Is Recreation a Context for Fostering Resilience in At Risk Youth?

By

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B.A., University of Victoria, 2001

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether recreation is a context for fostering resilience in at risk youth. Five at risk youth were recruited from past relationships with the researcher and with the help of local child-serving agencies. The researcher was also a participant in the inquiry. The youth were selected because they had experienced significant life adversity in their past but were deemed resilient because they had exhibited positive outcomes over a period of time. The research was guided by a Phenomenological paradigm. Two qualitative and one quantitative data collection methods were used. Data collection consisted of the completion of the Protective Factors Scale (PFS) questionnaire, email questionnaire/journaling and personal interview. These were used to capture the full, lived experience of the participants. Results were analyzed using the measurement tool provided with the PFS and NVivo qualitative software. Axial coding was used to identify higher order themes and synthesizing was used to merge stories and experiences. The data revealed five higher order themes that are discussed in detail. Recommendations for future research are presented and implications for practice are discussed.
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DEDICATION

To my mom, my hero – you sacrificed so I didn’t have too. You taught me to persevere and challenged me to never let adversity get in the way of my dreams. You never made it to see me finish this but I hope that in completing this graduate degree, I have made you proud.

To Erika, my love – you listened, supported and encouraged me every step of the way. Without you beside me, this never would have happened!

To my research participants – you are heroes. You trusted me with the most personal details of your life and your successes are why this research is important. Thank you for all you have given.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

It is a common observation that many children face severe adversity through their development years yet are able to overcome this and achieve great success and positive outcomes in their lives. What are the conditions, causes or correlations that allow this to happen? Can this information aid and protect the human adaptive systems? This qualitative research study examined the lived experiences of resilient ‘at risk’ youth to identify what protective factors and conditions may have aided in the increase of resilience in their lives. Drawing on the phenomenological paradigm, this research used the Protective Factors Scale, multiple personal interviews and email report/journaling to produce rich informative data. In addition, it examined current life conditions to determine what factors may be present that could affect their maintenance of this resilience condition. Finally, this research study investigated whether recreation experiences may be used as an intervention for increasing resilience in ‘at risk’ youth.

Resilience research provides one of the best opportunities to study at risk youth and how they have overcome adversity because there is great potential for guiding interventions and policies through the understanding of children who have achieved positive outcomes (Masten, 1999). A resilience researcher has, at their core, the desire to make improvement to the lives of at risk youth and their families (Robinson, 2000). If we have a better understanding of what led to positive adaptation, we are more likely to be able to create positive interventions that produce positive experiences and reduce negative consequences. Gaining a greater understanding of the development of adolescents, demands that resilience research should study the positive psychosocial
outcomes in high risk circumstances, that is, to better understand what the health enhancing behaviours exist (Galambos & Leadbeater, 2000).

The field of recreation has a strong tradition in promoting health and preventing disease, as well as in community development. From the beginning of the last century, leisure experiences were viewed as having social value. They were a medium for addressing social problems as well as a means of assimilating individuals into the new industrial society, engendering community spirit and cooperation, improving neighbourhood life, and developing health and social benefits. Recreation began with a concern for the urban poor and excluded as a means of making them feel part of the community, removing social barriers and class distinctions. Recreation was a means to bridge social differences among people and reduce inequities by providing "an equal playing field" - a better place to live, work and play.

During the 1980s, the restructuring of recreation organizations, as well as the adoption of a marketing philosophy and the dwindling public purse for local services, led to a reduction in the provision of services and a reliance on user fees. This depletion of resources led to the realization that essential service goals and basic recreation needs of the general public were not being met. The publication of the Benefits Catalogue in 1992 sought to document the many benefits of recreation, especially public recreation, partly in an effort to encourage the return of recreation to its historical tradition. Despite this initiative, the 1990s witnessed escalating fees and charges as a means to increase revenue as the public sector struggled to do more with less. This meant recreation came to be viewed as something done in one’s "leisure time," catering largely to those who could afford to pay.
There are many forms of recreation including reading, playing sports, engaging artistic pursuits, music and simply ‘hanging out’, and each of these can contribute to the enhancement of the lives of at risk youth (Laidlaw Foundation, 2001), including decreasing their boredom and subsequently, decreased deviant behaviours (McKay et. al., 1996; Reid et. al., 1994), as well as dropping out from school (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). The positive, individual effects of structured recreation on the physical and psycho-social health of youth are well documented (Beauvais, 2001; Jackson, Roberts, & Harmon, 2001), although the literature is much less specific about the conditions which engender these benefits and the collective consequences of public recreation. Recreation can serve as an important instrument in yielding resilience, particularly regarding social inclusion. According to Donnelly and Coakley (2002), social inclusion can be fostered through recreation programs when they are designed to provide a safe environment, opportunities to develop and display competence, moral and economic support, develop social connections and supportive relationships and when activities provide opportunities for participants to see themselves in future in a positive role.

Purpose and Objectives

Prior to returning to the University of Victoria to commence my studies for my Master’s degree, I was employed as a youth programmer for ‘at risk’ youth. My experience included programming, facilitating and counselling both the youth and their families. Most of these youth were from foster homes, single parent families or were incarcerated at the Victoria Youth Custody Center. In addition, as a child I faced many of the same challenges and adversities that I saw with these youth. One of the most
devastating events of my own life came as a ten year old, when I discovered my alcoholic
father after a suicide attempt.

While working with the youth, there was a recurring observation that, although
these youth were in similar situations, some made it through in spite of the obstacles they
faced, while others fell to the adversity. I chose to return to school to conduct research
into this phenomenon to investigate the factors associated with youths’ resiliency to
difficult life circumstances and experiences.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the life experiences of resilient ‘at risk’
youth to better understand what factors may have contributed to increasing resilience. A
further purpose was to determine whether recreation could assist in creating and fostering
these factors. The objectives of this study were:

1. To analyze the life experiences of several resilient ‘at risk’ youth to
determine what factors may have aided in developing resilience.

2. To analyze their current history to identify factors that may be aiding or
assisting in maintaining and increasing resilience.

Research Questions

1. What previous experiences may have assisted in the development of
resilience for ‘at risk’ youth?

2. What current experiences may be aiding in the maintenance of resilience
for ‘at risk’ youth?

3. Can recreation serve as a context for fostering these experiences?
4. What is it about youth’s recreational experiences that contribute positively and/or negatively to their resiliency?

**Significance of the Inquiry**

Over the past decades, statistics indicate that there is an increasing number of youth and adolescents who are experiencing negative outcomes such as poverty, abuse, violence and divorce (Nettles & Mason, 2004). Research on resilient youth suggests that adaptation systems are strongly linked to competence (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), and that recreation can assist in developing competence. Governments and policy makers have recognized that recreation, like health and education, can assist in individual and community development, improve social function and quality of life (National Recreation Statement, 1987). Despite these promising outcomes, “not much attention has been paid to recreation” (Beauvais, 2001, p. 20). As such, little evidence exists about such benefits, particularly in Canada, and much remains to be known about the nature and of the relationship between youths’ recreational pursuits and any positive developmental benefits (Laidlaw Foundation, 2001).

**Frameworks Guiding the Inquiry**

The purpose of this inquiry was to understand the meaning of the experiences shared by resilient at risk youth. The study was guided by a phenomenological paradigm that sought to make meaning out of the human experiences of the participants. Naturalistic inquiry allowed for disentangling the shared essence and meaning of human experience (Morse, 1994). This paradigm enables the researcher "to inductively and holistically understand [that] experience in context-specific settings" (Patton, 1990, p.
37). In addition, it recognizes the researcher as an instrument, acknowledging the perspectives and experiences of the researcher as valuable to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This inquiry was further guided by heuristics, which prescribes to the notion that the researcher has "personal experience with and intense interest in the phenomenon under study" (Patton, 1990, p. 71). A phenomenological paradigm is ideal for understanding the experiences and perspectives of the rich lives of the participants. A second framework guiding the study was resilience theory. The hallmark of resilience theory is that people possess strengths and qualities that assist them in overcoming adversity (Richardson, 2002). These resilient characteristics are referred to as protective factors or protective mechanisms.

The thesis is presented in the following order: Chapter Two discusses the literature regarding resilience theory and research, as well as the state of the knowledge concerning the benefits of recreation. Chapter Three describes the methodology used in this study, including its research design, recruitment of research participants, data collection and analysis strategies. In Chapter Four, the results are presented. Chapter Five opens with a discussion of the results re-contextualized in terms of the literature, and closes with implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

Limitations

Limitations for this study are identified but it is understood that in a study where the focus is on a constructed idea of participants, they are less applicable. The focus of this study is not on generalizability but rather on the trustworthiness of the data.
The limitations of this study include:

1. The study is based on self-reports from individuals and from a retrospective perspective. Both situations could lead to under or over reporting or loss of information due to the time lapse between the event and the reporting period.

2. Because of the small number of participants, sample size is a limitation. With a predominantly male sample size and all being residents of Greater Victoria, it is unclear whether the findings identified would be transferable to other groups of at risk youth.

3. The study did not examine the types of recreation programs that participants took part in. The data suggested that these at risk youth tended to gravitate to individual rather than group pursuits.

4. Having the researcher as a research participant may be limitation. With phenomenology, the experiences brought to the research guided the inquiry. A researcher independent from the study might interpret the value of the lived experiences in an entirely different manner.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents an overview of the literature related to resilience theory and resilience research, including methodological flaws and knowledge gaps. The chapter then provides evidence in the literature pertaining to the contribution of recreation to the healthy development of youth.

Resilience Theory

Resilience is a “common phenomenon that results in most cases from the operation of basic human adaptation systems” (Masten, 2001 p. 227). If the adaptation systems are in good order then development is substantial, regardless of any adversity with which one is faced. The risk of developmental problems is greatly increased if these systems are impaired (Masten, 2001).

Implicit within the theory of resilience are two critical conditions: (1) exposure to significant threat or severe adversity; and (2) the achievement of positive adaptation despite major assaults on the developmental process (Luthar, 2000). Roosa (2000) suggests that the objective of research on resilience is to understand what factors contribute to “positive development in the face of adversity but have little or no positive impact or even negative impact on development in the absence of adversity” (p.567).

Resilience is inferential and requires two major kinds of judgments: the threat side of inference, and the criterion by which the quality of adaptation or development outcome is assessed or evaluated. The threat side of inference can be explained by asking, does a threat exist – past or present? That is to say, an individual is not considered resilient if
there has never been a significant threat to their development. This past event must also be judged to have the potential to derail normative development (Masten, 2001).

According to Masten (2001) within the theory of resilience, risk definition includes: socioeconomic status, number of life events occurring in recent months as well as within a lifetime, massive community trauma, low birth weight, divorce and cumulative risk. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) also include in the definition, teenage pregnancy, child abuse, homelessness, substance abuse, violence and poverty. Resilience is defined on the basis of (1) external adaptation criteria, which involves academic achievement and the absence of delinquency; and, (2) internal adaptation criteria, which involves psychological well-being and low levels of distress (Masten, 2001).

Masten (2001) presents two major approaches that are used with the theory of resilience: variable-focused and person-focused. The variable-focused approach is correlational that uses multivariate statistics to test for relationships among predictors and outcomes. This method is appropriate for measuring the degree of risk or adversity but it fails to capture the essence of the experiences that have occurred in the lives of real people. This approach also includes the study of potential qualities of the individual or environment that may function to compensate for or protect the individual from the negative consequences of risk or adversity.

Once risk variables are determined, intervention strategies to add assets or resources to maintain normative effects or counterbalance the negative effects may be put into place. Change in an individual occurs when enough compensatory effects are introduced into their lives to the point where a normative balance is reached. The
compensatory effects phenomenon is based on the idea that enough positive effects can offset the burden in a child’s life from one or many risk influences (Masten, 2001).

In person-focused approaches, people who have different profiles within or across time on sets of criteria are compared to identify what differentiates resilient children from other groups. The classic person-focused approach to resilience involves the comparison of two groups drawn from the same high-risk sample who have adaptive and maladaptive outcomes (Masten, 2001). This approach helps to identify patterns within people’s lives and to identify those at greatest risk or who will require specific interventions. As in the variable-focused approach, interventions and compensatory effects are employed to affect cognitive change. The strength of this approach is that it attempts to capture patterns of adaptation as they naturally occur. A deficit of this model is that it can obscure specific personal life experiences that may provide valuable clues to the explanatory processes of development. In addition, it employs single case studies. This is only relevant if the research is conducted from a positivistic perspective. If the researcher takes a constructivist perspective that includes contextual data, validity as described here is not at issue. Luthar and Zigler (1991) refer to the person-focused model as the compensatory model but suggest that resilience can also be studied utilizing two additional models: the protective versus vulnerability model and the challenge model.

The protective versus vulnerability model suggests that there is an interactive relationship between stress and personal attributes that can predict adjustment. A protective function is implied if individuals display high levels of a particular trait yet are relatively unaffected by the increased levels of stress, whereas declines in competence are displayed with increased stress levels for those with low levels of a particular trait. In a
vulnerability process, individuals with high incidence of a particular trait are more susceptible to increased stress than those with low incidence of a particular trait (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). The challenge model "hypothesizes a curvilinear relationship between stress and adjustment, so that stressors could actually enhance competence, providing the levels of stress are not too high" (Luthar & Zigler, p. 13).

Garmezy, as presented in Luthar and Zigler (1991), suggests that research has identified three categories of protective factors that aid against stress and help to increase resilience: (1) dispositional attributes of the child, (2) family cohesion and warmth, and (3) the availability and use of external support systems by parents and children. Dispositional attributes include the aspects of temperament that moderate the effects of stress such as; distractibility, threshold level and approach. In addition, the research proposes that boys will suffer more adverse affects since they react to stressful family situations with more emotion and often with negative or disruptive behaviour (Luthar & Zigler, 1991).

According to Luthar and Zigler (1991), children who enjoy a good relationship with at least one parental figure can often be protected from many negative outcomes and therefore be more likely to be seen as resilient. They further suggest that stress resistance is more likely to occur when children have a strong belief in their ability to have control over their environment. Those individuals lacking this internal locus of control are more likely to participate in deviant behaviours and thus become less likely to avoid negative outcomes in life.
Resilience Research

To date, resilience research has focused on the study of youth within the school environment. In their study of 205 children aged 8-13 years old, examining the associations of stress exposure to various aspects of school-based competence, Masten, Garmezy, Tellegen, Pellegrini, Larkin and Larsen (1988), identified two stable factors that consistently re-emerged in their results. The most prominent factor was associated with a variety of attributes pertaining to the quality of parenting. They suggested that parenting quality related strongly to the child’s social competence in school. Girls with low parenting quality were increasingly disruptive. The second factor was associated with family stress and disruption. Results indicated that disruptive behaviours were linked to stressors such as divorce, family instability or family discord, particularly in boys. Masten et al. (1988) suggest that the relation of stress exposure to competence in middle childhood might be a function of the family background characteristics and childhood characteristics: "... children with more assets, both personal and environmental, demonstrated greater competence in the school environment: they were more engaged, more achieving and less disruptive or aggressive" (p. 760). This suggested that disadvantaged children of both sexes, that is those with lower intellectual ability, lower socioeconomic status (SES), fewer positive family qualities, were at risk for lower competence. In addition, these same children were more likely to be viewed by teachers and peers as disruptive. The study also points out that girls appeared to be more competent than boys in most areas except academics. This can be attributed to the fact girls are more socially oriented and connected, and therefore when faced with a stressful situation are more inclined to seek help.
Masten, Huband, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy and Ramirez (1999) investigated the phenomenon of resilience through the examination of competent outcomes in late adolescence in relation to adversity over time. Competence was defined in “terms of a pattern of effective performance on three major age-developmental tasks: (a) academic achievement, (b) conduct (rule-abiding vs. antisocial behaviour), and (c) peer social competence” (p. 145). Low competence was on at least two of the three competence domains. Correlations performed on the data indicated that competence in childhood and late adolescence was related to more resources and lower adversity. Global competence was related to the level of family-based resources. These correlations further identified continuity over time in resources, competence and adversity. A regression analysis was conducted on the data and results indicated that academic achievement and peer social competence were predicted by SES and Intelligence (IQ). Quality of parenting was found to overlap with SES in predicting social competence. With regard to conduct, the results identified that participants with low IQ were more likely to experience negative conduct when faced with high adversity, whereas participants with high IQ showed improvements in conduct when faced with high adversity. In addition, “over time, the conduct gap widened between low- and high-IQ adolescents experiencing high adversity” (Masten et al., 1999, p. 156). Exploratory analysis revealed that children themselves might contribute to the quality of their parenting, as better conduct and peer social competence in children independently predicted better parent-adolescent relationships.

Masten et al. (1999) further examined Maladaptive versus Competent and Resilient Groups. Analyses suggested that adolescents identified as maladaptive had lower self worth and higher negative emotionality than the other two groups. Over time,
maladaptive adolescents were found to score lower on competence indices as well as on psychosocial resources. In addition, adolescents in the Competent and Resilient groups scored higher on IQ than counterparts in the Maladaptive group. Four conclusions were drawn from this study on resilience in the context of adversity.

1. The development of competence is related to psychosocial resources.
2. Good resources are less common among children growing up in the context of adversity.
3. If reasonably good resources are present, competence outcomes are generally good.
4. Maladapted adolescents tend to be stress-reactive and have a history of adversity, low resources, and broad-based competence problems.

An important outcome of the studies of resilience was the finding that IQ continued to have a moderating effect from childhood to late adolescence with respect to conduct. This suggests that there may be long-term consequences in the context of adversity that stem from early cognitive functioning.

Findings in the previous studies that linked SES to all levels of competence, quality of parenting and adversity of exposure are consistent with widely reported results in the current literature. Masten et al. (1999) suggested from the results of this research that, “multiple strategies for promoting better outcomes, including risk/adversity focused, resource focused, and process focused” approaches would be best for interventions promoting more desirable outcomes among children (p. 166).
A study by Garmezy (1991) on resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty in Afro-American children identified the following characteristics of resiliency:

1. Social skills that were used with children and adults.
2. A self-perception of a sense of power, not powerlessness.
3. Cognitive skills make them clearly different from less competent peers.
4. An action goal-oriented behaviour.
5. An expressed preference for active educational pursuits and aspired higher education goals.
6. Homes were less cluttered, neat and clean and containing more books.
7. Well-defined parent and child roles in the family.
8. Parental awareness of the child as an individual.

According to Garmezy, these positive attributes are instilled by the family, by schools and by other formal and informal institutions such as the church. These findings lend support for a more integrated approach for studying resilience.

One of the most influential studies on resilience was conducted by Werner and Smith and reported by Masten (1994). In a longitudinal study of children in Kauai, the researchers identified risk factors present in the first two years of life that predicted maladaptive outcomes at 10 or 11 years old and 18 years of age. These risk factors included poverty, perinatal stress, family discord and low parental education. High risk was identified by the presence of four or more risk factors. Of the original cohort group, 10% were identified as high risk. Thirty-three percent of the high-risk group was later reported as resilient as these group members had adapted well in childhood and
adolescence. The resilient group was found to be more mature, responsible, socially connected and achievement oriented. Early assessments indicated the resilient group shared good relationships with their caregivers as they had more attention and less separation, less family conflict, faced few life stressors and had better physical health than the non-resilient group.

Egeland, Carlson and Sroufe, as reported by Pianta and Walsh (1998) indicated in their in-depth study of children raised under harsh circumstances, the challenge that lies in identifying competent children, as competence levels for the individual and groups vary over time. The notion of intra-individual differences was introduced in this research. Intra-individual differences imply that a child may be seen as resilient at one point in time but could be identified as non-resilient at another. In addition, Pianta and Walsh (1998) state that measuring resilience may prove difficult as a child may be resilient in one area but they may fail in another. This suggests that resilience is a dynamic process and therefore should be researched by embedding the constructs of resilience in a solid theoretical perspective.

Resilience research – shortcomings and pitfalls.

Resilience research as a theory is as dynamic and every changing as the research participants studied from this paradigm. With a focus on lived experiences and meaning making, resilience research continues to change with time, just as the lives of the participants change because of their experiences. Many of the changes that occur in resilience research are made to address its shortcomings. This section will identify areas of concern within the research.
According to Luthar and Zigler (1991), resilience researchers have had great difficulty in establishing causality. In addition, life stress measures typically show correctional effects but provide the potential for problems with confounding measurement. This may be attributed to the fact that many of the life event measures may have been created by other maladjustments. Included in this is the inability to address causality between the events over which the individual has control and those with no control (Kaplan, 1999; Luthar, 1991). Roosa (2000) suggested the interactions effects of the life event measures are the defining feature of resilience research. Furthermore, when researchers “discover a main effect associated with positive adaptation in a high risk group that contrasts with results from research on mainstream children, their main effect is really an interaction” (p. 567). A common limitation of using life stressors as indicators of resilience is that this methodology often excludes the use of a control group. This exclusion makes the comparison of resiliency between at risk children and the general population difficult (Luthar, 1991).

Further resilience research lacks consensus on definitions and has substantial variations in operationalization (Luthar, 1991; Luthar, 2000). This lack of consensus and variability has implications for reviews of literature and replication of research by others. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) suggest that to fully understand resilience in children, researchers must break away from the early models of single risk factor research and develop research methodologies that include multiple risk factors and multiple resources. They suggest this approach as children’s lives are characterized by many risks and recurring stressors.
The final area of concern to be addressed in this paper is the caution expressed by Pianta and Walsh (1998) who suggest that since the 'science' of resilience is still in its infancy, literature, documentation and replication of experiences that cause or predict outcomes are still lacking.

*Future research in resilience.*

According to Masten (1999) one of the best arguments for studying resilience has been the premise that “knowledge about how children achieve good developmental outcomes despite risk status and adversity holds great potential for guiding interventions and policies aimed at promoting better development among children at risk” (p. 251). Masten (1999) further suggested that resilience studies provide a good reminder of the human capacity for adaptation, recovery, self-righting and reintegration.

Several resilience researchers provide direction for future studies in resilience theory. Robinson (2000) argued that the resilience researcher must have as their purpose, the “desire to improve circumstances for families and children” (p. 571). She further stated that it is necessary to also develop more consistent terminology and eliminate the lack of clarity that currently exists. Roosa (2000) also suggested that an expanded vocabulary will provide greater precision in describing interactive effects. Robinson expresses that further study in resilience especially in understanding the processes that underlie the pathways to positive adaptation can assist in creating positive interventions that ultimately reduce negative consequences and enhance positive experiences. For Galambos and Leadbeater (2000), gaining a greater understanding of the development of adolescents will demand that resilience research study the positive psychosocial outcomes in high risk circumstances, that is, to better understand what the health
enhancing behaviours exist. Robinson (2000) believes that the study of resilience can also provide information about “personalogic and ecologic factors that support individuals positive adaptation” (p. 571).

According to Werner and Johnson (1999) when researching resilience several questions need to be systematically addressed, including:

1. The need for attention to gender differences in both vulnerability and resilience.
2. The need for a developmental perspective that addresses the interplay between risk and protective factors at important developmental transitions.
3. The need to identify the mediating processes that underlie resilience and the differential pathways that may lead from risk status to positive adaptation.
4. The need to consider the price exacted from individuals who sustain high competence and abstain or desist from drugs despite exposure to stressful home environments.
5. The need to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs at every age level.

Moreover, future research should carefully evaluate the ethical issues. Luthar and Zigler (1991) identified that research on this topic labels children as emotionally troubled since it utilizes behavioural indices for its measurement. This labeling can affect both prevention and intervention programming. They further cautioned that this labeling is often based on one-time assessments of the children.

With regard to methodology in future research, Roosa (2000) predicted that improving measurements by tightening definitions of resilience, increasing sample sizes, and conducting multiple replications, results will become more stable and generalizable.
In addition, Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) argued that greater attention should be given to the selection and justification of strategies to operationalize constructs. This greater attention will help reduce disparate estimates of rates of resilience among risk groups and produce less diverse conclusions.

Currently, most studies of resilience have been of short duration (with a few exceptions). Luthar and Zigler (1991) proposed that it is vital for future research to "establish whether children who appear resilient continue to do well over time not only in terms of adaptive behavior but also on indices of emotional health" (p. 18). They further proposed that research done with multifaceted approaches could be invaluable in terms of informing theory as well as providing specific directions for future intervention programs and policy initiatives. Masten (2001) suggested that future research look at understanding the processes at multiple levels and how the individual interacts effectively as a complex living system over time and with the systems in which it is embedded.

*Research on Recreation*

Research in resilience is still in its infancy and although no resilience research has been conducted in recreation, studies investigating at-risk youth within the recreation domain have identified many commonalities and opportunities. Martinek and Hellison (1997), in their study on underserved youth, suggested that a preventive approach to improving conditions for underserved youth makes economic sense. It is suggested these costs include: health, policing and 'societal' costs. They further suggested that in programming for underserved youth, it is important to understand their values. A lack of understanding these values has important implications for programming such as program success and participation. Further, Martinek and Hellison found that social competence,
autonomy and optimism are factors that affect underserved youth and these are potential products of good physical activity programs. In their study, Martinek and Hellison presented a model drawn from McLaughlin’s several year meta-analysis outlining eleven guidelines for developing physical education programs for underserved youth. They suggested these guidelines parallel the protective factors identified in current resilience research literature:

1. Treat youth as resources to be developed rather than problems to be managed.
2. Focus on their emotional, social, educational, and economic needs
3. Respect their individuality, including cultural differences, developmental needs, and behavioral fluctuations due to intense pressures encountered in their daily lives.
4. Empower them.
5. Build into the program a strong, explicit set of values with clear expectations into the program.
6. Help them to envision possible futures for themselves, especially future vocational and avocational activities which they may not see as relevant to their lives
7. Provide a psychologically as well as physically safe environment.
8. Keep programs numbers small and encourage participation over several years to create a sense of belonging and membership.
9. Maintain a local, community connection.
10. Provide the kind of courageous and persistent leadership that makes the program work despite systemic obstacles.
11. Provide significant contact with an adult who cares and offers support.

Martinek and Hellison concluded that physically active recreation is interactive and highly emotional and this provides the opportunity for exploring and practicing values, teamwork, goal setting, peer teaching and conflict resolution.

Witt and Crompton (1996) examined a project funded by the (US) National Recreation Foundation. This project had as its purpose to investigate the status of recreation programs for at risk youth, to develop instrumentation and improve methodologies for evaluating these programs and to increase the evidence of how park and recreation facilities can impact at risk youth through programming. They found that park and recreation departments (PARDs) have been a primary community contributor to the alleviation of societal problems associated with youth at risk. They suggested that PARDs are uniquely positioned for addressing the youth at risk issue as recreation centers and park areas are widely distributed across communities. In addition, PARDs tend to be congregation areas for gangs and deviant youth making contact opportunities possible. Furthermore, parks and recreation personnel are experienced in establishing empathetic, nurturing relationships with their clients (Witt & Crompton, 1996).

A third important consideration is that recreation activities appeal to large segments of the youth population, including at-risk youth. The programs offer a vehicle for assessing and positively influencing pro-social behavior.

According to Witt and Crompton (1996), the past several years has witnessed a movement in recreation programming to change direction towards a more holistic approach to delivery. The idea of holistic programming is vital to fostering resilience in
at-risk youth, as it has been previously identified that multiple risk indicators are present and embedded in every aspect of their lives.

In their review, Witt and Crompton (1996) presented the ‘Protective Factors Scale’ (PFS), “developed to measure program outcomes in ten areas related to developing knowledge, attitudes and behaviour necessary to develop resilient youth who can avoid risk related behaviours” (p. 4). The PFS approach focuses on the protective mechanisms and processes of negotiating risk situations where as previous attention was focused on identifying the risks. Similar to resilience theory, research in recreation and at-risk youth suggests that the development of protective factors is “central to promoting positive youth developments in risk environments” (Witt & Crompton, 1996, p. 5).

In a more recent study by Green, Kleiber and Tarrant (2000) on the effect of an adventure-based recreation program on the development of resilience in low income minority youth, they found that intervention programs can challenge youth mentally, socially and physically and have the potential to provide necessary skills to overcome risks in their everyday lives. They concluded that intervention programs can provide long-term positive change and growth. Green et al. (2000) stated “adventure-based recreation programming, while not based on resiliency research, is based on similar principles” (p. 79). They further described that adventure-based programming provides opportunities for at-risk youth to work with others, learn their personal abilities, develop the ability to resolve conflicts and to function cooperatively in a group. These factors are described in resilience research as aiding in increasing resiliency in at-risk youth.

The benefits identified by Green et al. (2000), include enhanced social skills, increased self-esteem and a positive view for the future. In their conclusion, the authors
suggested that future research should look at those who are ‘just’ at risk of becoming involved in delinquent or criminal activities as most research has focused on those that are already incarcerated or labeled at-risk. Research based on resilience theory can aid in this. It can provide an understanding why some are resilient while others are not and will help to identify at an earlier point in time those most at risk. Once identified, target interventions can be developed for implementation prior to the at-risk youth engaging in negative behaviours.

Common to the evidence generated from the research on recreation is the need for all children and adolescents to create a strong relationship with an adult. The most important relationship would be with a ‘good’ parent but in the absence of this, another positive adult relationship. This notion is also one of the basic assumptions of resilience theory. Moreover, recreation and sport programs for youth are more likely to provide an avenue for resilience if they provide: a safe environment, opportunities to develop and display competence, social networks, moral and economic support, autonomy and control as well as hope for the future (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002).

Conclusion

Studies of resilience suggest that there are powerful adaptive systems that protect and aid in the development of individuals. These adaptive systems can be compromised through traumatic life events and the effects on children can be devastating for a lifetime. Research exploring theories of resilience has helped to identify the processes and factors contributing to resilient behaviour. Identification of these factors and processes can be used in the development of interventions and preventions that can work to restore these broken adaptive systems.
Current research resilience has focused on studying youth in the school system. Results indicate the youth faced with multiple adversities are less competent and more likely to be seen as disruptive, identifying them as non-resilient or maladaptive. Thus, children with more personal and environmental assets stand a great chance of achieving resilience.

Current recreation research focused on at-risk youth suggests that adventure-based programming has many commonalities between itself and resilience research. These include risk or vulnerability factors as well as protective factors.

It seems clear that resilience and recreation research can be used to improve the quality of life for youth at risk and their families. Through this research, interventions and prevention can be developed WITH the youth, not just FOR the youth that prevent, reduce and eliminate potential risks.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In Chapter Two, the review of resilience literature, I suggested that to advance theory and practice, future research needed to understand the dynamic nature of resilience and capture the multiple factors influencing youths’ ability to adapt to adversity. One means to achieve this is through studying resilience with a qualitative, constructivist research design. “Constructivist research case studies follow the naturalistic inquiry method of exploring the concept from the participants' perspectives through emergent interviews” (Williams, 2001, np). The constructivist approach suggests that knowledge and understanding is developed through interaction with one’s own environment.

Because the purpose of the inquiry was not to predict or generalize, but to understand the meaning of the experiences shared by at-risk resilient youth, this research was guided by a phenomenological paradigm. Using naturalistic inquiry to dissect and break apart the meaning of human experiences (Morse, 1994) makes it possible for the researcher to logically and holistically understand and evaluate those experiences in context-specific settings (Patton, 1990). This approach encourages the study of the phenomenon within its natural setting and recognizes the researcher as an instrument, acknowledging the perspectives and experiences of the researcher as a valuable to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Naturalist Inquiry relies on qualitative methods for capturing the full, lived experience, rather than a narrow perspective of generalizations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Indeed, the value of phenomenology lies in its ability to “transcend the inadequacies of thin descriptions, decontextualized facts and produce thick
descriptions of social texts characterized by the contexts of their production, the intentions of their producers, and the meanings mobilized in the process of their construction" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 286). Further, phenomenology suggests that what is important is the viewpoint of the researcher and that this perspective should be explicit from the outset (Morse, 1994).

This research study adhered to an interpretive Heidegerrian phenomenological design that specifically acknowledges how researchers backgrounds determine their view of the world and makes meaning of the data. Unlike Husserls’ approach to descriptive phenomenology, Heidegger believed that the researcher’s own history or pre-conceptions could not be bracketed out of the inquiry process, rather they were important to the hermeneutic act of interpretation (Morse, 1994). For Denzin and Lincoln (2000), coming to an understanding of a phenomenon is a research process known as the hermeneutical circle where

Researchers in a hermeneutical circle (process of analysis in which interpreters seek the historical and social dynamics that shape textual interpretation) engage in the back-and-forth of studying parts in relation to the whole and whole in relation to the parts (p. 286).

Thus, the research inquiry becomes an iterative process which produces a more enhanced, richer understanding of the experience of resilience for at-risk youth. To achieve this, the researcher is able to use questions drawing on a conceptual model or theoretical framework for the data collection (Morse, 1994); in this study, I used resilience theory to orientate the interview questions and email journaling. Denzin and
Lincoln (2000) remind us that interpretive phenomenology is particularly valuable when it “... catalyses the production of a new question for our consideration ...” (p. 286).

Care must be taken throughout the research process to ensure that the strategies for data collection and their interpretation are rigorous and transparent. Trustworthiness within naturalistic inquiry requires that audiences perceive the findings of an inquiry important and worth taking account of (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Criteria for establishing trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1989) recommend a number of strategies for establishing credibility and this study utilized prolonged engagement and member checking. As the researcher, I “established the rapport and built the trust necessary to uncover constructions” (p. 237). To assist with relationship building, I spent time in advance talking with the participants in more casual conversation. The purpose was to learn about them but also to share elements of my own life so that they understand my background was similar to theirs. In addition, the initial meeting was conducted in a public place where we shared food and drinks prior to any formal structured data collection. During the initial contact, the participants completed the protective factors scale only so I was not requesting any potentially troubling information. Multiple meetings and contacts occurred prior to the interviews and this helped establish a stronger rapport with the participants.

Lincoln and Guba (1989) suggest that member checking may be the most important criteria for establishing credibility and this study continuously used both formal and informal member checks. This process was done by telephone and email, and
participants were asked to confirm their responses to questions from the transcripts. In addition, participants were asked to clarify missing information that occurred from parts of the taped interviews that were extremely quiet or not audible. The exception was the data provided by one participant as she was unavailable for a period of time surrounding transcription and data analysis. There were no parts of her taped interview that were not clearly audible.

To satisfy transferability, this research presented a thick description of the data, which allows others the opportunity to make an informed decision about the usefulness of the findings for other projects or research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick description is how “well somebody else can use” the data, whether it “makes sense to somebody else” and if there is “any relevance or validity in the context” of others’ experiences (Morse, 1994, p. 117).

Dependability and confirmability were determined through the use of an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Copies of all taped interviews, transcripts, notes and email correspondence have been maintained and these records are available for review, allowing the data to be tracked to its source helping to establish dependability of the information sources.

Research Participant Recruitment

For the purpose of this research, the ‘at risk’ youth participants were considered ‘resilient’ because they have experienced a minimum of three significant threats or adversities and have demonstrated resilience in two domains for a minimum of six months. Participants were considered at-risk because their life chances, choices or
circumstances endowed them with the following characteristics: low socioeconomic status, living in a one parent household, history of physical, mental, or sexual abuse, or history of trouble with the police or in school. Purposive, intense case sampling (Patton, 1990) was used and four youth and one adult–myself as participant researcher—who met the criteria for being at risk and resilient, were invited to participate. Participants were recruited utilizing contacts with professionals working with local youth-serving agencies and from the researcher’s previous work experience. Initial contact was made with the potential participants after receiving a referral from a youth-serving professional. This method did not yield an appropriate number of participants therefore the snowball strategy was used to identify additional participants from the original contacts. At the commencement of the study, two participants came through referrals, two from previous work experience and one from the use of the snowball strategy, that being a referral from another participant of the study.

Data Collection Strategies

Three methods were utilized for the collection of data: the completion of the Protective Factors Questionnaire, email questionnaire/journaling and personal interview. The data were collected over a period of three weeks and involved private face-to-face meetings for the administration of the PFS, two personal interviews and review of the transcripts. In addition there many email connections as well as several telephone calls. The duration of each meeting ranged from one to three hours. The Protective Factors Scale (PFS) (Appendix C) was designed by Dr. Peter Witt, professor in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A & M University. Initially, its function was to determine the outcomes of recreation programs for at-risk youth, but this
role expanded to include guidance for developing program goals, the design and structure of specific program elements to achieve these goals, and the use of relevant sub-scales from the Protective Factors Scale to measure program outcomes. This 40-item Scale has four items per area representing ten protective factors. The purpose of using this scale was to assist in determining what factors may have aided the participants in increasing their resilience. In addition, it may assist in the analysis of whether recreation can be used for fostering resilience. A further purpose of the PFS was to confirm the resilience of the participants and to assist in establishing rapport. The PFS was administered and analyzed prior to the initial interview so that participants could elaborate on the data.

