

Risk and resilience: The role of risk and protective factors in  
the lives of young people over time.

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date:

Peter Stanley

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Peter Rodeka and Katy Laurence collaborated with me in writing *Guidelines for teachers for the identification of year 7 students at risk for substance abuse and other problem behaviours*, published in 2000, and the thesis makes reference to, and calls upon, case material contained in this document. Lastly, and very importantly, I need to acknowledge my debt to the 12 young adults who have allowed me the privilege of sharing their lives

The *Guidelines for teachers* (Stanley, Rodeka, & Laurence, 2000) were written for, and funded by, the New Zealand Ministry of Education, and a copy of a letter from the Ministry is attached (Appendix A) giving permission to use the material for a doctoral thesis. As well, this letter shows that Katy Laurence and Peter Rodeka gave their consent to this further use of the *Guidelines*.

The thesis research project was considered by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee and the investigation was approved on 10 May 2006 (AUTEC reference number 06/55).

## **Abstract**

In 1998, 12 students, aged 11-12 years, were identified by primary schools in a socially disadvantaged area of New Zealand as being at risk of negative life outcomes, as a consequence of known adversities in their lives. The students were interviewed, as were their parents and teachers, and they also completed learning assessments and measures of personal and social concerns. The purpose of these evaluations was to identify risk and protective factors in the young people's lives, and to make estimations of personal resilience.

In 2008, nine of the original study participants, who were now aged 21-22 years and in emerging adulthood, were located and were interviewed again. The assessments addressed the participant's current circumstances, and what had happened for them over the last ten years. The interviews also asked the participants to reflect about 12 resilience dimensions that have been identified in the literature (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998) and whether they considered that they were personally resilient.

The recent interview data were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The individual analyses show a rich diversity of life paths and, as well, three sets of themes were identified across the case studies; and they are personal relationships, contexts of development (schooling and education, culture, religion, and jobs and careers), and personhood and identity.

A resilience model was derived from the integration of the data from the first and second assessments with contemporary resilience studies and theorising. The central idea of the model is that resilient functioning is determined by the nature and quality of relationships within, and across, developmental settings. As a corollary, it is hypothesised that interpersonal relationships influence individual executive functioning, and emotional regulation in particular; and that these cognitive and affective capacities can translate into goal seeking and other constructive actions.

The explanation of the resilience model leads onto recommendations for further research on relationships that enhance personal functioning. There are also suggestions for social policy that follow from the exposition, and some guidelines for professional practice with children and families.

## **Introduction**

In numerical form, the distinguishing aspects of the thesis are that:

1. It represents two data-gathering points in a longitudinal study, and this study may extend into the future.
2. It utilises the risk and resilience framework and, as a consequence, it has access to an array of theorising and research in human development.
3. It embraces a qualitative methodology, which builds on a previous mixed-methods investigation.
4. It acknowledges both individual and contextual determinations of competence and resilience.
5. It examines the conditions and exigencies of the developmental transition known as emerging adulthood.
6. It provides an examination of resilience processes and mechanisms.
7. It considers the cognitive appraisals of events as a specific process.
8. It is research with young people from different ethnicities in contrast to much resilience research which has been with representatives of the white, middle class. Nonetheless, the study remains a Western scientific investigation.
9. It provides a resilience model, which accommodates the findings of the two data-gathering points, relates the findings to extant theory and research, and makes recommendations for future research endeavours.
10. It is a New Zealand resilience study that has the capacity to produce research-based and developmentally-grounded suggestions to improve the lives of children and youth.

The present document retains the four standard report divisions of literature review, methodology section, results, and discussion. However, some variants in the established pattern have been introduced, and these modifications largely relate to the



objective of getting the most productive association of the research with the results and theorising of past studies. It was decided to split the relevant literatures into introductory, or ‘foundational’ knowledge; and this is outlined at the beginning of the thesis. Later, in the Discussion section, a number of other studies are called upon that relate to more specific issues and themes that have emerged from the longitudinal study.

The methodology that was chosen for the second data-gathering point is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This strategy was adopted because the participants were in their early twenties, and person-centred approaches are typically applied in adult resilience studies (Luthar & Brown, 2007). As well, however, there was a wish to position what the respondents had to say in relation to their current contexts, their previous experiences, and in comparison to existing resilience studies, and IPA promotes these purposes.

The Methodology section of the thesis examines the general context of resilience research and it briefly describes the first assessments with the participants ten years ago. There is also a review of IPA’s knowledge base (core concepts and philosophy), and a discussion about ‘quality’ in qualitative research. Following this, there is an outline of IPA approaches to data gathering and analysis. And finally, there is a commentary on practical matters that were encountered in actually *doing* the thesis research.

The Results section is divided into two parts; in the first section there are write-ups of the case studies, and in the second section there are descriptions of the super ordinate themes that arose from the single cases. The Discussion section follows and, as indicated, it contains the second set of literature material. In the Discussion, both the individual cases and the major themes are, successively, interpreted by the additional research studies and perspectives that are provided. The analytical process continues at this point and, according to Smith and Osborn (2008), “This is consonant with the processual, creative feature of qualitative psychology” (p. 76). The outcome of the

further analysis and reflection is that arguments are made for a resilience model that attempts to accommodate present and past research and theorising. The resilience framework that is suggested leads to recommendations for further research and for responding to problems of living.

To conclude this section, and by way of orientation to the content that follows, I would like to make two general observations. Firstly, the resilience idea can be romanticised as an ideal (Davis, 1996) and, when this occurs, it may deliver less than many might hope. An historical perspective shows that work to assist children at risk “has been long, frustrating, and often disappointing” (Pianta & Walsh, 1998, p. 407). For these reasons, it is understandable that there can be enthusiastic receptions for stories of young people who triumph over the odds, and that there can be a tendency to see individual attainments as heralding a new means, or ‘movement’, for many others to follow. Such approaches, however, ought to be considered in relation to the qualities of our society, which can be viewed as being “structured so that many must fail in order that a few succeed” (Gordon & Song, 1994, p. 42).

Resilience is an individual, psychological, construct but, seen in this way, it can deliver more than some might imagine. All of us are resilient in distinct ways, to varying extents, in contrasting situations, and at different periods of our lives, and resilience studies provide special insights and understanding regarding human competence and adaptability. Johnson (1999) asks, “What if resilience is the poetry of life, and we are now just learning the alphabet?” (p. 227).

## **Literature Review: Frames of Reference**

### **Introduction**

This initial literature review provides six frames of reference that give orientation to the complex study of risk and resilience. The first of the review essays or chapters is a description of the processes of human development, as these are now understood. This statement was actually written towards the end of the study, when it became apparent that the thesis contained numerous assumptions that needed to be directly discussed. The second chapter addresses the resilience construct, which is complicated, and which is dependent for its meaning (according to an ‘external’ vantage point) on the specification of indices, or standards, of personal functioning and competence.

The third and fourth chapters discuss, respectively, risk factors and processes, and protective factors and processes. The attempt here is to provide some conceptual clarification, while also examining some of the topics that are central to the subsequent analyses; such as poverty and parenting relationships. The fifth essay is a brief statement on the biology of resilience. Biology is the ‘newcomer on the block’ in resilience, it is presently enjoying a high profile in the literature, and it is critical to a fully integrated understanding of personal functioning and adaptation. The last statement looks at emerging adulthood, which is the developmental period shared by the participants in the current study. This stage in development (18-25 years) has only recently been designated, and various social statistics suggest it is a perilous phase for many.

### **Conceptualisation of human development**

According to Lerner (2006a), people who are working in the resilience field today tend to embrace ‘cutting edge’ conceptions of human development in their writings and, in fact, resilience investigations are part of a broader *zeitgeist* of human

functioning (Windle, 1999), that involves a reconceptualisation of child and adolescent problems (Masten & Powell, 2003). Doll and Lyon (1998a) provide a summary of the new ideas (context, time, interaction, mechanisms and politics) as they apply to resilience. Children are seen as inseparable from the social situations in which they function. All people travel along pathways over time and they are influenced by various risk and protective factors which determine personal competence and ability to cope. The risk and protective factors interact with each other and there are mechanisms that move the individual more towards either positive or negative adjustment or outcomes. Finally, this portrayal of adaptation and maladaptation provides guidance for actions and interventions, and at this point we enter a political realm.

We begin this introduction to resilience theory and research with a fairly detailed overview of current thinking in human development because of its importance to studying resilience. Indeed, the central questions for the discipline of human development are the pressing issues in resilience studies. Lerner (2006b) says that the primary questions for us to determine are the distinctive attributes that individuals possess, at particular points in time, and in specific situations, which promote distinguishing instances of positive human development.

### **A new way of seeing.**

Contemporary conceptions of human development are variously referred to as holistic, organisational, or systems approaches; and as interactionist, dynamic, or multiple-levels-of-analysis (Cicchetti & Blender, 2006; Lerner, 2006b; Magnusson & Stattin, 2006; Thelen & Smith, 2006). Traditionally, the study of human development was largely concerned with either biogenic or psychogenic perspectives, and within these streams there have been preoccupations with maturation, stage theories, and stability and change, amongst other matters. However, over the last 20-30 years theorists have been attempting to grasp development in its full complexity, and

particularly the interactions of biology and psychology, and the models that are now being advanced are, of necessity, comprehensive and sophisticated.

The fundamental axioms of the new approach are succinctly stated by Magnusson and Stattin (2006) as “the holistic principle, transformation, interaction, temporality, organisation, synthesis, and – a most central principle – individuality” (p. 451). The organism (or person) is portrayed as being composed of many parts, which are organised into subsystems and levels. There are continuous processes of interaction across the systems and levels, and between the individual and the environment. Henggeler, Schoenwald, Borduin, Rowland, and Cunningham (1998, p. 11) describe this situation as one of “simultaneously occurring, mutually influential and interrelated phenomena” and Sameroff (2000) observes that any instances here of simplicity have to be artefacts.

Nonetheless, at any point in time, the human systems have organisation and coherence, and change occurs when new needs arise, or there are environmental challenges that demand a reorientation of the existing organisation to achieve more adaptive functioning. But there is not a master plan for development; rather it is more accurately seen as a cascade of many processes acting over time in response to environmental expectations or affordances. Thelen and Smith (2006, p. 281) capture this sentiment, and something more, when they say that “Development can be envisaged as a series of evolving and dissolving patterns of varying dynamic stability, rather than an inevitable march toward maturity.”

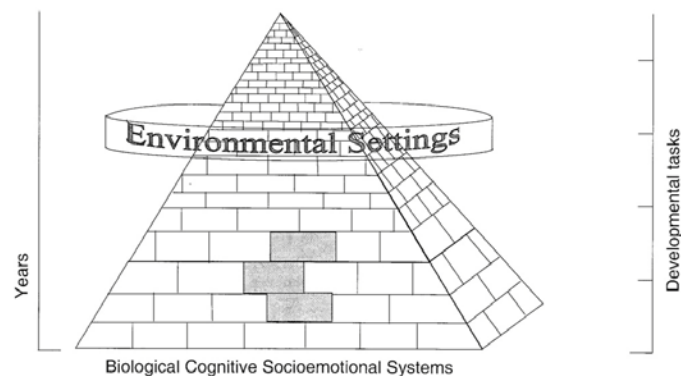
Human development is characterised by multiple pathways, and here general systems theorists can invoke the concepts of multifinality and equifinality to typify the heterogeneity that is possible (e.g., Yates, Egeland, & Sroufe, 2003). Multifinality is when the same early event (e.g., maltreatment) has different personal outcomes (such as eating problems, mood problems, challenging conduct, and normal adjustment), and

equifinality is when different experiences in the early years (across diverse, adverse settings) have the same outcome as, for instance, in subsequent affective issues. As will be apparent at this point, problem behaviours (so defined) are not viewed as being generated by some qualitatively distinct developmental process (Rutter, 2006b) and, instead, 'good' and 'poor' adjustment are effectively seen as branches of the same tree.

So how is it that some people do 'better' than others in this conception of human development and behaviour? Masten (e.g., Masten & Obradovic, 2006) suggests that there are fundamental human adaptational systems, such as attachment and stress responses, which are critical to individual competence. When these adaptational systems are damaged, or destroyed, or develop abnormally, then functioning is compromised. Masten contends that the systems are related to both the regulatory capacity of the brain and to the regulatory qualities of social relationships. What we have here, then, is a quintessential systems exposition that can provide an explanatory framework for mediation and moderation effects, while also linking the environment to biology.

An attempt has been made to represent, and to relate, the central ideas of the organisational model of human development in a diagram (see below). Starting at the base of the pyramid, we have a neonate who possesses developmental systems and processes (biological, cognitive, socioemotional). Even a newly-born baby has jobs to do, in terms of developmental tasks, and the early expectations extend to the formation of an effective attachment relationship, the beginnings of behavioural and emotional self-regulation, and his or her first steps towards autonomous functioning. As will be appreciated, these competencies develop in reciprocal person-context transactions, most notably and obviously with the mother, who will typically afford sensitive, contingent care. Yates et al. (2003) assert that "It is within a framework of available care and positive self-regard that the child develops adaptive emotion regulation patterns,

flexible problem-solving skills, and an expectation of success in the face of adversity”  
(p. 254).



**Figure 1. Organisational model of development.**

Throughout childhood, and indeed right across the life span, there is a series of developmental expectations and challenges, and it is a pivotal tenet of the organisational perspective that success/failure at one level strongly suggests accomplishments, or difficulties, at subsequent levels. The darkened bricks on the diagram are there to indicate that positive and negative experiences are carried forward into new patterns of adaptation. This conviction certainly seems to operate for some forms of maladaptation at least, such as early onset depression and antisocial conduct, as evidenced in the persistence of these behaviours in adulthood (Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006). There is also a self-evident quality to the assertion made by Yates et al. (2003, p. 247), that “the longer an individual is on a particular developmental pathway, the less likely it becomes that she or he will deviate from that course”. Nevertheless, we should never lose sight of the fact that outcomes in human development are always probabilistic rather than certain.

Lastly, with respect to the diagram, the base bricks are much larger than those at the apex of the pyramid, and the reason for this is the young child’s personal systems and processes (biological, social, emotional, cognitive, representational, and linguistic)

are not especially differentiated, integrated, or organised. Werner's orthogenetic principle (cited by Cicchetti & Cohen, 1995) indicates that, over time, the systems will each become more substantial and consolidated, and there will also be repeated hierarchical integrations among the systems resulting in greater structural complexity and, as a consequence, enhanced adaptive capacity.

A little more explanation may be indicated concerning the biological subsystems and the mind/self in the new conception. The biological processes of interest concern the brain, the endocrine system, and genes. Virtually every behaviour has a biological foundation or correlate but, what may be less often appreciated is the frequency with which behaviour also has biological consequences. For instance, there are almost constant changes in the structure and physiology of the central nervous system in response to experience (Cicchetti & Blender, 2006). Similarly, hormonal activation in response to events is a regular part of human functioning, while chronic activation can have deleterious effects on neurons and immune responses. The point to be emphasized is that an individual who has experienced neural and endocrinal changes is, in some important respects, a different person to who they were before those experiences, and they now engage with, and seek out, new experiences in accord with the changes that have occurred (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003).

The mind and self subsystem are integral components of the developmental holistic and they also exhibit the defining qualities of continuity and coherence. We look with our eyes but we see with our accumulated life experience, or (more technically) an individual's learning and experience contribute to their cognitive schemata, which determine how they select and process information from the environment (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006). Since our mental lives are the product of a store of distinctive interactions with the environment it is impossible for two people to have identical world views and self-perceptions.



Personality development, like biological development with which it clearly has a reciprocal association, occurs through normative processes, although the outcome will be individual and unique. The colossal number of constituents in development, combined with the multiplicity of pathways, has led some theorists (e.g., Lerner, 2006b) to insist that there are individual as well as general laws of human development. Since one event does not directly and solely influence another, and because behaviours can defy clear categorisation, systems thinking can be seen as a marked departure from previous mechanistic, linear, and binary conceptions (Henggeler et al., 1998) and, more generally, from “the overgeneralisations and abstractions of the Cartesian philosophy of man and Newtonian mechanics” (Husen, 1989, quoted by Magnusson & Stattin, 2006, p. 432).

### **Resilience construct**

#### **The meaning of resilience.**

The starting point in understanding resilience is, simply, that people respond differently to experiences of adversity. More particularly, resilience refers to ‘off-gradient’ or ‘better than expected’ personal outcomes in the presence of high risk (Masten & Curtis, 2000). Two inferences, or judgements, are required then in every determination of resilience, and they relate to the experience of risk or adversity, and to positive adaptation or competence (Luthar & Cushing, 1999; Rutter, 2007). Importantly, resilience itself, like other psychological phenomena such as intelligence and independence, does not exist as a separate entity; rather, it reflects “aspects of the integrated, dynamic functioning of the individual” (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006, p. 431).

The view of resilience as a process contrasts with some common usage of the resilience label, where resilience is depicted as a permanent personality trait. These interpretations of resilience can be found in some popular literature (e.g. the writings of Horatio Alger) and they have perpetuated the myth of the golden child, who is an

invulnerable individual. In fact, there is little evidence for a unitary resilience trait or quality (Luthar & Cushing, 1999; Masten, 1999; Pianta & Walsh, 1998; Rutter, 2007; Sameroff & Rosenblum, 2006).

Some commentators have questioned whether resilience is a unique scientific construct. For instance, Glantz and Sloboda (1999) comment that true empiricists may regard instances of resilience as representing incomplete information or faulty predictions. As well, Masten (1999) asserts that, ultimately “resilience concepts and studies should not be necessary. Sophisticated developmental models and studies of human behaviour that accommodate the full range of organism and environmental variation and their complex interactions will absorb them” (p. 293). Meanwhile, Masten (2001) suggests that both ‘competence’ and ‘resilience’ are actually sub constructs of ‘adaptation’.

Other workers argue that it is important to retain resilience as a distinct construct rather than subsume it within positive adjustment (Luthar, 2006). Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) say that resilience provides a different vantage point, and it is that good outcomes can transpire through trajectories that defy expectations. As important, is the fact that the correlates of adjustment in adversity can be different from those in low stress circumstances. For instance, teacher support is likely to be especially important to a child who does not receive support from anyone else. Further, the resilience biologists believe that there could be “differential neurobiological correlates of and contributors to resilience and positive adaptation, respectively” (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003, p. 802).

### **‘Ages and stages’ in the study of resilience.**

The study of resilience grew out of the study of risk. Investigations of risk, which dominated research throughout much of the twentieth century (Masten & Reed, 2002), is concerned with the etiology and development of psychopathology amongst

children. Rutter (1985) provides an overview of risk research, and Masten and Obradovic (2006) bring this chronology up to date and distinguish four phases in the development of resilience. Rutter (1985) says that the early risk studies posited links between negative life experiences and subsequent adjustment issues. This was followed by investigations which provided more detailed understanding of particular risk types and outcomes; but much of this research was restricted to single risk factors, or (less often) it examined multiple factors as independent variables.

Subsequently, risk research invoked the construct of resilience and in doing so it dramatically altered approaches to, and the understanding of, the causes and courses of human behavioural adaptation. The move was instigated by repeated observations that, “even with the most severe stressors and the most glaring adversities, it is unusual for more than half of children to succumb.” (Rutter, 1985, p. 598). The presence of relatively competent individuals amidst high-risk populations, or people who ‘beat the odds,’ suggested that there were additional forces and factors deserving of investigation. It was at this juncture that resilience, which has been a perennial feature of myths and fairy tales (as well as in literature) became a scientific study.

Rutter’s (1985) review of the early research leads into Masten and Obradovic’s (2006) attempt to distinguish four ‘waves’ amongst more recent developments in resilience. The first wave of research was when workers attempted to establish the markers and correlates of good adaptation amongst young people at risk. The second wave emphasised the empirical and theoretical importance of processes and mechanism that promote resilience, and the authors describe this as “a formidable agenda that is still under way” (p. 14). The next phase of development was prompted by “a sense of urgency” (p. 14) about the plight of young people, and it gave rise to resilience promoting programmes and policy. The fourth wave is about “integrating the study of

resilience across levels of analysis” (p. 23), which essentially means adding biological considerations to the research agenda.

### **The core resilience factors.**

Resilience has repeatedly been shown to be associated with a core of individual, family, and extrafamilial influences. These correlates of successful adjustment and development are shown in table form in Masten and Coatsworth (1998, p. 212) and are reproduced below. The two most well established predictors of resilience are good intellectual functioning and relationships with caring prosocial adults. These factors, plus socioeconomic advantages and positive self-perceptions, have “broad and pervasive correlations with multiple domains of adaptive behaviour” (Masten, 2001, p. 231).

Characteristics of Resilient Children and Adolescents

Source	Characteristic
Individual	Good intellectual functioning
	Appealing, sociable, easygoing disposition
	Self-efficacy, self-confidence, high self-esteem
	Talents
	Faith
Family	Close relationships to caring parent figure
	Authoritative parenting: warmth, structure, high expectations
	Socioeconomic advantages
	Connections to extended family networks
Extrafamilial context	Bonds to prosocial adults outside the family
	Connections to prosocial organisations
	Attending effective schools

(From Masten & Coatsworth, 1998, p. 212)

Werner and Johnson (1999) state that protective factors “appear to transcend geographical, historical, and social class boundaries and have been replicated in samples

of Asian, Black, Caucasian, and Hispanic youth” (p. 262). On the basis of his international resilience research, Ungar (2008) contends that there are both universal, and specific, cultural/contextual aspects to resilience. This writer says that, while resilience research is “anchored in a Eurocentric epistemology” (p. 222), concepts such as self-efficacy, social support, and secure attachment are relevant to children in every culture. This observation is in keeping with Masten’s contention (e.g., Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Masten & Obradovic, 2006) that there are fundamental human adaptive systems, such as mastery motivation and self-regulation, and these probably underlie the resilience characteristics listed above.

Masten (2001) cites a study she did with others that shows that competent children in low adversity and high adversity situations have much the same psychosocial resources. The relevant protective processes included good intellectual functioning and good self-concepts. It does seem probable that a select, standard group of processes accounts for resilience, and also for recovery-to-normal trajectories. The latter phenomena are instances of developmental catch-up, such as have been evidenced by Romanian adoptees. According to Masten, “Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities” (2001, p. 235).

In the second half of this section on the construct of resilience two controversial areas are examined: the content and utility of standards of personal functioning, and the prevalence and meaning of emotional problems amongst people who are otherwise considered to be resilient. The section concludes with discussion of both the criticisms, and the positive appraisals, that have been levelled at the resilience construct.

### **Standards of functioning.**

Johnson and colleagues (Johnson & Howard, 1999; Howard, Dryden & Johnson, 1999) contend that resilience is meaningless outside of a conceptualisation of what is 'good' for children, but they also express concern about the possible middle class bias of any 'standards of functioning.' Oftentimes, resilience is determined in relation to developmental tasks, and what this means is adaptation is defined in terms of effective behaviours, across multiple domains of achievement, for people of different ages. There is an emphasis in developmental task theory on external behaviours, rather than emotional wellbeing, and there is also an understanding that success at one stage of development forecasts success at subsequent stages of development (Masten & Obradovic, 2006).

The problem, as Johnson and his coworkers have indicated, is having and using criteria that are inadequate and unfair because they are culturally and historically bound. In this regard, Luthar and Burack (2000) describe how youth in poor urban neighbourhoods can have conflicts between the otherwise normative tasks of adolescence, since getting along with peers and doing well at school tend to go together for the majority of the culture, but they can be in opposition in the ghetto.

Luthar and Burack's (2000) paper is especially useful because it reveals the depth of the complexities and challenges associated with defining robust standards of functioning. The authors indicate that disadvantaged children and youth can actually engage in an array of behaviours that are considered undesirable, deviant, or pathological by the standards of middle class people and conventional psychology. For instance, inner city school children often evidence levels of verbal and physical aggression which would bring diagnoses of conduct disorder in more affluent localities. Again, teenage pregnancy, which is often regarded as a problem behaviour outside of the ecology of poverty, can be perceived as representing adult status amongst minority

youth; and it also can be seen by them as an opportunity for new relations and continuing the family.

Similarly, heavy substance use is not necessarily indicative of a troubled teenager in poor areas. In fact, each of the behaviours that have been mentioned here can be interpreted as adaptive in the circumstances and conducive to positive self esteem and peer acceptance. Luthar and Burack (2000) suggest that these variations and discrepancies in valuations should caution us to

a need for greater contextual sensitivity, while delineating constructs of high potential salience in future research designs. Developmental psychologists must be attentive to indigenous perspectives in their selection not only of major indicators of competence (“outcome variables”), but also of salient risk and protective factors (“predictors or moderators”), for many constructs that generally serve protective functions can be rendered neutral or even deleterious by catalysts specific to the ecocultural setting of poverty. (p. 42)

An additional perspective, and a possible solution to the problem of bias, is provided by Woodhead (1990), who writes about the cultural construction of children’s needs. He suggests that needs are often projected onto young people by adults and, as a consequence, the fact that they represent value positions is obscured, but an emotive force remains. This author says that the identification of needs is simpler, and empirical, when it is done with children themselves. Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999) believe that disregarding the viewpoints of young people about what is worthwhile is a general and significant failing, and it is apparent that children do have different ideas about many matters. Harvey and Delfabbro (2004) contend that resilience is related to questions of individual determination and they suggest that we ask people about their definitions of life success, and the extent to which they have achieved their objectives and ideals;

. . .we believe that greater focus needs to be placed upon the reports and experiences of people who appear to have overcome adversity, and that the definition of resilience itself should be based less upon so-called objective cut-off scores, but also upon culturally and socially relevant ratings of success. (p. 11)

There are some problems, however, associated with definitions of resilience that emphasise self-evaluations and minority group membership. Luthar and Burack (2000) assert that matters become complicated when only *some* behavioural valuations are inverted or antagonistic across socioeconomic divides, and when the members of minorities also have to function within the norms of a larger society. According to these writers, investigators need to be wary of two potential faults; firstly of ethnocentrism and being disrespectful of individual perspectives, and secondly of “the disservice that can be done to disadvantaged youngsters if standards set for them were substantially different from those stipulated for others” (p. 37-38).

A further possibility is that the values that are typified as ‘middle class’ actually represent goals and outcomes that are universally endorsed. This viewpoint has been advanced by Johnson and Howard (1999), who suggest that the values underlying schooling seem to represent widely accepted aspirations regarding children’s health and wellbeing. These investigators cite the following ‘good outcomes’ for children, which, they admit, have “a distinctly Maslowian heritage” (p. 8): good physical health, personal safety, emotional security, positive personal relationships, and engagement in purposeful activity. There is a similarity here with Garmezy’s resilience criteria which, in turn, have a Freudian flavour. According to this pioneering resilience researcher, the resilient child “works well, plays well, loves well, and expects well” (quoted by Howard, Dryden, and Johnson, 1999, p. 310).

### **Affective issues and resilience.**

Some, and possibly many, people who show resilience have affective issues, such as anxiety and depression. For instance, Schoon (2006) in an assessment of academic resilience in two British longitudinal studies found that success “might be achieved at the cost of emotional disturbance” (p. 147). Werner and Smith (1982), who provided one of the first resilience studies, noted that some resilient young people



deliberately detached themselves from family members who were engulfed in domestic and emotional problems. This detachment was undoubtedly adaptive for them at the time, but it also may have led to stress-related health conditions. Werner (2000) describes these personal difficulties as the “price exacted” (p. 130) for resilience. Finally, Harvey and Delfabbro (2004) present an example of a woman who was sexually abused as a child, and who subsequently attained significant education and career successes, but who was incapable of peer relationships. What meaning does resilience have in such circumstances?

Evidence of emotional problems among resilient populations is a continuing challenge to the meaning of resilience. Quite obviously, the place of these dimensions in a resilience definition is determined by the assessment criteria that are applied. In this regard, Masten and Curtis (2000) observe that, when developmental tasks are used to judge personal competence, it is possible for a young person to be within the normal range but be unable to meet relevant milestones, whereas another child or youth can succeed according to these developmental standards, but be unhappy enough to receive a psychiatric diagnosis. Rutter (2000) takes a different approach, and he says that it is not helpful to talk of ‘success’ with respect to one domain of personal functioning and ‘failure’ in another. Rather, we should see an individual’s particular profile of adaptive and maladaptive dimensions as the product of a specific configuration of risk and protective processes.

Wolff (1995) and Harvey and Delfabbro (2004) dispute the value of resilience definitions that emphasise behavioural success, and that do not require the absence of internalising issues, such as elevated levels of anxiety and depression. As well, Wolff (1995) asserts that internalising issues among otherwise resilient people must be given serious professional consideration because of the potential for major interpersonal difficulties, and these can extend to child rearing. Similarly, Luthar and Zelazo (2003)

assert that emotional distress can bring about a diversity of negative outcomes and they point to an imbalance in the programmes presently offered by social service agencies. “Existing prevention programs are overwhelmingly focused on overt behavioral indices such as conduct problems, teenage pregnancy, or academic failure, with scant direct attention to the depression or anxiety that frequently underlie and engender these problem behaviors” (p. 541).

### **Criticisms of resilience.**

Other criticisms are made of the risk and resilience framework, in addition to those that have just been mentioned; and these criticisms can be categorised as theoretical and methodological, and related to social justice concerns. With respect to resilience theory, Kaplan (1999) says that it does not give due cognisance to the complexity of individual behavior and responding; and, as the following statement by Hartup and van Lieshout (1995) indicates, the complexity is indeed substantial.

What remains is the formidable task of disentangling causal status among the variables in the developmental sequence, including the transactions that turn genetic chemistry into behavioral individuality and the ways in which social context and social relationships are implicated in both stability and change. (quoted by Magnusson & Stattin, 2006, p. 419)

Central to the methodological concerns is the fact that the key terms can have numerous meanings and are used interchangeably. Both resilience and risk can refer to a factor, a process, a result, and more. As a status or outcome, resilience has different meanings as well, and these can be defined in terms of domain and degree, or as achievement, maintenance of functioning, or recovery. The complex multi-dimensionality of the field of study and the lack of consensus on foundational concepts has produced major measurement problems in researching resilience. Glantz and Sloboda (1999) commented on the situation as they saw it a decade ago:

We have identified few attempts to assess resilience in which measurement problems do not cloud or eclipse the findings. There is no consensus on the referent of the term, standards for its application, or agreement on its role in explanations, models and theories. In sum, the problems and inconsistencies in

measurements, findings, and interpretations in the published literature raise serious questions about the utility and heuristic value of the concept of resilience. (p. 111)

Barton (2002, cited by Newman, 2004) reportedly contends that resilience theory does not give appropriate recognition to the structural determinants of oppression and inequality. In a sense, this possibility is inherent in the resilience construct because resilience is concerned with individual actions that defy adversity from whatever cause. However, Schoon (2006) takes a different position to Barton (2002) on this concern. She suggests that an advantage of the person-context conceptualisation that underpins the resilience framework is that it shifts the focus from individuals and families to “the prevailing systems and structures that are implicated in the distribution of life chances, resources and opportunities” (p. 156).

### **Contributions of resilience.**

Resilience has been described as “a construct of tremendous theoretical and practical importance” (Luthar & Cushing, 1999, p.153). Similarly, von Eye and Schuster (2000) consider resilience to be one of the most important (and challenging) concepts in contemporary psychology. According to Windle (1999), resilience has made four substantial contributions. It has been responsible for the identification of conditions that promote healthy development in situations of threat. It has promoted the adoption of an integrated model of developmental psychopathology. It has stimulated research in many disciplines and it has given a positive, competencies based approach to prevention and treatment. To this, it might be added, that resilience is increasingly being seen as providing a structure for social service policy and practice and, in particular, for programming that emphasises primary prevention (Jenson & Fraser, 2006a; Schoon, 2006; Stanley, 2008).

Fundamentally, resilience has reminded researchers and policy makers of the positive dimensions of human development and functioning. Traditional models of

behaviour have significant tacit assumptions (Glantz & Sloboda, 1999), and included here is the notion that positive outcomes are ‘normal’; they are generally to be expected and do not have to be accounted for. These assumptions are remarkably limiting because they mean that conventional models cannot explain positive outcomes from negative circumstances.

The defining features of the resilience framework, including the insistence on a systems approach and protective factors, provide a particular contrast with the components of the ‘medical model’ (Stanley, 2006a; Stanley, 2006b). The medical approach to risk factors for disorders has been criticised for being incapable of encompassing the more complex complaints of life style (Kumpfer, 1999), for its lack of guidance on how to live a productive and happy life (Johnson, 1999), and for its emphasis on individual deficit and pathology (Benard, 1999).

### **Risk factors and processes**

Kirby and Fraser (1997) define risk factors as “any influences that increase the probability of onset, digression to a more serious state, or maintenance of a problem condition” (p. 10-11). Dunst (1993) provides a comprehensive listing of risk factors with corresponding opportunity factors.

### **A Proposed List of Risk and Opportunity Factors Influencing Human Development and Functioning**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Risk factors</b>	<b>Opportunity factors</b>
Mother’s age	Younger or older than normal childbearing years	Within optimal childbearing years
Parent education	Low educational attainment	High educational attainment
Income	Inadequate income	Adequate income
Occupation status	Low occupation status of head of household	High occupation status for head of household
Socioeconomic status (SES)	Low SES	High SES
Job stability	Repeated job changes or unemployment	Stable job
Pregnancy	Unplanned	Planned
Number of siblings	More than four children	One or two children
Residential stability	Repeated relocations	None or few relocations
Marital status	Absence of spouse or partner	Supportive spouse or partner present
Marital relationship	Conflictive	Harmonious

Marital stability	Repeated changes in a conjugal relationship	Stable conjugal relationship
Child temperament	Avoidant, difficult	Warm, responsive
Infant separation	Prolonged separation in first year	Limited separation in first year
Parental health	Poor physical health	Excellent physical health
Parental mental health	Repeated occurrences of mental health related problem	Stable emotional well being
Parental self-esteem	Low self-esteem	High self-esteem
Parental locus of control	External	Internal
Parental social skills	Poor	Good
Coping strategies	Reactive	Proactive
Quality of primary caregiver/child interaction	Controlling and emotionally unavailable	Stimulating and warm
Parenting style	Authoritarian/directive	Responsive/facilitative
Toxic substances	High exposure	No exposure
Nutritional intake	Inadequate	Adequate
Accidents	Frequent	Infrequent
Infections/illnesses	Frequent	Infrequent
Alternative caregivers	None	One or more
Presence of extended family	None or few available	Many and supportive
Extra family support	Poor/unsupportive	Good/supportive
Life events	Negative life events	Positive life events

(Reproduced from Dunst, 1993, p. 147)

As with the list of resilience correlates in the previous section, this catalogue probably conveys a sense of clarity and certainty that is false. Risk factors are variable and complex entities, which can operate in complicated, conditional, and counterintuitive ways (Luthar, 1999). What is more, they may not function in any direct way at all but, rather, they can act to create vulnerability to other negative factors, exacerbate an adverse effect, or invalidate a benign influence. Significantly, an action, or pattern of actions, always occurs in the context of other life conditions. For this reason, it is necessary to consider “the timing, duration, sequence and frequency of stressful events” (Newman, 2004, p. 21) and, most importantly, to listen to the meanings that individuals attach to the events that transpire.

### **The risk lexicon.**

Over time, there has been a lot of speculation and theorising about risk factors (and far more than there has been about protective factors) and a typology of terms has emerged. A first distinction that can be made is whether the negative event is a

‘universal’ one, such as a war, or some natural disasters; or if it is restricted to sectors of the population (e.g., boys, families with children), or to an individual person. The second set of distinctions concerns the severity of the assault or experience. For instance, there are ‘broad-spectrum’ risk forces (e.g. neurological disorders, severe family dysfunction) that tend to significantly affect many people that are exposed to them, and that are linked to a variety of problems (Glantz & Sloboda, 1999).

These experiences can be ‘particularly pernicious’ (Glantz & Sloboda, 1999), and they may represent ‘risk traps’. Events such as child maltreatment can be especially malevolent and injurious; and as Cicchetti and Blender (2006) observe, it “may represent the greatest failure of the caregiving environment to provide opportunities for normal development” (p. 249). Risk traps are similar to pernicious risk factors in that they have pervasive effects. They are also circumstances that are difficult to escape from. Poor parenting and drug abuse are both examples of risk traps.

‘Chronic’ and ‘acute’ categorisations are sometimes invoked as another useful set of distinctions. Acute events are specific instances of risk (e.g., a serious motor vehicle accident), whereas chronic risks persist over a prolonged period of time, and they may include living in a highly conflicted family, being a part of a dangerous neighbourhood, and living in poverty. Interestingly, adults tend to report difficulties occasioned by major life events, whereas children seem to be more affected by daily events such as persistent bullying, continuing parental disagreements, and transitions, like changing schools (Compas, 1987; Wertlieb, 1991, cited by Newman, 2004).

Another complication associated with the attempt to differentiate acute and chronic risk factors is that many adversities, like a divorce or an illness, are often actually ‘markers’ for a collection of events, and these can include both acute and chronic elements (Rutter, 2006b). Since acute risks can initiate ongoing problems, and chronic circumstances can place a person at risk for episodes of special difficulty, it is

frequently more accurate to think of adverse events and conditions as being dynamically related, rather than as influencing development in independent ways (Wyman, Sandler, Wolchik, & Nelson, 2000).

There are five other general points that should be considered before we move on to discussing multiple risks and risk trajectories. Firstly, risk factors change over time. Not only are they variable in their effects, but they are also variable in constitution and manifestation. A second, and probably fairly obvious point is that people actively seek risk experiences, and young people 'at risk' are often 'risk takers' (Fergusson & Horwood, 2003). The third, and related matter, is that 'problem' behaviours can have constructive and adaptive outcomes, as well as deleterious and destructive ones. Schulenberg and Jarrett (2006) suggest that alcohol and other drug use by emerging adults, for instance, can promote social connections and identity clarification.

A fourth matter concerns assumptions about the effects of risk factors. A stressor may be present in a child's life but have no causal significance. There are undoubtedly false attributions of resilience in situations that appear threatening, but which in fact do not touch the young person. Finally, false assumptions can also be made about the absence of risk. A situation that is devoid of risk factors is not, by definition, a desirable state. Positive circumstances for children are typically characterised by productivity and development in different domains.

### **Additive and multiplicative risk models.**

What is the relationship between single, several, or multiple risk factors? Young people can generally cope with one or two risk forces but adjustment issues tend to ensue when there are more than two risk factors (Kumpfer, 1999). Additive models of risk posit a direct or linear relationship between the number of risk influences and negative outcomes. By contrast, multiplicative models consider the interactions within sets of risk factors and between risk and protective factors.

In psychometric terms, additive models have high face validity and high reliability. Common sense suggests that disadvantage increases relative to adversities. However, we cannot be sure what an elevated risk score actually means. The factors that are summed will differ in seriousness and we are told nothing about process. Multiplicative approaches also have intuitive appeal. It is indeed possible for stressors to have no effect alone, but to have a strong effect (or be potentiated) by another stressor. Still, multiple regression analyses show interaction effects for risk and protective factors to be statistically significant but generally small (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). Direct additive approaches continue to be the main focus in quantitative studies; with acknowledgements that factors can have complex relationships.

### **Developmental trajectories and categorisations.**

The concept of developmental trajectory refers to the movement and direction of development over time. Children who are consistently exposed to benevolent influences will tend to have positive and adaptive outcomes. By contrast, young people with continuing risk factors in their lives are likely to have a different sort of gradient that leads to multiple (and linked) problem behaviours (Dryfoos, 1990; Fergusson & Horwood, 2003).

Problem behaviours might be given the status of categorisation when a liability gradient crosses a threshold (Tarter & Vanyukov, 1999). Psychiatric diagnoses and criminal convictions are two familiar categorisations, and some comments have already been made about determinations of mental illness. Kaplan (1999), writing about resilience, which can also be a categorisation, says that “to arbitrarily decide that some point on the continuum of stress constitutes an undue burden and the ability to carry that burden constitutes a special characteristic called resilience is questionable” (p.74). A further point is that categorisations can convey a misleading impression of being



endpoints. In reality, being diagnosed or categorised usually represents no more, and no less, than a personal career marker for an individual.

The problem with a reliance on categorisations is that they cannot encompass the variability, complexity, and transactional nature of development. As the life course proceeds, individual vulnerabilities change, as do the significance of risks and the salience of contexts. For these reasons, risk (and resilience) assessments are time limited and prognostications about personal futures can only be cast in terms of probabilities. In an examination of criminal careers, Kazdin (1997) commented that “influences can place a child on a trajectory or path. The trajectory or path is not a fixed or determined course... some outcomes become more probable (e.g., being arrested, bonding with delinquent peers) and other outcomes become less probable (e.g., graduating from high school, entering a monastery)” (quoted by Bowes & Hayes, 2004, p. 21).

### **Oregon social interaction model.**

Researchers at the Oregon Learning Centre provide detailed descriptions of how a negative life trajectory can arise and, even more importantly, they proffer a risk process or mechanism to account for antisocial behaviour and development (Patterson, Reid & Dishion, 1992; Reid, Patterson & Snyder, 2002). Children who are at risk for criminal careers ‘progress’ through four stages. Stage 1 is characterised by ineffective parental discipline. The second stage, which involves entry to the school system, sees poor academic performance, and peer and parent rejection, which results in depressed mood. In stage 3 the marginalised 12 or 13 year-old seeks out a deviant peer group, which promotes the likelihood of substance abuse and delinquency. Stage 4 sees the emergence of the career antisocial adult, who has an array of adjustment problems, and who is likely to be periodically institutionalised.

The risk process contributed by Patterson and his colleagues is called the coercion hypothesis, and this mechanism facilitates movement along the antisocial pathway. Briefly stated, coercive processes are in operation when a child responds to inconsistent and ineffectual discipline (nagging, threats without follow through) with increasing displays of aggression and non-compliance (whining, yelling, hitting). These responses are negatively reinforced by adult acquiescence and withdrawal; the youngster learns that his aversive behaviours 'turn off' the parents' responses.

The action-reaction sequence of coercion between caregiver and child occurs many times each day, and the confrontations increase in duration and intensity. Effectively, the young person is trained in hostile behaviour, but there are other personal consequences, like rejection, diminished self-esteem, and depression, that encourage the delinquent teenager to seek out, and to 'choose' to join, an antisocial peer group (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992).

Patterson and colleagues suggest that poor family management skills are the primary determinant of antisocial behaviour and development. Other risk factors, such as an antisocial parent, divorce, and high crime neighbourhood, exert influence by disrupting childrearing practices. Consequently, a child may grow up in circumstances that contain various threats, but provided their caregiver is reasonably skilled they can enjoy a constructive life course.

### **Socioeconomic status and poverty.**

In interview, Garnezy described the assumptions that the affluent can have about poor people.

The image of the poor, and I am sorry to politicise this, but the image of the poor in the eyes of middle and upper class people is really one of all too often of saying "If you want to make it, you can make it." But that isn't quite so. One needs to have a great deal of assistance in reaching a position of safety in this country. Middle class people never think of that. But the offspring of middle class people have a tremendous protective factor in their parents. They go off to high school, they go off to college, and they move in a different environment of safety and support and so on. (Rolf & Glantz, 1999, p. 13)

Bronfenbrenner, amongst others, has questioned the utility of 'social address' as an indicator of the nature and quality of family life (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, cited by Luthar, 2006). Summative constructs, such as poverty, can be misleading, and they can obscure the fact that residential areas, whether seemingly affluent or comparatively disadvantaged, can vary in terms of organisation, cohesiveness, and self-efficacy (Luthar, 2006). With these cautions in mind, we should not lose sight of the potential personal significance of poverty. Doll and Lyon (1998b) contend that poverty in childhood is the most consistent predictor of adult maladaptation and, relatedly, Luthar (1999) reports that children growing up in disadvantaged areas are at three times the general risk for major psychiatric disorders.

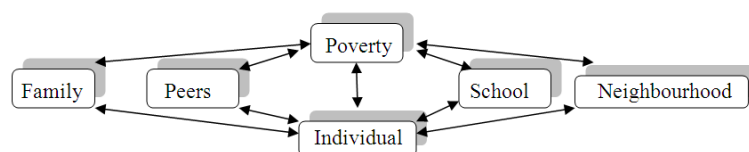
Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory continues to provide a useful framework for understanding social settings and the interconnected nature of impoverishment. He describes the environment as "a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). The five structures or levels are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem.

The microsystem is an everyday setting that the child occupies like home or school, and a mesosystem is made up of two or more microsystems, such as home and school, or home, school and peers. The exosystem is a context or institution (e.g. parents' work environment, government agencies) which affects a child's development, although the young person is not part of the setting. The macrosystem is the values, beliefs, and practices of different social groups that influence the quality of the experiences that children have in homes, neighbourhood, and other circumstances. Finally, the chronosystem concerns events and transitions over the life course and sociohistorical conditions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

A child who is socioeconomically disadvantaged occupies microsystems which are distinctive in terms of physical features, activities, people and relationships and that

are qualitatively different from those than an advantaged young person participates in. Further, it is likely that there will be consistencies across settings, at the mesosystem level, which mean living in a low cost neighbourhood with similarly straited peers and attending a low decile school. For the disadvantaged youngster, the exosystem exerts its indirect influence by allowing only restricted and prescribed opportunities. The macrosystem promotes the behavioural blueprints for the ecology of urban poverty including social class, ethnicity, single parenthood, and benefit dependence. Further, the chronosystem witnesses the transmission of social disadvantage from one generation to the next. The upshot is that poverty is multilayered, and Bronfenbrenner's framework makes clear how comprehensive, interrelated, and powerful environmental influences can be.

In the diagram that follows I have attempted to capture the multiplicity, and the concerted quality, of the sources of influences that characterise poverty. What is being indicated here, as well, is that the negative forces have both direct effects and indirect effects and it is likely that the latter influences are largely mediated through the parenting relationship (Dishion & Patterson, 2006).



**Figure 2.** The direct, indirect, and bidirectional effects for children living in a socioeconomically disadvantaged community.

In keeping with what has been said, Rutter (2006b) describes poverty as a 'risk indicator' because it actually indexes a number of specific stressors. Violence is included amongst the risk factors associated with socioeconomic disadvantage, and severe exposure to violence can have pervasive and long lasting individual effects. Luthar (2006) catalogues the consequences of living with the constant threat of physical assaults, and they include a substantially heightened probability of internalising

problems, greater vulnerability to externalising behaviours (e.g., delinquency), and reduced academic attainment, which may be due to difficulties with concentration and memory. Young children who experience violence can acquire fundamental neurological changes (Luthar, 2006), while people of all ages are likely to have heightened states of arousal and distress that substantially diminish their quality of life.

Recent survey research by the Adolescent Health Research Group of the University of Auckland has produced a complex picture of the experience of growing up in poverty in this country. This study of 9,107 secondary students was referenced to the New Zealand Deprivation Index, and it shows that teenagers who are socioeconomically disadvantaged are most likely to have witnessed violence in the home, and to have been in a serious physical fight in the last twelve months. They are also more likely than other adolescents to smoke cigarettes, use marihuana, be sexually active, use motor vehicles perilously, suffer depression, and to have seen a health professional for emotional worries in the last year (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008a, 2008b).

The Adolescent Health Research Group investigation found, as well, that disadvantaged young people are the most likely to eat 'sensible' meals (fruit and vegetables), to assist at home, and to help others generally. Compared to other youths, they participate more in music, arts, dance, and drama, and they more often belong to volunteer, cultural, and church groups. Contrary to other indicators and research, New Zealand's most deprived young people more generally report excellent mental and emotional wellbeing (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008a, 2008b).

The investigative approach used by the Adolescent Health Research Group has been challenged (Stanley, 2005) and, significantly, because it only surveys teenagers who continue to attend secondary school. Nevertheless, the inclusion of demographic variables in the recent survey does indicate that the experience of poverty is uneven, and

that many youth in these circumstances do show “impressive adaptational profiles”, as Luthar (1999, p. 5) suggests.

### **Protective Factors and Processes**

There has been debate in the resilience literature about the exact meaning of protective factors, and an issue arises when risk factors and protective factors are seen as opposite ends of the same continuum (Jenson & Fraser, 2006b). The alternative view is that protective factors moderate the relationship between risk factors and outcomes (Kaplan, 1999). They only have an effect in combination with risk variables, and any understanding of them depends on an appreciation of how stressors work.

Rutter (e.g., Rutter, 2006b) gives adoption as an example of the alternative interpretation of protective factors. Adoption typically offers nothing to children from low risk backgrounds, but it can constitute a protective factor against negative outcomes for children who are neglected and abused by their natural parents. In the discussion that follows, the term protective factor relates to influences that interact with risk, *and* it also covers ‘promotive factors’ (a term used by Sameroff and colleagues, cited by Jenson & Fraser, 2006b), which are features that benefit people irrespective of the presence of risk.

The relationship of protective factors and risk factors is shown in the many commonalities that they share. There is a group of protective factors that is generally significant for a large number of people, in a diversity of circumstances, and in relation to an array of outcomes (Glantz & Sloboda, 1999). Again, protective factors exist in multiple domains, including biological, psychological, social, familial, and wider environmental contexts. As well, the influences operate proximally and distally, and proximal protective forces tend to be viewed as protective processes or mechanisms. Further, protective factors clearly do combine and they presumably can potentiate each other.

Another fundamental area of similarity across risk and protective factors is likely to be in the specific, subtle, and often imperceptible ways that they operate. Tarter and Vanyukov (1999), in a discussion of the divergent outcomes found amongst siblings say that “The answer resides in the innumerable, idiosyncratic, and chance opportunities to engage in interactions with facets of the environment that are particular to the person’s liability phenotype” (p.97). Relatedly, Patterson, Reid, and Dishion (1992) suggest that the action-reaction sequences that characterise coercive patterns of interchange occur over many hundreds of trials, and people engage in them unconsciously. “Coercive patterns are analogous to the overlearned behaviour of the musician or the highly trained athlete. The events in the patterns are performed too quickly to be mediated by cognitive processes” (p. 56).

#### **Rutter’s protective processes.**

As we know, the research emphasis for some time in resilience has been on processes and mechanisms, rather than static factors, and Rutter (1990) offers four possible protective processes for consideration. Firstly, there are strategies that reduce the impact of stressors by altering the meaning of them, or by reducing exposure to them. Preparing a young child for a hospital stay is an example of modifying the meaning of a threat, and efficient parental monitoring can reduce an adolescent’s exposure to negative influences.

Rutter suggests that the promotion of self-esteem and self-efficacy is another protective process. Secure and caring attachments and relationships seem to favour self-esteem, and accomplishing personally important tasks probably contributes to self-esteem and self-efficacy. Rutter (1984) describes self-esteem and self-efficacy as:

...a feeling of your own worth, as well as a feeling that you can deal with things, that you can control what happens to you. One of the striking features of problem families is that they feel at the mercy of fate, which is always doing them an ill-turn. So one important quality is a feeling that you are in fact master of your own destiny. (quoted by Howard, Dryden, Johnson, 1999, p. 312)

The third and fourth protective mechanisms proposed by Rutter (1990) are effectively opposing strategies. There is the reduction of negative chain reactions, and there is the opening up of new opportunities. A negative chain reaction is a maladaptive pattern of interaction that follows risk exposure. The protective process contains the initial threat, or diminishes its ongoing influence. Opening up of new opportunities can be the commencement of a positive chain reaction, or an adaptive pattern of interaction, from a potentially perilous circumstance.

**The primary protective factors: cognition and relationships.**

Masten (2002) suggests that resilience outcomes can generally be accounted for by the proximal, and overlapping, attributes of intelligence and parenting. Good cognitive functioning has been found to contribute to protection against a range of negative possibilities in a number of the longitudinal studies (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003; Werner, 2000). In these situations, intelligence is typically measured on standardised tests and attempts have only just begun to see whether there are particular cognitive components that contribute to the protective effects. One possibility is that the people who exhibit superior performance do so because of executive functioning faculties, which include “planning ability, logic, and general problem solving skills in the context of interpersonal relationships” (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003, p. 793).

Rutter (2000) observes that the prophylactic effects of good cognitive functioning appear strongest in the case of antisocial behavior, and that it has more variable impact on internalising problems such as anxiety and depression. Various explanations exist for the protective role of cognitive competence. Wolff (1995) suggests that good intelligence allows children living in challenging circumstances to access compensatory satisfactions from their interests and achievements. Wyman et al. (2000) cite attribution theory, and they propose that more able people can more



accurately perceive situations, and whether they engage or disengage depends on their understanding of their capacity to control events.

Another interpretation is more encompassing and developmental in its emphasis; both parent-child relationships and cognitive facilities are related to self-regulation skills, and it is possibly through these abilities (the regulation of attention, emotion, and behavior) that they exert their effects. What is more, the presence of effective parenting, good intelligence, and proficient self-regulation will likely lead to cascading effects and the enlistment of other protective influences. The upshot, it is suggested, is a spiral effect with the successful negotiation of each transition and developmental task setting the stage for, and increasing the probability of, continuing positive adjustment.

Possessing high intelligence might, on occasions, have negative personal repercussions. Wolff (1995) contends that being especially able and particularly sensitive can be an unfortunate combination in the young child. The bright youngster is made vulnerable by their greater awareness of threat, which at this developmental stage is not compensated by an ability to ameliorate distress through commensurate cognitive processes. As well, Luthar and Burack (2000) quote research that shows that in conditions of severe poverty more able people engage in increasingly sophisticated ways of breaking the law, and while this could be seen as adaptive in the short term, it tells against their long-term adjustment.

The importance of relationships to resilience is receiving ever increasing emphasis, and it is most clearly and forcefully stated by Luthar (Luthar, 2006; Luthar & Brown, 2007; Luthar & Zelazo, 2003) who says that

The first major take-home message is this: Resilience rests, fundamentally, on relationships. The desire to belong is a basic human need, and positive connections with others lie at the very core of psychological development; strong, supportive relationships are critical for achieving and sustaining resilient adaptation. (Luthar, 2006, p. 780)

The personal relationship that presently attracts the most attention from resilience theorists is the parent-child relationship, and this is quite simply because it is the single strongest predictor of adaptive functioning (Luthar, 2006). The salience of caring and contingent parenting for children and young people is attested to from multiple sources. For instance, there is the evidence of ‘natural experiments’; as transpired with the Romanian orphans, which showed that infants who were left for longer than six months sustained substantial, and long-term, negative effects (Luthar & Brown, 2007). As well, we have a body of research on child maltreatment, which is “unambiguously negative” (Rutter, 2006b, p. 205), and which is complemented by studies on the negative consequences for offspring of maternal depression (e.g., Hammen, 2003).

Two other perspectives that converge, and that deepen our appreciation of the importance of responsive caregiving, are the findings from intervention studies and biological investigations. According to Masten and Obradovic (2006), the intervention studies that took place during the third ‘wave’ of resilience research “provide some of the most compelling evidence for the power of the family environment for individual resilience” (p. 16). Relatedly, we also now know that familial nurturance and support have biological correlates, and that they affect neuroendocrine stress responses, neural networks, and brain size (Curtis & Nelson, 2003; Taylor, 2007).

The parent-child relationship has always had a prominent place in human development theory and, as Luthar (2006) says, we have now known about the critical dimensions of effective parenting for a long time (i.e., warmth and support, and control and discipline). Nonetheless, there are some new emphases that are emerging in the literature, and included here is a concern about caregiving as a dependent variable, and the need for assertive parenting and the monitoring of adolescents. Parent-child transactions have consequences for parents as well (Luthar, 2006; Stanley, 2004), and

until we really understand this we are not going to be able to provide precisely the right sort of assistance to people who are raising children in conditions of adversity, such as socioeconomic disadvantage.

The other matter, is that parents need to know what their teenage sons and daughters are doing, and who they are with, at any time of the day and night, and monitoring as it is called, is considered very important to resilience in youth (Dishion & Patterson, 2006; Luthar, 2006). A related activity is “peer management and structuring practices”, or picking your children’s friends, which Dishion and Patterson (2006) think “may be one of the central roles of parents in effecting long-term adjustment in their children” (p. 527).

### **Biology of resilience**

The first part of this section provides an overview of biological research as it relates to resilience, and the principal contributors to this account are Curtis and Cicchetti (2003). In the second part, there is a critique of the biological approach to resilience, and for this I am indebted to Luthar and Brown (2007).

The biology of resilience is, in a sense, the last frontier of resilience scholarship and its active exploration has been advocated by some of the disciplines leading researchers, including Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000), Luthar and Zelazo (2003), Luthar (2006), Masten & Obradovic (2006), and Rutter (2006a). According to Curtis and Cicchetti (2003), the historical and contemporary prominence of psychosocial studies in resilience research is understandable, given the dominance of behavioural and psychodynamic frameworks in clinical and developmental psychology throughout much of the last century. There are three other reasons that may explain the comparative neglect of biological factors up until now; (i) most resilience investigators have not had training in neuroscience or biology, (ii) the hard information that we now have on the

structure and function of the brain was not available, and (iii) researchers have only relatively recently had access to biological technology.

### **Neural plasticity.**

The biology of resilience is generally concerned with the role of the brain, hormones, and genes in adaptive behaviour. More particularly, and technically, the topics of interest include neural plasticity, localisation of brain functions, the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, gene expression, and the use of biotechnology in resilience studies (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003). Awareness that the brain could be modified by experience dates back to the work of Hebb (1947, 1949, cited by Curtis & Nelson, 2003), and to subsequent researchers, who exposed rats to contrasting experiences, and who then showed that rats that had enriched and stimulating conditions displayed superior performance in complex problem solving. Of equal significance, the enriched condition rodents, when sacrificed, showed distinct neurochemical, physiological, and neuroanatomical changes (Curtis & Nelson, 2003).

Human neural plasticity, evidenced by structural and functional changes in the brain consequent to environmental input and experience, has also been clearly established by modern neuroscience (Luthar & Brown, 2007). As well, we know that people can regain functioning after significant assaults on the brain, and recovering from an adversity is a form of resilience. Cicchetti and Blender (2006) repeat an observation to the effect that the plasticity of the human brain has probably been central to the evolutionary success of the species.

Greenough and others (e.g., Greenough & Black, 1992, cited by Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003), distinguish between two types of neural plasticity that are related to experience: experience-expectant processes and experience-dependent processes. The experience-expectant variety is associated with critical, or 'sensitive' periods, and the brain provides a plethora of synapses at these times, and these are subjected to pruning

depending on environmental input. Romanian orphans who were institutionalised for longer than the first six months of life show psychological and behavioural costs, and these undoubtedly correlate with damage to neurobiological systems during this especially formative developmental phase (Luthar & Brown, 2007).

Experience-dependent plasticity can occur throughout the life span and, in effect, each of us builds our own brain, as “a significant portion of postnatal brain development is thought to occur through interactions and transactions of the individual with the environment” (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003, p. 777). So how exactly does the environment get into the brain? In their book chapter, Curtis and Nelson (2003) pose this question, and then they provide the following explanation. Firstly, motor, sensory, and perceptual systems acting in concert transmit representations of intriguing aspects of the environment to the brain. Secondly, it is suggested, gene activation occurs and messenger RNA codes for the formation of new synapses and dendrites.

More synapses mean more efficient neural networks, which translate into an enhanced behavioural repertoire. It should be emphasised that the relationship of brain and experience is continuous, bidirectional, and cumulative. As was intimated above, in the section Conceptualisations of Human Development, experience modifies the brain, and the changed brain alters how the individual interacts with their world. In accordance with this view, Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) contend that resilient children choose events and settings that revise and strengthen their brains to promote adaptive functioning.

### **Localisation of brain functions.**

It is likely that the left and right prefrontal cortices are particularly significant in resilience, because the left hemisphere seems to contribute positive affect while the right hemisphere associates with negative feelings; and as Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) observe, emotional regulation has high salience as a protective factor in resilience

theorising. So far, at least, distinctive patterns of hemispheric EEG asymmetry have been observed in adults with depression and in children of depressed mothers. Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) cite speculation by Davidson (1998a, 1998b) that differentials in the cortices bias affective style, which could increase vulnerability to depression.

### **Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis.**

It is critical to wellbeing to have an endocrine system that can respond to stress, but when that system is excessively activated by chronic stress, and there is an over production of the stress hormone cortisol, deleterious consequences may be instigated by the genes that control brain structure and function. Hypercortisolism harms neurons, and it negatively affects neurotransmitter receptors, and neurotransmitter production and reuptake. Returning to the Romanian orphans, it was found that, six and a half years after adoption, there was a direct correlation between length of institutionalisation in the first year of life and morning basal cortisol levels. Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) conclude:

Repetitive challenges in a child's environment, such as being reared in an institution or being abused or neglected, can cause disruptions in basic homeostatic and regulatory processes that are central to the maintenance of optimal physical and mental health. (p. 792)

### **Gene expression.**

Rutter (2006b) provides explanations of gene action that point to both their complexity, and to their indirect effects. Genes work collectively to produce proteins that operate through one or more biochemical pathways that might influence either a particular part of the brain, or neurotransmitter functions, or neuroendocrine operation, or an aspect of cognition. It is unlikely that genetic expression has anything to do with psychological traits as people may think of them, and this includes resilience. As we suspect, human beings have marked differences in genetic susceptibility or

predispositions and these differences are the biological bases of individuality (Cicchetti & Blender, 2006).

Interestingly, the male participants in the Dunedin longitudinal study have contributed to pivotal publications on G x E, or gene sensitivity to particular environmental factors. Caspi and colleagues (cited, amongst others, by Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003; Rutter, 2006a; Luthar & Brown, 2007) looked at the impact of maltreatment amongst the Dunedin males in determining antisocial behaviour, and they found that a genotype associated with high levels of monoamine oxidase A conferred protection, whereas low levels of this neurotransmitter-metabolising enzyme created vulnerability. Rutter (2006a) lists the lessons that are provided by this work, and probably the most important of these is that a particular G x E interaction can have significant specific effects.

Luthar and Brown (2007) cite Suomi (2006) who says that there are two interpretations of G x E findings. Either, “good” genes protect against “bad” environments, or “good” settings buffer “bad” genes. On this question, Luthar and her co writer say that experimental animal studies show that the environmental interpretation has sway. These authors refer to work by Meany et al. (1999) who studied the consequences of maternal grooming on the brains of rodent pups. Offspring who received licking and grooming in the second week of life had altered gene expression with respect to stress reactivity. Additionally, the changes lasted a life time and, moreover, the brain modifications were passed onto the next generation.

### **Biotechnology in resilience research.**

Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) argue that biological assessments should be included in a multifaceted pre- and post testing approach to the evaluation of interventions to promote resilience. Some of the possible assessments are relatively easy and non-invasive, such as saliva sampling to measure neuroendocrine and immune functioning,

and buccal swabbing to obtain DNA. More sophisticated biotechnology tests are the EEG and brain imaging, both of which can contribute understanding of the role of cognition in resilience, amongst other factors.

Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) see the following advantages in biological evaluations, and in the inclusion of a biological perspective: (1) interventions could be individualised to a client's genetic profile, (2) psychoeducation could be provided to clients to assist them to understand the neurological change that may have occurred as a consequence of a traumatic experience, (3) interventions might be provided to clients whose neural systems have been affected by trauma at an early age, (4) an efficacious intervention will be understood to change both behaviour and physiology, (5) the components of a multidimensional intervention may be shown to impact on different brain systems, (6) it will be possible to ascertain whether timing is a crucial consideration in resilience interventions, and whether more is achieved early in development and close to the assault, (7) more precise knowledge can be gained on the mediators and moderators of resilient functioning, and (8) relatedly, we will obtain a greater understanding of adaptive and maladaptive development.

### **Critique of the biological approach.**

Luthar and Brown (2007) do not question the value of basic biological research but they do object to it assuming a predominant place in resilience studies and, principally, this is because resilience research is primarily intended to improve the lives of children and families who are at risk. Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) also have some concerns about excessive attention to biology, which they describe as a reductionist pitfall; but the case that is mounted by Luthar and Brown (2007) is much more substantial, it is largely critical, and it traverses theoretical, empirical, and pragmatic arguments.



Luthar and Brown (2007) observe that resilience theorising is informed by many scholarly perspectives and, the authors contend, there are other potential contributors, in addition to biology, that should be called upon to enrich resilience, such as economics, family systems, counselling psychology, social psychology, and qualitative research methods. The authors provide persuasive justifications for utilising contributions from each of these sources, and they say that the fundamental problem is that our understanding of the context of resilient functioning is deficient. In this regard, Zucker (2006) is cited by the authors for his criticism of some major longitudinal studies which, he says, do not detail the socialisation environment. Luthar and Brown (2007) make the following observation:

Even as we are several years into the new millennium, there is still little commitment to broad, multilevel analyses of youth competence; careful understanding of the experiences of individuals in their own contexts of families, peers, and societal expectations will be essential to understanding resilience and devising effective interventions to promote it. (p. 941)

What is known in resilience, is that the early care giving environment has a critical role in individual wellbeing. Luthar and Brown (2007) comment that the confirmation of this by biological research has been its most important contribution, but the significance of early attachments was known in behavioural research a long time ago.

The authors make strikes against neurobiology and genetics, specifically, regarding false promises. For instance, it is known that there can be methodological problems with brain scan studies and, further, that when parts of the brain ‘light up’ we should not necessarily infer particular psychological states because of the number and complexity of the neurological processes involved. As well, the idea that there is ‘a gene for’ particular psychiatric problems implies a direct causal chain that simply cannot be sustained.

The empirical concerns voiced by Luthar and Brown (2007) mostly relate to transdisciplinary research, which means resilience studies with biological investigators, and which have been previously advocated by Luthar (2006) herself, amongst others. Two of the difficulties with transdisciplinary collaborations are that they are very expensive, and they take attention away from other important research topics; and as Luthar and Brown (2007) say, “who will pursue what we have been doing?” (p. 938).

There are two other issues with effective transdisciplinary work, according to Luthar and Brown (2007). Such work is dependent on the depth of the unidisciplinary contributions, and biological investigators typically do not accommodate psychosocial perspectives. With respect to this last point, the authors cite Rutter (2006) who says that, “It is quite striking that behavioural genetics reviews usually totally ignore the findings on environmental influences. It is almost as if research by nongeneticists is irrelevant” (Luthar & Brown, 2007, p. 937).

The pragmatic questions revolve around whether children at high risk are really going to benefit very much from studies on the biology of resilience. Basic biological research might guide intervention design, but brain scans and genotyping are expensive and, as it is, we do not provide comprehensive services to anything like the full population of young people who are problems to themselves and to others. Luthar and Brown (2007) say that the question of *time* is also relevant, especially for children who are presently experiencing adversity, and the authors again quote Rutter (2006) who cautions that “it will take time (many decades and not just months or a few years) and we are only just learning how to pursue the long path from gene discovery to determination of the causal processes” (p. 936).

### **Emerging adulthood**

The identification of emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental stage is a recent development within the discipline of human development. Emerging adulthood

is seen as falling between adolescence and young adulthood and as comprising 18-25 years of age. Like the categorisation of adolescence before it, emerging adulthood is a social construct that is associated with economic progress and increased life expectancy (Arnett, 2004).

On a simple and evidential level, the new phase in the life-span may explain why young people do not seem to settle down and marry like they used to. In fact, emerging adulthood is associated with an array of defining attributes. This period is important because it contains significant psychosocial events, and some of these challenges might currently be misattributed to the teen years. As well, this period contains New Zealand's highest proportions of troubled young people.

### **What is distinctive about emerging adulthood?**

In a landmark paper in 2000 in the *American Psychologist*, Arnett distinguished emerging adulthood as a recognisable developmental phase demographically, subjectively, and by identity explorations (Arnett, 2000). In terms of demography, the author cites living arrangements, and education and training, as indicative of the variability and instability of the period. Young people, 18-25 years, live with parents and in halls of residence, and they board, flat, cohabit, marry and own their own homes. As well, they alternate between some of these options fairly frequently and, as many parents know well, the family home is often the point to which they return.

What emerging adults do during the day has a similar diversity and, with respect to education and training, it extends to part-time and full-time university, polytechnic, and whanaga enrolments, and a myriad of apprenticeships, cadetships, and other work-based schemes. Again, diversity is complemented by instability and even a university education is often pursued with false starts, restarts, and unexpected diversions and digressions (Arnett 2000; Power, Edwards, Whitty, & Wigfall, 2003).

Emerging adults do not see themselves as either adolescents or adults, but as occupying some sort of subjective in-between land, and studies have repeatedly shown that, for most people, it takes until they are almost thirty before they truly feel that they have reached adulthood (Arnett, 2000). In fact, many 18-25 year-olds are unsure that they want to be adults. Some view adult responsibilities as burdensome and annoying, some associate adulthood with personal stagnation, and some approach being adult with reluctance or even dread (Arnett, 2004).

Emerging adults are, nevertheless, generally optimistic people. They believe that they will do better in life than their parents, and this includes having happier marriages. Arnett comments that the dreams of the emerging adult are untested by reality and he repeats an observation by Aristotle about the young people of Ancient Greece: "Their lives are lived principally in hope. . . . They have high aspirations; for they have never yet been humiliated by the experience of life, but are unacquainted with the limiting force of circumstances" (2004, p. 223).

At what point in our lives do we decide who we are? A contemporary view in human development studies is that we confront identity decisions throughout our lives (Santrock, 2008). Nevertheless, it may be that many people still see the teen years as the time when we discover ourselves and this is in keeping with Erickson's idea that the period is concerned with identity versus identity confusion (Erikson, 1965). Actually, while serious self-exploration often begins in adolescence, many enduring developments in personal identity occur in emerging adulthood, whether in relationships, work, or worldviews.

Relationships between males and females in adolescence tend to be tentative and transient. By contrast, love associations among emerging adults are generally more intimate and serious, and understandings of self and others are more salient. Likewise, the part-time work that youths perform is primarily to obtain money whereas emerging

adults actively try out vocational options. With respect to worldviews, 18-25 year-olds have more life experience on which to base new sets of personal beliefs and values (Arnett, 2000).

Arnett (2006) summarises the features of emerging adulthood, and these attributes are largely the culmination of what we have discussed. The period that encompasses 18-25 year-olds is: (1) *The age of identity explorations*, when people have the freedom to clarify who they are and what they want; (2) *The age of instability*, and the high rate of residential change (including 'the Big OE') reflects the many other changes that are taking place at this time; (3) *The self-focussed age*, which is not to be confused with selfishness or self-centredness since this self-preoccupation facilitates a self-sufficiency that involves consideration for others; (4) *The age of feeling in-between*, which is how emerging adults describe themselves developmentally; and (5) *The age of great optimism*, and the hope and optimism that young people generally feel has a special pertinence for emerging adults from troubled homes who can see themselves as having a new beginning.

### **Health and wellbeing of emerging adults in New Zealand.**

Young adults are generally the fittest and healthiest that they will be in their lives (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2007; Santrock, 2008) and they belong to the most healthy generation in history (Arnett, 2007). However, there are significant subgroup differences in wellbeing, and in this country Maori health and longevity compare poorly with nonMaori (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). As well, an array of problem behaviours come to prominence in emerging adulthood and it is possible that, again, we have been preoccupied with the teen years as a time of challenge and have overlooked what the statistics are saying about the next phase of the life-span.

Cigarette smoking is most prevalent among 25-34 year-old people, but 15-24 year-olds are the next most prolific consumer group (Ministry of Social Development,

2008), and emerging adults are binge drinkers. In fact, nearly one-third of males aged 16-24 years usually consume eight or more drinks in a single session (<http://www.alac.org.nz/NZStatistics.asp> x). This alcohol consumption has its squeal in fatal motor vehicle accidents, and alcohol and drugs are a contributing factor in 32 percent of these for 15-19 year-olds and in 46 percent of fatal accidents for 20-24 year-olds (Ministry of Transport, 2007a).

Young people and motor vehicles are truly a dangerous combination. This is exemplified in the 2006 statistics which show that, of the 121 fatal traffic accidents involving young people, they were at fault in 92 of them, and of the 813 serious injury crashes, 15-24 year-olds were to blame 628 times (Ministry of Transport, 2007b). Accidents on the road are the leading cause of deaths for emerging adults (Ministry of Youth Development, 2003).

Analysis of fatal motor vehicle crashes, 2004-2006, shows that 78 percent of the 15-24 year-olds who were killed were male (Ministry of Transport, 2007b). Young men also predominate in work place injuries, and emerging adults are second place on this table, after men aged 65 years (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). As well, according to government data, deaths from assault and intentional injury are highest for emerging adulthood, and it is males who are likely to be the victims. Further, the whole age group is over represented in rates of sexually transmitted illnesses (Ministry of Youth Development, 2003). Finally here, women in their early twenties have significantly more abortions and, in 2006, the figure was 37 terminations per 1,000 females aged 20-24, which was about twice the general abortion rate (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

The statistics for criminal victimisation and offender incarceration contain some predictable and some surprising findings, perhaps. In 2005, of all age groups, 15-24 year-olds were most likely to be the victims of offences, with a prevalence rate of 55

percent. With respect to household violence (between partners), men are as vulnerable as women to being victimised at least once (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). However, it is during emerging adulthood that most women (12 percent) are sexually assaulted (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). With regard to imprisonment, most men who are sent to jail are between 20 and 29 years of age (Department of Corrections, 2004).

Suicide is a major cause of death in emerging adulthood and this group has the second highest suicide rate after those aged 25-34 years. New Zealand has the second highest male suicide rate in the OECD, and the Ministry of Social Development (2008) observes that we are one of a few countries where younger people kill themselves more frequently than older people.

The Ministry of Social Development (2008) has established that loneliness peaks for Kiwis during emerging adulthood. In addition, mental health research (Oakley Browne, Wells, & Scott, 2006) shows that 16-24 year-olds are most likely to have emotional and behavioural issues, and they are also the most vulnerable to serious psychiatric disorders. The twelve-month prevalence is 28.6 percent for any disorder and 7.2 percent for serious disorders. As a country, we have high percentages of anxiety, mood, and substance use disorders.

Emerging adults do not fare well on financial indicators either (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). They earn less, and unemployment for them is a more regular feature than for older age groups. There is also higher participation in part-time and casual work (Ministry of Youth Development, 2003). Among all adults, 15-24 year-olds are most likely to live in over-crowded accommodation. Lastly, since the late 1980s in this country, there has been a large increase in the number of households spending more than 30 percent of income on rent and mortgages, and this impacts more on low income occupants like emerging adults (Ministry of Social Development, 2008).

### **Making it in emerging adulthood: Adaptation and maladaptation.**

Emerging adulthood is a paradoxical period because it sees *both* significant increases in problem behaviours and a general rise in wellbeing across the age group as a whole (Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006). These trends are best explained by the person-context changes that occur at this time. Compared with emerging adults, teenagers who are attending secondary school and who are living at home have relatively structured and supported lives and, consequently, they are reasonably homogeneous as a group. However, when these young people leave high school and enter tertiary education or employment there is often a fairly sudden drop in institutional structures and constraints and this provokes an array of responses, and the heterogeneity of emerging adulthood.

Shanahan (2000, cited by Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006) contends that the density of social role changes during emerging adulthood is greater than during any other developmental transition. Many emerging adults clearly enjoy the increased opportunities for self-selection, as evidenced in their enhanced wellbeing. For a minority, there is a mismatch between their individual needs and what the environment now offers and, as a consequence developmental discontinuity ensues, and problems and distress results.

The picture, however, is incomplete because for some emerging adults the years 18-25 contain a turning point experience and for them developmental discontinuity represents a new and positive life change. For this small group, life has been conflicted and challenging, but now the environment offers unprecedented opportunities, and new resilience trajectories are initiated. The following positive turning points have been identified in longitudinal studies: higher education, work opportunities, military service, religious involvements, and marriage and romantic relationships (Masten, Obradovic, & Burt, 2006). The impetus for change is not always obvious, and Masten et al. (2006) observe that "In naturally occurring resilience, luck may play a significant role in the



conjunction of a ready-to-change individual and transformational opportunities” (p. 188).

Masten et al. (2006) have studied positive turning points in emerging adulthood as evidenced in the Project Competence longitudinal study. This is defining resilience research and the newly identified resilient participants were required to show competence in age-relevant developmental tasks while presently, or previously, experiencing significant risk or adversity. As we have come to expect, the standard and highly salient resources of cognitive capacity, parenting quality, and socioeconomic status contributed to salutary functioning (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). However, another set of variables directly related to the transition to emerging adulthood made a unique contribution that went beyond the core adaptive components. The special factors that made the difference for the resilient individuals were autonomy, future orientation and planfulness, coping skills, and adult support.

The turnaround participants shared similar, although fewer, resources of intellect, personality, and family with the much larger number of their colleagues who displayed continuing competence. Nevertheless, there was a contrast with those who remained on maladaptive trajectories, and the people who were now pursuing positive pathways had much better adaptive resources. A pivotal lesson of resilience research was reiterated here: there is nothing magical about it. Essentially, the factors that produce good outcomes for the majority of young people are also operating for the few who are categorised as ‘resilient’ (Masten, 2001).

### **Emerging adulthood: Conclusion and implications.**

In times past, the study of human development was largely the study of childhood and adolescence (Santrock, 2008), and it is likely that these emphases have conditioned how we respond to young people and the sorts of human services that our community provides for them. The lengthening of the life-span, amongst other

influences, has created an awareness that development continues beyond the teen years, and that subsequent developmental periods have particular, and important, personal challenges.

Emerging adulthood is special because so much that is important in terms of psychosocial functioning is reviewed, revised, and reorganised. This period is also distinctive because of the large number of problem behaviours that become prominent at this time. It is little wonder then, that Masten et al. (2006) describe the years 18-25 as possibly representing “a unique window of opportunity for strategic intervention to promote positive change” (p. 186)

Emerging adults have a unique and singular claim for the deployment of substantial, social service and health resources, and this is because they experience special psychological challenges, they exhibit multiple problem behaviours in high amplitude, *and* they have a reasonable probability of becoming parents. The Ministry of Statistics website shows that, in 2007, 26.5 percent of all births in this country were to 18-25 year-old women (<http://www.stats.govt.nz/tables/births-table.htm>). The presence of dependent children adds an outstanding imperative to social service engagements because adult personal challenges, of whatever form and source, will often impact adversely on the quality of the parent-child relationship (Dishion & Patterson, 2006).

There is an opportunity here, for interventions of scale, that are both problem-focussed and preventative, and that can aspire to ‘breaking the cycle’ of generations of maladaptation and distress. Significantly, a candidate programme is presently being taken up by the human services in this country (*The Incredible Years* parent programme), and there is already preliminary proof of efficacy for this intervention for both Maori and Pakeha families (Fergusson, Stanley, & Horwood, 2009).

## **The relevance and significance of the literature**

Resilience is a complex, multidisciplinary study and the present thesis, which incorporates two divergent studies that were ten years apart, endeavours to acknowledge and respond to the inherent complexity. It is for this reason that we have discussed risk factors and protective factors, the new developmental challenges of emerging adulthood, and the biology of resilience. Risk and protective factors require close scrutiny because they are simple-sounding categorisations that often cover intricate influences and interrelationships. The participants in the current investigation are emerging adults and so it is appropriate that we give special attention to the challenges and demands that can confront 18-25 year-olds. The biological material has been included because, in the words of Curtis and Cicchetti (2003), “Omitting biology from the resilience equation is tantamount to omitting psychology” (p. 803).

The study of resilience is part of the larger discipline of human development, and it is indebted to the purposes and understandings of the parent discipline. Development occurs via normative biological and psychological processes; Masten’s (2001) ‘ordinary, magic’, but the outcomes are unique. Human development is concerned with “the integrated, dynamic functioning of the individual” (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006, p. 431), and it is the centrality of the individual cases that links the two investigations that are presented in the thesis.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This section of the thesis has four parts. The first part is intended to orient the reader to research approaches in resilience; and to the purposes, and to the participants, of the thesis investigation. The subsection begins by looking at the place of longitudinal studies in resilience research and the potential contributions of qualitative investigations. Next, there is an explanation of how the present study came about; the participants are introduced, and there is a description of how the first assessments (Time 1) were constituted. Following this, the research questions for the second assessments (Time 2) are enumerated; and the ethical considerations, and the Treaty of Waitangi obligations, of the research project are outlined. The subsection concludes with a discussion on combining the different research approaches at Time 1 and Time 2.

The second part of the methodology section largely provides a description and a discussion of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which is the research method that was chosen for the Time 2 assessments. At the start of this subsection, a brief account is given of case study research, and the IPA approach is then put forward. As well, in this part, the advantages of IPA as a research strategy are presented, some background is given on the philosophical and conceptual underpinnings of IPA, and there is a critique of this research method. The second subsection concludes with a statement on criteria for evaluating qualitative studies.

The third and fourth divisions of the Research methodology section deal with IPA in practice. The third part is concerned with the planning phases of the Time 2 assessments, and included here are the purposes and processes of semi-structured interviews, interview schedules, initial and subsequent analyses, and the writing up of an IPA study. The fourth and last subsection of the Research methodology tells the

story of what actually happened in the interviews and the analyses, when the investigation came to life.

### **Resilience research and the present study.**

Most resilience research is quantitative, and it is divided between variable-focused approaches that test for linkages among measures, and person-focused approaches, which consider how resilient children are different in relation to various criteria. Whereas the variable methods provide information on specific correlations among factors, the person-centred approaches show the patterns that exist in children's lives (Schoon, 2006).

Prospective studies have contributed substantially to our understanding of resilience. Indeed, Werner (2000) says that we are indebted for what we presently know to about 12 longitudinal studies. Werner's own prospective investigation on the Hawaiian island of Kauai was really the first systematic attempt to identify the factors that make it possible for children from high-risk backgrounds to prosper and to develop into well-adjusted adults (Werner & Smith, 1982).

While the bulk of the research literature is quantitative in orientation, there are some notable exceptions. In fact, several of the leaders in the resilience field have undertaken qualitative investigations. Masten provided a case study of recovery by a young girl with some severe stressors in her life (Masten & O'Connor, 1989). In addition, Werner in her ground-breaking resilience research, combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Werner & Smith, 1982). And another reasonably well known qualitative project was undertaken by Gordon and Song (1994), who looked at educational and occupational attainment for 26 African American men and women. More recently, there has been qualitative work by Laub and Sampson (2003), and Hauser, Allen, and Golden (2006), and the second of these investigations has some elements in common with the present thesis research.

Hauser et al. (2006) provide a report on a qualitative, longitudinal study of 67 people who were admitted to a secure psychiatric facility as teenagers. Twelve years after hospitalisation, nine of the research group were considered to be resilient according to the following criteria: very good socioemotional functioning, constructive relationships with friends and parents, and absence of psychiatric symptoms and serious antisocial behaviour.

Hauser et al. (2006) studied resilience processes, which the authors describe as elusive because they are hardly in evidence during bad times, but “as recovery progresses they increasingly and confusingly resemble the very outcomes they are bringing about” (p. 260). Moreover, “a resilience process may be operating powerfully underneath exactly the kind of behaviour that would most seem to controvert it” (p. 268). Three interrelated resilience mechanisms are identified in this narrative investigation, and they are reflection, personal agency, and relationships.

### **Longitudinal investigations.**

For some time now, there have been calls in the resilience literature for more longitudinal studies and for additional qualitative investigations. These research emphases reflect prevailing interest in the processes and mechanisms that are associated with resilient functioning. The workers who have called for additional prospective studies include Doll and Lyon (1998b), Luther, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000), Masten (1999), Masten and Coatsworth (1998), and Werner and Johnson (1999).

Schoon (2006) says that even short-term longitudinal investigations can be really useful, and Rolf and Johnson (1999) recommend a four to five year prospective study with adolescent participants that has similarities with the thesis research project. The period of adolescence is proposed because it is a predictably stressful developmental transition, as is emerging adulthood. Inevitably, there would be individual variations and different pathways and close scrutiny should reveal how protective factors assemble

over time, and transact positive outcomes, and how stressors bring about adverse results. There would be particular interests, such as gender differences in vulnerability and behavioural expression, and the presence of transition points. Ideally, such a study would depart from much previous research, which has examined risk and resilience in relation to problem behaviours with samples of white, middle class youth (Stoiber & Good, 1998).

Quite simply, the attraction of the prospective design is that it permits the investigator to trace changes over time. Rutter (1994) provides some additional benefits and advantages of longitudinal research. These studies have shown that the persistence of personal difficulties typically depends on independent chain effects and they have revealed that people tend to take their environment with them as they develop and age. Prospective investigations have also dealt with the potentially distracting fact that many children have temporary periods of adjustment difficulties. By contrast, retrospective work (which is where some resilience research began) cannot pick up the presence of some risk and protective factors, and neither can it gauge with accuracy the strength of those influences which are apparent.

### **Qualitative investigations.**

Longitudinal investigations are obviously relevant to the present research priorities and so too are qualitative methods. The potential contributions of qualitative studies to resilience research can be seen as falling under five headings: (1) *generating ideas*. Luthar and Brown (2007) see qualitative work as providing different points of view about central questions, and Luthar (2006) and Rutter (2007) value the hypotheses that are generated that might then lead to new quantitative investigations. Relatedly, Creswell (1994) says that qualitative methods are particularly useful for exploring a situation where the important variables have yet to be fully determined. (2) *resilience processes*. Doll and Lyon (1998b) believe that “Carefully designed qualitative studies

that attempt to provide insight into the phenomenological world of resilient individuals, including personal reflections, attributions, and perceptions about negotiating risk situations may prove invaluable in elucidating mechanisms and processes used to overcome adversity” (p.359).

A further (and pivotal) advantage of qualitative research is its subjectivity; (3) *individual meaning*. In fact, there are at least three related, but distinct, gains that can accrue under this heading. For instance, Patton (1990) suggests that qualitative methods are especially useful where the focus is on diversity and the uniqueness of individuals, whereas Ungar (2003) talks of the advantage of revealing the ‘intelligibility’ of different patterns of behaviour. Ungar (2003) also says that qualitative approaches allow individuals to have their own story recognised, and this includes people who might not be otherwise heard (Ungar, 2003).

A fourth benefit of qualitative analysis is that it allows for the contextualisation of studies and participants, and a fifth advantage is that it can guide the design of intervention strategies. (4) *contextualisation*. Most research on risk and resilience is undertaken in the US, and Australian academics Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999) question the applicability of findings that are generated in different social conditions; “patterns of privilege and disadvantage emerge differently in each country and thus we cannot assume that research conducted in, say, Minneapolis or Houston or Philadelphia, will be relevant to children and schools in Auckland, Adelaide or Sydney” (pp. 318-319). (5) *promoting interventions*. Both Luthar (2006) and Schoon (2006) make this argument, and it can be seen as especially relevant in the light of the complexity of behavioural and developmental influences.

### **The Time 1 assessments.**

The present qualitative investigation builds on a previous study that I undertook with two colleagues in 1998 (Stanley, Rodeka, & Laurence, 2000). At the time I was



Director of Whatuora Research Centre, which I established for Specialist Education Services to undertake research for the Ministry of Education. The Research Centre was charged with writing a manual for teachers to help them to identify senior primary school students who were at risk for problem behaviours. I wanted the manual to have a research base and a group of 11-12 year-old research participants, who were experiencing various adversities, was sought from local schools. Ethical approval was obtained for this project, and a copy of the approval letter from the Wellington Ethics Committee is attached as Appendix B.

Classroom teachers in decile 1 and 2 schools (i.e., schools with a socioeconomically disadvantaged parent population) were asked to identify their most at risk and most resilient Year 7 students using a student assessment form. The Assessment form used a coding system to hide identity (see Appendix C), and it required teachers to make determinations about pupil personality and behaviour using Likert-type scales. Other items asked about the presence of particular risks (e.g., physical abuse) and any specific resilience factors, such as religious faith or affiliation. The completed forms were appraised, a group of students was chosen, and contacts were then made with the caregivers by the schools. The information sheet for parents that was used is attached as Appendix D.

Ultimately, 12 students representing six schools were comprehensively assessed; and there were also interviews with their parents/caregivers and teachers. The child assessments encompassed an interview (see Appendix E for the interview schedule) and the administration of the following assessment instruments: Burt Word Reading Test (New Zealand Revision), informal prose inventory (scored for accuracy and comprehension), an informal four item student self-assessment of happiness scale, an informal 40 item sentence completion inventory relating to personal/social concerns,

and the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. As well, the young people completed a five minute writing sample entitled "What I hope for the future".

Each child's school records were reviewed and photocopies were retained of enrolment forms, the Primary and Intermediate Progress Records, samples of work, anecdotal notes, and any other relevant matters. The interviews with the parents and caregivers were audiotaped and transcribed, and the schedule for these interviews is presented as Appendix F.

All of the assessment material for each of the twelve participants was independently considered by the three researchers who then discussed all of the cases together, and collectively rated each of the participants in terms of his or her relative risk status; and this was taken to mean the apparent likelihood of the young person experiencing negative life outcomes. The risk and resilience judgements were also related to the Masten and Coatsworth (1998) definition of resilience, as "manifest competence in the context of significant challenges to adaptation or development" (p. 206). There were contested and rigorous determinations regarding the totality of each young person's circumstance, as this was understood at the time.

Conceptually, the assessments, interpretations, and judgements that were made with respect to the participants reflected a holistic idiography, which resembles the work of Gordon Allport (Ashworth, 2003). There was a commitment to using a number, and a variety, of assessment approaches. Each individual was to be understood as a unique totality, made up of a special configuration and interplay of personality, experience, and behaviour. However, while the aim was to appreciate the respondents in their full complexity this initial study was largely carried out from an external vantage point.

## **Time 2 research purposes.**

Simply stated, the intention to revisit the young people was to find out how they had fared since the first assessments. More particularly, the aim was to see how the young people themselves (who were now 21-22 years of age) viewed and understood their development and their current circumstance; and this goal gave rise to the following research objectives:

1. To explore and assess the participants' perceptions of personal competence and resilience.
2. To identify the risk and protective factors that had, and were, operating in the participants' lives since the initial interviews.
3. With the participants, to trace their individual developmental pathways across their lives to the present.
4. With the participants, to evaluate how the transition to early adulthood was contributing to a consolidation of risk and resilience for them.
5. To the extent that it was practicable, to identify the processes and mechanisms that may have contributed to vulnerability, or that have facilitated personal competence.
6. To integrate the results from the first assessments with the findings of the more recent study, and attempt to relate the outcomes of these investigations to current resilience theory and research.

As is well known, attrition or loss of subjects, can be a major issue in longitudinal research (Santrock, 2008), and there was concern that the original participants from 1998 would not be available to take part in a new study. In 2005, an exploratory trip was made to where the young people live and eleven of the twelve participants were located. It is now believed that the twelfth person has gone to Australia. Finding the participants was a difficult undertaking as some of them had made numerous changes of

address. It probably would have been preferable to approach the young people less directly and through an intermediary but the first necessity was establishing their existence and whereabouts. The available members of the original group were advised about the possibility of the proposed research and they expressed considerable interest in being involved. A follow up letter was also sent to them and a copy of this letter is attached (Appendix G).

In 2008, when I was ready to proceed with the new research project, ten of the original participants were located. Again, finding them represented a major undertaking that took three weeks; and some of the challenges, and the lessons learned from this adventure, are contained in Stanley (2009). Of the ten respondents who were located, nine of the young people now agreed to be interviewed. The Participant Information Sheet that was given to all of the respondents is presented as Appendix H and the consent form that they signed is contained in Appendix I.

### **Research participants.**

Some demographic characteristics of the research group are reported in the following table.

	Year of birth	Gender	Ethnicity
Anna	1986	Female	Pakeha/European
Damian	1987	Male	Maori/Pakeha
Richard	Not recorded	Male	Maori
Amber	1986	Female	Maori/Pakeha
Kerry	1986	Male	Pacific Island/Pakeha
Patrick	1986	Male	Maori
John	Not recorded	Male	Maori
Sean	1987	Male	Pacific Island/Pakeha
Jasmine	1986	Female	Pacific Island

**Table 1. Research names, year of birth, gender, and ethnicity of participants.** (Note, ethnicity was self-determined by the participants.)

The young people who participated in the present research represent a purposive sample. Smith and Osborn (2003) say that IPA investigators should look for a reasonably homogeneous group for whom the research question will be relevant. These young adults all grew up in the same geographical setting amid socioeconomic

disadvantage, they experienced an assortment of threats to their wellbeing, and ten years previously they had been judged as evidencing relative degrees of personal resilience. As Reid, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) suggest, the participants were originally recruited because of their expertise on the issue in question, which is the experience of risk and resilience.

Significantly, the research group is a *theoretical* sample, as well as representing purposive sampling. What this means is that, while they collectively depict resilience, they also have some individuals who are, perhaps, more typical exemplars of resilience, some who are at the extremes, and others whose life state suggest various divergences and discrepancies (Yardley, 2000). Theoretical sampling was not deliberately sought in the present project; rather it was an inadvertent (but desirable) outcome of the original recruitment strategy, which canvassed fairly broadly for participants ‘at risk’.

### **Ethical considerations.**

This research project utilises substantial quantities of personal information. Particularly in the interviews, but also at other phases of the investigation, the project could have threatened participants’ trust, dignity, self-esteem, and self-determination; and it might also have negatively impacted on personal and family relationships. The young persons’ wellbeing was foremost throughout the investigation, and this was shown in practical ways such as regularly checking on how they were feeling in the interviews. I also closely followed the Ethics Committee’s (AUTEC) requirement that the participants’ engagement in the research should be, and would continue to be, voluntarily undertaken. One of the original research group of 12 people refused to take part in the Time 2 assessments and, in a sense, this person’s refusal served as a confirmation that those who did participate in the investigation did do so voluntarily.

These duties of care notwithstanding, it does seem probable that there are some protections for participants in the construct of resilience itself. The study of resilience,

unlike risk research which preceded it, emphasises positive attributes and accomplishments. Even in the most difficult human circumstances there are things to celebrate, and especially in the lives of emerging adults, and this emphasis arguably represents a form of personal safeguard. In the interviews, I made a point of acknowledging all of the participants' accomplishments, while also being careful to maintain the focus and flow of the exchange.

A further point is that there is evidence that participants find their engagement in some research projects, at least, to be personally fulfilling. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) contend that, ideally, participants "should be enriched by the experience and should leave it with the feeling that they have learned something" (p. 64). Instances of personal enrichment through participation in case study research are recorded in the literature, and include Smith (1993). This is an examination of personal identity change during pregnancy and at the end of the study the participant concluded:

In a way I am glad that I have done this because it's stripping away those strategies, seeing how I operate, or how I have operated. . . I will go away and think about it, and I might employ those same strategies again to think, or I may use it to modify how I operate. (p. 264)

A final issue, which has both ethical and methodological significance, is the personal influence of the investigator. It is a fact that when we aspire to enter as completely as we can into someone else's social and psychological world (Smith, 1995) via dialogue and co-determined interaction, then circumstances are being created that are rich in potential for personal influence, as well as for exploitation. Nevertheless, as Yardley (2000) suggests, such influence can be bidirectional, as qualitative methodologies are presumed to have given research participants more active and powerful roles.

The research implications of interpersonal influence typically centre on the concept of investigator neutrality. This issue is discussed further in the subsection that follows on IPA, and the reader is also referred to Rapley (2001) for a searching

examination of the matter. Commentators generally do hold the investigator responsible for ‘managing’ researcher-respondent influence but, as Yardley (2000) says,

. . .it is difficult to overcome the inevitable imbalance in power relations between those who are selected for involvement in the study and the ‘expert’ whose role as an academic usually entails initiating, controlling and materially benefitting from the process of research. (p. 221)

### **Cultural considerations.**

The first study in 1998 assiduously attended to cultural considerations. For instance, the Project’s Advisory Committee had representatives of the Tangata whenua, documents were translated into Maori, and Kaitakawaenga were available as support people for participants and their families. In addition, during the course of the initial investigation a close professional link was maintained with the Pacific Health Research Centre located at Whitirea Community Polytechnic and, conjointly with this facility, Whatuora Research Centre hosted a Pacific Island student on a Health Research Council summer research placement.

The present investigation also gave practical expression to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. From the outset, discussions were held with cultural representatives about any contentious issues that might arise in the course of the research; and I am also fortunate in having links to Kaumatua in the study locality, so that local advice and support could be readily called upon. There was a clear commitment to responding to the participants in a respectful and responsive manner, and the research process endeavoured to maintain and enhance mana Maori (Health Research Council, 1998).

### **Two studies - mixed methods.**

As has been discussed, the vast bulk of resilience studies are quantitative investigations, and this means that there is a research legacy, which has characteristic qualities and emphases, and this legacy does not necessarily meld easily with a subjective approach. From an individual standpoint, what does ‘poor’ parenting or ‘good’ adjustment mean? And again, from a personal perspective, what relevance does

the standards of functioning debate have? Moreover, apart from being irrelevant, these questions have the potential to lead to prejudicial and harmful responses, and such outcomes would be completely counter to what is intended.

The thesis tries to appreciate the lived experiences of the participants and, as well, it attempts to contextualise these experiences in relation to the previously recorded perceptions to consider whether there are identifiable processes and patterns. There have been numerous calls in the literature for resilience research to focus on the processes and mechanisms that affect the course of human development (e.g., Doll & Lyon, 1998b; Luthar, 1993; Luthar, 2006; Masten, 1999; Masten & Powell, 2003; Rutter, 2007), and the combination of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ contributions (relative to the participants themselves) may have the power to explain personal interactions and transactions in terms of developmental processes.

Again, as stated above, the very special contribution of the subjective, or phenomenological approach, is that the investigator is given access to how participants appraise events and relationships. There have been calls for cognitive appraisals, like qualitative research more generally, to be a priority area in resilience research (Harvey & Delfabbro, 2004; Rutter, 2000). Quite obviously, the cognitive engagements that people have, and the mental schema that they contribute to, impact on how individuals respond to subsequent encounters, but we do not really know very much about this topic. Rutter (2000) comments:

The last feature that may promote resilience is probably the one about which we know least, namely, how people think about their experiences and how they incorporate them into the overall schema of themselves, their environment, and their relationships with other people. (p. 674)

## **Interpretative phenomenological analysis**

### **Case study approach.**

The thesis project is a qualitative investigation that utilises a case study approach. According to Yin (1994) case studies are concerned with “[E]stablishing the



how and why of a complex human situation” (p. 16). Yin (1998) says that case study research is especially appropriate when the goal is the explanation of events, when a variety of events are assembled using different data collection techniques, and when there is not a clear boundary between the ‘case’ and its context. The challenge of the present research was to obtain full understandings of complex personal situations. More precisely, the study endeavoured to explain person/environment interactions and transactions in terms of processes and consequences, and to truly appreciate the lived experiences of the participants.

According to Willig (2001) the case study involves “an in-depth, intensive, and sharply focused exploration” (p. 70), and it has five defining characteristics. The approach embraces an idiographic perspective as it is concerned with a particular, individual situation. As well, it attends to contextual data and it examines the case in relation to its surroundings. A further defining quality of case studies is that they depend on diverse sources of information to gain a detailed understanding. In addition, there is appreciation of change and development over time. The final feature is that case studies facilitate the generation of theory. Gordon and Song (1994) assert that, case studies “capture the functional flow of human behaviour. In the context of the cases, sequence, directionality, intent, circumstances, relationships, and values are more easily perceived as they are experienced in the process of living” (p. 40).

The present investigation involved multiple case studies. Multiple case studies can allow confirmation of general effects while permitting the exploration of particular issues. Each of the cases is considered in relation to all of the others to refine and modify, and to strengthen and refute, the emerging theory. In an exposition that closely aligns with a description of the present research participants, Yin (1998) says that the selection of two or three cases allows for *literal replication*, through the production of corroboratory evidence. Four or more cases permit *theoretical replication*, or the

duplication of different patterns and manifestations of a theory. Yin uses levels of significance from statistics as an analogy, and he comments that the number of cases that are selected depends on the degree of certainty that is sought.

### **Interpretative phenomenological analysis.**

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was the qualitative methodology chosen for the Time 2 investigation and it is concerned with the meanings that research participants associate with their experiences. The ‘main currency’ for IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2003) is the first-person viewpoint, and respondents are seen as experiential experts. The researcher’s role in IPA is to take an ‘insider’s perspective’, and to attempt “to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world” (Smith, 2004, p. 40).

IPA has an array of positive attributes that justify its adoption as a research strategy. Most importantly, the methodology “maps closely the complex reality of psychological process” (Smith, 2004, p. 44), and this is required if the risk and resilience framework is to move beyond simply enumerating risk and protective factors. Relatedly, Smith and Dunworth (2003) believe that IPA and qualitative methods have a very important role to perform in developmental psychology because they can cast light on changes that occur across developmental periods. Again, underlining IPA’s contribution to human development studies, Smith (2004) reports that the single superordinate construct that emerges from the published work that has employed this research strategy is personal identity.

A second set of justifications for using IPA is associated with its accessibility. This methodology is “quite unique among qualitative approaches in psychology” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 114) as it is mostly inductive, and it is not governed by some closed theoretical assumptions concerning the interpretation of the insider’s perspective. The ‘epistemological openness’ brings with it other demands, however, such as the

account having to be foremost and contextualised; and explicit research questions are also required (Larkin et al., 2006). Nonetheless, the relative lack of *a priori* assumptions does mean that IPA can connect relatively easily with diverse bodies of knowledge (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

IPA is accessible, as well, because it brings with it clear procedural guidelines (Smith, 2004) and those who have written about it have done so in comprehensible language. In this regard, Brocki and Wearden (2006) comment that IPA theorists “haven’t used language to obscure meaning in the way that other qualitative methodologies might be criticised” (p. 101).

IPA has two additional strengths that complement its accessibility and its process focus. IPA reveals interrelated personal meanings as a totality or gestalt (Smith, 2004), and this deep and practical understanding can give rise to best casework practices. The second attribute stems from IPA’s comparative youth as a methodology; being young, and comparatively unfettered theoretically, means that there are plenty of opportunities to trial it with new populations and novel data collection methods (Smith, 2004). In this regard, Reid et al. (2005) suggest that there is scope for IPA to move away from the disease and deficit preoccupations of health psychology, where it enjoys a particular prominence, and allow respondents “a chance to express their views about strength, wellness, and quality of life” (p. 21). As will be readily appreciated, such emphases are very much in keeping with the positive orientation of the resilience approach.

As indicated, IPA enjoys popularity as a research procedure in health psychology (e.g., Jarman, Smith, & Walsh, 1997; Kelly, 2006; Osborne & Coyle, 2002; Smith, 1997) and a principal reason for this is, that “Illnesses occur over time and it is over time that the processes in which IPA is interested unfold” (Brocki & Wearden, 2006, p. 90). Another reason that health psychologists have adopted IPA is because the

rich or 'thick' personal exposition that it provides accommodates "significant existential issues of considerable moment" (Smith, 2004, p. 48-49). Nevertheless, as Reid et al. (2005) have shown in a review of published papers, IPA has now been picked up by a range of other psychological specialties such as clinical and applied social psychology. Smith (2004) says that many clinical psychology doctoral students in the UK are now using IPA, and Brocki and Wearden (2006) talk of 'burgeoning' growth for this research strategy.

### **IPA: Intellectual roots and conceptual considerations.**

The principal intellectual force underpinning IPA is phenomenology, and it is illuminating to briefly trace the history of this movement and perspective. The progenitor of phenomenology was Edmund Husserl (1900/1970, cited by Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003) who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, contended that the neophyte discipline of psychology was prematurely preoccupied with abstractions. Instead, Husserl believed, psychologists should attend to the 'phenomenon', or the primary reality of what is experienced.

According to Husserl, human beings are conscious agents who attribute meanings to lived experience; and for each person, experience and meanings form a composite 'lifeworld' (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Subsequently, Heidegger (who was Husserl's protégé) argued that the individual is inevitably, and inextricably, a 'person-in-context'. Both mentor and follower shared, then, a rejection of the Cartesian divide between subject and object. However, Husserl and Heidegger also disagreed on a fundamental point, and that was whether phenomenology provided purely descriptions of experience, or whether interpretations of experience are actually unavoidable.

As we know, however, the fledgling discipline of psychology embraced empiricism and the nomothetic over introspection and the idiographic. Behaviourism held sway over American academic psychology for 40-50 years, and it was succeeded

by cognitive psychology, which shares a similar methodological commitment to external and measurable factors (Ashworth, 2003). Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) say that mainstream psychology is wedded to a very conservative version of science, and Smith (1996) comments that the quantitative orientation of psychology has

. . . produced a distorted agenda of what counts as legitimate inquiry and an impoverished map of psychological knowledge. A particular methodological commitment has tended to be privileged over substantive concern and topics have been neglected precisely because they would prove difficult to quantify. (p. 265)

Phenomenological concerns did not receive the attention that they deserved from the discipline of psychology, but they did not disappear; and Ashworth (2003) discusses the development of person-centred ideas and the impact that these have had on qualitative research methodologies. This author observes that these ways of thinking continued to develop in an underground way, and Smith and Dunworth (2003), and Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006), connect IPA to a substantial intellectual history.

Qualitative methodologies have now won a place in psychology, although this has been somewhat grudgingly on occasions. For instance, Hauser et al. (2006) observe that narrative studies, such as their own, have recently been recognised in the “skeptical world of developmental psychology” (p. 13). It is appropriate, then, to undertake some finer-grained conceptual analyses concerning IPA as a qualitative approach, and to reflect a little more on its relationship to contemporary psychology.

IPA has been described as a “broadly realist ontology” (Reid et al., 2005, p. 21) and as a ‘minimal hermeneutic realism’ (Larkin et al., 2006). These descriptors arise because IPA recognises linkages across cognition, language, and affect, and the perception of events and experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Phenomena have presences, which are more than representations as the aforementioned arise solely as conceptions or constructions in people’s heads. Language is a tool for thought for perceptual phenomenologists in the Husserian tradition, as distinct from those who view

it as the constructor of thought. In a sense, then, IPA lends towards the softer, or quasi-modernist, end of the qualitative research continuum; which would see discourse analysis, for instance, posited at the opposing postmodern pole.

This characterisation is simplistic, however, because IPA has been influenced by symbolic interactionism as well as by phenomenology, and because researchers who use IPA engage in interpretation, in addition to the description, of participants' experiences. According to Mead's symbolic interactionism, human relations are transacted, and interpreted, through the use of symbols (Giddens, 2006). As individuals, we are "embedded, intertwined, and otherwise immersed" in the social world (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 105). Symbolic interactionism has been a wellspring of constructivism in qualitative psychology (Ashworth, 2003), but the realist ontology of IPA means that while 'things' only achieve reality in the context of human life, these 'things' are real, or independent, nonetheless (Larkin et al., 2006).

The interpretation of experience, which is a step beyond the description of experience, takes us into the realm of hermeneutics, and hermeneutic approaches do not align with correspondence theories of truth (Tappan, 1997, cited by Larkin et al., 2006). Hermeneutics achieved prominence after the Reformation when Protestants were seeking accurate interpretations of the Bible, and under the influence of Schleiermacher, the interpretator's aim is to "understand the text at first as well as and then even better than the author" (Inwood, 1995, p. 353).

Smith and Osborn (2003) say that a double hermeneutic takes place in *interpretative* phenomenological analysis. Firstly, the participant makes sense of an experience in relation to his or her world, and this means that key 'objects of concern' are identified and described, and the participant's 'experiential claims' are understood (Larkin et al., 2006). Secondly, the researcher attempts to explain the participant's experience related to the context, and here there is effectively a hermeneutical circle;

with the parts contributing to the understanding of the whole and the whole giving meaning to the parts (Inwood, 1995).

In the IPA conceptualisation, then, neither participant nor analyst is a passive perceiver but, again, this qualitative strategy is not typically constructivist. Smith (2004) observes that the hermeneutics of IPA is mostly of empathy and meaning recollection. The phenomenological, the idiographic, and the single case are central to this approach and ultimately these take precedence. Smith (1999) provides a useful caution to those seeking to position IPA conceptually in terms of intellectual heritage when he says that his intention was “to propose a theoretical model which, while influenced by a metatheoretical position has been derived from and is grounded in, rather than predates and constrains, a body of data” (p. 412).

IPA does not meet the standards of conventional science and positivism, because it does not deal in observable events and testable propositions, and it has an expanded and personalised understanding of a single, unitary, and real world. Equally, it is inappropriate to see qualitative approaches, like IPA, as simply being an abstention from traditional ways, or to regard the findings that they produce as being merely subjective.

The fundamental reason why such discriminations are inappropriate is because the ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ cannot be easily separated. As Larkin et al. (2006) put it, we cannot actually stand apart from the world to find out how things ‘really are’. This has been accepted by the hard sciences for some time and the quantum revolution in physics is cited as a turning point in our understanding of objectivity. Since then, the materials of scientific study have been seen as deriving their meaning in the interactions with those who observe them (Spinelli, 1989). In science there are no longer ‘facts’ and ‘final truths’, but probabilities instead “which allow for increasingly adequate theories

and conclusions that *approach* ‘truth’ or ‘objective reality’ but can never achieve such” (Spinelli, 1989, p. 190, italics in original).

In fact, Spinelli (1989) argues that phenomenological psychology is distinctly scientific. While the individual’s subjective experience is central, the phenomenological psychologist’s investigative activities focus on the interactions between external reality, consciousness, and action. In effect, any and every understanding is dependent on careful and sustained scrutiny of the subject’s perceptual field.

An examination of a perceptual field shows the effects of ‘sedimented’ beliefs, or individual and cultural biases, on a person’s understanding of his or herself and the circumstances in which they exist. The analysis also offers the possibility of discovering ‘invariants of experience,’ or universally shared qualities, which is in keeping with a Husserlian understanding of phenomenological research (Ashworth, 2003). In conducting an inquiry, the phenomenological investigator has no alternative to ‘testing’ what they see according to their own perceptual awareness. In a sense, our perceptual ‘biases’ make good research difficult, and they also make it possible (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999).

Larkin et al. (2006) observe that IPA is probably more accurately seen as a phenomenological perspective, or stance, than a research strategy, and consciousness and cognition are at its core. As we know, the emphasis in phenomenological psychology and in IPA is on sense making and Smith et al. (1999) suggest that there is much common ground with the social cognition paradigm in social psychology, which is defined by an authority in the area as “the study of how we perceive, remember, and interpret information about ourselves and others” (Brehm, Kassin, & Fein, 2005, p. 18). Smith (2004) goes further when he says, somewhat provocatively, that IPA *is* cognitive psychology, if by other methodological means. On this topic, however, Larkin et al.



(2006) observe that “it would not be wise for IPA to claim the equivalent of a reductive move from discourse to some sort of enduring and certain knowledge of an *inner, conscious, or cognitive domain*” (p. 109).

Certainly, the commonality of concepts and constructs across quantitative and qualitative psychology should facilitate some useful conversations, as Smith (2004) contends. For its part, conventional empiricism may need to more completely appreciate a simple truth that is communicated by Giorgi and Giorgi (2003): the world of the participant is subjective but the capturing of that world is objective, methodical, and scientific. These authorities on phenomenology make another, and related, illuminating observation when they say that all science (phenomenological and mainstream) transforms, or modifies, data, but phenomenological psychology does it *a posteriori*, compared to conventional psychology’s *a priori* approach. Quantitative psychologists expend much effort on experimental design whereas qualitative researchers have to do the bulk of their work after the raw data are collected.

There are several other points about phenomenological psychology that should be noted because of the significance of these matters to the present resilience project. Firstly, phenomenological researchers readily utilise the experimental findings of other psychological approaches (Smith, 2004; Spinelli, 1989). Conventional psychology has emphasised the shared features of the human experience and phenomenologist’s value this contribution but they now wish to redress the balance by stressing the unshared aspects of the human condition. For instance, Smith (2004) says that a principal aim of IPA is “to make a contribution to psychology through interrogating and illuminating existing research” (p. 44).

The second matter is that phenomenological psychology acknowledges and values a number of the most salient components of the risk and resilience framework. Amongst these common commitments is the prominence given to context; but it is also

apparent in the holistic and integrative view of experience, which is also central to current conceptualisations of human development.

Perhaps most importantly, phenomenological psychology and resilience studies share a similar conception of person/environment relationships. Neither approach accepts the single location discourses of a constitutional or environmental determinism (Stanley, 2003a). Spinelli (1989) says of phenomenological psychology that “Its one central assumption lies in its view of human beings as active interpreters of their experience of the world rather than as passive reactors to both bio-physical and environmental forces” (p. 180). This statement is reminiscent of the transactional view of person/environment relations (Sameroff, 1995), which is widely accepted amongst resilience workers.

IPA has been subject to criticisms by Willig (2001). This writer observes that phenomenological research documents and describes personal experience rather than explains it. She says that the explanation of experience requires knowledge of the conditions that originally generated the experience, and these conditions may be far removed in time and place. What is unique about the present resilience study is that we have detailed information about previous times for our participants and so on this occasion explanations may be possible.

Willig (2001) also contends that IPA fails to acknowledge that language does more than represent reality, and that it can actually construct it. However, as the foregoing discussion has hopefully made clear, this is a conceptual and theoretical issue; in IPA verbal reports are not seen as stand-alone entities but, rather, as linked to and indicative of cognitions.

A further observation offered by Willig (2001) is that IPA demands that participants possess sophisticated communication abilities. This is a criticism that might be made of qualitative methods more generally; and the related criticism is that

interview approaches favour people from middle-class backgrounds. Smith and Osborn (2008) acknowledge the need for good interviewing skills, but IPA is about people telling their own story and the approach benefits from the common propensity for self-reflection. Reid et al. (2005) advise that a person's mental status can actually be irrelevant in IPA because of the emphasis on personal meaning, and they cite an IPA study by Rhodes and Jakes (2000) with people experiencing psychotic delusions. Smith (2004) also comments that,

In my experience there is no correlation between the socio-economic status of the participant and the richness of the data obtained. Rather, the richness of the account is more likely to be associated with the importance of the experience being discussed by the participant and the engagement they feel in the project. Indeed accounts from middle class professionals can often be disappointingly abstract or opaque. (p. 49)

### **IPA in practice, procedural considerations**

There are repeated claims that IPA is not a prescriptive methodology and that there is not a single and correct way of using this qualitative strategy (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Smith et al., 1999). Nevertheless, this research strategy is rich in guidance for the investigator. On this aspect, Willig (2001) observes: "The systematic nature of its analytic procedure and the provision of detailed descriptions of the analytic process. . . have meant that IPA has become an increasingly attractive research method for psychologists" (pp. 53-54). IPA typically uses semi-structured interviews, which are sufficiently flexible to allow the researcher to understand how participants are perceiving and making sense of the events in their lives, and it follows the usual pattern of qualitative methods with cumulative and integrative coding.

#### **Semi-structured interviews.**

Smith and Osborn (2008) state that semi-structured interviews (SSIs) are probably the best way to gather data in an IPA study, and they are certainly the means that are used most often. For instance, Brocki and Wearden (2006) reviewed 52 articles

that used IPA, which were published through to November 2004, and they report that SSIs were used in 49 of them.

The advantages of SSIs are listed by Smith (1995), Smith and Osborn (2008), and Reid et al. (2005). Firstly, there is significant potential within the SSI approach for the development of interpersonal empathy and rapport because they do not adhere to a strict procedure. This is to be expected in a dialogue, or a co-determined interaction (Smith & Osborn, 2008) which, might otherwise be defined, as an “in-depth and personal discussion” (Reid et al., 2005, p. 22). Secondly, SSIs by definition are more flexible than structured interviews in what they can cover. The ordering of the questions is not so important, and subsequent questions can be modified by responses to initial items. Smith (1995) says that it is the interviewer’s role to “facilitate and guide” (p. 16), which should allow the participant to “think, speak, and be heard” (Reid et al., 2005, p. 22).

A third advantage is that SSIs can depart from the interview script entirely to follow up a novel or interesting aspect of a participant’s concerns. In effect, then, the interviewer is not completely in charge, or control. From time to time the respondent determines the direction of the interview, and this is in keeping with the interviewee’s role as the experiential expert (Smith, 1995; Smith & Osborn, 2008). A fourth point is that SSIs have the capacity to produce rich data. Unlike traditional methodologies that define and refine data in terms of quantitative categories, SSIs can generate a much fuller picture. Potentially, there is the maximum opportunity for the participant to tell their story.

### **Interview schedules.**

Smith (1995), and Smith and Osborn (2008) say that a schedule should be prepared in advance for the interview. By this preparation, the purpose of the interview can be made explicit, and any difficulties that might be encountered can be anticipated.

A further advantage of writing an interview schedule is that it allows the interviewer to concentrate more completely during the course of the interview.

Yin (1998) contends that the use of a formal case study protocol is obligatory when using a multiple-case design. According to this authority, the protocol states the investigator's theoretical propositions/questions, it contains the procedures and rules for data collection, and it is, in effect, the agenda to be followed in the field. Brocki and Wearden (2006), in their survey of 52 published IPA studies, found that very many of them used some variety of interview schedule.

Smith (1995, Smith & Osborn, 2008) provides a sequence for producing an interview schedule. In keeping with IPA more generally, he emphasises that this sequence is suggestive, not prescriptive, and as a process, it is iterative rather than linear. The first step is to state the topics, issues, or themes. The second step involves putting the topics in the best order, and this will be determined by the logic of the subject matter, and by the sensitivities associated with it. Topics that arouse emotions will likely come later in the schedule. The third step is concerned with devising general questions for each topic, and these questions, like the topics that they represent, are ordered logically and on the basis of the feelings that they might engender.

The fourth step in the construction of an interview schedule is about incorporating probes and prompts, which are more specific questions to carry the interview forward and deeper. Interpretative phenomenological analysts are hesitant about the deployment of probes and prompts (Smith, 1995; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The preference is for first-order questions that are "specific enough to encourage the respondent to talk about the topic and general enough to do it in their own way" (Smith & Dunworth, 2003, p. 607).

Brocki and Wearden's (2006) survey showed that IPA reports do not generally describe how the interview schedule was constructed and, as well, few examples of

prompt questions are typically provided. Additionally, these authors observe that interview schedules often arise from theoretical constructs that have been identified in research, and included here are concepts from quantitative studies. Brocki and Wearden (2006) do not see this as some sort of limitation, or in any other way inappropriate, and “it seems unlikely that researchers could embark upon a project without having at least some awareness of the current literature and issues surrounding the area” (p. 92).

### **The thesis interview schedule.**

The interview schedule for the thesis is attached as Appendix J. The interview schedule has a defined sequence, moving from biographical material to the participant’s personal understanding, and appraisal, of resilience. There are four sections to the Schedule; (1) Relating, which is about building rapport; (2) Recounting which firstly covers the participant’s present circumstance, and then the events since the first assessment ten years ago (Time 1-Time 2). Next, the most significant events across the life span are reviewed, as well as evidence for any patterns or trends in life events; (3) Reflecting, is derived directly from empirical resilience research (specifically, as reported by Masten & Coatsworth, 1998) and it poses open questions in relation to the twelve protective/resilience factors that have been established in the literature; and (4) Redefining, is concerned with how the respondent understands resilience, and how they see themselves in relation to a personally-defined resilience concept.

The interview schedule intentionally revisits biographical material, although there is a changing emphasis as the interview proceeds. There are four reasons for this structure. Firstly, it allows for some self- verification. Secondly, it means that the same material can be viewed from overlapping vantage points. Thirdly, it attempts to facilitate more considered and reflective responses from the participants and to enrich the data. The fourth justification is that, in moving successively to more abstract matters, the questioning process may deliver insights at a theoretical level. Effectively,

the structure of the schedule might be described as a spiral as it moves purposely and progressively to more particular, and refined, understandings of a participant's world.

Something that had to be considered in the design of the Schedule, and subsequently in the interviews, was the place of the information that had been acquired ten years ago. It was apparent that these data could be both helpful and unhelpful. The advantage that such records represent in an interview situation is that there are numerous points of reference that might be followed up. However, it was appreciated that the interviewees would not necessarily welcome questions of this sort. As well, this information clearly had the potential to bias the present study and to inhibit the derivation of new understandings. It was decided to remind the respondents of the existence of data from Time 1 at the outset, but only to utilise this information in the interviews incidentally, and as the basis for specific questions after the participants had given their contemporaneous viewpoints about matters.

The Interview Schedule was trialled in the week before the study interviews were conducted and minor adjustments were made.

### **Initial analyses.**

Analysis of an individual case using IPA requires sustained attention, and it is time consuming as the researcher firstly needs to achieve an intimate appreciation of the account and secondly, to interact with, or 'work' the text. The practical steps seem easy enough. The investigator reads and rereads the transcript and makes notes in the left-hand margin of anything that appears interesting or significant. This is pretty much a free textual analysis and the jottings may be summary statements, comments on the use of language, observations about the participant, preliminary interpretations, and references to textual "echoes, amplifications and contradictions" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 67).

The annotations in the left-hand margin of the transcript are complemented by the noting of emerging themes on the right-hand side of the document. The titles and concise phrases that the researcher uses may be suggested by the prevalence, articulacy, and immediacy of the sentiments that they represent (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Some of the identified themes follow the interview schedule but others can be new.

The intention is to develop a coherently ordered table of themes for the case. Inevitably, it is an iterative and cyclical process of analysis as categories are revised on the basis of their ability to encompass meaning. The investigator has to constantly check back to see what the person said to ensure that the determination of themes is justified, and instances need to be cited from the manuscript for each theme.

IPA can give rise to two levels of analysis. The first level or stage is a third person description of the participant's concerns. The second stage positions the description relative to social, cultural, and theoretical contexts (Larkin et al., 2006). This is the interpretative and speculative phase, and it leads to a critical and conceptual commentary that is likely to exceed the participant's conceptualisations .

Larkin et al. (2006) say that there are a number of analytical strategies that can be used at the interpretative stage. Obviously, what is done should be informed by the research questions but, as well, the analysis can contain psychological theory and previous research-“provided they can be related back to the phenomenological account” (p. 116).

### **Subsequent analyses.**

We have two options in continuing the analysis with new cases. We can use the themes from the first case as a guide to the analysis of subsequent cases or we can start again from scratch (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Either way, the intention is to note repeating patterns, and their further elaboration, and to discern new emerging issues. As Smith et al. (1999) put it, we are now “Searching for patterns, connections, and



tensions” (p. 232). As with the analysis of an individual case, it is not just the prevalence of an idea that will see it labelled and recorded. The richness of a particular passage can make it significant, and whether it contributes to the illumination of the account.

In subsequent analyses, a new theme should be tested against the initial analyses, and by this means it may become a subordinate or superordinate explanation and category. The ultimate aim is to establish a consolidated table of master themes and subsidiary themes for all of the cases. However, with categorisation and its associated abstraction, comes distance from the individual transcripts which produced the themes so we need to be regularly reminded of the personal stories and local contexts that generated the higher-order constructs (Smith, 1995).

Smith et al. (1999) make clear that there is no set way for identifying themes that are shared by participants. Having obtained a compilation of categories, however, the challenge is in exploring the connections within and across the conceptual groups to obtain a depth and texture of understanding. To assist in this undertaking the authors suggest that investigators use some techniques that can be associated with grounded theory, such as diagrams to posit the relationship between emergent themes, and keeping notes about your interpretations of the data.

It needs to be appreciated that the present research investigation, with nine participants, is relatively large for an IPA study (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 1999), and there were implications for the approach to data analysis (see below). Smith (2004) discusses respondent numbers and he says it is only possible to do the detailed examinations of IPA with small samples, and Smith and Osborn (2003) suggest that about five or six cases is a reasonable sample size; as this avoids being swamped by data while allowing for the examination of similarities and differences amongst participants. Notwithstanding, these authors comment:

There is no right answer to the question of the sample size. It partly depends on several factors: the degree of commitment to the case study level of analysis and reporting, the richness of the individual cases, and the constraints one is operating under. (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 54)

### **The write up.**

In qualitative research there is not necessarily the strict division between the 'results' and the 'discussion' sections that can apply in the reporting of other methodologies (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Nonetheless, under one of these headings the themes that have been identified in the transcripts are translated into a narrative account. Smith and Osborn (2008) describe the write up in these terms, "Here the analysis becomes expansive again, as the themes are explained, illustrated and nuanced" (p. 77). As this statement suggests, the narrative contains verbatim extracts from the interviews and these tend to be 'the most articulate expression of a theme' (Flowers et al., 1999, cited by Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Following on from this, various writers emphasise that throughout the commentary there must be a clear distinction between what the participant(s) expressed and the researcher's interpretations of what was said (e.g., Smith et al., 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The themes provide the topic and the focus for the write up (Reid et al., 2005) but the 'art' of a qualitative account is in the way that the writer portrays the points of interest and convinces the reader of the present interpretation of them (Smith et al., 1999). Yardley (2000) says that the quality of a write up is critical part of its worth and, more particularly, she observes that "a convincing account exerts its effect partly (or sometimes wholly) by (re)creating a reality which readers recognise as meaningful to them" (p. 222).

### **Evaluating qualitative research.**

Yardley (2000) contends that there are a number of issues associated with the evaluation of qualitative research methodologies. Firstly, the regular use of these

approaches in the social sciences (and in psychology in particular) is relatively recent and, consequently, evaluation criteria and standards are still evolving. Secondly, there are many different qualitative methodologies and these can have contrasting epistemologies, objectives, and procedures. Thirdly, most qualitative researchers subscribe to non-realist philosophical assumptions, which recognise pluralism and reject notions of universally correct practices. Finally, there can be a tendency to judge qualitative investigations by the established standards of quantitative research, and these attempts will be seen as inappropriate in the light of the other observations about qualitative research that have just been made.

Evaluation standards for qualitative research are important, nonetheless, and Elliott, Fisher, and Rennie (1999) give four justifications for their promulgation. Explicit, methodological guidelines will assist in legitimising qualitative research, they will facilitate more valid reviews of qualitative studies, they will assist with the quality control of investigations, and they could act as reference points for the further development of qualitative approaches. Yardley (2000) also argues for criteria for qualitative studies, which she says are unavoidable as well as imperative. They are unavoidable because every interpretation contains a claim for authority, and “it makes no sense to engage in a process of analysis and then deny that it has any validity!” (p. 219). Criteria are imperative, as well, if qualitative findings are to be understood as having practical uses.

Elliott et al. (1999) list seven standards that apply to both qualitative and quantitative research, and seven criteria which are more specific to qualitative investigations. These guidelines are reproduced below:

A. Publishability Guidelines Shared by Both Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

1. Explicit scientific context and purpose

2. Appropriate methods
3. Respect for participants
4. Specification of methods
5. Appropriate discussion
6. Clarity of presentation
7. Contribution to knowledge

B. Publishability Guidelines Especially Pertinent to Qualitative Research

1. Owning one's perspective
2. Situating the sample
3. Grounding in examples
4. Providing credibility checks
5. Coherence
6. Accomplishing general vs. specific research tasks
7. Resonating with readers

(Elliott et al., 1999, p. 220)

Yardley (2000) suggests criteria as well, and these largely encompass, and extend, Elliott et al.'s second set of seven points. This author says that good qualitative research is sensitive to context; and context here means far more than the participants' socio-cultural setting, although this is critically important. Context includes any published literature that is relevant to the study and it embraces the philosophy of the methodology that is utilised. Context also includes the investigator's actions and characteristics, and consideration of his or her power relations with the participants. On the topic of context, Smith and Dunworth (2003) suggest that studies can show sensitivity by including comprehensive descriptions of the participants and their locale.

Yardley (2000) also says that qualitative studies should show commitment, rigor, transparency, and coherence, and have impact. Commitment is exemplified by

time spent with the topic, by engagement with the data that is derived, and by being proficient in the use of the method chosen. Rigor is demonstrated by the completeness of the data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. Transparency can be achieved by detailing how the data were collected, through providing examples of the data and relating them to the analytic procedures and the understandings that were developed, and by having other analysts appraise the data.

Coherence is about providing a clear, cogent, convincing, and consistent account. A clear and cogent narrative fits together and, in sum, it is a well-structured data-based story. Such accounts should *resonate with readers* (Elliott et al., 1999); or, in other words, it should ‘ring true’ and be persuasive and convincing. Lastly, but most importantly, good qualitative research has impact and significance. Yardley (2000) comments:

The decisive criterion by which any piece of research must be judged is, arguably, its impact and utility. It is not sufficient to develop a sensitive, thorough and plausible analysis, if the ideas propounded by the researcher have no influence on the beliefs or actions of anyone else. (p 223)

The author describes three varieties of impact and significance that qualitative research can have and, of these, theoretical worth is often of primary importance.

Theoretical worth refers to the capacity to present challenging ideas that show that there is a new way of thinking about a topic. Socio-cultural impact is a related contribution, and it is concerned with altering an experience by changing how people construct it. Good qualitative research can also have a special significance in determining best practices, and this stems from its concern with research-in-context. As Yardley (2000) suggests, the link between research and clinical practice can be so close that it may be practicable to combine the two purposes.

Smith (2003) praises the contribution made by Yardley (2000) and Elliott et al. (1999), and he also draws attention to the *independent audit* (Yin, 1998), which he says “is an extremely useful way of thinking about quality in qualitative research” (p. 234).

Briefly, the independent audit or, more accurately and more probably, the *virtual* independent audit, is when the data are accessible so that someone *could* follow every step of the chain of events, from the research question to the final report. Smith (2003) also discusses the mini-audit, which can contribute to transparency, and which will likely involve assessment and advice on an annotated transcript, and the codes and categories, of an initial interview.

Yardley (2008) provides further elucidation of the points made in her 2000 paper and, in particular, the meaning of validity in qualitative psychology is clarified by contrasting it with how validity is understood in quantitative psychology. The author regards this distinction as paramount because, without it, it is difficult to judge quality in qualitative research. As well, and as has been indicated above, the absence of an explicit appreciation of the different meanings of validity means that there is a tendency to judge qualitative studies by the standards of quantitative research.

The fundamental difference between quantitative and qualitative validity concerns the quantitative commitment to establishing causal inference relative to the qualitative intention to create new understandings. Quantitative researchers test hypotheses, whereas qualitative investigators seek patterns of meaning that have not been strictly specified in advance. In a qualitative study there is the chance to examine novel topics with participants and to analyse the subtle interactions of context and time. According to Yardley (2008), “Demonstrating that your study has this vital characteristic is therefore central to demonstrating its validity as an example of high-quality qualitative research” (pp. 246-247).

The quantitative commitments to causation and correlation mean that that investigator influences, individual differences, and contextual effects are regarded as sources of ‘bias’ or ‘error.’ Conversely, the individual’s relationships with his or her contexts are central to qualitative research. Here, investigator influences are considered

to be both inevitable and desirable; and their positive contribution is in the accessing and analysis of subjective experience. However, in the interests of transparency, qualitative researchers must attend to reflexivity, or the particular ways that they may have influenced the outcomes of a study.

Yardley (2008) says that the meaning of generalisability also needs to be distinguished when quantitative and qualitative methodologies are compared. Quantitative approaches generalise from a representative sample to the wider population but this type of generalisation about population trends is not possible in qualitative research. Here investigators aim for ‘theoretical,’ ‘vertical,’ or ‘logical’ generalisations (Yardley, 2008). It is important to appreciate that while qualitative researchers do not aspire to statistical generalisations they can reasonably apply their findings to new contexts that have elements in common with the original study setting. Again, Yardley observes that “Since contexts can share some features even if others are quite dissimilar, generalisability in qualitative research is potentially wide-ranging and flexible” (p. 238).

As has already been discussed, Yardley (2000, 2008) offers us four *core principles* for determining the validity of a qualitative investigation: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, coherence and transparency, and impact and importance. However, Yardley also emphasises that research is a practical, pragmatic, and evolving activity and sometimes we need to prioritise some forms of validity over others. The author describes validation techniques as a “toolbox”, and these instruments can be used selectively provided that they are always deployed to enhance the breadth, depth, and sensitivity of the analysis.

There are, in fact, some ‘higher order’ dimensions and determinants of quality research. Good work builds on what is already known and it takes it some steps further. Good research is useful to people and it can provide a meaningful answer to the following question that might be posed by a dispassionate observer, “So what?”

(Yardley, 2008, p. 250). Moreover, quality studies are accepted as ‘sound, legitimate and authoritative’ and as ‘trustworthy and useful’ by other people, such as other researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and by interested members of the public.

Yardley comments that these, and related commitments to integrity and value signify “a new confidence that qualitative methods are now sufficiently well developed to take equal place alongside quantitative methods in psychology” (p. 251).

### **IPA in practice, method in action**

#### **Interviews.**

Each of the interviews with the participants aspired to be an “in-depth and personal discussion” (Reid et al., 2005, p. 22). On occasions, these engagements definitely became co-constructions and the following statement that was recorded in an interview with a woman participant (Jasmine) is an instance in point, “I don’t think you can say anyone who has an eating problem is secure. I don’t know. . .what do you think?” On other occasions, it was necessary to work really hard to obtain some information from some participants. An example of this was with Anna; and it was only on the third questioning that she indicated her position on spiritual concerns and, similarly, the identification by her of a mentor did not come easily.

Other participants, by contrast, led straight into important topics from the start. For instance, there was Kerry, and his sporting interest had such prominence (karate) that supplementary questions were indicated from the second interview question. With this participant it was a case of in engaging in two interviews at the same time, as his mother was present and contributed. Quite obviously, conducting two interviews simultaneously is not the same as undertaking multiple independent interviews.

While some information was extracted with difficulty, and some came very easily, other data were revealed inadvertently;

Interviewer. Let’s talk about the highs in terms of your physical growth, development and health. . .like, have you been in hospital at all?



Amber. Yes, when I had a car crash. I was drink driving.

The interview schedule (Appendix J) seemed to work well. After the first or second interview I shared the schedule with the research participants. Some of the items are complex and it clearly helped the interviewees to see them. Participants could say important things after the interview had finished and sometimes I would turn the recorder back on and capture the content in both contexts (refer to Rapley, 2001, for discussion of this procedural aspect).

There was a sense of a high level of honesty and, from the interviewer's perspective at least, the schedule and interviews delivered a good appreciation of each of the participant's lives. Notably, there is information that no interview method can convey, like the fact that Kerry's mother had the most caring face imaginable, or the ambience of the geographical locality at different times of the day.

As stated in the ethics subsection above, I watched for signs of discomfort throughout the interviews. In addition, at the end of the interview I specifically checked that the participants were not upset. Some of them said that the interview process had challenged them, and many left the interview situation with the feeling that they had learned something from it (again, see above for comments on this by Cohen et al., 2000). Below are excerpts from the closing phases of the interviews with three of the participants (Sean, John, and Jasmine).

I. We're at the end of this interview Sean. How have you found it?

S. I think it was. . .interesting. . .productive I suppose. . .it does make you think. It makes you go back into the past, sort of thing, 'cos I don't usually do that.

I. John, how have you found this interview today? Has it been okay for you?

J. I think it's made me realise that I don't like talking about my past. . .I don't know. Do I seem like I'm open to the past?

I. Has that been a good thing or a bad thing?

J. Well I would think it was a good thing if I was open about it, but. . .was I ... did I seem open or was I a bit. . .closed off about it?

- I. Well Jasmine, unless there's anything else, that's us. . .
- J. No, I think that's it. But I think it's been an interesting discussion. . . what has come out to be the most underlying thing for me has definitely been the relationships that I have with other people and the relationship with myself. I still need to nurture.
- I. So would you say that this interview has helped in some ways?
- J. Yeah, I think it has helped in some ways.
- I. Has it upset you at all?
- J. No, I think I'm capable of being able to remove myself and talk about things in an open and frank manner.

### **Analysis.**

The investigator kept a research diary and an entry for September 2008 reads:

“Exciting to get the transcripts. Now the work begins and it is clearly going to be a colossal task.” An early decision was made to perform the individual case analyses, where practicable, according to the three headings of ‘risk factors’, ‘protective factors’, and ‘resilience’. This was a practical judgment that was determined by four factors: the relatively large number of cases; the repeated references to risk and protective factors, and to resilience, in the interview schedule; the presence of historical data that had been analysed using the same framework; and the strong resilience orientation of the study generally.

Smith et al. (1999) suggest that some common themes be identified fairly quickly when there are larger samples, and quite simply this is because it is not possible for the investigator to keep in his or her head all of the connections between individuals and themes. It was not felt that the choice to do this in the present study was a compromise, because within the chosen categories there was close attention to “personally distinct experiences” (Smith et al., 1999, p. 229). Nevertheless, it should perhaps be emphasised that the categorisations of ‘risk factors’, ‘protective factors’ and ‘resilience’ refer to the appraisals of these matters in an analysis that is both phenomenological and interpretative.

The analytic phase actually proceeded in the following way: (1) Read the hard copy of a transcript, written points were made on the left and right hand side of the typescript, and themes were identified [see Appendix K for a transcript excerpt that has been analysed in this way]. (2) The list of themes for the case was entered at the top of an electronic version of the transcript. (3) All of the material in the 'saved' transcript was allocated and rearranged according to the themes. Typically, these divisions of the data meant that there was some revision of the categories, and there was also some material that was attracted to two themes. (4) Wrote case summary on the basis of the 'sorted' transcript, and this had the advantage that the quotations were already in place. (5) The themes from the first case were used for the analysis of the other cases, and the original categories were added to, and revised, as this process continued. By the end of the analyses, I was confident that everything had been accounted for.

In October 2008, there is the following entry in the research diary: "When you move from the transcript to the table of themes you really start to think about the young person. The process is progressive; ideas to concepts, to seeing the relationships of influences." I was surprised at the relative ease with which cognitions became apparent. Some participants make their thoughts and intentions especially clear and there is little need for intuitive analysis in these circumstances. I increasingly gave attention to the participants' use of language. In a sense, every qualitative study does involve discourse analysis.

There are several general observations about IPA, and the first of these is that it is a really rewarding methodology to work with. Nevertheless, while Smith (e.g., Smith, 1995) provides comprehensive guidance on the application of IPA, it is suggested that nobody can really tell someone else how to analyse a transcript, as it is in the nature of the approach that we legitimately see different things. A final point is that

IPA does seem to be inherently creative, and possibly this is because incongruous ideas can be juxtaposed in the derivation of a table of themes.

The longitudinal aspect of the present investigation is integral to its utility, but it also posed the question of how to reduce the mutually influential effects of the Time 1 and Time 2 data analyses. In the event, the Time 2 information was attended to before the Time 1 information was reassembled, as there were more new judgments associated with Time 2, and this approach was probably less biasing. Within the examination of the Time 2 data, care was also needed to distinguish past, present, and continuing risk and protective factors.

A further issue with longitudinal data is that the chances of an individual being publically identified increases significantly, and there is an inevitable tension between wanting to provide a truly accurate account and needing to protect the participants and their families. The strategy that was most often deployed to protect the young people's identities was the deletion of identifiers (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). In addition, in the interests of anonymity and confidentiality, some material was not included in the case analyses, such as information from social service files about parents' bankruptcy and suicide attempts.

It is noteworthy that one of the participants raised a significant ethical issue, and it concerned whether he was actually a dangerous person. Sean is a political ideologue who has had anger problems in the past, but his affiliations and beliefs are more an expression of resilient identity than anything else. Interestingly, the participant's political commitments posed another and different sort of threat altogether, as they seemed to question the intellectual validity of the investigation at times. The challenge came in the contrast between the study's comparatively prosaic, and psychologically-oriented questions, and Sean's elevated and theoretical responses.

For Sean, personal identity and political identity are indistinguishable, and a fusion of this sort can convey a sense of idealism which can make a psychological interpretation seem potentially demeaning. Sean used a derogatory descriptor for academic critics of Trotskyism; he called them “the so-called middle-class proof readers of history.” Through other people’s eyes, possibly, psychologists can be seen as ‘the so-called middle-class proof readers of personality.’

Brocki and Wearden (2006), amongst others, believe that there should be more acknowledgements of investigators’ theoretical orientation, research interests, and preconceptions and beliefs because of their role in the interpretation of data. I am a psychologist and, quite obviously, I have a background and training in human development. Theoretically, I am ‘mostly’ eclectic, which aligns with the multiple perspectives of contemporary human development. However, I do need to say that I especially value the explanatory power of ecological approaches, and this preference has very probably influenced the derivation of the resilience model, which is offered in the Discussion section.

In fact, it may be more to the point that I am an optimistic person and, in keeping with the personal positivity, I regularly adopt a particular strategy when thinking about resilience, which is to reverse the findings and assumptions of risk research. As indicated above, the literature on risk is far greater than the evidence about protective factors, but the existing commonalities across the two influences means that there could be some implicit lessons about resilience in what we know about stressors. For example, Newman (2004) cites authorities to say that the impact of risk is related to the number, proximity, and duration of adversities. It could be helpful to revise this observation and, in keeping with my thesis argument (see resilience model below), to suggest that the beneficial impact of relational contexts is likely to be consequent on an

accumulation of relationships over time, the closeness of relationships to each, and how long relationships last

### **Some comments regarding the quality of the research at Time 2.**

There are several matters that can be reported in relation to the quality standards that are suggested by Elliott et al. (1999) and Yardley (2000, 2008), and which are outlined above. Firstly, early on, and in the interests of conducting a rigorous analysis, the investigator practised his analytical skills on ‘worked’ examples that are presented in publications (e.g., Smith & Osborn, 2008). Subsequently, a mini-audit was undertaken of an initial interview, as suggested by Smith (2003), and this involved an appraisal by the study’s supervisors of an annotated transcript.

A second point concerns the number of participants in the present investigation, and it is now maintained that additional case studies would have been unlikely to have reversed the major findings, or to have modified the resilience model that stems from these results. The opposing question is more difficult to answer, and that is whether there were too many participants. One response is that the available research participants confirmed the emerging patterns, and contributed different manifestations and exemplifications of resilience. In effect, the additional cases provided theoretical replication (Yardley, 2000; Yin, 1998).

## Results – Individual Cases

### Introduction

This section reports on the individual interviews with the nine participants. Each case begins with a summary of the information that was obtained, and the interpretations that were made, at Time 1 in 1998. Following this, the recent interview material, which was gathered in 2008, is presented under the headings of protective factors, risk factors, and resilience. The reasons for these determinations were discussed in the Methodology section, but it should be emphasised that it is *appraisals* that are being recorded under the relevant headings here. To reiterate, the analytic method that was employed (IPA) with the Time 2 data involves a two-stage interpretation, or double hermeneutic; “The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 53).

As the cases were analysed according to an interpretative phenomenology, care did need to be taken to demark the participants’ perceptions and evaluations of their circumstances from the investigator’s perceptions and evaluations of these same circumstances. A most useful strategy in this regard is to closely reference observations to transcript excerpts. An additional technique that is used here with longer extracts is to include the questions that were asked of the participants along with their responses. The reason for including the questions is to more completely show the context of the ‘conversations’, so that the subjective dimensions might be clearer.

By way of further orientation, it should also be noted that the first assessments in 1998 included risk and resilience determinations for each of the young people, and four risk categories were employed; ‘low risk’, ‘moderate risk’, ‘enhanced risk’, and ‘high risk’. The investigators utilised current indices of competence to suggest whether a person was likely to evidence positive adaptation at some future time, and the final risk

and resilience evaluations were derived through an extended process of analysis and argument by the three researchers. Stanley, Rodeka, and Laurence (2000) comment that the determinations that they have made are undoubtedly contentious, and they invite readers of the Time 1 case studies to make their own judgements on the basis of the information that they provide.

The nine cases that are about to be presented were analysed simply on the basis of the order that they came to the investigator from the transcriber. The differing length of the transcripts is interesting, and especially as some of the longest case studies are at the end of this Results section. It could be that I got better at analysis, but it is more likely that the arrangement of the cases is actually fortuitous and that the last case studies are longer (and richer and smoother) because they reflect better psychological processing (Hauser et al., 2006).

## **Anna**

**“being a good mum to my kids and being a good student. . .and a partner”**

### **Time 1**

Anna was 12 years of age when she was assessed in 1998. Stanley et al. (2000) considered her to be at ‘moderate risk’, but they also describe her as a ‘question mark’ child “because the risk factors are becoming more prominent” (p. 51). Anna presented well at the first assessment (good physical state, relaxed and confident) and she indicated high levels of happiness (self-report). Protective factors included a caring mother and a close relationship with the maternal grandmother. Anna had a strong religious faith and regularly attended a youth group. She enjoyed craft and outdoor activities and she had plans for the future. Anna was described by her mother in these terms “a neat personality, she is really aware of people’s feelings. Anna is a really



gentle, lovely girl.” On her Primary Progress Record, Anna was said to be a helpful, kind and independent person.

In spite of this largely positive presentation, Anna’s father had left the family home earlier in the year in which she was assessed. Her teacher reported that she would cry in class quite often, that there were attention seeking, moods, and psychosomatic complaints; and she was teased, bullied and rejected by other children. Anna’s mother commented about the time when the father left: “I thought she was going to have a nervous breakdown. . .she was crying, crying, crying and I got really worried.” It was revealed that the parents’ relationship had been very difficult prior to the separation. The mother said that Anna “has had a hard life and seen heaps of things. Been around a lot of arguments. Lots of not good family behaviour.”

When Anna was two or three years of age she had seen her father banging her mother’s head against the kitchen wall. A teacher said that this child had the most extreme, horrific background and that Anna was emotionally disturbed; and certainly there was evidence of personal distress. Anna’s mother reported that when she cuddled her daughter at night “she just won’t let go and we have cuddles every night like she never ever wants me to go.”

Anna’s mother was apprehensive for her daughter in the future. “I can see my hard one being Anna. I just sort of sense those teenage years. I have a real fear about them.” Apart from the affective issues that have been mentioned, the mother identified three additional and specific concerns. Anna had a tendency to ‘bottle things up;’ “like she’d get really badly hurt but would not really say it out loud. She’d keep it all in.” Apparently, Anna was also easily swayed by others; “she gets easily led, she’d do things to please others.” The third apprehension was that Anna’s mother thought that her daughter would find the work at secondary school extremely hard. Her mother had some reason for this last concern, as Anna’s year 7 Progressive Achievement Test

results were not encouraging (by age, Listening Comprehension 22 percent, Reading Vocabulary 4 percent, Reading Comprehension 38 percent).

In addition, there were socioeconomic and neighbourhood risk factors for Anna and her family. Anna's mother was in employment with benefit assistance, and the family had received other financial help and gifts, such as food and blankets. The family had also changed residences because of violence; for instance, a local gang dog had killed their cat.

## **Time 2**

Anna attended secondary school briefly, and she looks back on this time as her period of delinquency when she wagged and was "naughty." "I think I was just doing it just to be a cool guy. . .I don't know. . .just to be a shit. I just wasn't there to learn. I was there to socialise" Her last two terms were spent at an activity centre which, she sees, as providing some new opportunities, including work experience.

Anna became pregnant at 15 and left school. For the next two years she was engaged in fulltime parenting. At 17 years, Anna had another child, and she subsequently enrolled in a teen parent school. The participant is now training to be a nurse, and she works part-time in a care facility.

The participant did not see her father after he left the family home until she was 14/15 years. She now sees him about once a fortnight when he stops his car outside her place, toots the horn, and she goes to the roadside. "Things are okay now, but I just think 'cos of the circumstances that he left on, like it was really horrible, I hated him for so long."

### **Protective factors.**

So what transpired for this young person that she moved from 'acting out' to focusing on family and a career? Within the protective factors category there are

groupings of ideas that relate to the participant's personality and cognitions, and that concern the support she has received from her family and from external agencies.

Anna views her first pregnancy as a crucial turnaround event for her:

- I. What was it like finding you were pregnant at 15 years?
  - A. I cried. . .when I found out, 'cos I had. . .I went through the whole piercing stage . . . I had everything pierced I'll say. And I remember when I found out I just went into the shower. . .and I cried and then I just took all my. . .every single piercing out of my body, 'cos. . .I don't know why. But I just did.
- I. Can you tell us a bit about that experience of having a baby so young?
  - A. It was one of the scariest things ever. I remember when I was in labour and it was like. . . 'cos it was in February my first son was born. And I just remember looking out the window and it was this beautiful sunny day and all I could think was, 'All my friends will be at school, going to school right now and I'm in hospital having a baby', but other than that. . .I would never, ever change anything. Everything that I've done, I wouldn't change it, just for the fact that I like how things have turned out right now.

Having a baby propelled Anna into adulthood, as Arnett (2000) suggests it can, and the participant took full advantage of the opportunities that were now available to her, such as attending a school for young mothers; "In the end I just took myself there [the teen parent school]. I dropped my kids off at my aunty's house, because I didn't want to take them and I went and talked to the principal and got enrolled and I was starting within the week."

Anna shows self-awareness and, specifically, she knows that she loves being a mother. She also knows that part-time work at the care facility helps her to cope as a parent, and that she is still unsure of some things. "I told my partner recently that I want to start going back to church. I'm not sure where I am in my life with that." Anna is aware that her temper can get the better of her. "I just have a mouth which won't stop sometimes. . .which gets me into a fight. It's gotten me into some trouble a few times."

Anna can be feisty, and she showed this when her son was bullied on his second day at primary school.

- I. What are areas of strength for you, protective factors, or whatever you want to call it?

A. I think when it comes to my family, like my partner and stuff, I'm always there. Like, I'm not afraid to step up, type of thing, like I'm not afraid to speak out. Like if someone. . .if someone's pissed them off. . .like for instance, my son, he started school in February. . .

I. Where's he going Anna?

A. He went to [. . .] School at first and he was getting completely bullied and beaten up and stuff, and I remember just telling his principal because they weren't going to do anything about it, and I just remember saying that I'll go stand outside and watch the kids go to their parents' cars and I'll go and yell at their parents like they do to my son. Like. . .you know, I'm not the type of person to just stand back and let it happen. And so, in the end, I moved him, he's at [. . .] now, 'cos it just kept on going.

Along with self-awareness and spirit, the participant has an obvious sense of her own progress. With respect to her time at secondary school she says "I look back now and I think, 'What a dick!' Anna's seventeen year-old brother has just dropped out of high school and she describes him as a 'loser'; "He doesn't get it yet." Closely related to this sense of personal progression is a heightened awareness of opportunities. Anna looks back ruefully at how she initially responded to an offer of work experience at a care facility. "I remember when my teacher he first told me about it. I said, 'There's no way you're going to get me doing that. So don't even ask me'. But then they got me to do it and then this whole thing, I realised that I wanted to be a nurse and I wanted. . .just the opportunities they gave me, it was just awesome."

Anna's partner, who is three months older than her, is the father of her children, and their relationship spans seven years. "I know this sounds wrong, but I'm completely happy with my relationship. . .I just enjoy going home and talking about my day. . .he's pretty much my only serious relationship." Anna told several anecdotes which indicate that her partner is a hard working person, that he helps at home, and that he participates in family activities. "he's just completely supportive of what I do. Like he's never said, 'No you can't study, you need more money.' He's always been, 'You need to study'. . .it's good." Interestingly, seven years ago, Anna's boyfriend (as he would have been at that time) might have been considered a risk factor in her life.

The respondent's mother and grandmother have stood by her throughout. Anna describes her mother's reaction when she told her about her first pregnancy. "She was just like, 'Fuckin' hell!' and then she hugged me, and then. . .but it was okay." Anna's mother clearly had a lot to cope with when her daughter was at secondary school and there were challenging times as well when Anna, her partner, and their children were living with her. Anna describes her mother as "a good mum."

Anna's grandmother lived next door when she was fulltime care giving and she spent most weekdays with her grandmother at this time. Anna says of her grandmother, "She's been supportive through everything" and "when I went my whole stage, everybody apart from my nana told my mum to just kick me out of home." At the present time, Anna sees her mother "pretty much every day" and her grandmother every day.

Anna has received a lot of professional help and support and she considers that much of it has been very useful to her. Both the activity centre and the teen parent unit represented pivotal engagements. As indicated, it was at the activity centre that she participated in the Gateway work experience programme. "I went into a rest home and I just loved it. I loved the people and stuff. . .it was fantastic and that's what made me pretty much decide to become a nurse."

At the teen parent school, Anna appreciated being with others in her situation who were intent on getting an education. Anna says of the young parent school, "That was the best thing that I've ever done, I think, the best move I've ever made." At this facility, Anna also established a mentoring relationship. This person is now "a really good friend of mine. She's a lot older, but she just. . .she's always. . .she's never, ever said anything bad."

It is difficult not to be impressed by the extent of the assistance provided by the school for young mothers. For instance, a scholarship was arranged for Anna to go

nursing and her books, fees and a laptop computer were paid for. Earlier, Anna saw the guidance counsellor at her secondary school and she had been a client of the local mental health service. Anna says, “the whole counselling thing I think helped, but then I stopped it and that’s pretty much when I went off the rails”

### **Risk factors.**

Anna thinks of education as a struggle, and this perception may apply more broadly to her life. Without a doubt, Anna and her partner are very busy people. Anna attends nursing training for six hours a day and she does three hours preparation after the children have gone to bed. Then there is the care facility job, and leisure time is devoted to child-centred activities like going to the park, airport, or beach. Anna observed, “I love keeping them busy in the weekends.”

Academic tasks, however, do not give Anna pleasure; “through my whole education I’ve just felt like I’ve been struggling. I still feel it now, but I seem to be doing okay.” Anna relayed some comments that were made to her by the secondary school guidance counsellor that “made me feel even worse about myself”: ““You’re not one of those people who can just go in and take it all in. You actually have to sit there and listen.”” As well, there was this self evaluation in the interview:

I. Have you done well because you’re an intelligent person, or has this been a problem for you?

A. I don’t know. . . I find it hard doing well. I have to work completely hard and be really serious when I want to get somewhere. It doesn’t always come to me.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Anna considers that she has a problem with self-esteem.

I. Would you describe yourself as a confident person, Anna?

A. No, I don’t really think I have any self esteem. I don’t want to just say that, but I don’t think I have any faith in myself. I don’t know how I’ve gotten this far. That’s what I. . . when I look at how far I’ve come from when I was sixteen or whatever, I just can’t even see how I’ve done it. I don’t know how. There’s just nothing there. I don’t feel happy for myself or anything. When people say that I should, I just don’t.

Anna believes that lack of self-esteem is a defining characteristic for her, and this is despite the praise and support that she receives.

I. How do you think other people see you now, Anna?

A. Everybody keeps on telling me about how they're proud and how I've done all this stuff and I just don't even see it. I don't know. I think everyone. . .everyone keeps on telling me that I've come far.

### **Resilience.**

Anna says that she is happy with the way her life is progressing now. "I think I'm doing okay now. . .yeah. . .heaps of things have happened, but like now, I think I'm finally on the right track." For Anna, 'doing okay,' or resilience, is the fulfilment of social roles; ". . .just being a good mum to my kids and being a good student. . .and a partner."

Anna's conceptualisation of her life seems to be clear and direct, and central to it is valuing and investing in relationships. When asked about the highlights in her life she said "Highlights would be having my kids. . .and. . .meeting my partner would be another. My low points would be. . .everything that happened with my dad."

The participant's commitment to roles and relationships appears to be reflected in everything that she does, including her choice of vocation. Talking about her work at the rest home, Anna said "it's like they need you. I don't know what it is, but I really liked it. It made me want to be able to do more." To be able to do more Anna felt that she had to obtain tertiary-level qualifications; but there was another variant of the responsibility motivation operating as well; "I remember being eighteen and two kids and I just figured, I don't want my kids to . . .when my kids have grown up I don't want to be working at McDonald's."

### **Damian**

**"it's basically doing the right thing in life. . .the thing that you feel is right and you go and follow that path"**

## **Time1**

Stanley et al. (2000) considered Damian to evidence enhanced risk, and they described him at 11 years of age in these terms:

Damian is not very resilient, neither is he very much at risk, at least in the usual sense of the words. This young person is mostly disadvantaged, and this is mainly the product of poverty. Damian is not especially likely to engage in antisocial behaviour or suffer internalising difficulties. He is, however, very distinctly at risk of being victimised. (p. 54)

It is interesting to look at earlier documented comments concerning Damian.

After he had been at primary school for one month, Damian's teacher recorded that he displayed immature development in most areas, he played on his own, and he had trouble following instructions and conforming to school routines. Nonetheless, this junior student loved being at school apparently. Damian's Primary Progress Record (Middle School) indicates that he was not doing well with the core curriculum. He also had few close friends, although there were some advances in social skills; as he "has become more sensitive to the other children in the class. He is beginning to be able to work cooperatively with others."

Damian's school report for 1998 is a catalogue of deficiencies. Academically, he had trouble settling quickly to tasks, working independently, and completing work. In the personal/social domains, Damian found looking after his belongings a challenge, and making friends, dealing with conflict, cooperating with others, and playing appropriately were stated as areas of difficulty.

When Damian was interviewed for the Time 1 assessment he showed his school report to the researcher with pride, and he also pointed out his latest school photograph. The interviewer commented that Damian appeared to get enjoyment from school and out of life in general. A note was also made that Damian evidenced sustained concentration in the interview. Nevertheless, there were some more negative aspects on some of the pen and paper self-report devices. For instance, on the sentence starter,



beside 'My mind. . .' he put "not that good", and alongside 'At school. . .' was written "not that much."

Damian's teachers were interviewed in 1998, and they said that this student was not successful at anything and he was described as "the total package of a victim." He was said to have a "pathetic" demeanour, his clothing was "grubby", and he came from a home that was "dirty and disgusting." No personal strengths could be identified. The school considered that it provided protection for Damian, and there was also material assistance to the family. In interview, Damian's mother described him as "a person on his own", as he liked to do his own thing. She said that her son was a happy person, "except when you come on his territory."

Some further excerpts from Stanley et al. (2000) may complete the picture of Damian at Time 1:

Damian is one of many children in a father-absent family. The mother has bad health. Damian's personal and family situation is indeed bleak, at least on the surface. Closer scrutiny reveals an assortment of protective and compensatory influences.

This boy is healthy and does well in physical education and athletics. Like many of our sample, he is a good artist. He enjoys reading. He has passionate interests; trains, trucks, and transformers which have given way to the topic of disasters. Damian loves church youth activities and he has attended regularly for a number of years.

Damian may well represent the triumph of spirit and goodwill over adverse circumstance. The boy says he is happy, and he is proud of his family and this is while admitting that his classmates make fun of him, that it is hard for him to make friends, that his looks bother him, that he worries a lot, that he feels left out of things, that he is often afraid, and that he forgets what he learns. The big problem for Damian is that he lacks critical social competencies which mean that he is likely to be particularly vulnerable to the harsh evaluations of conformist adolescent culture. (p. 55)

## **Time 2**

Damian did find secondary school challenging, and he looks back on his five years at college with frustration and some anger; “it was kind of annoying ‘cos I didn’t even get NCEA Level 1, and I kept. . .all my classes I tried to choose they kept pulling me back, back, back and yeah.” The predominant emotion that he experiences about his high school education, however, is regret, “looking back at it now, I was an idiot. I should have just sat down and learnt what they were trying to teach me.”

Damian had several unskilled jobs after leaving school, and then there was a two-year period on the dole, which ended when he joined a six-month polytechnic music course. Damian says that the music course was very special, “I think it was one of those experiences that changed the direction of my life. . . ‘cos I learnt a lot of things which I didn’t know before.” Now, the participant works as a stockperson at a local abattoir and it is a job that he hates.

### **Protective factors.**

This young man seems to have two sets of protective cognitions; firstly, he is preoccupied with learning, and secondly, he has a robust independence of mind that underlines his personality. Two additional excerpts from the transcript may give further credence to the characterisation of the respondent as being ‘preoccupied’ with learning. When Damian was asked whether the present time (emergent adulthood) was a good period for him, he said that it was “‘cos I’ve learnt and I’m doing things which I’ve never done before.” Again, in response to the question “As a person today, do you think that you’ve ‘done okay’?” Damian said, “Yeah, I think I’ve done good. . .really good. . .I’ve done things which I never thought I would do. I’ve learnt things which I never thought I would ever learn.” This young man says that he has ‘Attention Deficit Disorder.’ Damian sees this condition as a risk factor for him (and it is considered

under this heading below), and the diagnosis and self-perception of a disorder clearly affects his feelings about learning.

It was initially difficult to interpret and categorise Damian's capacity for independent thinking, and this may have been because it was associated with strong emotions. Damian says that his personal coping mechanism is to sit and think about things, and he certainly seems to have worked through what he thinks about religion. "Last year, when I stopped. . .I got sick of it. It was just the way they were. . .they didn't like me 'cos I had certain other interests which they didn't like because they said it was evil." Apparently, this church did not like Black Metal music. Damian's response was direct; "Well fuck you then!"

- I. How has faith, or lack of faith influenced your life Damian?
- D. Well, when I was at church, it just felt kind of important to go. But now, since I've learnt more about it and found how kind of bullshit it is, it's kind of gone out the window. Like, for me to get into something, I have to get into every day and week and [...] influence my mind, like music or something like that. But religion. . .just doesn't seem to be important for me anymore.

Damian seems to express emotions easily. However, he is reasonably objective even on the most subjective aspects of his life. For instance, when Damian was asked whether his girlfriend was a positive force for him he replied "In some cases yes, some cases no." He is grateful to his girlfriend for helping him to learn things but he does not think that she sees his abilities accurately;

- I. Are there things that you are good at, like talents, and have these talents influenced your life?
- D. I don't really know if I've got anything. I know how to play the guitar ... but my girlfriend says I doesn't. . .but I think I can play the guitar pretty well. . .but not like Jimmy Hendrix, but. . .I know all the chords and everything.

In addition to being committed to learning, being capable of independent judgment, and being able to articulate his feelings, Damian has a life-span perspective. In other words, he has an appreciation of where he is now in relation to being a child and

having a future. In keeping with being an emerging adult, however, he appears to be uncertain as to whether he is actually an adult yet (Arnett, 2000, 2006). Nonetheless, he expresses a sense of there being a sequence to life; “when I was in childhood [I] learnt different things.” As well, Damian told the interviewer that he likes reading, because reading “helps me get all the information for when I’m an adult and when I have my own kids, I know what I’m doing.”

Damian is a young man with many interests and hobbies but, as has been indicated, music is his principal passion. At the polytechnic music course, he learned to read and play music and to understand business aspects of the music industry. This seems to have boosted his confidence, and his love of music runs deep; “I just love listening to music. I love playing music. I just love everything about music. . .It’s just had a big impact on my life.”

Damian is also interested in railways and warfare.

- I. What about trains?
- D. I’ve loved trains ever since I was a little boy. . .Yeah, at school I used to be called Train Boy. . .It’s just everything about them. . .how big they are. . .and I’ve driven steam engines and that before when I did some work in Plimmerton.
- I. Oh really?
- D. That was a boyhood dream come true. . .driving a train. . .I loved it. . .
- I. Now what was the other one we had there, warfare?
- D. Warfare’s another one which I’ve had since I was a little boy. . .about war and tanks and guns and everything about it. . .like especially the Second World War, and Vietnam, and the First World War. . .yeah, ‘cos they all had. . .they all had impacts on my life ‘cos I had relatives in each of them. And warfare’s something I really love to read about and to watch war movies and to play war games on the play stations. . .and I used to do re-enactment work.
- I. Go on, tell me about it.
- D. Fortress in Wellington, this old World War II fortress, built beside the [...?] and I used to do work up there, and I used to do re-enactment stuff. I’ve got like a World War II uniform in my room. . .a British one. I just dress up in that, yeah.

Damian’s girlfriend was mentioned frequently in the interview, and his relationship with her is significant to him. They met each other a year ago at the music course. “She’s about nineteen, she’s two years younger than me and. . .yeah, yeah I

love her.” It is apparent that the girlfriend has views about Damian and the person he should be;

- I. Come on, tell me about her.
- D. Well, she says that I’m obsessed with music and guitars and she wants me to get into other things. She wants me to learn. . .I understand, ‘cos a lot of things, it’s right what she’s trying to make me do. But she’s wanting me to get out of different areas which I like doing, like music and playing the guitar. Like, she’s got me into heaps of other things.

Reportedly, the girlfriend thinks that Damian is lazy and she is encouraging him to acquire basic life skills. She has also started him collecting Harry Potter figurines.

Damian is grateful to her for contributing to his learning.

Damian’s protective forces do seem to be largely within himself. However, this could be an artifact of the interview and methodology. For example, there are five external influences that are alluded to, or briefly mentioned in the transcript, and each of these probably are (or were) powerful, relational protective factors. The five sources of support are Damian’s mother, the extended family, a special friend, other friends, and a mentor.

Damian’s mother died in 2004 from emphysema caused by smoking.

- I. How did that affect you Damian?
- D. It affected me a lot, ‘cos I really loved my mum and I was really disappointed when my mum died. . .especially seeing her dead on the bed, on the hospice bed, I didn’t like that.

Damian remembers his mother as being a strict parent before her illness, “not strict, strict, but she knew the good ways”. He says that he had a close relationship with her, that she told him about things, and she was encouraging.

This young man has a large extended family, some of whom he sees regularly while others of them he has not seen for years. Damian is presently residing with his sister. In addition to some close family, this respondent has a long standing friendship with Sean, who is another member of the research group. It is known that this is a

special and enduring relationship, but Sean rated only indirect mentions in the manuscript. Damian apparently socialises easily; “Yeah. . .yeah, I like to go to the pub and shit. . .and hang out.” Lastly, Damian has been the recipient of some mentoring:

- I. Do you have any relationships with responsible older adults outside the family. . .you know, some people do. They have an old teacher that they still keep in touch with, or some guy who gives you guidance or help.
- D. Sean’s dad. . .I always talk to him, we always talk about music and different things. I really enjoy talking to his dad. We’ve sat down for ages talking about music and poetry and different areas.
- I. Does he give you any advice?
- D. Yeah, he’s helped me pass some of my tests when I did the music course. I did a thing on him.

### **Risk factors.**

Damian presents as having two principal risk factors in his life; Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and the perception and experience of frustration; and it could be that there is a connection here, just as there is a relationship between the ADD and the concern about learning. Damian says that his mother told him that he was born with ADD and the condition came down the paternal line. Apparently, it was worse when he was a child; “I was talking to my cousin. . .and she said I was just off the wall. . .going nuts and talking all the time. . .fidgeting.”

Inability to maintain concentration has been a severe and continuing problem. Damian has taken Ritalin, and his girlfriend is encouraging him to do so again, but he is reluctant to do so because it can make him act violently, apparently, and feel “like a zombie.” This young man tried to join the Army, but he could not get in “because of it ... ‘cos of ADD.”

- I. How big a thing in your life would the ADD be? I mean, if ten was massive and one was nothing, where would it be on that scale?
- D. Probably a ten. . .it’s played a lot of parts in my life. . .just basically been right there in my face. . .never been able to go away, even though my little brother had it, but he’s just grown out of it. It’s just gone now. I’m stuck with it.

Damian perceives that he experiences a lot of difficulties and frustrations. Four situations and circumstances will be briefly mentioned and they are when he was at secondary school, while he was attending the music course, at his place of employment, and the difficulties he encounters attempting to get a new job. Damian says that, when he was at college, some of the teachers called him names, and they ignored and embarrassed him; “Like when I’m talking to them they’ll just ignore me, like right in front of the whole class and the whole class will start laughing at me.”

At the polytechnic music course, Damian was required to specialise in the piano when he really wanted to learn the guitar. As well, he says that he was abused by a tutor;

- I. Were the people on the course. . .the tutors. . .did they help you?
- D. A lot of the time they did, but some of the time they didn’t. . .like one of them was a real arsehole. . .always putting me down. I don’t know why . . .saying to me. . .I can’t do this, ‘You suck at doing that’

Damian works 12 noon to 1.00am as a stockperson at a local abattoir. The positive things about the job are the money, he has made a lot of friends, and “I’ve learnt a lot of stuff” but, as well, a “lot of it’s annoying.” And for Damian the word ‘annoying’ seems to have a special emotive status. Amongst the detractors of his job are the long hours and the fact that he is always sick.

- I. What is it about the conditions that produce this? Why?
- D. It’s just the environment down there. Like there’s. . .you’re exposed to everything. . .the weather, animal faeces on the ground, whatever it is on the animal which is usually faeces ‘cos they’re packed real tight on the stock trucks and they shit on each other. Yeah, it’s just everything about that place. Yeah, it just makes you sick, you get some kind of sickness from it.

Understandably, Damian wants different work. He says that he has applied for many jobs. He thinks that he has been unsuccessful because he lacks qualifications. “Still it’s kind of annoying. So I’m stuck with this job I hate.”

## **Resilience.**

Damian is acutely aware of his lack of learning and qualifications, and he does not see himself as an able person; “I’m not really intelligent at all.” Inevitably, perhaps, Damian does not feel that he has very much self-efficacy;

- I. Are you a person who gets what they want in life, Damian?
- D. In some cases, yes, but in some. . .a lot of cases, no.

However, again according to self-report, this young person’s self-esteem is generally good; “there’s some things I don’t feel good about myself sometimes, but a lot of the times I feel good about myself.” Damian defined resilience for himself in terms of personal destiny, or ‘following your own star.’

- I. Damian, you’ve started on answering this question, this is a really important one, this question. Can you make clear what ‘doing okay’ means for you?
- D. I think it’s basically doing the right thing in life. . .the thing that you feel is right and you go and follow that path, that’s what I think it is.

From the researcher’s perspective, there is a real sense with this young man that he has not received appropriate support and assistance. It is almost as if he has done as well as he has despite the education system rather than because of it. Damian is quite clear himself about the sort of help he would have liked.

- I. If you had been offered some help in your life, what sort of help would you really have benefited from? Like if someone had come along at some point and said, ‘Damian, I’m going to really help you’, what would they have done?
- D. Basically, skills and qualifications, I reckon. That would have been really helpful. . .getting good qualifications so I could get a better job. . .yeah.

Damian is a surprising participant in many ways, and he is a person with a special appreciation of how protective factors can coalesce and exert a combined effect.

- I. If you think about your life, Damian, you’ve got some really strong things going for you. You’ve got this girlfriend, right. . .tells you what to do [*both laugh*]. . .you can work hard. . .you’ve got a strong interest in music, you’ve got family support. . .so what’s the most important amongst that little lot?
- D. I think the whole thing’s important. Everything about it’s important, ‘cos after a while it all fits into one little thing.



## **Richard**

**“just to have a job and help my mother out and that”**

### **Time 1**

At the first assessment, Richard was rated as moderately at risk (Stanley et al., 2000). He was considered to have reasonably high personal resilience, principally because of strong sporting abilities and interest, but there was a real concern about his personal happiness. On the Student Self-Assessment, Richard gave happiness at home 5/10, happiness at school rated 8/10, happiness with friends received 10/10, and the overall score for personal happiness was 4/10. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale also contained a lot of items marked in the negative, including that Richard felt he was unpopular, that he was not an important member of his family, that he worried a lot, and that he was not a happy person.

Richard presented as the victim of a marriage breakup, which occurred when he was seven years old. His father lives in a northern locality and Richard had been with him for two or three years, but the participant was now living with his grandparents in the study locality. There is an older sister but she was not with Richard at this time. In interview, the grandparents said that Richard missed his father. Reportedly, when the father went back after a visit he became quiet and he slept. Richard expressed his hopes and concerns in his five minute writing sample:

What I hope for the future is for me to get a good job. And when I grow up I hope I will make it in the All Blacks. But all I want for the future is for my family to be together. And then I hope I will be a traveller.

Richard's class teacher said that he was not especially able, and he could occasionally be disruptive, but he had a very positive attitude to his education. The school also complemented Richard on his sporting ability, saying that he was 'thinker' in sport, and that he persisted despite injuries.

This participant's parenting was recorded by Stanley et al. (2000) in the following terms:

This student is being raised by his grandparents who are absolutely clear what they want for Richard and who provide tough and immediate consequences for any lapses in expected performance. The grandfather, in particular, simply wants the boy to be the best and to be a leading sportsperson. Education is seen as highly relevant to this goal; "Got to push them, push them to the limit. . . education is number one. . . I always tell Richard not to get into a factory. That's what we got out of, factory jobs. here are careers out there as long as you use what you get from an education." Reading and writing are important even for top sports people, "he's got to read the contract, he's got to have an accountant." The grandfather has difficulty helping with homework, "All I can provide is a roof over their heads, shoes and pay the bills but I can't do more than that." Additionally, the family has purchased a commercial video package to assist memory development. (p. 54)

The parent management style impressed as being distinctly authoritarian. The grandmother stated that: "I always pull his ears when he tells lies. . . I give him a whack if he watches TV." Richard got a similar response from the grandfather if he did not do household chores, "Oh, if he doesn't do them he'll get a clip across the ears." In the student interview Richard reported that misbehaviour by him was punished by a slap on the head, and he said that this consequence was ineffective with him.

The research notes that were written in 1998, and which are still available, contain a number of questions about Richard's parenting. It was suspected that the grandparents were inclined to socially approved answers in the interview. For instance, the grandfather said that he often watched Richard play sport and, if he was not available, the uncles and aunts were on the sideline. When he was interviewed, Richard said that his guardians did not watch him play sport. In the research notes there are also these questions concerning the participant: "Who is he particularly bonded to?" "Has Richard got anyone special?"

In the final analysis, Richard was thought to be a resilient young person. Stanley et al. (2000) concluded:

[Richard] might be viewed as being supported by competent parenting, and as being resilient in the context of his personal, neighbourhood and sociocultural

circumstances. The family is ambitious for their boy but they may not appreciate the complex skills that are required for success. Nonetheless, in selecting sport they have chosen a powerful and proven protective mechanism. (p. 54)

## Time 2

### Protective factors.

Richard left secondary school from year 12. Since then he has attended a sporting academy and he has worked in construction, fisheries, and fruit packing. Richard is presently single, but he is a father and he has a young daughter. When interviewed, he was doing periodic detention for previous offending and he was awaiting sentencing on a serious assault charge.

From an external vantage point, Richard currently possesses some unambiguous protective factors, and these are purely within himself; and they are physical health and agility, and aspects of personality. Having good health is clearly an asset, and it makes it possible for Richard to engage in hard physical work and to express his sporting abilities. This young man did not expand on his sporting prowess; all that he said was that he used to play rugby but he was not doing so presently.

Richard is healthy, he works hard outdoors, and he seems to have done well in sport. These capacities may contribute to the sense of self-assurance that he conveys.

- I. Now Richard. . .are there things that you're good at mate?  
R. [laughs] Yeah.  
I. Tell me some of the things that Richard's good at.  
R. There's heaps of things. . .just got to get me out there and I'll do it.  
I. Okay. . .so you're quite an adaptable guy?  
R. Yeah.  
I. You're still okay with this interview in terms of feeling comfortable?  
R. Yeah.  
I. Richard, are you a confident person?  
R. Now and then.  
I. In what situations are you confident?  
R. Just really. . .when I really need to do stuff really. When I have to. . .

Richard said that he was advantaged because he is laid back and easy to get along with. He says that he does not get the things that he wants in life, but he feels good about himself as a person, and he now gives himself nine out of ten for happiness.

Richard uses drugs to relax;

- I. Okay. . .Richard, we've all got ways that we cope. . .you know what I mean. . .things that upset us, how do you cope with things?
- R. When I'm upset. . .no, I'm normally. . .I don't take it out on anyone or anything. . .just have a sesh. . .
- I. And what's a sesh?
- R. Oh, [blaze?].
- I. Marijuana?
- R. Yeah.
- I. Yeah. . .okay. . .do you use a lot of marijuana. . .
- R. No. . .I train most of the week, so it's just now and then.

Richard seems to have another coping 'mechanism' and it is his daughter.

- I. Now, what are some of the other things you've done in the past that have helped you to cope Richard?
- R. Just being with my daughter, pretty much.

Richard's daughter is being cared for in his home town. He says that it is "cool" and "different" being a father, and it was "all good" when they were living together. Richard enjoys watching his daughter grow up, and it has prompted him to think back; "that was me when I was a baby." Richard lived with the mother of his child for about two years, and this relationship might also be included as a protective factor because it was viewed as mostly a good time by the participant.

There are some other forces in Richard's life that appear to have had both negative and positive consequences for him. Included in these indistinct and 'mixed' categories are being a young Maori male, religion, primary and secondary schooling, and his own parenting. When pressed, Richard said that his culture was important to him and that he had been to Rarotonga to play sport. However, being a young Maori male is possibly a risk factor of itself, given the high representation of Maori men in the New Zealand prison population (Department of Corrections, 2004).

The participant was ambivalent about the significance of religion in his life. He has not been a church attender since he was a young child, but he admits that he believes in God and his Cook Island religion is still important to him. Richard's schooling does not appear to have made much of an impact on him. At high school, he says that his best subject was physical education and that he passed NCEA level 2 Maori. When he was asked how he thinks his secondary teachers would have regarded him, Richard said, "Probably like a good person, but a trouble person as well." He says that he was unmotivated towards the end of his schooling and his attendance could be irregular. Clearly college was a social time ("Oh there was quite a few of us.") but there are now some regrets;

- I. Okay. . .what about looking back on your education, is there anything you want to say about that?
- R. Just should have took more notice of my work at school, I guess. . .yeah . . .just should have chose. . .picked out the right crowd, I guess, that would have helped.

When interviewed, Richard was staying with his mother up north but he has mostly lived with his grandparents in the study locality over the last five years. The home town is the place to be, apparently; "It's just family, friends and that are there." It should be noted, though, that the participant sees his extended family infrequently; "Just once in a blue moon." Richard considers his grandparents to be his real parents, and he says that he has a close relationship with his grandmother and that she met his needs when he was growing up. However, Richard does not look back on his childhood as any easy one;

- I. Were they strict?
- R. When I was growing up. . .yeah. . .got lots of hits. . .[?] thirteen.
- I. Pardon?
- R. When I was younger, but once I hit the age thirteen they were more. . .all right.

### **Risk factors.**

This young person is a member of an identified gang, which is set against another well-known gang. Richard knows that this association is a risk factor for him. With the gang he drinks alcohol, participates in street fights, and does other “gang related stuff.” Richard says that the gang does not look for trouble, but rather “trouble comes to us pretty much.” He gives some interesting insights on gang membership,

- I. What does the gang do for you? I mean, why are you a member of a gang?
- R. I think it's just 'cos all the boys that was in our group, just we've all grown up from primary 'till now. . .just more like family now, all of us, that's how we see it. Yeah, it's just come to. . .we have to just protect ourselves
- I. So you like being with the other guys?
- R. Oh yeah. . .no. . .yeah, they're normal people. Just when it comes to things like that, that's when we just have to step it up a little bit I think ... just to protect ourselves too.

### **Resilience.**

Richard thinks that he is doing okay, although he was not especially sure what doing okay means for him. He concluded that it was having a job and helping his mother. He thinks that now is a good time in his life. Richard would like to play more league but there is a need to “sort my stuff out first before I get to that.” The issues to be sorted centre around his forthcoming court hearing;

- I. Are you worried about this sentencing that's coming up?
- R. Nah, not really, 'cos I already know what I'm getting.
- I. And what are you getting mate?
- R. Oh, it could either be home detention, but I've got to go see someone else, oh my drug and alcohol assessment to see if I can get a lower charge, instead of home d, 'cos I don't want to go on home d.
- I. Do you find home d hard?
- R. Oh yeah, it's just like being on curfew, 'cos I'm already on curfew and I've been on it for ages.

Richard's story made a particular impression on the investigator, and it was because it seemed to have beneficent forces and influences missing from it. What was

equally striking, perhaps, is that the participant seems unaware of what he has missed out on;

- I. Okay. . .is there anyone out there, like a responsible adult who takes an interest in you?
- R. Not sure eh, not sure on that one.
- I. Is there any guy. . .or woman. . .who says, 'Hey Richard, how's it going mate?' and gives you advice?
- R. Nah.
- I. Okay. . .now Richard, if you'd been offered some help early on, what sort of help would you have really liked?
- R. Umm. . .not sure.

## **Amber**

### **"I've got my own mind and I know what I'm doing"**

#### **Time 1**

Amber was considered to be at moderate risk at the first assessment (Stanley et al., 2000). There were various detractors in her personal situation. The father used to beat up her mother before he left the family home, and mother and daughter were still fearful of him years later. Amber began her primary education with hearing difficulties, and there were a number of changes of school. These comments were recorded her by teacher in her first year at primary school: "Amber has settled into routines well but does not handle conflict situations well. Appears to be very bitter."

The following statement appears on Amber's Senior School Record: "A very caring and shy girl who at times can open her mouth in a nasty way. Easily distracted by her peers. Needs to be monitored with social interactions as she is easily led." Prior to being assessed, Amber had been found smoking, and some friends of hers had been caught stealing.

Amber gave some interesting responses to the Time 1 investigators; for instance, in reply to the question 'What do you like about your life?' she said, "Being young, enjoying being young." Additionally, Amber said, "I know things but I am not brainy"; and lastly there was this casual comment, "My mum has a boyfriend and my father

might find out and I don't know what he might do. I am going to tell him if he asks."

Stanley et al. (2000) made this observation:

This young person made a distinctive impression on the research team with her personality and she reminds us of the importance of protective factors that are internal to the child. One of the researchers noted that "she seemed to be more on to it than many of the other kids, more alert and more mature for her age." Another researcher recorded this comment at the student interview: "Forthright answers, occasionally a bit touchy. A sense of personal strength. (p. 52)

The mother indicated that Amber had few real boundaries at home. She did not do what was asked of her and she argued with her mother. Punishments were negotiable, in the sense that there was not necessarily any follow through. It was apparent that the mother found the situation exasperating, but Amber continued to say that the best times for her were being with her mother. Amber gave the researchers at Time 1 cause for reflection.

It is interesting that Amber's positive personal qualities and self-esteem may actually contribute to her risk status. It probably takes an equal quantity of capacity and confidence to act independently and break the rules as it does to conform and achieve conventional success. Whatever, the mother's actions and inactions are very likely creating a vacuum that could easily be filled by the peer group with promises of adult pleasures. This would be a shame because at this time Amber is well motivated and continues to value adult approval. (p. 53)

## **Time 2**

Amber says that she attended secondary for two and a half to three years. She then did a six month hairdressing course and this led to an apprenticeship in an "up-there salon." Unfortunately, the hairdressing apprenticeship had to be terminated within two years because Amber developed dermatitis on her hands from exposure to chemicals. Since that time, she has done some hairdressing work but there has also been shop work and part-time employment in a café. At various times, Amber has also worked with her mother at a factory. She recently returned to this employment, where she is hopeful of obtaining an apprenticeship.



This participant lives with her partner who is a member of a major gang. Amber does not have children, she sees her mother regularly, and she has had issues related to substance use.

### **Protective factors.**

Amber impresses as having an abundance of personality, and her spirit and cheek were shown in the interview where she joked with the researcher and wished to discuss other matters such as her hair, which she was straightening at the time. Amber describes herself as appealing, sociable, and easy going. “I’m pretty much a kind of mellow person. I try not to care and worry about too much stuff that I know would upset me or anything.” She also says that she is reasonably confident, and she feels good about herself. Amber considers herself to be intelligent; “I can learn things quite quickly ... pick things up fast. I don’t know. I just think I got something. . .it’s there. . .so I use it as much as can.” As well, this young person has hopes and ambitious and she sees herself as a hard worker:

- I. Amber, what are your hopes for the future?
- A. I hope I get a really good job that I like, that I will stay there for more than two years. Umm. . .I wouldn’t mind travelling. I wouldn’t mind owning my own company, but now I’m dreaming.
- I. Any further education in there?
- A. Oh yeah, I’d want to do an apprenticeship. I want to get some certificates, you know, something behind me so that if anything ever happened with a job. . .I’ve always. . .at least if I’m qualified at something at least I can fall back on it.
- I. What about partner and family?
- A. What do you mean?
- I. Having kids.
- A. Oh yeah, I want to have kids. . .later on though, not yet. Like I want to get all this done first. I’ve always said to myself that I want to have a proper job and want to have money, you know, I don’t just want to jump into it. I want to make sure I’m sussed first.
- I. Let’s talk about when people see. . .how do they see Amber?
- A. A good worker at work and they’re jealous.
- I. Why are they jealous?
- A. I don’t know. Probably because I’m a good worker and I actually do work and, some of them, they like to be lazy and they like to wait for the bosses to go so they can get stoned. ‘Cos I work. . .I work night shift and there’s no managers and that there, so they get stoned.

Amber's statements might be interpreted as showing self-awareness. And in addition to the examples that have already been given, Amber says that she worries about the effects of drugs on her health. She also sees herself as a sympathetic person. Nevertheless, this participant could be considered to show some confused thinking about her partner's gang involvement;

- I. Now, Amber, for someone like me, [gang title] means antisocial behaviour, right. . .is that true or not?
- A. I don't know. . . 'cos I've only known him for a year and that's as long as we've pretty much been going out, so all I've ever known from him is that he's just practically got a lot of [gang title] mates and they hang out with themselves, you know, and there's still a lot of them, so it's not like they're antisocial. But I guess, though, 'cos they just hang out with themselves and not too much other people and go out there. . .well they do try. . .but I don't know, they just like to be hard and not everybody else likes to.
- I. Staunch.
- A. Maybe. . .maybe. . .I'm not too sure. I don't ask them, 'Do you like to be staunch?'
- I. I don't even know what the word means.
- A. I don't know. The ones that I've met have been all right. They haven't done anything to me or anything. I try and keep separate. . .try and do my own thing.

Amber says that her mother has been, and continues to be, a major source of influence on her. When discussing the past, Amber said that the relationship with her mother had been turbulent at times, but she always knew that her mother was well intentioned; "She tried to be strict, but then she gave in a lot of the time. . .but she tried." Amber says that she is close to her mother and she clearly respects her;

- I. Has the nature of your relationship had an impact on your life?
- A. Yes, I think my mum's made me a good person compared to other people. . .I don't know. . .yeah, like. . .sometimes I just care about people that I shouldn't even be caring about, and my mum's like that. She cares about things and stuff.

Amber was interviewed in the kitchen and her mother was in the lounge next door. Her mother wanted to join the interview, but Amber would not let her. Nonetheless, mum managed to make some contributions to the conversation;

- I. In what ways has your life been influenced by having or not having money and possessions?
- A. Yeah, 'cos I've pretty much worked since school and my mum used to give me money and she still does. Mum's a good mum.
- M. I'm not a good mum.
- A. But, yeah. . .
- M. Good mums don't do that.

The respondent reported that there are other people, in addition to her mother, who attempt to give her guidance about her life; "They always say, 'Are you with that fellow?' and I say, 'Yes'." Amber says that, whenever she has been told to avoid people because they could lead her astray, she has reminded herself that she is an independent person and she knows how to look after herself.

Latterly, Amber has been intentionally re-establishing relationships with her extended family, and especially her cousins. This involves seeing them, texting them, and asking them to visit.

- I. Are there advantages with having those sorts of relationships with family?
- A. Yeah, then you know that you've got heaps of support and stuff all around and family and you can always go and talk to them and see them and talk about stuff and like. . .just a couple of my cousins, their mums have passed away, so I'm still happy that I've still got my mum, you know. And I'd want them probably to be there for me if my mum passed away.

There have been some seemingly benign influences in Amber's life which are now inert or inactive. For instance, when Amber was younger an aunt used to take her to church but the participant has had no religious involvements over the last ten years. Similarly, Amber does not have a clear commitment to her ethnicity as a Maori;

- I. Okay. . .what about culture? Is your ethnicity important to you?
- A. Yeah. . .I don't really get too much into it, you know, I'm just. . .well, probably not really. . .just in. . .I don't know. Not really, I just know I'm Maori and that's all good with me.

Amber is another of the participants who appears to have been relatively unaffected by secondary school, or at least in a positive sense. She said that she could

be a good student when she wanted to be but the work did not hold her interest.

Basically, she just wanted to talk to her friends and socialise. Amber said that she did not do anything really bad, just wagging, and smoking tobacco and marihuana. An art teacher told her that she was a good artist, and this teacher also let her come into his room when she was wagging other classes. In sum, however, Amber was unimpressed by her education; “I didn’t really like school. I didn’t like it at all.”

### **Risk factors.**

Amber talked a lot about her drug use, which she says is limited to alcohol and marijuana. She admits that she has a reputation as a drug user, and probably as “someone who’s always wasted.” People also know that she can access drugs for them; “if they need some weed, they can call me and I’ll hook them up.” She says that it has interfered with her jobs in the past because, about once a month, she has been too hung over to go to work. Amber wanted to make it clear to the interviewer that, while she got ‘wasted’, she was never ‘tragic.’

- I. What’s the difference between ‘wasted’ and being ‘tragic’?
- A. Well ‘wasted’ is if I could been just stoned and walking round or I could be drunk, and ‘tragic’ is falling over everywhere or falling over some guy or spewing up everywhere or not even know what I’m doing, kind of stuff. . .tragic.

As indicated above, Amber has some worries about the health effects of marijuana use (“weed kills my brain cells. [laughs]”). She attended a drug and alcohol counsellor on one occasion, but she believes that giving up substances is completely up to her. The participant says that her drug consumption is reducing and she is increasingly controlling it.

- I. What are areas of risk for you Amber? Now, when I say risk. . .I think the marijuana is probably a bit of an issue, would you think?
- A. No, ‘cos I don’t smoke that much anymore. I used to smoke hard out, but now I just smoke. . .maybe once a week. . .I don’t even drink that much anymore. . .I used to drink as often as I could, but now I’m like ‘Oh no, I’ve got work’. . .work comes first and I can save it for the weekend and. .

. 'cos I don't start until twelve, I think. . . well I can drink until a certain time and then I stop.

Amber seems proud of having a partner who is thirty-something and in the [gang title]. Her previous relationship, which lasted four years, was with a younger gang member but he “was like just a little wannabe.” In one sense, Amber's current partner could be seen as a protective influence because he restricts her social involvements. He does not permit her to go out whenever she wants and to see whoever she wants. To a degree, Amber feels she is missing out on things but she tries to see her partner's point of view; “[I am] annoyed, but I can see where he comes from. . . just knowing what girls are like these days.” This aspect aside, a year-long relationship with a patched member of one of this country's most notorious gangs probably has to be considered a significant risk factor for her.

I. Is he a good influence on you?

A. Umm. . . a little bit. *[laughs]*

I. Did you get into trouble with him last year?

A. Oh nah. . . I never got into trouble with him. He gets in trouble on his own.

A third source of risk that Amber talked about was her social life and obviously there is, or has been, a lot of overlap amongst her drug use, relationships, and socialising. Apart from the parties, substances, and movies, and “stuff like that,” Amber has smashed up cars and engaged in theft with her friends. The dishonesty occurred when she worked on the checkout in a supermarket. She used to ‘hook’ her work mates up, and they also did this for her, which means that only some of the grocery items that were presented were scanned. There is a sense of resentment in a statement that Amber made about her friends, as it seems that often she has been the one who has supplied the car and the money for social activities.

## **Resilience.**

Amber thinks that she has done well (okay) in her life to this point, but she wants more for the future. She wants to become someone special and “to do something with my life.” Amber has had a lot of fun on the way to where she is now but, less obviously perhaps, there is a sense of struggle as well;

- I. Just asking about. . .looking back over your life Amber, what might have been some of the more difficult things you’ve experienced?
- A. Trying to keep at one thing. . .maybe like school. . .trying to stay at school or trying to stay at my job or something like that. . .trying to keep my mum happy.

## **Kerry**

**“it’s not a problem to me if I’m not intelligent or I am.”**

### **Time 1**

Kerry was categorised as enhanced risk by Stanley et al. (2000). At the time, the authors observed that this twelve year-old’s life “is compromised by internal risk factors (intellectual issues/learning problems) and these in turn are attenuated by other internal factors (personality and disposition) and by the external influence of the mother” (p. 57). Kerry had major learning difficulties. His teacher in year seven reported that he could not get beyond a six year reading age. His Progressive Achievement Listening Test showed that 96 percent of children his age were more able than he was in listening comprehension. Individual education plans guided his education and he was receiving itinerant special needs teacher support. As well, his parents had sent him to Kip McGrath for individual tuition.

Kerry’s teacher commented that he was disruptive in class because he needed so much teacher guidance. This student was often absent from school, and the Truancy Officer had been involved. The father found this exasperating as his son suffered from severe asthma, and he spent about a week in hospital every two months. Kerry’s father wondered whether the medication he had taken for the asthma had impacted on his

learning. Regarding Kerry's learning issues, the father believed that "the key is to focus things to what he likes. Computer or a PlayStation in front of him, he'll sit there for hours and hours" Additionally, he said that Kerry is quite capable of reading about things he wants to know about, such as material associated with video games.

In the individual assessment in 1998, Kerry reported high levels of personal happiness; "I like my life because it is cool." In this same year, his special needs teacher reported that "Kerry's strength is in his willingness to keep working and his unfailingly cheerful disposition." These are obviously positive and encouraging comments, but there was a hint of some social difficulties in another observation by his class teacher; "Kerry has a heart of gold but he is likely to be easily swayed by others in the future."

In fact, Kerry was severely bullied at school and this was a major source of concern for his mother. She had spoken to the care giver of one of the boys who had picked on Kerry; "I won't have them beat up on my son." However, there was little else that she could do as a mother; "you get so mad with the kids picking on him and he'd come home with a new bruise and I'll get him to punch my hand just so he can say that you can hit back." Kerry's mother wondered whether the abuse occurred because she had been overprotective with him; "I protected him so much he wasn't rough like other kids." Another explanation that she offered for its occurrence was "because his dad's white and his mum's not."

The mother was quite open about the extent that she went to look after Kerry. For instance, she ensured that he got to school safely; "I won't let him catch the bus because I am scared that if I let him catch the bus in the morning, he'll end up at. . ." She was encouraging his religious involvement to teach Kerry right from wrong, and as a protective factor; "I hope it'll be something that he'll make some part of his life." The mother also chose what he was allowed to watch on television. With respect to the

bullying, Kerry's father gave him \$5 a day for lunch knowing that he might use the money to buy popularity.

## **Time 2**

### **Protective factors.**

Kerry was interviewed with his mother present and this provided a number of alternative perspectives on his situation. Specifically, what might have first appeared as unambiguous protective factors came to be seen as more complex influences that contained detractions as well beneficial qualities. In this section we will discuss Kerry's and his mother's appraisals of his personal disposition, his interest in karate, his religious and cultural commitments, the support that he receives from his parents, his place in the family, and the contribution of an external mentor.

Kerry's mother describes him as sociable and easygoing. Kerry sees himself as easy and helpful; "if someone was down I would help them." Note, the word 'help,' in various forms, is recurrent in Kerry's conversation. Mother says that her son's easygoing nature means that family members and others take advantage of him. Further, Kerry sees himself as a confident person. The mother, however, thinks otherwise; "he doubts himself a lot. . .doesn't believe in himself, I feel."

Kerry identifies karate as the most important thing in his life; and this is his mother's view as well. The salience of karate for him is shown in this excerpt: "I'm always true to my God. . .but my karate is my big one." Kerry has achieved a lot of successes with his sport, and in his club he is an instructor. Kerry's mother describes a very important day:

- M. one of his highs there would have been when they all had a tournament. . .all the clubs got together, Grand Master was there, he asked for a specific stance, all the black belts had to do it and nobody knew how to do it. Only Kerry did. . .they got all the black belts down doing a hundred push-ups and Kerry standing by and watching them and he got his black belt then as well.



Kerry participates in karate three to four times a week, and he was voluble about what it gives him. Kerry sees physical, psychological, and generative benefits in his sport, although he did not use these terms. Firstly, it gets him moving and keeps him fit. Secondly, karate confers self-respect, helps him cope with life, and makes him feel special;

- K. Mostly when I was doing karate, I've learned that there's more to life than just being an ordinary. . .like a normal person who just goes to work, goes to sort of a gym and then goes home. I've realised that my karate can help other people if they would just take the time to understand it.

As indicated in the above quotation, Kerry wants to 'spread the word' about karate. He obtains considerable satisfaction from instructing in his sport;

- I. Right. . .What do you get out of being involved in karate, Kerry?  
K. I get the feeling of enjoyment just helping other people learn and understand a. . .art. . .basically a martial art form just so that they feel confident enough to take on other obstacles in their way sometimes.

For Kerry, religion and Samoan culture are connected. Actually, for him the connections of religion and family are intertwined and intimate;

- K. Oh, it's attending church, listening to the father who reads the Bible . . .mostly. . .sometimes I just don't listen to him 'cos I know. . .if you read the Bible most of the time that Jesus was just not looking for his father up in Heaven, he knew that his father was in his heart. So I believed that Mum and Dad were in my heart all the time with my religion or faith, so I believed in. . .mostly. . .what I went to church for. . .for a reason, but I just believed that my mum and dad were my lord and Jesus.

Kerry says that his Catholic faith has given him insights into why people give into fear or their habits. He also says that religion has made him strong, and helped him a lot with his personal issues and health difficulties. Kerry's mother has a less fulsome view of her son and religion. She says that he has "always had that shoved down his throat since he was so high." One advantage that the mother sees in her son's religion is that it has helped him to understand Samoan culture, and "he struggles with it [the culture], as we all do."

- M. And the religion. . .Kerry. . .Kerry, he's all right with religion, but if he can he won't go to church because. . .yeah, I think he's pushed into it. And that again is the culture.

Kerry has endeavoured to understand Samoan culture and learn the language and, if Kerry's mother had not been present at the interview, culture might have been seen as an unambiguous protective factor on this basis. However, the mother says that Kerry's culture has held him back. She says that she tries to discard what she describes as the bad parts of the culture, but it is not always possible to do this. For her, some of the negative aspects of the Samoan culture are that, as a schoolgirl, she could not go to social events or on field trips. Now, she objects that her parents can dictate what happens in her family and that Kerry, as the eldest, has to financially contribute to the support of his grandparents.

The participant impresses as really valuing and appreciating his parents, and he says that they have always been there for him. Kerry says that his mother has been the strict one and his father is more of a 'clown', like he considers himself to be. Kerry believes that he has benefited from his mother's strict approach; "If I didn't have any rules or anything else, I'd be a loose cannon." He says that when his parents are not around he tries to act as they would expect (as "the older person in the house") and this might be seen as testimony to the effectiveness of the parenting he has received.

Kerry's mother admits that she intervenes when it seems that advantage is being taken of his good nature; "I've always been there to kind of. . .you know. . .say, 'Hold up' if I see that happening." As well, it was interesting to hear that Kerry's positive sporting engagement was intentionally arranged by the parents;

- I. Perhaps Mum would like to make a comment on this one. . .karate.  
M. Karate. . .yeah, it's kept Kerry grounded. . .when he first started out. . .the primary. . .teachers thought that he had ADD, so we went through all the tests and that and found no, no. . .he just had a short attention span, he said and we needed to get him into something that would focus him. So it has actually focused him throughout his whole life in things that he wants to do and how to achieve it.

Kerry's family clearly means a great deal to him. They are a major source of support for him ("they help me move along through the little bumps") and he is completely committed to them; "In the past I've had a lot of bad experiences with people and their attitudes, but I've always looked out for my family. It was my top priority." Kerry has special responsibilities as the eldest of four children. He is the "head-man in the house" in his parents' absence, and he is expected to be a role model to his younger brother and sisters. These are quite onerous responsibilities and, according to his mother, "everything is left to poor old Kerry." The young man himself sometimes does not feel that he is equal to the job:

- I. Okay. . .Kerry, here you are, you're the head of the family in terms of the kids. . .the eldest. . .what's that been like over the course of your life?
- K. I've stuffed up sometimes in the oldest role, but making sure the kids are safe and making sure they don't do anything stupid like I did back when I was a kid. It's just really hard sometimes when you try and tell them. . .try to make them understand what you are trying to tell them and they just don't get it. I guess it's in their little kid mind or something.

Kerry's mother went to the same school as the participant, and both mother and son have benefitted from the same mentor, and this person also now shows an interest in Kerry's sisters. This teacher visited the house when Kerry was first born. He says of the mentor, that she understood him the best at school, and she was his helper in one-to-one tuition. The mother says that this person assisted Kerry to be the person that he is today;

- I. Okay, so she helped you, she was your best teacher, anything else?
- K. No, she was just the best teacher that I had since I was at that secondary school.
- M. She understood the culture, so. . .and she taught. . .a lot of the family, myself included, and in that way she helped Kerry out a lot because she knew that. . .she knew when there was a problem in the family, yeah. Kerry would act up at school and she would just ring and say. . .and we'd discuss it. . .yeah.

### **Risk factors.**

Kerry is a chronic asthmatic and he has also had problems from a bone growing inside his nose. The significance of these health concerns should not be diminished, but they do seem to have been overshadowed by another set of risks factors, and this is his learning difficulties. There are repeated references in the transcript to the challenges of learning and schooling. For instance, Kerry says of his intellectual ability, “I’m not intelligent. I’m not a brainy person, but sometimes I can be intelligent sometimes, but not all the time.” As indicated above, the participant valued his good teachers, and he does not hold any of them responsible for his problems;

- I. Did you feel that the teachers let you down, the school let you down, or it was just one of those things?
- K. I don’t think it was the teachers. I think they did try hard with me, but I think it was just me not letting all the information in. I didn’t understand most of it.

This young man appears to have had various coping (or ‘survival’) skills for when he was at school. His mother told us that the other students at secondary school did most of his class work and his homework; “Kerry would just have to ask and they did it. Yeah, we got called in quite a few times for that.” He also used the detention system to his advantage; “Sometimes when I get a detention I always asked the teacher that I had last to come and do one-on-one lessons with me, and I pretty much learnt from just going to detention than actually in the class time.”

Kerry and his mother have explanations for his learning difficulties. A few years ago he was tested and it was thought that he had dyslexia, and that there was a familial cause. There is also a family belief that Kerry is ‘doer’ rather than a ‘thinker’, and a practical person rather than an academic. Kerry wishes that he had help earlier with his learning, as he now finds that his difficulties have implications for his employment;

- I. So what sort of form would that help have taken, if you can be a bit more detailed about how that. . . what sort of help would have made a big difference?

- K. Well, with the reading side. . .was to read my contracts and to understand what they want from me. And probably the maths which was definitely hard because they do test people and the first thing is the maths, but. . .either that. . .I definitely wish that I had help earlier.

In addition to any risks and challenges that may be associated with Kerry's health, learning, and employment prospects, there are also some threats that come from living in a disadvantaged area, and Kerry and his mother gave some insight into these dangers. A youth that Kerry grew up with was stabbed to death and this boy's younger brother (and Kerry's best friend) was also stabbed. These events were upsetting for Kerry, and they were worrying times for his mother as well; "I've basically had to watch Kerry last year to make sure that he didn't take off and go on a vigilante hunt, sort of thing. . .as they did. . .a lot of the kids did. . .they were out for blood."

Just over the road is a gang base. When the children used to play touch rugby on the road they were hassled all the time, and on one occasion Kerry's brother was hit by a gang member. Kerry's uncle tried to sort the situation out and he was arrested by the Police as a consequence. Kerry's family is hoping to move from the neighbourhood.

### **Resilience.**

It was difficult establishing what being resilient means to Kerry;

- I. What does 'doing okay' mean for you?  
K. Well 'doing okay' is. . .well basically what I do for helping other people, trying to understand them, 'cos I know I was there before, but 'doing okay' to me doesn't really much mean anything to me anyway.

His mother said that he was 'doing okay' because he was still working and he did not have a lot of problems in his life. When he was asked how people would have seen him in the past, Kerry gave some indication of a resilience quality; "I did feel like a loser, but people looked at me as like, sort of a let-down, but I didn't put that into heart." However, from the investigator's viewpoint, there is also an aspect of unreality in what

Kerry says, and especially when we recollect what his mother said about him lacking self-confidence;

- I. Okay. How do you think other people see you now, Kerry?
- K. As a big achiever. I just tell them sometimes people. . .I achieved it because I worked really hard to get that. . .to get where I am today ... working hard, putting in the hours.

There were a number of other points in the interview where Kerry might be considered to have an overly optimistic appreciation of his circumstances. One event occurred on an outdoor adventure camp that he attended. Kerry is very proud that he alone could roll a kayak, and this accomplishment is given as evidence of his physical (versus intellectual) prowess. However, in his mother's words, "He got pneumonia from that and he just couldn't handle the cold, so he had to give that up."

Kerry's (and his mother's) optimism is also shown in their career hopes. The mother wants an office job for her son; "I mean, that's. . .would be the only thing he sort of could do." However, Kerry aspires to more:

- I. Okay. . .Kerry. . .your hopes for the future mate? What do you hope for the future?
- K. Well, I'm into Manga cartoons, I just feel like I want to be a cartoonist for the voices and for acting, if I could, stunt-wise. . .for a martial art movie.

This 21 year-old and his family believe that Kerry is popular person. Kerry's popularity has come, apparently, from doing karate and, in his childhood years, because "I had most of the new toys or just. . .you know. . .being a boy that had the biggest lunchbox." In addition, Kerry says that at school he was a good friend, he helped people, he was easy going, he had no fear of doing anything like skating, and he would happily 'clown' about. His mother says that throughout his schooling he was described as a charmer; "He could charm the birds out of the trees according to some of the teachers. . .so yeah." However, as before, Kerry's mother also presented another side of

her son. She reported that Kerry had talked of suicide when a girl that he knew was killed in a car accident.

## **Patrick**

**“Compared to what I was. . .what’s happened, I reckon I’ve done pretty good. .  
.excellent.”**

### **Time 1**

Patrick was regarded as being highly at risk by Stanley et al. (2000). These authors made this comment about the participant’s circumstances in 1998: “Patrick presents a complex picture of risk and protective factors. The primary adaptive force in his life is his educational potential. Amassed against this are some virulent influences, including disruptions, physical abuse and maternal drug abuse” (p. 58).

Patrick’s teacher described him as a very bright boy with very good oral skills. This observation was qualified by saying that he was quick rather than careful in his school work. Patrick was always eager to please his teacher, but he could have difficulty dealing with conflict. According to the school, he had a justified reputation for stealing other people’s possessions, and his desk was the first place that was searched if anything went missing in class.

This young person’s life had been beset by disruptions. He was adopted into his present family at nine months of age and, reportedly, his biological parents had not treated him well. On receipt into his new home, he was in poor condition and dirty and under-nourished. Patrick’s adoptive parents believed that they would never have children themselves, as they had lost a child very early, and apparently the new child was initially the centre of much positive attention. However, Patrick’s parents did go on to have a second child who survived, who became very precious, and who they said that they would not ‘let out of their sight.’

When interviewed for the Time 1 assessment, Patrick was attending his tenth school. His present teacher said that he found changes of teachers hard. It may, or may not, be of significance, but the mother listed herself as Patrick's 'guardian' on the school records and he did not have the family name.

The effects of the two sets of disruptions that have so far been discussed were undoubtedly intensified by a major reorientation in family practices and values. Patrick's adoptive mother had used drugs for 16 years and it had been an established routine for her to get the children off to bed at 5.00 pm to allow her an evening of drug use. Three years before the assessment team met the mother, she had found Jesus and her life, and the lives of those associated with her, had radically changed. It was the school's view that Patrick was unable to keep up with the changes that had occurred in his family.

Patrick's primary school was also convinced that he was being physically abused. There various signs of this, such as coming to school late with puffiness around his face; and then there were the effects that close physical proximity and some tones of voice had on him. The very first time the class teacher growled at him he said "don't hit me." The school reported that the parents kept Patrick home for lying and other bad behaviour, but the interview team wondered whether he was kept home after beatings.

When assessed, Patrick indicated that he wanted to be an artist or do architecture. He attended church every Sunday, and he played rugby and softball. Patrick described his mind as an asset. This young person presented as mature and likeable in the interview situation, and he used humour. However, pen and paper assessments were conflicting, and they suggested a more complicated picture. On the Student Self-Assessment there was a 10/10 for overall personal happiness, but the following items were marked in the affirmative on the Piers-Harris; 'I am often sad', 'I cause trouble to my family', 'I do many bad things', 'I behave badly at school', 'I worry a lot', 'My



parents expect too much of me', 'I feel left out of things', 'I wish I was different', 'My family is disappointed in me', 'I am picked on at home', and 'I am often afraid.'

In the light of the foregoing indices and evidence, Stanley et al. (2000) made the following determination:

The research team agrees with the school that this child is very much at risk. The negative influences are too many, and too powerful, for the few protective forces (including Patrick's relative academic ability) to contend with. This youngster's dishonesty (stealing and lying) ought to be regarded seriously, and it is probably an important indicator variable of risk status. Stealing may suggest unmet needs and lying is possibly a response to an unpredictable and punitive world. As well, it is likely that persistent dishonesty represents a serious lack of internalised standards and self-control. (p. 59)

## **Time 2**

Patrick was living with his sister in the study locality when he was interviewed for Time 2. Since leaving secondary school he has been a street person, and lived in foster homes and been placed in a welfare institution. He has two living children; and he lost a son at six months of age. Patrick is currently unemployed but he hopes to get a job in furniture removals or scaffolding.

### **Protective factors.**

Patrick discussed an array of related protective factors which he sees as operating in his life, and these are the possession of 'street smart' intelligence and a positive attitude, good health and physical abilities, supportive relationships with his siblings, and a constellation of positive effects associated with being a father and parent. Two other protective influences that Patrick identifies as assisting him in the past are gang membership and social welfare residential placements.

Patrick says that he lived on the streets in Auckland and in the study location for three or four years. He is proud that he is 'streetwise'.

- I. So what does 'street wise' mean? Tell me a bit about it.
- R. I mean, the street is. . .like you see over in America, see them sleep on the streets, but. . .with me, I was onto it. . .I would like. . .I would just go into like. . .offices and. . .abandoned houses and all that. . .or else I'd just hit

up my mates and guaranteed they'd always let stay at their house, and then I was at my mate's house for a year and a half. . .staying with him.

Apart from being able to obtain accommodation, Patrick says that he learnt how to drive, and how to protect myself, and "what not to do and what to do". In his own way, this young person appears to have known how to 'play the system';

- I. Okay. . .did you have any brushes with the law?  
R. Constantly. . .that's how I ended up in foster care. . .it's either foster care or jail. So once I heard that I could be going to jail I just bucked up my ideas, got through foster care, got my relationship back with my parents. . .oh, my mum anyway and then. . .yeah.

Patrick describes himself as easy-going and as a happy person at the moment. He also says that he is a shy person, and while he will not initiate contact, he will respond to others.

Patrick reports good health. As a child, he says that he had problems with his eardrums which necessitated operations. These problems continued until he was about nine years of age, and clearly they were an issue for him. When talking about the problem he had with his ears, Patrick showed his concern for his children: "Yeah. It's a long time, but lucky my kids ain't going through it. . .that's what I'm thankful for."

The participant has been doing weight training three to four times a week for two months, and in the future he might look at participating in competitions. Patrick mentioned a number of other sports that he has been interested in over time, and he indicated that he could have been successful in softball. However, there have been barriers to his sporting involvements and success;

- P. It's just. . .  
I. It's just what?  
P. I don't want to do it.  
I. What? You lack the motivation?  
P. Yeah, I mean what stopped me from doing it was when I was. . .hard-out into rugby and I was up there, but every time I looked at the sideline there was no one there. . .there was never anyone there. And then I usually either had to walk to training or catch a bus. . .I don't know.  
I. A lot of trouble?

- P. Yeah, especially for someone that didn't have. . .I was only young. .  
.didn't have the money to catch the bus, didn't know where to go. . .had  
to sign myself up for rugby.

As well as having a sister, Patrick has brothers, and his sibling relationships mean a lot to him; "we're tight. . .close as." The participant said that it is a comfort to him to know that they care about him and that they are always there if he needs anything.

Patrick's experience as a parent is a recurring topic in the transcript. He has a three year-old and a four year-old son and they live with his mother, "just 'cos [his sister's] house is too cold for them to live there and their asthma." Nonetheless, Patrick sees the children during the day and he is also there at nights sometimes, "just whenever my mum needs help with them, I'm there." A positive aspect of his present employment situation is that Patrick can spend time with his sons; "just as much as I can." The participant would like to live in Australia but the children represent a complication for him;

- I. Okay Pat, what are your hopes for the future?  
P. To actually live in. . .be over Aussie.  
I. Living in Oz?  
P. Living in Oz, but also having my kids to enjoy it with me.  
I. That makes it difficult doesn't it, really?  
P. Oh yeah, it does, 'cos my mum will miss them. My mum will miss the kids, so. . .yeah. . .  
I. So would you take the kids when you went?  
P. Nah. . .I'd leave them here and I'd just fly backwards and forwards every weekend. . .as much times as I could.

Patrick describes the boys as energetic and fun loving, and as hard to control; "it makes me wonder what I was like when I was young." This father also made repeated references to his children's learning. He has learning resources, and he has been teaching them the alphabet, times tables, and how to write and spell their names. Patrick is looking at his sons attending a primary school that is outside of the study locality;

“I’ve heard that is better education for them and my kids, they want to learn.” The participant seems to define his identity in relation to his children;

- I. Okay. Are there times in your life when you’ve done better than other times?
- P. Yeah, there’s a few times.
- I. Tell us about some of them.
- P. Well one was when I actually taught my son how to go toilet. . .that was. . .that was pretty good.
- I. That gave you a sense of achievement?
- P. That gave us both a sense of achievement.

Being a parent appears to contribute an enormous amount to Patrick, and a significant dimension of this contribution is psychological; “I don’t need anyone. . .I use my kids to comfort me when. . .” There are other gains of being a father, however. For instance, the experience has awakened an interest for him in Maori culture;

- I. What about culture? Is your culture significant to you?
- P. Yeah because my kids want to learn it, so. . .to me it’s significant.
- I. Tell me about it Pat.
- P. Oh, it’s just. . .I took my kids to kohanga. . .and then the first week. . .after the first week they just started picking up songs like that, but they were always Maori songs. . .you could talk to them in Maori and they’d talk back. Yeah, that’s what’s made me take interest in Maori.

To speculate further, being a parent may have fostered a sense of generativity for Patrick, which he now wishes to express through his culture, and in other positive social actions;

- I. Okay. . .are you involved in any community organisations at the present time?
- P. Nah, but that’s something I’m looking towards. . .I’m trying to do something for the community. I mean, when I was young I took a lot from it, so I give something back.

Patrick was in foster care for two and a half years and then he was placed in a residential institution for three months. The fostering ultimately came about because he ran away from home (“I always used to get hidings and I didn’t like it”). He says that he learnt a lot from his fostering experience and, in terms of formal qualifications, he obtained NCEA level 1 in several subjects. Patrick found the residential institution

“pretty cool”. It was “just like being on the street, just with rules”, although the size of the other residents (“they’re all huge. . .bigger than me”) and the fact that they were there for different offences could be perturbing. Nevertheless, Patrick made a lot of friends in the secure facility, and he caught up with an aunt who worked there.

Patrick says that his time as a gang member worked for him, as it met his personal needs and gave him practical skills.

- I. What sort of folk were you mixing with in secondary school?
- P. I was mixing with the wrong crowd eh. . .just the ones that want to be cool, smoke. . .but then I thought that was cool and they were looking after me, like I was part of their family. . .something I didn’t have at home.
- I. Tell me a wee bit more about that. . .I mean, what did they make you feel?
- P. Well, if I got in trouble, they’d have me back. . .they’d be there. If I needed something and they had it, they’d give it. Now if I went home and did it, no one had me back at home. My mum or dad they never had it.

Patrick says that his gang involvements taught him both legal and illegal ways of providing for his family. He learned how to harvest marihuana but, as well, he learned the importance of hard work. Patrick dropped his colours, or left the gang scene, because it got ‘too big’ and ‘too violent’; “I could be walking around here and I’ll have at least about thirty to forty people with me ... and it just got too much ‘cos they were causing too much trouble. . .beating up people.” The participant would like to write something sometime so that other people can understand what gangs are like.

There are two aspects, or influences, in Patrick’s life that appear to have been relatively passive for him, and they are his education and religion. Patrick said that neither his primary schooling, nor the time he spent at secondary school, had much impact on him. With respect to the two years at high school he says, “I wouldn’t really call that an education eh, because I wasn’t really taking advantage of it.” He does not blame the teachers; in fact two of his secondary English teachers encouraged him to pursue journalism as a career. However, Patrick’s interests were elsewhere, such as

hanging out with mates and “trying to be cool”; “I suppose the high points for college was actually going out with a chick for the first time.”

Patrick acknowledges that he was not receptive to what the teachers were trying to impart to him, but he is grateful for what he did learn; “‘cos I’m finding out now that all the stuff they taught us then is coming up now and I’m actually using it.” With respect to the journalism option, this young man made a comment that was similar to what he said about his inability to achieve in sport;

- I. How did the teachers treat you?
- P. Oh they were good, they just treated me like any other normal student, just they thought that I had something in me that I could. . .like my English teacher, she thought I could be a journalist, but I don’t know. . .I haven’t got the heart for it.
- I. When you say you haven’t got the heart for it, what do you mean?
- P. It’s just. . .I like doing it, but I get bored with it straight away. I’m one that likes to do physical stuff, so. . .

This young man has rejected religion for himself, and neither is he actively inducting his children into a faith.

- I. Has religion played any role in your life in the last ten years?
- P. Yeah. . .my mum, she pressured us into doing it. . .becoming Christians, so that’s kind of what turned me off it. It was just all her pushing, nagging, ‘Oh you should do this’. Now I just stay with my kids. I tell my kids, ‘You can go to church if you want to, you don’t have to’. They don’t want to, so I’m not going to force them.

### **Risk factors.**

Patrick believes that he has a low sense of self-efficacy and low self-esteem. He said that he never gets what he wants in life. He considers his lack of self confidence to have caused him significant problems; “I couldn’t even thank my family for turning up for my son’s funeral. I had to get my aunty to do it.” In addition, the participant says that people can perceive him as a threatening person, but “I just think they got a problem.” Patrick does acknowledge that his temper is an area of risk in his life,

although he says that his response to others is typically restricted to words; “‘cos I won’t hit unless I get hit first.”

Patrick’s relationship with his parents is a source of anguish for him, and there is repeated reference to them not being there for him;

- I. When you say ‘not being there’, do you mind me asking what you mean?  
P. Well, physically they’re there, but. . .I mean, when I was with my partner we were all right, but, it was like. . .‘We’ll go [up?] and my mum and dad will treat her better than they ever treated me’. . .like say, take my twenty-first, there wasn’t even meant to be a drink up but I had. . .I had drunk by myself on that day. . .and then come to my partner’s twenty-first, my mum and dad went out of their way and took her to the pub and all that, which really got to me. . .

Patrick says he does not have a parent figure in his life; “there is no one actually.” He also believes that his parents do not like him; indeed, he says “that’s kind of too nice” a way of putting it. The participant gives the impression of grieving about what he does not have with his mother and father, but in somewhat different ways. The concerns with his father are lack of forgiveness and loss of trust;

- P. . . .with my dad it’s just. . .we can get so far and if I stuff up. . .like I stuffed up once when I was little, he takes it back down to square one. So with him he just sets me up to fail anyway. So there’s no point in trying to please him.  
I. And how did that, losing the father’s trust, come about?  
P. Just over the years of stealing, getting arrested, not listening to him, kicked out of school. . .suspended from school and all that. . .just being a normal teenager. . .but just worse.  
I. Does that hurt you losing that trust?  
P. Yeah, it does. . .it still does. . .even like. . .even to now. . .it hurts, but it’s part of life. . .just got to get used to it.  
I. Patrick, if you’d been offered help at some early point, what sort of help would you have really benefited from?  
P. I would have wanted the help. . .just counselling me, just that. . .so my dad understands what I’m going through, not so he just sees the one side. . .

Patrick can talk to, and communicate with, his mother (“me and my mum, we get along well”), but he feels concerned about the emotional and mental hurt that he has caused her.

- I. Okay mate, how do you think other people would have seen you in the past?
- P. They couldn't stand me.
- I. Couldn't understand you?
- P. Oh, they couldn't stand me.
- I. Why couldn't they stand you?
- P. 'Cos I was hurting my mum. . .which everyone loves her. . .she's the favourite aunty out of everyone, so if I hurt her the whole family will hate me, and they did for the first five years.

The participant had a relationship with the mother of his children for four or five years. Apparently, his ex partner now has little to do with the two boys. Patrick intimated to the interviewer that he lacked confidence in his capacity for another intimate relationship. He said that he "wouldn't know what to do any more" and, as well, there was the following interchange:

- I. . . .what about in terms of relationships, you've got some hopes there?
- P. Nah.
- I. Why not mate?
- P. Well, with my ex that I was just with. . .the reason we broke up was because she slept with my best mate. . .so I can't really go. . .I can't really go down like that anymore.
- I. You could find someone else.
- P. Yeah, but there's still that thing in the back of my head that I think. . . 'Oh, is she going to sleep with my mate. . .with my best mate again?'

### **Resilience.**

Patrick tries to accept things for how they are. He says that the death of his son was very upsetting but "it's part of life." This was also the phrase that he used when describing his relationship with his father. Patrick tries to keep busy, and this seems to be a coping mechanism for him; "If I get bored, well then I get angry and then I get. . .I go into a mood swing, but if I'm motivated and keep working. . .nothing. . .just. . .yeah, time just flies by."

Patrick says that he feels good about himself when he does something that he is proud of, like when he did a mural at the back of his mother's garage with spray cans as a memorial for his grandfather. He says that getting through to where he is now is an achievement, and he believes that he has done well because "I just keep telling myself I've got no choice but to. I just keep pushing myself."



## **John**

**“Looking back at my life, I think that I’ve done more than okay.”**

### **Time 1**

John was considered by Stanley et al. (2000) to be highly at risk. When the research team met with him he was living apart from his mother, and he was with foster parents while social services decided his long-term placement. John had also recently shifted from a primary school to an intermediate. What follows are synopses of consultations with the primary school and the intermediate school, and with the welfare and special education services. In addition, brief commentaries are provided on interviews with a psychotherapist who was seeing John, with John himself, with John’s mother (Jan), and with the new foster parents. This report on Time 1 concludes with an excerpt from Stanley et al. (2000).

The previous primary school had found John’s behaviour extremely difficult to deal with. When he first came to the school, it had taken two weeks of individual attention to get him to sit at a desk. Apparently, when John was held to account for his behaviour he denied everything and it was always somebody else’s fault. It was the primary school’s view that there was a fairly direct connection between what was happening at home and John’s conduct in the classroom and playground. The school also alleged that his mother (Jan) came up with responses that made her ‘look good’ whenever the family circumstance was being investigated.

John’s behaviour improved remarkably when he had recently changed schools and was placed in foster care. His new teacher said that John could not really be considered a behaviour problem, and she observed that this student was more intelligent than might be initially credited.

The welfare service advised that Jan was actually John's adoptive parent, and that there had been many concerns about his care and wellbeing over the years. For instance, when John was two years of age he was often left in the care of his nine year-old sister, and on one occasion he was left without money or food for nearly a week. Jan had many different couple relationships, and these partners also molested the children reportedly.

The mother admitted to the welfare service that she and her partners hit John. The Police were frequently called to the home for domestic incidents. The participant had at least ten alternative placements during his life with Jan, with all but one of them being violent. Not long before the initial study was conducted, Jan had boarded her son with a convicted sex offender.

Special education provided details of John's behavioural difficulties. He could be extremely violent and other students were very frightened of him. At his last primary school he had assaulted a teacher and the principal. He was foul-mouthed and he often took things from other children, including their lunches. It could take John 45 minutes to calm down after an outburst, and he was very hard to reason with. It was noted that he carried a sense of injustice that was very emotional, and which was expressed through feelings of resentment towards others.

The psychotherapist described John as a very impulsive, fiery tempered and creative person. It was this professional's belief that John's multiple living arrangements and placements had affected his sense of safety. John was considered to have attachment to his mother, but it was uncertain how attached his mother was to him. The psychotherapist observed that there had never been quite enough evidence to keep John out of his mother's care.

When interviewed, John was clearly concerned that he was going to be permanently separated from Jan. The following scores were recorded on the Student

Self Assessment: 10/10 for happiness at home with his mother (and John also wrote “100,000%” beside the figure 10); and 10/10 for happiness at school, happiness with friends, and for overall personal happiness. As well, he said that he was worried about never seeing his mother again, and that he had sad feelings in his heart when he had to go back to the caregivers. A more positive aspect that emerged was that John indicated that he hoped to pursue a trade career in the future.

According to Jan, people did not know how to handle her son. In addition, it was alleged that the past primary school principal was overly concerned with maintaining the school’s reputation; “She wants angels at her school.” The new caregivers said that John had presented with a range of difficult behaviours at the start. However, there had been a lot of improvement and he was now more responsible and accepting of blame. The caregivers commented that John talked about his mother fairly often, and it was obvious that he loved her. They also observed that they believed that this youngster was ‘on the edge’ and he could go one way or the other in terms of his development.

John was the last case in the Stanley et al. (2000) compendium, and they said this about it:

This is a fitting case on which to finish because it demonstrates the enormous power of the environment for good and ill. What we must never lose sight of is the fact that the environment is made up of a series of settings and, if we are to engage in meaningful and useful assessments and interventions, we have to engage with all relevant situations. Some while ago an educational psychologist made a prophetic, and somewhat poetic observation regarding John which encompassed this point: “It appears as if a plant has been uprooted and replanted but was struggling to find its roots. He was an angry and resentful 8 year old rather than a carefree, jolly child. Unless his emotional well-being is addressed, all other structures put in place at school are bound to fall through. He needs stability in a very nurturing environment to grow into a confident well-adjusted individual.” (p. 63).

## Time 2

### Protective factors.

John continues to live with the same foster family that he was with during the first study (Time 1) and soon he will have completed his apprenticeship. John now sees himself as a very appealing person who is easy to get on with. He says that he has lots of friends and he feels good about himself as a person. The participant considers that he is “pretty confident” but “it depends on what the situation is.” John believes that he has a practical, rather than an academic, intelligence; “I guess I’m intelligent in other areas. . .yeah. . .physical ways.”

In addition to these positive personal appraisals, John also seems to view external events in reflective and constructive ways and he has an understanding of the effects of the passing of time. The following extract exemplifies the first of these categorisations; “I’ve had many girlfriends. . .they’re all good at learning experiences.” John does not appear to hold grudges as he did as a child; in fact, he is pleased to see old adversaries in new circumstances;

. . .recently when I was playing for the rugby club. . .it was the Under 21’s. . .a lot of those same guys that I met at primary school. . .like some of them who were being mean to me. . .like, I’m mates with them now. I talk to them often and it’s like. . .well we’re all grown up now and things have changed and. . .I don’t know. . .I think. . .pretty cool.

This young person has hopes and aspirations. He wants to own his own company and he wants to go on a mission for his church. At some point he would like to get married and have children (“and bring up kids. . .the right way”). He would also like to build his own house, and he “wouldn’t mind playing NRL” as well. In addition to these aspirations, John seems to have some significant attributions. For instance, he is clear in his own mind that his mother (Jan) contributed to his personal difficulties:

- I. Okay. . .what are some of the things that you might have done in the past that have caused you problems?

- J. Done in the past? Umm. . .I don't know. . .I. . .caused me problems. . .see when you asked me this question, all I could think about is my mother. . .and I think that. . .
- I. Talk about that. . .
- J. . .and I think that I wasn't the problem, that she was the problem, and her problem just affected me in my life, so. . .

John impresses as having other 'internal' qualities that could be seen as falling midway between cognitions and aspects of character, and that might be defined as dispositions. They are more than cognitions, because they come with quite strong motive forces, but they do not necessarily have the 'hard edges' or values components of character dimensions. For instance, this young man really believes in himself and, relatedly, in his capacity to achieve things;

- I. Now. . .talents. Do you know what talents are. . .the things you're really good at. Are there things you're good at John, and have they influenced your life?
- J. Umm. . .I think I'm good at anything if I give it a try. . .if I give it a go. Yeah, if I can learn it, then I can do it, I guess. . .do you know what I'm saying?
- I. No. . .have to give it another crack.
- J. . .like for my maths. . .like I was crap-as at it and I hated it, but the more I did it, the better I came and the more natural it came. and my talent would be being able to learn something and become good at it. Does that make sense?
- I. Sure does.

John seems to have a strong achievement orientation, and he knows that results require effort; "like with any goal you can't watch it happen, you have to make it happen." As well, he clearly enjoys success. He spoke with pride about coming first in his English and mathematics classes at secondary school; "I liked the feeling of passing my assignments", and he also gained satisfaction from his waka ama club's success at the national competitions; "in [year], my team and I. . .we were training pretty hard for it and we won [number of medals], so. . .and I think it was the first for the club."

There is another disposition that John appears to possess that is a little more difficult to define because it is a way of relating to others, rather than thoughts or beliefs. John saw the interview as a 'co construction' and this was shown in the numerous points

of clarification that he raised, such as “What does this one mean?”, or “what else do you want me to say?” and “what do you want from the question?” To the interviewer, this means of interchange suggested self-possession and strength. Two further extracts may give some additional validation to this impression, while also showing some other dimensions of the interview situation itself;

- I. Now John, do you have any close relationships with responsible older adults outside the family. Is there someone out there, like a mentor, for you?
- J. There's Daniel Carter. . .from. . .I don't know. . .
- I. Go on, you're going well. Any previous bosses that have had this role?
- J. No. . .no. . .I didn't. . .
- I. What about Daniel then?
- J. Daniel Carter is a rugby player!
- I. There you go! [*laughing*] Now listen. . .I think this is true. . .
- J. Wait. . .do you not know who Daniel Carter is! Do you not?
- I. No.
- J. Oh man! Jingoese man. . .do you watch the All Blacks?
- I. I don't watch television at all.
- J. Oh man! No good! No good! Okay. . .
- I. I wish I could tell you a lie but I can't. . .
- J. That's good. That's good.
- I. Would you describe yourself as an appealing person or unappealing?
- J. Appealing.
- I. Would you describe yourself as easy-going or hard-going?
- J. Oh wait. . .what was the first one?
- I. Appealing. . .or unappealing. . .in other words, are you the sort of person that people like?
- J. In what way?
- I. Just as a person. . .nothing. . .nothing deep and dangerous here. [*both laughing*]

Actually, John could be considered to have an array of adaptive characteristics such as, insight, other-awareness, positivity, certainty, commitment, independent judgement and personal responsibility. Further, when these individual dimensions are put together and laid alongside the other traits that have been identified above, there is a pervasive sense that this young participant possesses both character and maturity.

It is acknowledged here that descriptors such as ‘character’ and ‘maturity’ are subjective and value-ridden. Nevertheless, the following case examples do seem to

show something akin to character; and it is interesting that it can be revealed indirectly, and in both trivial and nontrivial ways;

- (1) J. I don't drink, don't smoke and don't do drugs.
- (2) I. John, apart from your arm, have you had other health problems or injuries?
- J. Oh yeah, one day my dog bit me. . .for my lip.
- I. What the Alsatian here?
- J. No! It was a Neapolitan Bull Mastiff and it was going to have a fight with another dog and I jumped on him and he bit me. He realised that it was me and then he came back after with his tail between his legs.
- I. Did you give him a thrashing?
- J. Nah.
- (3) I. John, the next question is. . .in what ways has your life been influenced by having money and possessions, or by not having money and possessions?
- J. Umm. . .having money. . .I remember when I was at college, I would do anything for fifty cents. . .umm. . .oh, no I wouldn't do anything but. . .I remember having no money. I would think, 'Oh man!' and I was getting sick and tired of the peanut butter sandwiches and I used to like the pies that they had at the [. . .]. So I guess if I had money, then I wouldn't have to have peanut butter sandwiches and that I'd have a nice pie at lunchtime. [checks question]. . .so I guess it was dumb having no money at college and seeing all the other kids have money and always buying lunch. But then, by having money, now that I've got a job, well the more money you have, the more responsibility you have. I've got a truck now and it's always breaking down and it cost me heaps of money to fix and. . .oh, money gives me a way of life. It helps me do things that I like to do, like my sports and my iPod that I have and other things that. . .I like to get, like my cell phone. Money's a good thing, I guess but. . .it's not everything. . .yeah.

As indicated, the interview with John had mutual and collaborative dimensions and this was again evidenced when he discussed the external protective factors in his life. The participant rank ordered these influences, and the final list that he came up with was: family, religion, friends, work and sport. We will now examine each of these environmental forces in turn before looking at John's secondary education and his cultural circumstance, as he also sees these experiences as having had beneficial effects.

John described his transition into his adoptive or foster family, and there appears to have been three phases in this process for him. At the beginning, John says he was confused and resistant, but there were new benefits nonetheless; "at first I didn't want to

be here and the only thing that was keeping me here was the feeling of not being alone, 'cos when I was with my other mother I would always be at home alone." The second phase for John occurred in his early teenage years, and it was characterised by acceptance;

- J. Yeah, I was unhappy for a while here and. . .I can't remember when I started appreciating being here and not being with my real mother. I think it was when I was thirteen or fourteen or. . .I can't exactly remember, but yeah, I'd been here for ten years and. . .

The third stage in the transition seems to have been ushered in by a particular event:

- J. I think it was for the first five years, I was calling them Uncle and Aunt. It wasn't until my grandfather approached me and he said, 'Would you like to call them Mum and Dad?' and I guess that kind of blew me away. I guess that's when we started to have a close relationship because I was referring to them as my mother and my father.

John deeply values his new parents and he calls their children his brothers and sisters. Interestingly, he has recently met up with his biological family and this was a special event; "just finding about where I come from and my whakapapa." In fact, over the last decade, John can be seen as having gone from a scarcity of family to an abundance of familial connections and support.

- I. Now, I think this is true for you eh? You have lots of relationships with your uncles, aunts and cousins.  
J. Yeah.  
I. Do you think that having these relationships has changed your life?  
J. I think it's the point of actually saying that I do have cousins, uncles, aunts. . . 'cos ten years ago. . .or say twelve years ago or nine years ago, the only person I had was my mother and I didn't know my uncles, didn't know my aunts, didn't know any of my cousins. . .it was only until I came here that my parents now say, 'Well that's your cousin'. They've adopted me into this family and now it's my family and I guess the relationships have helped me 'cos it's awesome to have thirty other cousins who live close by.

This young man is a committed Christian. When he first joined his adoptive family, and was required to attend church, he says he found it boring at best ("man, this sucks"), but John's appreciation has changed with time;



- I. How have you found that [church] over the last ten years?
- J. Oh well at first I was only going 'cos I had to. I thought it was boring as and. . . But then I guess over time where you'll actually learn about. . . learn about where you come from and where you're going and why we're here. . . it gives me a better understanding about that, and it's made me realise that this is where I want to be and this is what I want to do and this is where I want to go. And. . . I don't know. . . it's just been good. . . especially being with everybody else that's my age. It's just like, 'Oh man, this is awesome!' Yeah.

John gave his friends quite a high valuation, but he was not especially forthcoming about them, although he did say that they help "me cope with life." When asked what he did with his friends, John said, "I don't know. . . just hang out. . . watch movies. . . do what mates do, I guess." He indicated that he has male and female friends, and that he has friendships within and beyond his church associations.

The participant has had a diversity of work experience, as well as sustained employment engagements. John reports that, prior to his present apprenticeship, he worked voluntarily for two trades people for quite lengthy periods. Paid positions have included 12 hour days sorting fruit (where he says he was 'ripped off' for \$5 an hour) and work as an assistant at the city stadium, and as a delivery person for a pizza company. John describes himself as a hard worker.

John has lived elsewhere in New Zealand for a six month period while working on a building project, and during this time he played for a local touch rugby team. This year he played for [. . .] Rugby Club but, of union and league, the preference is for the latter; "I want to go back to league, it's much more fun." However, with regard to sports, John says that "I'll give anything a go." He is really interested in, and proud of his participation in, waka ama, although the eight hour training days can be hard for some people who work. Nevertheless, he says "I think I'll be doing it for the rest of my life, as long as I've got two arms." John sees a number of benefits accruing from his engagement with this sport:

- J. Oh yeah. . . with waka ama. . . it's helped me a bit in my life. It's made me realise that good things take time and a lot of effort. And it's helped me

gain friendships from all over New Zealand and it's helped me with my health and my fitness and. . .it's been good.

As was briefly discussed in Richard's case study above, good health and physical abilities can be seen as prerequisites for manual work and sporting prowess. In effect, the latter protective factors have to be underwritten by the former protective factors. John sees himself as resplendent in the foundational capacities for his work and sporting interests; "My health. . .the doctors say that I'm just awesome and I'm a superman."

John lives on a marae and he sees an advantage in his present living arrangement; he is never on his own, because there is "always someone to go to and I've got my grandparents next door and my grandparents behind us. . .my aunty and uncle on the other side of us." Paradoxically, in the verbal exchange of the interview, it could be easy to overlook that we were situated on a marae, and in the midst of a most comprehensive manifestation of cultural identity and influence. Nevertheless, John is fairly articulate about what being a New Zealand Maori means to him;

- I. Do you identify with your culture much?  
J. Pardon?  
I. Does your culture mean much to you, or. . ? It's a bit of a loaded question. . .  
J. Well, yeah, I'd rather be Maori. . .I'm proud to be Maori. . .yeah, I like to see Maori succeed.

This participant is different from some of the others in the research group because he views his secondary education more positively than he sees his primary schooling. John believes that college helped him with his education and he has reflected on why high school was preferable to primary; it "was a different story but possibly because I was with a different family who were always there for me." Nonetheless, John voiced a fairly standard lament about secondary school; "I think I wasted my time. . .I regret now not doing the best that I could in school."

As it happens, this young man appears to have done well at high school, as he passed NCEA level 2. John says that he had a number of friends at his secondary

school and together “We were always getting up to mischief.” The exact nature of the ‘mischief’ was not specified, except that we do know that he wagged two periods of English. However, “as soon as I wagged my teacher told my parents, so I got a punishment, so I never did it again.”

John does not see himself as a strong academic student. Rather, at secondary school “I was a very energetic person. I liked to be. . .work with my fingers and I worked with my hands and be active.” Consequently, John left after four years of high school and he then did a one year training course which enabled him to get an apprenticeship.

### **Risk factors.**

As we know, the first 10-11 years of this participant’s life were very difficult. This time might be divided up into the long period that John lived with Jan, and his peripatetic instances of fostering. With the exception of a family he stayed with in the Bay of Plenty, John does not have any good memories of his foster families; “I always remember being unhappy everywhere else I went, besides the [family name].”

This young man says of Jan that “she never was a mother” because “she was just never there for me.” In the interview, John had two particular complaints about Jan.

The first of these was that she frequently left him home alone;

- I. So, let’s look right across your life and think about the highs and lows, and whether there are any patterns or trends in your experiences.
- J. A low point for me, while I was at primary was, basically every day when, before I’d go to school I would. . .or Mum would leave to go to work about 7 o’clock and I’d be home alone until I had to go to school and. . .especially in the school holidays she would go to work and I would stay home all day by myself and get up to mischief. I think I started a couple of fires with one of my mates and stole from the local dairy and. . .what else did I do? Oh. . .we smashed some windows and stole go-carts from people’s houses and stuff. . .just getting up to mischief when I was younger. But yeah, that was a low point, just being alone all the time. . .being alone the time while Mum was away. . .yeah.

John makes repeated mentions in the transcript about being alone. Another issue that the participant had with Jan was that she did not discipline him.

- J. Oh, like, I remember, if ever I did something wrong, there was no punishment to it, or she was never angry, she would just never talk to me about it. But I realised, when I got here, when I did something wrong I was always punished because of it and because and. . .oh and always talked to about it and explained to why it was wrong and stuff.

John has clear views about consequences for child misbehaviour. He says that children need to be punished by their parents to learn right from wrong, and as a preparation for life outside the family. John is grateful to his foster/adoptive parents for being strict as “it’s impacted my life in a good way.” This young man might be regarded as having a superior understanding of parenting issues for his age and, arguably, this interpersonal awareness is complemented by heightened intrapersonal understanding and objectivity;

- J. Yeah, I loved her and I didn’t ever want to leave her. I always wanted to go back to her when I was here. . .for a long time. . . and. . .well, because she was my mother and she’d ahh. . .I don’t know. . .been my mother for my whole entire life until I came here. Is that the question? Is that the answer?
- I. Mmm
- J. Okay. . .yeah.

With respect to his education, John has already told us that he thinks that he did better at secondary school because of family support. For him, primary schooling was a risk experience;

- I. Well, do you think your primary or secondary school helped you, or was it good for you, or did it not do much for you?
- J. Primary school. . .umm. . .no help at all. . .umm. . .no support. . .I didn’t like it.

As was outlined above, John was a major problem for the education authorities. However, the participant has views on why there were difficulties at primary school as well. He admits that he was always getting into trouble, but he also points to the academic difficulties he experienced, and to the fact that some others were mean to him because of his learning problems. A single highpoint for John at primary school was

taking part in a play. John was asked what additional assistance he would have benefitted from at this time:

- J. Yeah. . .umm. . .I don't know. . .just someone to. . .tell my mother that she needed to take care of me properly, I guess. I don't know.

### **Resilience.**

John sees himself as resilient. His foster/adoptive parents tell him that he has done well, and reportedly they refer to other people John's age who have had advantages from the outset and who have seemingly achieved very little. In relation to these people, John says "I think that I've done okay because I've. . .I know what I want in life", and what this young man wants in life is to be successful; and the success that he seeks spans work and family. Some keys to success, in his view, are hard work, involvements in sports and church, and being with friends. This participant has a clear sense of his own personal progress:

- I. Are there times in your life that you have done better than at other times. . .in terms of doing okay?  
J. Umm.  
I. Like, are you 'doing better' now than. . . ?  
J. Oh, like now or. . . ?  
I. . . . than you did in the past?  
J. Oh yeah! I've got a job and I'm working towards a qualification. So, of course it's better. . .oh, and I'm not stealing from a dairy or making fires, so. . .  
I. How do you think that other people would have seen you in the past?  
J. Well if I was still in the past, I would think that I wouldn't have any friends or family. . .I think I would have been alone, I guess.

### **Sean**

**"In order to have confidence in myself, I have confidence in what I believe."**

### **Time 1**

Sean perturbed the interview team at Time 1. The participant was only rated as being at enhanced risk (Stanley et al., 2000), but there were unusual aspects to his personal situation. At this time, Sean was not especially happy. In fact, he did the worst of the entire research group on the Student Self-Assessment, with 6/10 for happiness at

home, 6/10 for happiness at school, 4/10 for happiness with friends, and 7/10 for overall happiness. Sean's class teacher gave this description of him:

He is bright but has no friends – an average student out of this environment. He is a loner and his parents are loners. Negative about life. Very interested in violence. He relates to no one in a pleasant way. He has been disliked by teachers the whole way through the system because he is hard to have in your class because nothing reaches him, nothing will change him. Everyone is picking on him mentally.

These notes appear on Sean's Primary Progress Record, Middle School: 'Has a core group of friends but often very intolerant and quick to hit others, even without provocation. Highly excitable and has difficulty in calming down. Has displayed a very quick temper on a few occasions and can resort to using bad language. Can be very stubborn.'

School records also show that Sean loved to draw and paint and he did so with originality and imagination. As well, he would absorb himself totally in a topic of interest and he would write about it endlessly. Sean was a library monitor at school with Damian, who is also in the research group. The participant went to church most Sundays.

Sean's mother had a professional-type job and his father stayed at home and he was a writer. At one time the grandmother had a lot of influence on the family, and it is recorded that she used to hit Sean and he used to hit her back. Further, the researchers were told about an occasion when Sean was sent to his room for shaking his younger brother and, when he was in his room, he broke the window in anger.

Sean's mother had been investigated by child welfare for trying to block the breathing of one or more of her babies. For quite awhile, she was not allowed to be left with the children unsupervised. Reportedly, the welfare service involved the extended family, who was not supportive of the mother and, as a consequence, a family rift developed. Sean's mother has participated in anger management training.

In 1998, the researchers raised questions about Sean's relationship with his father. Sean referred to his father by his first name, and he seemed to have a friendship with his father rather than a parent-child relationship. As well, there seemed to be something akin to a coalition of father and son against the mother. Sean said that the best times were when the mother was not there and they could watch some of the 300, or more, war movies that were in the house. He also said that there were arguments "when mum puts on music we don't like."

As indicated, this participant raised some issues and concerns for the investigators at the first data gathering:

What is different and okay, and what is different and dysfunctional? This is the question that is posed by the father and the videos. Experience with people teaches us that normal is a very broad road but Sean could be seen as being systematically socialised into violence. There is a disturbing adult profile here of a person who is socially isolated and embittered, with inordinate passions, and who is steeped in visual violence. (Stanley et al., p. 56)

## **Time 2**

Sean completed six years at secondary school. Since then he has worked intermittently for a fast food chain, in a call centre, and selling tickets for the commuter train service. Sean continues to live at home with his younger brother and his mother and father.

### **Protective factor.**

The interview at Time 2 with this participant seemed to defy any sort of conventional analysis and categorisation. At more than 17,000 words, the transcript was longer than most, but the real challenge came from the fact that the interview was actually a reasonably seamless statement of Sean's political beliefs. Essentially, the participant has a single protective factor, which is his commitment to Trotskyism, and this has an all consuming significance for him.

The analysis that follows has two parts; and the first and larger of these parts begins with some self-descriptions by Sean, and it gives an outline of his political

philosophy. This leads onto interpretations of various aspects of the participant's life according to his political frame of reference, and then there is a statement that shows the connection between his political and personal development. The second part of the analysis contains categorisations concerning the participant's relationships with family members and other people.

Sean introduced his belief system somewhat coyly, but he quickly moved to define it in more certain terms; "at the moment I just do a lot of reading and so forth on the Internet. . .mainly focussing around. . .specific activities, shall we say?" This was followed by: "I'm a Trotskyist. . .so that's where my main passion lies and it's where everything centres around."

Sean describes himself as working class and he says that this status inevitably brings difficulties, but "only a fool would blame working class people for activities of higher people who are responsible for that." As a Trotskyist he has developed a critical attitude of everything. For instance, whereas before he could simply enjoy music, he now has to know the musician's beliefs.

Sean said that he has been good at art and, more specifically, at drawing human pictures and characters from television shows like DragonballZ. But Sean has moved on, he does not dwell on the past, and he says that "you have to integrate things into a whole". As well, he believes that things that no longer have any relevance should be discarded. The participant now focuses much more on reading; "The reason being that what you read captures you and doesn't let you go."

This young person describes himself as a nonconformist who likes his privacy. He also said that he is a very passionate and very confident person, and he feels good about himself. He has a remarkably clear sense of who he is; "I've completely reached the point irreconcilably where this is what I am." However, part of being who he is means that he has to keep challenging himself and Sean's goals now are to speak to



people at lectures and public meetings (rather than “shout at people”) and to write articles. Being a confident person is important to Sean for his own safety:

. . .the first word that I have to say is that I am confident. Because you can’t let people break into your weaknesses if they are there. You have to like, always maintain a strong hold. . . persona and a . . .you’re not trying to act up, but just to be sure of yourself, and if people find weaknesses in yourself or what you’re talking about they’ll exploit them.

Sean says that he came to Trotskyism through the anger expressed in heavy metal music; “when it’s articulated in art, it’s not an individual anger, it comes out as a social anger.” Other formative events appear to have been a meeting he attended of the Committee of the Fourth International and he also goes to a fortnightly meeting at a local educational facility with a few friends or comrades.

Sean outlined what it means to be a Trotskyist. Firstly, “it’s not something that you just suddenly do”; there is so much work and learning to be done, and this is what distinguishes it from joining the Labour Party or a trade union. Secondly, becoming a Trotskyist is a huge responsibility because once you have learnt “the utter correctness of the position” you are obliged to expose belief systems, political parties, and splinter groups “for the frauds that they are.” For instance, capitalism “is only just another development of the end of class society.” Those who have broken from the Fourth International are traitors and vulgar opportunists, and no time must be wasted on them as “they are blocking the independent movement of the working class.”

The participant was asked whether Trotskyism was a faith, and he said that it was more accurately characterised as a strong belief; “It’s completely and utterly correct because of the critical attitude that the Trotskyists have towards everything out there and towards themselves.” As was discussed in the Methodology section, Sean talks about middle class academics who endeavour to find fault in Trotsky and Trotskyites as “the so-called middle-class, proof readers of history.” The participant finds the work of these people amusing because Trotsky did make mistakes, just as he has made mistakes

himself, but there are no accidents or coincidences in life; “everything has led to this place, to what I am for a specific reason.”

Not surprisingly, Sean interprets every aspect of his life in accordance with his commitment to Trotskyism. Other belief systems are problematic, and Christianity is a particular target of his anger;

- I. Sean, can I ask you, do you have any religious involvement or faith commitment?
- S. Nah, simple answer. . .no.
- I. What about your relationship with say. . .mother, father and your brother over the last ten years?
- S. I’ve completely broken irreconcilably with all this religious mysticism that goes with my mother and the Catholic Church and all the disagreements, so the one happy thing I can say is that I don’t have to go to that any more. And it’s quite interesting ‘cos my father, his kind of liberal pretence, has kind of helped. I’m absolutely sure that he has no awareness of it, but that kind of contradiction in the family has led me to where I find myself when I talk about say, Trotskyism.

Apart from the mysticism, Sean makes several other arguments against organised religion. For instance, it is no coincidence that religion repeatedly appears in the history of mankind because “It’s a convenient lever for the ones at the top to maintain the way things are. . .so that people like me don’t mess it up.” Somewhere between 2004 and 2005, this young man decided that he hated the church since it is a “complete injustice” and his studies showed that the history of the Catholic Church is “not a pretty one.” Moreover, occurrences such as holy inquisitions and burning at the stake are, in Sean’s view, not aberrations; “It’s a part of the. . .an out-moded institution wanting to keep hold of its tethers.”

Sean has been the recipient of some helping interventions and, again, these involvements are interpreted politically. When he was at high school he saw a guidance counsellor and there was another, much earlier, involvement which sounds as if it might have been initiated by a social worker;

- I. Sean, if you’d been offered some help earlier in your life, what sort of help would you have really benefited from? Say someone had offered

some support and assistance. . .you know. . .you've met a counsellor at secondary school. . .

- S. It's not an easy question because my attitude towards how things are helpful has changed greatly. . .for example, I see a counsellor as a limited role. . .it's like a limited power, kind of thing. There's only so much that that kind of job can benefit somebody. That counsellor can't change the world around them. . .but in the past the. . .what would you call them. . .these family systems people. . .the ones that deal with the children when they're in. . .I wouldn't call it unstable families, but questionable. . .when there's problems in the families. . .but we ended up with this. . .stayed at my Nana's house and there was just. . .from the family assistance people's point of view, it's safe for safe's sake, but from my point of view, I don't like to be around my grandparents or my grandmother and I don't like to be around. . .the closeness of the statues of Jesus and all of that. . .so I guess that was counter-productive. . .these official organisations. . .they have a limited role that they can only do so much.

Sean has received political mentoring and he is himself a political mentor. A local school teacher has taken an interest in him and given him resource material to read. As well, Sean has had email and Facebook conversations with a sixteen year-old student who is reportedly very interested in what Trotsky is about. There is the possibility of Sean and the younger person meeting, but Sean's own mentor believes, apparently, that the research participant needs to deepen his own political understanding before a meeting should occur.

Sean speaks of his future employment and study ambitions with some ambivalence. It is also uncertain where his present income comes from:

- I. Are you on a benefit now?  
S. Not really. . .but I get help, sort of thing, just money and do sort of on and off jobs, sort of thing.

He thinks that he probably should have a job, because "at the end of the day everyone's got to contribute work towards that great good", but there are other more important matters to attend to. There are additional complications with employment, as well, like "it's a job to get a job" and, because workers compete for the same job "there's not a job for everyone out there." Actually, there are many different kind of jobs that Sean would like to do, such as being a pilot or a teacher, but he says that it

would be demoralising to be tied down to an occupation forever. Further, jobs are risky things for any working class person because there is “no control of the decisions that are made above us.”

The participant made repeated comments about pursuing academic study, but again there were difficulties. The necessity to obtain a student loan is concerning to him, and Sean has co-authored an article about student loans. He would like to study politics, philosophy, science, and history “but the funny thing is I’ve been learning all of that all along.” However, Sean now has an advantage with any future study, and it is that he feels that he is capable of putting everything he has into what he is focusing on, and “especially when it’s reading and when it’s studying something that’s very important.”

Sean’s personal development and his political development seem inseparable. There are many elements and dimensions to this intertwined process and, at this point, we will briefly consider his awareness and aspirations, his sense of progress and development, and his acquisition of morality, including a sense of responsibility to others.

When Sean looks around, he wonders whether others have purpose and meaning in their lives:

- S. I find it interesting where everyone’s heading. . .everyone’s going to. . .where people are leading. . .what’s the purpose of their lives, kind of thing. . .and at the end of the day you have to ask people what they live for and. . .when there’s that kind of unsureness in their. . .on their face, it’s a question mark for them to consider.

For our young participant there are good things that are worth aspiring for:

- S. I think Trotskyism brings out the best in people. It is always. . .it has always been a movement for the best and for the brightest, and it’s always been something for. . .the most youthful and the most idealistic kind of people. The people that have a lot of courage and determination, so it’s not. . .a thing for the superficial or. . .for the shallow-minded or the narrow-minded. It’s not. . .you don’t join this party to say, ‘Well in ten years I might just ditch it because it’s not for me any more’. It doesn’t work like that. . .because you’re learning about the world around you

properly, and you're learning that a lot of these other. . .roads are completely bankrupt and counter-productive in the long-run.

Sean impresses as having an acute sense of his own personal/political progress. He borrows an analogy from another Trotskyite, and he describes himself as a book that is in the process of being read. He says that when he was assessed ten years ago by the research team the 'chapters', or plot, had "only reached a certain point." "Now, I'm not saying the book's completed yet, because there's still so much to learn and there's still so much for us to do"; nevertheless, a lot of progress has obviously been made. Sean also seems to have a dynamic view of his own intelligence; "I think intelligence is not something that you. . .gets given to you. . .you have to earn it, kind of thing, you have to. . .push yourself and learn and always keep reading."

Sean does not use a term like 'morality', but his commitment to Trotskyism has very probably contributed to his ethical development. Trotskyism "makes you more critical and socially aware." For Sean, adopting a critical approach means you do not talk about things you do not know about, you learn to reserve your judgements, and you avoid the opportunism of changing your principles to suit a specific time or a gain. He believes that, with an understanding of social processes comes an awareness of responsibility to other people; "Because you can't isolate yourself from people, at the end of the day, you do have to get involved, you do have to integrate, kind of thing, with all the working class struggles, you do have to help."

Sean appears to have an uneasy relationship with his parents, and with his mother in particular; and this is because she holds onto unmodified and incorrect perceptions of him, apparently. He says that, "in primary school and the developing years of secondary school it was a bit easier. . .I wasn't messing with their beliefs, fabric, sort of thing." The participant acknowledges that his parents have assisted his growth and development,

but he also seems to suggest that this has been by providing contrasts, or foils, as much as anything.

Sean feels that it was his parents' obligation to care for him; "whether they like to admit it, at the end of the day, they are working class people, you've got to do what you've got to do for your kids." This young person says that he is not an emotional person and, unlike his brother, he does not play the "kiss-arse kind of role" like "saying goodbye to the father at the door."

Sean does not regard culture as a valuable personal dimension;

I. What about ethnic cultural identification?

S. Well I don't like to tag onto my parents' past. . .but my father's New Zealand European and my mother's Samoan, but umm. . .that's all fine and I respect that, but I wouldn't consider that I am 'lost' or anything. . .I have not focussed on that so much and their past and all the riff-rabble that comes with it. So. . .kind of. . .I create my own culture, my own ethnic. . .and not just. . .pull out the rags from their past, with all due respect to them.

Sean is expected to look after his brother from time to time, which can interfere with what he wants to do, but he does look out for him, in part, because he is "not as bright as me." With respect to other people, the participant's mother's family are "very nice people and friendly and caring and loving, and that's fine." His grandmother is, apparently, a very committed Catholic and, for Sean, this means that there is a colossal 'caste' difference between him and her, but she remains a "genuine person, friendly and. . .nice."

This young person had a girlfriend at secondary school, but Sean says that there were problems; "I'm not blaming her, but she did get in the way." However, Sean is now really good friends with his ex girlfriend's mother, who has attended some political meetings, "and my friends have had to get used to that." There have been other girlfriends around his age, but "their problems have come along." One issue that Sean says that he can experience with potential partners is their inability to grasp some of the

ideas that are so important to him; “For example, when I talk about productive forces and things like this or even like art or aesthetics. . .she wasn’t understanding of it. . .She was saying that I confuse her.”

Damian is still Sean’s best male friend and he values the relationship because they go back to primary school together, and he is loyal and genuine. Sean observes that Damian is like him, in that he is consistent in his interests and passions. However, these two do not see much of each other now “‘cos he works all the frickin’ damn time, and. . .he spends a lot of time with his girlfriend who’s a bit on the controlling side.” Sean reports that he has about three regular male friends and he is quite capable of relaxing and socialising with them, but they know that he has a serious side. Having fun “is all good and fine and fabulous”, but “you have to take on some responsibility and you have to take on some awareness of how things are in this world.”

### **Risk.**

Sean made a number of references to his anger, and he described two instances where he has lost control of himself. The first occasion was about seven years ago when he punched out a window and he required stitches. The Police were called to the second incident, which arose out of an argument at a party. There had been discussion about how beneficiaries could hinder the development of the New Zealand economy, and the political naivety of this “hit a nerve” for Sean. When he got home from the party the gate would not open properly and he says that he “just totally exploded, kind of thing.” The participant says that he is making progress in controlling his anger but, for the investigator, the question arose about the means that Sean might see as justifiable to achieve his political purposes;

- I. Sean, do you see a place for armed intervention in terms of seizing power, or are you working through the democratic process?
- S. As I’ve learnt about socialism, of course the question always comes up, ‘How will the working class take power?’ . . .I mean literally take power and the parliamentary road is completely and utterly false. The liberal reformers road to socialism by giving the working class concessions is

completely and utterly bankrupt, because as people who are aware of what's happened over the last twenty or thirty years, is that every concession once given to the working people after World War II has been clawed and taken back by the ruling class. So yeah, the only road for taking power is not by dreaming that they'll change, because class interests don't change people. The only road that we always stress is that workers create their own organisations, that they break with what has failed. . .The revolution can't be made by two people or even by revolutionary leaders. It happens when the masses have educated themselves to a certain extent that they create it.

### **Resilience.**

As indicated above, Sean has a clear sense of his own progress. For him, emerging adulthood is the best time so far “because the other stages are incomplete” and “all my goals and achievements and desires and wants, needs, come to this point.” Not only does this young man have a sense of his own development, but he also understands its importance in relation to contributing to others; “my own development is the most important thing. . .you're not in a position to help anyone else. . .if you can't even look after your own internal contradictions and resolve them”

- I. Can you make clear what 'doing okay' means for you?. . .doing okay as a person.
- S. I guess it's just. . .well you've got to make use of the word time. I don't like to waste time. . .but I am doing mostly psychologically, intellectually okay. . .I don't see anything wrong with me. . .if you look around New Zealand, I don't think a lot of young people are 'doing okay'. But there's this campaign or this typical tendency to look at the problem as the cause, whereas the problem is just a product consequence, yeah, I'm doing okay and yeah I'll keep on that and then hopefully other people will be doing the same thing.

Sean would like to get physically fit but he says that his political activities mean that he does not have time for exercise. However, this young person impresses as having strength of another kind, and it is the confidence that comes from a comprehensive belief system; “I think it's inevitable that you'll come to the correct conclusion. . .and once you make clear the principles and the perspective of the Socialists' International you're leading on a correct path and nothing can topple you from that.”



## Jasmine

**“I think I am doing okay. I’m in the direction that I want to be going. I just have to make sure I don’t let anything deter me.”**

### Time 1

In 1998, Jasmine was rated as low risk by Stanley et al. (2000). The authors made this observation about her:

Jasmine presents as the prototype of the resilient pupil. There has been adversity in her personal life, combined with attending a low decile school and living in an area of significant social disadvantage. Despite these considerations, Jasmine has an array of competencies and is supported by a host of overlapping protective influences. Indeed, Jasmine has virtually every characteristic of resilient children and adolescence listed by Masten and Coatsworth (1998). Most importantly, she clearly has what appear to be the most widely reported predictors of resilience, relationships with caring prosocial adults and good intellectual functioning. (p. 48)

Jasmine was initially raised by her grandmother in the Pacific Islands and this person’s death was a major loss for the participant. Another difficulty that Jasmine experienced was social rejection, as a consequence of being of mixed parentage; as she has a Pacific Island mother and Pakeha father. Jasmine’s mother said that “because our kids are half-castes they always expect to be different. . .the Pakeha doesn’t accept them as Pakehas, so they move towards their Pacific Island thing more.” However, acceptance does not necessarily come from this identification, and when Jasmine was living in the Islands she was referred to by the other children as a “white bastard.”

Ten years ago, this participant was assessed as having the following active protective factors operating in her life: total engagement in education, supportive parenting, emphatic religious faith, celebration of culture, various sporting involvements, and a singularly positive mindset.

When she was about five or six years of age, Jasmine’s mother asked her what she wanted for Christmas and she said, reportedly, that all that she wanted was to be able to read a book. The respondent did become an avid reader, and she taught her

grandmother to read; and there was actually concern that she would cause herself eye damage with all the reading that she was doing. Jasmine's mother said of her, "she is our little Pakeha that one, she is not Pacific Island, it is not in her. . . her big sister is one of the best dancers here, even in the Islands they reckon she is. . .but Jasmine is not. . .she is a book person."

This twelve year-old told the research team that it was her intention to go to Otago University and become a marine biologist. She hoped to go straight to university from year 12, as "I want to be really young when I graduate from university." Jasmine had comprehensive support at home for her educational goals. The participant's mother said that her husband: "can't shut up when it comes to children's education. He has always been like that." The mother made this comment herself about her children's schooling:

I talked to them a lot about their education. . .I talked to them a lot about doing something with their lives. . .you've got the opportunity in New Zealand that we never had. . .if you are going to be a bum, I want you to be the best. . .your lives are so precious.

Church and faith are very important to Jasmine's family. In fact, Jasmine used to go to school and pray for the teachers, and her mother went to her teachers about it, because she didn't want them to think "She is one of these crazy nuts." Culture is also really important to the participant's family and Jasmine told the researchers that, "If you don't know who you are, you are no one."

This young person played tennis, tag, volleyball, and she did swimming training three to four times a week. Jasmine hoped to be a New Zealand representative swimmer. At the Time 1 assessments, the participant distinguished herself with her positive attitude; "I don't back down to anyone. I am emotionally strong. I can handle a lot without it getting to me for a long time." Jasmine said that she received a lot of strength from her grandmother but, as well, she was clearly affirmed by her parents. Jasmine's father made this comment:

Never had any lack of confidence in her abilities, in her eventual proving herself. . .I just didn't question the fact or the belief in my mind that she would do alright. All the problems she had were treatable and responded to treatment.

Stanley et al. (2000) concluded their observations with the following statement:

This young person has a plethora of protective and supportive influences in her life and it shows in her attitude and behaviour. Something we also found was that Jasmine worries a lot and, in particular, she is concerned with her popularity with peers. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) raise the question of whether resilient young people pay for their achievements with personal distress. There is no doubt that Jasmine is an atypical child, with an extraordinary clarity of focus and motivation. However, this could also be socially isolating. Interestingly, the mother also suffers from anxiety. She says she gets really scared and worried about being a parent and fears that she is not doing the right thing. (p. 49)

## **Time 2**

Subsequent to the first interview in 1998, Jasmine completed five years at secondary school and she then worked as a receptionist for eighteen months. She also explained how she had completed a qualification in another city, but an eating disorder intensified during this time, and she returned to live with her parents. Jasmine now lives with her male partner, and she had recently embarked on a professional training course

### **Protective factors.**

Jasmine might be regarded as possessing intrapersonal intelligence, and this interpretation by the investigator arises from the totality of her appraisals. Howard Gardner, who is a contemporary expert on multiple intelligences, considers intrapersonal intelligence to represent the ability to access, and discriminate amongst our personal feelings, and "to draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one's behavior" (Gardner, 1993, p. 240). In Jasmine's case, there seems to be six distinct aspects to her special intrapersonal ability, and these aspects are self-awareness, a defined sense of self, self-monitoring, self-management, and consideration of possible selves and ideal selves.

The participant's self-awareness is shown in her knowledge of herself and, more specifically, in what she enjoys doing and what she hopes to achieve. Jasmine believes that she is an easy going and a happy person. She also describes herself as friendly and civil, and she enjoys connecting with people, "but only to a point." Her interests include yoga, photography, design, art, politics, the environment, and women's right, and she has a greenhouse. In terms of her goals, Jasmine says that she wants to top her course, she intends to work for a period of time in the Pacific Islands, she would like to rise to the top of her profession, she wants to be in the Green Party, she hopes to have her own business, and in time she would like a family; "There's a lot of things I want to do. I know I'm on the right path to getting all of them done"

Arguably, self-awareness can extend beyond knowing yourself to understanding yourself, and Jasmine provided numerous examples of personal understanding. For instance, she spoke about what delights her, what she finds disappointing in herself, the quality of interpersonal relationships that she seeks, her self-esteem, and her determination; and she regards determination as her principal personal asset.

- I. Within your interests, what are the high points, low points?
- J. Becoming more conscious. I was at the Tuhoe marches last year and that was a really amazing experience for me. I met Nandor, Nicky Hager. . .those are. . .just been turning points, especially. . .and when I started studying with [person's name] at the end of last year, it just really switched me in. . .terms of wanting to work in [a named profession].
- I. Do you feel good about yourself as a person?
- J. I don't think I do, but that's because I have very high standards. I hate it when I'm an ugly person. I hate it if I'm mean. . .I'm always trying to be aware of not being a bitch. I think that a lot of people can perceive me as being bitchy, or reserved when I'm not. I try not to be too judgemental of people.
- I. Like, for instance, in your relationships have you noticed that there's patterns in the way you respond to people and they respond to you?
- J. I know that the biggest thing that I have with relationships is I have to have respect for the person. I couldn't go out with someone I thought was stupid. That's not intellectual snobbery at all, it's just. . .I need to be challenged for me to respect the person, and, because I think I'm so headstrong and opinionated, it's important that I'm with someone who can handle that and can also say to me sometimes, 'Just shut up' and that I will have that respect for them to not get angry.

- I. Okay. . .then we've got self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-esteem. Self-efficacy's the belief that you can do things and you've already said you're going to do that. I mean, you've got a belief that you can do things. Isn't that right?
- J. Mmm.
- I. Self-esteem is that you feel good about yourself. What about that one?
- J. Well, that's hard, because given my history, everything points to not having very good self-esteem. I don't know how I can say in one discussion that I want to do these things and achieve these things, but have such a huge importance placed on something so superficial .
- I. I tell you what would be useful now, is if you were to tell me what the mix of protective factors or resilience factors has been for you and perhaps how they're ordered. Like, correct me if I'm wrong, but what I get is a feeling, it is some close personal relationships, some mentoring relationships, intelligence, culture. . .maybe there's some other things. Do you want to comment on any of those?
- J. I think determination.
- I. So a personality factor?
- J. Yeah. . .just. . .to be completely determined to do something. . .I don't know what else it could be. . .I think just getting to a point where a light switches on and you know what it is that you want to do and so you just go about doing it. . .because what's the point in doing anything else?

It is being suggested here that self knowledge can lead to self understanding and, further, that the extent of this self understanding will likely impact on a person's sense of self, or their awareness of their individuality. Jasmine says that she lives "to defy stereotypes or make new ones." Growing up in the study locality meant that she was the subject of a lot of prejudicial stereotypes reportedly, like "People from [locality] are dumb, Pacific Islanders are lazy. . .a drain on the economy." Jasmine made a quintessential observation on her individuality and personal agency when she said, "I think I am who I am. . .I won't change myself to suit others, but I'll change myself if I think I need to improve as a person."

Awareness of personal progress is probably related to having a sense of self. When Jasmine was doing her first qualification she maintained a website which documented what she was doing and, as a consequence, it "became clear that I was doing the wrong thing." She regards having a severe eating disorder in a strange city as "a growing experience." It is apparent that Jasmine sees her life as a 'work in progress';

- I. We're looking at talents. . .Are there things that you are good at? How has having talents influenced your life?
- J. I don't know. . .I think that there are things that I'm good at. I. . .wait and see how they influence my life.

Jasmine self monitors and self manages her eating problem and, when interviewed, she was concerned that she was getting into trouble again; "I can pick up on little patterns and things that I might be doing that no one else, they wouldn't notice, but to me I know that I'm slipping back into that place." The participant was putting in place four actions to counter a reoccurrence of her difficulties: she was talking to her flatmate "so that someone else knows and it's not just keeping inside and getting worse."; she was enforcing an eating routine on herself, "and if I break that routine, then everything else deteriorates"; she was reducing the amount of her paid work, and she was endeavouring to feel good about herself and what she is doing.

This young woman reflects on how her life could have been different if her grandmother had not died; "I think I was very sheltered by her and that I wouldn't be the strong person that I am now. . .or maybe I'd be strong in a different kind of way." In addition to contemplating possible selves, Jasmine considers ideal selves:

I think I have role models. . .women like [Assata Shakur?], I'm not saying that I'm anything like her, but she's a role model. And I also love Barbie, and a lot of people might think that's a strange person to have as a role model for someone who believes in women's rights, but I admire Barbie because she's done everything. She's been an astronaut, a veterinarian, a ballerina, she's won American Idol, she's been a mother out of wedlock, she babysits, she's been an equestrian, an Olympian, she's done everything and she does it all without compromising herself as a woman and she does it all in high heels. And, to me, that's such a big message to send to women, that you can do it all without compromising yourself. . .

At some point, it may be more accurate to see personality attributes as character traits and, as has been suggested above, this is when dispositions are associated with a defined and relatively immutable belief system. To this formula, Jasmine would likely add a 'quality' dimension, as "you shouldn't be defined by what you do, you should be defined by how you do what you do."

- J. I am very morally superior. . .I have high standards by. . .I judge people by. I think I'm totally within my rights to be like that, just in the same way they're within their rights to live in the way that they do, I am by right allowed to choose who is in my life. I don't like people who don't have the same morals as I do, because they're poison.
- I. Do you want to tell me a little bit more what you mean by 'People with less moral standing are poison'?
- J. Umm. . .I. . .have total. . .a total lack of respect for people who are promiscuous. I think it's definitely a problem in my age group. I don't. . .I'm not interested in going out clubbing three times a week and getting really drunk and having casual encounters with people. . .I'm not interested in people who do that. I don't want friends who are like that at all. I need to be around people who have the same aspirations as I do and value the same things as I do.

Jasmine does not eat meat or dairy products, despite the fact that she thinks that a lot of the tiredness that she experiences is related to her diet. This is an ethical decision. Jasmine also has a significant sense of social responsibility, and this is shown in her choice to pick up rubbish on her own on a Saturday morning. As well, the participant feels a major sense of responsibility to her culture;

- I. Now, culture. . .over the last ten years. . .its significance and place in your life. . .
- J. I think it's become more significant, the older I've become. Especially now, at the moment, it seems like I have an obligation to my community as a Pacific Island woman. I think that I have a huge role to play in the future about making sure that [professional service] is accessible to my group of people and that making the tools available to my people. . .because they're being neglected currently.

This young woman recounted two situations that she interpreted as ethical matters. The first involved a relative who lived with her family and who did a lot of stealing. Apparently, Jasmine's parents attempted to excuse the relative's illegal behaviour by saying that he did not have things. The participant's thinking on this was "Well when I was growing up, neither did I, but. . .I was never deprived of morals." The second situation involved Jasmine more personally, and it was whether she should accept a Pacific Island scholarship;

- J. I went through a phase where I didn't like to acknowledge that I was a Pacific Islander, but only because I didn't like people who acknowledged their Pacific Island part only when it benefited them. I was reluctant to even take the scholarship that I'm on now because I was like, 'No, I want

to make things on my own. I don't want to get things just because of who my mum is'. But. . .a relative talked about it with me and he said, 'The way I see it, you've been. . .Islanders are disadvantaged from the start. You are raised in a lower decile area. You don't get as good an education as a person living in [named affluent locality]. If someone wants to give you a handout you should take it'. And I agree with him.

Jasmine identified at least eight external supports presently operating in her life, and included here are her parents, wider family, culture, religion, partner, friends, career, and mentors. The first four of these protective factors might be seen as a 'package' but, in fact, there are various intersections across all of the influences. It is intended to consider each of the protective forces in turn.

Jasmine spent the first ten years of her life living with her grandmother. She then returned to her parents until she was 16 years when she went to live with her older sister. More recently, she has resided again with her mother and father after returning from her first course of study. Jasmine spoke about her relationship with her parents as having been really hard until recently and, according to the participant, this was "just a repercussion of her [mother] choosing to give me to someone else to raise."

Jasmine says that she now enjoys a harmonious relationship with her mother and father, and the frequency of the communication between Jasmine and her parents suggests that the relationship is a close one; "I get an email from my dad every morning. My mum texts me every day. . .they call me if they haven't heard from me."

Jasmine clearly appreciates her parents and her family. She compares herself with her partner and she says "I've had such a rich upbringing, I've never, ever thought of being deprived." She says that her mother and father were strict and very loving, and she believes that they have always wanted the best for her. Jasmine suspects that it disappointed and hurt her parents when she became a receptionist after leaving school, but she knows that they put her happiness first. Having happy children was important to the parents, as was raising good people; "my parents have high morals as well, so if they raised good children then that's more important than raising successful children." The



participant freely acknowledges her debt to her family: “I wouldn’t be anything without my family.”

This young person has limited contact with her extended family but she does enjoy a close association with one aunt and uncle and their four children; “they just rally around you and you can just be yourself. . .which is important.”

The participant gave a fairly detailed explanation of the importance of culture to wellbeing and adjustment. Jasmine believes that people who are aware of who they are and where they come from are stronger and more successful in life. She observes that when ethnic minorities come to New Zealand they only have their culture, family, and religion “and that’s why we hold onto those three things so dearly.” However, as has already been mentioned, Jasmine is a ‘half-caste’ Pacific Islander (her definition) and this status is both a personal problem and an identity catalyst for her.

- I. Culture. . .highs and lows?
- J. Lows. . .I have them all the time. I’m half. . .half way in between. I don’t get much negativity from Europeans. I get a lot of negativity from other Islanders. Just. . .a lot of bullying. . .I think to myself though that I know who I am, so it doesn’t matter. And knowing who I am, that would be a high. But it’s horrible to be seen as. . .‘Oh, she’s only half. She doesn’t know anything about it. What’s she doing here?’ . . .Being made to feel like you don’t belong by certain people. But then. . .yeah, I have a good family around me. . .a good core family who always look out for me. So, that’s okay.

Jasmine says that being an Islander was ingrained in her from birth and, in this regard, she says that she was very lucky. She takes an active and responsible part in the three or four months of preparation for an annual Island festival. The participant says that her cultural identification “has become stronger, the more I am made to feel like I don’t belong, the stronger I become in who I am.”

In accord with the interview protocol, Jasmine was asked about her religious faith and commitment on several occasions and she repeatedly said that she was presently exploring her spiritual beliefs; “I think that I like to take different bits from

different religions and kind of make my own rosary because. . .yeah, I just want it to be something that fits me.”

Jasmine stopped going to church a long time ago, and while religion is “a present factor”, she cannot think of any ways which in which it has influenced her life. The participant’s grandmother was, reportedly, very devout, and her parents are religious, and Jasmine’s language can be rich in Christian allusions:

- I. Another one is talents. . .things that you’re good at. . .how do feel about things in that area?
- J. I have my talents, everyone has talents and I think it’s a sin to waste a talent. And at the moment I’m doing the best with what God gave me. And I’m honing my talents, bringing out talents that are probably maybe hidden or I don’t know I have.
- I. And we’ve discussed faith and that’s not really a major one really nowadays is it?
- J. No.

Jasmine has a live-in partner of relatively recent origin, and she has had boyfriends before. Mac is quite a lot older than the participant, and he has been married. The participant says she gets “so much grief” because of the age difference; “Luckily he doesn’t have children, ‘cos that would be one thing I’d find really hard to deal with.” Jasmine values her partner’s maturity; “because he’s older, he’s been able to say that, ‘I know that you’re behaving in this way because of that’, whereas a younger guy wouldn’t be able to.” The respondent also really appreciates that Mac has “never, ever tried to clip my wings.” However, it is something of a reciprocal arrangement, apparently; “because I’m happy for him to go out with other girls and things like that.”

Mac is said to be a much more sociable person than the participant. Nevertheless, Jasmine has three or four good friendships; “I’m very close to the people that I’m close to and they’re good relationships.”

The participant considers her career choice to be a major positive influence in her life; “Nothing would give me the same sense of pride and achievement as what I’m currently doing, so why would I do otherwise?” As an educational experience she says

that she has never felt sharper. Jasmine shows signs of professional identification or socialisation, for want of better terms. She has adopted activities and practices that are associated with her chosen career, and some personal involvements are being conditioned by it.

The participant feels that she has been the beneficiary of a number of mentoring relationships and several people were identified who have provided her with guidance and support. There are lecturers at her course and there are older friends. Actually, Jasmine may currently have a live-in guide and adviser although, understandably, it is a complex situation;

- J. I think the adult that probably has the biggest influence on me would be Mac. .he plays the biggest part of my life, just because he's my other half. But he's not my mentor, we're like chalk and cheese.

#### **Risk factors.**

This participant's account of her own development suggests that she has four primary risk factors. The first two factors seem to be largely related, and they are her physical health, and some cognitions that she regards as aberrant. The second two influences are her adoption and her secondary schooling, and these are both more distant and more distal. Nevertheless, these latter experiences very likely relate to each other as well, and to the internal risk factors of cognitions and health.

Jasmine describes herself as fiercely independent, and she says that this means that she pushes people away and she does not let others help her. She believes that this makes life harder than it needs to be. The situation is actually quite acute because, as will now be appreciated, Jasmine has very high standards for herself; "if you think of how critical I am of others, times that by a hundred and then you get close to how critical I am of myself." The participant knows that she needs other people to validate her and to encourage her. Without support and assistance, Jasmine can very quickly slip into a 'bad place';

I think the mind is your worst enemy. I have a lot of problems because my mind is so capable of convincing myself that something can be true. In my head I can convince myself, within a day, that I'm meaningless or worth nothing and should stop studying and do something unfulfilling. I think the mind is such a powerful weapon that it can be a problem and it has been a problem for me in the past. I've done well in the past because I've had people round me who have pushed me to believe in myself, and have helped me get to a place where I'm doing things that helped me believe in myself. But I'm not going to lie and say that I think that I'm there now. I don't think I am at all.

The respondent's eating problem began when she was a receptionist, and she says that poor self esteem is responsible for it; "How was I supposed to feel good about myself if I'm doing something so mundane?" Initially, the issue was anorexia and then it moved to bulimia. After she came through the process of recovery, she put on a lot of weight. Jasmine says that she found this hard to cope with as well; "to my family and friends, they're like, 'She's put on weight, she's happy again, she's healthy', rather than looking at the underlying issues." The participant concludes that eating issues are a significant area of risk for her;

There's no way I'll be able to have a normal healthy relationship with food ever, regardless of how I feel about myself. . .that's what happened, and it's sealed my fate and I'll always have to be aware of that part of me. So. . .it's the kind of thing that you learn to live with and then you learn to live against and then maybe, eventually, you can live without. But, at the moment, I'm still in the first stage and the only way I can deal with it and the only way I can feel good about myself is by exercising routine.

Jasmine also spoke about recently having had other health issues, in addition to her eating disorder. She had an adverse reaction to an oral contraceptive and this has included nausea, bad headaches, and feeling tired all the time. In addition, after six months of continual doctors' visits and tests, she has found out that she has endometriosis. This has clearly been difficult for her.

The death of Jasmine's grandmother was a traumatic event for the participant because she was very close to her; "essentially. . .I was orphaned because she was my parent and then she died." This young woman has had counselling and grief therapy, and she says that she now understands the impact that the bereavement has had on her;

“I can see what I do wrong. . .well not necessarily ‘wrong’. . .just how I behave with other people. I have it in my head that there’s no point in getting close to a person if they’re just going to leave you.”

Jasmine experienced some other issues when she came to live with her mother and father

- I. So we’re talking about parenting and you had the situation where mum and dad didn’t have the advantage of raising you early on. So how did you think that impacted on things?
- J. I think that. . .I felt like. . .I’ve often felt like I didn’t fit into their family or I had to make. . .we had to make a space for me to fit in. I’ve often felt like they expected more of me than they expected of my siblings. I think a lot of that’s all in my head as well. I have a lot of things where I think it’s just in my head.

The participant states that her mother and father have provided her with unconditional love and she believes that she is lucky to have such a solid relationship with her family. Jasmine also pays tribute to her partner’s patience with her insecurity about people; “I just kind of have a wall that most people will hit eventually, and normally people hit that wall and leave, but he hit that wall and said, ‘A wall is just a wall and it can be broken.’”

Jasmine has anger and resentment about her secondary education and her commentary about it occupies over 2,000 words of a 13,600 word transcript. In large measure, she feels that she was let down by her high school because she was not sufficiently challenged:

I think it’s typical New Zealand. . .tall poppy syndrome. You’re so busy trying to make everything nice and equal that you’re just forgetting about a whole group of students that need to be challenged and need something more than just an Achieved grade, or a Merit grade. They just want to make everything accessible to the masses, but what about people who need something more?. . .so PC. . .it’s a joke.

There was an incident with a year 12 English teacher. Jasmine corrected her when the teacher attributed the line ‘No man is an island’ to William Shakespeare. The participant was told to apologise but, as she did not respect the teacher, she refused to do

so and she stopped attending the class for a term. Jasmine contends that she lost confidence in her abilities because high school was so lacking in stimulation. She thinks that she might have benefited from having more guidance in her last years of secondary school, but “by the grace of God I’ve managed to pull my life together post college.”

Jasmine says that in her last two years at school, in particular, she was “so undernourished and not looked after at all.” However, there were presumably some highlights because she held various offices. She was also a ‘buddy’ with junior students, and she participated in, coached, and adjudicated in debating. Although Jasmine says that she does not like sport (because she says she does not like sweating), she was a competitive sportsperson at national age-group level. In addition, she played rugby one year, “just because everyone had this kind of idea that I was really prissy and girly, so I thought. . .I’m going to play rugby just to say that I can do whatever I want.”

There were other positive things as well, like “social-wise it was good.” Further, Jasmine had connections with some special teachers and she would talk to them, or work in their classrooms during her study periods. Nonetheless, the participant’s verdict on her secondary schooling is resounding bleak, and it meant that she did not pass her examinations or go onto university;

- I. Okay. . .given the impressions that I’m forming of you, if you don’t mind me saying, it must have hurt you quite hard to not do well in the final years of secondary? Would that be true?
- J. No. I think it hurt my school more than it hurt me. . .and deciding not to go onto university. . .that was such a slap in the face to my Principal and to my deans. Because, I also got to a stage where they just expected great things from me and I was like, ‘No, I don’t want to do that for you. I’ll do it for me when I’m ready and on my terms’. . .because I was. . .yeah . . . put down. I’d do great things straight away, but they wanted me to study [identified profession] and there were. . .like I say, the teachers who influenced me the most weren’t my actual teachers and they thought that I’d be suited in [chosen profession]. And when I’ve seen them now and they know what I’m doing, they’re just so happy. . .It didn’t hurt at all. . .I think I’ve fared quite well and it had nothing to do with. . .it was nothing to do with college. They didn’t equip me at all.

### **Resilience.**

Jasmine thinks that she is doing okay, which for her means that she is doing something that makes her feel good about herself. As well, she thinks that her life is quite balanced at the moment, as she is only in paid employment one day a week. This young woman says that she is learning very slowly to let people get close to her. She believes that she has a good relationship with her siblings, with her mum and dad, and with her partner, and these relationships give her sounding boards that help to calm her. Jasmine also says that she knows that sometimes she needs to be cared for, and that she may need to “just go home to my mum and dad and just be looked after for a little while.”

- I. Are there times in your life that you’ve done better than at other times?  
Like, is now a good time?
- J. Now is a good time I think.

## **Results – Themes Across Cases**

### **Introduction**

Three super ordinate themes span the individual cases, and they are ‘relationships’, ‘developmental contexts’, and ‘personhood and identity.’ Each of these themes will be considered in turn, although there is substantial interaction amongst them and people do progress from early relationships, through the contexts of development, to revisions of identity in adulthood. In the last part, in a segment entitled ‘More than building blocks’, there is some speculation on the adaptive significance of the young people’s contrasting configurations of personal relationships, developmental experiences, and personality components.

### **Relationships**

Comparative analysis of the cases shows that relationships are fundamental in people’s lives, and the parent-child relationship is the pivotal relationship around which all others turn. Commentaries on the participants’ parent-child relationships were dependent on the respondents’ evaluations, parental descriptions and comments, some third party observations (e.g., teachers) and, occasionally, a reasonably unambiguous event, such as Sean’s mother’s attempt to suffocate him or his brother. As well, the patterning of subsequent events can be suggestive of the nature and quality of earlier attachment. Clearly, these matters need to be approached with considerable caution, and not least because of the heterogeneity of the research group. At the least, we know that one participant was adopted at 9 months (Patrick), several others spent periods of time in two homes (John and Jasmine), another was raised by his grandparents (Richard), and five of the participants lived with mothers on their own for extensive periods (Anna, Damian, Amber, John, and Jasmine).

The care giving relationships seem to be distinguished by evidence of love and affection, and the ways and extent that the care givers embraced an adult-parent role



that allowed them to express parenting competencies. All of the participants are presently emotionally engaged with their parents (with the possible exception of Sean), but there does appear to be differences in the amounts of love, in terms of both consistency and intensity, that each of the participants has received from their caregivers. Kerry has been comprehensively loved and so was Damian until his mother died. John and Jasmine experienced disjunctions in affection occasioned by circumstances, and Amber and Anna undoubtedly strained relations with their adolescent behaviour. Richard and Patrick both received a lot of physical discipline (if not abuse). Richard's parenting was characterised by relocations, whereas the parenting sequence for Patrick was essentially one of being 'neglected, adopted, relegated, and rejected.' Reference has already been made to the traumatic aspect of Sean's childhood, but his mother subsequently engaged in anger management counselling, and the records do show caring by her in difficult personal circumstances.

Amongst other stressors, John's childhood contained repetitive physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. Nevertheless, John's mother (Jan) very probably loved him and he definitely loved her. At Time 1, she made protestations of love for her son, and the participant's interviewer noted that 'Jan was John's world.' There is other evidence of sincere affection between them and included here, arguably, is the very positive adaptation that John now shows. According to the structural organisational model (e.g., Yates, Egeland, & Sroufe, 2003), human development is cumulative and hierarchical, and it is likely that Jan contributed to the foundations of John's development, and others subsequently channelled and refined the construction of his personality in relation to age and stage demands and to optimal effect.

This view acknowledges Jan's contribution, but it also points to her deficiencies as a parent, and these deficits were picked up by various commentators. For instance, a lawyer at a Family Group Conference said, "It was clear after observing Jan and John

that there is a great deal of love between them but unfortunately that does not translate to good parenting.” And there is this comment on a social service file: “She is looking for options for someone else to do the job of disciplining while she retains the title of ‘mother.’”

It is contended that the role of parent has distinct and defining attributes which encompass care and protection, and a commitment to the dependent child’s welfare. By definition, the relationship is that of an adult and child; which is distinct from child-child and adult-adult relations, because the adult-parent/child relationship is characterised primarily by ‘giving’, rather than mutuality or reciprocity.

The parent-child relationship can be conceptualised as having curvilinear effects, with the ideal degrees of involvement falling in the middle of the distribution, and with risks stemming both from excesses and insufficiencies of commitment and identification (Luthar, 2006). It is possible that a number of the respondents have been, or are, overly enmeshed with their parents. Sean and his father were friends who watched violent videos together. Richard’s goals in life are “to have a job and help my mother out and that” and Amber struggles with keeping her mother happy.

At Time 1, the research team questioned Anna’s individuation, as her mother seemed to be very involved in her psychological world. The mother made the following comments when interviewed: “I’ve got this real thing about damage you know, after what they’ve been through, and I don’t want to add to that” and, “Anna really reminds me so much of me. . .if anyone says anything to her, like the boys tease her and that, it’s just like me.” Ten years later, several questions were prompted by Anna’s situation; firstly, do developmental tendencies become more prominent in single parent circumstances because they are less likely to be moderated or attenuated? Secondly, does this closeness of parent and child in childhood make parent management especially difficult in the adolescent years?

Anna and Amber have had similar parenting circumstance: mothers with disrupted personal histories who had violent relationships with their partners, and who became solo parents in the participants' childhoods. However, even in 1998, Amber's mother appeared to have retreated from assertive parenting in response to her daughter's coercive relational style. There are common care giving features here, as neither of the mothers could control their daughters, and both had diffuse parenting roles - and in the absence of steadfast protection, the neighbourhood risk influences could presumably take hold.

A lesson of the present study, nevertheless, is that love seems to triumph over exigencies, in the sense that young people who are the recipients of affection go on to be caring of others. Anna, Jasmine, and John have actually had two loving mothers each (for Anna it was a mother and grandmother concurrently), and all three participants can be seen as caring and responsible people who acknowledge the affection and support that they have received. Damian's mother loved him, and he loves his girlfriend, and the maternal love that he enjoyed also made him proud of his family and of his home, and at Time 1 a school teacher described the family home as "dirty and disgusting."

Kerry, as well, values and appreciates his parents and, despite significant learning difficulties, he wants to help others. And Amber, for all her spirit and piqué, knows that her mother has given her a capacity to care about people. Some 'gaps' have, perhaps, transpired for Richard, Patrick, and Sean. Richard and Patrick have both fathered children, but are separated from their partners, and Sean's commitment to others takes the form of a grand vision for the world.

The Time 2 data suggest the following hypotheses: (1) The better a person's relations in their family of origin, the better will their relations be with other family members and friends, and (2) The better the relations in the family of origin, the less

likely will it be that there is gang participation and affiliations with extreme political movements. These tentative generalisations are clearly conditioned by a number of variables, such as personality (e.g., independent/dependent, sociable/reclusive), gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, developmental stage, and role demands.

More to the point, perhaps, the meanings of the hypotheses are determined by the interpretation of the word 'better', but here the data are again generative and suggestive. Some social relationships, in contrast to other social relationships, seem to 'fit' more completely within, and contribute to, the coherence of the individual's life world. And, as a consequence, there is probably a greater chance of these relationships being enriching and continuing.

John, Jasmine, Anna, Damian, and Kerry have good relations with their siblings and extended family. Interestingly, Amber is now intentionally re-establishing connections with cousins. Sean talks condescendingly of his brother and, while he does have friends, the relationships can be fraught. Richard comes from a fractionated family and he now belongs to a gang. Patrick, who has recently abandoned gang life, seemed to be a lonely person, although he does have a close relationship with his siblings.

Three of the participants have been directly affected by gang involvements (Richard, Patrick, and Amber), and the rest of the research group have probably been indirectly affected because they live in the study locality. Five observations can be made about gang participation. Firstly, the evidence of this study is that gangs promote violence and criminality, and drug use. A second point is that gangs obviously meet psychological needs and for Richard and Patrick it appears to be about acceptance (parent/family substitute), which is probably followed by status, safety, and access to things. The third point follows on from this; gang involvement is adaptive, depending on personal and social circumstances, and gangs are learning environments.

A further observation about joining a gang is that it probably gets close to being a normative developmental event in resource poor settings. At Time 1, Richard's grandmother conveyed something of this sort when she gave this description of childhood in the study locality: "the kids around here they know each other and that's why they all get together and go in the front and play there until evening." The social associations are already in place and, when the peer group confronts the vacuity and disconnection of the secondary school experience, taking up gang colours may be almost inevitable. The last point, which derives from what has been already said, is that gang participation is seen as 'normal' by those who are involved and, as a corollary, defending one's social group against outsiders is a logical and laudatory action.

The investigator's experience suggests that gangs actively mentor adolescent males, and this observation might make us wary of any automatic assumption that mentoring is an inherently positive activity. In fact, the experiences of the research group seems to suggest that there is no shortage of people who are prepared to encourage others towards different purposes. Sean has been mentored into Trotskyism and he is now keen to foster this commitment in others. As well, for Anna and Jasmine, and for two generations of Kerry's family, mentoring has had a critical role.

There is sense that mentoring is actually a substitutory engagement and, moreover, that it is an intervention that can have uneven effects. It seems significant that there are no prominent mentors in John's present life and, while Patrick had two English teachers who encouraged him to become a journalist, it has so far come to nothing. It is suggested that, to work, mentoring may need some combination of personal vulnerability and a predisposition to take advantage of what is offered. John has neither quality and, while Patrick, Richard, and Amber evidence vulnerability, their circumstances and/or personalities do not incline them to mentoring outside of gang associations.

A major development from Time 1 to Time 2 is that some of the participants now have partners, and three of them have also become parents. As intimate partners were not interviewed by the writer, the significance of their presence (and absence) amongst the research group can only be a matter of speculation. For this reason, the following surmises are stated in question form: Is there evidence that close relationships have both the capacity to empower people (as in the cases of Anna, Damian, and Jasmine) and to disempower, as with Patrick? Is it noteworthy that two of the female respondents (Amber and Jasmine) have male partners who are quite a lot older than them? Is John's relative delay in pairing off been influenced by the nature and quality of his more recent parenting experiences? Is a relationship with an intimate partner the one dimension that Kerry's parents cannot contribute to his life? Are romantic associations a problem for Sean because of his zealotry?

Interestingly, perhaps, Sean's political obsessions do not appear to present as real barriers to potential partners, but he probably sees liaisons as an 'untidy', and as a trivial, aspect of life. The final question in this series applies to all of the participants: What effects will the relationships that their parents have modelled to them have on the nature and longevity of their own close associations?

The issue of parenting modelling is probably particularly relevant to the participants' parenting behaviours. Anna's mother and grandmother both demonstrated relationship obligations to her but, as young men, Richard and Patrick may not be subject to the same influences, or to the same expectation effects. Nevertheless, what is particularly salient for all three participants is how meaningful becoming a parent has been for them. It is probable that as a society we underplay the personal impact of parenthood for women but young fatherhood has no profile at all.

For Patrick, especially, having children has been life altering and, in effect, it may have reconnected him to conventional social processes. Actually, Patrick poses a

particular question: Why does a man have three children before he is twenty years of age? It could be that ideas about choice, control, and contraception have no place here and that this young person was subconsciously, or consciously, seeking love and meaning in life. How else can we explain the fact that this street smart participant considers the toilet training of his son to be a highlight of his life to date?

### **Contexts of Development**

There are four contexts that are related to the participants' competence and resilience, and they are schooling and education, culture, religion, and jobs and careers. The startling finding about secondary schooling is its seeming irrelevance. Almost to a person, the participants regard high school as a waste of time and a waste of opportunities. Six explanations are advanced to account for what happened at secondary school, and the first of these is that there was simply too much else going on for the respondents at this time. For Amber, for instance, there was no competition between an exciting social life and the discipline of academic study.

A second possibility is that the participants' parents and homes were not sufficiently or appropriately supportive of the work of the school. In contrast to just about everyone else, John views his secondary schooling more positively than he considers his primary education to have been; "but possibly because I was with a different family who were always there for me."

The third suggestion to account for the participants' reaction to their secondary schooling is that the high school programme is fractionated, and there is a lack of meaningful personal connections. A number of aspects favour this interpretation, such as Jasmine's statement that she felt unsupported, and there were the unusual ways that the participants connected with their high school teachers, like going to see them when wagging.

The constructions of the secondary experience continue with the hypothesis that the respondents' primary schools, and possibly their parents as well, 'set the scene' for subsequent difficulties by scripting for failure. By the time that Anna and Damian arrived at the high school, with their fresh uniforms and new stationery, they may have believed that they could not meet the learning challenges, and this was despite the fact that they are both hard working and conscientious people.

In addition, there may be a series of individual reasons for academic failure, and class groupings and college uniforms can obscure these differences. As suggested, some students mistakenly think that they might not be able to do it, and some (like Kerry) simply cannot do it. Others have difficulties because they cannot deal with the distractions, and others of them get into trouble because they create the distractions.

The last observation about the secondary school experience is that it was not actually that bad. Jasmine, Sean, and John obtained qualifications, and people like Patrick learned more than they realised at the time. It could be that school leavers often have a sense of missed opportunities because secondary education is so rich in academic, sporting, cultural and leadership possibilities, and high school contrasts so markedly with the demanding but mundane nature of entry level work experiences.

So far, six members of the research group appear to have had successful learning experiences since leaving secondary school. Patrick passed NCEA in foster care, Damian attended a music course, and John went to a training course for a year and is now finishing an apprenticeship. Jasmine, having pursued one course is now in a professional programme, and Anna is steadfastly pursuing registration as a nurse. The final member of this sextet is Sean, who has accumulated a large amount of learning as an autodidact.

The respondents' post-school learning successes raise some interesting issues. For instance, it is patently inappropriate to attach some empty label, like 'life-long



learners', to the participants because they did not enjoy their secondary years, and many of their more recent accomplishments have been dependent on special provisions (Patrick, Anna, and Damian). In fact, it may be that the participants can *only* really achieve academic success when they are out of formal schooling. There is also another possibility, which is certainly not mutually exclusive, and it is that there are advantages in students from disadvantaged backgrounds leaving home to study.

Culture as a developmental context is variable and complex, and it presents as having both risk factors and protective influences. Of the participants, Jasmine has the clearest cultural identification and she articulates the advantages of this in terms of identity and community. However, this young woman has suffered because of her ethnicity and culture. In the Islands she was bullied because of her Pakeha parentage, and back in the study locality she says that she was the victim of the negative stereotyping that can associate with being a Pacific Islander.

The cultural practice of being raised by a grandmother also occasioned trauma for Jasmine, as her caregiver died when she was at an especially vulnerable developmental stage; and this is may be a reasonably common occurrence for Pacific young people. It is possible that Jasmine has had the worst of things, as well as the advantages of culture, since eating disorders are less prevalent amongst Pacific peoples apparently. Jasmine's mother reportedly said to her, "It's such a weird thing because it's not a Pacific Island problem, it's a European problem. Pacific Islanders don't have these things."

Jasmine believes that she is fortunate in knowing her culture from the beginning; Patrick and John have discovered their Maori culture more recently. It is instructive that Patrick embraced culture through his children. John's cultural identification is like Patrick's and has a distinct quality of generativity; "I'd rather be Maori. . .I'm proud to be Maori. . .I like to see Maori succeed." John and Jasmine both live their culture –

Jasmine with preparations for, and participation in a Pacific Island festival, and John through waka ama.

It is noteworthy, however, that being a fit and tough looking Maori male is probably a risk factor in itself. This applies to Richard and Patrick, and to a lesser extent to John. The writer was aware when he was around town with Richard and Patrick, in particular, that their very presence seemed to be perceived as threatening by some people.

During her primary schooling, Amber was enrolled in a bilingual unit and she had an excellent understanding of Te Reo Maori. At Time 2, there was not a strong commitment to culture. Similarly, neither Anna nor Damian give priority to culture or ethnicity, although Damian is interested in knowing about his Maori and Pakeha ancestry. Sean is openly antagonistic to conventional cultural considerations, which he describes as “riff-rabble.” Rather than “pull out the rags” from his parents’ past, he says that he prefers to create his own culture and ethic.

Religion and faith has played a prominent part in the participants’ lives, and at least seven of them were Christians when they were young. Kerry’s religiosity was deliberately encouraged by his mother as a protective factor, and Patrick had church thrust upon him when his mother gave up drugs for Christianity. Today, only John is devout and, interestingly, he did not appear to have any religion as a child. Richard says that he still believes in God, and Anna and Jasmine both express uncertainty about spirituality. Damian and Sean are now anti-Christian.

What general conclusions can we come to about something as personal and individual as religious faith? Firstly, faith has functioned as an active protective factor for many of them and it continues to do so for some of them. Secondly, we do not know what enduring impacts on cognition, behaviour, and affect an early exposure to religion may have for the participants. Thirdly, statements by Anna and Jasmine

suggest that, for some of the respondents, religiosity is likely to resurface at a future time. Finally, for all of them, religion will probably continue to have significance for identity development and clarification.

With respect to the individual cases and religion, Sean shares with John a preoccupation with Christianity. However, whereas the one is the devotee of Christianity the other young person is its antagonist. Subsequent sections of the thesis consider faith and personality, but here we might ask whether Sean's radical political beliefs are actually a form of religious commitment. