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TURNING POINTS AND PROTECTIVE PROCESSES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON RESILIENT YOUTH THROUGH THEIR PERSPECTIVE AS RESILIENT ADULTS

by

Michael E. Monson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education

Approved:

Dr. Janice Hall Major Professor	Dr. Gary Carlston Committee Member
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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2006

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ABSTRACT

Turning Points and Protective Processes: A Qualitative Study on Resilient Youth Through Their Perspective as Resilient Adults

by

Michael E. Monson, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2006

Major Professor: Dr. Janice L. Hall
Department: Education

This study investigates the processes of resiliency and the turning points of decision-making in youth from at-risk environments. The study utilizes a constructivist, qualitative approach, to examine indicators of resiliency from both an individual and contextual perspective. The narrative descriptions of eleven adults from at-risk childhoods are analyzed through biographical interviews.

Analyses were completed to determine common factors that contribute to the process of resiliency in successful adults. Results indicate that the influences of risk on healthy functioning are modified by shifting environmental protective factors, resources, and developed attributes of self-efficacy. Risk and adversity had a strengthening effect that contributed to participant success in adult life.

(171 pages)

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If it takes a village to raise a child, I feel that it takes one of proportionate size to help me complete this dissertation. I have been taught priceless lessons about research, writing, and perseverance, through the suggestions, recommendations, and examples of my committee members. I thank them for taking precious time from their busy schedules to meet with me and provide guidance and leadership. In particular, my chairperson, Dr. Janice Hall, has my heartfelt gratitude, as she read my work and made suggestions, but allowed this to become my research. Her attention to detail and her understanding of qualitative research has remained a guiding force in the completion of this work. She spent many hours reading to allow quick turnaround time, so that I could make corrections and adjustments. I acknowledge her work with great gratitude and appreciate the friendship that has developed through the process.

I give thanks to the people who were willing to be interviewed in this study. Their willingness to share personal information is courageous. Their stories have inspired me to have greater empathy, be more cognizant of others' needs, and have a much greater appreciation of my family.

I thank my parents, Earl and Donna Monson, for always being there for me and for providing a safe, warm, and loving environment throughout my childhood. The biographies found in this study have taught me how fortunate I am.

Finally, I give my deepest expression of love and appreciation to my dear wife, Kris, who has stood by me for 28 years. Her patience with books and papers spread throughout the room—along with her constant view of the back of my head as I faced

the computer—is remarkable. Every good thing in my life is because of my marriage to her. There is little I have accomplished without her at my side. My children are my strength and support. They are my cheerleaders. My three children, Matt, Nick, and Marci, along with my two wonderful daughters-in-law, Whitney and Michelle, are the loves of my life. Writing a dissertation is truly a family venture.

I dedicate this dissertation to all of the people in this world who refuse to stop living and growing in spite of extraordinarily adverse circumstances. You are the resilient, and your message needs to be heard for the benefit of all.

Michael E. Monson

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For decades, social science researchers have explored the internal and external factors that damage people, including poverty, racism, abuse, neglect, violence, and illness (Beardslee & Podoresfky, 1988; Festinger, 1984; Higgins, 1994; Vaillant, 2002; Virgil, 1990; Werner & Smith, 2001). From the studies, policy makers, the media, and researchers themselves have personalized a fatalistic model that assumed a troubled childhood inevitably created a troubled adult (Benard, 2004). It has led to stereotyping, tracking, lower expectations, and even discrimination. The research failed to explain the fact that some people remain well adjusted under horrific conditions, or stumble early, and later turn their lives around.

The scientific study of resilience—people succeeding in spite of serious challenges to development—emerged about 30 years ago, when a group of pioneering researchers kept finding examples of successful development in their studies of children at risk (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Werner, 1993). Later studies focused on specific populations that were experiencing negative life outcomes because of a variety of individual, family and environmental factors (Garmezy, Best, & Masten 1990; Higgins, 1994; Rutter, 2001; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). Researchers explored single-risk factors, such as premature birth, divorce or abuse, but it soon became evident that risks such as these rarely came in single packages. These investigators realized that we did not understand how good outcomes are achieved, and that this information was vital for improving the odds of these high risk children for productive lives.

Today, people who show such strength are being studied, as a focus has turned toward enhancing people's ability to overcome adversity, rather than trying to compensate for perceived damage. Prevention programs have been developed to change systems at the most fundamental levels of beliefs, relationships and providing opportunities for participation that ultimately serve as the connective factor for healthy development. Grossman (2001) studied the impact of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring program in the United States. The findings of his study indicated that when resilient adults are able to provide retrospective analysis of influences, the overwhelming majority identify a caring adult, whether that is a loving parent, a teacher, a relative or a neighbor. Marshall (1998) stated that the efforts must begin by helping the adults in the system realize their own health so they can be competent and caring anchor points for youth.

Development does not simply come by mastering more and more skills in a cumulative way, but by making conceptual leaps in understanding and viewing the world—as transformative more than additive (Merrifield 2000). The meaning of what individuals learn is coupled with their life experiences and the contexts of the experience. Learning, anchored in real-life situations is referred to as contextual learning and is rooted in a constructivist approach. Constructivism challenges the technical-rational approach to learning by redefining the relationship between the knower and what is known, including what is most worth knowing and who decides (Dirkx, Amey, & Haston, 2000). The better we are able to articulate the features of our

life experiences, the better equipped we will be to create resilience and protection for children.

Resiliency theory has led to the creation of programs and interventions designed to provide protection to those at risk. Programs and interventions provide the needed support for many children at risk, but do not always get to the root of the problem and may involve the wrong sources to provide information and draw conclusions. Ungar (2005) notes that emphasizing predictable relationships, circular causality, and transactional processes, is inadequate to account for the diversity of people's experiences. Outcomes reflect a negotiation between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse. Outside of clinical consultations, resilient adults have not been asked to make a reflective examination or assessment of a "turning point" in their lives. A turning point that would be defined as a time when they made a determination to pursue a path of personal choice, take charge of their lives, and become a witness to the evidence of their own competence.

Statement of the Problem

Theorists, researchers, and clinicians concerned with development are interested in the study of resilience. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2000), identified the study of resilience as relevant to support research related to the etiology, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental disorders.

The central appeal of resilience research is derived from repeated findings that a significant number of children reared in the most adverse circumstances develop into competent and productive adults. If the mechanisms and processes by which this occurs could be fully understood, the potential exists to foster resilience in children and their families.

Past resilience research inadequately addresses contextual learning, whereby individuals construct meaning from their life's experience, and the processes of overcoming, anchored in the context of real-life situations and problems. Human nature tends to make interpretations and generalizations about specific problems, rather than addressing the source of the problem and the means for solution. Knowledge is inseparable from the contexts and activities within which it develops (Borko & Putnam, 1998). The central role of experience is to serve as a resource and as a stimulus for learning. There is little evidence of going to resilient adults as resources, to determine when and how they came to an understanding of their ability to overcome adverse situations.

Purpose of the Study

Despite a growing body of research on risk and resilience, there is only tentative consensus among researchers as to a shared set of common factors that predispose children to particular outcomes (Benard, 2004; Glantz & Slobada, 1999; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2001). The complexity of resiliency demands a more holistic approach, one that includes both the contextual and individual perspectives of process among adult

survivors. Gaining this individual perspective of a point in time, contextual specificity, and the resiliency process is the purpose of this study.

Past research, with children at risk, proceeded from a medical model approach that identified the symptoms of risk rather than indicators that preserved resiliency (Printz, Shemis, & Webb, 1999). The sources and methods used for obtaining this data typically have employed teacher or parent responses to surveys, inventories, or stress checklists developed from researcher developed instruments (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Garmezy, 1994; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 2001). Such secondary sources and retrospective approaches have been useful for identifying risk factors.

By focusing on the narrative perceptions and interpretations of adults that have survived at-risk environments or situations, the relative individual and contextual indicators of resiliency are identified. In particular, there is an understanding of when and how, they made a personal decision to overcome the obstacles in their path and make a determination to take personal control of their life's choices. Resilience is mediated over the long term in multiple ways that can best be described by those who have experienced the adverse situations. These first-hand perspectives are crucial to understanding the existence of resiliency.

This study gathers the participant's perceptions of their experiences of living within an at-risk environment or at-risk situations, and opens the possibilities of understanding the factors that contribute to healthy development. This study focuses upon the processes of resiliency rather than the individual factors associated with risk. The commonalities gathered from the interviews provide a framework for healthy

decision-making, in spite of adverse situations, and examine pathways to resiliency. To understand how resilience fits into this framework, it is important to come to a definitional understanding of terms.

Definition of Terms

At-risk: Youth who are most likely to experience school failure, poor behavior, teen pregnancy, or other negative developmental outcomes (Winfield, 1994).

Contructivism: Knowledge is not fixed and objective, but fluid and subjective, constructed by an individual through discourse and interaction with teacher, parents, peers, others, or through experience with objects, to provide meaning and organization (Bruner, 1990).

Crisis: A radical change in a person's life; the decisive moment; a crucial and unstable time when a decisive change is pending (Walsh, 2003).

High-risk: A situation where an individual has multiple risk factors in their life, without having adequate support systems, coping skills or self-concept (Gilgun, 1999).

Locus of control: Stable and generalized beliefs about personal responsibility for outcomes. At one extreme is the internal—the person who thinks of themselves as completely responsible for their behavior. At the other extreme is the external—the individual who sees the power of others, luck, or circumstances beyond his control as responsible for outcomes (Hans, 2000).

Protective factors: Those factors that tend to reduce the effect of stresses/risks (Rutter & Quinton, 1984).

Protective processes: How identity is formed, maintained and transformed across the span of life. Where people intentionally change their behavior, their circumstances, or readjust their goals (Masten, 2001).

Resiliency: A class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development (Masten, 2001).

Turning points: Significant life events, experiences, or realizations (Rutter, 1987).

Theoretical Framework

A large volume of resilience research over the last three decades has examined the psychosocial levels of analysis to derive explanatory models (Anthony, 1987; Combrinck, 1995; Gilgun, 1996; Glantz & Johnson, 1999; Hauser, 1999; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Sharma & Sharma, 1999). Based on an ecological model, there has been an emphasis on causal links and a predetermination of health outcomes. This body of knowledge cannot help in the prediction of which specific high-risk children will survive and/or thrive and which will experience developmental and behavioral problems. Rutter (1987) stated that there is a tendency to focus gloomily on the ills of humankind and all that can go wrong. The potential for prevention lies in increasing knowledge and understanding of the reasons why some children are not damaged.

Benard (1997) described four common attributes of resiliency: (a) social competence—resilient children are able to connect with healthy people in their lives, they have good communication skills, and they demonstrate empathy and caring; (b)

problem solving skills—children who overcome obstacles in their lives are able to identify alternate sources of support, they look critically at their home and school environments, determine what is lacking, and then identify a neighbor or teacher who can fill in the gaps; (c) autonomy—they understand their strengths and weaknesses; (d) optimism—they have a hope for the future and are persistent in striving to achieve their goals. Resiliency theory proposes that most people have some of each of these attributes, but that whether these attributes are strong enough to help individuals cope with adversity in their lives depends on the protective factors provided by families, schools and communities.

An individual's interactions with family, school and community are established in a continually changing environment, and because of various interactions, the individual makes self changes and acquires new ways to be and act. The concept of resilience implies an individual experiential process judged by the appropriateness of social behavior (Garmezy & Masten, 1994).

The construct of resilience is also closely linked with prevention and is system centered (Blum, 1998). This means changing systems at the most fundamental levels of beliefs and relationships, and providing opportunities for participation that ultimately serve as the connective factor for healthy development. Leaders in the field of risk and resilience research acknowledge their inability to narrow down the causal factors that predict unhealthy and healthy outcomes among at-risk individuals or those factors that protect and divert children and youth from problem behaviors (Kaplan, 1999; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Masten, 2001). The efforts must begin by helping the adults in the

system to realize their own health and use the wisdom gained from their experiences to benefit youth.

This study will use an organizational and theoretical framework uniting the models of resiliency and constructivism along with Vygotsky's (1962) socio-cultural theory. Through the course of the literature review, key concepts will be discussed that when interlocked, assemble a specific view of both resilience in terms of experience and learning, and experience and learning in terms of resilience. This interpretation of resilience reflects a postmodern understanding that explains social realities as constructed through interaction, and dependant upon the language that we have to describe our experiences. Those with the voice have the power to control social discourse and influence our definition of what is health and what is illness (Gergin, 2001). Elicited perceptions and meanings made of the events experienced by resilient adults are important and have not been heard.

It is the goal of this research to better understand the contextual indicators, and the past experiences of adults within all-encompassing perceptions of their ability to overcome adversity. The only way the problems from the past can effect the present is if we carry them with us. The resiliency and constructivist models provide a framework around which this study's participants will be able to define resilience through the negotiation they experienced with their environment and resources to define themselves as healthy amid conditions collectively viewed as adverse.

Bolkosky (2002) used a constructivist model in the resilience research on Holocaust survivors. His qualitative research provided stories of purpose and hope in

the midst of adversity and trauma. The participant's processing of environmental events produced individual cognitive constructs to form their adaptive behavior. Holocaust survivors have now reached old age, a time when adults often review their lives, attempt to resolve old conflicts, and find new meaning in life events. There is reason to believe that resilience may be understood in the way people respond to risk over time and is best comprehended by examining how people respond to stress across the course of life (Fraser, Richman, & Galinsky, 1999).

The resiliency-constructivist model seems appropriate within the context of this study because it examines individual perceptions of their own ability, time frames to overcoming adversity, and the processes of change regardless of cultural, economic or language orientations.

Research Questions

The central question of this research is: What are the contextual indicators in the lives of people who have overcome high risk situations? The theme driving those indicators is that of discovering a "turning point," or a period of time and the process that people went through to make a determination to overcome their specific adversity, risk or obstacle. Youth and adolescence are pivotal periods in learning and development. The majority of child survivors have not told their stories, as children they were not encouraged to tell. Many adults have looked upon their stories as unimportant or too painful to discuss. Successful adulthood depends on acquiring skills, attitudes, values, and the necessary social capital to respond to adversity and the

fulfillment of basic human needs. Therefore, the focusing questions that guided this study are:

1. Are there common themes in people's lives that explain how some surmount high risk factors?

2. What resources and strategies did resilient adults use to help them handle the challenges they faced?

3. What factors do "resilient" adults identify as inhibitors of their own resilience?

4. What unknown strengths and abilities emerged from people's experiences?

5. In retrospect, what do people value from their experience in high risk situations?

Limitations

1. Participants will share their experience within the context of their culture and environment which may reflect different interpretations of common situations.

2. The individuals who are willing to participate.

3. Context factors related to family, neighborhood, community and school can amplify or moderate the perceptions of individual's personal control in decision making.

4. Participants' perceptions and accurate recall of their life's experiences.

5. Given the small n, outcomes will not be generalizable, but will be transferable.

Delimitations

1. Geographic location. All participants hail from the western region of the United States.
2. All participants are between the ages of 35-55.
3. Socioeconomic levels of participants are considered middle class or better.
4. Ethnicity is limited but representative of population of western United States.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I describes the gap in research on adult construction of risk and resilience in their youth. Chapter II will provide research support for participant interviews, drawing on the literature in the areas of resilience, social constructivism, basic needs and self-assessment. Chapter III will explain the methodology of the study. Chapter IV is a compilation of the biographical sketches of the participants. Chapter V will report the results of the study. Chapter VI will interpret the results, describe practical and theoretical implications of the study, and offer direction for future research in the area of resilience, mentoring and guiding youth. Chapter VII will include a summary and discussion of the research, including recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of invulnerability from harmful influences emerged, almost by accident, from longitudinal development studies of at-risk groups of children as they encountered many life stressors during their development, through childhood and adolescence, to adulthood (Silva & Stanton, 1996; Werner & Smith, 1982). While these were essentially epidemiological studies of the incidence of disease and pathology in the studied populations, interest grew in what Rutter (1987) referred to as "the ubiquitous phenomenon of individual difference in peoples responses to stress and adversity."

The Pathology/Damage Model

The influence of behaviorists such as Freud (1910) and Skinner (1950) focused on individual's maladjustment, insufficiency or illness. The fatalistic model that emerged assumed that a troubled childhood inevitably created a troubled adulthood. Research that supported the development of this paradigm used a retrospective approach (Hawkins & Catalano, 1992). They looked at individuals who were currently experiencing problems, then went backwards in time to find a set of circumstances or events in the person's past that suggested a causal relationship. For example, it is felt that there is a greater tendency for children of alcoholics to have alcohol problems themselves or other related difficulties (Wolin & Wolin, 1993). Maternal depression sharply depresses their young children's development (Fuller, 2002).

Other studies focused on specific populations of resilient children and adolescents (Anthony, 1987; Garmezy, 1991, 1994; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1992). In these studies the subjects were classified as being at-risk of psychiatric disorders, delinquency and other negative life outcomes because of a variety of individual, family and environmental factors. These factors include low parental education, unemployment, welfare, family transience and troubles with drugs, and the law. The Children's Defense Fund (2001) listed 25 key facts about American children. Each are considered factors that may put children at risk. They include such things as difficult family situations, poverty, violence, health issues and abuse. While these factors do not condemn a youth to school or social failure, the presence of one or more increases its possibility (Sullivan, 1992).

Currently, a large body of research suggests that cause is not consistent with outcomes. In most studies, including foster care (Festinger, 1984), members of gangs (Virgil, 1990), teen mothers (Furstenberg, 1998), sexually abused (Higgins, 1994; Wilkes, 2002), substance abuse or mentally ill families (Beardslee & Poderesfky, 1988; Rutter, 1985; Werner & Smith, 2001), children in poverty (Clausen, 1993; Garmezy, 1991; Vaillant, 2002), more children become productive citizens, than do not. Many people have the ability to overcome adversity.

Most resilience research has been conducted on high risk children and adolescent populations (Cicchetti & Garmezy, 1993; Hawkins & Catalano, 1992; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 1985, 2001). Participants in longitudinal investigations are now entering the early and middle adult phases of their lives

(Felsman & Vaillant, 1987; Rutter & Quinton, 1984; Werner & Smith, 1992). Numerous researchers (Benson, 1998; Hawkins & Catalano, 1999; Richardson, 2002; Werner, 1993) have stated that risk-reduction approaches, whether targeted at delinquency, drugs, or teen pregnancy do not work. Pollard (1999) found that prevention programs that concentrate on resiliency at the expense of risks are less likely to reduce problem behaviors than a strategy that is effective in both enhancing protective factors and reducing risk factors. The source of the risk must also be addressed. Lifton (1994), who carried out an in-depth study of the survivors or Hiroshima and the Holocaust, found that people who are resilient have a variety of adaptive mechanisms, and are able to bring together or integrate seemingly incompatible ideas. They seek consistency, remain connected to human events and search for spiritual meaning.

The literature suggests that children who experience trauma and become resilient adults, often demonstrate personal strengths, empathy, intellectual skills, hope and faith (Garmezy, 1994; Higgins, 1994). Because of various studies, there has been a gradual change in prevention from risk-focused deficit models to asset focused strengths models. An example of a risk-focused model is the federal "Just Say No" campaign (1986). Current statistics indicate there is not reduced drug usage among teens (Office of National Drug Control Policy [ONDCP], 2000). Farber and Egeland (1987) found that some children show competent behavior and good coping strategies but are not emotionally healthy. Thus, preventative programs that focus on a specific risk are less likely to be successful.

Unger and Teram (2000) found that youth labeled as *resilient* and *vulnerable* demonstrated similar engagement in protective processes which they reported as health enhancing. Their strength-model examination indicated that the distinguishing characteristic between the two groups was the availability of resources to sustain their well-being and their resulting self-constructions as healthy. The most vulnerable youth in the study found through their delinquent and disordered behaviors the same health resources (self-esteem, competence, involvement, and attachment to others) as their resilient peers.

Fostering resilience is a process not a program. Resilience related factors, have been identified through largely quantitative ecological approaches to research. Some researchers have begun to study resilience in adulthood using qualitative, retrospective (O'Connell, 1994) and life history methodologies (Singer, Ryff, Carr, & Magee, 1998) in clinical situations. Rather than focusing on those children and adolescents who were causalities of negative factors, studies focused instead on those who did not succumb. What is it that enables them to survive? What makes them apparently immune to the factors that negatively affect others?

The Resiliency Model

A resiliency framework has arisen because other theories failed to account for all of the data and other observations of human behavior. Richardson (2002) provided a framework for resilience to provide structure to the piecemeal studies and articles that existed. He looked at resilience as a process of coping with disruptive, stressful, or

challenging life events in a way that provided individuals with additional protective and coping skills that could be developed. He contended that traits promoting or stimulating resilience may be taught or, at the very least, managed through opportunities of environmental control or ecology through a collection of characteristics developed over time.

The idea of resilience emerged in the developmental literature at a time when there was a shift from traditional deficit-based models of development towards strength-based models. The focus is on what is present, not what is absent. The root of resiliency research is partly to be found in the work of Werner (1993) on the island of Kauai. The subjects of her study were 698 children, born in 1955. The children were tracked periodically for the next 30+ years. During the course of the research, the children were divided into two groups: "high risk" and "low risk." High-risk children had been born into poverty, were products of more troubled pregnancies, or lived in troubled families. Low-risk children were healthier, more affluent, and came from more stable family situations. Originally, the researchers focused on factors that made children vulnerable. They were not surprised to note that two thirds of the high-risk children developed learning or behavioral difficulties by the time they were 10 years old. In particular, children with four or more risk factors prior to the age of 2 years were much more likely to be having problems in school at age 10. The risk factors she used as criteria included poverty, occupational or marital difficulties, single-parent families, poor parent-child communication, parents with substance abuse problems, and parents with openly aggressive and hostile behavior.

What surprised the researchers was that while nearly two thirds of the high-risk children developed problems in their teens and one third did not. Instead, these high-risk children grew into competent adults who were able to sustain employment and relationships. Werner (1993) stated, "Our findings...suggest that a number of potent protective factors or buffers have a more generalized effect on the course of vulnerable children than do specific risk factors on stressful life events...and they offer us a more optimistic outlook" (p. 530). The literature to date contains many compilations of factors or characteristics thought to be protective, or to be related to positive outcomes (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Waller, 2001).