The purpose of the email questionnaire was to understand what factors, conditions, challenges and incentives may be present in their lives today that may affect the maintenance of their resilience and to assist in determining if they are resilient all multiple areas or in single domains. The purpose of personal interview was to understand the conditions participants faced growing up that may have led to their 'at risk' status, what factors may have assisted in increasing their resilience and what conditions they face in their lives. The interviews allowed for exploration of the role that recreation has played in the lives of the youth.

A series of two interviews were conducted with the participants with one occurring prior and one after the email questionnaire/journaling stage of data collection. The setting of the interviews was very important as at risk youth often lack trust of those in authority and could be unwilling or afraid to provide personal information if they feel unsafe. Therefore, neutral locations were used were possible. These locations included a local park, a participant’s home, McDonald’s Restaurant and my office at the University.
At each interview, the participants were asked to provide a narrative and the interviews began with a single question. Further prompts were given as required in order to follow up with details given by participants. All interviews were audio recorded.

The questions for the first interview were:

1. Tell me about your life growing up?
2. What were the good things for you (positive)
3. What were the bad things (negative)
4. What people were most important to you when you were growing up and why?
5. Tell me about your home life growing up?
6. What were the good things (at home) for you (positive)
7. What were the bad things (at home) for you (negative)
8. What types of recreation/hobbies did you have when you were growing up?
9. How often did you participate?
10. Did you belong to any groups like Boy’s & Girls Clubs, Boy/Girl Scouts etc?

The first group of interview questions was focused on the history of the participants. The purpose was to gain an understanding of the situations, conditions and challenges each faced at home and in the area of recreation.

The questions for the second interview were:

11. Tell me about your school life growing up?
12. What were the good things for you (positive)?
13. What were the bad things (negative)?
14. Tell me about your friends, family and others important to you?
15. What is it about those family and friends that you admire/respect??
16. If you could change things/events in your life, what would you change?

17. How would you change it?

18. What recreation/hobbies do you participate in now?

19. How often do you participate?

20. What are the good things and bad things about recreation that influence your life?

The second group of interview questions was designed to gain insight into the social support networks that each participant currently had, as well as the supports from their past.

Each participant was asked to answer a series of questions emailed to him or her on scheduled days throughout the research process. The purpose of this was to understand what factors, conditions, challenges and incentives may be present in their lives today that may affect the maintenance of their resilience and to assist in determining if they are resilient all multiple areas or in single domains. The list of questions included:

1. What were your major activities for the day?

2. Did you eat breakfast, lunch and dinner today?

3. Did you eat your meals with family, others or by yourself?

4. Did you participate in any recreation activities today (either structured or unstructured – please describe them: what, with whom, length)?

5. Did you face any difficult situations today at home, work, school or in your free time? If so, what was it and how did you deal with it?

6. What were the positive things that happened to you today? Why are they positive?

7. Was any person influential in your life today? If so, what did they do?
8. Tell me something that you remember from your childhood that was good or bad and why it was so?

Pilot study.

A pilot study was conducted to establish the appropriateness of the PFS, interview and email questions. At the suggestion of my committee, the pilot study was conducted on myself as a participant researcher. In answering the first and second set of interview questions, I recognized that the questions were appropriate, open-ended and would provide the basis for rich data from the youth. I further recognized that with the youth in the study, it would be necessary to have several ways of asking the same questions if they became stuck were struggling to provide answers. The email questionnaire/journal questions were direct and appropriate. It was felt that they final journal question might be too closed and that the answers might not go into sufficient detail, therefore it was identified that extra emphasis would need to be placed on the importance of why the experience was positive or negative. With regard to the PFS, it was quickly understood that this tool would not work effectively for identifying reasons for resilience in the participants but that it would still support the research as it confirmed that each participant was a resilient at risk person.

Ethical Approval

Research policies of the University of Victoria required that research to be conduct on people, in this case at risk youth, must have Ethical Approval from the university. An application outlining the research question, participants to be recruited, where the participant’s were to be recruited from, and a sample of the Participant Consent
Form (PCF) (Appendix 2) was submitted and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee. The PCF form was reviewed and signed by each participant prior to conducting any data collection. At each stage of the data collection, participants were reminded of their rights and the researcher's responsibilities and were asked directly if they wished to continue. The forms have been stored in a locked filing cabinet to ensure confidentiality.

**Data Analysis**

The scores from the Protective Factors Scale were analyzed using the measurement tool provided with the scale. Results are displayed in a table format, which is the typical presentation tool used with this scale. Results for each individual participant were reviewed, and in addition individual and group results were compared with normative results provided by the scales creator, Dr. Peter Witt, on research conducted on other at risk youth (Witt & Crompton, 1997).

Interviews were transcribed immediately following their completion, and responses to the email journaling questions were cut and pasted into a word document once received. N’Vivo, a computer program designed to aid in the management and interpretation of qualitative data (QSR International, 1999), was used to organize and code the qualitative data. The data were examined using intraparticipant microanalysis, which is line-by-line analysis (Morse, 1994). Using this form of analysis provided opportunities to search for themes, implied meanings, attributes, similarities, cultural values and differences in life experiences that may have aided in the increase of resilience. Axial coding was used to identify the higher order common categories of meaning or the protective mechanisms. This was a second review of the data that
followed the initial line-by-line coding. Rather than focus on the data, it reviewed the initial coding, examining consequences, causes, conditions and interactions. This analytical strategy allowed me to focus on specific category and the sub-categories where similar themes were collapsed into the higher order themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990.). Further, the technique of synthesizing is utilized, where stories and experiences are merged to “describe a typical, composite pattern of behaviour or response” (Morse, 1994 p. 30). Results are displayed in text and tables. After completion of transcription, all data were reviewed with the participants to ensure accuracy and establish trustworthiness as previously described (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Data were corrected and expanded to include the feedback from the participants.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter four provides an introduction to the participants as well as an overview of the results from the data analysis. The chapter is organized in four parts. The initial section provides background information on each of the participants. Section two outlines the results from the PSF (Table 1). Section three outlines the common concepts identified in the data. This is broken into two sub sections—relationship and recreation themes and these concepts of meaning are illustrated in Figure 1 and Table 2. Section four provides a definition of theme and an identification of the themes identified in the data. The final section explores each of the themes further with illustrations from the data.

Description of Participants

For the purposes of this study, individuals’ names were changed to protect their identity. The following paragraphs provide a profile of each research participant, including myself as a researcher.

Scott is a 15 year-old male. He currently lives with his mom, her boyfriend, older brother and baby sisters. Through my past association with Scott’s family I am aware that they would be considered to be a low-income family. This observation was made through interactions with the family and with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, whereby program registration fees were paid by the Ministry or the family requested assistance paying for fees because of their income situation. In addition, on several occasions when working with Scott, he referred to his family as a “welfare”
family. Scott, his brother and sister all have different fathers and his own father has chosen not to be a part of his life. His brother and sister both share relationships with their fathers. He has not seen or spoken with his father since he was very young. At that time scheduled visits with his father were most often missed or cancelled, leaving Scott feeling unimportant and causing a negative affect on their relationship.

Sixteen year-old John was raised by his mother. He has one sibling, a brother, who spent most of his teen years in and out of youth detention and at the time of the data collection was incarcerated in an adult facility. His brother has a long history of violent behaviour yet John still looks up to him and considers him his best friend. John’s home life is relatively stable. He lives with his mom and an uncle who shares part of the house to help with expenses. John has been in trouble at school and has flirted with criminal activities including using drugs, vandalism and shoplifting and while never arrested, has been picked up by law enforcement for his activities. His participation in the research project was limited as he withdrew after completing the initial interview and several of the journal entries but did allow all data up that point to be used.

David is a 19 year-old male who has lived on his own since he was a young teen. David was raised by his mother, who struggled with substance abuse problems (drug and alcohol) since the time he was little. As a child, he moved often and considered his growing up years to be very unstable. David had one sibling, a brother, who died from a drug overdose several years ago.

Eighteen year-old Mary has had a tough life. Like David, her mom has struggled with drug and alcohol problems since Mary was a very little girl. At age ten, Mary, along with her younger brother and sister were abandoned at a drug house. While her mother
went out to get a fix. During that time, Mary found a handgun in house. The kids began to play with the gun and she picked it out and pointed it at her brother. Not knowing the gun was loaded, she pulled the trigger. The weapon discharged and the bullet struck and killed her brother. Mary lives with her father and in many ways serves as mother to her younger sister as she is fully responsible for meals and housekeeping.

The fifth participant for this study was myself. Adopted as an infant, I grew up with an alcoholic father who was most often absent. At age ten, my father tried to commit suicide and I was the person that found him. I have one sibling, a sister who is six years older. She has struggled with substance abuse issues since she was 15. Shortly after my parent’s divorce when I was ten, my mother was diagnosed with a severe respiratory disease. As my sister lived with my dad and I with my mom, I took on the role primary caregiver. Her health, along with a lack of a high school education meant a life of low income for us. In addition, with mom having to work long hours, I was often alone for long periods, a situation often referred to as a “latch key kid”.

Analysis of the data revealed nine common categories of meaning. Each participant identified that they had a significant relationship with at least one parent and an attachment with an adult other than a parent. The interviews and journals showed that each participant considered themselves to have only a small number of close friends and that those friends tended to be with a member of the opposite gender, which was also the gender of their significant parental relationship. The findings also showed that each participant struggled with school. In some cases it was with grades and in others it was difficulty with interactions with teachers or students. Another common meaning amongst the participants was the role taken in their home. Each of the research subjects expressed
that they were required to take on a role within the home that would generally be considered to be a traditional parental role. A further category of meaning that emerged from the data was that of nutrition. Most of the subjects reported that they lacked consistent meals and that the quality and nutrition of those meals was poor. In addition, most often meals were eaten by themselves.

Specific to recreation, each participant expressed that through their adolescent years they all enjoyed taking part in recreational pursuits but faced limited access due to financial difficulties and lack of skill, equipment or acceptance of others. Each subject identified that they had a strong desire to recreate and felt that recreation increased their social network, assisted with skill acquisition, kept them busy and away from trouble and was an outlet from all of the other struggles in their lives. There were perceived differences between how often subjects believed they participated in recreational pursuits and how often they reported to actually spend time in a recreational activity. Each of these categories is discussed in greater detail below.

