature of generalizing to youth in other regions of the country. However, the research project was designed to capture the heterogeneity in the population by interviewing youth from multiple sites in larger urban communities as well as smaller cities in the Midwest.

The aim of the study was to interview youth on the streets as well as in shelters. With the study of homeless and runaway youth, there are inherent constraints. Agencies serving these youth are naturally under time constraints that reinforced a selection bias. The majority of the adolescents in this sample were shelter youth although they were not immune to living on streets.

Another caution bears mentioning. As was indicated earlier, adolescents were sampled from multiple sites in various sized urban cities. Nevertheless, adolescents were
also sampled from smaller shelters in less populated cities. The sampling design could decrease the number of rural adolescents in the study because they are members of a population that does not have ready access to shelters. When rural adolescents remain in abusive families longer, the number of rural adolescents that could potentially be sampled could be underestimated by this study's sampling technique.

Caution is also warranted when evaluating the cross-sectional nature of the data. Care must be taken in drawing conclusions about the processes at work because the data does not allow one to evaluate these mechanisms over time. This study made an effort to tap this dimension by incorporating a life-events matrix into the survey. Respondents were asked for a chronological accounting of their lives including all changes in caretakers and geographic transitions to give breadth, tempered with caution, to the conclusions drawn from the analysis (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

Readers should also be aware of the bias associated with self-report data. The adolescent was the sole source of information about her/his experiences. Single-reporter bias was counterbalanced with the interviewer evaluating the quality of the responses offered by the adolescent. Overall, the analysis of the interviewers' remarks indicated that adolescents tended to underreport abuse and their criminal activities as well as their drug use (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).
Despite these limitations, this study has made an important contribution to the research on homeless and runaway youth. This analysis considered the role that place might play in the lives of these adolescents. Place did not have a main effect on the age that adolescents initially ran, their use of deviance to survive, nor their rates of street victimization. Yet, there were some indications of significant interactions in predictors of these outcomes by place.
REFERENCES CITED


Daddis, M., Braddock, D., Cuers, S., Elliot, A., & Kelly, A. (1993). Personal and family distress in homeless
adolescents. *Community Mental Health Journal, 29*, 413-422.


Kipke, M., Simon, T., Montgomery, S., Unger, J., & Iverson, E. (1997). Homeless youth and their exposure to and
involvement in violence while living on the streets.


Whitbeck, L., Hoyt, D. & Ackley, K. 1997b. Abusive family backgrounds and later victimization among runaway and


