Relationships and Development of the Resilient Adolescent Female:

A Qualitative Exploration

by

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ABSTRACT

Developmental psychology long established that some adolescents are at greater risk for negative developmental outcomes such as psychopathology and/or problem behaviors. The largely quantitative body of research identified risk and protective factors which may moderate and/or mediate adolescent development. The characteristics and nature of adolescent relationships may increase risk or protection based in part, on the perceptions the adolescent holds towards these relationships.

This study was a qualitative exploration of six resilient adolescent females' relationships. Open interview technique was used to explore the participants' perceptions and possible attributed meaning to self, parental, peer, romantic, school and community relationships. Thematic analysis revealed themes related to self and parental relationships were most meaningful.

Results are discussed as they related to the participant's development especially areas such as self-awareness, identity development, moral development and stress/coping. Parental themes centered on parenting style, attachment and reciprocal socialization. Implications and suggestions for future research are offered.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Current research on adolescents deemed at risk for the development and/or reoccurrence of problem behaviors has redirected its focus from causative agents towards understanding the factors in youths' lives which promote more positive behavioral outcomes. The majority of youth meet the demands of family and society to become reasonably well adjusted, law abiding citizens. However, some adolescents, for a variety of reasons, seem predisposed to experience their rockiest years as they find their way from childhood to adulthood. Of those youth, some are disadvantaged due to genetic, personal, and familial factors that make the developmental journey even more challenging. These youth are often described as "at-risk". They are vulnerable to developing psychopathology, practicing unhealthy lifestyle choices, and/or engaging in problem behavior.

In previous years, research has focused on the vulnerability of adolescents and the identification of factors that could negatively influence their development (Achenbach, 1990). Factors such as adolescents' perceptions and reaction to life-events could increase stress levels and move them to a more vulnerable position. Adolescents' reactions to stress might affect their development of competence in dealing with events and influence their sense of connectedness to others in varying ways specific to their psychological makeup (D'Imperio, Dubow, & Ippolito, 2000; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). The family, community and society would also be influential in shaping adolescents' perception of stress in a given situation.

Currently, researchers are attempting to identify what factors are necessary in adolescents' lives in order to foster resilience during their development. They have found that the adolescents' relationships with family, community and society play a vital role (Pollard, Hawkins, & Arthur, 1999; Smokowski, Reynolds, & Bezruczko, 1999). As well, they are exploring the existence of critical pathways and important combinations of these factors in their attempts to increase understanding of operating processes and mechanisms. Further identification of these and other so-called "protective factors" may enable youth workers and health care professionals to promote resilience in "at-risk" youth.

One area of interest in the protective realm concerns not only adolescent relationships but also connectedness. Namely, 'at risk' adolescents who feel connected to others and who maintain supportive relationships may be more resilient against risk factors than other vulnerable youth (Laible, Carlo, & Raffaelli, 2000; Lohman & Jarvis, 2000). Close supportive relationships may provide protection against problem behaviors and dysfunctional development. Further, supportive relationships may modify or mediate the way in which an individual responds to stressors (Jessor, VanDenBos, Vanderryn, Costa, & Turbin, 1995; Kazdin, 1993).

Though many studies (Baldwin et al., 1993; Laible et al, 2000; Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993; Roff, 1992) have been conducted in an effort to examine both risk factors and protective factors in adolescent development, the vast majority have done so using predominantly quantitative methodologies. In addition, the studies (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000; Pollard et al., 1999) have largely ignored the critical component of individual

perception that is best explored through qualitative research. The current study hopes to qualitatively explore some aspects of how protective factors, specifically relationships and connectedness, promote resilience in "at risk" adolescent females. The study, in particular, seeks to present adolescents' perceptions of some of their significant relationships in order to serve as a complimentary adjunct to current quantitative findings.

Adolescent girls have been chosen for this study because researchers indicate that females are persistently misrepresented or absent from research in this area (Artz, 1998; Gilligan, 1982; Leadbeater & Way, 1996). It is also important for the researcher to gain insight into the female adolescents' perception of support within their relationships, which may differ, from their male peers (Allen, Abel, & Leadbeater, 1990). How female adolescents describe their relationships and the meaning they attach to these relationships may be key in understanding the mechanisms of protection (Baldwin et al, 1993; Hauser, 1999; Smokowski, et al., 1999; Way & Gillman, 2000).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Developmental Psychology

Developmental psychologists have investigated factors which appear to place adolescents in a vulnerable position for the development of anti-social, problem or even criminal behaviors (Achenbach, 1982; Cicchetti, 1984; Garmezy, 1974; Meyer, 1957; Robbins, 1966; Rutter, 1983). Risk factors were identified as those attributes, situations, and conditions which increased the chances of negative developmental outcomes.

Several factors were determined at the biological, psychological, familial, and societal levels. Researchers recognized that there was a biological predisposition for mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and depression (O'Dougherty & Wright, 1990; Sameroff & Seifer, 1990). As such, adolescents from families with a history of mental illness would be more likely to develop mental illness in adulthood. Psychological factors, including, poor attachment, low self-esteem, lack of religious identity, poor peer relationships, and negative attitudes are also significant in the development of the adolescent (Basic Behavioral Science Task Force of the National Advisory Mental Health Council, 1996; Engle, Castle, & Menon, 1996; Peterson & Moran, 1988). Familial factors include the incidence and frequency of domestic violence, family break up, predominantly negative parenting style, and family history of mental illness (Grizenko & Pawliuk, 1994; Mangham, Reid, & Stewart, 1996; Marsh, Lefley, Evan-Rhodes, Ansell, Doerbazbach, LaBarbera, & Paluzzi, 1996; Rutter, 1995). Societal factors that may negatively influence adolescents may include: exposure to negative role models and

violence, lack of a sense of school connectedness, low socioeconomic conditions, high population density, and a lack of community based programs (Baldwin et al., 1993; Basic Behavioral Science Task Force of the National Advisory Mental Health Council, 1996; Gilgun, 1996).

Once researchers identified risk factors, they began to change the direction of their investigations (D'Imperio et al., 2000; Jackson, Born, & Jacob, 1997; Pollard et al., 1999; Radke-Yarrow, & Brown, 1993; Rutter, 1990). Interest shifted to exploring factors which might protect individuals from developing psychopathology and unhealthy lifestyle practices, and displaying problem behavior. Protective factors were thought to act as inocullants against the effects of risk factors, and were catalysts to the development of resilient individuals.

A simplistic description of the resilient person is "one who springs back" (Jacelon, 1997, p. 123). Identification of such factors and the mechanisms and processes by which these factors exert their protective function on the resilient individual are imperative for the development and implementation of programs for "at-risk" adolescents.

Stress

While several factors are characteristic of "at-risk" youth, these factors do not necessitate psychopathology or delinquency. It remains unclear why adolescents raised in similar environments and exposed to similar events react in different ways. An examination of individual responses to stressors may help to provide some explanations.

A stressor can be amorphous, therefore difficult to pinpoint, or concrete, such as a parent's death, and can act directly and overtly, or indirectly and covertly (D'Imperio et

al., 2000; Lohman & Jarvis, 2000). It is even possible for the stressor to simultaneously assume multiple modes of expression both internally and externally (Engle et al., 1996, Jacelon, 1997; Jessor et al., 1995). Stressors may be subject to the influences of the individual's interpretation which may change across time, place, person, and situation (Hauser, 1999; Smokowski et al., 1999). Essentially, the stressor is only a stressor if the individual consciously or subconsciously perceives it to be one. The key to the degree of influence of the stressor often has more to do with the meaning an individual attributes to the stressor than the stressor itself (Vaillant, 1993). In addition, research has demonstrated that over time, cumulative daily hassles are more likely to impact the individual's ability to effectively cope with stress than most major life events (D'Imperio, et al., 2000; Lohman & Jarvis, 2000; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Rutter, 1994).

Achenbach (1990) identified 10 correlated categories that could have potential positive or negative influence in the mediation or moderation of responses to stress by the individual. The categories are not exhaustive and research does not clearly indicate whether one category has greater weight in determining success than another. It is likely that such mediators and moderators work in various combinations and at times in opposition to one another (Engle et al., 1996; Jessor et al., 1995; Pollard et al., 1999; Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993). The categories are listed randomly:

1. Positive/negative life experience(s)
2. Physical health – past and present
3. Level of social skills
4. Stability/flexibility and average level of self-esteem
5. Prosocial/antisocial behavior

6. Intelligence
7. Peer relations
8. Family structure and relations
9. Temperament
10. Neighborhood/community/societal milieu

Many of the variables seem to follow a continuum along a positive/negative polarity scheme. The negative closely relate to increased vulnerability, whereas, the positive are more likely to encourage protection (Engle et al., 1996; Jessor et al., 1995). For example, distant family relations and insecure attachment are more consistently seen in vulnerable individuals (Rosenstein & Horowitz, 1996); whereas, close supportive family relationships are found to be protective in at risk adolescents (Laible et al., 2000; Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993).

Another crucial point to acknowledge is the labile and sometimes unpredictable nature of the stressors operating within each variable. A stressor can change the nature of its influence based on the strength or weakness of other variables which may happen to be dominant at any given time (Vaillant, 1993).

Much of the research regarding resilience has been conducted using quantitative methods (Grizenko & Pawliuk, 1994; Hauser, 1999; Jackson et al., 1997; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Rutter, 1994; Smokowski et al., 1999). Consequently, there are few sources that consider the impact of a stressor, or the experience of stressful situations from the perspective of the individual who experiences them. Many sources of relevant literature address stress as if it was some internal or external force imposed upon the individual (D'Imperio et al., 2000; Lohman & Jarvis, 2000; Pollard et al., 1999). However, the

influence of the stressor is contingent on its perceived importance from the perspective of the experiencing individual (Hauser, 1999; Nabors, Reynolds, & Weist, 2000; Smokowski et al., 1999). The meaning that the individual attributes to any given stressor, factor or situation will determine its power or degree of influence in that individual's life. Therefore, an event that one individual perceives to be stressful may not be perceived negatively by another individual (Bandura, 1982; Galotti & Kozberg, 1996; Jackson et al., 1997; Vaillant, 1993).

D'Imperio, Dubow and Ippolito (2000) compared resilient with stress-affected adolescents who were categorized into high or low stress and high or low competence cohort groups. Analysis of the battery of stress and competence measures revealed that many participants reported substantial numbers of stressful life events as well as the chronic environmental stressors of life in an impoverished or high crime neighborhood. However, contrary to expectation, resilient adolescents did not report higher levels of previously identified protective measures than did their stress affected peers. For this group of 185 adolescents, the measures did not reflect the process of what occurs in the resilient individual. What appears to be lacking from the data is the perception the individual holds of his/her capabilities. It is unclear if the identified stressor had any effect at all on the individual, since only its presence has been established. Might detrimental effects be attributed to an as yet unidentified stressor? Such confounding components typically reside outside the domain of the quantitative analysis, but are readily apparent during more qualitative investigations.

Lohman and Jarvis (2000) considered perception as integral to the effects of stressors on coping strategies and psychological health. Using a smaller sample size

(n=42), the researchers examined congruence between adolescent and parental report on the adolescent levels of stress and coping strategies. A positive correlation between level of congruence between adolescent and parental reports on the adolescent and family cohesion was evidenced. Further, it was demonstrated that more adaptive adolescent coping was fostered in the cohesive family environment.

Adolescents in the Lohman and Jarvis (2000) study reported school and family concerns as being the most important stressors. Parental congruence was high. Adolescents reported that they more frequently used a strategy labeled *acceptance coping* which the researchers defined as "removing one's self psychologically from the situation, cognitively redefining the situation or event, and accepting the situation or event as it is" (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000, p. 18). The parents reported that their children used more active coping strategies. *Active coping* includes behaviors such as "strategizing alternatives and utilizing instrumental social supports" (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000, p. 18). Finally, and interestingly, while parents were able to correctly match at least three of the stressors identified as significant to their adolescent, none correctly identified the most significant as reported by their adolescent.

Vulnerability and Risk Factors

During the 1960's developmentalists organized theories and empirical evidence relating to normal development; however, researchers soon began to investigate psychopathologies occurring particularly during the formative years (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Chess & Thomas, 1984). Theoreticians and researchers began to examine concurrent aspects of development, such as social development, emotional

development, moral development, self-development, and social cognition. It became apparent that the clinicians and researchers had to work integratively and to use knowledge gathered from other disciplines to fully understand and appreciate the process of psychological development.

The neurosciences, psychobiology, behavioral, and molecular genetics offered insights for an integrative view of developmental psychopathology (Valliant, 1993). At that time, however, thinking was driven more by the medical model of disease, and the scientific need to deconstruct phenomena in the effort to understand causality (Rutter, 1994). Preliminary research, evolving theories and subsequent interventions focused on the potential for negative outcomes from populations deemed to be at risk in one or more of the physical, cognitive, and emotional developmental domains (Rutter, 1994).

More recently, Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) defined vulnerability as the individual's predisposition "to develop varied forms of psychopathology or behavioral ineffectiveness" or "susceptibility to negative developmental outcomes that can occur under high-risk conditions" (p. 2). Investigations then concentrated on and continue to focus on trait identification (Beardslee & Podororefsy, 1988; Garmezy, 1993), risk situations (Dohrenwend et al., 1992), dysfunctional support systems (Laursen, 1995; Rutter, 1985; Mangham, Reid, & Stewart, 1996), and faulty genetic combinations (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). Once such factors or traits were identified, treatment regimes were tested in attempts to rectify the weak links in normal, successful adolescent development (Van Slyck, Stern, & Zak-Place, 1996).

The exact mechanism, by which these factors may influence any given person, and why a specific factor may influence any specific person and not the next, has yet to

be fully understood. Such complete understanding may be an unattainable goal, but its pursuit will surely provide knowledge and guidance to those working in the field.

Data resulting from a 10-year longitudinal study conducted by Radke-Yarrow and Brown (1993) illuminated contrasting profiles in resilient and troubled and/or vulnerable adolescents. Profiles were constructed from systematically obtained measures over the ten-year period to produce standard case studies on 18 resilient and 26 troubled adolescent participants. "All children in the study were at risk for affective illness in both parents and a highly chaotic and disturbed family life" (Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993. p. 581). A control group comprised of well children of well parents was used as a comparison.

Radke-Yarrow and Brown (1993) found few differences between the control and the resilient adolescents. However, the troubled adolescents as a group scored lower on IQ scales, were more often shy, had poor academic achievement, and had a history of poor peer relationships. Further, they received fewer positive reactions from teachers, were less likely to be favored by their parents, and exhibited more negative self-perceptions than their resilient counterparts. The study included an assessment of coping strategies and found that the troubled participants tended to use somatization more frequently than the other two groups, yet they too reported use of a vast array of coping methods (Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993).

Resilience and Protective Factors

An examination of vulnerability and risk factors, as well as problem behaviors, is only useful in so far as it lends insight into eventual prevention and treatment of these

factors. With this in mind, research naturally moved in the direction of identifying and characterizing the resilient individual as well as the factors in an adolescent's life which might serve a protective function.

Jacelon's (1997) simple definition of a resilient individual as "a person who bounces back" (p. 123) seems incomplete. Block & Block (1973) offered a more complete and somewhat cumbersome definition:

> To be generally resourceful, to show more "umveg" solutions when faced with a barrier, to be able to maintain integrated performance under stress, to be able to process simultaneously two or more competing stimuli, to be able to resist sets or illusions, to be able to both 'regress in the service of the ego' and when task requirements favor such a form of adaptation and, conversely, to be able to become adaptively obsessive and even compulsive under certain other environmental presses (p. 5).

However, such a definition does little to clarify emerging concepts or to standardize notions across differing disciplines.

More recently, Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990) define resilience as "the process of, or capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances" (p. 426). D'Imperio, Dubow and Ippolito (2000) proposed two criteria for determining resilience; stressor exposure and competence. Despite the commonalties evinced by these definitions, the resilient individual only exists as an ideal counterpart to his or her more troubled, less successful counterparts.