Werner and Smith (2001) reported, "One of the most striking findings of our two follow-ups in adulthood, at ages 32 and 40, was that most of the high-risk youths who did develop serious coping problems in adolescence had staged a recovery by the time they reached midlife. As adults, they were stable in marriages and jobs. They were satisfied with their relationships with their spouses and teenage children, and were responsible citizens in their community" (p. 42).

The Search Institute (Benson, 1998) asked why some children and youth grow up with ease, while others struggle? Why do some get involved in dangerous activities, while others spend their time contributing to society? Why do some beat the odds in difficult situations, while others get trapped? Through their research, they identified 40 developmental assets, which are positive experiences or influences that are directly correlated with positive youth behavior. The more developmental assets of support that youth experience in their homes, communities and schools, the less likely they are to

engage in a wide range of risky behaviors, and in fact, the far more likely they are to engage in positive behaviors. Benson, through results of thousands of surveys, referred to the assets as protective factors that influence choices that young people make in becoming caring, responsible adults.

The presence of factors identified as increasing risk or protection do not lead to predictable outcomes (Luthar & Zigler, 1992). A specific factor may be protective in one case, neutral in another, and related to risk in someone else's life. For example, having educational aspirations and good school attendance may foster resilience in one youth, while for another, who is bullied at school regular attendance may ultimately be experienced as a risk factor. There is an interdependence and contextual nature of resilience. The effect of protective factors is evident in the larger context in which the interaction occurs and the meaning of a particular factor to a particular individual (Waller, 2001).

Focus on resilience-enhancing variables and processes in development studies has resulted in attention being paid to children and youth who resemble their problem peers on measures of risk but demonstrate qualities associated with definitions of normative health. Masten (2001) defined resilience as a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development. Gilgun (1999) said that the resilience construct has come to mean both a set of behaviors and internalized capacities. Davis (1999) added the element of time to his conceptualization of resiliency, and pointed out the differences between coping, adaptation, and resiliency. Coping is seen as a response to an adversarial or challenging

situation, and is often reactive and defensive in nature. Adaptation describes responses that move beyond the defensive into adjustment and coping, and serve to improve or maximize the person's situation. Finally, resiliency is described as positive change over time and is related to the maintenance of coping and adaptive capacities. So, rather that reducing risk in and of itself, the resilient person practices coping with and adapting to adversity, and gets better at doing so over time.

The tenets of the resiliency model, focus on how human beings adapt, and consequently, on how they stay healthy (Benard, 2004). "Simply put, resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity, and overcome negative influences that often block achievement" (p. 5). Resilience research focuses on traits and coping skills and support that help children survive, or even thrive, in a challenging environment" (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory [NCREL], 1994). Benard (1991) said resiliency is the natural outcome of healthy human development in which various personal and environmental influences interact in a reciprocal, transactional relationship.

The literature is full of theoretical discussion on the complex nature of resiliency but has few results of conclusive evidence about the process of resiliency 'in-the-moment,' or how to foster resiliency in others (Wolin & Wolin, 1995). As stated by Wolin and Wolin, "there is an increasing trend for authors of prevention reports to discuss the relevance of interventions for resiliency promotion with proof of the causal relationships dependent on future research" (p. 418). The difficulty of establishing consistent and generalized findings is that children preidentified as resilient (whether or

not they are at risk) may be identified because they conform to social norms and expectations. Traumatized children may be adaptive to the need to please adults or adaptively distance themselves in ways that do not meet adult approval (Martineau, 2001).

A key finding from resilience research is that successful development and transformative power exist not in programmatic approaches per se but at the deep level of relationships, beliefs, expectations, and willingness to share power (Benard, 2004; Unger, 2006). Health resides in all individuals even when significant impairment is present. Resilience is successful negotiation by individuals for health resources, with success depending on the reciprocity individuals experience between themselves and the social constructions of well-being that shape their interpretations of health status (Boyden, 2001; Unger, 2003).

Social Constructivism

Vygotsky (1978) stated that every function in a child's cultural development of cognition appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people and then inside the child. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding the processes that occur in constructing knowledge (Derry, 1999). It begins with the assertion that individual human beings are motivated to satisfy several psychological needs. While the needs are universal, the ways in which people meet the needs as well as the extent to which these needs are met, are highly variable.

Human needs are a powerful source of explanation of human behavior and social interaction. What appears to be a driving force in the process of human development, resilience and adaptation is an internal force, or an intrinsic motivation. These essentials go beyond food, water, and shelter. They include both physical and nonphysical elements needed for human growth and development, as well as all those things humans are innately driven to attain. Human beings are intrinsically motivated to meet basic psychological needs, including a sense of *inclusion* or affiliation, the need for *control* or autonomy to make decisions about what is happening, the need for *affection* which is to like and be liked, and the need to be seen as capable or *competent* (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci, 1995; Hillman, 1996; Maslow, 1954; Resnick, 1997; Richardson, 2002; Sandler, 2001). High intrinsic motivation, an internal locus of control, and feelings of self-efficacy are also largely cited as personal factors that contribute to resiliency (Benard, 1995; Catterall, 1998; Gordon, Ingersoll, & Orr, 1995; Peterson, 1997).

McClelland (1998) noted for his contributions on human motivation, studied participants of a ring toss game. He asked them to throw as many rings onto a peg from a distance that they chose to set for themselves. From this study, he described three types of motivational need: (a) the need for achievement; (b) the need for authority and power; and (c) the need for affiliation. He noted that most people possess and exhibit a combination of these characteristics. He observed that most people set limits and goals for themselves in which they would find an ideal personal challenge, not too easy and not impossible. In exercise fitness, the same principle is applied. In order to develop

physical strength the exercise must be sufficiently demanding to increase existing levels, but not so demanding as to cause damage or strain.

How needs are expressed and met varies, not only within a person over time, but from person to person and from culture to culture. These needs are referred to by developmental psychologists as fundamental protective human adaptive systems (Masten & Reed, 2002). All human beings are compelled to meet basic needs throughout their lifetime. For youth, whether their needs are allowed expression in a pro-social, positive way depends to a great extent on the people, places, and experiences they encounter in families, schools and communities (Benard, 2004). Dossey (2003) noted that there is a crucial difference between the needs felt by a population and the needs professionals attribute to the population.

Self-Assessment

Young people displaying resilient behavior are more likely to talk in ways that indicate they believe they could control their lives and what happened to them (Howard & Johnson, 2000). They do not see themselves as victims of fate or circumstance; they do not accept personal weaknesses and faults as unchangeable givens that would prevent them from being successful in the future. Research suggests that good health and success in life are largely determined by how one responds to adversity (Cohen, 1988; Seligman, 1993; Stoltz, 1997). Psychological theory explains this phenomenon in terms of attribution theory or locus of control theory. Attribution refers to how people

explain events that happen to themselves and others. It may be explained as self-agency, personal control or self-determination (Mamlin, Harris, & Case, 2001).

An internal locus of control helps one see oneself, as having an impact on his or her environment through behaviors that elicit or fail to elicit response from the environment. Zeldin (2000) found that students engage in tasks about which they feel confident and avoid those in which they do not. Pense (1998) and Pollard (1999) examined adults that had been abused as children and found that those with an oppositional stance as opposed to passive victimization were associated with better mental health outcomes. Within the context of environment, social construction develops through an ongoing interaction between the individual and the social contexts and social groups with whom he or she interacts (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

While these interactions may either protect or threaten adolescent well-being, a significant number of studies on protective factors focus on the personal attributes and skills of individuals (Seligman, 1993; Stoltz, 2000; Wang, 1997). People learn by experience or by example. Learning by observing how others behave is explained by social learning theory. Social realities are constructed through interactions. One's sense of personal control, agency and autonomy is learned, largely from what others say to you, from observations of how others respond to life's events and from conclusions you draw from your own attempts to act autonomously (Hans, 2000).

Bandura (1997) situated self-efficacy within a theory of purpose and collective agency that operates in concert with other sociocognitive factors in regulating human well-being and attainment. Self-efficacy beliefs influence our behavior in several ways.

It influences the choices that we make and determines the amount of effort we will expend and the length of time that we will persevere. As people get older, they have greater control over the course of actions and activity selection, and their confidence influences these decisions. Bandura has argued that beliefs of personal competence constitute the key factors of human agency, the ability to act intentionally and exercise a measure of control over one's environment and social structures. Marsh (1993) said that as children strive to exercise control over their surroundings, their first transactions are mediated by adults who can empower them with self-assurance or diminish their fledgling self-beliefs. They rely on the judgments of others to create their own judgments of self-worth.

Research confirms that a clear sense of identity is associated with optimal psychological functioning in terms of personal well-being and the absence of anxiety and depression; with goal-setting activity and problem solving; and with social competence, in terms of attitudes of social acceptance, cooperation, helping, and intimate personal relationships (Pert, 1997). Research has also looked at the concept of social identities related to one's membership in a group.

The National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (Blum et al., 2000) randomly sampled 90,000 adolescents from 134 schools around the United States and interviewed and surveyed their parents, teachers and school administrators. The study measured individual variables such as emotional distress, substance abuse, sexual behavior, religious identity, grades, violence, amount of paid work, perceived chance of dying before age 35, and self-esteem. They looked at family variables such as parent-

family connectedness, family activities, family presence, parental school expectations, parental sex expectations, and family suicide attempts. They also looked at school variables including, connections to students, prejudice, attendance, dropout rates, class size, and the education of the teachers. Among the main findings, after demographics were controlled, were that family and school connectedness were protective against every health-risk behavior measure except pregnancy. On an individual level, self-esteem was the most protective factor.

For the past 10 years, the goal of this research has been to overcome negative risk factors, through positive action that would develop or strengthen the resiliency of youth (Krovetz, 1999). Advances in achievement theory have provided a conceptual framework for the continued study of resilience (Bempechat, 1999). Erickson (1968) theorized that achievement of a positive, coherent identity or the sense of one's internal relatively stable self apart from others is the critical developmental task of adolescence. Harter (1990) concurred, "Defining who one is in relation to multiple others, determining what one will become, and discovering which of one's many selves is the 'true self' are the normative tasks of this period."

Beardslee and Podoresfky (1988) identified the protective factor of "knowing" in a study of 15- to 18-year-old survivors of parents with severe emotional disturbances. Their research suggests an awareness of a parent's illness and self-awareness travel together. Resilient adults do not take people, themselves, or life at face value. Striving to understand, resilient survivors process their experiences, look for meanings hidden beneath the surface of events, and confront themselves honestly.

According to Higgins (1994), recognizing prior vicitimization actually leads to a heightening of one's internal understanding or locus of control. A locus of control refers to an individual's perceptions or beliefs of what are the main causes or events in life. It is a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do or on events outside our personal control (Zimbardo, 1985). An internal locus of control may also be referred to as attribution, self-agency, personal control or self-determination (Mamlin et al., 2001). People construct outcome expectations from observed conditional relations between environmental events in the world around them, and the outcomes that a given action produces (Klohnen, 1996). The ability to bring anticipated outcomes to bear on current activities enables people to transcend their immediate environment and shape and regulate the present, to fit a desired future (Catalano, 1998; Locke & Latham, 1990). In regulating their own behavior by outcome expectations people adopt courses of action that are likely to produce positive outcomes.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is ideally suited to this study of resilience. Qualitative methods have the potential to provide a more comprehensive picture of lives lived under adversity. Adult perspectives on contextually embedded pathways to resilience have remained largely silent. Ungar (2003) stated that qualitative methods have the ability to discover unnamed processes, to attend to the contextual specificity, to increase the volume of marginalized voices, produce thick descriptions of lives lived, and to transfer the findings between contexts.

The mode of inquiry in this study took place through interviews. The narratives help make sense of the human experience. The combination of exploring the past to clarify events that led participants to where they are now, and describing the details of their youth, establishes connections with what they are now doing in their lives. Every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness (Vygotsky, 1987). Qualitative interviews are not designed to test hypotheses, gather answers to questions or corroborate opinions. Rather, it is designed to ask participants to reconstruct their experience and to explore their meaning (Seidman, 1998).

The purpose of the study was to examine the processes to resiliency, time frames of positive decision making, and the contextual specificity of resilience. It examined the behaviors of children and how they respond to adversity and high risk, through the eyes of reflection and experience as adults.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) provided a framework of criteria in naturalistic or constructivist analysis. They suggested four standards for trustworthiness in inquiry. As an inquiry paradigm, those standards are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These standards are used to address the essence and context of lived experience regarding troubled childhoods, and to understand and appreciate these as individualized experiences and voices. Credibility will come through member checks, where respondents will verify their biographies. Patton (1989) stated that "thick description," improves transferability, and provides others the opportunity to apply the findings of the study. Biographies in this study will open the possibility of transferability. Dependability and confirmability come from taped interviews, descriptive notes, and transcriptions.

Subjects

Permission was obtained from the Utah State University Internal Review Board (IRB) to assure ethical treatment, human dignity, well-being, and protection of all participants. Written consent from the subjects was obtained while risks and benefits were explained (see Appendix).

A purposeful sample was used with a screening process of adults that emphasized those that had faced two or more high risk factors as youth, and today, by societal definitions, are emotionally healthy, productive citizens. Those risk factors, as outlined by the International Resilience Project (1997) included, but are not limited to: poverty, divorce, parent deaths, homelessness, abandonment, suicide, natural disasters,

physical and sexual abuse, and environments of drug and alcohol abuse or crime. Through observation, experience, and self-reporting, all participants were defined as having experienced multiple risk factors as youth, and currently possessing emotional intelligence. Goleman (1998) defined emotional health and productive citizenry as emotional intelligence. Study participants possessed: (a) a *self-awareness* or a sense of contentment, well-being, and hope for the future; (b) s*elf-management* based on evidence of productive activities related to profession, education, socioeconomics and community; (c) *social awareness* where there is a sense of community and a role to play in that community where the cycle of adversity experienced in their own life is broken; and (d) *relationship management* with the ability to maintain relationships with friends and family and have evidence of passing along appropriate values to the next generation (Goleman).

All participants were between the ages of 35-55 and spent the majority of their childhood in the western United States. The interviews included seven female participants and four male. The purpose of the study and procedures were explained to them prior to interviews. The focus questions served as a guide for discussion as needed to provide information that did not readily come forth in the interviews. Questions used in this in-depth interview followed from what had been said. The significance of noncoercion was stressed prior to each interview. Additional information regarding each participant will be outlined in the Chapter IV biographical section.

Process

The number of risk factors and their magnitude, as reported by the participant's in their youth, along with their current sense of emotional health and productive citizenry serve as criteria for selection of the participants in this study. Names of the participants are withheld and pseudo names were used to protect identity.

Through self-selection and referral, participants were approached and asked to tell their story. The deliberate goal in recruitment for individual interviews was to provide a variety of risk factors from a cross-section of society, representative of the population with regard to age, gender, ethnicity, employment, and community status, while using the common link of overcoming adversity in their childhood in the western United States.

Written consent (see Appendix) was obtained to participate in the study in which participants were asked to respond to open-ended interview questions based on the focus questions previously outlined and information gathered through the literature review. Interviews were conducted face-to-face. When face-to-face interviews were not possible, technology such as web cams and telephone conversations were used. All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transferred to text. Notes were taken during the interviews with key words to note recurrent themes or important points to check at a later time with written transcripts and recordings. Notes also described family situations and surroundings to describe situational context. E-mail was used for interview arrangements, clarification of information, correspondence and follow-up communication. Data was also collected through informal conversation and through

participants voluntary sharing of pictures, letters or other sources that would contribute to the interview. Where possible, participants were given the opportunity to determine the location of the interview.

Participants were engaged in individual semi-structured interviews using the work of Stoltz (2000) and Howard and Johnson (2000) as a framework designed to elicit information regarding the availability and/or use of protective factors, the ability to overcome adversity, and the processes used to overcome adversity in their youth. The questions centered on the research focus questions, examined common themes, resources that were used, inhibitors to resilience and strengths gained, plus a reflection on the value of their experience.

1. Are there common themes in people's lives that explain how some surmount high risk factors?
    a. What are the most significant challenges you faced as a youth?
    b. What events do you consider to be important in assisting you with making the decisions you have made in your life?
2. What resources and strategies did resilient adults use to help them handle the challenges they faced?
    a. Currently, who are the important people in your life?
    b. Who were the important people in your life growing up?
    c. How do you like to spend your time? Is this reflective of how you spent your time as a youth?

3. What factors do "resilient" adults identify as inhibitors of their own resilience?
    a. Are there things that have happened in your life that you wish hadn't happened?
    b. What were the biggest hindrances to achieving your goals?
4. What unknown strengths and abilities emerged from people's experiences?
    a. What are you proud of in your life?
    b. What were your biggest strengths to achievement?
5. In retrospect, what do people value from their experience in high risk situations?
    a. When did you make a decision to make your life go in a positive direction? What drove you to that decision?
    b. What were your goals and plans as a youth?
    c. What are your plans for the future?
    d. What advice would you give to young people that are struggling with adversity today?

People's behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives, and the lives of those around them (Patton, 1989). The meaning of people's experience was placed in context by asking participants to tell as much as possible about themselves with respect to the study. In follow up interviews with participants, the researcher shared some of the recurring themes and resiliency

indicators that had been gathered to assure accuracy of description within their particular context.

Participants were not asked to remember, but to reconstruct their experience. Seidman (1998) outlined techniques on listening, questioning and sharing that were used to assure best practice in qualitative interview research and provide maximum opportunity for participants to discuss their experience in a non-threatening environment.

Data Analysis

Qualitative inquiry brings an understanding of multiple constructed realities that may be understood to some extent but cannot be controlled or predicted (Guba, 1987). As interviews were conducted, loosely formulated hypothesis began. Data were triangulated between the interviewer and participant perceptions, along with the model of resiliency and constructivism, causing all entities to shape each other. Information was described as a working hypothesis described by individual cases, then synthesized.

The features of data analysis included the division of text into units; the transformation of units into meanings expressed as concepts; and the tying together of transformed meanings into a general description of the experiences (Priest, 2002). Findings in this study were subjected to member checks by participants for affirmation and clarification of biographical data and reported information. Data collection, note-taking, coding, memos, sorting and writing were used to examine the emergence of grounded theory. Glaser (1998) suggested two main criteria for judging the adequacy of

the emerging theory: that it fits the situation; and that it works, or in other words, helps the people in the situation make sense of their experience and to manage the situation better.

Constant comparative analysis assisted this research in the generation of core categories and properties as the stories were taken apart and theoretical explanations were explored in comparison to the literature. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested axial coding as a means to arrange codes according to conditions, context, actions, and strategies. Core concepts and axial coding were used to order information and provide links to other concepts. The original research inquiries were compared and examined as emerging theory reached a saturation level and could not be disconfirmed.

Records of the research included digital taped recordings, transcriptions, notes of key words, theoretical notes and personal notes as a means to confirm interpretations and individual constructs of experience. Concepts and patterns were recorded and provided sections and headings in an organizational framework. Patterns were described as well as exceptions to the patterns. In the analysis section of this dissertation, concepts will be described and excerpts will be used to provide evidence for interpretations as well as a means to illustrate conceptual findings. These findings will be linked to related research and theory.

Chapter III provides the methods used in this study to construct and gain an understanding of resilience in the lives of high-risk youth. Research that supports resilience as a social construction defines resilience as the outcome from negotiations

between individuals and their environments. Chapter IV gives biographical information on 11 individuals who made up this study.

CHAPTER IV

BIOGRAPHIES

The participants in this study had voices to be heard and stories to be told. It was reported that in some cases information was shared with the researcher that was unknown to the participant's spouse, children, and/or parents. Several follow-up telephone calls and e-mails were initiated by participants as additional recollections and insights were recalled. The experiences told were enlightening, emotional, gut-wrenching, and insightful to both the participant and the researcher.

Semistructured interviews were used to gather descriptive data in the participant's own words so that the researcher was able to develop insights on how participants envision their experience of growing up in high-risk situations. Transcripts from the interviews were reviewed to understand the experience of each participant.

Although covering a specified time of life and the search for turning points and protective processes, the stories became biographical in nature, as adults constructed their past experiences and compared them with current situations. Many compared their experiences with siblings who had taken a different path. One participant stated in an interview, "I have always told bits and pieces of my life story, but have never been asked to sit down and connect all the dots."

Data has been gathered from interviews, field notes, photograph albums, introductions to family members and friends that have played a role in the stories, and from observations of the researcher. The meeting of family and/or friends did not lead to additional interviews. They were used to make a connection between the story and a

real person. Information, observations and interpretations are constructed through a biographical format.

In the following biographies, the names of the participants have been changed. In some cases, identifying factors, such as occupation or location have been generalized to protect the identity of those that may be known within the local community. In this chapter, background information, risk factors, protective processes and turning points will comprise the biographical information. Goleman's (1998) definition of emotional health and productive citizenry (i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) will be illustrated through biographical information to provide indicators of current success.

This chapter will provide enough background information and identified risks to paint the picture of the participant's current situation, and the context of their experiences while growing up. The biographies serve as a snapshot into the lives of people that by definition are resilient today. Some examples are used to give perspective, but cannot capture the entirety of experience. Quotations are used to emphasize particular points of risk and protection and give voice to the individual participants. They clarify context and intent on the part of the individual that was interviewed.

Risks and protective processes are contextualized within the biographical stories. Identified risks and protections are not specifically delineated since the reflective processes of most participants indicate that risk and protection are dependent

on one another. In other words, some of the protective processes experienced are a result of the difficulties faced.

Allen

Background

Allen is a 55-year-old Caucasian male. He lives in northern Utah and is a successful businessman who serves on the board of directors of several organizations. He is highly involved in religious and civic events and opportunities. He has received state and national recognition for his innovative ideas and service to the community. He is the father of four children from a marriage of 20 years. He also has three step-children from his current marriage of 15 years.

Allen was raised in a small rural farming community in the Midwest with two sisters and two brothers. His oldest sister was born to his mother out of wedlock. The family lived off of what was produced from the farm, picked berries, and occasionally slaughtered a hog to provide meat. There was not any electricity in the house nor was there indoor plumbing. A windmill was used to pump water. A narrow dirt road led to the farmhouse from the main road. The family placed corn cobs on the road to add a foundation and stability to the muddy pathway leading to their home. The family was resourceful and learned that nothing went to waste.