Protective Factors Scale

Each participant completed the pretest portion of the Protective Factors Scale (PFS) prior to taking part in other aspects of this research. The results were tabulated and displayed in table 1. This model can guide youth programmers in preventing risk behaviors from occurring through developing programs that increase protection and decrease the negative consequences of these antecedent conditions (Witt & Crompton, 1999).
Table 1.
Protective Factors Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale Area</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pete</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Resources:</td>
<td>• I know lots of safe places to play/hangout</td>
<td>(5)4.25*</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of and interest in utilizing neighborhood recreation</td>
<td>• I know lots of activities to do in my community</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities, including organized and informal programs and opportunities.</td>
<td>• I am interested in participating in programs in my community</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I am interested in programs that take place after school</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table notes apply for entire table. ( ) refer to individual question scores for Pete. * refers to mean scores for sub-scale area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale Area</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pete</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested and Caring Adults: The perception that there are adults who care about and are interested in teens, and who are available to help teens when they have problems.</td>
<td>• There are adults who are interested in me</td>
<td>(3)3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.25</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I can turn to adults for help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• There are adults who will look out for me</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Adults are willing to help me with my problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of Acceptance and Belonging: The perception of being liked and accepted by other teens and/or family members.</td>
<td>• I am able to get along with friends</td>
<td>(4)3.25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There are other children who like me</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I am an O.K. person</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• I am wanted by the people around me</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Scale Area</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Models for Conventional Behavior:</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Controls Against Deviant Behavior: The understanding that it is important and necessary to stay out of trouble and obey the rules.</td>
<td>- I must stay out of trouble</td>
<td>- Respect for and appreciation of teens, adults, and institutions who model or reinforce appropriate behavior.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- I must obey the rules</td>
<td>- I respect authority figures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- I will be punished if I break the rules</td>
<td>- I respect adults</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- I must follow the rules if I want to participate</td>
<td>- I respect people in charge</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- I respect children who stay out of trouble</td>
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Table 1 continued
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale Area</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pete</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Attitude Toward the Future/Future</td>
<td>• I am creative</td>
<td>(3) 3.75</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations: Perception of oneself as having a</td>
<td>• I can set goals</td>
<td>(4)</td>
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<td>positive future including the willingness to set</td>
<td>• I can deal with problems that might come up in the future</td>
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<tr>
<td>work to achieve goals, the willingness to be</td>
<td>• I like to try new things</td>
<td>(4)</td>
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<td>spontaneous and creative, and the understanding</td>
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<td>that one has some control over the outcome of daily</td>
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<td>events.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Scale Area</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>Scott</td>
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<td>David</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value on Achievement: Interest in and understanding of the importance of doing well in school. Also includes the general idea of being successful and trying to do one's best in any area of involvement.</td>
<td><em>I can succeed in life</em></td>
<td>(4)4.25</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>It is important for me to always do my best</em></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>It is important for me to do well at school</em></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Work with Others:</td>
<td><em>It is important for me to stay in school</em></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the importance of and having the ability to get along with other teens, be cooperative, and be a good member of a team or group.</td>
<td><em>Teamwork is important</em></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Cooperation is important</em></td>
<td>(3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>All players need a chance to play</em></td>
<td>(5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Scale Area</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>David</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to Workout Conflicts: The ability to deal in a positive manner with problems that arise with other teens.</td>
<td>• I try to solve problems in a positive manner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I try to control my anger</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I try to listen to the opinions of others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I can settle arguments without fighting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Liking/Perceived Competence: The degree to which one likes to do a particular activity and feels that he/she has the skills to participate successfully.</td>
<td>• I want to keep playing [this activity]</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I want to improve my skills [in this activity]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I am interested in [this activity]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I like [this activity]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The PFS asked participants to answer questions in the strongly disagree – strongly agree format (1 to 5). Scores were tabulated and mean scores displayed. This PFS was designed to be a pre/post test with an intervention but for the purposes of this research, the pretest was used to establish the resilience of at risk youth participants.

The results of the PFS, because of the very high scores, indicated positive resilience in the participants. A more important result of administering the PFS was the credibility it gave to the study for the participants. The use of this tool created a clinical environment, thus increasing the impression of the importance of the information they were providing. Further, by beginning the study with this tool, it provided an opportunity to build a relationship with the participants prior to the interviews and journaling, which may have contributed to a more open and rich dialogue.

*Common Categories of Meaning*

The common categories of meaning that emerged from the data are summarized in Table 2 and described in more detail in the following pages.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Meaning</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quote from Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant Parent or other</td>
<td>Each participant identified the importance of a relationship with a parent</td>
<td>My mom was my hero and without her I think my life would have been significantly different Pete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>and/or a significant other adult.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Number of Close</td>
<td>Participants revealed that they each had only a small number of close friends.</td>
<td>I'm the kinda person with one or two close friends, but be on good terms with many acquaintances. Honestly, I can only handle a couple at a time. I really like my independence David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category of Meaning</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Quote from Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggles in School</td>
<td>Challenges faced by: participants in school–success, participation, behavior, being in trouble and fitting in.</td>
<td>A lot of times I felt my teachers didn't like me; they were more condescending than anything. Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role in the Home</td>
<td>Participants took on a more significant role in the home, often filling that normally held by a parent.</td>
<td>I woke up at about 7 am. Helped my dad with getting ready for work and then gave him a ride to work. Got home at about 7:30-8:00. Tried to get my little sister outta bed (quite a chore). Normally I would get her off to school with a lunch... Mary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category of Meaning</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Quote from Data</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Proper Meals/Nutrition</td>
<td>Participants most often did not eat appropriate nutritious meals and often ate alone.</td>
<td>Ummm...I am eating a sandwich now. It is the first thing I've eaten today. Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Access to Recreation.</td>
<td>Participants all identified significant barriers to accessing recreation. The most prominent was financial limitations.</td>
<td>That actually happened to me and I went to an ice hockey session and there's all these guys out there with gear and I took a look and it was pretty intimidating and so I just left. David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Skill</td>
<td>Participants expressed that in many cases they lacked the necessary skills to participate in organized recreation programs. This limited ability to take part or be selected for teams.</td>
<td>Leadership, take turns being the leader, like usually there are the same captain's, get the ones who aren't very good to pick. David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category of Meaning</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Quote from Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Desire to Recreate</td>
<td>Each participant expressed a strong desire to recreate, for health or social reasons.</td>
<td>I think because when you are there and you are doing activity with other people your not focusing on your problems, nobody there understands what you are going through and there is no reason that they need to so you're there and you can think about whatever you want. Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Social Network</td>
<td>Each participant believed that participation in recreation programs will increase their number of friends and provide a group of people with similar interests that they would be able to spend time with.</td>
<td>We decided to play basketball...we went to Blanshard school. My other friend lives right near there so I called to come and play with us and he did so we played basketball for a few hours. It was lots of fun. David</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Common Themes

Each of the common categories of meaning was grouped into themes. Themes are assertions that have a high degree of generality (Spradley, p. 141). With an underlying pattern of meaning, these themes help explain the actions and perceptions of the participants.

Four themes emerged from the data. The first, close relations, included the categories of significant parent and small number of close friends. Challenges at home and school was the second and included the categories struggles in school and the role in home. The third theme, barriers to recreate, included lack of proper meals/nutrition and eating alone, limited access to recreation due to finance, and lack of skill or acceptance of others. The final theme was reasons to recreate and included strong desire to recreate – for health, fitness and fun and increased social network provided through recreation.

Close Relations.

Each of the participants identified that they had a significant relationship with one parent. This is consistent with the literature. Springer, Wright and McCall (1997) suggest that family contributes to adolescent resiliency through “the ability to develop close, trusting relationships through family bonding and caring relations with parents” (p 437). The Canadian Institute for Health Initiative state that “Adolescents’ social environment is shaped by their experiences with parents and caregivers” (p. 8). They further add that healthy development is directly related to positive relationships with family, friends and others in the community. For each of the four males it was their mother and for the lone female participant it was her father. Three of the participants – Mary, John and myself – expressed that they have a relationship with their other parent but it is not a close
relationship. Each of the participants indicated that they also shared a strong relationship with another adult. For Mary and David that adult was a babysitter, for Josh and Scott it was a youth leader and for myself it was a sports coach.

When asked about family, Mary responded:

I’ve always had a close relationship with my dad but it is not like a father-thing, it’s best friends. With my dad I want to be there all the time for him and have our talks. I always want to be there and make sure that everything is okay.

For Scott, “my family [mom and brother] they were always there for me…whenever something bad happens they would always help me get over.” In response to the question about what were the positive things in his life John replied, “My mom has always been there. Probably kept me from starving and kept a roof over my head.”

Mary spoke about the other significant adult in her life, a babysitter: “She’s exactly like a second mother. She is supportive, she’s nice. She’s kind; she’ll basically do anything if you need to ask her if you need anything she’ll help you with that.”

For myself, there are two specific coaches who took a strong interest in me. I used to think it was just because I was a good athlete but in retrospect, they invested a great deal of time over and above coaching. In the case of one former baseball coach, he taught me life lessons I remember even today. These lessons included how to control my temper in emotional situations, the importance of being part of a team and stepping up in leadership and taking responsibility for your mistakes.

Interestingly, each participant indicated that they often didn’t get along well in large groups and that they preferred to have only a few close friends. The depth of the
friendships, trust and respect were very important to those friendships. When asked about their most important relationship outside of friends or family, participants revealed that their closest connection was with a member of the opposite sex. The sex of that friendship was the same as the sex of their significant parent. This pattern is also reflected in my life experience as my closest friends in the past have been and are presently with females.

Making friends has never been easy for Scott. He feels most don’t understand him because he is different. He prefers to make friends with girls. “I meet most of my friends over the internet now,” said Scott. “You can’t actually show any physical things. You can think over what to say and not screw up your words.” One of his longest friendships is with an Internet friend Rachel and that has been a little more than a year now.

For Mary, friendships are important and require trust and understanding. “Well I have a trust issue when it comes to friends,” she said. “Trust is big and honesty.” Her closest friendship is with a male. “You can tell them anything and they won’t get mad,” she added. Mary further stated one of the great things about her friendship with a specific male is that “he protects me’. Overall her view on friendships is that she prefers having only a few, “I’m the kind of person with one or two closes friends, but on good terms with many acquaintances. Honestly, I can handle only a couple at a time.”

It was evident from David’s responses that he made friends quickly but most did not last a long time and most were not the deep or close relationship type.

I don’t know why I don’t have many close friends. I don’t have the time to talk petty shit that most people talk about and in turn I don’t have many friends
because I don’t call anyone and don’t feel the need to call them. I’m that way because [pause]...I don’t really have an answer.

David identified his closest friends as his brother who had died from a drug overdose a few years earlier. His free time was spent mostly with one particular girl.

Challenges in the Home and School.

Each participant in the study expressed that they had struggled through school. For some it was with grades, others with teachers or with other students.

Scott struggled with both teachers and students. “A lot of times I felt like the teachers didn’t like me, they were more condescending than anything.” He spent most of his days in conflict with other students and was in trouble on a few occasions for fighting. He shared this on his thoughts of other students. “A lot of people at school tend to be very group-driven. They stick with their own supportive social status.” His overall thought on school was “I really just don’t want to be there. I feel I could do something more stimulating.”

David’s school experiences were generally good but his early years were plagued with much ridicule. “School was fun for me but I also hated it. I had a speech problem and of course I got teased for it, but I got used to it and it was usually the same crowd of people.”

Like Scott, Mary felt her time could be better spent then in the classroom: ”I usually don’t want to go there [school]. I don’t hate it or everyone there, it’s just that I always feel I could be doing something more stimulating.” She struggles with a couple of the teachers and one specific counselor Mary shared, “She [counselor] means well but she pushes the limits and invades my line of privacy regularly, along with many of
the staff." Mary quit in grade nine and went to get a job but returned shortly after and is finishing her grade twelve at Esquimalt high school.

For myself, my troubles were strictly with the teachers. Having success, staying focused and out of trouble was a struggle for me in school. Although my marks were respectable until grade eight, I was often in trouble or disruptive. In grade five I threw a pencil at a teacher because I felt I was being picked on and was suspended from the school grounds on another occasion for trampling through a garden and smashing a thermometer that was being used by our class to learn the metric system. In grade seven I was removed from the regular class area and forced to sit at a table directly beside the teacher. As with Scott and Mary, I felt that school was not important and that I could be doing more with my time. I began working at jobs at age nine and felt that I would rather be making money than in school—a belief I carried right through my undergrad at university.

Such experiences are not exclusive to these participants. According to the McCleary report on Healthy Youth Development, “youth who are highly connected [to school] report better health and engage in fewer risky behaviours,” such as drinking alcohol, using tobacco or marijuana or being involved in fights (McCleary Centre Society, 2003, np). Participants in this study did not feel a connection to their school and exhibited risky behaviours such as consumption of alcohol and drugs, petty crime, anti-social behavior and skipping classes.

Participants were asked about their role in the home and for each, there was a significant role in running the household. “I woke up at 7AM. Helped my dad with getting ready for work and then gave him a ride to work,” shared Mary. As a normal
routine, when she returned she would try to get her little sister out of bed and try to get her off to school. After school she would return home and take her dad grocery shopping, prepare meals and clean.

David’s role in the home became one of caregiver. With his mom’s addiction to alcohol and drugs, he was forced to look out for her. “My mom is always a difficult situation,” he said, “every day she has a drink.” He was reluctant to share many home experiences.

Home life for Scott involved more childcare and babysitting responsibilities. He has two young sisters, two and three and it is his role to come home after school to look after his sisters while his mom is working. His mom’s boyfriend looks after them while Scott is in school. He is also expected to take a lead role in household chores. “I’d just do like chores around the house like cleaning out the guinea pig cage and some simple cleaning stuff.”