Nonetheless, the scientific and clinical communities began to examine those factors which would lend protective measures to the at-risk individual, with the goal of

promoting, correcting, or circumventing risk (Grizenko & Pawliuk, 1994; Luthar, 1991; Pollard et al., 1999; Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993). Once again efforts were directed at identifying traits and situations which might protect the individual from negative outcomes (Pollard et al., 1999; Rosenstein & Horowitz, 1996).

Several researchers have demonstrated that the strength and quality of an adolescent's relationships are strongly predictive of resilience. Grizenko and Pawliuk (1994) conducted a study which compared 50 "disordered" and 50 control pre-adolescents as a means of assessing and identifying risk and protective factors. Significant risk factors included learning difficulties, hyperactivity, perinatal complications and violence in the home. The ability to express feelings and a good relationship with grandparents were found to be significantly protective with this group.

A more recent study conducted by Pollard, Hawkins and Arthur (1999) sought to explore the relationships between self-reported exposure to a set of risk and protective factors with behavioral outcomes. Though the survey instrument measured 20 risk constructs it only measured eight protective constructs. Outcomes were limited to violent and nonviolent delinquent activity, academic achievement, and substance use.

The researchers (Pollard et al., 1999) found that increased levels of risk exposure were clearly associated with increased prevalence of all negative behavioral outcomes. The results for protection were less consistent across the outcome behaviors. While protective factors were negatively related to alcohol and marijuana use, they were much less reliably related to the other outcomes. Therefore, Pollard et al (1999) concluded, "the effects of protection are different at different levels of risk" (p. 151). As with many of

the quantitative explorations, the answers to the questions of "why?" and "how?" remain elusive.

The hope of offering support and services that are preventative rather than reactionary lies with understanding how these adolescents were able to shift the trajectory of development from troubled to resilient. By examining the factors and traits of resilient individuals, researchers and clinicians may be better informed, identify possible critical pathways, and construct plans for timely intervention, parental education, and support in order to head off dysfunctional development in "at-risk" populations (Grolnick, Weiss, McKenzie, & Wrightman, 1996; Lohman & Jarvis, 2000; Marta, 1997). In fact, these resilient "survivors" may be more adaptive to a variety of life experiences and may be better able to cope with unforeseen challenges later in life.

The increased availability of longitudinal data on risk, vulnerability and protection has led to an increase in qualitative research which may augment and deepen our understanding. Smokowski et al. (1999) used an autobiographical perspective to explore the adjustments of 86 inner city adolescents. These resilient adolescents spoke of internal attributes of perseverance, determination, and having an awareness to learn from others' choices and subsequent consequences (positive and negative). They identified, through their stories, how motivational support from family and teachers was highly valued in their lives and in this way explained to themselves why they were successful while they watched others fail in similar circumstances (Smokowski et al., 1999).

Problem Behaviors

Most at risk youth are identified as such only after they begin to demonstrate problem behaviors. According to Leadbeater, Blatt and Quinlan (1995) problem behaviors generally fall into two categories which they defined as either externalized or internalized behaviors. Externalized behaviors were categorized as behaviors which are associated with conduct problems, use of alcohol and/or drugs, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder. Internalized behaviors, conversely, were defined as those associated with depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, and eating disorders (Leadbeater et al., 1995).

As part of the recent British Columbia Adolescent Health Survey (1995), adolescents were asked to identify their health concerns. They frequently related discrimination and violence at school or in the community, limitations on future activity or opportunity, and a sense of disempowerment. In their 1998 examination of the survey, Murphy and Tonkin recognized that the primary adolescent concerns appeared to be family conflict, school or learning issues, and their own response to developmental challenges such as alcohol and substance abuse, sexuality and sexual orientation, and dissatisfaction with appearance. The same survey reported that about 25% of British Columbia adolescents experience emotional health problems, including depression, anxiety, and attention deficit problems.

Problem behaviors during adolescence negatively impact the developmental path of individuals. In addition, such behaviors place stress on school and social support

systems which range from the family to government agencies and social programs (Pollard et al., 1999).

For some, it is difficult to know whether the behavior in question is more of a problem for the individual or for people with whom she comes in contact. At times it would seem that the adolescent is locked in a cycle of behavior she cannot shake. She is perhaps scapegoated or labeled and then becomes further entrenched in acting out at home, school and community.

Recent quantitative research has provided scientists and clinicians with additional insights into the definition and development of problem behaviors (Allen, Aber, & Leadbeater, 1990; Jessor et al., 1995; Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993). Curiously lacking from this body of knowledge is insight identifying the purpose these problem behaviors serve for the youth who engage in them. "They lack discipline", "They got in with the wrong crowd", "They are just attention seeking", and "It's genetic" are cited as popular explanations (though not scientific) for problem behavior (Crystal & Stevenson, 1995).

Further, despite the plethora of quantitative studies, few investigations have attempted to qualify the perspective of the youth. What meaning does their behavior have for them? One might presume that an adolescent who feels unloved (regardless of how her parents believe they express their love for her) may seek affection and closeness from peers. Further, she may think that in order to gain the attention, respect, and/or admiration of the peer group she must behave in a certain way (Hagan, 1991; Laursen, 1995).

The range of behavior that is defined as problematic can make a comprehensive review of the relevant literature difficult. In addition, studies pertaining to the origins, and

development of differing behaviors and examinations of individual, familial and societal factors contributing to their development are seen across many fields and disciplines. Several behaviors have been examined consistently through a number of major studies (Allen et al., 1994; Grizenko & Pawliuk, 1994; Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993; Blum & Resnick, 1997). Such behaviors include drug and/or alcohol abuse, antisocial behavior and/or delinquency, and unprotected sexual encounters. An exhaustive review of all literature is not as beneficial as an examination of the common findings and research directions.

Relationships/Connectedness

Research on resilience has informed us that a number of factors may serve to protect the at-risk individual from following destructive and dysfunctional developmental paths (D'Imperio et al., 2000; Herzberg & Hammen, 1999; Laible et al., 2000; Marta, 1997; Pollard et al., 1999). Relationships and an adolescent's sense of connectedness to family, friends, and community have emerged as primary determinants of positive developmental outcomes.

There may however, exist genetic and biologic influences which affect the ability of individuals to connect with others. Early behaviors such as withdrawal or self-isolation may exist in those genetically predisposed to schizophrenia (Ebata, Petersen, & Conger, 1990). However, most adolescents with difficulty forming relationships will likely not have a biologic or genetic predisposition as these are known to affect only a small percentage of the general population.

Psychological factors such as low self-esteem, lack of feelings of self-control, low self-efficacy, a view of her environment as unpredictable, and a view of life as basically a negative experience may contribute to the development of problem behaviors and impede the development of supportive relationships (Engle et al., 1996; Hauser, 1999; Herzberg & Hammen, 1999; Marta, 1997; Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993).

A large-scale longitudinal study that illuminated several factors related to relationships and connectedness is the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health Project) (Resnick et al., 1997). The Add Health Project utilized a nationally representative sample (N = 90,000) of adolescents in grades 7 to 12 to conduct the first part of their study. From 1994 through 1995, students from 80 schools answered brief questionnaires about their lives, including social and demographic characteristics, the education and occupation of parents, household structure, risk behaviours, health status, friendships, self-esteem, expectations for the future and school-year extracurricular activities.

In the second phase of the Add Health project (Resnick et al., 1997), 12,105 adolescents who had completed the questionnaires were randomly chosen from each school for in-home interviews. One to two hour interviews were completed with responses recorded on laptop computers. Several topics were covered and included questions regarding peer networks, decision-making processes, educational aspirations and expectations, employment experience, formation of romantic partnerships, sexual partnerships, substance use, and criminal activities.

For sensitive sections, the respondent listened to pre-recorded questions through earphones and entered the answers directly into a computer. Although this may have

minimized the potential for interviewer or parental influence, it may also have weakened the responses of those students with poor typing skills or low levels of literacy.

In addition, a parent (usually the mother) of each adolescent completed an at-home interview (Resnik et al., 1997). The interviewer assisted, op-scanned questionnaire covered topics concerning educational achievement, employment and income; marital status and relationships; health; neighborhood characteristics; involvement in volunteer, civic, or school activities; parent-adolescent communication and interaction; and the parent's familiarity with the adolescent's friends and friend's parents. It is unclear if parents had difficulty completing the questionnaire.

Further, in order to gather information about the neighborhood and community context, Resnick et al. (1997) contacted a variety of sources (i.e. US Census, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics and other published data bases). Information concerning schools was collected in the first year of the study from the participating schools. The administrators completed self-administered questionnaires dealing with school policies and procedures, teacher characteristics, health service provision or referral, and student body characteristics. A follow-up phone call was made to each administrator in 1996. During the telephone interview, administrators were asked to update previously obtained information and to discuss specific dress codes and security procedures on the school campus.

Although a complete analysis of the survey is expected to take a decade or more, Blum (a member of the Add Health Project Group) and Rinehart (1997) prepared a monograph based on the first analysis of the Add Health data (Resnick et al., 1997).

While the data clearly describes several factors that may serve protective functions, one of the most important emerging factors was an adolescent's connections to others in life.

The home environment emerged as central in shaping health outcomes for American adolescents. The results indicated that "adolescents' connections to family and school make a difference to their health and well-being" (Blum & Rinehart, 1997, p 34). Students who had high degrees of closeness, caring and satisfaction with parental relationships and who felt understood, loved, wanted, and paid attention to by family members appeared to be protected from a variety of risks. These risks included emotional distress, suicidal thoughts and attempts, cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use, violent behavior, and early sexual activity. Blum and Rinehart (1997) state "when a parent is physically present in the home at key times, and has high expectations for the child's education, children are on the road to being protected from involvement in behaviors that can damage them" (p.16).

Students who reported connectedness with schools described that teachers treat them fairly, they feel close to people at school and get along with teachers and other students. Students who felt connected to school reported lower levels of emotional distress, were less likely to think about, or attempt, suicide, had lower levels of violent behavior and abused substances less frequently (Blum & Rinehart, 1997). Schools which fostered an atmosphere in which students felt fairly treated, close to others, and a part of the school appear to be important to the healthy development of adolescents. "Adolescents stand a better chance of being protected from health risks when they feel connected to their school" (Blum & Rinehart, 1997, p.24). Conversely, students who

perceived other students in their school to be prejudiced and those who felt "out of sync" with their peers reported higher levels of emotional distress.

Earlier studies such as one conducted by Radke-Yarrow and Brown (1993) yield essentially the same results. These researchers found that adolescent self-perception was positively related to favoritism in multiple-risk families. Further, explicit non-favorite status was attributed to 78% of troubled children though 23% of troubled children described at least some positive relationship with at least one parent.

Radke-Yarrow and Brown (1993) did not address potential gender differences in their study. However, Marta (1997) did include gender as a consideration in her exploration of the correlation between family functioning and support, and communication. Data was collected on 279 "normal" white families with 16-19 years olds. Marta (1997) used a battery of assessment tools to determine support, self-esteem, friendship satisfaction, educational success and risk for each of the participants. She concluded that freedom of expression of opinions and feelings was an important stress mediator. Marta (1997) reported that the perception of being encouraged, supported and being able to count on someone was protective against risk. In addition, she found that both parents play an important role in family communication and the conveyance of support to their adolescents.

Marta's (1997) conclusions focused mainly on the gender of parents. She reported that "parents' gender appears to be more significant than adolescents' gender in determining the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, at least during late adolescence" (Marta, 1997, p. 484). Additionally, she asserted that level of risk was more

significant than adolescents' gender, therefore, analysis of gender differences was not further pursued.

Marta's (1997) findings based on quantitative measures are substantiated by Smokowski, Reynolds and Bezruczko's (1999) autobiographical inquiry. Though most of the adolescents in Smokowski et al's study were resilient in their own estimations, family regard was highly valued and evidenced in the guidance and mentoring received, especially from mothers. Within the family environment, and largely thanks to role modeling, Smokowski et al (1999) found that the adolescent learned positive adaptive coping strategies as well as negative risk-taking consequences. Mothers were the source of motivational support receiving praise from the adolescents for providing information about risks and voicing the message that the adolescent will make it to a better life through dedication and perseverance.

Important connections were also voiced about relationships with teachers and friends (Smokowski et al., 1999). Through their life stories, the adolescents reported that teachers provided motivational support, role modeling and critical information about risks to avoid. The teachers articulated how and why the adolescent should keep on track and further inspired the struggling adolescent to persevere. Teacher messages reinforced parental motivation and at times substituted for parents who would not, or could not offer motivational and informational support. Teachers who were seen as warm, accepting, open and accessible, yet candid in their guidance, were deemed most effective by these adolescents.

Adolescents voiced more ambivalence regarding their friendships (Smokowski et al., 1999). They questioned whether true friendship existed and were willing only to say it

was relatively rare. Most described a friend as someone who would see you through "thick and thin" and adopted a cautious stance while differentiating peers as friends or "associates" (Smokowski et al., 1999, p. 443). Such reluctance to embrace peers in their environment was attributed to the plethora of hazards associated with trusting.

Connections may be important for adolescents at many junctures. Individuals who come into regular and infrequent contact may intentionally or unintentionally influence the adolescent by informing them, motivating them, or emotionally supporting them. Finally, it would appear that any influence might be immediate or delayed in its effects on perception, attitude or behavior.

Attachment

Attachment may play an important role in the nature of relationships between parents and teens. Developmentally, it has long been theorized that repeated interactions with attachment figures assist infants and children to form internal representations of both the self and of others (Petersen & Moran, 1988). These "internal working models" (Bowlby, 1973) subsequently form a heuristic basis for future relationships. How the individual sees herself, influences her role in other relationships (Allen et al., 1990; Jackson et al., 1997; Marta, 1997; Rosenstein & Horowitz, 1996).

Rosenstein and Horowitz (1996) examined the relationship between attachment, psychopathology and personality traits in psychiatrically hospitalized patients. All admitted adolescents were invited to participate. Subjects in their sample of 60 adolescent patients and 27 of their mothers were deliberately unselected in order to obtain attachment data on adolescents across a broad range of psychopathology. Subjects were revealed to have both adolescent and maternal attachments which were overwhelmingly

insecure. Attachment was categorized into one of four classification groups (autonomous, preoccupied, dismissing and unresolved). The study revealed that two of the categories significantly influenced attachment. The adolescents who showed a dismissing attachment organization, where they either dismissed the importance of attachment or the depth of its influence on themselves, were more likely to have conduct or substance abuse disorder, narcissistic or antisocial personality disorder, and self-reported narcissistic, antisocial, and paranoid personality traits. Adolescents who showed preoccupied attachment organization, where they appeared confused and entangled by attachment relationships and lacked the objectivity to move beyond their preoccupation, were more likely to have affective disorder. They also demonstrated more obsessive-compulsive, histrionic, borderline or schizotypal personality disorders, and self-reported avoidant, anxious, and dysthymic personality traits.

Although significant associations have been found between insecure attachment in infancy and various forms of later psychopathology in both childhood and adult life (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994) they cannot be consistently relied upon for causal conclusions. Causation appears to be more likely related to multiple influences and multiple pathways (Jessor et al., 1995; Harter & Whitesell, 1996) acting in a complex combination of mediators and modifiers.

Herzberg and Hammen (1999) conducted a five-year longitudinal study examining the relationship between attachment cognitions and social support. Data was gathered through questionnaire and interview from a representative sample of 129 female adolescents. Analysis revealed that attachment cognitions, representing greater security in close relationships, were associated with higher levels of perceived and enacted social

support. Further the differences between secure and insecure attachment cognitions were mostly related to emotional support rather than enacted information or material assistance. The results of Herzberg and Hammen's study suggest that close relationships are paramount in providing both perceived and enacted support as they are often the medium of emotional support.

Allen, Aber and Leadbeater (1990) provide a strong argument for the role attachment plays in the development of problem behaviors. They suggest that there is a link between attachment and self-efficacy (Allen et al., 1990), which is generally accepted as "one's belief that one can be successful at a particular task" (Bandura, 1977). In addition, they stress the relationship between insecure attachment and anger. The insecure adolescent is one who lacks confidence in her/his abilities to cope with complex and frustrating social situations. An angry adolescent is predisposed to acting out her/his anger in potentially violent ways. Further, Allen et al. (1990) highlighted the lack of research exploring the nature of the associations between attachment and problem behavior.