Allen was involved in school activities. He was on the honor roll, served as president of the senior class, played trombone in the band, and lettered in varsity football, basketball, track, and baseball. Education was always important to Allen. He

worked two or three jobs to pay for his college education. During his years at the university, he had a laundry service that he provided for the other residents of the dormitory, because he learned to wash and iron as a young boy, and the students would rather pay $1 per item than do it themselves. He holds a master's degree and additional professional endorsements that far exceeded the eight-grade education of his parents.

Risks

Allen's mother died when he was 3 years old. He later learned that her appendix ruptured, but their lack of finances, opportunity, and medical care prevented her from having the help she needed to survive. He described a vivid recollection of where he sat, what he was playing with, the pats on the head from people going in and out of the screen door, and the sights and smells of the living room where the casket with his mother inside was on display.

Allen spent the summers wearing a pair of overalls without a shirt and without shoes. This way he could save the one pair of shoes, shirt, and pants for school. He tried to fit in and hide their poor conditions. "The culture of poverty is hard to break. It is especially difficult to deal with when you are around other people. The only way that I knew to overcome it was to work harder." There were times that he would make excuses or even lie about not wanting to go on a school activity or trip, because he knew it could not be afforded. "I knew I was different."

His relatives took advantage of the family situation. They would invite him to work for them and then pay him half or none of the money that they had promised, but

he felt that there was nothing that he could do about it. "It used to make me so damn mad, but my father taught me to respect adults, no matter what."

The values taught Allen at a young age by his siblings, several influential teachers, coaches, and his father, influenced the difficult decisions that came in the next few years. At 13 years of age, his brother was brought home by the football coaches and left in Allen's care after a high school football game that resulted in some serious head injuries to his brother. Allen carried his older brother up the stairs and put him to bed. The next morning, he could not wake up his brother. "At that moment, I started making decisions like a 40 year old." He carried his brother down the stairs, and placed him in the bed of the farm truck. He did not have a license, but drove the truck into town and begged the town doctor to give his brother some medical attention. The injuries were serious enough, that medical teams at the hospital worked for hours to save the boy's life. They did, but the head trauma has impacted his brother's abilities to this day.

Shortly thereafter, his father got sick. He came to the realization that the only way to get him to a doctor was to repeat what he had done with his brother. He carried his father to the car and took him to the doctor. After a 2- week stay in the hospital, his father passed away from a gall bladder infection that had spread throughout his body. It was early in his sophomore year of high school. His older siblings had gone their separate ways. There was not a family service that placed the children in foster care, so he continued to live at the farm by himself. He planted crops, took care of the farm, and fed the animals. "At 15 years old I was alone on this beaten-down farm. It was hollow and quiet. There was nobody to talk to and no one to ask about your decisions" In the

fall, the neighbors came and helped him harvest the crops. Soon they sold the animals and eventually the farm. "I came home at night to nothing but the two dogs and I knew I had to go." The dogs were given away and he spent the next 2 years living with a variety of friends, family members, or any place he could find. For two summers he found a job where groups of men spent several months going to farms from Texas to Canada to harvest wheat. He found that the job gave him a place to stay and assured that he had food in his stomach. He saved all the money that he could for the opportunity to attend college. Nobody in the family had ever gone to college. His hard work, combined with his entire inheritance of $1,400, saw him through his educational experience.

Protective Processes

Allen's 13-year-old sister took on the role as surrogate mother for the family. She cooked, did laundry, cleaned, and nurtured her siblings aged 8, 5, 4, and 3. Her influence was very important in the family. She got married when Allen was 8 years old. Almost immediately the next sister in line took over the role as mother of the house. His father tried the best he could to take care of the children and keep the farm afloat, but could never provide a living for the family.

Allen claimed that his father was the greatest influence in his life. He was a quiet man who was not always understood by the community. Many people in town viewed him as poor, uneducated, and incapable of providing for his family. "I can remember being so proud of my dad when I went into town with him. I didn't see an old grizzled guy beaten down by life. He was my dad and I was proud of him." He taught his children the importance of personal character by example. They learned to hold true

to values and beliefs. They learned to make and fix things so they did not have to buy something new. Although the family was desperately poor, his father was generous. He would often give other people meat that he had packaged or produced from the farm. People who truly knew Allen's dad gained a great admiration and respect for him.

"I never did much with religion until later in life, but the friends I had would party, but tell me I shouldn't. For some reason they took care of me." Teachers were also a great influence on Allen. "They were always so much higher than what my family had achieved." Several coaches had a great influence on him as he participated in high school sports. "They never said much to me. I think they knew my situation and just kept an eye on me." One of the coaches found him nearly 30 years later and apologized to him for leaving his brother on the doorstep. The teacher was now the admissions dean of a college and told him that night had haunted him for years.

Turning Points

Allen can pinpoint a day when he was 16:

> I remember I was by myself working on the tractor. I had no money. Everything was broken. I was constantly making excuses. It was embarrassing. I threw the wrench and started crying. I was so damn lonely I just knew I had to make my life different.

He realized that he could stand on his own two feet. He had fought through the death of his father, the cruelty of his relatives, and the realization that he was alone. He said that he learned to tell adults what he was doing and why. "Most kids can talk to their parents and they'll protect them and help get things worked out when people are taking

advantage of them." If the situation was going to change, he was the person that was going to have to do it. "I never looked back."

Becky

Background

Becky is a 48-year-old Caucasian female. She is the mother of three children. She is a homemaker and for the past 6 years has worked as an elected government official. She has been married for 28 years. She is highly involved in church service, community service, and with volunteer work in schools and nonprofit organizations. Becky leads an active lifestyle as she enjoys skiing, hiking, reading, cooking, quilting, family activities, and recently ran her 11th marathon. Her peers view her as a woman of honesty, integrity, creativity, and dependability. A neighbor told me that she loves to be involved with anything that Becky has organized because she knows it will be done in a first-class manner.

Becky was born in Maryland but spent her years growing up in southern Idaho and northern Utah. She is the oldest child of a family with three boys and three girls. Becky and her sister were born to her mother and her biological father. Her stepfather, who later adopted her, brought two sons into the marriage. Her mother and stepfather had two children together. "With the meshing of families, the children were yours, mine, and ours." Her parents have since divorced.

Becky was heavily involved in school activities. She joined several clubs, competed in DECA and business competitions, was on the swim team, and participated

in speech and drama. She was selected to represent her school at the American Legion Girl's State program between her junior and senior year. She worked hard to maintain good grades. Prior to her marriage, she completed two years of college education and worked for the forest service.

Risks

Becky's father worked for Bill Marriott in Washington D.C. when the Marriott "Hot Shops" were in their infancy. Her mother soon learned that her husband was not the person she thought that she had married. Alcohol became a problem in their relationship as Becky's father would come home late at night, drunk, and often become physically and/or verbally abusive. She remembers her mother being hit by her father and on one occasion having a door slammed into her, breaking several ribs. Her father's carelessness for family life put Becky and her sister in harms way. She can remember having the ashes of a cigarette flicked into her eye. The abuse and arguing intensified between the parents and soon her father lost his job. It was discovered he had embezzled a large sum of money from the Marriott Corporation.

Her mother took Becky and her sister to Idaho to live with her grandparents. Divorce followed, but the arguments, hatred, and animosity continued. Becky can remember an occasion when her parents were fighting over her. Each of them had a hold of one of her arms, pulling in opposite directions. Her cries and screams did not seem to matter to either parent.

Her mother and father soon met new people and each had remarried within a short period of time. Becky's father came around a few times and tried to offer small

gifts, but his new wife was not fond of his daughters or his past. He gave the children up to be adopted by Becky's stepfather to avoid support payments. Her next meeting with her biological father came eleven years later at her high school graduation.

The new family moved to northern Utah. Life with her new step-father did not improve the family situation. The new marriage was filled with arguments and her new father rarely spent time at home. Her mother began long periods of depression and began to become verbally and physically abusive toward the children. "The days she was happy was like a day of winter sunshine. It was so infrequent that we all wanted to celebrate." Her mother had been sexually abused as a child and many of those nightmares recurred and were carried into her adult life.

As the oldest child, Becky felt an obligation to protect her siblings. She can remember standing in the closet, listening, trying to figure out what her parents were arguing about so she could try to fix it. She loved having new brothers, but could not seem to stop the screaming and physical beatings that were inflicted by her mother on the two boys. They were beaten because they did not vacuum correctly or put the silverware away in the right spot. When Becky tried to intervene, her mother would slap her, pull her long hair, and throw things at the children.

The family had very little money. Initially, her father was going to school and working, but even after he finished school, the family could barely afford the rent on their home. The children ate Spaghetti-o's nearly every night for dinner, but her father would insist on having a steak for himself. He never offered to share. There were very few clothes and only one pair of shoes that served for all occasions.

Soon other children began to notice and mock her lack of clothing and finances. She knew her family was different and she realized that they seemed to be shunned by their neighbors. Harassment from her peers became more intense during the junior high years and seemed to reach a crescendo in the ninth grade. "There was an overwhelming loneliness." The harassment came from the "popular" girls.

Becky does not remember her parents ever attending her school activities and they rarely asked about them. There were not curfews or monitoring of who she was dating. When coming home from dates, her father would be asleep on the couch because of another argument. Her parents never asked about school, although she maintained excellent grades. She remembers that for some reason she was put into a special education class in the seventh grade. Her parents did not seem to understand or take an interest in why this would happen. One day she was silently reading a story in the special education classroom and laughing at the humor in the story. The teacher asked her if she comprehended the story and Becky said of course she did. The teacher quickly found out that Becky did not need extra help and moved her out of the class.

Protective Processes

Her paternal grandmother tried to keep contact with her and would sneak into the school from time to time to visit with her and let her know that she was loved. She sent her a new dress on one occasion, but her step-father returned the dress since he did not want that part of the family involved in their lives. Becky was heartbroken because it was the same dress worn by the most popular girl in the school.

In second grade, Becky remembers a teacher who pulled her aside and asked her what was wrong. "I guess I had really been acting up and emotional." She told the teacher of the fights, the alcohol, and the divorce. The teacher took her that afternoon to buy treats for the class. While they were shopping the teacher told her to pick out something for herself. Becky can still remember how much she loved the mini stapler that her teacher bought for her. Other adults became important in Becky's life. A high school teacher took an interest in her and encouraged her to come out for the swim team. Another teacher somehow arranged for a boy who she liked to ask her to the prom. A neighbor invited Becky to come clean her home every Saturday. She would pay her $5 each week, even though the house was nearly spotless. This turned in to long conversations about life, family and school.

Several years ago Becky was asked to speak at this neighbor's funeral. She told the audience that she always knew that this woman loved her best. The next two speakers said the same. They thought the neighbor had loved them the best. Other adults seemed to fill a gap for Becky to take the place of a family who was torn apart and abusive.

She remembers spending many hours at school and being involved so she would not have to face her situation at home. When she was chosen for Girl's State, she realized that somebody actually would single her out as being important. When she opened a letter that stated she was accepted to work for the United States Forest Service at Flaming Gorge, Utah, she realized she finally had a reason to get away from home.

Turning Points

Without hesitation, she stated that her turning point in life was when she started high school. She was 15 years old and something inside of her helped her realize that she had a fresh start. She could be a different person.

> I read a book called the Pink Dress…It talked about a layer cake, and I started looking at the layers of my life and seeing that I had certain talents…I started thinking of the bad things that had happened as being layers that could be discarded.

She began to focus on her talents and abilities and made a conscious effort to share them with other people. "I wanted to make sure I had no regrets about my decisions because of past experiences." Even though her teachers worked with hundreds of students, the fact that some of them noticed her and treated her as if she were special made a difference in being able to turn in a different direction. She cites another turning point was when she got married to a good man. She realized that somebody would love her for who she was and not judge her on her upbringing or her past. "He treats me as an important person…I didn't grow up feeling that way." She considers her marriage as a secondary turning point that has reinforced her life's decisions.

Cindy

Background

Cindy is a 54-year-old Caucasian female who lives in Central, Utah. She has been married for 28 years and is the mother of four children and one grandchild. She has a Ph.D. in psychology and currently works as a counselor for an organization helping troubled, at-risk youth. She loves to read and escape into books. She enjoys

yoga, quilting, research, and teaching. She is a published writer and serves in her community on advisory boards and in service for church and community activities.

Cindy is the youngest of five children. Her father grew up in England in extreme poverty. He and Cindy's mother were married for over 50 years. As Cindy was growing up, her father was recognized by people throughout the state for his role as a government official and as a strong leader in the business community.

She worked hard in her early years of school but soon did whatever was the minimum to get passing grades. She read a lot of books, joined clubs, and played on the tennis team. She describes herself as being very active yet becoming more reclusive the further she went into high school.

Risks

Cindy said, "In the family I grew up in, our motto was, don't talk, don't trust and don't feel." Her father was a community leader who hid what he was doing and acted as if nothing was wrong. He used religion, if it was convenient, to further his renown, career, and political success. Her mother covered for her father and tried to help out where she could in holding the family together. Since he was a leader in the community, the people surrounding her father also hid what he was doing and acted as if nothing was wrong. He was philanthropic with the community and donated thousands of dollars for various causes, yet he was totally abusive to the family.

Cindy can remember from an early age being an obedient child. "I obeyed out of fear of a father that was alcoholic, was verbally abusive, and potentially physically abusive if things didn't go his way." She knew the alcohol and the abuse could start at

any time of the day. As she got older she became more and more depressed and angry as she compared her father's behavior at home with his public life persona.

At 6 years of age she was sold by her father into the occult, of which he was a member. He would take her to meetings twice a month where part of the ceremony was dedicated to sexual rituals. The sexual abuse did not stop with the occult meetings, it continued with her father at home. "It was a horror that went well into my mid-teens.... I would turn into my mind and my spirit to repress the memories of what was happening."

One teacher encouraged her to run for the position of school secretary in junior high. Cindy made plans for months on what she would do to try to win the election. She made posters and flyers and created slogans. At the last minute, her best friend decided to run against her and won the election. She was devastated. She felt betrayed and disappointed. When she went home, she sobbed. Her father was furious with her for being so weak.

Protective Processes

In elementary school and junior high she reached out to teachers for security and comfort. Several could see that she was miserable and they tried to include her by talking to her or giving her special opportunities at school. Most looked at the family and thought that she must be a well-adjusted child because the family had a lot of money and a lot of connections in the community. Cindy talked about the loneliness she felt because it did not seem that anyone could possibly understand her situation. "I just

wanted to scream. Couldn't anyone see what was happening? ....I knew if I ever talked, they would believe my dad. All I could do was keep quiet."

At 14 she began to work and earn her own money. She found as many opportunities to separate herself from home as possible. During her years in high school, she turned to alcohol, drugs, and partying. She attempted suicide on several occasions. She became reclusive from former friends and siblings as she tried to escape the abuse that she was experiencing. Since the family had money, she was taken to a psychiatrist. Cindy did not share the truth of what was taking place and was eventually diagnosed as schizophrenic, with upwards of 22 different personalities. "I had all the support that money could buy. Inside of my mind, I knew my parents knew the truth. By sending me for psychiatric help it made them look as if they were trying to do all that they could."

Turning Points

A turning point in Cindy's life came when she decided to attend a university at 18 years of age. She never returned home again. She changed her name and still insists on it being used today.

> When I got to college and realized that I did not have to answer to my parents, it was the most exhilarating feeling of my life. I started feeling hope. I think that I knew I could do it, but I wasn't sure I would get the chance. I finally realized that I could start a new chapter and not have to read the previous chapters.

She was a terrible student in high school; however, she approached this new opportunity with abandon. She took 28 credit hours in one quarter and said that she literally was studying as much as 12 hours a day. "I had to prove to myself, and others, that I wasn't

bad, but very smart, and very good.... Soon the multiple personalities started to meld into one."

Her drinking and partying continued through much of college, until she met her husband. He helped her understand the self-destructive path that she continued to follow. He accepted her and loved her for who she was. His faith in her became an anchor and provided further opportunity for her to heal and to make further changes. In spite of her current success, she said the healing continues to this day.

David

Background

David is a 50-year-old Hispanic male. He lives in Central, Utah, where he spent the majority of his childhood and youth. He is the youngest child in a family of two boys and one girl. Professionally, he is in a high-level position with a federal government agency. He has been married for 25 years and is the father of four children. He holds a bachelor's and master's degree. He is an avid runner and has numerous interests and hobbies in the community and church that he enjoys in addition to his family life.

David's father and mother both worked several jobs to provide a living for the family. His father worked as a mechanic and his mother cleaned houses. They had moved to Utah from Mexico and tried to establish themselves in a community with very little diversity. They owned a home in a low-income neighborhood yet found it difficult to make ends meet for the family.

David was extremely involved in school. A lifelong friend of his described him as, "one of those guys that everyone knew and everybody liked." He was a student body officer in his high school and participated in clubs, drama, and sports. As a student, he worked hard at his grades and generally made the honor roll.

Risks

David describes his life in two contexts: his home life and his social/school life. In his home life, his brother and sister were much older than he was and not around much in his growing years. His cousins became more like siblings to him. He looked forward to the times when he had their company.

His father was addicted to alcohol. Most evenings his father was drunk and his parents fought. Screaming, threatening, yelling, and throwing objects were common occurrences. Even today he sleeps with a pillow over his head, a habit he developed as a young boy to block out the arguments and verbal and physical fights that his parents were having.

His mother worked hard, was tired, and often depressed with her own situation. One time, out of frustration, she poured boiling water on David's hands when he did not do what she had asked. His father was rarely home and when he was he was not in a condition to take care of his son. David can remember numerous occasions where his mother would take him to a park to play and then ask anyone who was there to watch him while she left for work or some other activity. Some people would walk him home, other times he went on his own. "I can remember being very independent as a preschool child....I knew my way around the neighborhood...I knew what everyone was

doing....and everybody pretty much knew who I was." He has often thought about how grateful he is that there were trustworthy strangers in his life.

Food was often a problem as he would try to find anything to eat around the house. When he began school, his mother tried to save enough money for him to eat in the cafeteria. It often was the only food he would have for the day. Several ladies in the cafeteria must have noticed his need and tried to give him extra portions or allowed him to work in the cafeteria to earn his lunch and extra food.

When David was 12 years old, his father committed suicide. This left his mother in greater depression and the family in even greater financial hardship. Social workers came to the house and placed him with another family for several months. "There were several things I don't want to remember, but as I look back on it, those memories were the key to healing." His mother's behavior was even more erratic, "but she was still my mother."

Protective Processes

David always had the gift of gab. He developed an extensive social network that sustained him. The social context of his life seemed to override the problems at home. "I was invited to parties by the kids that were in drunken stupor or high on drugs, and I was invited to parties by those that would never think of drinking or taking drugs." Teachers liked David because he was not afraid to talk to them or to work hard in class. Students liked him because he went out of his way to befriend them. He seemed to have a special gravitation toward the students with special needs and spent a lot of time assisting and tutoring them. With the exception of a few close friends, nobody knew

what he went through every night at home. "I basically, spent almost all my time at my friend's houses. Usually, my friend's parents really liked me, so I would stay until I could tell I wore out my welcome.... I ate a lot of dinners with different friends."

Turning Points

David said that after his father killed himself, he realized that he felt sorry for his parents and the way they were living.

> Even though I was 12 years old, I couldn't be mad at my dad. I can remember being sorry for him and sorry for my mom who was left behind. Any hatred or anger that I had with my parents seemed to leave, and I just felt sorry for them. I started to worry about my mom. After that I tried to take better care of her.

David said he was determined to not let the darkness take over his life. His involvement with his church gave him an understanding of who he was and a circle of friends who supported him in his decisions. He said that as he began high school he had made personal goals for his future and started to focus on them. At that point he became a caretaker of his mother. He was busy with school, away a lot, but began having a greater understanding of her needs.

Evelyn

Background

Evelyn is a 48-year-old Caucasian female. She currently lives in northern Utah. She is the mother of four children—three daughters and one son. She has been married for 24 years. She is involved in church activities and serves on the adjustment board in the local government of her city. She works as the secretary at the local elementary

school. She is an accomplished pianist and shares that talent whenever she can. She is involved in quilting, book clubs, and loves swimming and boating with her family and friends. She holds a bachelor's degree in finance.

Her parents lived on a farm in Idaho; however, she spent the majority of her youth and childhood in northern California with her grandparents. Evelyn has nine siblings with whom she has become better acquainted as an adult. She is number six of the 10 children. Two of her siblings have passed away. One sister died from lung cancer and a brother was murdered in Colorado.

Risks

Evelyn was born with clubbed feet. Her knees and hips were misaligned, which caused her to have a sideways gait when she walked. Because of this, she was referred to a specialist at a hospital in Utah. She spent the next 5 months in the hospital; during that time, her health continued to decline. Her family was trying to run a farm in Idaho so they never visited. After 5 months, a great aunt heard of her plight and called Evelyn's grandmother in the bay area of California. She came and got Evelyn and raised her until she was 3 years old. In the meantime her family moved to California. So she went back with her family.

She said, "We had the family that nobody wants to live next to." Her mother and father were never at home. Her mother worked nights and either slept or left during the day and she did not know if her father worked a lot or just chose not to be at home. When she came back to her family, she felt her siblings barely knew that she was their sister. They had not seen her for the past 3 years as she left the home as a baby.

She can remember being very independent from an early age. As she spoke, her memories were vivid about situations, conversations, and feelings. "We were left to our own devices and my older brothers and sisters were constantly in trouble with the law…they were usually off doing other things, so I took care of myself and my brother who was one year younger." She had one older sister who would sometimes help her get dressed, help her bathe, and attempted to "mother" her when she had the time.

Most days, Evelyn looked after her brother who was one year younger. One day they were locked out of the house for the entire day in the rain. At 5 years old, she would get lunch for him, clean the kitchen, and try to take care of his needs. On one occasion, she was trying to put sugar on some cereal for him. She poured the white powder from a Mason jar that looked like sugar. She found out later that the bottle contained lye that an older brother had left while working on his car. Nobody else was at home. She had the responsibility of getting neighbors to help and rush her brother to the hospital. His throat was badly burned and the scar tissue still affects him today.

Her physical conditions worsened and her muscles started to atrophy. Her family was not giving her the care she needed. She was in constant pain. Everyone thought she was emotional because of her family situation. "I don't remember anyone asking me what was wrong, until a teacher started to talk to me and realized I was in physical pain…the more I talked, the more she realized I was also in emotional pain."