My parent’s separated when I was just ten years old and from that time on it was expected that I would carry a large role at home. Most weekdays I would come home from school and start cooking and cleaning. I had been cooking since I was five or six. With only mom and I in the house, I did most of the outdoor jobs of lawn care and gardening, snow removal, garbage and such. My mom took ill when I was in my early teens and that increased my role at home. She would be sick for long periods of time so I had to take on the load of grocery shopping, cooking, banking and caring for my mom. This role increased as my mom’s illness progressed.

In single-parent families, supports are often weak or non-existent and children in these families are often given too much latitude in making their own decisions. In her
report “At-Risk Youth and Leisure: An Ecological Perspective,” McCready (1997) noted that, the lack of structure combined with the decision making relinquished by adults contributes to youth adopting more mature roles and responsibilities.

**Barriers to recreate.**

Food security is increasingly problematic for low-income families. Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk (2003) found that low-income households purchase significantly fewer servings of these dairy products, fruits and vegetables and need greater access to affordable nutritious foods. As well, The Cost of Eating in B.C. – Annual Report (2006) identifies that families of low income or welfare do not have the funds necessary to purchase healthy food after basics expenses such as accommodations are paid for. Not surprisingly, a common theme amongst the participants in this study was their lack of proper nutrition and that meals were often eaten alone. They were asked about meals for each journal entry and for David the message was consistently the same. “I didn’t eat all day, I was drinking coffee and water all day”, “I got a couple of sausage rolls this morning from a bakery by my work”, and “I usually do most of my eating in the evenings and I eat alone” were some of the entries from his journal.

The response from Scott was very similar. “I am eating a sandwich right now. It is the first I’ve eaten today. I’m eating at the computer. I usually eat wherever I’m doing something like watching TV or at the computer or in my room mostly by myself.”

For Mary, although she was preparing meals for her dad and sister, she rarely did that for herself. Typical responses for her were “I ate some pizza bread and pop and had a few snacks before I went to bed” and “I didn’t eat breakfast because I was cleaning my
morning away.” She went on to say she didn’t eat lunch or dinner either, “but I did have a banana nut muffin”.

As a child I learned to cook at an early age and loved to eat so nutritional and regular meals was generally not a big problem until I moved out on my own at 18. My mom was quick to remind me about meals but because she often left for work before breakfast time, I usually skipped it.

Money was an issue for each of the participants and had a major effect on their ability to participate in recreation activities. A combination of registration fees and the cost of the equipment prohibited participants’ involvement. Participants’ experiences are mirrored in the literature. Donnelly and Coakley (2002) found that only 37.1% of children below the low-income cut-off (LICO) participated in sports with a coach more than one time per week. This is compared to the 59.1% found for children above the LICO (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002).

I began playing hockey at an early age. When my parent’s first separated, my mom could not afford to put me in hockey and my dad was not willing to help out much. I was forced to withdraw but the association created a bursary so I could continue to play. All of my gear was second hand or I paid for it with money I earned from jobs.

David experienced a similar situation with ice hockey. “That actually happened to me,” he said. “I went to an ice hockey session and there’s all these guys out there with [new] gear and I took a look and it was pretty intimidating and so I just left.” He added further “we didn’t have a lot of money but my mom tried to make us happy and she did.”

Financial issues affected Mary’s participation as well. “I was in gymnastics for awhile. But most of my life I didn’t have much to do with things like that. For two
reasons...time and money.” Mary stated, “Money has always been an issue. They
[recreation activities] can be really expensive.”

Scott did not state that he faced any financial barriers to participate in recreation. His activities were many that were inexpensive such as swimming, watching TV and playing on the Internet. In my previous role with Scott, I know that he was sponsored to participate in a weekly floor hockey league as well as was sponsored to take part in outdoor adventure summer camps.

When asked about what would have improved the recreation activity, David reflected that changing leadership styles would have enhanced his experience. He felt that often only the most skilled kids would be selected to be captains and they always chose their friends first. “Like usually there are the same captains. Get the ones who aren’t very good to pick.” His quote in the previous section regarding the ice hockey session also spoke to the lack of acceptance.

For Mary, an environment without judgment was important. She felt that others often judged and that made her feel very uncomfortable. “I think there needs to be a variety of age groups and role models...so you can look at successful people working as a teams and no judgments.”

Lack of skill was never an issue for me yet because my family never had much money I faced ridicule from other teammates. Often they would go out after games for food and I couldn’t go or they would go to movies or sporting events and I didn’t have the money to go along with them so often felt like an outsider on the team. On a number of occasions I couldn’t travel to out-of-town games because I couldn’t afford the cost of accommodation and I perceived a lack of discretionary funds shaped my lack of
experience with others. Regardless of the nature of the activity, acceptance and a sense of being is critical to healthy adolescent development (Konopka, 1973).

Reasons to do recreation.

Participants expressed that it is important to them to have the chance to take part in recreational activities. The purpose for each was different. Each recognized it was important to be involved for health reasons but that there were other social reasons to be active as well.

Sports and recreation played a significant role in my life. Growing up my mom registered me in minor baseball and hockey. Because my dad was busy working and my parents split when I was young, my coaches became role models for me. Through sports I learned a great deal about working with others, following rules and it kept me busy. Many of my friends who didn’t play sports were getting into trouble committing burglaries and experimenting with drugs.

“IT [sport] hasn’t played too big a role in my life other than the hockey...it has helped me a lot in getting me to where I am. I’d probably still be very quiet and not really do anything,” shared Scott. David added, “Without her [mom], sports and friends growing up, I think my life would have been very different. I think that I would have been a social hermit even more than I am.” His further comment on recreation created his foundation for participation. “It teaches you teamwork, keeps you fit, you have fun.” He summed up his response with “I think physical activity can help you in all ways—physically, emotionally—your confidence is based on how you feel physically, not necessarily how you look.” There is a social component for David as well, where he sees his participation helping his friends too. He shared, “I am an inspiration to my friend
Allister. He doesn’t do much except smoke pot but I convinced him to play basketball and I think he had fun”.

The social benefits were also important to Mary, who commented:

I think because when you are there and you are doing activity with other people you are not focusing on your problems, nobody there understands what you are going through and there is no reason that they need to so you’re there and can think about whatever you want.

Her own recreation experience included swimming, “Growing up I was always active. I always liked going swimming with friends. I felt very comfortable where I was and who was looking after me.” Participants’ experiences echo a sound evidence base on the positive outcomes of recreation, leisure and sport where lifeskills can be nurtured

Support for this premise is found in Morden and Delamere’s work (2005), who suggest that leisure provides opportunities for youth nurture life skills, and contribute to developing their identity. Further, participation in activities, such as sports, require youth to abide by the boundaries and rules of the game and teaching them of the constructive use of time (Morden & Delamere, 2005).

The previous section outlined some of the social interactions that the research subjects experienced through their participation in recreational activities. Each provided additional support for this notion.

For myself, some of the friendships that were born during my minor sports years continue to be a part of my life today. In particular, one friend was a real inspiration through the time when my mom passed away and through some health care concerns I was faced with.
David discussed his friendship with Allister and how he felt that was important to both himself and Allister and how he felt he had influence in Allister’s life. David shared another experience where friends got together. Speaking about being out with a friend Mason, he said, “we saw someone we knew and we didn’t know what we should do so we decided to play basketball.” He later went on to add, “my other friend lives right there so I called him to come and play and he did.”

For Mary, recreation presented the opportunity to be around large groups of people, which can affect your frame of mind. “Most of the day I was in a negative frame of mind. The people I was around didn’t promote my mood to get any better.” Mary later expressed:

From there I went to an African performance and celebration. I danced for quite a while, like 2-3 hours. There were probably 150 people there and everyone’s sober. Once I got to the celebration I got the chance to release all the negative energy while promoting the intake of positive. After I left I felt rejuvenated, tire but relaxed and happy.

An entry from Scott’s journal stated “I was feeling kind of depressed today cause I wanted to talk to some people and make some new friends.” Scott considered chatting on msn to be one of his main recreational activities and later in the journal he wrote “so far today I have gotten to talk to some good friends” and a few entries later added “I got a new internet girlfriend today so I’m pretty excited.”

Summary

This chapter provided a descriptive overview of each of the participants, and the common categories of meaning emerging from the data; significant parent, small number
of close friends, struggles in schools, role in the home, poor nutrition and eating alone, access to recreation, lack of acceptance, benefits of recreation and increased social network. These categories of meaning were organized into the themes of; close relations, challenges in the home and school, barriers to recreation and reasons to do recreation. These themes reflect elements of resilience theory that were identified in chapter two – the review of literature.

Contextualizing the nine common categories of meaning in relationship to resilience theory produced four higher order themes; close relations, challenges in the home and school, barriers to recreate and reasons to recreate. This is presented in Figure 1. Chapter five will discuss the research data in context of the existing academic literature, highlighting the role of these protective factors. Possible associations between the categories of meaning of role in the home and struggles in school, the trend of at-risk youth gravitating to unstructured versus structured recreational opportunities and the concept of empowerment are also discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study and the implications for future research conclude chapter five.
Figure 1

Organization of Themes

**Common Categories of Meaning**
- Struggles in School
- Role in the Home
- Lack of Proper Nutrition
- Significant Parent or Other Adult
- Small Number of Close Friends
- Barriers to Access
- Increased Social Network
- Strong Desire to Recreate

**Major Themes**
- Close Relations
- Challenges at Home and School
- Barriers to Recreate
- Reasons to do Recreation

**Close Relations**
- Significant Parent or Other Adult
- Small Number of Close Relations

**Challenges at Home and School**
- Struggles in School
- Role in the Home

**Barriers to Recreate**
- Lack of Proper Nutrition
- Barriers to Access
- Lack of Skill

**Reasons to do Recreation**
- Increased Social Network
- Strong Desire to Recreate
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter is organized into four sections with the first being a summary of the study results and a discussion of the protective factors scale, the themes common to relationship and recreation, the protective mechanisms reflecting the themes of close relations, barriers to recreate and reasons to recreate. A discussion of the results in terms of literature is examined in part two, followed limitations of this study in part three. This section concludes with a discussion of implications for practice and future research.

Protective Factors Scales

Participants completed the PFS prior to their participation in the personal interviews and email questionnaires. The PFS is broken down in to ten sub scale areas and mean scores for each participant in each area were calculated (table 2). The mean scores identified that each participant scored high in all of the sub-scale areas. Those scores helped to confirm that the participants were in fact resilient. It had been hoped that the PFS would assist in identifying particular areas of strength and weakness with regard to resilience but since all of the scores were high and above the averages of the comparison tables provided by Witt and Crompton (1996), the PFS questionnaire data were not used beyond this confirmation. The most significant contribution of the PFS was the credibility it provided with the participants. As a tool, the PSF created a clinical setting that was important for the participants as it legitimized the importance of the information they were providing. In addition, administering this tool as the initial stage of the research provided an opportunity to build a relationship with the participants prior
to the interviews and journaling. The increased level of comfort may have contributed to a more open and rich dialogue. The PFS as a measured tool may have been more effective if it was used for pre and post testing with an intervention or if the pre-test was given at different intervals throughout the research process in order to determine levels of resiliency at different periods of time.

Close Relations

From the protective mechanisms identified in the data, we can argue that parental relationships and relationships with another significant adult figured prominently in the resilience of the participants. Research participants in the research discussed their relationships with a significant parent using terms such as hero and best friend and several stated that they knew they would not have survived or thrived as well as they did without the support of that parent.

According to Hultsman and Little (1995), “parenting style is very important in preventing youth from becoming at-risk” (p. 17). Where parents take an active role and provide a more authoritarian household, youth are required to make less decisions—decisions often uninformed and without an idea of consequences—therefore reducing opportunities to risk exposure. McCready (1997) suggested that when youth and parents interact and spend time with each other, they are less likely to experience feelings of rejection and neglect, further reducing risk.

Close association with a parent may also increase a youth’s self-esteem. Where youth have a greater idea of self, they are less likely to associate with groups that engage in risky or deviant behaviours (Bagley, Bertrand, Bolitho, & Mallick, n.d.). These authors
further surmised that positive interactions between parent and youth are important for the development of adult competencies.

A further outcome of close parental relationships is the contribution they make to developing close relationships and to developing trust. In their research, Springer, Wright and McCall (1997) found that the results of positive family relations were relevant for youth developing self-control.