Laible, Carlo and Raffaelli (2000) explored parent and peer attachment of 89 adolescent participants (mean age = 16.1 years). Statistical analysis revealed that the best adjusted adolescents were those with high peer, high parent attachments. Adolescents with a high peer, low parental attachment were better adjusted than those who reported low peer with high parental attachment. The results suggest that peer attachment may be relatively more influential to adolescent adjustment than parental attachment.

Finally, the struggle of the adolescent to remain close and yet separate from her parents in the search for autonomy can be a difficult developmental task. Successful

development occurs when the adolescent is able to achieve autonomy in the context of a positive relationship with parents (Allen et al., 1990; Grolnick et al., 1996; Laible et al., 1999; Marta, 1997). Way and Gillman's (2000) qualitative exploration of early adolescent females' perceptions of their relationships with their fathers is illustrative of such a struggle. Participants described enjoying shared activities with their fathers and expressed a desire for "more", yet they had already established boundaries around activities and conversation of an intimate nature. Even in early adolescence these girls were cautious regarding the appropriateness of contact and discussion topics. Activities and discussion was centered almost entirely on sports, school or "the world" (Way & Gillman, p. 314). Emotional content and displays of affection seemed relegated to maternal interaction.

Adolescents with strained parental relationships face additional stressors (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000). The methods they choose to cope with tense relationships may include seeking validation from peers and/or other significant individuals in their lives (such as adults who assume a mentoring role for the youth) (Laible et al., 2000; Marta, 2000). The development of a coping pattern within a positive context promotes self-confidence and a sense of competence (Allen et al., 1990; D'Imperio et al., 2000; Kazdin, 1993).

Perceptions

A persistent theme connecting all the related literature seems to indicate that an important aspect of successful coping revolves around the perceptions of the adolescent. First, how one determines whether a person's life experience is positive or negative is highly dependent on the subjective experience of the individual. Secondly, the impact any given stressor might have at any particular time is clearly based on the individual's

perception of the stressor. A study conducted by Baldwin et al. (1993) illustrates an important point in this regard.

Baldwin et al. (1993) utilized 150 families who were followed over an 18-year period. In their study of parenting behaviors, it was abundantly clear that what was perceived and interpreted in one way by a group of adolescents, was interpreted in an entirely different way by another. The factors that were important in predicting mental health differed between the groups studied.

Data analysis revealed that the factors meaning behind certain parenting behaviors, as attributed by the adolescent, significantly influenced the protectivity of the relationship (Baldwin et al, 1993). For example, the strict critical parenting style of urban Afro-American teens were seen by the teens as being demonstrative of caring, love and affection, whereas the a strict parenting style in the suburban white families was seen by those teens as untrusting, and suspicious. Such differences in the youths' perceptions are important to consider in evaluating the influence of risk and protective factors. Therefore, Baldwin et al. (1993) demonstrate the necessity for research which not only identifies factors and mechanisms, but also endeavors to understand them from the individual's perspective.

It has been shown that even the perception of support can be as powerful as real support (Herzberg & Hammen, 1999; Marta, 1997; Smokowski et al., 1999). This has implications for the improvement of the efficacy of different treatment modalities, customized to best suit the needs and perceptions of the individual.

works (Artz, 1998; Cameron, deBruijne, Kennedy, & Morin, 1994) suggest that, drug/alcohol abuses as well as HIV infection rates are on the rise in female populations.

Summary

The literature follows an evolutionary path of its own from identifying factors that place youth at risk for problem behaviors, to exploring those factors which may protect at risk youth from engaging or continuing to engage in these behaviors. A great deal of quantitative data has provided a solid knowledge base in the field, however complementary qualitative research is lacking. Researchers and clinicians recognize that it is equally important to understand both the nature and process of risk and protection during an adolescent's development, as well as the mechanisms which fuel risk and protective factors along the developmental continuum. Further, the lack of gender differentiation in many studies clearly demonstrates that this is an avenue of inquiry which merits continued investigation.

The following qualitative exploration intends to expand on the knowledge regarding the quality of relationships and connectedness from the perspective of the young female experiencing them at the time. Further, it attempts to gain insight into how she views relationships with herself, her parents, her peers and those she considers significant. It then examines what the connection may be between these relationships and resilience by integrating the commonalties between the first person accounts and the quantitative body of knowledge in the area.

Just as an exploration of delinquency necessitates an examination of the delinquent, so to, an investigation into resiliency necessitates a closer look at the resilient. By illuminating their thoughts, feelings and perceptions we may hope not only to light

the way to greater understanding of at risk youth, but ideally, to gain further insight into their salvation.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Methodological considerations

Previous research in developmental psychology has focused its attention on identifying aspects of context that place adolescents at risk, and on the aspects which appear protective and therefore foster, in theory, resilience. Quantitative methodologies were most appropriate for such undertakings and have provided the current professional community with ample understanding of the adolescent's environment, and characteristics. In this study, the intention is to gain deeper understanding of the issues from the perspective of the adolescent, therefore requiring a more qualitative approach to inquiry (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996; Taylor & Bognar, 1984; Weiss, 1994).

Robert S. Weiss (1994) provides the methodological direction for this study. The author asserts that a qualitative interview is an appropriate method to enlist when seeking an understanding of another's experience. It offers a means of learning about another's perceptions and further about the meaning of those perceptions. A qualitative interview permits the exploration of the experience without the deconstruction of the participant. It allows the researcher to maintain the integrity of the person as a whole while still in context of time, place, person and situation.

Weiss (1994) describes the gathering of participants as seeking "a wide-ranging panel of knowledgeable informants" (p.17). Such informants are "...people who are uniquely able to be informative because they are expert in an area or were privileged witnesses to an event; and people who, taken together, display what happens with a population affected by a situation or event" (Weiss, 1994, p.17). These individuals can

provide the researcher with first hand accounts of their experience: significant events, relationships, perceptions, and the effect of their perceptions on their thoughts and feelings in relation to the experience (Weiss, 1994).

In pursuing information in this fashion, Weiss (1994) asserts that the first task is to set out the aim of the study. In this case the aim is to gain insight into resilient female adolescents' perceptions of various relationships, including: mother, father, school, community, religion, friends, romantic, and significant others. Once the aim is clear the researcher needs to consider who the most suitable informants will be, and take the necessary steps to procure/encourage their participation. For this inquiry the panel of informants would meet the criteria of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990).

The design of the interview questions is an important aspect of this methodology. The types of questions asked may play a part in the kind of responses the researcher might receive. Questions that promote brief answers may not provide much fodder for analysis, yet they will help to keep the interview focused. Weiss (1994) proposes the use of an interview guide which lays out the areas of interest, has some questions as a way of focusing the respondent, yet leaves enough leeway for the astute interviewer to pursue topics or perceptions as they arise. The facilitation, elaboration and clarification of the meaning the respondent attributes to the question topic is paramount in an effective interview.

Weiss (1994) identifies four different approaches to analysis and reporting of interview results. In order to determine the appropriate method the researcher must decide if he or she will focus on issues or on individual cases. In addition, the researcher must decide the report's intended level of generalization. Does the researcher intend to take the

participants' responses and present them as they are individually, or is the intention to combine the responses and look for more generalized themes throughout all participants' responses? Weiss (1994) describes the first option as the "level of the concrete" and the second analysis as the "level of the generalized".

The combination of decisions regarding case vs. issue and level of generalization provide four possible approaches to analysis: a) issue focused and generalized, b) issue focused and concrete, c) case focused and generalized and, d) case focused and concrete. Having identified these approaches, Weiss (1994) states that "no matter the level or focus there is no single tried and true method of analysis or strategy for presentation of findings" (p. 152). However, Weiss (1994) does assert that a good report conveys a coherent story, provides a line of argument or image of how it all works, and must be consistent with the data. To use the terms and intentions outlined by Weiss, the present study is issue focused and generalized.

In the current study, the intention of the researcher was to explore issues relating to the relationships of these adolescent females, looking for commonalties in themes which would link each person's story. The researcher refrained from taking a particular stance in this matter until the direction was more or less revealed by the words of the participants, in the hope of developing the greatest possible voice from the adolescents' responses.

Issue focused, generalized data are best analyzed using the four distinct analytical processes of coding, sorting, local integration and inclusive integration (Weiss, 1994). The first process, coding, provides the material necessary for sorting and so forth, yet the processes are not linear. As each informs the other, some jostling occurs before a final

analysis is offered. Just as one's opinion may change during an interaction...as information is exchanged it alters the perception of the data. Final integration cannot occur before all the information is considered.

Coding provides the connection between responses and concepts or categorizes. This process can be influenced by the historical experience of the investigator, theoretical assumptions, and research interests. The investigator closest to the data best accomplishes coding.

Sorting involves the placement of excerpts within the broader umbrella of the category or concept. Local integration is a rudimentary organizing and assimilating of what might be known about what we are seeing develop out of the coding and sorting. Mini-theories begin to emerge and find support or die out as not viable. Those mini-theories that survive help to illustrate the meaning of what the respondent was actually saying.

The final process of analysis, inclusive integration, brings all the areas of analysis into one single cohesive story. With the analysis process complete, the investigator may turn his or her attention to reporting the results. Caution must be exercised when making statements of causation (Weiss, 1994), yet inferences of causation gathered from various informants are likely to offer glimpses or partial explanations. It must be kept in mind that self-assessments are not always accurate, despite the informants' belief in their own account and insights. The data does however, reveal informants' perceptions of their experience.

Participants

"Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, selected purposefully" (Patton, 1990, p.169). This study centers on adolescent females aged 16-17 who reside in a small urban area on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. To be included in this study, the adolescents met two distinguishing criteria: a) they had engaged in acts of delinquency when they were 13-14 and b) they self-reported not re-offending within the previous 18 months. The participants had been labeled as delinquent by the criminal courts based on their conviction of a criminal offense.

Participants were recruited through Probation Services in Victoria on Vancouver Island, and through word of mouth. Permission to discuss the study and the identification of potential participants was obtained from the Ministry of Children and Families, the Ministry of Attorney General, and Youth Court Services. It was deemed necessary to use third party recruitment in order to locate suitable participants due to the age of the participants, as well as issues related to the maintenance of confidentiality. The researcher held informal seminars on related topics and outlined the scope and intent of the study for Social Workers, Probation Officers (PO), and Youth Court Workers who were asked to identify prospective adolescents.

Recruiters identified and contacted ten suitable participants. Four of those individuals agreed to participate. Two additional participants were recruited by word of mouth through the existing participants. It was decided during the recruitment process, on the advice of Ministry officials, that adolescents who were suitable yet required consent from the Ministry (the Ministry was their legal guardian) would not be included in the study as consent issues were too complicated for the time constraints of the study.

Participants in this study came from mostly single parent families who lived in densely populated urban housing. One participant was raised with both her parents living together and another was currently living with her father and stepmother after having lived previously with her mother in a single parent household. Various combinations of broken and blended family constellations existed for these participants. Though in their interview responses they described exposure to family violence and drug and alcohol abuse in historical context, it was a major part of their daily lives prior to coming in contact with the law. Despite some interruptions in education all participants were working in the high school grade levels.

Interview

The qualitative interviewing approach, which keeps the focus on the relationships of one individual, affords the opportunity to compile an account of the adolescent's own story and elaborate on the impact of her experience and perceptions.

The interview guide was adapted from protocol used by Leadbeater and Way, (2001). Open-ended questions (see Appendix IV) were intended to prompt focused responses that would promote an understanding of the adolescents' relationships. The investigator used more focused questions for less articulate participants and allowed the more articulate participants to expand their responses at will, until such time as the intention of the question was achieved. In the interest of time constraints and in an attempt to refrain from crossing therapeutic boundaries, the investigator endeavored to keep the focus on the question.

Interviewing techniques, such as encouragers, were used to indicate the investigators desire to learn more about what the participant was saying. The investigator

attempted to remain cognizant of encouraging responses without delving into therapeutic techniques such as overuse of empathy. When inconsistencies arose, clarifying questions were posed, and the investigator refrained from crossing the boundary of therapeutic confrontation. Thus it is acknowledged that the investigator may have inadvertently encouraged responses which focused on content rather than feelings.

Interviews were conducted in a setting where the participants indicated they would be comfortable. Five of the interviews took place in the participant's homes while one participant chose a coffee shop. On average, the interviews took two hours to complete.

Once the initial interview was concluded, the researcher completed the process of analysis as outlined in the methodological considerations section. A follow-up interview was conducted over the telephone to review the analysis with the participant as a validity check. The second interview was important to the process as well as beneficial to the participants who expressed some surprise at the accuracy of the recording of their perspective.

Ethical Considerations

Approval for the study was obtained from the University of Victoria Ethics in Human Research, Ministry of Children and Families and Ministry of Attorney General. Once approval was granted, the researcher approached local probation officers (POs), youth police officers, youth court workers, and social workers to discuss the area of investigation.

Once ten potential participants had been confidentially identified by the PO (that is to say the PO knew the individual's identity but the researcher did not), the PO

discussed the research project with the youth. This discussion included the provision of an explanation sheet with information for discussion with her parent(s) (see Appendix II). The potential participants were given a telephone number where they could contact the researcher for more information.

Upon receiving an expression of interest, the researcher met with the youth and her parent(s) to discuss the study in detail, ensure that all ethical guidelines were met, and to obtain written consents from the participants and their legal guardians.

The investigator, the parent(s), and the participants reviewed the letters of consent prior to any commencement of an interview. Confidentiality was discussed. Expectations were clearly explained, including the right to withdraw at any time. Questions were addressed to ensure informed consent and therefore the parent(s) and the participant had a complete understanding of the nature of the study and the extent of their participation. See Appendices I, II, III for copies of letters of introduction and consent. Once proper consents were signed, an appointment was arranged to conduct the interview. The researcher set a time and place that was convenient for the interviewees. At the commencement of each participant's interview she was asked to select a pseudonym to be used in place of her real name as another means of ensuring confidentiality.

All interviews were audio-taped with permission from the participant. The investigator used a tape-recorder as a means to maximize the attention given to the participant at the time of the interview and to augment recall when transcribing the responses. As per the consent agreement, following the transcription, the tapes were destroyed thus maintaining confidentiality.

Analysis

Weiss (1994) described value in the early analysis of interview data. He states, "the more investigators have developed understandings during data collection, the surer they can be of the adequacy of the data collection...(p. 151)". He further asserts that such a practice is rooted in idealism and although the investigator may remain thoughtful throughout the process, formal analysis is likely to be curtailed until all interviews are conducted. In this study, the time which transpired between interviews did afford the investigator time to transcribe and review each interview in its own right. Thus allowed decisions to be made about where further interviews might enhance the overall picture developing from the data.

Initial thoughts and codings were recorded in the margins of the transcribed interviews. As the analysis was to be "issue-focused" rather than "case-focused", notes were kept close to the issue of relationships.

In the current study, the intention of the researcher was to explore issues relating to the relationships of these adolescent females, looking for commonalties in themes which would link each person's story. The researcher refrained from taking a particular stance in this matter until the direction was more or less revealed by the words of the participants, in hopes of developing the greatest possible voice from the adolescents responses.

Some preliminary coding occurred with each interview transcription as it was completed, however, the majority was held off until all the interviews were completed and transcribed. The final transcription appeared as a master list of questions and responses, with each participant's responses being color-coded. From the master list of

responses the investigator sought to excerpt the respondents' descriptive language that characterized their relationships and other relevant themes, as well as explanations that led each to their conclusions. The codings were gathered in the form of quotes from the participants, and at this point the name of the participant was abandoned.

A review of the coding process gave rise to the establishment of categories in the sorting process. Responses were first sorted according to relationship and then by identifying themes and patterns of relating to each individual. Once the sorting process was accomplished, the identification of implied categories was able to proceed. Initial consideration of potential categories and mini-theories was drawn from the literature, particularly on relationships and connectedness. These categories included parental presence, caring, feeling understood, degree of identification with the person (friend, mother, teacher, etc.), and attachment style.

The process of local integration was a natural evolution of the data into an organized understanding of the themes that emerged. The generalized perceptions of the participants began to coagulate and "mini-theories" were developed to make sense of the themes. As a means of limiting her biases and attempting to remain true to the participants intent, the researcher conferenced findings at the coding sorting and local integration phases. The final process, inclusive integration, brought the data into a cohesive illustration of the participants' perceptions and the meaning of their relationships.

Validity in such studies is achieved by checking back with the participants to ensure that their story has been recorded accurately. The researcher did this and also checked that her analysis was consistent with each individual's perspective.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

General Overview

Personal traits and family histories, among other factors revealed in the interview process, confirmed that the participants fell under the broad umbrella of being vulnerable and at risk. The important contradiction however, is that despite their vulnerability they had managed to redirect the apparent path of delinquency. Though no major change in lifestyle or living situation had occurred, the participants managed to refrain from continuing to engage in delinquent or problem behaviors which would bring them to the attention of the legal system. Further, they had essentially been able to refrain from any activities for which they were and remain at risk. None of the participants currently made unhealthy lifestyle choices, abused drugs or alcohol and none displayed or described thoughts or feelings consistent with overt psychopathology.

Before embarking on a detailed review of the results, a brief overview of some of the general emerging themes is helpful. On the whole, participants viewed relationships as important. Family relationships were deemed more difficult, while relationships with peers were seen as fun. There was a pervasive theme related to partying, though not all these adolescents engaged in drinking or using drugs. It seemed to be the social connection to peers and the perception of having fun which fuelled the drive to focus so much attention on this activity. It almost seemed that, given the lack of involvement in organized extracurricular activities, they needed something to fill the void and the hype around organizing parties was the replacement.

The participants tended to stumble on questions that involved thinking about the future, such as those related to career planning or simply inquiring about where they thought they might be in a year or two. They vocalized low levels of ambition in all questions related to their future. The predominant career-related theme expressed, centered on seeking work that would give them some sense of control. In addition, work with animals and/or small children was seen as desirable. Responses such as, "kids always give you hugs" or " animals are always so happy to see you " and " they (animals and children) don't fight with me" may be indicative of a more emotional approach to career selection.

The following sections present the results of the major categories of the interview questions. Each subsection corresponds directly with interview categories.

Self

Participants described the most important aspect of their closest relationships as being treated in a non-judgmental way by one who was both forgiving and supportive. They saw these relationships as being rooted in trust and honesty.

When answering questions that related to making a change, co-existing internal and external themes were common. Anger, hurt, drugs and money were ever present in the participants' responses. Despite the negative themes, the participants espoused a belief in themselves which seemed to be generated by parental support (mostly mother's support) or perceived support.

All participants expressed the aspiration to simply be seen as a "good" person. The participants were diverse in their interests and activities. As well, all expressed, in some manner, an underlying knowledge of their own competence. However, despite

hinting about their own self-efficacy beliefs they were reluctant to openly acknowledge their capabilities.

When asked if a change had occurred in the way that the participants see themselves since being charged with an offense, the responses were to the affirmative. Further questioning revealed that the humiliation and shame of being caught and of disappointing someone they cared about were the predominant catalysts to their change in thinking and subsequent behavior. One participant stated, " ...it was hard to actually admit that I was screwing up. I thought I had everything under control and this was like a big wake-up call...I knew I had disappointed my parents really bad...and I wanted to be part of the group...but now that doesn't much matter...cause they aren't gonna back me up". Another responded, " I had no idea how what I thought was o.k. and not so bad could end up like this...I didn't think what I did was so awful but it sure was embarrassing when my mum had to come down and bail me out...I don't ever want to go through that again".

Final areas of common themes were the personal dislike of their appearance and the notion that they display too much emotion.

Parental

The participants lived in various household arrangements/situations while also having contact with parents and step-parents who did not reside in the same dwelling as the adolescent. Family constellations for all but one participant were complicated, consisting of broken and blended family configurations. One participant lived with both her biological parents, three lived with a single female head of household, one of which

was not the participant's biological mother, one with her father and stepmother, and one was independent.

Albeit with their own fluctuations, the relationships with mothers appeared to be the primary parental relationship. Interestingly the relationship with mother was described in terms of what mother does TO or FOR the adolescent. For example, "she talks to me, sometimes I am not sure she is listening to me though" or "she takes me to my probation appointments" and "she hassles me till I do it."

In contrast, the responses to the same questions regarding daughter-father relationships described fathers in terms of what the adolescent has done to the father. "I disappointed him." " I should have talked more to him." And " I should have spent more time with him."

Mother

The participants described their biological mothers as fun, open and caring. They perceived their mothers as being available to them as they were needed, despite the fact that they did not actually spend much time with their mothers. Responses consistent with, "She's always there now...even when I am out and about for a few days and I don't see her everyday". The persistent theme of these relationships centered on safety ("I know she will be there for me. If I really needed something I know she would look after me, and help me").

Mothers were seen as helpful to the participant when they offered reassurance that "things will turn out ok" or that their relationship "will survive the situation". One participant responded, "till then I was never sure if she would be so mad at me that she would disown me...but she kept telling me we would be ok...I guess I let loose with a lot

of stuff too, you know... I finally told her all kinds of things and she was really cool about it, she didn't freak like I thought she would." Mothers were also helpful in changing their adolescent's focus, i.e. redirecting her attention as well as encouraging the adolescent to find other "more appropriate" activities.

In contrast, the adolescents' mothers were seen as taxing the relationship when they offered feedback. Often the adolescents perceived the feedback as criticism which always focused on negative behaviors thus leaving the impression that the mother failed to acknowledge the attributes and individuality of her daughter and had unrealistic expectations. These expectations were viewed as perfectionist and unattainable by the participants and were considered to be something imposed upon the adolescent rather than a goal which had been mutually agreed upon. The participants felt that they should be recognized as independent and capable.

Three participants had experiences with stepmothers. Relationships with stepmothers were ambivalent. Participants were often unclear about whether they could rely on stepmothers and expressed competitive issues and confusion about trust. Comments like: "sometimes she is ok, but I am never really sure what her angle is" or "she is more concerned about making herself look good."

Father

Questions regarding paternal relationships received the most diverse responses. Three of the six participants did not have contact with their fathers for at least five years, yet all described a relationship with a father figure. Those who had no contact appeared to have created a relationship with the absent parent (referred to as "kinda like an imaginary playmate") which seemed to have served some purpose and offered them an

explanation for "the way I am." Explanations were dichotomous in that they were either blaming him or identifying with him.

Feelings about fathers were expressed in greater number and greater depth of emotion than those regarding mothers. Regrets were also expressed more frequently in discussing the paternal relationship. Many prefaced their responses with, "I wish we had... or I wish we could..."

The participants who had contact with fathers perceived their fathers to be helpful even in cases where contact was very limited. One participant recalled, " whenever I called he would ask what I needed. He didn't like bark at me for getting in trouble". The fathers were described as being mindful of their daughter's individuality and competence in problem solving. Many responses resembled a participants account; "He always tells me that I have to do what I have to do.... He tells me he knows I can deal with it."

Romantic

For those participants who were involved in romantic relationships, the relationships were described as fun and caring, and the boyfriends were described as fun, trustworthy, caring and smart. Responses included: " We have a lot of fun together... we go to parties or just a movie or something." "Well, he's way smart and he likes to make sure I'm okay." "I can talk to him about anything, he doesn't rag on me cuz he is so mature." And " He looks after me and takes me out and stuff".

All participants reported a change in the quality of desirable attributes a current or future partner must possess in terms of seeking more respectful treatment. " I wouldn't let him walk all over me or use me like I used to."

When asked about the meaning of love, commonly expressed themes included trust, loyalty, deeper respect (than other relationships) and safety. Commitment was described in more concrete terms reflecting action, "to be with one person" or "living together" and "setting goals and sticking to them".

Friends

The adolescents identified both male and female platonic friendships. These friends were valued for their support and understanding. Friends were also appreciated for their ability to refrain from passing judgement while providing both supportive and challenging feedback. Friendships were characterized by comments like, " She listens to me and even if she doesn't agree she still listens and doesn't shoot me down. But, you know if she really thinks I am wrong she challenges me about it. It helps me get it straight you know... more for myself."

Time spent together was centered on social activity, talking on the phone and "hanging out". Interaction between their friends occurred on a daily basis and the friendships remained strong as they evolved over time.

Friendships described had lasted for at least one year since inception and most were more than three years, enduring both maturation and situational changes.

Other

Two common themes emerged in the "Other" section. First, participants listed those individuals who seemed to possess attributes that were desirable to them or with which they identified. Responses included: " Well, I'd like to be able to talk like her and I know she kinda cares when she is listening." " I knew she could help me, cause all the

social workers weren't helping at all. They were just telling me how to live my life. I don't need anyone to tell me."

Secondly, these relationships were all ones of few, if any, emotional ties and were therefore perceived as safe and accepting for the adolescents to be accepted. Most often these relationships were with teachers, lawyers, probation officers, and counselors. Participants expressed appreciation for what they perceived as the honest provision of information and the motivational support offered by the "other". Interestingly, each significant "other" described was female.

Religion

Formal religious affiliation was scarce. One participant said that even without formal involvement she may have adopted some Christian values and also some ideas related to reincarnation. Based on the responses in this area, religious faith did not come across as being important nor was it something to be avoided. None referred to, or inferred to a "relationship" with "God".

School

Interestingly, education was identified as valuable and desirable yet it was clearly seen as separate issue from "school". All the adolescents attend either public regular, alternative or correspondence school. School was seen as positive if only for its social aspects, but most acknowledged some value in terms of getting ahead in life. School-life appeared to serve as a conduit for socializing with friends. Comments relating to school did not indicate any feelings of connection towards the school, such as school pride. One participant stated, " Well, really school sucks, but my friends are there and it is a place to

hang out and we can make plans for like Friday and the weekend... you know... a party or something... where to hang out."

Extra-curricular or co-curricular programs or activities were seen as lame or of no interest or value to the adolescents interviewed. " Oh god, my friends would never let me forget it and they'd probably stop talking to me too! (if I signed up for any school club or program)" Rather, descriptions highlighted an abundance of unstructured time outside school which consisted of talking on the phone, hanging out with friends, or watching TV.

Community

The final section of the interview schedule dealt with the community. The participants' descriptions of their community were diverse. Most often the community was liked for the availability of friends. Secondly, all adolescents described themselves as feeling safe in the community. As with the school "relationships", there was no indication of being a "part" of the community as demonstrated by a lack of involvement in programs or community activities. Responses to interview questions about the participants' neighborhood and community included: " Not interested and don't have the money either (to participate in community programs)." " I don't really feel a part of any community... I can see and feel how people look at me and my friends."

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Qualitative inquiries are known for the sheer volumes of information they elicit from the participants. Such information is rich with emergent themes. The researcher must move towards making some sense of those themes. The task is to interpret the results in a manner which remains true to the story of the individual, while at the same time expounding of its value by placing it in context. This chapter integrates the resultant themes within three broad and interrelated domains: personal, familial, and societal. Since relationships usually contain at least two participants it is important to consider what each of the participants bring with them as well as how they connect with each other.

Personal

The majority of concepts, which emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview responses, fell within the first two domains: personal and familial. The themes in the personal domain relate to the adolescents' self-awareness, self-esteem, self-concept, and identity development. The also relate to morality orientation, stress/coping (including the tendency to internalize or externalize), and predominant worldview.

Self-Awareness

Harter (1997) described self-awareness, as an adolescent's various roles and membership categories that define who he/she is. Harter (1997) suggested that there are ten dimensions of an adolescent's self-understanding and these dimensions provide a helpful framework for a discussion of the participants' responses.

The first dimension involves the individual's ability to think in increasingly abstract ways while incorporating more idealistic perspectives. The adolescent participants as a whole were able to consider their more abstract selves, yet seemed to be verging on using more idealistic labels. Many described themselves as "really, a good person", and "caring, open and honest". Thus the participants appear well on their way to gaining self-understanding in this dimension.

Differentiation, Harter's (1997) second dimension of self-understanding, relates to the individual adaptation in role and behavior as being specific to circumstance and situation. These adolescents were clearly able to describe themselves across a number of contexts. Many described how they behaved with family as being quite different from how they were in school or at home. They appeared to accept that the individual remained the same person yet simply altered certain attributes to meet the situation or role of the moment. For some, adapting slightly to the situation offered them variety in their choice of behavior sets and attitudes as reflected in responses such as " I am a much different person with my friends than with my mum, but it is good that way cuz I wouldn't want my mum to see the way I am sometimes with them (friends)."

The aforementioned quote also illustrates in part the third dimension, namely, contradictions within the self (Harter, 1997). As the individual expands her world and ideas she moves into a certain multiplicity of roles and potential contexts. She may have notions of her self as being both good and bad. One participant laughed at her response to an interview question which asked her to describe herself. She then stated. " I am really a good person down deep... but I can be so very mean if you make me angry".

Differentiation and contradiction necessitate the fourth dimension, which Harter (1997) described as the "fluctuating self". Adjustment over time and across situations can be characterized by instability as possible selves are explored, practiced and revised before the adolescent solidifies a more coherent theory of self. Many of the participants acknowledged an awareness of the rapidity at which they could change their perspective or mood, sometimes describing it as something that they found disturbing about themselves. One participant stated that it sometimes frustrated her as she didn't always know what was "gonna set me off". Another participant stated she wished she could be more like she is with her friends when she is with her mum..."cuz sometimes I feel like I have to be someone I'm not".

The fifth of Harter's (1997) dimensions centers on the construction of an ideal self as well as the actual selves. The adolescent is challenged to reconcile discrepancies between the two before she can develop an integrated self. Most participants in this study seemed to be striving to become more like their ideal selves. References to how each individual would like to be were tempered with a reality check about what was reasonable.

These individuals were not ready to look too far into the future. The most common response to questions pertaining to career goals, and the kind of person they hoped to be five years from now included, "I haven't thought much about that, I am really just dealing with the day to day stuff for right now".

It is possible that the previous few years, leading up to the time of their involvement with the Law, were ones of conflict. Most described "things being (are) more calm in my life now" and " I have a way better grip on myself now and I know

more about who I am". Within this dimension there exists the notion of the "possible self". It would seem likely that when the adolescents were caught committing their offenses, they were confronted with images of who they did not want to become. In relatively short order, perhaps even subconsciously some made a decision to change the direction in which they were heading by altering their concept of themselves. It is reasonable to assert that someone who sees herself as a basically good person cannot be caught and publicly convicted of doing bad things. Something had to change such an incongruity in order to restore a balanced self-concept. Such a conclusion is in keeping with the results of Oyserman and Markus' (1990) study in which findings suggested that a particularly important aspect of adolescents' configuration of possible selves is the balance between their expected possible selves and their feared possible selves. Further, they concluded that without balance between their expected and feared selves in important domains, both the initiation and the maintenance of delinquent activity are more likely (Oyserman & Markus, 1990).

Continuing with this dimension, Harter and Lee (1989) found that adolescents were capable of distinguishing between their true and their false selves. In this study the adolescents reported being most false in romantic/dating relationships and with classmates, whereas they were least likely to show their false self with close friends. In the current study only one individual reported being in a serious romantic relationship. She described herself as being her true self with her boyfriend "cuz he loves me and thinks I am pretty". It would seem that false selves were used to impress and as experimentation in alternative ways of being. This false self might also be more

prominent as peer pressure mounts and the individual feels uneasy about whether their true self will be accepted and respected.

The interview questions did not overtly address relationships with peers in general, yet peer relationships were alluded to in the responses to the questions about school. They described having to present themselves as someone different from who they "really" were with different groups of peers and acquaintances. For example, when they were running with the wrong crowd, they described behaving in ways that were viewed as cool to the group despite not personally believing such behavior was cool. The perception of having to be someone they were not was paramount in their decisions to attend alternative education programs such as "Baby GAP" (Girl's Alternative Programs for Young Mothers) and correspondence schools rather than regular public schools.

The sixth dimension of self-awareness is social comparison (Harter, 1997). Adolescents, as a whole, resist being compared yet they will use social comparison as a means to evaluate themselves. In a social context they strive to be seen as a unique individual. These participants were no different than any other adolescent in this respect and exclaimed, " if they would only try to see the real me" and "I hate being call a juvenile delinquent...I am not like those people".