Evelyn was miserable. She missed her grandmother. Finally, her grandmother intervened and made sure that she got medical help. Evelyn spent the next year in the hospital. For 9 months she wore casts up to her hips and 3 months with casts to both

knees. Her family became the other 30 children in the hospital ward. They seemed to all know who would have visitors and who would not. She came to accept that she would not, and found enjoyment in the other children and their stories.

> It seemed that every night one of the children would be taken out and come back with an intravenous drip connected to their arm. They would have the wildest stories about what happened to them. We all listened with wide eyes and enhanced the original story tremendously when we told someone else.

During this time, her parents divorced. She only has one or two memories of her father. They center on the fact that he professed Christ-like character with everyone but never lived it with his family. She never really saw him until her adult life when at age 22, she tried to reconnect with both parents and gain insight into their lives.

Protective Processes

Evelyn's grandparents applied for legal adoption. When she went into the courtroom, her parents were sitting on one side and her grandparents on the other. The judge asked her who she wanted to be with. "All I could remember is that I cried and cried and worked myself into such a frenzy, that I blacked out." The next thing she knew she was in the back seat of her mother's car. Her mother had remarried and now there was a step-father on the scene. He was not fond of the little girl with many problems and totally ignored her. The following year he was killed in a car accident.

Evelyn later learned that, indeed, her grandparents had been given custody but she was required to spend the summers with her mother. Her mother was an alcoholic and still never home. She was verbally abusive when she did see her. "When I would go

there for the summers, I would think there is no point to all of this. I never see her unless she is passed out or yelling at me."

Her saving grace was her grandparents who truly loved her and cared about her. They tried to make up for the mistakes they felt they had made with their own children. She said that she was proud to be seen with them and thought of them as her own parents. She dealt with some jealousies within the family. Some felt she was treated better than the grandparents had treated their own children.

Her grandparents gave her opportunities, helped her begin to understand her own abilities, and gave her religious, moral, and ethical training to build a foundation to face life's choices. This allowed her to build relationships with other adults and peers. As she had the opportunity to connect with great aunts and uncles, they became an important part of her life and gave her a sense of family.

> Since my grandparents were older, I grew up around a lot of adults...my relatives would come over and talk.... I have happy memories of many evenings with them...I know I lived this weird life, but it felt quite normal to me.

Turning Points

The turning point in Evelyn's life came when she finally went to live with her grandparents at 10 years old.

> It did not really sink in until I was 15 or 16. I started to heal and feel secure both physically and emotionally. I learned to accept compliments and feel that people really meant them. When teachers conveyed that they believed in me, I started to feel that it was true. I knew I was going to make something of my life.

She has compared and contrasted her life with that of her siblings who never escaped the family that they were raised in. There is a marked difference in the paths that they

have taken. Each of her siblings have spent time in jail. All but one sister has struggled with various addictions and numerous difficulties in relationships.

Faun

Background

Faun is a 35-year-old Caucasian female. She currently lives in northern Utah. She is the mother of one daughter and has been married for 9 years. She was born in California and spent her years growing up in California and Utah. She enjoys many outdoor activities and currently teaches ski lessons at a ski resort. She also works as a personal trainer and as a stay-at-home mother. She is active in volunteer work with the local elementary school.

She grew up in a family of three boys and three girls. Her parents have been married for 38 years. Her mother emigrated from Holland. Her father worked two to three jobs all of her life. They always saved enough money to take one family trip each year. Everyone in the family looked forward to the trip because it was one of the few times they would see their father for any length of time.

Risks

Faun's mother was the disciplinarian in the family. She liked to scream and yell and hit. It was her only way to get it all out because her husband was never home. Faun can never remember her father standing up to her mother on anything. "To this day, I do not know what my dad stands for or what he believes because he never questioned my mother's decisions or actions."

Her mother's constant abuse and control was difficult for Faun to understand. Faun's older siblings were involved in alcohol, drugs, sex, and spent time in and out of detention as their way of escaping from her tirades. Since Faun's mother felt she could not control her siblings, her mother directed relentless picking toward Faun. She distrusted anything positive that Faun was trying to accomplish. "I tried hard to be good and not do the same things my brothers and sisters were doing, but it was never good enough."

Faun's maternal grandfather always treated her as a favorite grandchild. She knew it. However, when she was 10 years old he began to touch her inappropriately. This went on for 3 years. A cousin came forward and said that grandpa was doing the same thing to her. Her aunt called the police. Faun's mother denied all of the charges and berated Faun for trying to pull the family apart. She was able to get the charges dropped.

Faun never felt that her mother supported her. She swam on the high school swim team, participated in DECA, and numerous clubs and organizations at school. The only event she can remember her mother attending was a swim meet when her grandparents had come to town. Then she complained for days about how hot and humid and miserable it was being in the pool area. She never asked her about her dates, her activities, or her work at school even though she maintained good grades and was trying to make good decisions. "If my mother wanted to communicate, she would leave notes on my pillow telling me what she thought I should be doing."

Faun had a brother two years older than she. When he was 13 years old, he got into pornography, drugs, and alcohol. He would slip into her room at night and try things that he had seen on the movies. He molested her for a very long period of time and made her perform various sexual acts with him. He was a violent person and threatened to kill her if she ever told. Knowing that her mother would never believe her, and the fact that she believed his threats, she kept quiet. He told her that all anyone would want her for was her body. Since this was happening with her grandpa and with her brother, she believed that too.

Faun tried several escapes. She went to live with a friend for a few weeks. Soon her mother convinced the friend's father that Faun was a chronic liar and needed to come home. She thought about suicide on numerous occasions and practiced cutting herself to see how much it might hurt. One day her brother told her that she looked like she was gaining weight. This soon led to bouts of bulimia, which led to hospitalization for a period of time, as her weight dropped below 90 pounds.

Protective Processes

Faun spent as much time away from home as possible. She knew what she was being forced to do was wrong, but could not find a way out. She was heavily involved in school and activities because it gave her a legitimate excuse to be away. Teachers were a positive influence on her and a safe haven. She especially admired her business teacher. He was the wrestling coach and the sponsor for the DECA club. The DECA club went to San Diego for a competition during her senior year. All the way home on the bus Faun and the teacher talked. She felt that he was someone who cared about her

and who she was. Unfortunately, when they returned to the school, the teacher tried to kiss her, reinforcing to her once again, that men only wanted her for her body.

After high school graduation, Faun came across an ad in the newspaper for the need of a nanny for a family in New York. She felt that this was as far away from home as she could get, so she readily applied. She was hired to be the nanny of a kindergarten-aged girl and a little boy. She soon realized she could define who she wanted to be. She met new friends, had an enjoyable environment, and learned to love a little boy who called her mommy. She started to heal and through this little boy she saw total trust and the need for protection. She could not understand why anyone would hurt a little child.

Toward the end of the year, the mother took the children on a trip to visit her parents. While they were gone one night, the husband returned home drunk and crawled into bed with her. She left that night and never returned.

Soon she found another family to work for in New York and developed a wonderful relationship with them. She started dating a young man who was extremely kind and considerate. Their dates consisted of biking, hiking, dancing, and a variety of activities. Her developed distrust of men caused the relationship to grow slowly and was difficult to believe.

Her mother continued to call and tell her that she needed to be home. Faun could not understand why. "Why would I want to go home? I was happy. I was making new friends and I started to recognize I had something to offer to people besides my looks."

Turning Points

Faun cites several turning points in her life. The first came when she was 16. She was taking a shower. As she came out of the shower, her brother grabbed her, threw her on the bed and tried to have sex with her. She screamed, kicked, clawed, and told him she did not care if he killed her, but she would not take it any more.

> I told him he could kill me if he wanted but I was going to let the world know what he was doing. It just didn't matter any more. I just screamed and screamed and screamed. I hoped someone would call the police....I finally knew I was old enough and had the courage to start fending for myself.

From that point on he left her alone. Again, she tried to tell her mother about what was happening, but her mother turned on her and told her to quit trying to tear apart the family with her lies.

A second turning point came when she was 19 and living in New York. She realized that she was responsible for her own decisions and her own choices. She said "I knew my mistakes were mine and my good choices were mine." She describes the feeling as exhilarating.

Her third described turning point came at 26 years of age when she married her husband. It took an up and down, tumultuous relationship of 6 years, and a lot of patience on the part of her husband to allow her to trust herself and those around her. She finally realized what it meant to be happy and feel the security of sincere commitment toward her on the part of another person.

Gary

Background

Gary is a 53-year-old Caucasian male. He is a renowned musician and educator living in Utah. He lived for a number of years in Europe, where he worked on a Ph.D. at Cambridge University and met his current wife of 13 years. He was previously married for 6 years. He does not have children. He provides service in the community by sharing his gift of music and is actively involved in his church and professional organizations.

Gary was raised most of his life in Colorado. He has two brothers and a sister who died as an infant. He grew up in an upper middle class neighborhood where his parents ran a business together out of their home. They worked long hours to make enough money to support the family and their lifestyle. Because of personalities and problems with other family members, Gary's parents were cut off from the rest of the family so he had very little contact with grandparents and cousins most of his youth.

Risks

Gary cites his physical appearance as a risk factor while growing up. He was overweight, wore thick glasses, had bucked teeth, and terrible acne. He was an obvious target for teasing and harassment at school but he also seemed to be a target at home. He begged his parents to do something about his teeth and to provide braces. His father, who was so dominant and made all of the decisions in the family, did not seem to understand why it was a problem.

Gary cannot remember his father supporting him in much of anything that he did in school or in the community. He generally seemed disappointed with Gary, since his interests were not in sports and the areas that many fathers hoped their sons would be interested. Instead, Gary loved music, the theater, and the arts. He was somewhat effeminate in his mannerisms and his father ridiculed his behavior. As a teenager, Gary won first place in the vocal music competition for the state of Colorado. He received a nice trophy, his picture in the newspaper, and other prizes, but neither parent was there. When he got home, he was excited to tell them. He entered the house and found his parents in a terrible fight and his father was yelling, "To make it worse, I've got a worthless God damn sheep for a son!" "Basically, I was screwed up in who I was and where I belonged."

His father was a womanizer. He was found in bed with another woman the day Gary's brother was born. It was not uncommon for him to be seen in bars with different women on a nightly basis. Alcohol and his promiscuous lifestyle led to tension and abuse at home. His mother never wanted to make a fuss so she put up with all of the antics. If anyone would disagree with him, he would become physically abusive. In particular, Gary watched his brothers take some terrible beatings. Gary had his hands burned when he was 2 years old. When his father wanted to discipline, he would take a belt and slap it across the children's hands. Because of the intense pain, Gary grew up to be obedient out of fear.

When Gary was 13, his mother became extremely ill. For the next 3 years he performed all of the household chores and duties and took care of his younger siblings.

When his mother started feeling better, the expectations of him were the same. He felt that he was being treated as a slave. Self-esteem issues and depression led to thoughts of suicide and Gary did make one attempt. "I threw a rope over the pipes downstairs and tried to hang myself. They were copper pipes and bent with my weight. I couldn't even commit suicide in the right way!" Finally, at age 16 he ran away from home to live with a teacher and her family. Her husband was an advocacy lawyer and the only person he ever saw stand up to his father.

Protective Processes

Before the beginning of Gary's senior year, his parents moved to Wyoming. They left him to finish high school with the teacher's family. His high school years were positive for several reasons. First of all, he discovered that he had a talent. His ability to sing became recognized and appreciated by others. Secondly, several teachers took an interest in him. One teacher, the football coach/history teacher, saw worth in Gary. "It was a little ironic that it was the coach since football was far from my interests. But he could see something in me that I couldn't see in myself." Through his encouragement and through the encouragement of other teachers, Gary became involved in plays, in madrigals, and in student government. "I started to believe in myself." Another teacher who he admired and respected was his music teacher. Over his high school years, Gary became his prodigy and the teacher found many opportunities for Gary to perform and grow.

On graduation night, his mother cajoled Gary's father into breaking his date with another woman and attending the ceremony. After the graduation, his father gave

him a $20 bill and said, "Get drunk, get screwed, and don't come home." Unfortunately, that is what happened to Gary. His music teacher offered to take him to a party. The teacher got Gary drunk then raped him in the back of the teacher's car. A year later, the teacher committed suicide when it was discovered that there had been many more male victims.

Turning Points

Gary cites his senior year when he lived away from his family as being a turning point in his life. He had the opportunity to witness positive family life and see a husband treat his wife and children with respect.

> I gained a certain tenacity by being away from my parents. I learned to make my own decisions and realize I could make good ones... I began to believe that there had to be more out there. I started to soak in what it was like to have real family life...and I developed a quality that I carry today: People that know me, know that I love them....I also learned that I'm loveable.

A second citation of a life change came several years later when he met missionaries and added a spiritual connection to his life. "I felt like I was part of a group and I started seeing myself as having a place in this world."

Helen

Background

Helen is a 49-year-old Caucasian female who has been married for 28 years. She lives in southern California, which is where she was raised. She is the mother of three children and works as a paralegal. She has been actively involved in her children's schools and sports teams and in volunteer work in her church.

Growing up her family consisted of five brothers (one older and four younger) and herself. Helen felt that she and her brothers have always had a good relationship. Her parents were well educated. Her father was a businessman in southern California. Her mother was on scholarship at Stanford University prior to the marriage with her father. The family tried to do a lot together and would take camping trips and vacations every year. In school, Helen was involved in art, chorus, and sports. She worked hard to be a good student and please her teachers and parents. She completed two years of college and has continued to take classes of interest and/or self-improvement as an adult.

Risks

The dark side of family life in Helen's home is that she was sexually abused by her father from the age of 4. As an adult, she learned that the abuse also took place with all of her brothers with the exception of one, who has diabetes. It was 5 years after she was married that the siblings finally spoke to one another as a family and discovered their individual childhood experiences at home. Each of them thought they were the only person who was experiencing the abuse so they did not say anything—thinking that they were each protecting the others.

She remembers begging her mother to take her to the store with her so that she would not be left alone. He would wait until his wife was gone and then be extremely nice to Helen and try to convince her everything was okay. Her father would always tell her that she needed to be quiet. "It will kill your mother if you ever tell." "It will tear our family apart." There were many physical threats and Helen felt too young, too

vulnerable, or incapable of escaping. She had many nightmares and to this day finds certain smells and sounds as repulsive since they remind her of events from her childhood.

Her father seemed to be respected and liked within the community. She could never understand why her mother did not save her and protect her. "I always knew I should tell someone, but I thought about whether they would listen to me or to my dad. I knew it wouldn't be me that they believed." She remembers many occasions when her father would hit one of the children for no apparent reason. Sometimes it was directed toward her mother. She would cry as her father kicked and beat up her brothers. Helen tried to be obedient to her parents so she would not cause her father to be angry. "I stayed straight in line because I didn't want to go there.... I could see what was happening to my brothers."

There was a lot of verbal abuse. "Because of constant demeaning comment, I felt great insecurity.... I needed assurances...I felt as if I lived my life with a sign that read, 'I'm stupid' across my forehead." It has taken years of hard work for Helen to overcome the feeling that she really has something worthwhile to say and to contribute.

Protective Processes

From an early age Helen had a close friend. It was not until she was in her early teens, however, that she shared with her friend what was really going on at home. She feels that since she had a close friend she never developed a relationship or communicated as much as she would have liked with her mother.

As Helen got older, around 14, she started to stand up to her father. It stressed out her mother so she tried not to say much in front of her mother. He was smart enough to realize the problems that his actions were going to cause so he began to leave Helen alone.

Helen was asked out on many dates and was popular in high school, but she always felt that she would never have a relationship. When she was in high school, some older boys grabbed her and took her behind a building and tried to rape her. Fortunately, one of her brothers had heard about what was happening and intervened. This event, along with the constant berating of her father, continued to reinforce the feelings of worthlessness.

Helen told of her involvement in school activities. "The main reason I wanted to be involved in high school was to do whatever my friends were doing and to escape the pain that I felt in my home life." She knew that teachers liked her and that she had close friends but was not sure she would ever be very loveable. She decided to go to college and live away from home. She felt a great deal of freedom and hope. While she was there, she sought out psychological therapy to help her find resolution to her past. It seemed to help to talk to another person. She studied psychology in college to try to gain an understanding of her past.

She continued to date a very nice young man she had known from high school, who later became her husband. He had lived a very sheltered life and she could not imagine he would ever understand her experiences and family. It took years for her to

convince herself that she really could measure up and know that she really did deserve to be married to someone nice and considerate.

Turning Points

The consistency of her best friend from the time that she was a little girl (even to today) provided Helen with the courage to stand up to her father in her early teens. Teachers were consistently there for her and added a measure of stability in life. Their examples in the classroom helped her begin to see the kind of person she could become.

> I gradually started to gain an understanding that my father was sick....I wanted my dad to like me, but I realized he wasn't really capable of doing so....I became a fighter, because I discovered most of the problems were not mine...it's just that guilt stops you from doing good things.

She describes her turning point as the time she left home and went to college. She recognized that she had a choice to continue or to get away. She said that her brothers never had the courage to stand up to their father and have paid for it in various ways since. The second turning point was her marriage and relationship with her husband. "He literally saved me...I didn't want to marry him because I didn't think I was good enough. Looking back on it, the chance to get away from a bad environment and my marriage to a good man are what led me to an understanding of myself."

Iris

Background

Iris was born in Michigan. She is a 38-year-old Caucasian female. She has one brother, a half-brother, and a half-sister. Her father was in the military so the family

moved several times through her early childhood. She spent her youth growing up in Michigan, Illinois, Colorado, and Washington.

Currently, Iris is a high school principal in Illinois. She has been married for the past 10 years but has not been able to have any children of her own. She is extremely busy in the community because of her position with the high school. She was an outstanding student in school and college, winning numerous recognitions for her academic skills. She played on the softball team, volleyball team, and swim team during high school.

Risks

When Iris was 5 years old, her parents divorced. She said it was a relief to have a break from the daily arguing, the hitting, the screaming, slashing each other's tires, throwing clothes and possessions of the other spouse outside, and locking the doors. She and her brother, who was one year younger, seemed to be always caught in the middle. Iris remembers taking her brother and trying to hide him from all the chaos.

Her father was soon remarried to a woman who he had been seeing for some time before the end of his marriage. Iris and her brother lived with their mother. Iris' mother started going out with what she termed as her "sorority sisters" from high school. "I didn't know they had sorority sisters in high school." Sometimes, she would be gone all night, leaving the children to be on their own.

A month later a woman moved into the home. She was from Czechoslovakia. She spoke very little English, but she and Iris' mother seemed to be fast friends. Iris' mother was illiterate and not trained for any skilled work. Her Czechoslovakian friend

worked some, but at very low wages because of her lack of language skills. The family tried to survive on the $62 per week they received in child support. Unfortunately, much of that money went toward the purchase of alcohol.

Her mother told the children that their new houseguest was a cousin of hers. Iris remembers at 6 years old she did not believe her mother. "I knew at a very early age that my mother lied to me a lot." Then her mother told her that the woman was a half-sister. She did not believe that either. The two women shared the same bedroom. Soon, relatives quit coming to their apartment and Iris was never allowed to have friends over. In the ensuing years, Iris' mother became more and more paranoid. It seemed to Iris that everything in her life was a lie. Her mother taped all of her phone conversations and would not allow her to date or go to a friend's house. Her mother went through her drawers and room on a daily basis.

The women started selling ice cream from an ice cream truck. They would set up the truck at the park and eat a lot of their inventory. They expected Iris to spend up to 12 hours a day working on the truck. "I just hated it…I felt an overwhelming sense of loneliness…I just wasn't allowed, nor had the time to be around friends or relatives."

Her mother was eventually hospitalized for a period of time for severe depression and mental illness. Her "cousin" (Czech woman) was now in charge of the household and became verbally and physically abusive and threatening toward the children. When her mother returned, the abuse continued, yet Iris' mother never did anything to make it stop. In fact, her mother, who weighed nearly 300 pounds, followed suit. "Mom was very scary when she was furious."

When Iris was 13, her mother's live-in friend became pregnant by a man she worked with, and delivered a baby girl. It became Iris' responsibility to care for the little girl as the two women were seldom around the house. "There was hell to pay if I wasn't home."

Iris felt like a slave and started looking for ways to escape. She experimented with cutting herself and poking herself with safety pins. "I just wanted to see how bad the pain was." At the age of 16, Iris took a full bottle of aspirin. A male friend discovered what happened and convinced her to go to the hospital for help. She experimented with pot to see if that would help her escape. She threw herself into school activities to avoid being at home. She was sick of living a lie.

Protective Processes

During Iris' sophomore year of high school, her mother doctored up her income tax returns and paper work to get Iris into a private school. While she was there, she enrolled in a class entitled "Man's Search for Meaning." During the course of the year, the teacher asked, "What is wrong with you?" She broke down and told him the story of her life. For the next 3 years he mentored her and encouraged her to stay strong until she could be on her own.

When Iris went away to college, she never came home. She would spend Christmas breaks, spring breaks, and the summers trying to find friends to live with or jobs where she would not have to go back home. Her mother tried to convince her that she should be home. However, time would tell that she needed to stay away.

Finally, she decided to come home for a week and soon found that nothing had changed. Her mother was wrapped up in her girlfriend. They went everywhere together. They were never home and they wanted Iris to stay with the little sister. "I thought to myself, why should I go somewhere that makes me miserable?"

Iris' mother's and her partner's absorption in each other continued to create problems with the children. For example, Iris' mother was always late. When it came time for graduation from college, she was so late that she missed almost all of the ceremony. When it came to Iris' wedding, her mother never made it. She claimed that she had car trouble. "I realized how sick everything was…I couldn't believe that my own mother didn't come to my wedding."

Turning Points

One turning point for Iris was when she took the class "Man's Search for Meaning" and met the teacher who influenced her throughout her high school years. He helped her develop hope. She only saw her father twice during her youth, but she saw him about this same time (16 years of age). He told her that soon she could make her own decisions. Another teacher encouraged her to become a teacher.

She met her future husband in college. "He was everything good." His family was a good family and she grew to know them and love them. He stayed with Iris during many of her struggles and poor decisions and became a good friend.

> He was my biggest cheerleader and helped me to learn to like myself…He gave me something to live for…I realized that I didn't want to die, I just didn't want to live the way I was living any more…I felt sorry for my mom because I knew how screwed up she was and yet there was nothing that anyone could do about it.

She notes the difference in her life because of the influences of others, contrasted with life patterns of her brother. He has had many struggles as well, but continues to struggle.