Carbonell, Reinherz and Giaconia (1998) concluded in their study that where strong family and social support is present, adolescents at-risk are less likely to experience emotional problems. They added “the opportunity to discuss difficulties and worries with a receptive family member may make a child or adolescent less likely to find obstacles insurmountable” (p.270). Children who enjoy a good relationship with at least one parental figure can often be protected from many negative outcomes and therefore be more likely to be seen as resilient (Luthar & Zigler, 1991).

All participants in the study identified that in addition to a strong family tie, there was also the presence of another significant adult in their life. All youth need to know they are important and having this additional adult friend, can give a sense of value and worth, and may go a long way to increasing their ability to overcome life’s obstacles and challenges. According to Torjman (2004), “connections through trusting networks and common values enforce positive standards for youth and provide them access to mentors, role models, educational sponsors and job contacts” (p. 10).

Indeed, a mentoring relationship with someone other than a parent or guardian may be more desirable as it broadens the youth’s supportive network (Gilligan, 1999). Gilligan further added that, “this mentoring role in relation to a young person’s interests
and talents can be resilience enhancing” (p. 192). Evidence from this study and in the literature, suggest that the roles played by a parent and other significant adults may have had a powerful impact on the participant’s ability to overcome hardship and attain resilience.

Barriers to Recreate

One of the concerns discussed by the participants was the barrier of financial resources that affected their ability to participate in recreation programs. Although each was able to participate in various programs, the frequency and type varied and each expressed a strong desire to participate more than they did.

In my own case, barriers related to travel to out of town events with a rep hockey team, and at times lack of equipment. For David, it was having the appropriate equipment, which left him with the feeling that he was seen as less than an equal. For Scott and Mary it was the basic funds to cover off registration fees.

The financial barrier expressed by participants is consistent with what literature has described as a problem for at risk youth. The challenge does not exist with just individuals but with the organizations that provide the recreation opportunities (National Children’s Alliance, 2006). According to the position paper Recreation in Middle Childhood, the “ability to offer accessible programming is difficult – there is a lack of resources to add more free programs, while at the same time, free programs are usually always full” (National Children’s Alliance, 2006, p. 7). Because schools are not as open for use as in the past, opportunities for community-based recreation programs to utilize school facilities further restricts access. According to the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) (2001), “children living in families above the low income cut-off
(LICO) were significantly more likely than children below the LICO to have participated in sports with a coach more than once a week” (p. 5). Further, children below the LICO were less likely to have attended a day camp, overnight camp or participate in dance, art, drama, or music lessons. The statistics are even worse for younger children who experience even fewer opportunities to recreate than children living above the LICO (CPRA, 2001). In fact, frequency of participation in recreation is positively related to family income levels (Torjman, 2004).

In a more recent CPRA report (2005), youth and parents from low-income families reported that youth faced many barriers to recreation and identified “costly program fees and equipment, distant program locations, a lack of transportation” (p. 4). The report further suggested that where subsidy programs were available to assist with fees, it was often uncomfortable or cumbersome to follow the procedures to receive this subsidy. Slack (2003) has argued that municipal services have been targeted because of lack of public funds. This has led to the implementation of user fees, which has had an adverse effect for low-income families. Not surprisingly, user fees appear to discourage low-income youths’ participation (CCSD, 2001a; Craig, Cameron, Russell & Beaulieu, 2001a; Hughes & Griffiths, 1992). In a survey by Craig, Craig and Russell (2001), more than 90% of the municipal recreations centres in Canada now charge user fees for some of the aquatics, athletics and art programs.

As mentioned, participants in this study were able to take part in recreation in a limited way, desired to do more but lacked the proper equipment to do so. Families in the lowest income bracket typically make a financial commitment for their children to have the same access to recreational opportunities and services as middle and higher income
families, despite a greater financial burden to do so (CPRA, 2001). It is likely that the families of participants in this study could only afford registration fees and were unable to also purchase the new or appropriate equipment.

According to the Canadian Population Health Initiative (2005), “lower income families may have more challenges than higher-income families in accessing housing and sufficient food” (p. 6). Moreover, because low-income families struggle to meet their daily needs, they have far fewer discretionary resources to spend on activities contributing to healthy development of their children, and this includes recreation (CPRA, 2001). Where families have lower income, they are also more likely to live in areas of crowding and without ready access to parks and safe playgrounds, and are likely to experience problems with transportation, (Craig, Cameron, Russell & Beaulieu, 2001b; Hanvey, 2001). These conditions contribute to the notion that at-risk youth have reduced access to recreation. In this regard, income clearly determines opportunity (Craig, et al., 2001b).

*Reasons to do Recreation*

Participants in this research indicated that friendships were very important to them but that each had only a few close relationships. Their belief was that recreation was a good vessel for promoting and increasing their own social network. Their voices echo Gilligan’s (1999), who noted that recreation is crucial for youth in care as it introduces them to adults and young people outside the care system. These new social relationships can help with self-esteem and integration into the local community.

Donnelly and Coakley (2002) suggested that through recreation, at risk youth can learn intra-personal and inter-personal skills. It is these skills that assist and encourage at
risk youth to develop more social relationships, and engage as a community member "beyond their family boundaries" (p. 6). Such positive consequences arise when youth are able to participate in environments that are safe. When this is the case, youth are less likely to withdraw from social situations. Safe environments, such as recreation centre where conditions are supervised and there is little or no fear to personal safety, enhance the likelihood that at risk youth will stay involved and cultivate more connections with peers, which can translate to more friendships.

Increasing social networks can also be tied to anti-social behaviour. Where at risk youth demonstrate this type of behaviour, they are less likely to make solid connections with peers. According to Morris, Sallybanks, Willis and Makkai (2003), "sport and physical activity programs provide an effective vehicle through which personal and social development in young people can be positively affected" (p. 1), markedly reducing incidence of anti-social behaviour (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002). Fostering relationships and attachments among youth and adults can be achieved through youth-directed recreation programs that are supervised by caring leaders, and where peer networks are strengthened (Ellis & Caldwell, 2001).

Youth require a sense of belonging and a feeling that someone cares for them. When this is absent, youth are more likely to take part in risky behaviours, such as joining gangs, in order to find the feeling of being accepted (McCready, 1997). Among B.C. youth, "having friends with healthy attitudes towards risky behaviours" is one of the most potent protective factors (McCready Centre Society, 2006, p.7). Clearly, there is a strong connection with the experience of participants in this research and what other researchers have found to be consistent with developing resilience in at risk youth.
The participants of this study indicated that they had a desire to take part in recreation programs. Further, each was participating but wished they could do more. This desire to recreate was founded on the idea that there were many health and social benefits to increased involvement. In addition, participation provided distraction from the challenges of life, alleviated boredom and was fun. These reasons are confirmed in the literature.

It is well documented that play is fundamental to healthy growth and development, and recreation provides critical opportunities and experiences for play. In fact, the value of recreation was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly almost two decades ago as a means to ensure the well-being and healthy development of children (National Children’s Alliance, 2006).

Lack of social and leisure skills can lead adolescents to boredom because of their perception that opportunities for involvement are limited. When at risk youth become bored, there is an increased risk of drug use and other unacceptable behaviours (McCready, 1997).

The desire to recreate is a key element on the road to resilience for the participants of this study. Youth’s interest in recreational, sport and cultural programs that could contribute life skills and social development must not be ignored.

*Summary of Protective Mechanisms and Recreation*

The purpose of this research was to explore the life experiences, including recreational experiences, of resilient ‘at risk’ youth to better understand what factors may have contributed to their facility to withstand adverse life events. The protective
mechanisms identified in the data and discussed earlier in this section were found to be key indicators of resilience in at risk youth.

Although frequently dismissed as activities done in one’s leisure time, it is clear that recreation contributes to positive youth development and can minimize risk factors that children face (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Saskatchewan Municipal Government, n.d.). The British Columbia Ministry of Children and Families’ (MCF) policy acknowledges its role in responsible child development - to provide youth in their care with opportunities to learn, work and play. Further, MCF needs to support opportunities for youth to take part in recreation and that these services should be, where possible, delivered by community service organizations (Miller, 2000). “Children are entitled to grow to adulthood in a nurturing family and community environment, with an adequate standard of living to support their full development” (Child and Youth Officer of B.C., 2006, p. 1). Far from a “frill”, recreation provides for optimal development for at risk youth and can serve as a bridge connecting them and their community. For example, the Laidlaw Foundation report on Youth as Decision Markers states that “recreation provides alternative forms of learning for youth and opportunities for engagement, that can ultimately be used to teach skills that promote civic engagement” (p. 7) and become responsible community members.

To grow and survive, young people need positive relationships and caring environments. Factors such as family, significant adults and friends can offset risks and reduce the likelihood that youth will suffer depression or engage in substance abuse (Luthar & Ziglar, 1991; McCrea Centre Society, 2006).
The 40 Developmental Assets for Middle Childhood, identified by the Search Institute, list several of the protective mechanisms found in this research. Family support, other adult and adult role models and positive peer influence closely resemble the protective mechanisms of significant parent, other significant adult and increased social network. The National Children’s Alliance paper on Recreation in Middle Childhood (2006) acknowledges that organizations such as the YMCA are now integrating these protective mechanisms into their programming.

The latter report also cites the work of Bronfenbrenner, suggesting that quality recreation programming should include the principles of friendship development and a role for a caring adult. Relationship-based programming places priority on the ability to build and solidify healthy relationships between participants and the leaders.

Limitations and Future Research

As mentioned in the opening chapter, the goal of this research is trustworthiness or believability and not transferability, therefore the impact of limitations on this study is lessened. This study does have certain limitations that may be addressed with future research. A limitation to this study concerned the types of recreation that each participant engaged in or wished to engage in were not specifically examined. The data suggested that these resilient at-risk youth tended to gravitate to individual pursuits, rather than team pursuits. It would be important to investigate the types of recreational activities that at-risk youth feel most comfortable participating in – sport, physical activity, cultural, musical etc. Our understanding of the nature of protective factors would be advanced by a more thorough investigation of the recreation experience. For example, does the nature and purpose of the recreation experience matter if youth can find a sense of self-worth,
belonging, and competence in it? Are the benefits the same for those who join the pick up
game at the playground, sit at the piano stool or master playstation?

The sample size of the study was a limitation. Because of the small number of
participants, it is unclear whether the findings identified would be transferable to other
groups of at risk youth. The participants were all residents of Victoria, British Columbia.
A more varied sample representing diverse cultures and communities of at-risk youth is
necessary to glean greater detail and additional information. In addition, the subjects were
predominantly male, with only one female participant. Although it was clear in this study
that patterns were similar between the male and female participants, further study might
reveal more nuanced gender differences which have been identified in sporting pursuits
(Gibbons, Wharf Higgins, Gaul, & Van Gyn, 1999).

Using myself as a research participant was another limitation. The experiences I
brought to the research guided the inquiry, and were integral to interpretation of the data.
A researcher independent from the study might interpret the value of the lived
experiences in an entirely different manner. However, a researcher who has not
experienced life as an at risk youth will not have an insider’s view and therefore, will not
likely be treated by the research participants with the same level of trust or with the same
level of respect as an insider to insider.

A final limitation was that the data were collected retrospectively. The
participants were interviewed in their late teens and adulthood and asked to recall
difficult and emotional information from their distant past. A study focused on collecting
data during the time the participants are at-risk and following them until resilience is
established will be illuminating how life choices, chances and circumstances influence
the dynamic nature of resilience. For example, this study focused on participants who had been deemed to be resilient for a period of more than six months. During the data collection period, it was identified that resilience for these subjects was not a static state but rather that each would move in and out of resilience depending on events that were occurring in their lives. While this reflects concerns identified in the literature (Pianta & Walsh, 1998), this presented a challenge when understanding the feelings and emotions of the participants at any given point of time.

Understanding the limitations and implications described, a direction for further research on this subject would include a larger study that examines the same research question. With an increased number of participants who are followed in a more longitudinal study, a deeper understanding of the challenges faced, identification of obstacles that prevent or limit participation and identification of concepts that foster resilience would be achieved. A larger scale study that included more participants from several geographical areas, with equal representation by gender could then lead to specific recommendations for recreation that meets the needs of at-risk youth and their families.

This study looked only at one individual per family. A further investigation into this topic might be well served to expand to include siblings within a family. In each of the cases reviewed in this study, participants had siblings. The experiences of those siblings could be considerably different. Further research would examine this and provide more rich detail.