Self-consciousness (Harter, 1997) characterizes the next (7^{th}) dimension. The adolescent becomes more introspective and even preoccupied with what they experience with their inner thoughts and emotions. She may seek the companionship of close friends who will validate her evolving views of herself. One participant described a close friend as being wonderful at listening to her and challenging her ideas, but always accepting her

for herself. This reinforced the participant's narcissism and reduced extraneous stress related to not fitting in.

Adolescents also expand their protective resources and mechanisms in Harter's (1997) eighth dimension of self-awareness. Self-protection allows them to maintain the view of themselves as basically positive and allow only trivial (to them) and superficial traits to face attack from others (Harter, 1997). The participants in this study sought relationships that were protective of their positive self. They avoided interaction and situations that might place them in vulnerable positions such as confrontations with peers who would challenge them and attack them for not being cool particularly when cool meant acting in a way contrary to their values and beliefs about themselves. Avoidance was a tactic frequently used to avert people and situations that presented such threats. One participant almost placed herself under a kind of "house arrest". She stated, "If I go out I might get caught up with the wrong people. So I stay here, do my school work and talk on the phone to my friends."

Harter (1997) refers to the ninth dimension as "Unconscious". Despite a few hints at the concept solidifying in their awareness, the notion of the unconscious was for the most part absent from the participants' responses to any questions. Harter (1997) contends that self-understanding includes unconscious as well as conscious components. Participants preferred to use tangible and conscious examples when discussing intentionality behind their ways of thinking of or perceiving any situation. When asked a question that might have had some room for considering unconscious motivation or intent, the participants were more comfortable with an "I don't know" response rather than contemplating the possibility of an explanation that included something being

beyond their immediate control. This is actually a consistent finding for this age group according to Selman (1980) who found that such awareness was not likely to surface until late adolescence.

The final tenth dimension of the adolescent's self-understanding is self-integration. The premise of this dimension is that adolescents are increasingly able to detect inconsistencies in their own self-descriptions and to therefore form a more holistic perspective on the self (Harter, 1997). Based on the limited questions asked of these participants and the few incongruities that were questioned for clarity by pointing out inconsistencies, self-integration had not occurred as yet with these individuals. Follow up interviews done at some time in the future, for example in two years, might permit a more decisive assessment of this dimension.

Though Harter's (1997) dimensions greatly assist in the examination of an adolescent's self-awareness as well as her developing roles in life, several concepts bare a more in-depth examination. In the realm of the personal, self-esteem and self-concept, overall identity, cognitive and moral development, stress and coping abilities and overall world view are critical issues requiring a closer look.

Self-Esteem and Self-Concept

Self-esteem and self-concept are both evaluative terms. Self-esteem refers to the overall feeling of the individual's self-worth and self-image while self-concept refers to a particular area of one's life, such as academic, social, athletic, etc (Santrock, 2001). Esteem is usually discussed in the rather vague terms of low, average and high based on a cumulative account of various domains. It is difficult to qualify due the complexity of all

that it encompasses, nevertheless, the effects of how one feels about one's worth can have far reaching implications (Brendgen, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1998).

Another perspective on self-esteem and self-concept is Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy which stems from the individual's belief that she will succeed or fail at any given task or situation. Research in this area has identified a few correlations that were relevant to this study's participants and the responses they provided to some questions.

First, the issue of physical appearance was clearly and persistently present in each participant's consciousness. Correlations have been reported between physical appearance and global self-esteem and with peer social acceptance (Harter, 1989; Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989). Those who are judged by others as good looking tend to have higher self-esteem and greater peer social acceptance. Further, there has also been demonstrated to be a correlation between low self-esteem and a greater tendency to act out or engage in delinquent behaviors (Brendgen et al., 1998, Harter & Marold, 1992; Rosenberg et al., 1989). Permeating effects of low self-esteem over time are likely to have a highly detrimental impact on self-concept in various domains, which in turn could send self-esteem into a further downward spiral.

These participants in the current study actually communicated decent levels of self-esteem. There seemed an underlying confidence that they, as a person, would be all right in the world and have something (though they could not articulate anything specific) to offer. Their limited responses pertaining to future outlook included phrases such as, " don't know but I will find a way (to go to University)". It would seem likely that these individuals have somehow received a boost in their self-esteem, perhaps in part due to the support and caring they received during the height of their acting out behavior. Since self-

esteem is often increased after the individual successfully copes with a problem (Lazarus, 1991) it is possible that the critical incident of their charge and subsequent conviction was beneficial to how they now view themselves.

Identity

The participants in this study appear to have undergone a transition, in keeping with Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development, in that the incident which brought them to the attention of authorities catapulted them into facing some fundamental questions about their identities. Each adolescent put herself in a position of having to come up with some fairly philosophical notions about who she wants to be, how she will think of herself, what makes her who she is, and certainly about where she is headed in life. Identity versus identity confusion marks the conflict of Erikson's fifth developmental stage (Erickson, 1968). The fast pace of budding social lives, coupled with the increasing expectation of assuming greater amounts of self-responsibility, and in some cases responsibility for others is a significant load on the individual at this stage. Existing roles and expectations change and a few new ones are thrust into the mix, including those pertaining to employment as well as the sexual/romantic domain.

According to Erikson's (1968) theory there may be a gap that exists between the safety of childhood and the autonomy of adulthood which leaves room for the adolescent to play as they explore facets of their emerging identity. The adolescent who experiences multiple stresses may be afforded less time and expanse in the roles, behaviors and perspectives she can explore. Socioeconomic factors and imposed roles and responsibilities may dampen the opportunities available to adolescents at risk increasing

the struggles involved in finding their own way of life. Some participants were required to assume roles that may have been beyond their cognitive and emotional maturity. This tainted their view of the roles and led them to rebel in other areas, possibly as a means of venting. Yet these individuals managed to find a way to define their purpose and their values and beliefs such that it allowed them to continue along more normative developmental pathways despite the pit stop in juvenile court.

From the sense of conviction evidenced in the responses, it was apparent that each participant had more or less adapted to her situation and had made decisions about the direction that she wished to pursue. Granted it is not clear from the interview responses HOW each accomplished this feat. Marcia's (1987) view of the four statuses of identity offers a partial explanation when considered with the interview responses.

The four statuses according to Marcia (1987) are identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. These statuses are based on the magnitude of an adolescent's crisis and commitment. Crisis being a period of identity development in which the adolescent is choosing between meaningful alternatives (Marcia, 1987). Commitment refers to the demonstration of personal investment in some action on the part of the adolescent (Marcia, 1987). Identity diffusion is the status of not having experienced a crisis that precipitates making a commitment, or not having made a commitment even in the absence of a crisis. It is likely that more than one of the participants in this study was identity diffused before her trouble with the law began.

Identity foreclosure is the state of the individual having committed herself without a crisis occurring. It is possible that one or more of these participants could have been in foreclosure. However, it is most likely that each experienced some degree of moratorium,

which Marcia (1987) defines as the state adolescents are in during a crisis when commitments are either absent or vaguely conceptualized. No doubt the incident of arrest and conviction precipitated a crisis in her evaluation of where she saw herself and who she wanted to be as well as where she wanted to go in the world.

Marcia (1987) describes identity achievement as the state of the adolescent having experienced crisis and subsequently made a commitment. Following completion of the interview there was a sense that each was somewhere on a path to identity achievement, even if it was only in terms of where the individual did NOT want to go, or having a sense of who she did NOT want to be.

It is prudent to include some consideration regarding the relationship of gender to identity formation. The gender differences that Erikson originally asserted seem to have become less pronounced over the past three decades (Madison & Foster-Clark, 1996). The shift in opportunities available to females may increase the domains in which they must master identity conflicts in order to achieve integration. Interestingly, responses to any gender-related questions failed to reveal any sentiments about how the participants in this study viewed gender issues other than as a non-issue.

There is substantial controversy when it comes to gender and identity development and the order of Erikson's stages. The crux of the debate centers on the gender differences that suggest that boys need to develop their identity prior to the development of intimacy. Conversely, females may need to develop intimacy before the stage is set for successful identity development. Much of the work that forms the basis of Erikson's theory was derived and tested on males (Gilligan, 1990). Recent works that focused on female subjects cast some doubt as to the linear nature of the stage

progression (Santrock, 2001). A third possibility is that these two stages are far more co-existent in female development than current research can identify. For the participants of this study, it seemed that concurrent development was more likely than linear. Participants described concurrent themes such developing levels of caring about others and becoming less selfish in their views as being necessary to their solidifying ideas about who they were as a person. The interconnectedness and vacillations between the two concepts supports the notion that fluctuation between these two of Erickson's stages was the reality for these adolescents

Erikson (1968) describes intimacy as finding oneself, yet losing oneself in another. In his view, a failure to do this would result in a young adult left with a sense of isolation. Success at this stage is characterized by engagement in healthy friendships and romantic relationships. Conversely, individuals who find themselves in persistently negative friendships or withdraw from social closeness and avoid romantic encounters may develop detrimental personality traits and worldviews. Thus, peer influences on ideals and behaviors may play a significant role as the adolescent solidifies her relationships.

Participants of this study articulated this concept with ease and most often expressed it in terms of being able to make friends with the wrong people. They expressed some frustration at how difficult it was to find friends who matched their ideals. Instead, they frequently seemed to choose paths of self-isolation from groups, or deciding to only have one or two friends at a time.

At the time of these interviews, only one participant was engaged in a serious romantic relationship. Other participants reported having had romantic relationships yet

they were not currently involved. Interestingly, this finding is consistent with research conducted by Feiring (1996) who found that in the 15-year-old participants most had had a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past 3 years, yet were not currently dating. Further, many had short term relationships lasting an average of 4 months, but less than 10% had relationships lasting a year or longer. Short intense relationships seemed to be normative in this group.

A pertinent aspect of the intimacy – isolation conflict relates to the loneliness component of isolation. Weiss (1973) differentiated loneliness into two general categories: emotional and social. Emotional loneliness was said to arise from the individual lacking intimate relationships whereas social loneliness reflects a more general sense of not being involved. Nearly all the participants in this study described feelings of isolation consistent with social loneliness.

The adolescents seemed to know that there were people who cared for them, however, there was a prevailing sense of disconnection and isolation from the world around them. Further, they described this as something which was confusing and which evoked some anxiety for them as they questioned their place in society. This perspective on loneliness also provides some insight into why individuals such as these participants sought distraction from their plight by looking to hang with an anti-social crowd and also to engage in behaviors such as partying and drinking (Buchholz & Catton, 1999; Haines, Scalise, & Ginter, 1994).

Cognitive Development

Though none of the interview questions were specifically included to provide clues to the participant's cognitive abilities, each adolescent was able to grasp the intent of each question and answer in a coherent manner. While some questions seemed to elicit rather concrete answers, on the whole, the level of abstract thought and philosophical perspective was refreshing, though not especially sophisticated. Based on the presentation of the participants, it would be a fair assessment of their cognitive abilities to say that each had successfully moved from Piaget's (1952) concrete operation phase into formal operations.

Cognitive monitoring, decision making and critical thinking may act as mediators between what goes on within the adolescent and how it transforms into behavior (Santrock, 2001). Cognitive monitoring is the process of self-assessment consisting of what one is currently doing, what would be done next, and how effectively mental activity is unfolding.

As the adolescent matures across the many developmental domains she is faced with ever increasing opportunities for decision making. As she gains experience she becomes increasingly better able to make more complicated decisions and in fact better decisions in general than she used to. Adolescents must reconcile idealism with reality in order to make competent decisions in everyday life.

Critical thinking involves grasping the deeper meaning of problems/issues, contemplating alternative approaches and perspectives, and then deciding on one's own perspective and/or behavior (Santrock, 2001). In each of these three activities the adolescent may have had influence both from her own past experiences as well as from

the instruction and observation of others. Despite the possibility that the adolescents' life experiences may have interfered with their formal education and/or the observation of appropriate role models, the participants in this study demonstrated competence in critical thinking. These adolescents seem somehow to have been able to assess, examine and make decisions about their circumstances and their behavior.

Again, the interview questions in this study were not designed to assess a participant's level of intelligence. However, based on the interactions and explanations required in order to determine whether participant would understand the concepts of consent and the intent and meaning of the questions being asked, it is the researcher's opinion that all the participants were within the boundaries of normal intelligence.

Moral development

Carol Gilligan's groundbreaking authorship in the early 1990's provides much insight into how adolescent females develop moral grounding. The premise of her assertions stems from the gender differences within this developmental domain. Gilligan (1990) states that a male's morality is based on justice, utilizing the formal logic of fairness, whereas a female's is based on care, which utilizes the psychological logic of relationships. Despite fairly heavy criticisms of her methodology and concerns regarding validity, most arising from quantitative perspectives, the information obtained in this study seems to corroborate her assertions.

Gilligan's theory includes three transitional stages: selfishness – responsibility, goodness – truth, and finally, care. In the first transitional stage the female views issues and dilemmas from a selfish perspective. Primary concerns of survival and protection are

evident in how she rationalizes her decision making and behavior. As she moves to the end of the transition she is more able to take into consideration the thoughts, feelings and desires of others, but it make take on the appearance of self-sacrifice. Many of the participants described such a shift in their responses during the interview, mostly when referring to their relationships with their mothers and when discussing the changes that had occurred over the past year or so.

The second transitional stage occurs as the individual's concern moves from one of goodness to one of truth (Gilligan, 1990). At the beginning of this stage the individual considers issues from the perspective of what is right, where what is right is good. Toward the end of this transition the individual will approach issues with moral implications by focusing on that which is truthful and honest to them. For example, she weighs what is good and right with what is true to herself and to others. The adolescents in this study all grappled with these concepts, with the exception of one who still approached issues from the first position of selfishness. It is important to note that a positive self-concept is tightly related to making successful transitions. Only when one has attained certain levels of self worth will the psychological stage be set to permit moving through the next level.

The third transition concludes as the individual arrives at a place where she can balance reality and idealism when considering moral issues involving both herself and others (Gilligan, 1990). At the time of these interviews, participants responses indicated that they were well on their way to a seemingly "normal" path in moral development. They expressed regret at having made selfish decisions and were now able to reflect upon their own behavior at a higher moral level.

As with other domains, crisis can lead to growth when it presents an opportunity to confront impediments to further development. A participant in Gilligan's (1990) inquiry asserts that "crisis reveals character" (p. 126). Gilligan adds, "that crisis also creates character is the essence of a developmental approach" (p. 126). It is plausible that for these adolescents, getting caught thrust them into crisis and forced them to evaluate their situation and their ideals and make decisions about how they wished to see themselves as individuals as well as how they wished to conduct themselves in the future.

Within this domain there exists one more concept which deserves mention as it may provide some insight into the perspective of the one participant who did not seem to have gotten beyond the "selfish" stage. Moral nihilism is the perspective of "who cares". When this particular participant was asked to expand on a number of her responses she repeated "who cares" or "why should I care?". This perspective appeared to serve a protective function, which implied that her self-concept, self-esteem and perhaps her level of cognitive functioning was not yet sufficient to move her along to the next transitional stage of taking responsibility.

Stress/Coping

Superimposed on the developmental constructs are the stressors of daily living and major life events. Stress imposes a threat to successful development and taxes the individual's coping abilities (D'Imperio et al., 2000; Lohman & Jarvis, 2000). At risk adolescents may experience more than their share of stressors, yet ironically, may adapt more readily and more effectively than those adolescents who are not at risk (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000; Rutter, 1983).

How the individual perceives the stress will influence how they cope (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000). Phelps and Jarvis (1994) identified four coping factors in their research on the coping strategies of adolescents. The four factors were labeled: active coping, avoidant coping, emotion-focused coping and acceptance. Avoidance strategies are cognitive and physical ways of denying or reducing the stressor to a more manageable size. The individual will actively withdraw from or move to avoid the stressor.