Janet

Background

Janet is a 51-year-old Caucasian female currently living in northern Utah. She has been married for 34 years and is the mother of four children (three girls and one son). She has seven grandchildren. She has a bachelor of arts degree in English with a minor in music, as well as a master's degree in English poetry. She plans to complete the dissertation for her Ph.D. by the end of the year. She has spent the majority of her career as an educator.

Janet does not know who her parents were. The people who she knows as her parents made it clear to her that she was adopted, but they never told her anything about her mother or father. Her adopted grandmother once told her that her mother was very young and lived in Utah. That is all she knows. Her birth certificate was changed. She assumes that her birth date is correct, but she is not sure. She had no other siblings.

Risks

Janet's adopted father was a colonel in the Air Force. He had served in World War II and had been shot down during the war and spent several years in a prison camp.

As a young girl, the family moved quite a bit. When Janet was 6, her father retired from the Air Force. The family ended up living in a motel in northern Utah.

Her father slowly drank himself to death. "When he was sober, he wouldn't talk about the war and when he was drunk, he would cry and tell me stories." When Janet's mother drank, she would go into fits of rage and hit her father and physically abuse him.

When Janet was 8 years old, she found her father lying on the bed. He was purple. She could not wake him, so she tried to wake her mother. Her parents had been drinking the night before, but she knew her father was dead. She could not convince the motel manager for a long time, but eventually he came to help. They could not wake up her mother. "She was addicted to uppers, downers, diet pills, sleeping pills, and anything else that she could get her hands on." Most of what she was addicted to came from prescription drugs.

Eventually, the ambulance came and took her father away. His death made her mother suicidal. She tried several times to slit her wrists or overdose on medications. Janet can remember the graphic displays of her mother going outside without any clothes on and her wrists bleeding. Janet had parented her parents for many years so she was used to bandaging her mother and trying to get her to believe that everything would be alright. "I cannot remember my mother ever washing my clothes, fixing my hair, putting food on the table, or just taking care of my needs.... I ate a lot of peanut butter...in fact, that is what the dog and I were eating while we waited for the ambulance." If she was hungry, she learned to fix something.

Six months after her father's death, Janet's mother succeeded at committing suicide from a drug overdose. "I remember walking home and seeing all the cars outside the motel....I knew what had happened....I didn't feel sad....in fact, I felt bad that I couldn't cry." She had been through so much, it was not a surprise. It was just frightening to her what would come next. "I loved school. It was my salvation. So my biggest worry was that I would have to go to a different school."

She was sent to live with a married cousin who made it apparent he did not want her. He had two small children and a baby on the way. They were not happy that a 9-year-old girl was placed into their family. "Looking back, I don't know if I can blame them, but I literally had nowhere to go."

Janet had tended herself, raised herself, and taken care of her parents. She had lived her own life and had never had to obey rules. Nobody had ever told her what to do. She had to figure it out for herself. Yet, she knew that she had nowhere to go, so she was obedient to their rules and wishes.

When she was 13, the family decided that she was old enough, so they sent her from Utah to a boarding school in Alabama.

> There was little education going on in that school. It was an all-girl's school and the place was wild. The girls were smoking marijuana, some were pregnant and it seemed that all the girls were out of control. We would roam the streets of Birmingham, drink, smoke, and chase after boys....It was a miracle I wasn't raped, mugged or killed.

Protective Processes

Janet wrote letters to whomever she could think of to tell them that she was in a bad place. Finally, she was moved to a co-ed Catholic school in Florida. The education

was slightly better. There were rules, but there was not adult interaction except to reinforce the rules. In the summer, all the other students would go home, but she would stay there by herself and have the run of the school.

Out of the blue an aunt from Utah wrote to her and said that God had revealed to her that Janet was supposed to come live with her. "All she asked of me was that I go to church and pretend that I liked it." She spent her high school years living with this aunt. It was a tremendous culture shock, but turned into stability and consistency to her life, until she married during her senior year of high school at 17 years old.

Janet had spent her whole life growing up without parents. Every year she wondered if perhaps a birthday card would come in the mail. "I wondered if my biological mother ever thought about me." When the card didn't come, she thought, "maybe next year." She had pictured what it would be like to live in a family. "I have always wanted a sister to talk to…I guess when the opportunity came to be married, I wanted family bad enough, that I took it."

Turning Points

A definite turning point occurred when her aunt wrote to have her come live with her. It gave her hope and opportunity.

> I consider my turning point to be gradual. I never had a mentor…so I watched the world and watched for clues on how to act. I watched teachers and classmates and drew up in my mind what the parameters of a 'normal' person would do….I also think that a turning point in my life was the death of my parents….I know deep in my heart that their death saved me as an adolescent and a teenager. I don't know what my life would have been like had I been forced to continue to live that way.

Ken

Background

Ken is a 44-year-old male Caucasian. He is the father of four children and has been married for the past 21 years. He lives in northern Utah, which is where he spent the majority of his childhood. He has a degree in finance and is currently employed with a government contractor. His level of expertise in his field makes his job unique to anyone in the country. As a result he has great flexibility in his hours of work and chooses to donate many hours to coaching his children's sports teams, providing service to his neighbors, and service in his church. He is an avid golfer, fisherman, and sports enthusiast.

Ken was born is Switzerland. He grew up in a family of seven children (six boys and one girl). He is the youngest of the children. Ken's parents joined the Mormon Church in Switzerland when he was a baby. When Ken was one and a half years old, his father unexpectedly died of heart disease, leaving a widow and seven children. When Ken was nearly 6 years old, his mother decided to move the family to Utah to be closer to other members of the church.

Risks

Ken's reflections take him to a comparison of his life contrasted with his siblings. When the family arrived in America from Switzerland, the children were anxious to make new friends. They did not speak the language. His sister still has a rather pronounced German accent. They came without knowing anyone and did not

have any legitimate means of support—through work or through friendships. The older siblings sought acceptance wherever they could. As a result, they all became associated with friends who were involved in drugs, alcohol, and crime and offered quick acceptance. All but one brother has spent a significant amount of time in prison.

Ken can remember going with his mother to visit his brothers in youth correction facilities or in jail. At an early age, he could see where they were headed and knew that he did not want to go that direction. Since he was the youngest, his mother became very protective of him. Throughout his years growing up, there were never friends who were good enough. There was never a girl who he could date who was good enough for him. In general, she controlled all aspects of home life. She obsessed about having him make good decisions. Ken said that he was never allowed to have friends over to the house. He was questioned when he was seen by his mother speaking to other children. "I knew she wasn't mentally healthy, but she was my mom, so I didn't want to push very hard. She was all I had."

Ken started working when he was age 7 to support the family. He shined shoes for several years. He sold greeting cards and seeds door-to-door plus a myriad of other jobs to earn money for family survival. He learned to work hard from an early age. "You learn that if you can sell door-to-door at 7 and 8 years old, you can do most anything in life."

His mother worked hard and tried the best she could to bring money into the family. She remarried for a very short period of time and quickly had the marriage annulled. She never married or dated again. She blamed herself for the choices of the

older children and was frustrated that they did not turn to God for guidance. This created an oppressive home environment for Ken, filled with paranoia, guilt, and depression.

From the age of 10 to 15, Ken's answer to the home life was to escape with a rough group of friends. He would "party" with them as often as he could. He said with a laugh, "Maybe if you and I were in prison and writing a book, I would share with you all the things we did." They got into a lot of trouble, but he said he knew deep down that he was not going to continue.

Protective Processes

Entering his sophomore year of high school, his love of sports created new friendships and forced him to a different set of standards for living so that he could continue to play high school sports. He put his heart and soul into sports and school activities. His focus was on so many things outside of academics that he barely made it through high school. However, when he graduated, he had a friend whose father was over the admissions at a university. The friend talked to his father and the father agreed that Ken needed to go to college. So with a handwritten note from his friend's father, he was given a schedule and admission to the university. He never took the ACT or SAT exam. He simply started school, was given some grant money, and has never looked back. He found success in the classroom and through campus involvement. He met his future wife and has built a successful career.

Turning Points

A church leader had a great influence in Ken's life. He spent a lot of time talking to him, listening to him, and just hanging around. There was a group of 16 other boys his age in the neighborhood who became a greater influence in his life. They had a great time together, but it was not destructive behavior. Coaches and teachers seemed to take greater notice of him and he felt that he was not being judged because of his mother. Around the age of 15 or 16 is when this took place, although Ken said that he always knew he was going to turn it around. When he started going to college and served as a missionary for his church, he developed a sense of hope and determination.

> I watched my brothers make excuses that their father had died and their mother was crazy. Maybe it was because I was younger, but I just looked at my life as being as good as it could be. So why worry about it. I learned to work hard at an early age. When I was making bad choices, I knew it wasn't forever. I think the same was true when I was shining shoes or watching my mother fall apart…I knew it wasn't forever.

Summary

The biographies in Chapter IV serve as a means of illustrating common themes among uncommon contexts. The stories serve as an example of how some "damaged" children are able to overcome adversity without making excuses. Reflective information provided by the participants will be used to derive connections and contribute to research analysis and themes in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The constructivist approach in this study presents narratives to provide detailed descriptions that will allow readers to make sufficient contextual judgments to transfer outcomes, themes, and understanding emerging from the biographies to alternative settings. The most frequent challenge to constructivist inquiry is the question of applicability to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). In the analysis of this chapter, information is extracted for potential applications to situations other than those in which the research was grounded.

Making meaningful patterns seems to be an innate capacity of the brain (Jensen, 1998). Patterns in this study provide a context to information that might otherwise seem meaningless. Making connections, recognizing patterns, and finding relevance, are critical to the formation of meaning. Participants in this study began creating thematic patterns as the interviews progressed and as they began to reflect upon their experiences in greater depth. In most cases, participants continued to tell stories after the "official" interview was completed and/or initiated follow-up phone calls to assure that their stories were complete. Meaningful contexts seemed to emerge as participants created their individual mental models and analysis of what made them successful today.

Much like the researcher trying to make sense of the lives of the participants, the participants were trying to make sense of their family/environmental situations and experiences as youth. Without exception, participants sought a moral and ethical

evaluation in the construction of their stories. Their thinking processes brought out a sense of altruism and empathy for those who may have offended them.

Social and generational cohesion, as well as social change, depends upon the ability to empathize with the life stories and experiences of others (Richardson, 1990). Narrative examples are used in this chapter to illustrate movement, change, and transformation of thought among the participants. Their biographies help shape a commonality among shared experiences within a variety of high-risk childhood situations.

The resilient-identified adults in the study come from all walks of life and do not have the same risk factors. They affirmed that through personal acquaintance with the researcher or common acquaintances, their comfort level was high enough to share the details of their experiences, in some cases beyond that known to their own family members. Their experience cannot be quantified as a set of static traits or innate temperament. Their experience cannot be reduced to a set of inputs and outputs.

Resilience implies that potential subjects are able to negotiate significant challenges to development yet consistently "snap back" in order to complete the important developmental tasks that confront them as they grow. Unlike the term "survivor," resilience emphasizes that people do more than merely get through difficult emotional experiences. It captures the active process of self-righting and growth that characterizes some people so essentially (Higgins, 1994).

In previous research, essential indicators of resiliency have included caring and supportive relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful

participation in school, community and home life (Benard, 2004; Werner & Smith, 2001). This study reflects many of those indicators and expands on those previous findings.

The adults interviewed describe a lifelong process of mediation, and ongoing willingness to acknowledge their anguish, their guilt, their frustrations and their personal doubts. Intrinsic from the process is the determination to learn from their experiences and to integrate their trauma into a sense of who they are. They are not people that have shown resilience in the short term, but indicate that it is a long term process.

Emergent Themes

The framework for this chapter will center on the focus questions of the study (i.e. surmounting high risk, resources, inhibitors, unknown strengths and abilities, and value from the experiences). Interwoven into the analysis are the basic human needs (inclusion, competency, control and affection) discussed in the literature review. Objectivity and reliability are addressed through the triangulation of the researcher, member checks and comparisons to the resiliency model.

Surmounting High Risk

Need of Control

Nearly all teenage youth seek independence in their lives. Many turn against parents and values that have been taught in the home, yet they generally understand that

they can return to a support system if they choose to do so. Without exception, each study participant talked about their need for control, when they felt they had none. They expressed an intense drive to assure separation from a support system that they knew did not exist. Although there was the desire to have family support, they stopped looking to their families for satisfaction.

Allen and Janet lost both of their parents. Their separation was created through causes outside of their control. They both observed that the death of their parents was difficult, but they had already done their grieving prior to the deaths.

> I had spent so much time taking care of my parents, that it was almost a relief when they died. I was nine or ten and forced myself to cry at the funeral because the people there kept trying to feel sorry for me. I felt guilty that inside, I didn't feel sad. I just screamed out how much I hated her (mother). I never really had a mother....I had been the mother. I just had to figure things out before I was really old enough to figure things out for myself.—Janet

> It was so hard....people have no idea. There was a period of time when my dad was really sick, about three years before he died. It was just me and my brother and he was playing football and busy all of the time. It seemed like I was a little kid, making life and death decisions. I was making decisions that a kid shouldn't have to make. When my dad died, I just knew what I had to do and really couldn't feel sorry for myself.—Allen

The other participants took various approaches to the fulfillment of the need to separate from the adversity in their life. One participant's given description was "a need for a source of nourishment." They created safe boundaries by aligning themselves with friends, school activities or trusted adults to separate from trouble family situations. "I had a best friend from the time I was a young girl. She was my outlet. I could tell her anything and everything....I made myself scarce around the family. I needed her for assurance to know that I was still a good person"—Helen.

Real learning does not happen until students are brought into relationship, with the teacher, with each other, and with the academic subject (Fullen, 2001). Many of the participants found a sense of community through school activities, academics and classroom relationships.

> I spent hours and hours at school so I wouldn't have to be at home. People told me that I was good at making posters, so I made posters for the pep club, the cheerleaders, the student officers and anyone who wanted my help. I learned to stretch and grow and do things differently under my terms. I was accepted as my own person and I kept thinking how much I didn't want to slip into what was going on at home. It was up to me.—Becky

> In high school a teacher sent me a thank-you note for a project that he thought I had done exceptionally well. I really didn't know how to take a compliment and thought any compliment was insincere. Pretty soon, though, I started hanging out in his room more and we just talked about life, my plans and anything I could think of to talk about. I spent as much time as I could at school because it kept me away from home and I started to learn that people could be nice without having ulterior motives.—Iris

Many of the participants have faced the great challenge of a second separation. This separation was the death of the person who put them at risk. Several of them served as the caregivers of their parents in their aging years and gained personal insight into the lives of their parents. They spoke of the difficulty in their self-examination of whether or not they still carried unresolved anger or disappointment. Their sorrow was not necessarily over feelings of love, remorse, or hatred, but feelings of sorrow for that person.

> I saw this frail, broken-down old man. Even at 91 he still tried to grab my breast and kiss me. When he died I felt this burden lift off of my shoulder. I just wanted to tell him to go to hell, but something inside of me understood that he was sick…he missed my grandma…he'd been messed up in the war and prison camps…I had a new life and I felt sorry that he wasted so much of his.—Faun

The resilient adults in the study had the capacity to deal successfully with the obstacles in the road while maintaining a clear path toward goals. There was a sense of optimism, ownership and personal control. There was a sense of personal control at the death of the person that had control over them, earlier in their life.

> I took care of both my parents in their later years. I saw my father as a crippled man who was incapable of taking care of himself. I thought about how I had nearly taken my own life because of what he had done to me. It was sad really… He wasn't so powerful any more.—Cindy

Participants seemed to have more wisdom and a greater understanding of happiness in life, than what their parents possessed.

> Even today, my dad still doesn't get it… He wants everyone to be nice to him, but he isn't humble enough to admit he ever did anything wrong. I keep thinking…dad, all you have to do is go to your children and tell them you are sorry. In spite of his arrogance, I don't hate him. What good will the hatred do? …. it helps me enjoy life not to hold grudges.—Gary

Control was also gained by serving those that had wronged them earlier in life. Much like personal mistakes, the mistakes of others can lead to learning and understanding.

> I took my mother into my home for six months. She dried up. Then she just couldn't take it any more and had to leave. I found that while she was here, I had to give her my time and my service. We learned to love each other. I look at my parents with pity. Neither one of them had any idea what they could have with their children. They were clueless...they didn't understand that it comes by sacrifice and giving to another person.—Evelyn

Separation in death has helped the participants in the study gain a greater understanding of who they are today. Their sadness did not come in the loss of something real, but in the realization of what may have been. Through all of the conflicts in their youth, they were able to recognize the problems of the offender and avoid slipping into the same patterns of treatment with their own families.

Uncommon Vivid Memories of Early Childhood

Something not evident in the literature, yet present in the interviews was a sense of greater recollection of events from an early age in their childhood. Nine of the 11 participants made comments about their memories, unsolicited from the interview questions. They sensed that they had a greater recollection than their peers. When the patterns began to emerge, participants were pressed to make a reflective examination of the phenomena.

> Some things I know from my siblings telling me and some I know because I think I can remember more than most kids do. I think it was because I didn't have the 'run of the mill' life. It was a very different life. I can remember what things looked like. I can remember people who were there, people who weren't there. I think it's because if you're in the same environment all the time, time blends. When you're not and you're radically taken out of one environment and superimposed into another one, it's different and you remember more details. Everything becomes brand new again. I remember it all vividly.—Evelyn

The ability to see reality seems to be an important step in the process to resilience. Perhaps the assessment that life was so different, all senses were more receptive and keen. These memories helped make sense of difficult times.

> I can remember minute little details like the color of our couch, the clothes we wore, conversations we had. I think there was so much insecurity, that I paid attention to details. I never knew what would come next, so I had to stay alert. Just as an example and this may sound gross, but to this day, the smell of semen is repulsive because of all that took place in my past. It's hard to overcome some of those memories, but maybe they have been helpful in the decisions I have made.—Helen

The participants in the study seemed to devise constructs about their situations that created some sort of meaning for themselves and others.

> I had to fend for myself. I didn't have a mom and dad to guide me. I was on the streets and I was more observant than most kids. I can tell you what flowers my neighbors planted outside their house, when they watered their lawn and the

> name of their dog. I knew all they neighbors and they knew me. I guess they were part of my family. It's weird, I guess, but little details have stuck with me.—David

> I can remember things from when I was three years old. There were pretty significant events for a young boy to deal with. A lot of those memories shape who I am today. Maybe that's why I remember…I guess I had so many things happen in my life as I was growing up, there was always something to think about. There are a few gaps, but really I can remember all kinds of things…even detailed conversations.—Allen

Making meaning of these childhood memories presented the opportunity to build bridges from the present-day adversity to a better constructed future. Those bridges made the present manageable by modifying a sense of the present.

> I have a more vivid memory for details. I can remember smells and room arrangements ...I can remember the name of my stuffed animals….I think I was very cognizant of my surroundings. I also knew my mother was lying by age four. Because I discerned lies from truth so early, I was able to think for myself and have a better sense of who I was in the world. I think everyone considered me to be mature for my age.—Iris

Masten and Reed (2002) stated that perhaps the most amazing finding about resiliency is how ordinary it is. Resilient children adapt to environments over the course of development. The adaptive capacity in a child may be the ability to pay attention to detail, providing information for them to seek out better environments.

Hope for the Future

Havel (1993) stated that hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, it is the certainty that something will make sense no matter how it turns out. Several guiding questions from the interviews centered on hope. Feelings of insecurity in their youth led participants to the belief that there must be something better.

> Everyone has always got someone or something to blame. There are things in your life that you can't control. But the understanding that God didn't hate me and he didn't do this because he hated me saved me. Sometimes you're in the wrong place at the wrong time…I've had a talent for that…How destructive is that? I believe in Scarlet O'Hara's approach…I'll think about it tomorrow. Those bad things that can hurt you or that you have a hard time coming to grips with, can be dealt with tomorrow. It helped me keep a healthy psyche. I don't have to stew over things I can't change. …When it came time for my birthday, I'd think my mother would send me a card…it didn't happen, so I would always think, maybe next year. I'd put it behind me and not think about it any more. —Janet

Shifting one's paradigm requires personal change, and personal change requires hard work and time. Paradigms are deeply embedded in the self in the way one sees the world (Covey, 1989). One's paradigm precludes other people's realities.

> My favorite show was *Annie*. I would always think, 'tomorrow, tomorrow…' I don't know if I pictured myself in a warm, loving home with kids. It was too foreign. But I figured out pretty early that if my parents weren't good and true, I needed to follow someone else. Eventually, I started seeing enough examples to know what I pictured my future to look like.—Evelyn

Seligman (1993) researched optimism and how a person explains the causes of bad events. Optimism goes beyond recognizing one's thoughts and their role in creating reality. Optimism and hope embrace the ability to be proactive and persistent.

> What am I most proud of in my life? ...that I didn't give up! I don't like confrontation because I lived in it. Your destiny is not always determined by your environment, but it's awfully hard to go from poverty to middle class and to go from violent to nonviolent. I just had to keep looking at people around me and believing that they knew something that I didn't know.—Iris

Werner and Smith (2001) stated that "the central component in the lives of resilient individuals appears to be a confidence that the odds can be surmounted." Hope appears to be the mainstay of the participants in this study. "I just knew early on that I could

have a past without reliving it....I believed that I was going to be somebody and do something important in this world"—David.

> I started to realize that other people that didn't seem to have problems were just as unsure as I was. I didn't want people to think that I was a project. I had something inside me that kept saying there is something better out there. It pulled me to thinking that this too shall pass....And you know, it has.—Becky

Hope necessitates the capacity to envision workable pathways and goal-directed energy (Snyder, 2002). Hope leads to action. "I kept myself going by plotting my getaway and putting my plan in motion as soon as possible. I picked the brains of every adult to find jobs and inexpensive places to live. I just figured that I could make it"—Ken.

As discussions centered on a source of hope, participant's comments reflected that their hope was not based on the environment and conditions in their lives. It seemed to be more fundamental, something inside of them. Some explained it came from their belief in God. Others expressed that the mentoring and examples of other people gave them the faith and hope to overcome their personal ordeals. David expressed the idea that "we all hold, or are taught beliefs, practices and teachings that are wrong...some of us just have a little more courage than others to get out of our situations." Most participants seemed to understand that their conditions were not permanent. As they got older, they began to notice that there was a time when they would control their destiny. Ken stated "that a sense of the future helped me take care of the present."

Resources and Strategies

An objective of this study is to examine the processes that help youth overcome adversity and contribute to positive outcomes. The literature is full of protective factors

that provide psychological anchors to resilience in children and youth (Benard, 2004; Benson, 1998; Werner & Smith, 2001). Some of the factors identified through the interviews correspond with current resiliency research. They include: the ability to receive support from a person outside of the family; the capacity to be pro-active rather than reactive to events; the intellectual ability to see beyond their current situation; an authentic self-esteem/competency; and the ability to see personal control of decision-making.

Support from an Adult Outside of the Family

Ineffective or uncaring parenting is a powerful predictor of adult failure. Closer examination suggests that attachment warmth and caring may be more important than the simple responsiveness of a parent (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). The majority of participants in the study came from families with parenting deficiencies that greatly reduced the likelihood of a warm, consistent relationship developing between children and their parents. For example, Cindy and Helen came from families where they were sexually abused by their fathers. Becky and others had to deal with the consequences of alcoholism. Gary and Iris had parents whose affections were turned to others outside of family life. Alan, David, Janet, and Ken lost the opportunity to have a consistent relationship with a parent due to the death of one or more parent. Evelyn dealt with alcoholism and abandonment yet had the opportunity to be "rescued" by her grandparents. Others, not so fortunate, were sought out by teachers, clergy, or neighbors. "My neighbor somehow knew that I needed her. I loved the talks that we had about nothing important…it just felt good to be in her house"—Becky. A few of the

youth, were cognizant and aggressive enough to seek out other adults that would formulate a support system in the place of absent or incompetent parents.

> When I came home, I didn't have anyone that asked me how my day was or if I had any homework. My parents didn't go to parent-teacher conference or really even know what I was doing. Maybe I connected with school because my teachers would ask me if my homework was done…they asked me how I was doing and I believe that they really meant it.—David

The Capacity to be Proactive and Seeing Beyond Their Current Situation

Most of the participants began thinking of solutions to their problems well in advance. "I spent most of my time at friend's houses and I knew that other families could be happy"—David. Those that went through depression, suicide attempts and turned toward alcohol and drugs stated that for a period of time, they thought that to be their only solution. Gary said, "Looking back, I really didn't want to die. I guess I knew I could figure it out." Problem solving is a key to a sense of self-worth. Study participants expressed the power to hypothesize and plan, and look at the range of possibilities. Many of them had developed fantasy worlds and dreams that they could conjure up when needed. "Everybody told me I needed to do school to get a good job, but I just figured that's what they were supposed to say. It didn't mean much to me. I finally figured out that I worked hard for myself"—Ken.

Authentic Self-Esteem and Competency

One item of note is the ability of the adults in the study to understand and relate aspects of their lives in a realistic manner. They were able to articulate the times where they had made mistakes and they were able to share a sense of pride and achievement in

their accomplishments. Most children rely on the judgments of others to create their own judgments of confidence and self-worth. The adult participants seemed to have a great sense of competence by the problem solving tasks required, and their ability to overcome difficulties. Helen stated that she just got used to figuring things out on her own. "It was no big deal."

Seeing beyond enormous difficulties is an essential skill for maintaining hope. Self-esteem and competency were built by the individuals in this study when they realized the fallout of their situation could be contained to certain aspects of their lives. "I learned I could be one person at school and another at home. It helped me survive"—Becky.

For most children, a roadblock to self-esteem and feelings of competency comes from the fear of making mistakes and looking foolish. Iris summed up the feeling of what others eluded to when she said, "I had so many examples of serious mistakes being made around me...I had been teased and isolated so much...you get to a point that it doesn't bother you to try, because if you blow it...oh well." The vulnerable feelings of defeat that cause many to retreat from tasks that may lead to failure, seemed to have been experienced by the participants as they went throughout childhood, causing less fear of failure. They already felt as if they were a failure in many cases. "I had been told that I was stupid or couldn't do anything right, so many times that I guess I had to make a decision whether to go along with it or make up my own mind"—Helen. Placing the issue about fear of making mistakes out in the open served as a means to lessen its potency, and increased the opportunity for learning from experience.

Overcoming problems led to greater confidence in oneself and enhanced the process of learning from mistakes. "I found out it was okay to make mistakes, as long as I learned from it and didn't keep doing the same stupid thing over and over again"—Cindy.

Personal Control of Decision Making

The context of the power that comes with personal decision making is central to this study. Interviews revealed that the realization of personal control and decision-making, led to "turning points" in people's lives, their ability to make good choices, and seemed to inoculate them against further personal, familial and environmental adversities. The adversity still may have existed, but the individuals were able to feel a sense of hope and opportunity as a result of their ability to make decisions. "I feel sorry for kids whose parents make all of their decisions for them. They become weak"—Iris.

Focus questions examined who are/were the important people in your life? There was also an examination of events that were significant. Personal decision making was explored through the analysis of the focus questions. Identified turning points in the majority of the participants came as a result of a significant event where decision had to be made.

> I can see now that having an intense empathy for others has led me into the direction that I have taken... I think all of my experiences gave me the opportunity to understand the world better, no matter how ugly it may be. At age 16, I knew I would go to college, because my older brother went to college. My husband and children anchor me today. Life is built around shifting support systems. You never know where they might come from....—Cindy

> I asked my dad one time...dad, do you think I'll go to college? I think you'll find a way to make that happen, he said. It was little comments or conversations with my dad or others that were my anchors that made me believe I would make it some day.—Allen

David said, "I think some of the anchors in my life were the bad experiences. It made me work harder to get out of the situation." Ken supported David's comment by saying, "A teacher told me, that you have to raise yourself. Nobody else is going to do it for you. I always remembered that."

It is also noted that religion was frequently mentioned in interview conversations. For most, religious beliefs were an anchor or support in their life. Some had the consistency of religion throughout their lives, others turned to religion in the midst of their trials, while several turned to religion later on. For two of the participants, religion was an albatross rather than an anchor. Parents professed Christ-like values in the community, but lived contrarily in the home. For these two participants, they needed to separate from religion to find peace and healing.

Inhibitors of Resilience

A Sense of Loneliness

Emergent from nearly every interview was a described feeling of loneliness. Struggles can cultivate strength or sap energy. There are many factors, both individual and collective, that influence a turning point. The experience of loneliness described by the participants seemed to make them more open to what they were missing. It also led to anxiety, fear, guilt and a search for what could be destructive ways to fill the perceived void in their lives.

Wolin and Wolin (1993) said that resilient survivors may have departed from agonizing scenes in their childhood, but they also hold memories of the skills they

developed for protection, self-assurance and gained independence. Wallerstein (2003), who studied children from divorced families, found that disengagement or the ability to hold yourself apart from your parents' crises, is a measure of resilience.

> I spent so much time by myself. Nobody knew how lonely I was at school because I was so involved. I guess I had time to think and make up creative ideas in my mind...I look at those times and think, hmmm... I wonder if that's why I act that way today. There are very few kids today that I don't look at and wonder what's really going on inside of their head.—Allen

One can be surrounded by people and still feel lonely. It is an internal feeling independent of external factors.

> I know how rejected I felt. Even when I was around other people, I felt lonely... I think my experiences have helped my see things in others that they don't see. I guess you could call it empathy, but I've always tried to look for kids that don't feel cared for. In those dark, lonely times, I kept thinking, I can turn myself around. I've got to turn myself around.—Gary

External indicators of loneliness are not easy to detect. The conditions of connectedness with another individual, focuses on what is going on in the heart. "I kept hiding my fears and feelings and my family issues. My deep depression and use of alcohol and drugs finally led to loneliness and despair. I had to change or die"—Cindy

> I remember feeling like I was the only person in the world that was alive and everybody else had been sent to hurt me. I was the only actor in the play and everyone else was puppets. I just realized that I was starting to be like my mom, wallowing in self-pity.—Becky

> I didn't trust anyone. I thought everything was a lie....It's a very lonely feeling thinking that there is nobody else out there. I went through a period of drinking and sleeping around, thinking that would make me happy. It wasn't until I finally trusted my boyfriend (husband), and his intentions, that the weight of the world lifted off of my shoulders.—Faun

Some feelings of loneliness seemed to decline with age. Evelyn and Janet were placed in orphan situations from an early age. Others mentioned that they felt like

orphans even though they grew up with parents. Their immediate surroundings and circumstances forced emotional distance from the time that they were young. Participants gained control as they disengaged emotionally during periods of loneliness, then, disengaged physically as they gained the opportunity to remove themselves from family situations.

Regrets

The pathology/damage model described in the literature review focuses on injuries inflicted in the past rather than on living in the present. In five cases, participants mentioned that they had to unlearn what their parents had taught them or fill in a lot of gaps. The examination of the processes in this study looked at the concept that strength can emerge from adversity. The participants were asked to respond to the following question: "Is there anything you wish had not happened?"

> Of course, I wish I had not gone through the abuse....It's a hard question to answer, because if I hadn't, maybe I wouldn't be strong enough today. I was in such a dark place, I often thought about how I could possibly go on. You can't change it. You hope to grow from your experiences and look forward, not back.—Faun

> I have accepted the abuse now. I just have accepted it and have found that it has been a blessing by helping me know how to help others. I resent the ramifications of it (i.e., depression, fear of confined places, fear of meeting people, anxiety, etc.), but I have proven something to myself. I'm proud of it and I believe in others now.—Cindy

Participants were able to reflect on their regrets, yet make analogies and realizations of personal growth. There appears to be a sense of where one fits in the world.

> When you run marathons, you have to have small muscle tears in your training to help the muscles recuperate and become strong enough to endure a marathon. It's almost like a muscle that has to tear to make it stronger. If I wasn't strong, I

> knew I wouldn't be strong enough to have a good marriage and family. If I didn't change, I knew the outcome would not be good.—Becky

> I wouldn't wish a rape on any child. Having said that, it made me strong enough to be where I am at today. Others may have handled it differently, but the one quality I got from my father was that I am damnably stubborn. I just wasn't going to give up.—Gary

Organization of is a naturally occurring phenomenon. Self-organization is a powerful force that creates systems we observe and testifies to a world that knows how to be organized from the inside out (Wheatley, 2005).

> Unless someone asks me that question, I don't revisit all of this. When I start thinking about it or talking about it, I think, who is this person? …I know its part of the past. I think children can do that and set aside things and move on. There are things that can be handed on if you choose to. I have lots of fears that aren't rational, but I have made a conscious effort to never pass my baggage onto my children.—Evelyn

Unknown Strengths and Abilities

The Capacity to Forgive

The interviews led to almost unbelievable discussions with participants about forgiveness of those that had wronged them. It appears that a remarkable, yet necessary component of the resiliency process is the ability to forgive, forget, and move on. Participants in the study found a way to make peace with those that had committed unforgivable offenses against them.

In some cases, milestone events like a marriage, the birth of a child or career success, helped participants draw personal strength and view a new chapter in their own lives that could be independent of the previous chapters. They were able to return home and view from a perspective of chaos or take care of an aging parent without anger or

falling back into the role of a helpless, despairing child. The stories were moving as participants paved the way for parents who tried to make amends or forgave them without expectation of apologies in return. They stopped looking for satisfaction from their families and pursued avenues that made them happy.

> I made peace with my grandfather and my brother. I sent a letter of forgiveness to my brother. I found somebody who loved me. He hasn't. I can't look at them as bad men....they just did bad things....I'm proud of the fact that I am still kind to my mother. I'm very proud of the fact that I don't let what they did to me affect the way I treat them today. We all have baggage; it just weighs more for some people.—Faun

> I feel so sorry for my mother. How could she give everything up for alcohol? I've made a conscious effort to try to understand her and my father. All I can do is feel sorry for what they missed. You can only hold on to so much anger and frustration or it destroys you.—Evelyn

The effects of adversity, has the ability to impede future direction. The resilient adults described their understanding of this fact and their determination to not allow destructive behaviors to be passed on to their children.

> I wish my kids knew a story book grandpa instead 'grumpy grandpa'. They have had such a warm home environment, that they look at grandpa and laugh. He knows that I would never allow my children to be alone with him, so I think how sad is it that he missed out on the next generation as well? I just figure that you can either, move on and make things better or you can say I'm a screw-up and give up.—Helen

Healing seemed to come as a result of forgiving offenders. Everything has a season, and all things, including hatred, eventually die. The capacity to forgive helped the participants move forward. "Twenty years later, I had the chance to talk to the girl that had bullied me so badly in school. I apologized to her, but she never returned my apology. But it was okay because the weight was off my shoulders. It didn't matter any more"—Becky.

Others did not have the opportunity to make amends with parents, but recognize the separation and distancing they have created in their own lives and their personal choice to be in a happy situation with self-respect. The perceptions of the individual participants indicate that magical transformations did not come to the people who were the offenders. They still had many of the same problems and personalities. The transformation came in the attitudes and perceptions of the resilient participants in this study.

Sense of Purpose

Obedience

Interviews brought out the idea of a "sense of obedience." Duty-bound and loyal were other terms used as self-descriptors. Six participants in the interviews described themselves as having "Type A" personalities. They point out that they obeyed out of fear of an abusive parent when they were children. "My brothers used to fight my dad, but after having the belt on my sore hands a few times, I didn't want to go through it any more"—Gary.

In their adult life, they have used obedience as a means to happiness in decision making. Everyone requires freedom to author their own lives. When the freedom is perceived as lost, the later reflection led participants to realize that obedience to good choices and feeling a sense of control is important in their personal resilience. "I know I am a control freak…maybe it makes up for the control I never had as a child"—Helen.

Obedience and honesty are characteristics mentioned by most of the participants, as virtues that they adhere to in their adult life. Obeying the speed limit, obeying laws of the land, honesty in income tax preparation, honesty at work, and the payment of debts were mentioned as important. Simple things, such as not completely stopping at a stop sign or ignoring an undercharge made by a store clerk, where many people would cut a corner, was not an option for the majority of the participants. They have developed a sense of personal integrity, while having empathy for those that do not view the world the same as they do. "I live my life differently than my parents. I have never wanted to be two-faced and I don't want my children to be that way"—Cindy.

Obedience has also been important in the maturation process of self-discipline. This is an important aspect for children at risk, who can be impulsive, be disruptive, have physical altercations or generally lack self-discipline and self-control. Participants in the study recognized that part of the resilience process was to develop a sense of obedience and self-discipline.

> I've been lucky because I make enough money to spend time with my family and watch my kids play ball. My experiences growing up helped me learn to be flexible, to problem solve, and how to deal with people. I'm not any smarter than anyone else, but I think it has helped me advance a lot quicker in my job than I might have otherwise.—Ken.

What typically follows high-risk factors in a child's life is a downward spiral that is difficult to overcome and may cause a chain reaction to further problems or future events. When external interventions and personal determination are combined within a sphere of control, there is an effect on the exposure of a child's risk. "Inside, I

think I knew what was right. In spite of everything, I kept trying to be true to myself'—Janet.

Determination

As a child, Becky witnessed the poison of her parents fighting and how it infiltrated their whole existence and threatened to overtake the rest of the family. She learned to cultivate goodness by a determination to take care of others and not repeat the actions of her parents. Iris cited the fact that she took on a responsible role in an irresponsible family. Others provided insight into the sense of purpose observed in the research.

> I knew my father had lovers and that he was running away from us instead of doing the right thing at home....As I have matured as an adult, I have always wanted people to know I was there for them. If I'm asked to do something, I follow through and give my best effort.—Gary

Discipline and discernment led adults in the study to stop focusing on self-defense and move toward a determined effort to make self-improvement. "I've learned to think for myself. If you don't think for yourself, you don't have to feel responsible"—Janet.

> I don't go to church, but I believe in doing what's right. I've played the "what if" game a million times....I can't play the blame game. I am who I am and I have to live with what I do. I just think I have a greater sense of duty because I know what happens when you are not true. I've witnessed it.—Iris

When asked for the source of their determination, responses centered on an internal belief and feeling. "For some reason, I have this sense of integrity that won't even let me cheat on taxes or golf....I've learned it from my faith in God and the good examples around me"—David.

Sense of Responsibility

Boykin and Allen (2001) studied adolescents in both low- and high-risk contexts. They found that teenagers in high-risk environments who exhibited autonomy reported increased levels of delinquent behavior. They report that high-risk teens have fewer opportunities to gain autonomy from a part-time job, scholastic success, or extra-curricular activities, and thus, problematic behavior is the one arena easily accessible through which they can assert themselves and gain independence.

Some of the participants in the study had the responsibility, or felt a responsibility, to other siblings. "I would gather my younger brothers and sisters into a room, so they wouldn't have to hear my parents fight"—Becky. To neutralize potential opposition, people acknowledge their own responsibility for whatever problems they currently face (Linsky, 2003). "I never talked to my brothers about the abuse, because I thought it was only happening to me, and I guess, I hoped it was only happening to me"—Helen.

This study indicates that participants are able to accept the reality of their lives. "Most of my growing up years at home was a living hell, but not a lot I could do, except try to escape, and that didn't work out so well"—Gary. Whether responsibility was thrust upon them, or they were invited to take on more responsibility, the participants had opportunities to discover where they could be successful. "I was earning money at the age of seven for the family. I discovered I could talk to people and that I could sell"—Ken. They found meaning in their experiences and had the ability to adapt.

> In the summer it was such a waste to go stay with my mother. She would get drunk and never pay attention to me. I tried to help her where I could, but really,

> I knew I couldn't do it for her. I couldn't make her be a better mom. I knew that when I got back with my grandparents, it would be okay.—Evelyn.

Obedience to principles and a sense of personal responsibility provided meaning, organization, and purpose to lives surrounded by chaos. "Most of the time I had way too much responsibility for a kid, but in the long run, it has helped me be a better person"—Iris.

Value and Meaning from Experiences

A common belief about resilience is that it stems from an optimistic nature. That's only true if optimism does not distort reality. The participants in this study carried a down-to-earth view of their survival. Current optimism is a result of years of perseverance and struggle. Some have turned to drugs, sex, and alcohol, and have attempted suicide. They have been able to devise constructs about their experiences and create some sort of meaning for themselves and others. One of the focus questions asked them to respond to "the advice that they might give young people that are struggling with adversity today." This caused a great deal of reflection before responses were given. "Have faith and love yourself. Link with positive adults and choose high-achieving, honorable friends"—Cindy. Their advice was reflective of the fact that they are willing to forgive, but also think in terms of community and about the needs of others. "I would tell people to befriend kids that are in trouble. Let them know that someone cares. It is lonely. They need to know they are of worth"—Becky. With a sense of community, comes a sense of personal responsibility. Gary said, "I try not to let kids make excuses. You have to learn to be responsible. You can turn yourself

around. Nobody else can do it for you. It's lonely. Each person needs to know they are loved unconditionally."

> You can do this. You have to. You get to choose and that's what I think is really cool about life. If I influence anyone along the way, it's all I really have to give. It's simple but powerful…you just can't allow circumstances to ruin your life. Never give up hope.—Allen

Others talked about personal choice and decision making: "You decide. There are things in your life you can't control, but don't make excuses. You have to look forward and move on"—Janet; "The happiest road to go on is to decide for yourself. See beyond this moment"—Evelyn; "Keep your chin up. Things will get better. Find something, a hobby, helping others, something that keeps your mind busy and makes you feel good about yourself'—Faun.

> Don't give up on yourself. You're not alone. Don't blame where you are going with where you started. Nobody can find it for you. You will live. You will survive. You just have to be a person of integrity that doesn't give up on themselves.—Iris.

"I realize they are at a crossroads. I try not to say too much, I just give lots of attention. I know deep down, there is nothing I can say that will make a difference….It is how they see me live"—Ken.

Summary

The most decisive actions in our lives are often unconsidered. Chapter V brings into consideration the processes and factors that have contributed to resilience in the adult participants of this study. They recognize within themselves the fragile nature of decision making and express gratitude for where they are at in present time. The loss of

control pushed many of them to incompetence for a period of time. External and internal factors contribute to their ability to overcome.

Chapter VI will provide suggested applications from the outcomes in this study. Nearly every study participant stated that they would agree to the interviews if it would be helpful to other people.

CHAPTER VI

APPLICATION OF THE DATA

The eleven people that participated in this study each had their own subjective experience of risk and trauma in their lives. Each of their situations is unique. However, certain similarities and differences do exist in their narratives. It is necessary to examine those similarities and differences outlined in Chapter V as a prelude to application of the resiliency model. The constructivist model is examined as it applies to the beliefs and perceptions that the participants have of their world and the interpretation attributed to it by the individuals in this study. Those interpretations are used to derive applications for parents, community members and providers of youth services.

Constructivism is not simply a singular approach. It pulls together what we know about human learning. As a theory about knowledge and learning, constructivism defines knowledge as temporal, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, nonobjective. Learning from this perspective is understood as a self-regulated process of resolving inner cognitive conflicts that often become apparent through concrete experience, collaborative conversation, and reflection (Bandura, 1997).

Reality consists of multiple constructs that can be understood to some extent but cannot be predicted or controlled. The biographies of Chapter IV and the analysis of Chapter V brings out a constructivist view that explains the difficulty of cause and effect conclusions. All contextual entities simultaneously shape one another. Most resiliency research is goal oriented instead of determining why events occur and then

taking a more global view of process. As in most successful organizations, and in human relationships, the process is ultimately more important than the product.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggested that all inquiry is value laden. This chapter provides an opportunity to add value to the study and suggestions for application, where the experiential discourse of adults provides information to assist mentors, teachers, parents and others working with youth. It also provides hope to youth that may be in high-risk environments. Participants negotiated their challenges as an extended process. As children, the participants were more at-risk due to multiple adversities extending over time, sometimes long periods of their lives.

Resiliency can be explained by internal protective factors (within the individual) and by external protective factors (involving family, school, and community). Those in a position to influence external factors can examine ways to foster internal, individual factors of protection. Particular mention is made in this chapter of unique findings in the study and an affirmation of what can be confirmed from previous research on resiliency.

Resiliency in Individuals

Identification of At-Risk Youth

A great deal of resiliency research identified at-risk as the result of only a single factor in a youth's life. For example, the problems of school-aged children were attributed to cultural deprivation. As an antidote, children were provided with preschool compensatory enrichment that attempted to create a middle-class culture for them. Another cause for at-risk status was thought to be the failure of all social institutions

charged by society with educating youth. All youth were considered at-risk because families, communities, religious organizations, and work places, among other institutions, failed to help individuals achieve their full human potential. This definition suggested the need for basic restructuring of all the social institutions that educate youth. Programmatic responses involved provision of early identification and intervention.