A further area of study might include focus group work. Since participants desire stronger relationships, the need to feel accepted and attachment to an adult role model, a
study that includes multiple meetings might develop stronger trust and bond with the researcher, elicit deeper discussion and provide each participant the opportunity to build closer ties with others who have similar struggles.

Additional work in this area might include the use of the PFS as a tool for engaging the youth as researchers. By including the participants, there may be increased richness of data through the feeling of power in their collective voices and in the shared realities of the group.

A final area for future research would be to investigate and examine participants' self-esteem and self-efficacy levels, as well as other dimensions of health and health behaviours, particularly regarding recreation participation and its relationship to resilience. A mixed method design integrating quantitative and qualitative measures would serve to create a more complete profile of at risk youth and the factors contributing to resilience (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

Implications for Practice

It is quite clear from the findings and discussion that recreation can foster resilience in at-risk youth. As the literature discussed earlier in this section it, is important that adjustments be made within recreation programs to meet the needs of this group.

Local recreation, community and not-for-profit groups would better serve this segment of the population by implementing specific programming changes. As indicated by the findings, at-risk youth seek programs that a small leader to participant ratio and, as building mentoring relationships with adults is important, leaders should be adults and be
prepared to invest time to develop positive relationships and serve as appropriate role models.

Further, it is increasingly important that programs become more accessible to at-risk youth. Financial barriers appear to be prevalent and continue to be an obstacle preventing participation. It is not only the cost of the program registration that deters participation but also the ancillary costs for items such as equipment and clothing. It was suggested that supplying the identical equipment to all participants and not just those lacking what is necessary would increase the level of acceptance for the at-risk youth by decreasing the stigma of using sub-par equipment and having them stand out to the rest of the group. An example of this was given David who suggested he felt looked down upon when he used supplied floor hockey sticks within a program. "I didn't have my own stick and had to use the plastic floor hockey stick that was supplied," shared David. "Everyone else had good sticks with wooden shafts and plastic blades. They could shoot better and I felt everyone thought I was no good so I didn't want to come back."

Organizations such as Steve Nash Foundation (www.stevenash.org) and KidSport (www.sport.bc.ca/Content/KidSport/%20KidSport%20Main.asp) work to alleviate such economic burdens for low-income families, but are dependant on fundraising to support their work. As well, municipal recreation subsidy policies serve to minimize registration fees, but stop short of outfitting patrons with the necessary equipment and clothing to participate.

Tirone (2003-2004) suggests that low income and poverty require families to spend monies on essential survival needs, and due to this relative poverty are unable to access recreation outside their own community. To participate in recreation or leisure
programs low income families require assistance from others. Community development approaches such as lobbying government, grant writing or collaborating with churches or other funding agencies to gain financial support, is in the purview of recreation professionals in order to provide opportunities that are affordable, accessible and appropriate to their more vulnerable constituents. At the very least, service providers need to regularly re-examine their program delivery, and revisit their policies concerning equity of access. Others argue that it is time to resurrect the principle of access to recreation as a citizen’s social right: “can we talk about quality of life in our cities without fair access to sports and recreation? Isn’t this access a social right and a city’s responsibility? Just asking these questions sets us on the path to finding the answers” (Hanvey, 2002, p. 27). With our public education and health care systems founded on the principle of universal access, this research makes a case for broadening that perspective to sport and recreation. Providing access to programs for all youth without charging membership or user fees and where all appropriate equipment is supplied, will encourage increased participation from all groups and will aid greatly in the positive development of youth.

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study provides an overview of the lives of five resilient at risk youth. The rich data collected is only an initial step in understanding their experience but it has shown that protective mechanisms play a key role in facilitating resilience for these youths.

The participants expressed a strong desire to participate in recreation programs and the literature confirms their voices that such experiences can substantially enhance
positive outcomes for at risk youth. It is imperative that recreation programmers take the
time to understand the desires and needs of at risk youth, along with the concepts and
conditions that assist with creating resilience. In doing so, recreation programs can be
designed and operated so that they create a context for fostering resilient youth.

This study has provided an initial understanding of the experiences of at risk youth in the Greater Victoria area. Interpreting the participants' experiences through a resilience lens contributed to the growing evidence of the value of recreation as a source of protective factors. Further research is warranted in order to develop a deeper understanding of the experience and to provide more specific implications for both practice and theory.

*Personal Reflection*

As a participant in the research, it was interesting to see the emergence of the four common themes, based on the nine common categories of meaning. As a person who grew up as an at risk youth, I had given little thought prior to embarking on this research as to the reasons that may have contributed to my own resilience. In retrospect, I can identify with the themes that emerged. The close relationships that I shared with my mom, as well as coaches and leaders from the various sport and community organizations to which I belonged, were significant and provided stability and safety for me. I faced challenges in the home much different than those of my friends. As a younger child and teen, I took on a role that was traditionally that of a father or husband. I had responsibilities for making repairs around the home, and at age 12 when my mom became ill, I became the primary caregiver. This role involved driving her to the hospital on many occasions prior to holding a driver's license and additional household chores.
such as banking, bill paying, grocery shopping and sorting and administering medications. In addition, the sacrifices made by my mom and the financial contributions from others, removed many of the barriers I could have faced in participating in recreation programs. Examples of this sacrifice and contributions from others included my mom working additional hours to earn money to cover registration and equipment costs, her withdrawing from her own recreational interests so that their were funds available for me to participate, clipping coupons from newspapers and changing our dinner menu to save money and family friends and coaches “sponsor” me to go away on team trips and paying registration fees. The ability to participate allowed me the opportunity to grow and thrive, and created an environment of inclusion with the kids I viewed as “normal”. After completing this research, I am certain that because of the acceptance I received through sport and the friendships that developed as a result, I had many positive protective mechanisms that aided in my own resilience and fueled my desire to recreate. My hope is that this research opens doors for discussion and opportunities to share into the lives of others. The insights have been meaningful for me and I hope they are valued by the other participants and as such, offer meaningful insights for policy makers.
REFERENCES


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Appendix A

Volunteers Needed

To participate in University of Victoria research project

We are interested in learning about your current day-to-day experiences and previous life experiences at home, school and work.

You qualify to participate in this study if you have demonstrated success in your life (e.g., staying in school, being employed, having good relationships with family/friends, no trouble with police) while having faced significant life challenges (poverty, abuse, in trouble a school/home or with police, substance abuse or family divorce).

If you agree, your participation will include the completion of a questionnaire, journaling, taking photographs and participation either in focus groups or interviews.

If you have questions, please contact the researcher, Pete Lewis at 721-8725 or the supervisor Dr. Joan Wharf Higgins 721-6601.

To sign up, please fill your name, phone number and email below and you will be contacted with more information.

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Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, RESEARCH
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Participant Consent Form

Factors Fostering Resilience in At-Risk Youth

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled Factors Fostering Resilience in At-Risk Youth that is being conducted by Pete Lewis. Pete Lewis is a graduate student in the department of Physical Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by telephone at 250.721.8725 or by email at plewis30@uvic.ca. Pete was an employee with Youth for Christ during the years 1996 – 2000.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Sport and Exercise Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Joan Wharf Higgins. You may contact my supervisor at 250.721.6601 or by email at jwharfhi@uvic.ca.

The purpose of this study is to examine the life experiences of resilient ‘at risk’ youth, to better understand what factors may contribute to increasing resilience. A further purpose is to determine whether recreation can assist in creating and fostering these factors. The objectives of this study are:

3. To analyze the life history of several resilient ‘at risk’ youth to determine what factors may have aided in developing resilience.
4. To analyze their current history to identify factors that may be aiding or assisting in maintaining and increasing resilience.
5. To determine if these protective factors are available in current recreation programming.

Research of this type is important because it will investigate the factors that have assisted youth in overcoming difficulties in their lives. Identification of these positive factors may assist other youth in being successful as well as provide Recreation Programmers with a tool to assist them in programming for at risk youth and other marginalized youth.

You have been selected to participate in this study because you were among the first three persons to contact Pete Lewis after seeing the poster displayed at Youth for Christ Victoria. You qualify to participate in this study because you have demonstrated success in your life while having faced significant life challenges (poverty, abuse, in trouble a school/home or with police, substance abuse or family divorce).

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation may take up to eight hours and will include the completion of a questionnaire, journaling, taking photographs and participation either in focus groups or interviews.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the time it takes to participate in the focus groups/interviews, journaling, completing the questionnaire and taking photographs.

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research. When reflecting on your past experiences, you may become anxious or sad about your life circumstances. To deal with these risks, referrals to counselors specializing in youth risk issues (abuse, substance use, abandonment) will be made should you become anxious or emotionally disturbed through interviews or journaling. In speaking about your experiences, it may be possible that you discuss a time in your life or circumstances that may relate to an issue that is required to be reported under the law, such as a parent physically harming.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the identification and discussion of the factors that have assisted you in this resilience will be discussed with you to encourage your success.
An Inventory of Protective Factors for Recreation Programmers may be an outcome of this research that will be an asset in programming for at-risk youth and for society in general.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, we would like to use the information provided that has been provided to us to that point. Your decision to withdraw will not affect your status with Youth for Christ or access to programs.

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, prior to each focus group or interview, I will review with you the Letter of Informed Consent, emphasizing that participation is voluntary and withdrawal for any reason is acceptable. At that time I will request your verbal consent to continue.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, you will not be identified as a participant in this study in any way. You will be assigned a code number to which all of your comments will be matched. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the consent forms, the full list of participants and assigned codes. Transcripts of the focus group/interview sessions will not include any names. No true names will appear in any written report. Audio tapes will be erased following transcription. You will be given the opportunity to review transcripts and minutes, and change anything that you feel identifies yourself. If you take part in a focus group, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed since the others in the focus group will hear what you say. We ask everyone not to repeat what others say outside of the focus group; however you should know that other group members may know who you are and will hear what you say. Even though your name will not be used in any discussions outside the focus group, please understand that within the group, you will not remain anonymous.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by will be protected by storing all of the focus group/interview, questionnaire and photos securely in a locked room with no identifying information. Following the collection of data, only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the information, which will be stored in the researchers’ office at the University of Victoria. In final reports, the information collected will be grouped together and there will be no discussion or reporting of the findings about a single person.

If you choose to leave the research project, you will be asked for permission to use your data up to that point. If agreed, we will ask you for written approval and if you do not agree, your data will be destroyed.

Data from this study will be disposed of five years following the completion of the project by shredding focus group/interview transcripts/notes and photos and deleting text/analysis files from computer hard drives, CD’s and disks.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: a completed thesis document presented to the graduate committee and may be presented to scholarly journals for publication or conferences.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher or supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4362).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant  Signature  Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.
Appendix C

Pre-Program/Post-Test Version (40 Item Scale)

For each statement below, please indicate how much you disagree or agree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Please circle one answer for each statement.

| Example: |
| I am interested in school ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |

<p>| 1) I know a lot of safe places to play ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 2) There are a lot of adults who are interested in me ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 3) I am able to get along with friends ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 4) I must stay out of trouble ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 5) I respect authority figures ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 6) I am creative ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 7) I can succeed in life ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 8) I try to treat other children with respect ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 9) I try to solve problems in a positive manner ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 10) My desire to keep playing/doing (name activity) ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 11) I know a lot of activities in my community ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 12) I can turn to adults for help ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 13) There are other children who like me ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 14) I must obey the rules ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 15) I respect adults ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 16) I can set goals ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 17) It is important for me to always do my best ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 18) Teamwork is important ... |
| SD | D | N | A | SA |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19) I try to control my anger</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) I want to improve my (name activity) skills</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) I am interested in participating in programs in my community</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) There are adults who will look out for me</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23) I am an O.K. person</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24) I will be punished if I break the rules</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25) I respect people in charge</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26) I can deal with problems that might come up in the future</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27) It is important for me to do well at school</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28) Cooperation is important</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29) I try to listen to the opinions of others</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30) I am interested in (name activity)</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31) I am interested in programs that take place after school</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32) Adults are willing to help me with my problems</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33) I am wanted by the people around me</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34) I must follow the rules if I want to participate</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35) I respect children who stay out of trouble</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36) I like to try new things</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37) It is important for me to stay in school</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38) All players need to chance to play</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39) I can settle arguments without fighting</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40) I like (name activity)</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>