Given the narrow focus of the interview questions, it is difficult to make many inferences relating to the stress and coping styles of the participants in this study. However two particular factors did emerge from their responses. Participants' responses seemed to indicate a current tendency towards emotion focused coping following the failure of avoidant coping strategies which were further characterized by escape through the use of drugs and/or alcohol. The majority of participants described having initially used avoidance strategies rather than active or acceptance strategies in dealing with stress. Since the adolescents began turning their developmental trajectories around, they describe responding most often to stress in an emotional manner. Rationalizing their experience, and describing their relationships in emotional terms using phrases such as "well I don't think he means to hurt me".

Ultimately, participants sought support and reassurance in their relationships with mothers and close friends. Just as it is important to understand how the effect of a stressor may be modified by the perception the individual has to that stressor, so to, it is important to consider the individual's perception of her own competence in dealing with the stressor and her perceived resources for effectively dealing with that stressor.

Worldview

Each of the participants in this study conveyed, through her responses and through her perspectives, that she would succeed in this life despite whatever challenges the world might throw at her. Though each participant spoke of hardship and of negative situations, each also seemed to be able to put a positive spin on the situation, event, thought or emotion. Although this study did not endeavor to assess the area, it would seem that such a worldview is tied to the individual's innate personality traits.

An area touched upon in this study which relates to worldview is faith. Lack of religious connection has been identified as a risk factor in the literature on vulnerability (Resnick, et al., 1997; Rokach, & Neto, 2000). Although formalized religion was not a major influence, according to the participants' responses to questions about religion, there still was an impression of faith. The participants conveyed that they had beliefs about the world as an "okay place" and themselves as predominantly "good". As such they espoused the belief that they avoided bad things happening to them by following the doctrine of goodness.

Parental

Parenting Style

Research tells us that authoritative parenting techniques offer the best opportunities for children to develop into well-adjusted adults (Baldwin et al., 1993; Baumrind, 1991; Durbin, Darling, Steinberg, & Brown, 1993). Authoritarian and permissive styles, which can in turn be either neglectful or indulgent, undermine developmental pathways with psychological impediments. Permissive parenting styles

are most often noted as promoting identity confusion in the adolescent (Archer & Waterman, 1994). Further, identity formation is enhanced when the family promotes individuality and encourages thinking and expressing one's thoughts/emotions within connected relationships that are open-minded, sensitive and mutual (Hauser, 1999). Within the realm of parenting styles, it is the type of power a parent wields which seems to affect the adolescent's adjustment.

In addition to the style of parenting, the means that a parent uses to exert control will also play a role and have effects on the developing adolescent. The parent who uses psychological manipulation and guilt is most likely to impede the adolescent's chances of making successful adjustments. However, parents who remain aware of their adolescent's activities, attempt to control deviance and are not especially harsh in the way they deal with their adolescent, promote better adjustment in their offspring (Harter, 1990).

The mothers of the participants in this study seemed to change the dominant style in which they parented after the adolescent came into contact with the law. The mothers shifted from either permissive neglect or authoritarian closer to the authoritative style. They began parenting in a style which could best be described as authoritative. A change was also noted in the actual amount of time that the mother spent in the presence of the adolescent. Prior to the events of the charge and conviction, participants described being alone a great deal but with mother attempting to dictate the adolescent's "every move". The mothers were not always there emotionally as they were involved in thier own life events and/or somehow conveyed to their child that she was imposing on the mother's time. The adolescents reported that now their mothers check in with them more. This

leaves the adolescent with the impression that her perspective is being considered and that decision making is more of a collaboration.

Another potential shift that may have occurred between the mothers and their daughters relates to the work of Hauser and Boulds (1990). The changes described seem to match what these authors categorize as a shift from the mothers constraining their daughters to more enabling approaches. This includes encouraging the adolescent to find different friendships and activities, and actively supporting any changes she has made. With this in mind, the shift in parenting style was also a shift from constraint to support. The mother, who used to impose her decisions, now encourages her daughter to find other ways to meet her needs, and discusses and supports her daughter's choice of action.

Ironically, the fathers, despite their general absence, engaged in more supportive behavior than did mothers. This did not change with the onset of legal involvement. As interaction was limited to short, sporadic bursts, the nature of these relationships was one of the father telling his daughter that he would or might provide a little bit of assistance (most times financial) but that she needed to do the rest on her own. As well, he needed or wanted her to succeed for whatever reasons (including "to stop bugging him") therefore she was often told, "you can handle this well enough on your own and what you decide will be ok".

Some of the adolescent participants in this inquiry alluded to three of the four of Way and Gillman's (2000) resultant themes. First, participants expressed regret for not being able to "do more" with their fathers. Second, most of the participants spoke in words that suggested they were "protecting" their fathers in some way... most often from the adolescents' mothers. This finding was slightly different than the way it was reported

by Way and Gillman (2000), in that it was present across the panel of informants rather than only expressed in those adolescents who were in two parent families that had poor marital relationships. Third, some participants in this study did describe a sense of longing for shared activities, yet it seemed that they had reconciled such as activities as unlikely to occur and refrained from perserverating on the matter, indicating that their fathers were not interested in such contact. Finally, despite some descriptions of protective fathers, the participants did not indicate, as in the Way and Gillman (2000) study, that they viewed their fathers as over-protective.

Autonomy and Attachment

The predominant parenting style may play a role in the family dynamics that influence the adolescent's progression toward attaining autonomy (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1990). Autonomy is sometimes thought of as a three-stage event which begins with the child relinquishing control and needs satisfaction to the parent(s). The child then works to break away and become independent from parents and finally replaces the parental relationship with other relationships such as those with peers, romantic partners and so forth (Santrock, 1990).

It may be that the interview questions were not such that responses related to autonomy were invited. In fact, some participants described having more freedom and being more in control of what they were doing before their legal involvement began. Responses were however, more easily attributable to the concept of attachment.

Participants spoke frequently about feeling better about their relationships with their mothers and used phrases like, "she will always be there for me" and " I wish I had

trusted her more before cuz she was always there". Similar phrases were used for the participants who had relationships with their fathers. The substance of their statements seemed to relate to their understanding that basic trust, care and safety with their parents was never gone. Perhaps the incident of the adolescent getting into trouble served as a reminder that those basic parent/child bonds remained secure. For the participants who had no contact with one or the other parent, it is less clear how they perceived their attachments. The choice of words used to describe relationships with parental figures seemed to suggest that the attachment was either insecure or absent all together, for example, "I doubt she ever cared very much about me, she was more interested in what my dad could get her."

Theorists have proposed that secure attachments provide a solid base upon which the foundations of development occur and may act as a buffer against turbulence along the way. A secure attachment to one's parents seems to translate into a secure attachment to peers, romantic partners and so on (Rutter, 1995). Further, current research regarding the duration of the importance of attachment now suggests that it remains an important factor throughout adolescence (Laible, et al., 2000). The literature fails to address how the individual with insecure parental attachment manages to overcome this handicap and go on to achieve successful attachment to others. Interestingly, many participants described feeling close to their mothers (more so than in the past) and perceived her as always being there to listen, when in fact clarifying questions revealed that the two actually spent very little time together. It would seem that the adolescents' perceptions of attachment were sufficient in this instance.

The adolescents' descriptions did not support the notion of conflict as an ever-present strain between adolescents and their parents. Though the interview responses did highlight the themes of autonomy and attachment, in that the adolescents described dissension related to their increased drive towards independence at the same time they talked about valuing the connection, especially with their mothers.

Reciprocal Socialization

The adolescent does not mature in isolation. In fact while the adolescent is undergoing her own maturational process so too are her parents. As the parent attempts to guide the adolescent to the parent's world of adulthood, the adolescent works to sensitize and socialize her parent to the world as she experiences it (Santrock, 2001).

Along with the adolescent's cognitive and emotional maturation comes the rapid change of puberty. Her expanded logical reasoning means she may challenge her parent's rationale for behavioral consequences or decision-making perspectives. Increased awareness of the idealistic provokes thought on what constitutes the perfect parent and thus illuminates the discrepancies between the actual and the ideal. This inevitably leads to the adolescent suffering disappointments from failed expectations. The many changes in schooling (i.e. geographical location, more specialized teachers, bigger class sizes, more emphasis on self learning), friendships (i.e. people relocating due to changes in life situations, personalities clashing, changing interests), and romantic interests influence stability. The parents may suddenly find that mutually agreed upon expectations abruptly change as the adolescent improves her cognitive functioning, again, leading her to question the parent's decisions and expectations. Such questioning of parental authority

might cause a parent to view this questioning as resistant and oppositional and potentially place the parent in a defensive position. This in turn may raise the stakes such that the parent increases pressures to comply. All this forces some adaptation on the part of the parent in order to maintain reasonable relationship.

In turn the adult may have any number of his/her own maturational tasks to cope with. Some of which may include: evaluating marital satisfaction, career reevaluation, finances, and physical changes and repercussions. The adolescent often works to orient the parent to current issues of the times, particularly in the social realm. The two may meet frequently in intense emotionally charged interactions which stem from differing orientations and expectations.

Participants described numerous situations which illustrated reciprocal socialization. Some described having to deal with their mother's health problems, addictions, and their parents' marriages ending. Many participants became confidants to their mothers listening to the mother's experiences of financial strains, as well as emotional distresses. It is possible that these situations precipitated a blurring of parent-child boundaries and cultured an environment wrought with power struggles which left the adolescent seeking refuge in peer relationships.

Robert Kegan (1994) addressed some of these issues in his book, In Over Our Heads. The adult brings to the interaction certain expectations for the adolescent. These expectations are derived from where the adult is in his/her life given his/her experience and beliefs. The essence of what they communicate to the adolescent is that they expect the adolescent to consider life, events, situations and behaviors from their perspective,

seemingly unaware that the adolescent has a different view of how things should be, due in part to her ongoing developmental stages.

In White's model of relationship maturity (White, Speisman, Costos, & Smith, 1987), individuals progress through three levels to attain individuated-connected relationships. The first two egocentric levels see the individual move from concern primarily with who can affect them and in what way. The individual is thought to move through these levels to finally see others as separate and unique. Self-understanding as well as being able to consider the needs and perspectives of others characterizes individuated-connected relationships. This individual is then able to offer support to others as well as addressing his/ her own interests.

Most of the participants in the current study would likely fall into the intermediate level of relationship maturity, though one had clearly attained the highest level and yet another remained in a more childlike egocentric phase. In the descriptions of their relationships it would seem that the level of their maturity would often fluctuate depending on the aspect and type of relationship being assessed against this broad criteria.

Exposure and Incidence of Violence and Substance/Alcohol Abuse

The participants in this study spoke of exposure to family violence in a historical context. In cases where parental substance or alcohol abuse was present it too was spoken of as being a historical occurrence. It seemed that, through whatever method, the parents (primarily the mothers) had dealt with their addictions and/or abuse and had removed this influence from the home at least for the time being. Some accomplished this by leaving

an abusive partner, some by managing to arrest their addiction such that they were not dependent upon drugs or alcohol in the time period since the adolescent had gotten into trouble.

The adolescents did speak of these changes as welcome, and may have found them supportive in their efforts to change as well. Some had comments such as, "well since she (mum) has been clean she has been here more and she is way easier to talk to".

Dealing with the problem of family violence seemed to have instilled the notion in the adolescents of being able to take control and of not having to be involved in such a situation themselves. For those who had this in their lives, they seemed to have made note of how it happened in the first place and made statements like "I will never allowed that to happen to me".

The Imaginary Parent

One of the most striking themes that appeared during the thematic analysis was the emergence of an imaginary parent, more specifically an imaginary father. None of the adolescents without mothers alluded to an imaginary mother. Most of these adolescents had lived without a father figure for some time, some never really having a father figure in their lives at all.

As part of the interview process, all the questions were initially read aloud just so the participants could see what kinds of questions were going to be asked. Some of the adolescents offered responses to the questions relating to fathers quite spontaneously even when they had never known a father figure. Two of these participants described having a father, saying things like "I talk to in my head whenever I need him". These

adolescents made statements such as " if my dad were here..." and " sometimes I imagine that my father would...(...be like...) (...or do such and such)" and " I think I am like he would have been..." or "my mum says I do (something) just like he used to". One participant actually described "him" as " well, kind of like an imaginary playmate I had when I was little, except it is my dad."

The imaginary parent is not one that is oft spoken of in the literature and therefore unraveling it here takes a bit of guesswork. One possible explanation would be offered by Bandura's (1965, 1977) discussions regarding vicarious role models. The individual attaches the attributes she has obtained from various sources such as the media, literature, exposure to her friend's fathers, uncles, and so forth to create the father she both wants and needs to see her through. Thus the "imaginary father" embodies many of the characteristics of a supportive, authoritative, enabling father who she can look to for emotional support and even rescuing. She identifies with him at times, while at others blames him for her situation, behavior and perspective. The imaginary father is also able to offer her solutions that she cannot for one reason or another articulate as being hers.

A study conducted by Seiffge-Krenke (1997) included the examination of 241 adolescents' diaries to determine the existence, and possible role of imaginary companions. Content analysis revealed that imaginary companions provided support to the adolescent during the process of identity development. The relative influence of self-concept, creativity, role-taking ability, coping behavior, and egocentrism was further explored. Results showed that the imaginary companion was not a result of egocentrism, and was not used as a substitute for actual family or peer relations. Socially competent and creative adolescents with good coping abilities were particularly prone to create these

"special friends" (Sieffge-Krenk, 1997). Though Sieffge-Krenk's use of "special friends" appears to exclude any inference to "special family member", it would be reasonable to attribute these findings to the adolescents in the current study in terms of the purpose and function of creating their imaginary fathers. Further exploration in this area would no doubt be warranted.

It did seem that for these adolescents the creation and existence of this imaginary father was protective. Further, the adolescents who described this phenomenon did not take it out of a realistic perspective. Though it was arguably as fantasy, the effects were very real and it did not in any way suggest that the participants were delusional or psychotic.

Miscellaneous

A pattern in responses emerged which warrants mention yet which does not seem to relate to the themes discussed thus far. First, the descriptors used by the participants did not include "love". Though many of the descriptors used would exemplify how one might communicate love and caring. At times, there were pauses in the responses where the word "love" or "loving" might have been on the tip of the participant's tongue and she may have contemplated using the word but for some reason there was hesitation and she chose other descriptors. This would certainly be an interesting avenue to explore in further research.

Societal

Socioeconomic Conditions and Population Density

Most of the participants lived in lower socioeconomic conditions and tended to be in areas of higher population density. In one respect they enjoyed this as it meant their friends were always near. Yet the financial strains were a source of stress for them as they were maturing and they expressed guilt related to being a financial burden.

Peer Relations

Adolescents in this study, mostly described long-standing friendships of more than a year and most over three years. Thus the close friendships described were supportive and understanding.

It would seem though that it was the more casual relationships that were related to how the adolescent got into trouble with the law. A significant change occurred after the adolescent was charged and convicted. The superficial interest her peer group may have had in her waned and she was left to face the reality of her actions with only her closest supporters nearby. From this, these adolescents described such casual and potentially harmful peer relationships as "not being worth it" and many commented "I learned who my friends really are".

The friendships described by these adolescents did not seem to fall into the area related to the transfer of attachment from the parents to others as was discussed previously under the Parental heading. These friendships seemed to remain as separate

entities, co-existing with the parental bond and therefore possibly representative of a transitional stage.

Unlike the adolescents in Smokowski et al's 1999 study, participants did not identify as valuable the lessons learned by observing the consequences of others' actions. Perhaps it was too close to the event etc. for the participants to recognize such vicarious lessons.

Role Models

When the participants in this study described persons other than peers and parents who had influenced them in their post-delinquency phase, most of these "Other Relationships" fit into the category of role models. These role models were both directly and some indirectly helpful as they offered alternative perspectives and "ways of being" that the adolescent hadn't previously considered. The adolescents sought interaction with these "Others" because they admired particular attributes of the individuals.

For some, these people provided a more objective view which the adolescent found supportive or which, at times, challenged how they viewed and interpreted events, behaviors and situations. In some cases, the simple fact that someone outside the closer circle of friends and family might actually, genuinely care about the participant was a major shock. Nonetheless, the caring attention, or listening ear, was very welcome. The lack of emotional ties with these role models may have made the relationships "safer" for the adolescents, permitting them to be "more honest" as they explored their thoughts feelings and emotions related to various topics.