When speaking about identification of individuals, this study indicates that adults in a mentoring role may not always be able to recognize at-risk youth. With the exception of Evelyn's physical pain and Becky's crying in class, the stories in this study indicate that resilient adults may not have exhibited external indicators of trauma in their childhood. In fact, most of them were involved in sports, clubs, student government, and church activities as youth. Resiliency research has focused on the obvious external risks of youth involved in substance abuse, gangs, violent crimes, and dysfunctional families. Indicators such as poor grades, lack of school attendance, depression, and suicide attempts have been used to identify at-risk youth. Statistical analysis has been applied to determine appropriate prevention programs and assistance.

The results of this study indicate that it is not possible to quantify, nor accurately identify all high-risk individuals and their needs. It is an unreliable assumption to think that children at risk are easily, outwardly identified. There is great potential that high risk youth are serving as the president of the student body and starring on the football field. They may be the cheerleader, the member of the dance team, or an academic scholar. Many researchers have sought those who are unsuccessful and attempted to

make an explanation for their lack of success. This study would indicate that there is potential in all youth to be at risk, without necessarily exhibiting what one would assume to be obvious indicators of a cry for help.

With careful observation and the use of the reflective analysis from adults in the study, specific needs and tendencies may lead to an awareness of troubled youth and lead to the possibility of adult intervention and reconciliation on the part of the at-risk youth. The school, for example, represents a complex organization of people, environments, policies, routines, and procedures that must function as a coordinated whole. Adults in such organizations must be aware of the contextual nature of risk and examine protective practices that will help all children.

The traditional practice of labeling, and targeting disadvantaged populations for social intervention, unwittingly depicting all disadvantaged children and youth as at-risk and all advantaged children and youth as resilient, has inherent flaws (Martineau, 2001). It is also flawed to assume that all children are at risk or that all children are resilient. The psychological concept of resiliency may not exist in the absence of trauma. Those people committed to positive youth development, must be mindful of what it is to be resilient and look for ways to assist in the process.

Adults with experience working with youth will notice many warning signs, such as acting out to receive attention, or withdrawal and depression. They also understand that the warning signs may not be evident. Observation of potential warning signs, sincerely seeking to understand the individual and a willingness to take the time necessary to be of assistance and build positive relationships are key components in

helping at-risk youth. Covey (1989) observed that a habit for success in life is to be more proactive than reactive. Reactive focus reduces or shrinks our sphere of influence because there are feelings of despair or powerlessness. Care providers need to become aware of the fact that potentially all youth are at risk, but the simple influence of another person can provide the internal strength they may need to turn their life around. If adults were to stop viewing young people as something to be fixed and controlled and, instead, helped enable their development, there would be phenomenal change in their lives and society in general (Moorman, 2001).

Indicators of Resiliency

As discussed in the literature review, the profile of a resilient child includes social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy and a sense of meaning and purpose (Benard, 2004). Indicators from this study confirm that the participants identified themselves as being involved in social activities as youth. Showing empathy, caring and forgiveness would also be indicators of social competence in their lives. As illustrated in the biographical stories, many of the participants demonstrated their caring and empathy as they cared for parents and siblings.

All participants showed their flexibility, imagination, insight and resourcefulness as problem solvers. Allen, Iris and Janet all gave specific examples where they were forced to make "adult" decisions at a young age and in several cases, parent their parents. They were able to solve both cognitive and social problems. As insight is gained from the study, some of the resilient adults tried to seek help from

others. They wrote letters, had private conversations or aggressively sought the assistance of an adult or a peer.

Participants discussed the great need of separation and control which coincides with the sense of autonomy. When confronted with repeated negative experiences, they made adaptations by distancing themselves from the environmental situation.

Finally, a sense of purpose was found in their personal responsibility for decision-making, their drive to achieve, their sense of hope for the future and a reflective examination of faith and spirituality. Iris summed up the feelings of many of the participants when she said, "I think when you have to fight for everything you get as a kid you are less likely to give up as an adult." This description, coupled with the participant's sense of a more vivid memory, provide information that can lead care givers into a more keen perception of judgment, insight and acumen.

This research brings out an understanding that resilience is a negotiation between environmental factors and a person's cognition of their personal mental, emotional and social health. There was a sense that an internal driving force helped see them through difficult circumstances.

Protective factors and personal relationships serve as intermediaries between environment and self-efficacy (see Figure 1). When the characteristics of individuals and their environments interact with stable homes, positive classroom environments, individual coping strategies, better parenting practices and safer communities, risk factors are mitigated. Attention to protective factors over time shifts the focus from individual characteristics to developmental processes that are associated with healthy

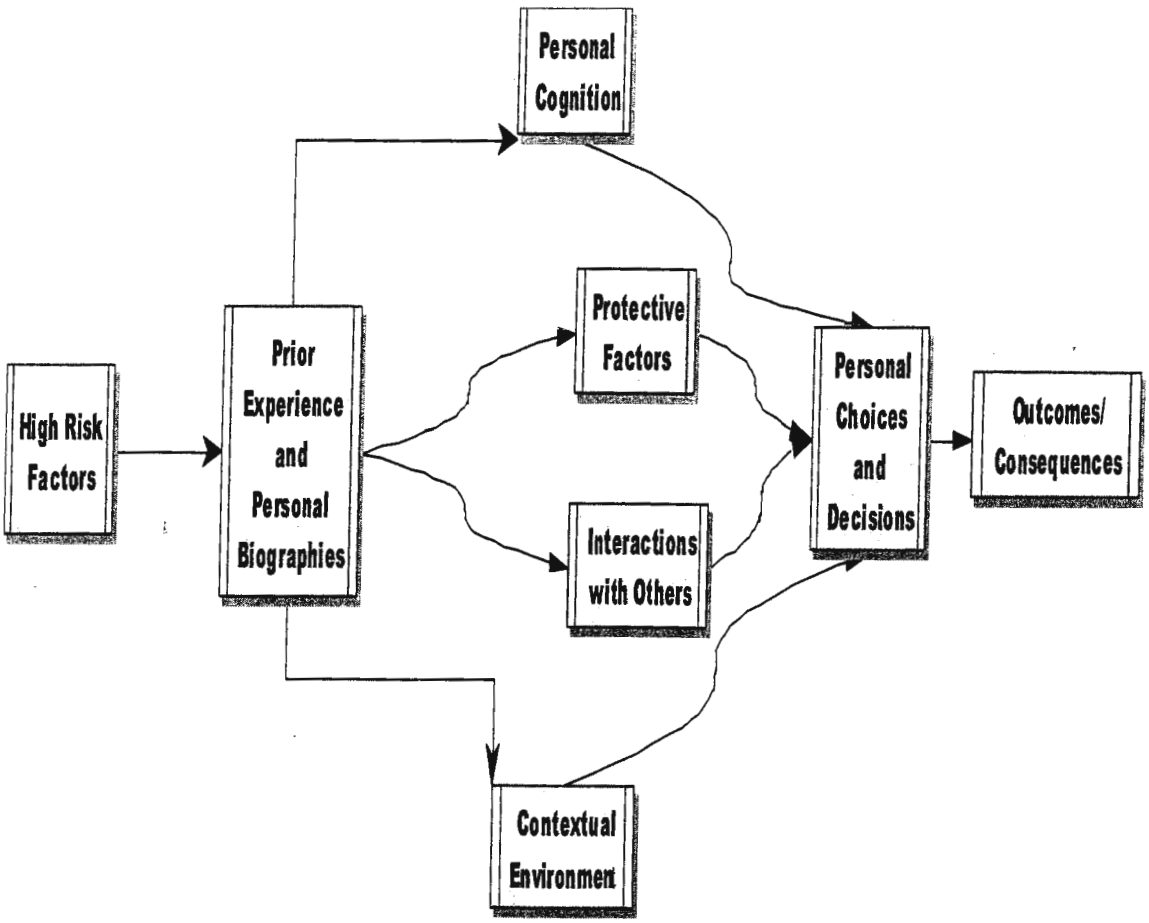

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of resiliency process.

outcomes (Unger, 2005). The accounts given by adults in this study tell us that even youth that are labeled as troubled, delinquent or disordered, find good mental, social and emotional health, given time and appropriate conditions. The great challenge as a community, and for adults within the community, is to develop an awareness of the worth of each individual. A person's words, actions, and behaviors may not be indicative of their potential or desire to be successful.

What Mentors Should Do

It is important to understand that students are shaped by the broader social context in which they live; their individual behavior results not only from their developmental level, but from their experiences of their families, neighborhoods, and schools. Practitioners who understand how these influences help to build resiliency in young people are more likely to be able to successfully intervene to reduce and prevent anti-social behavior and improve the lives of young people. Nearly all resiliency research and best school practice research indicate that high expectations and positive relationships with another adult are the key to the success of children. When adults have a caring attitude, express high expectations of behavior, academic success and social decision making, youth are less likely to choose destructive behaviors (Benard, 2004; Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). Providing youth with messages that they can do it or they can make it, boosts their self-esteem. This study confirms earlier research in these areas.

High Expectations

Adults working with children should resist the temptation to let at-risk children slide through school or through life. What they do not need is adults who are pessimistic about their ability to prevail over life's challenging conditions. Janet, David, and others brought up their need to find direction by observing others. Adults, who are in a position to mentor, need to help youth see the power they have to reframe their lives. They should not assume that children already know rules of etiquette, conduct or code of ethics. Many have never had it modeled for them. More than one conversation in this

study, expressed that the preferred teachers were those that were strict, yet conveyed that they were caring and liked them for who they were. They liked having rules, because many of them had no rules.

Rutter (2001) presented a shift in perspective for mentors, which was reflective of the biographies of the study participant's views: (a) helping youth not to take things personally ("You are not the cause of, nor can you control, your father's drinking"—David); (b) adversity is not permanent; and (c) setbacks are not pervasive ("This is only one part of life's experiences"—Becky). Adults can help young people realize that they have the power within themselves to rise above difficult circumstances. From the biographies, teachers, neighbors, parents and ecclesiastical leaders were identified as people who conveyed that they truly believed in that child's capacity to learn and to be successful in life. There is a great need for somebody to believe in children that do not believe in themselves.

As participants discussed turning points in their lives, they each observed how another person had believed in them. That belief reinforced their self-determination, or caused them to rethink their personal abilities and strength to overcome adversity. Five of the interviews indicated that secondary turning points came at the time of marriage with a spouse's belief in them. Adults who identify strengths and interests in a young person then holds them accountable to use those strengths, gives them the opportunity to address their personal challenges.

Establish Positive Relationships

Often, we have the greatest love for those with whom we have gone through the most difficult times. The stories from the biographies in this research, and adult's own experience are tools to help young people reframe their own experience with that of others. Mentors must take the time to connect with young people. The general term mentor is used, since it could refer to a variety of people, such as teachers, parents, relatives, neighbors, ecclesiastical leaders or another adult that only has a temporary influence on the child's life. The key components of relationship building is as simple as making eye contact, smiling, a touch on the shoulder, calling a person by name, noticing something positive about them, or noticing things they are doing in their life.

Adults can convey loving support to youth by listening to them. They can validate the young person's feelings, by demonstrating kindness, compassion, and respect (Higgins, 1994). Several of the participants suggested that they were attracted to adults that did not judge or take their behaviors personally. "I was already worried that people would think that I would abuse children, just like my dad"—Helen. The adults that were important to the participants seemed to understand that the children were doing the best that they could. They had talked to them enough to gain some insight into the lives of these young people and seemed to have an understanding of how the youth perceived the world. In several interviews, it was mentioned that the people who served as mentors did not spend time telling stories to them about themselves when they were a kid… "They just listened a lot….it was comfortable to talk to them"—Ken. Several discussions in the research led to the fact that so many people want to tell their story or

the story of someone they know as a means to help the troubled youth feel better. Iris said, "I didn't want to hear other people's stories I just wanted somebody to talk that would listen to what I had to say."

Adult models helped the youth learn to accept challenges, solve problems, take responsibility and build relationships. With counsel and encouragement, the youth learned values that shape their decision making, problem solving and the ability to reframe their life experiences.

Teachers play an important role in the developmental process. Their opportunity to build positive relationships with a captive audience cannot be diminished. By the nature of their position, they have an inherent trust and respect from the community and from students. In two of the biographies (Gary and Faun), trust was broken by the inappropriate, illegal actions of the teachers. However, both people interviewed had other positive examples from teachers, so they were able to make a discernment as to appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Like good examples, adults who served as poor examples, also helped those interviewed, frame their own experience and decision making.

Teachers have a unique opportunity to serve as a good example and can help meet the basic needs of students that come from overwhelmed or dysfunctional families. Most of the individuals described a chaotic home life with very few rules, very limited routines and traditions and with very little supervision. A safe, organized, structured classroom environment can provide a haven for youth that do not have that luxury at home. Through observation and conversation, teachers may notice the need

for school supplies, clothing or referrals to other agencies. Attentive caring and the wise voice of supportive adults, becomes internalized and part of the youth's own voice (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

The majority of the decision making and turning points occurred in the mid teens, as youth became more aware of their opportunity of personal control either then or in the near future. High school teachers in particular, should be cognizant of risk factors in their students and outward signs of distress, and look for opportunities to be the catalysts for intervention. Teachers of elementary age youth should look more closely for indicators of neglect, particularly at those ages when children have few options but to make the best of the environment in which they live. The biographies indicate that simple comments, notes, or attention made a difference in the lives of these individuals as they reflect back on the experiences they had a number of years ago.

Provide Opportunities for Inclusion and Personal Responsibility

One of the deductions made from this study is the importance of personal responsibility and the wisdom that comes from making mistakes. This is a key component to recovery and resiliency. There is mention in the research about personal responsibility but little connections with it as a protective factor in overcoming obstacles. This study emphasizes the importance of responsibility as a source of growth. When youth develop increased personal responsibility and become involved in community and school by their own choices and by the invitation of others, their self-image improves, and they become more determined and hopeful of reaching goals.

Participants in the study were constantly dealing with the choices that others had imposed on them. When they had opportunity to take charge of their lives, turning points and commitments began.

Schools who wish to go beyond crisis management can begin by identifying the protective process and mechanisms that reduce risk and foster resilience. Then, by using and reinforcing those processes, schools may devise ways to transform themselves and their communities into supportive environments--and better educate some children in the process. Mentors have the opportunity to invite and provide meaningful responsibilities to youth.

Teachers can create opportunities for inclusion through classroom management. Asking for student input on classroom rules, allowing students to express opinions and imagination, making choices, problem solving, cooperative group learning, service opportunities and other techniques, allow young people to have control and make decisions in a safe, structured environment. Some of the participants had disbelief that they were chosen to participate in a particular activity. Schools should examine the distribution of opportunity given within a classroom or school and look for meaningful ways for inclusion of all students. The best way to learn responsibility is to be given opportunities to be responsible.

Creating the opportunity for youth participation and contributions is an outgrowth of building relationships and a belief in their capabilities. Providing youth the chance to participate in engaging, challenging, and interesting activities, promotes the whole range of personal resilience strength (Larson, 2000). The following are

samples of what participants shared as they reflected on the concept of being trusted enough to have a chance, combined with the support of an adult who believes in them: "I never would have joined the team"—Becky. "I would not have tried if my teacher had not asked me"—David. "I didn't think I was a good student, but my English teacher did…I believed her"—Faun.

It is difficult to learn responsibility if there are not opportunities or expectations to be responsible. The invitations to participate, and to be included, offer students the opportunity to take initiative, by following up with assignments, expectations or practices. It also provides a sense of identity and inclusion. When opportunities for contribution, or service, are provided to youth, they no longer see themselves as victims, but as someone who can make a difference. They felt needed. Invitations to participate, whether at school, at home, at church, or in the community, give young people the chance to problem solve and make decisions. Some talked about how important it was that they had real assignments and not something that was obviously made up, because the adult felt sorry for them and had taken them on as a project. When adults are able to identify and provide opportunities for responsibility, freedom and self-determination, they help young people develop autonomy and self-control. They all recognize themselves as "hard-workers" today, and say it is a habit they developed in their youth. They said that they were happy when they were working because it took their mind off of their problems. Work was something they could control, and provided an opportunity to feel included.

Autonomy and Personal Agency

Autonomy is having a sense of one's own identity, an ability to act independently and to exert some control over one's environment, including a sense of task mastery, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy. The development of resistance, (refusing to accept negative messages about oneself), and of detachment, (distancing oneself from dysfunction), serves as a powerful protector of autonomy.

The results of this study provide evidence for the protective role of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to a combined sense of self-esteem and being able to deal competently with various situations. A sense of mastery mitigates current risk (Howard & Johnson, 2000).The indications from this study show that young people who become resilient adults were far more likely to talk in ways that indicated they believed they could control their lives and what happened to them, either now, or in the future. Iris said, "I hated my life…I tried not to think about it…I knew there had to be something better."

The majority of the participants did not see themselves as victims. They could see themselves being successful in the future. Several tried to commit suicide (Cindy, Gary, and Iris) to escape their situation. However, in further discussions and investigations, they also indicated that their attempts were not a result of their sense of personal weaknesses and faults. Their attempts came as a result of their feelings of betrayal, or their lack of personal agency or a cry to get somebody's attention. A locus of control, attribution theory, or social learning theory, all suggest that ones sense of personal agency and autonomy is learned from what others say to a person, from

observations of how others respond to life's events and from conclusions drawn on one's own attempts to act autonomously (Hans, 2000).

The biographies were full of examples on the need to separate from a current situation or condition. This is consistent with the resiliency research (Benard, 2004; Werner & Smith, 2001). There is an overall sense from the participants that there were periods in their life of placing blame on others for what was happening to them. However, most of their comments indicated their power of self-reflection, the ability to hypothesize and plan, and their ability to look at a range of possibilities in both the present and the future. Developing autonomy is a major social milestone. Independence or autonomy is a major value in mainstream American culture. It can be enhanced by giving someone small tasks to complete on their own and recognizing them for completion. Then, larger tasks and responsibilities are given to people to complete on their own. The process continues throughout development.

Build a Sense of Future

Resilience is a focus on what is available—not on what is lacking. Participants in the study seemed to be cognizant of their surroundings, conversations, and events. This common theme of awareness and memory of their childhood is an indicator to adult mentors that conversations, actions, and a general sense of well-being within environment may be a catalyst for change or hope within a young person. Protective factors and processes referring to characteristics of environments may alter or reverse potential negative outcomes and enable individuals to transform adversity.

Not prevalent in the literature, is the role played by siblings and family members as negative examples, and the ability of resilient youth to reframe their own lives toward positive decisions. Wayward siblings, family members and friends served as reminders of how participants did not want to live. Evelyn never connected with her siblings until adulthood, and came to realize the blessing she had in her life to be removed from the environment in which she would have been raised. Future plans started, and processes for achievement formulated in the minds of the participants as they witnessed the dysfunction of their environment and the ensuing consequences. Several of them spoke of visiting jails, rehab facilities and observing the environments of these family members as a means of determination of personal goals. Mentors may consider providing opportunities to at-risk youth to make observations and personal assessments of those that have made poor choices, without glamorizing their conditions.

Microsystems, such as schools or church groups were reported to have an effect on the development of the participants in this study. Those systems afford many possibilities and resources to assist young people to develop resilience-promoting skills and attributes. Parents, other adults, older siblings, and peers who act in ways which show the child desired and acceptable behavior, provide modeling both within the family and toward outsiders. These people demonstrate how to do things, such as dress or ask for information, and encourage the child to imitate them. They are also models of morality and may introduce the child to the customs of religion. Fostering the development of the whole child necessitates school, family, church, and community agencies.

At the core of this collaborative effort is the belief that overcoming adversity unfolds in the presence of certain environmental attributes. When adversity is relieved and basic human needs are restored, resilience has a chance to emerge (Masten, 2001). If we hope to create socially competent people who have a sense of their own identity and efficacy, then efforts need to be made to help them see it within themselves.

The research shows that fostering resilience is a process. Mentors need to understand that it is not what they do, but how they do it. It is not a focus on content or behaviors, but a focus on context. It is at the individual human level of relationships, beliefs and opportunities for participation and individual control over life's decisions. Cindy summarized what many of the participants reflected, when she said, "I had an intense, internal motivation…I was hurting, but I was teachable…and I was committed through a personal faith that things would get better and that I was the only person who could make it better." The more contextualized the insight of mentors, the more the realization of constructivist personal interpretations of resilience.

Mentors can provide example, positive comments, listening, and focus on the opportunities to provide real responsibility. Kohn (1999) stated:

> It is widely understood that people learn by example. But adults who are respectful of children, are not just modeling a skill or behavior, they are meeting the emotional needs of those children, thereby creating the psychological conditions for children to treat others respectfully.

When youth do not show respect, for example, it does not mean there is not a desire to show respect, it may mean that the youth's environment does not model or value respect to others. If adults want certain qualities to be exhibited, they must provide

opportunities for youth to actively engage in those skills and model what it should look like in their actions.

Adults can provide opportunity for responsibility and control within a safe, structured, environment. The consistent voice of resilient adults, suggest that an internal locus of control creates a greater opportunity for hope than external programs. Morgan (1998) examined the relationship between behavioral outcomes, as indicated by the level of privileges children attain while institutionalized. He said that children that see themselves as having more options, as being more capable of effecting change, were able to make changes in their lives, as opposed to those that had a sense of powerlessness and remained within the structure. The distinguishing characteristic between the two groups was the availability of the resources to sustain their well-being and their resulting self-constructions as healthy.

Application to Research Questions

1. *Are there common themes in people's lives that explain how some surmount high risks?* Themes in this study center on thriving rather than surviving. This chapter outlines the theme of having support from an adult outside of the family, the ability of the individuals to be proactive, the theme of having a sense of hope and future, the ability to develop a sense of control in decision-making, all coupled with a sense of self-efficacy.

2. *What resources and strategies did resilient adults use to help them handle the challenges they faced?* Some of the participants were able to seek out the assistance

of an adult or peer that could serve as a role model for them. Others had the adults come to them to offer assistance. All of the individuals found that separation from their at-risk environment gave them the opportunity to have greater control of their own destiny and have a respite from their at-risk situation.

3. *What factors do resilient adults identify as inhibitors of their own resilience?* Emergent from the interviews, and outside of environmental contexts, was an overwhelming sense of loneliness. Generally, the participant's loneliness was unbeknownst to others. Each of the participants had to struggle through the sense that they were against the rest of the world and that nobody really understood their situation. The loneliness in several cases led to a temporary sense of hopelessness.

4. *What unknown strengths and abilities emerged from people's experiences?* The remarkable capacity to forgive the person that had contributed to their high risk situation was not only an emergent theme, but also an identified strength that led to the path of resiliency. Seeing beyond the decisions of an offender or perpetrator led to empathetic responses for the individual and contributed to the healing of the victim.

5. *In retrospect, what do people value from their experience in high risk situations?* All of the participants indicated that they felt that they were stronger individuals today because of the adversity they faced in their youth. They are motivated in their endeavors, they are obedient to laws, principles and rules, and they feel a great sense of personal responsibility. As expressed in this chapter, they do not relish the experiences they had, but they value the lessons that were learned that continue to assist them in their current life situations and decisions.

Summary

When at-risk youth face a turning point in personal decision making, it is important that resources and support are available to them. The voices coming from this study indicate that ultimately resilience is a process of connectedness, of linking to people, to interests, and of a firm belief in the capability and capacity for young people to overcome tremendous adversity. Individuals, who work with youth and may serve as mentors, whether planned or unplanned, must see the context of environments in which people live. Youth who live in a bad environment do not need to continue living in a bad environment with a feeling of impotence. There was a sense of personal strength conveyed by the participants. David said, "I could have run away from home, but maybe I'm stronger today because I hung in there…I guess I knew I could take it until I didn't have to any more." The participants provide indication that there in an innate sense of resilience and well-being in spite of outward circumstances. Mentors would do well to work off of the premise that it is true, and engage those qualities in at-risk youth.

The social implications from this study are that relationships and opportunity for growth are universal at any age, but even more important for those youth in difficult, adverse situations. The need for community is universal (Sergiovanni, 1993). In this study, most participants claimed pride in a personal achievement. To one person achievement was recognition on reading scores, for another it was success in sports, for a third, it was a grandmother not seen for many years, coming to wish a happy birthday. Achievements need to be recognized.

This chapter's focus has been to demonstrate the need for mentors and positive relationships. Young people learn what is lived around them, through modeling, through opportunity and experience, and from cultural practices and environments. It also shows that personal agency is the key to change. Youth who feel a sense of autonomy and power, through opportunities for personal decision-making, seem to understand their personal control over their present situation, comes outside of the control imposed on them by family, school or community. Another focus indicates that structured environments, belief in human capacity, and guidance are also key ingredients to the discovery of resiliency. When opportunities for participation incorporate opportunities to contribute to a cause, youth are able learn from experience and to give service to others.

Chapter VII provides a discussion from the researcher on the implications of the study, its contribution to current literature and where it might lead for future research. Through careful reassessment of routines, practices and programs that make up school, family and community cultures, suggestions will be made to be of greater assistance to promote habits, attributes, characteristics and beliefs to assist at-risk youth.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussions in this chapter will center on the data and applications of Chapters V and Chapter VI. The construct connoting positive adaptation by individuals despite experiences of significant adversity is the focus of the chapter. Results of the study have both theoretical and practical importance. On a theoretical level, the developmental perspectives of successful adults underscores the distinctive ways in which diverse risk and protective factors combine in adulthood, resulting in multiple developmental pathways. On the practical level, findings in this study have implications for prevention, hope and future research efforts. No individual adult that was interviewed showed identical sets of coping behaviors. However, the biographies reveal common factors that are worthy of investigation, summary and discussion. This chapter will also make recommendations on further research that results from the interviews held with resilient adults.

Summary

The list of human protective factors, from diverse studies include connections to positive role models, feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy, feelings of hope and meaningfulness to life, faith and religious affiliation, talents valued by others, socioeconomic advantages, good schools and other opportunities to learn or qualify for advancement in society (Masten & Reed, 2002). Based upon resiliency theory, the narratives contained within this study appeared to confirm the existence of individual

and environmental indicators of resiliency from a reflective, adult perspective. The first hand insights gathered and analyzed during this study seemed to not only validate, but also humanize, the concepts of resiliency. The focus of this study upon the turning points, and positive resiliency indicators, as reported by adults, rather than risk factors, captured information regarding the existence of resiliency within a high-risk environment.

This study reflects and expands previous findings and serves as a model that relates participant's experiences to the resiliency construct. Overcoming adversity is a normal, and in some respects, healthy, part of human development. However, struggling against multiple high-risk adversities while being burdened by additional stresses of living in an at-risk environment greatly compounds the dilemma and is unique to a smaller percentage of the population. The participants in this study show that resiliency indicators existed in the lives of that small population, but many were dormant or unrecognized until a turning point was discovered.

Turning points in the participant's lives were transitional periods of time. Some coincided with transitions from one school to another or transitioning from one physical environment to another. For others, turning points occurred after a tragedy or traumatic event, causing a reassessment of life goals and values within the individual. On other occasions, turning points resulted from the belief of another individual in the person's ability.

Resilience research illuminates the lives of successful high-risk children in a time of growing concern about the effects of poverty, homelessness, abuse, violence,

crime and various other youth problems. This study indicates that children are protected by their own actions and the actions of adults that surround them. Personal decision making is a key component to resiliency and healing. Over the past decade, several researchers have tried to state that resilience is a quality that some people possess and others do not (Brownlee, 1996; Kagan, 1998). The reports from this study reveal that children have an innate desire to make personal choices, but must find the right opportunity or encouragement to exercise those options.

As youth, the participants were able to make an evaluation of their external resources but were also able to realize that they were able to make appraisals of their own situation. They realized that not everyone's father was alcoholic, or beating his children. They knew that other children did not have families of two women living together or mothers with outlandish behaviors or depression. Several of them made the analysis that they thought of themselves as different than their parents, which contributed to their ability to understand, forgive and not be guilt ridden.

Adult and peer behavior plays a central role in a child's risks, resources, opportunities and eventually the ability of the child to overcome extremely difficult circumstances. Because resilience is being defined as a dynamic rather than a static concept, educators, families, and community members can contribute to a child's potential to be resilient and strengthen protective processes in the face of external risk factors such as physical, sexual, or verbal abuse; incest; divorce; alcohol or drug abuse; abandonment; and poverty. If resilience is viewed as something we do, strategies to develop resilience will result in short term gains. If we view resilience as something we

do, we are more likely to support the notion that programs change and heal. While programs can serve as protective factors, they do not create resiliency. It must come from within an individual. If we make observation of the comments found in the biographies, we find that resilience is something that is fostered by personal choices that are made and through the assistance of individuals within the child's environment.

When resilience is looked at as a developmental process that can be fostered, strategies for change can be directed toward practice, policy and attitude among professionals working with youth. School and community leaders, along with parents have the ability to change the structures, language, and policies that affect individual belief systems. Organizational culture and climate have a great impact on youth when they are focused on protective processes. It is important for adults to realize that even when there is a change in practice, policy and attitude within schools and communities it is not a guarantee of resiliency. Personal choices along with support must still be made.

The participants in the study indicate that there may be multiple turning points and multiple commitments to directing their life away from destructive behaviors. Within every person interviewed was a delicate balance during those critical events between the protective processes and risk factors that originate both internally and externally. Protective processes need to have reinforcement over a sustained period of time, to cushion the effects of external, environmental risks, and allow the internal protection of self-efficacy and control.

Discussion and Discoveries

Through the interview process, there was a tremendous realization of real stories connected with real people. Adult perspectives really matter. If we look at the stories of resilient adults as resources we would begin viewing the potential in all young people with a shared vision. Participants echoed a common theme that they hoped their telling of the past would help those that read the stories today.

The emotions in telling the stories are difficult to describe. There are elements of pain involved in recounting experiences and a strong feeling of pride in personal accomplishments. The majority of participants indicated that they spend little time dwelling on their past. They state that the experiences define who they are today, but find little value in making their past the focus of the present. They prefer to lead by the example of their current lives rather than telling youth how difficult their life was. Cindy is the exception as she occasionally presents her stories to groups that are working with children or to teenage groups to offer a sense of hope and courage.

As a researcher, I was very surprised by the participant's commitment not to dwell on the past. I was equally surprised by their capacity to forgive. Benson's (1998) surveys related to internal assets of empathy and caring, suggested that they diminished as youth grow older. "Those numbers suggest that as we graduate into adulthood a majority of youth have lost the values of caring and compassion." The adults I interviewed are in the minority, since they did not indicate the hatred one would expect. As I listened to the study participant's stories, I sometimes shared tears with them as they described their experiences. I marveled over and over at their capacity to forgive,

forget, and feel sorrow for their offenders. Through their stories, they exhibited a great understanding of their own capacity to care and empathize with those that had been so dysfunctional. Each of the participants had developed some sort of explanation as to why the person may have acted the way that they did. I reflected on whether or not I would be able to forgive and forget under the same given circumstances.

Higgins (1994) documented a predominant quality of compassion and altruism in her study of adults that were sexually abused as children. Altruism refers to "doing for others what they need, and not what you want to do for them" (Vaillant, 2002). Werner and Smith (2001) cited in the longitudinal study of adults who were imprisoned as children with their mothers in times of war, that the most striking qualities shared by the child survivors in adulthood was their compassion for others in need. This study illustrates the value of forgiveness, of oneself, and one's offenders, in the process toward resiliency. It confirms previous research and expands the notion that this quality is shared across multiple types of risks.

Difficulties as youth were often directly related to their personal beliefs that they were stupid, "only wanted for sex," alone, unwanted, poor, and various other labels—even when such things were not objectively true. This group refused the self-fulfilling prophesy and broke away from the labels placed on them by others or by themselves. Internal beliefs of self-efficacy seemed to remain fairly consistent among all participants. During moments of darkness, there still seemed to be an internal knowledge that they could survive and succeed.

It appears that the best way to help children is not the prevention of risk, but to strengthen the individual, the family, and the community. It was evident that the basic needs of affection, control, inclusion, and competency are strong enough to drive individuals to make choices and decisions that will bring those needs into their lives. Those decisions either drew a person closer to the fulfillment of basic needs by seeking out personal involvement in activities or social support, or moved them further away through destructive behaviors.

Parents, teachers and community members should take seriously their share of responsibility in nurturing honest self-beliefs of children and students and assist them in the discovery of their internal capabilities to overcome adversity. Bandura (1997) argued that beliefs of personal competence constitute the key factor of human agency, the ability to act intentionally and exercise a measure of control over one's environment and social structures. As children strive to exercise control over their surroundings, their first transactions are mediated by adults who can empower them with self-assurance or diminish their incorrect self-beliefs. Mentors who provide challenging tasks and meaningful activities that can be mastered and assessed, and supported with encouragement, provide the groundwork of development of a sense of self-worth and confidence.

The themes of providing young people the opportunity to have control through personal decision making and the opportunity to be responsible in a structured environment came out many times in the interview conversations. Times of despair centered on the lack of opportunity to have control over ones life. This occurred when

the participants were in situations where the actions of parents or other adults took away their ability to have personal agency. Some of the participants were put into situations to have responsibility at a young age. Where environments were not structured, the responsibility provoked feelings of slavery, rather than the building of competence. Those feelings of competency and control had to come by other means in situations where they could work independently of their critical environmental situations.

Social comparison with peers and siblings also was of great interest in the research. This theme seemed to help bring comfort and resolution to the personal choices of participants as they developed self-beliefs and put self-concepts into practice. Most of them saw siblings that were in similar environmental situations spend time in jail, enslaved by addictions, or with difficult psychological problems. As the participants observed the consequences of the choices made by their siblings or peers, it served as an example of what they did not want to follow. Much like a check-list, they made determinations not to live like their parents, their siblings, their peers or other negative examples in the community. Several mentioned that they really didn't have a lot of pressure from their peers to participate in destructive activities even though they associated with a "rough crowd." David stated, "Maybe my friends knew things were messed up enough for me without trying to force me into anything else. With them, I pretty much knew I could choose for myself." The negative examples served as a way to empower them by reinforcing a sense of ownership in decision making, commitment, accountability and self-discipline.

Because of the influence of religion in the western United States, many of the participants spoke about their faith in God and their belief in personal agency as means of reinforcing their determination to overcome their high risk environment.

> Children try to understand not only what is happening to them but why; and in doing that they call upon the religious life they have experienced, the spiritual values they have received, as well as other sources of potential explanation. (Benard, 2004, p. 181)

Their belief system allowed them to assign meaning to their situation and reframe their environmental context. It helped them take away feelings of personal guilt. Cindy said, "Somehow I knew it wasn't my fault. God was still there for me and would not let me down."

Some drew strength from religion while others found strength in a more general faith and a sense of right or wrong. Religion, per se, was not beneficial for all. The negative example of parents who professed high religiosity but lived counter to their professed goodness, gave a chance for participants to find a sense of stability or coherence in finding personal answers to questions about their own self-worth, since they could not rely on parental example. For most, this question of where they stood with religion and God was a continuously changing factor in the resiliency process. Nearly all participants went through periods of blaming, denying and turning toward the influence of a greater being.

Nine of the 11 participants are very involved in religious organizations today. Three of the nine did not turn to organized religion until their adult life. The other two prefer not to be affiliated with organized religion but have chosen to live a principle-centered life. Although there are common themes in religious affiliation, the research in

this study would indicate that resiliency was not religion specific but more of a confidence in some center of value, and a sense that things don't just happen without a purpose. Higgins (1994) organized the meaning-making process into two themes: faith in surmounting and faith in human relationships which helps people overcome their harsh treatment as children and seek stability in the face of change.

Recommendations for Future Research

Qualitative research needs to continue in the study of resiliency. In spite of the research that has been done on the identification of protective factors and risk factors, there is very little evidence of adult perspective on contextual pathways to resilience. Most existing research has been focused on children, yet resilience can be achieved at any point in the life cycle and in fact there are turning points that come into young adulthood and later. The findings of this research would indicate that to better understand the processes and contextual specificity, of resiliency, we need to find access to the wisdom and perspectives drawn from the stories of adults that have overcome high risk childhoods. In making conclusions, creating preventions programs and analyzing data, we forget to ask those that have been involved.

There have been important advances in understanding resiliency over the past few years and continued research should work toward constructs of protective processes that might suggest useful avenues for intervention and assistance. Research on resilience should focus less on descriptions and more on developmental processes. There needs to be a greater understanding of the mechanisms that provide protection.

Perceived risks are more powerful than actual risks in some cases. An expansion of interviews of resilient adults, across cultures and regional locations would assist the examination of perceptions, protective mechanisms and processes that lead to healthy adulthood and assure transferability.

Although indications of resiliency are evident at different turning points in participant's lives, predictions concerning continued development are uncertain, as life's adversities further magnify within environments and living with past experiences. There should be a continued look at supportive interventions and the development of personal responsibility and the agency of decision making. In this study, supportive spouses helped sustain several of the participants. There is much needed information to find what indicators of resiliency remain in place or are strengthened over time, and which indicators may start to diminish with the increasing risks that are encountered during adolescence. Interventions need to continue to be investigated to find what types of support and services help families, schools, and the children themselves maintain resiliency into adulthood.

There should also be continued research into the identification of at-risk youth. From this body of research, external indicators are not reliable. Therefore, continued examination of identification of at-risk youth, and the intervention of creating positive relationships should be explored. If indeed, the connections that people have with one another could be valued as a means to temper the effects of risk, the study of resiliency could move forward with greater acceptance, and a more focused understanding of appropriate protective factors. The issues are complex, when it comes to risk factors in

people's lives, but through constructive research, there is a possibility to simplify a means for healing.

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APPENDIX

Informed Consent

Turning Points and Protective Processes: A Qualitative Study on Resilient Youth Through Their Perspective as Resilient Adults

Introduction/Purpose

My name is Michael Monson and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education at Utah State University. I am working with Dr. Janice Hall, my committee chair. As part of my doctoral dissertation, I am studying resiliency, or in this case, adults that have overcome tremendous adversity in their youth. The purpose of the study is to determine when and how they came to an understanding of their ability to overcome adverse, difficult situations and the processes that led them to a point of positive mental and social health.

Procedures

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to spend approximately one hour in an interview, plus some time for follow-up and clarification of questions. Participants will be asked to provide background information, reconstruct their experiences and explore the meaning of those experiences in their life.

Benefits and Risks

We hope to learn and better understand the personal decision-making processes that people go through to overcome adverse situations and experiences. You will be provided the opportunity to verify the information that you provide in the interview(s). The information gained in this study is anticipated to benefit others who may be in similar circumstances or people who may be supporting those who are trying to overcome adverse situations. There are no anticipated risks involved in this study.

Confidentiality

Your permission allows us to include your experiences and information in this study. All personal information will be kept completely confidential through coding so that no one individual can be identified.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from this study at any time. If you choose not to participate, information that may have been gathered will not be included in the study.

IRB Approval Statement

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects at Utah State University has reviewed and approved this research project. If you have questions about your rights you may contact them at (435) 797-1821

Informed Consent

Turning Points and Protective Processes: A Qualitative Study on Resilient Youth Through Their Perspective as Resilient Adults

Copy of Consent

You/I have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and retain one for your files.

Investigator Statement

I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual by me, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, along with possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions raised have been answered.

Dr. Janice Hall	Michael E. Monson
Principal Investigator	Student Researcher

I, _____ acknowledge that the researcher(s) have explained to me the purpose of this research, identified the risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have. I freely and voluntarily consent to participation in this project. I understand that all information gathered in this project will be completely confidential. I also understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form for my own information.

Subject's Signature	Date

CURRICULUM VITAE

MICHAEL E. MONSON

EDUCATION

2006	Ph.D.; Educational Leadership/Curriculum Instruction Utah State University; Logan, Utah
1992	Administrative Endorsement University of Utah; Salt Lake City, Utah
1983	Masters of Education; Mathematics/Curriculum Brigham Young University; Provo, Utah
1978	Bachelor of Arts; Mathematics and Physical Education University of Utah; Salt Lake City, Utah

EXPERIENCE

2005-Present	Personnel/Student Services Director, Logan City School District
1996-2005	Assistant Principal, Logan City School District, Logan High School
1995-1996	Teacher (P.E.) U.S. Department of Defense, Schweinfurt Middle School; Schweinfurt, Germany
1993-1995	Teacher (Math/P.E./Health), U.S. Department of Defense, Alconbury High School; Alconbury, England
1992-1993	Assistant Principal, U.S. Department of Defense, Alconbury High School; Alconbury, England
1987-1991	Teacher (Math/P.E.) U.S. Department of Defense, London Central High School; High Wycombe, England
1985-1987	Teacher (Math), U.S. Department of Defense, Kadena High School Okinawa, Japan
1979-1985	Teacher (Math/French), Granite School District, Granger High School; Salt Lake City, Utah

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Part of administrative teams that have received federal grants and designed administrative policies to improve student achievement
- Utah Goals 2000 selection committee
- Peer Review Committee Member for Utah Goals 2000
- Recognized as Utah's Assistant Principal of the Year, 2000
- Recognized with Special Act of Commendation from US Department of Defense for service and leadership
- Recognized as Outstanding Trainer in the Middle School Movement
- Received Coach of the Year Award in Basketball
- Received Teacher of the Year Award, London Central High School
- Member of Logan City School District's school board's superintendent search committee
- Member of Logan City School District's negotiating team representing the school board for 6 years
- Member of Logan City School District's interview committees for teachers and classified personnel
- Member of Logan City School District's administrative interviews and screening committees
- Member of Logan City School District's administrative negotiating team
- New teacher orientation, evaluation, and placement.
- Member of Logan City School District's evaluation committee
- Member of Logan City School District's insurance committee and benefits planning
- Member of Logan City School District's calendar committee
- Served on numerous committees and focus groups for Logan City School District
- Experienced in developing and implementing new programs, training and employee orientation
- Experience with legal issues concerning guardianship, custody, FERPA, IDEA and termination
- Served on due process, hearing committees, juvenile staffing committees and at-risk youth panels
- Served on safe school appeal hearings
- Part of the Administrative team at Mt. Logan Middle School with recognitions for: 21st Century School, Utah Centennial School, Partnership recognition with John Hopkins University, School of Promise, Utah Alternative School Funding, Federal Grants for after-school activities, safety and physical education
- Director in Regional athletic tournaments, Math Counts, Young at Arts, Odyssey of the Mind
- Director of the United Kingdom Activities Association
- Athletic Commissioner for European District
- Co-Director of Logan Schocap program
- Smithfield City Advisory Board for Trails and Parks
- Numerous leadership opportunities in my church and the Boy Scouts of America

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Member of accreditation teams with USOE and Northwest Accreditation
- Summer workshop director at Utah State University
- Director of numerous athletic and student activities and tournaments
- Chairman of Field Trip Committee
- Chairman of Wellness Committee

GRANT WRITING

- 21st Century Schools
- Utah Centennial Schools
- Department of Defense grant to establish middle programs and collaborative teaming
- :STAR--Sports, Technology and Recreation (intramural and after school programs)

PRESENTATIONS

- National presenter in Love and Logic: Colorado, Utah, Idaho Alaska, and Illinois
- U.S. Dept. Of Defense Europe Conference, 1993
- Utah Governor's Family Conference (GIFT), November 2001
- Utah Principal's Association Conference, June 2000
- Prevention of Sports Injuries, U.S. Dept. of Defense Europe Conference, 1992

PUBLICATIONS

- Teaching Moments, UASSP Magazine, Winter 2003
- Addressing Sports Injuries and Protecting Student Athletes, Athletic Trainer, 1993
- Creating A School Within A School, European Education Journal, 1994
- Dissertation: Turning Points and Protective Processes: A Qualitative Study on Resiliency in Youth From The Perspective Of Resilient Adults, 2006

MEMBERSHIPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Member of AASPA (Personnel Directors)
- Member of ASCD (Curriculum)
- Member of NASSP (School Principals)
- Member of local advisory boards
- President-Elect of Logan City Schools Administrative Association
- Advisor to the Smithfield Youth Council
- Race director
- Member of Cache Valley Civic Ballet
- Member of European Activities Association Governing Board

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- Active in community and church leadership and service activities
- Head coach in basketball and cross-country
- Legal issues in education
- Grant writing
- School reform, Assessment, service learning, learning communities, and classroom management
- Father, avid reader, gardening, golfing, boating, traveling, and skiing