Teachers, social workers, probation officers, and lawyers appeared most frequently in the "Other Relationships" category. Participants identified the "Others'" informational and motivational support as most helpful.

Connectedness to School

Among the factors that put adolescents at risk is the lack of connection to school (Pretty, Andrews, & Collett, 1994; Resnick et al., 1997). An interesting division of thought was expressed in the adolescents' responses. The participants clearly differentiated "school" from education. They identified school as having some importance, yet it was mostly for its function as the social hub. Many of the adolescents had left formal schooling around the time that they started to engage in delinquent behavior, yet now returned having identified education as being necessary. They did not however, necessarily, return to the formal school setting, but rather to alternative programs or to correspondence schools.

None of the adolescents expressed feeling any "attachment" to their schools. They did not have any sense of school pride, they did not speak about liking their school, nor did they express any participation or desire to participate in school functions or activities. In fact, they saw schools as oppressive and discriminating against them. This conflicted perspective on schooling may simply be representative of the usual attachment/autonomy developmental issue in adolescence, or may, instead, represent residual feelings of the alienation and isolation that helped to encourage the problem behavior pattern in the first place. Obviously, lacking a corroborative study on the school as a whole and the "sense of pride" reported by the remainder of the student body, it is not possible to know if the

comments of the participants were particular to their shared delinquent profiles or representative of the overall school spirit. Nonetheless, the prevalent theme of "the outsider" and the accompanying sense of pervasive disconnection is also echoed in the school-related responses.

Community and Religion

The adolescents expressed the same sentiment about community as they did about school. They had no emotional investment to speak of in the community at large. They were glad to have their friends nearby but they were not interested in becoming involved in community issues or programs. Thus it would seem that the lack of community involvement, as a risk factor, has not changed for these individuals. They remain disconnected and largely devoid of an interest in the greater world around them, though perhaps remaining insular does serve a protective function for these individuals.

When viewed from a more holistic perspective, examining the totality of relationships in these adolescents' lives, it is not surprising that they expressed a fundamental mistrust and lack of faith, if you would, in the world around them. They did not involve themselves emotionally with school, community or church, yet this lack of involvement did not seem to translate into a lack of traditional values, beliefs and even morality. The protective function hypothesized to account for an insular attitude towards involvement in the community could also be extended to account for the lack of participation in organized religion and school activities.

That these individuals are products of challenging environments is unquestioned; however, it is interesting to note that these adolescents have possibly attained their

resiliency by not throwing the proverbial baby out with the bath water. They have retained and strengthened the relationships that they value but, more importantly, which value them and they may with time be able to extend that sense of security to a broader community.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Impressions

There are times when a smile, a laugh or a wave of the hand goes beyond its accompanying words. There are also times when a simple phrase may imply much deeper meaning than is spoken. During the course of conducting this study, there were experiences like these for me as researcher. I am hopeful that in delving into the participants' spoken words, I have not gone beyond my scope in interpreting their stories. Keeping this in mind, I believe that the participants in this study attached a much richer story than their words conveyed. In this section, I would like to use their words to highlight my impressions in an attempt to shed a brighter light on their paths.

As I sat and listened to each of these girls and then began to think about their experiences and perceptions as a collective, it became evident to me that two major events occurred in their lives. First, a critical incident precipitated changes within each of the individuals. Second, it was the primary support relationship, those between mother and daughter, which underwent accommodative changes.

These girls suspended their ideals in the hopes of finding something they believed was better than their existing relationships and themselves. The influence of peers, the intense desire to belong, and the perceived absence of their mothers provided some of the motivation to turn away from their parental relationships. Further, motivation seemed to have been fuelled by the adolescents' desire to resist parental control, since they perceived control from afar as unfair and uncaring. Even further motivation seemed rooted in attempts to avoid being responsible within existing relationships.

Some participants explained that they were angry that their mothers were not there for them before and cited the renewed perception of the mothers' presence as what they found helpful and important to them post-incident. One participant stated "She was never around and she was always more interested in having time with her boyfriend or finding a boyfriend not hanging out with me. All we ever did was fight about everything...and she didn't even care about how I felt about things. We never went to movies or went out shopping or anything."

When further prompted with the question "Did your mum ever ask you to do anything with her?" the participant replied: "Well, I can think of a few times when she wanted to go out, but I already had plans with my friends. She always asked me at bad times. Usually she would say, 'Hey, let's take the dog for a walk or do you want to get groceries with me?' Wow, that's really a thrill. I had better things to do, and really, I didn't want to go walk the dog with her. What if someone saw me? And the times that I wanted to do something with her, she was always busy. Well I didn't exactly ask her if she wanted to do anything with me because I knew that the answer would be, 'no I can't go out right now'."

Q: "And how did that change after you got in trouble with the law?"

Participant: "It just seemed that she started to pay more attention to me. I don't know really. She spent a lot of time crying and that kind of got to me, too."

Another participant declared, "My mom and I hardly ever talked. I would get home from school or from being out with my friends and go straight to my room. My mom would ask me what I did that day, and I just thought that she was being snoopy. I didn't really think it was her business what I was doing with my friends. I had just been

at school all day and didn't really want to hear how she didn't like what I was doing or how I was spending my time."

Still another participant stated, "I'm not sure if my mom actually forgot about me, but I didn't really care about what she was thinking at the time. I thought that everything she said and did was crazy. (laughing) Actually, I had a lot of friends asking me why I put up with it or how I could stand it... and it seemed like it was very uncool to know her."

Inherent in the answers provided by the participants was a declared absence of their mother's support. Perhaps the mothers were trying to connect with their daughters before the critical incident. However, they had lost their synchrony or were temporarily out of sync. It is difficult to know if the mothers were truly unavailable to their daughters or if the participants had found perspectives to validate their own behavior and perceptions.

Having created a situation that validates the gap between the parent and the child may have several implications. What happens once the child meshes with a group only to realize that it is not for her, or that in order to be accepted by those she identifies with in most ways means doing something she does not agree with? This is where I believe the participants learned the lesson of true friendship. "They always made it sound like it was gonna be such fun and they really wanted me around. It was really the shits when I had to take the rap for other people and they didn't even have the decency to come a visit me or call me. That really bit me hard." Another participant stated, "Well, really they kinda let you think they are your friends but when I really needed them they didn't want to know me. I saw others being treated like it was cool that they got in trouble but that didn't

happen to me, they just pretty much dumped me and I think that is pretty shallow you know. It was like if I wasn't doing something for them I wasn't worth it or something and I trusted that they would back me up. Never again. I know who are my real friends thanks."

Q: What else did you learn from the situation with these friends?

Participant: "umm, well I just wanted to fit in and be liked by more people I think and I don't think that is gonna be the way it works. I thought they all had it together and it would be fun but really they are just a bunch of lonely people and they want to get back at people. I kinda wish my mum would've said I couldn't hang around with them but I know I wouldn't have listened to her. It would have been one more thing to fight about. I thought she was interfering and that I had it under control."

Most learned that the relationship they could count on most was the one with their mother. It would seem from their daughters' descriptions that the mothers made substantial efforts in changing situations and approaches to the benefit of their daughters. These efforts did not go unnoticed. "She gave up drugs and she booted him out. I didn't know she had it in her to do that."

Q: How was that significant to you?

A: Well it showed me that she cared. I had wanted her to stop the drugs for a long time but she didn't seem to listen to me…it was like if she can do it so can I." "I knew when she kicked him out she had done that for me too. I knew she figured it was our only chance and I knew I had to do something too."

For all but one participant I had the sense they would have eventually chosen a less delinquent path, yet I am left with the impression that the "critical incident" was

catalytic in interrupting the course of behavior at the time, and forcing a number of re-evaluations to occur.

When participants spoke of what was different in their relationships with their mothers from the time they got into trouble with the law, they highlighted most often that their mother had changed in the way she dealt with her daughter. "She used to just nag at me all the time... did you do this? ... when are you gonna do that? All I wanted to do was get away."

Q: How is it different now?

Participant: "Well now she kinda says what she wants to happen and then asks what part of it I am gonna help with. Then we talk more about it. I usually end up doing what she wants anyway, it is just easier to do it instead of being nagged at."

Another participant elaborated, "She used to complain about me never being home and not helping her with chores and stuff. She would just keep telling me what I was doing wrong most of the time so it was like why bother. Now we usually set up like a schedule for loading the dishes and we talk about who will do what. Really, I think she is listening to me more now. She got scared that something might happen to me if I went to jail. She knows I am not that bad."

It would seem that although these participants describe the perception of being "neglected" for a period by their mothers as their primary support and caregiver, they consistently stop short of seeing themselves as "rejected". Is it possible that therein exists a distinction of the resilient? Certainly if nothing else, the event of charge and conviction evoked changes in the actual behaviors of the mothers and also in the perceptions the participants held of their mothers actions' and intentions which came closer to their

vision of an ideal parent. Perhaps this also occurred for the mothers' view of their daughters, though that would require further investigation to determine. More questions come to mind: Did the participants make their expectations of their mothers clear? Did they somehow alter their perceptions to validate and justify their thoughts, feelings and emotions? Further inquiry may offer some insight into answers to such questions.

The Imaginary Father

The emergence of the imaginary father was fascinating to me. As I explored this area with the participants who described such an entity, I was struck by the protective role the imaginary father played in the development of these individuals. As a creative adjunct to typical coping strategies, this entity seemed to be a form of self-parenting or a way of externalizing what they could not verbalize and own for themselves. When they needed guidance with issues of the world, including relationships, these participants spoke to themselves through their imaginary fathers. It was their way of getting some kind of a relationship with a father, albeit a made up one. They were able to create an idealized parent who met their needs in the most relevant ways since it was, in fact, they who were dictating how this was accomplished. It did strike me as interesting that the same did not occur for those participants who had been raised without a mother figure, yet I suspect that the incidence of imaginary parents is not terribly high. Again, further research and diligent investigation may shed light on these issues.

Two participants in this study reported the "imaginary father" phenomenon; one was somewhat hesitant to elaborate on it and confided that it is not something she talks about. The other participant was more open to questions relating to her "imaginary

father" (her choice of words). When I asked the question which I would have asked of one who had contact with a father or father figure the second participant answered the questions as if she had a father, thus prompting me to explore further. First it was by making sure I had not missed something.

Q: I thought you had said that you were not raised with your biological father or a father figure around?

Participant: (laughing) Yeah well... that is true...technically I suppose.

Q: I am not sure what you mean, could you explain it a little more for me?

Participant: Well, I kinda have a dad in my head.

Q: In your head?

Participant: Yeah ...hmmm well...it is kinda like...ummm...I always missed out on having a dad (laughing) so I made one up.

Q: You made one up in your head?

Participant: uh huh, like kinda like an imaginary one...cuz I didn't have one.

Q: Oh, like some people make up imaginary friends?

Participant: Right...like when I was a kid I had an imaginary playmate.

Q: I see. Can you tell me more about your imaginary father? What is he like?

Participant: Well, first of all I sure as hell don't tell people about it, they might think I was nuts. But, it is like I can have a dad in my mind to talk to... like some of my friends. That way if I have a dad kinda problem I have someone to sort it out with.

Q: So you consult with this dad? On any particular topic or just in general?

Participant: Mostly I talk to him when I think he will help. Like when I cannot seem to communicate with my mum very well. Sometimes when I have questions about

stuff. You know, like mostly to do with guys and all that. I guess sometimes I wish he were there to give me the answers and tell me what to do. And (laughing) he does when I talk to him.

Q: What kinds of things do you talk with him about?

Participant: Well…sometimes I have questions about what kind of person he would be and I ask if that is why I am the way I am. My mum says he was a drunk and I wonder if that was really true and if I am like him much. (pause).

Q: Any other kinds of things you talk about with him?

Participant: ummm…I guess I look for him to help me make up my mind about things. You know like…should I go for a certain guy. Or how do I know someone is for real.

Q: How might he answer some of those questions for you?

Participant: ummm…well he might tell me how he would deal with a situation or with someone who is being a jerk. I do not really know, you know. I haven't given it this much thought. It is just that he is kind of there.

Q: Was this father there before you got into trouble?

Participant: yep

Q: Are things different now in this relationship?

Participant: ummm…not really. I am not sure if I talk to him quite as much though. Things are better with my mum and I have (friend's name) to talk to. But I guess sometimes I still talk to him.

The role of this imaginary father seems to have been more prominent prior to the "incident" and appears to have served some supportive function for this participant. She

concedes that the need to use this coping mechanism has diminished since things have gotten back on track so to speak but does not eliminate it as a viable source of support in the future.

Support

In closing, I would like to offer a few thoughts on the topic of resilience and relationships. It was unclear to me as I listened to these young women, now with the benefit of hindsight, whether they had been given the essential building blocks to maintain meaningful relationships. Based on both their responses to the interview questions as well as their unsolicited commentary, I found they were more than capable of initiating relationships, yet they may have lacked the information, role modeling, skill and motivation to maintain them in ways which they found satisfying. They watched mothers, fathers, and the various combinations of half and stepsiblings pass through their lives and I wonder about the perception this gave them about maintaining meaningful relationships. The experiences in the immediate family of most of these participants also included exposure to family violence and further did not appear to convey the hard work it takes to communicate in normal loving and caring ways over the long term. It is difficult to weigh the beneficial vs. detrimental influences some of these relationships held for these individuals, as we are abundantly clear about the effects of family violence over time. There were very few relationships described by these participants that provided them with persistent messages that may have enhanced their well-being.

Much of the anger in the participants' voices seemed rooted in a sense of entitlement they held about being "provided for". Somehow they wanted those they cared

for to be more representative in their lives by giving them more, yet they did not address their own responsibility in that, by accepting more. They sought fun, and escape, and the freedom to explore their "possible selves". Yet, they did not seem, for the period of time when they were behaving in rebellious and delinquent ways, to show much respect for their mother's views or expectations. They may have converted their mothers' support to nagging, abandonment and lack of considerations for their feelings. Although one participant did discuss the positive changes her mother had made by kicking a substance addiction, perhaps other changes made in the mother-daughter relationships, were a shift in the daughters' perception of support. Was nagging converted to support after the critical incident? I wonder about the development of the gap and loss of synchrony. Are these patterns established earlier in childhood? Do the increasing demands placed on parents in stressful environments influence the inception of this gap? Perhaps it is the parents who hold the best position to deal with these issues and therefore require substantial support. In addition to supporting children and adolescents, it may be imperative to offer parents support from the beginning of their child rearing efforts. Support must come in the form of education and guidance, yet it must acknowledge the unique situations faced by each individual.

Implications

Parents, health care professionals, and teachers of adolescents in similar circumstance may find inspiration, knowledge and insights from personal glimpses offered by qualitative undertakings such as this study. For those parents who are inclined, the study brings to light the importance of roles within a family and between an adolescent and society. The message parents might wish to convey to their children from

early on is simply the notion that they belong and are connected and welcome. Talking about capabilities in realistic ways and promoting a sense of self-competence to cope with situations, both anticipated as well as unexpected, will stand the child in good stead during the developmentally tumultuous years and beyond. Feedback, which addresses their behavior rather than their identity, may be more effective in dealing with the straying adolescent.

Parents may gain more ground if they ask more questions of their child, preparing her to think about herself, her situations, and her future. Such questions may include: What are your goals? How do you hope to achieve them? What do you need to know to achieve them? Have you considered_____? What can we work at together? What would you like help with? As the child matures, the parent may need to play a secondary role while expressing his/her concerns about behavior and interests yet may continue to set some boundaries and consequences as necessary. By asking questions parents communicate interest while gaining a more complete understanding of the adolescent's perspective.

The provision of information coupled with the consistent message of perseverance and determination appears to promote a sense of competence. Despite society's concerns regarding a child's school environment, peers and even television viewing habits, the parental position remains paramount in influencing successful development in at risk children and adolescents.

Although it appears that a critical incident was catalytic in these adolescents' experience, it is not clear whether this incident needed to occur for each to decide not to continue with delinquent behavior. Rooted in the common elements of each girl's story

are the themes of competence and self-efficacy that they needed in order to succeed in their lives. They may not have clearly formulated goals or plans for their future, but they all expressed the belief that they can do what they set out to do.

It would be prudent, for those in a position to identify adolescents at risk, to refer these adolescents for support in hopes that early intervention may offer some chance of preventing a progression to increasingly more delinquent behaviors. Since the participants readily acknowledged the value of role models in their lives, exposure to a wide variety of caring and involved individuals may help provide the sense of connection that the majority of these adolescents appear to lack.

Teachers and educational programs will certainly play a role in the future development of at risk individuals. Teachers may provide informational and motivational guidance; however, the effects of such may not be clear immediately. The results of longitudinal qualitative studies are only now beginning to shed light on possible latent learning and its role in protection and resilience (Smokowlski et al., 1999).

Health care professionals will need to continue to develop and adapt programs to meet the evolving needs of these adolescents. Despite research that supports the efficacy of programming, there remains a stigma attached that might deter those in need, especially in the face of peer judgements, at this developmentally critical time. (Nabors et al., 2000).

Participants of the current study contributed their own suggestions for helping adolescents who had similar experience to theirs. Suggestions included "... when kids are on probation they should not let them off so easily... when they are supposed to get counseling, the P.O. should make them go" and "Humiliation won't make people

change... no one factor will have lots of influence... maybe peer counseling from those who have been through it... and show them videotapes of parents in agony so they can realize that people do care". Other suggestions all centered around support: "help them find decent friends who will help them stay out of trouble" or "make sure they have someone to talk to".

Limitations

In the interest of controlling the volume of information that open question interviews could generate with regard to friends and sibling relationships, it was necessary to limit the discussion. Friends were limited to the two or three most important. Further, it is acknowledged that the issue of siblings was not addressed as an independent category.

Siblings might have been an exclusive category, yet the scope of the study required a smaller focus. While acknowledging sibling relationships as a factor in an at-risk adolescent's life, a larger study might have been able to examine the full extent of the impact of blended families, and multiple step relationships. Therefore the relationships of siblings may be underrepresented in this study, as participants were requested to only briefly discuss the importance of a sibling relationship when asked, only generally, was there "anyone else who was important".

Further, it is important to exercise caution when looking at the relationships in categories. One must refrain from too broad an inference when judging the relative importance to the adolescent of any relationship, since the notion of comparative value

can only be known to the individual and that value may change according to time, place and circumstance.

The cumulative effect of all relationships cannot be adequately measured in a preliminary exploration such as this. It is also possible that some of the resilient changes may be attributable to the natural maturational process. It is difficult to know how much influence this would have during the 18 months to two years between the time of her offence and this study.

For the purposes of this study the researcher remained close to the questions of the interview schedule. In future, it may have better served the intent of the research to use even more open questions and permit the adolescent to meander a bit more in their responses, encouraging them to explore while they answer. Additional questions which might have been particularly helpful were suggested as the interview unfolded, for example, "How do you think you got into trouble like this in the first place?" and "Are there any things you could think of that may have been helpful to you at the time?". Because the time required to complete the interviews was underestimated, it became important to not extend the interview further by revisiting the adolescent's response in order to add new information.

A general overview study, with this volume of questions, is by nature limited in its examination of any particular area or subject. An additional limitation pertains to the qualitative method itself, which leaves a collective assessment of the responses open to interpretation and of course its corollary, misinterpretation. The questions may be misunderstood or the interviewer may inadvertently influence the direction of the participants' answers through both verbal and non-verbal signals. Only in recognizing

these limitations can we appreciate that the value of such open, participant-centered studies lies with the volume of information reported first hand and its place in elucidating the larger body of quantitative research in the area.

Future Directions

Further study into the meaning and perception of these adolescent females' relationships, as well as research across a broad range of the possible mediators of risk factors, will be necessary in the professional community's attempt to provide comprehensive and effective treatment programs. An advantage to qualitative research is its potential to adapt to emerging information. It would be important to remain cognizant of trends as they develop, thus the research can illuminate issues as they become important to the participants.

Only a continued examination of current attitudes and perceptions will clarify the points at which the critical developmental pathways deviate from the norm. More important now is research which continues to examine not only resiliency but the resilient in addition to the population of, often voiceless adolescents, who fall, unheard, through the many unfortunate gaps in our knowledge and in our treatment options.

Each category of relationship begs to be explored in more depth and detail than was afforded in this study, utilizing a variety of research designs. For example, after the completion of a number of qualitative inquiries, a list of descriptors might be used to identify the attributes of significant relations within the individual's interaction. Attempts to understand the meaning which adolescents attach to their relationships may offer clues

into how to best circumvent critical incidents from continuing to play out in detrimental ways.

It might also be instructive to pursue explorations of the role-model aspects of these relationships to see where any incongruence or miscommunication might arise. Mentoring, its role and significance to adolescent relationships requires more qualitative investigation.

Further study into the concept of the "imaginary parent" and its potential role in assisting the resilient adolescent to essentially "self-parent", when and if necessary, may provide some new insights. In addition, how an adolescent with an insecure parental attachment manages to transgress this risk factor to form secure/attached relationships later in life bears more in-depth qualitative explorations.

An important question to arise out of this piece of work is "Is the critical incident necessary?" It is also curious that only one romantic relationship was described as loving. No parental relationship was described with the word, though it is the researcher's opinion that participants were trying to describe "how" their parents demonstrated their love. Research which explores the process and mechanisms of protective relationships of at risk individuals needs to continue with its focus directed on the many sub-contexts and issues involved before proceeding apace to a renewed examination of the big picture..

Final Remarks

Research over the past three decades has exploded in the realm of developmental psychology. The inclusion of multiple perspectives has allowed for an extensive exploration of the factors involved in normal development. Scientists and clinicians have

also endeavored to seek information that would benefit those individuals who are faced with extraordinary challenges to their development in the hopes of understanding, and perhaps altering, developmental pathways bringing them to more normative trajectories.

Though many of the individual factors are solidified in the early years of development, still others are malleable and influenced by family, school and community relationships. Intervention may play a role in support and education at all levels when necessary to assist those at risk in achieving more beneficial outcomes. In order to provide efficient and effective intervention, professionals, from teachers to social policy makers, need to understand, not only predisposing factors that place children at risk, but also the processes and mechanisms that mitigate the effect of those risks.

Review of the literature and the results of this study inform us that beyond the externally verifiable existence of risk factors there is meaning. The meaning behind events, behaviors, situations and relationships to the developing child, and to the developing adolescent influences them in unique ways. The stories and perspectives shared by the participants of this project have assisted in illuminating the importance of individual perspective. The stories also inform us that an underlying belief in oneself, coupled with the support of someone we care about, go along way in correcting past difficulties. Perhaps we underestimate at times, the persistence of simple messages. These young women voiced the knowledge that they were always cared for (though at times it was not so obvious to them), that they knew someone was there for them, and that deep down they would survive.

The question remains: "Was it necessary for these participants to experience "a wake up call" in order to gain perspective and direction on their lives?" or would they

have come to that realization eventually? It would seem that once they were held accountable and made responsible for their actions that both the adolescent and their parent(s) were required to make choices and chose what society would deem as responsible options to alter their behavior.

Finally, the participants of this study are due a resounding word of thanks. Without their willingness to share their personal experiences and speak about their relationships, this study would not have gotten off the ground. I wish them well in their pursuits and hope that they take with them the lessons of their youth to cherish through the years.

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Appendix A

Letter of Introduction
(For recruitment purposes)

I am a graduate student at the University of Victoria. I am conducting a study to explore the relationships of young females who have committed a criminal offence, yet have chosen not to re-offend.

Research in the field of developmental psychology suggests that relationships may be an important component in the successful development of adolescents. In particular, relationships may play a role in moderating the effects of certain risk factors that tend to lead to problem behaviors, such as delinquency, drug and/or alcohol abuse, and early sexual activity.

The proposed study involves obtaining interview data from at least ten females aged 15/16. The interview will contain questions such as, " When you look around and see who is there for you, who is the person that you feel closest to?" and "How would you describe him or her?" An important goal of the study is to understand the nature and meaning of the adolescents' relationships with others from her perspective.

In term of expectations, there would be two meetings. The first, to conduct the interview which is anticipated to take approximately one hour. The second meeting is intended to present the interview information and interpretations in a way to check for accuracy.

Meetings would be arranged at the convenience of the adolescent. Participation in the study is voluntary. Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of alias names chosen by the participants.

If you have any questions regarding any aspect of the study, please do not hesitate to contact me. And finally, if you have any clients whom you believe would participate, please ask them to contact me.

I can be reached Monday – Friday from 9 am until 8pm at 881-2069. There is voice mail so messages can be left anytime.

If you would like to discuss the study with my supervisor at the University. Dr Geoff Hett, can be reached at 721- 7783.

Sincerely,

Rochelle Lohrasbe, RPN/RN, BScN, MA (cand)

Appendix B

Letter of Introduction
(Potential participants and their parents)

Thank you for your interest in this study. I am a Graduate student at the University of Victoria. I am interested in learning about the meaning of relationships between girls aged 15-16, and the people in their lives. Some people who work with these young women believe that relationships are important in adolescent development. I am curious to know which relationships are important and what the relationships mean to the girls.

I would welcome the opportunity to hear from you. I have developed a set of questions that may help me to understand who is important and how you see them as being important to you. The questions would take about an hour to answer, and then I would like to meet with you again to make sure that I understand your answers correctly. The interview would be audiotaped to make sure I can accurately hear what you are saying. All the information that I obtain from you will remain between us. The tapes will be yours to keep or we can destroy them after the study is completed. You may choose to use a different name in order to protect your identity. I will share the general findings with you if you are interested. I believe it is important to hear from you, in your own words so that people who work with young women will have a better understanding of how to assist or support others in similar situations to yours.

Your participation is voluntary, which means you only participate if you want. If you or your parents have any questions regarding any aspect of the study I would welcome the chance to talk with you. Please feel free to call me @ 881-2069 between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. If I do not answer you can leave a message that only I can retrieve and I will return your call as soon as I can.

Thank you again for considering this opportunity to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Rochelle Lohrasbe, RPN/RN, BScN.

APPENDIX C

Consent/Assent to Participate
The Relationships of "At Risk" Adolescent Females: A Qualitative Exploration

This research project will explore the significant relationships of young females. Your participation in this study will involve about 3 hours of your time. You will be asked about the significant relationships in your life and their meaning for you. The descriptions you provide of your relationships will be used as part of a Master's degree thesis and may be published in a scholarly journal.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time and your choice to participate or not will have no effect on your probation (if applicable) or any future standing with the University of Victoria. There are no known risks to participating in this study. The benefits to participation may include achieving a greater awareness of your relationships and their meaning for you, assisting the people who work with you and others to better their understanding of you and assist them in developing programs and strategies to help others in the future.

All the information you provide will remain confidential. You will be asked to choose an alias, which will only be known by the researcher. Interview notes and audio taped interviews will be coded to protect your identity, and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. When the study is complete and the audiotapes will be erased.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher at the numbers provided. You will be provided a copy of this form for your records. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Having read both the information for participants and the above, I give my permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

I, _____ give my permission to participate in this study.

I would like the name _____ to be used as my alias.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: Rochelle Lohrasbe Phone: 881 2069 (cell)
380 3040 (office)

Supervisor: Dr Geoff Hett Phone: 721 7783

APPENDIX D

Interview

Date: _____
ID: _____

Current Status

1. What stands out for you in your life just now? What kinds of things have been important?

2. What things have happened in your life that have been particularly difficult to deal with lately? What has been particularly enjoyable for you lately?

3. Tell me something about what your life is like right now.
   a) What do you care about? What kinds of things do you think about a lot?
   b) What do you worry most about?
   c) What do you enjoy?
   d) What do you usually do during the day? Night?

(Probes: What 's a typical day like for you? What did you do yesterday- when did you wake up . .then what?)

Future

4. What would you like to see happen in your future? What are you most afraid of happening in your future? What would you like to be able to say about yourself in the future? In five years? Why?

5. What would be the ideal job for you? What kind of work would you like to be doing in five years?
   a) What appeals to you about being a _____?
   b) How do you plan to achieve your goals?
   c) What do you think might make it or has made it difficult to do this?
   d) What has helped you or might help you to reach your goals?

Self

6. How would you describe yourself to yourself? If you tell yourself who you really are, what would you say? (INTERVIEWER: For each adjective ask: What do you mean by _____?)

7. What do you like/dislike about yourself? Why?

8. Is the way you see yourself now different from the way you saw yourself in the past? What led to the changes?

9. What does being a female mean to you? Has what it means to be a female changed for you?

Relationships

10. When you look around and see who is there for you, who is the person you feel closest to? Why?

11. How would you describe him or her? (INTERVIEWER: For each adjective ask: What do you mean by _____?)

12. How would you describe this relationship? What do you particularly like/dislike about this relationship?

13. What would you like to change about the relationship? Why?

14. Is there anyone else with whom you feel particularly close? (if yes: repeat questions 10-14 for each)

Mother

15. How would you describe your mother? (INTERVIEWER: For each adjective ask: What do you mean by _____?)

16. How would you describe your relationship with your mother? What do you like/dislike about your relationship with her?

17. What would you like to change about the relationship? Why?

18. Is the way you see your mother now different from the way you saw her in the past? What led to the changes?

19. How helpful has your mother been to you since your trouble with the law began? What does she help with? What does she not help with?

20. In what ways are you like your mother? How are you different?

Father

21. Do you have any contact with your father? Have you had a father figure in your life so far who is not your biological father (e.g. a step-father who raised you)? If yes, to either question then ask the following; if yes to both, then ask only for the biological father):

22. How would you describe your father (or father figure)? (INTERVIEWER: For each adjective ask: What do you mean by _____?)

23. How would you describe your relationship with your father? What do you like/dislike about this relationship?

24. What would you like to change about the relationship? Why?

25. Is the way you see your father now different from the way you saw him in the past? What lead to the changes?

26. How helpful has your father been to you since your trouble with the law began? What does he help with? What doesn't he help with?

27. In what ways are you like your father? How are you different?

Boyfriend

28. Are you in a romantic relationship just now? If No, why not? If YES, How would you describe him? (INTERVIEWER: For each adjective ask: What do you mean by _____?)

29. How would you describe your relationship with this person? What do you like/dislike?

30. What would you like to change about this relationship?

31. What do you look for in guys these days? As you look back have things changed in what you look for? What does love mean to you? What does commitment mean?

Friends

32. Do you have a close or best friend(s)? If YES: How would you describe this friend? What do you mean by_____? If NO: Why do you think you do not have close or best friends? Would you like to have such friends? What makes it difficult for you to have such friends?

33. How would you describe the relationship? What do you like/dislike about the relationship?

34. What would you like to change about this relationship? Why?

35. What do you do together? How often do you see/talk with this friend? Has he/she been helpful since your trouble with the law began? How has she/he been helpful?

36. How long have you been close with this friend? How has the friendship changed over the years (months)? Why has it changed?

37. How have your friendships in general changed over the years? Why have they changed or not changed?

Other Relationships

38. Looking back over the time since your trouble with the law began, has there been anyone else who has been really important for you (family or otherwise)? INTERVIEWER: For each relationship ask:

a) How would you describe _____?
b) How would you describe the relationship?
c) How/why is the relationship important to you?
d) How has this relationship changed over the years?

Religion

39. Do you belong to any religious group? Are you active in your involvement? If Yes: How has your faith affected you? If No: Do you think religion has played any part in your life at all? How?

School

40. Do you attend school? If not, Why not?

41. What do you like/dislike about school?

42. What kinds of things do you do after school?

43. What kinds of school programs are you involved in?

Community

44. Tell me about your neighborhood? What is it like? What do you like/dislike about your neighborhood? Do you feel safe? What community programs do you participate in?

Conclusions

45. What would you like to change most from the way things are now?

46. Is there anything else I should know about you?

47. What kinds of services have been helpful for you since your trouble with the law began? Why?

48. What has not been helpful?

49. What do you think should be done to help young females who are likely to or have gotten in trouble with the law, so they can do well in their lives?

50. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?

Adapted from: Growing Up Fast: Adolescent mothers transitions to adulthood (2001). Leadbeater, B.J. and Way, N.

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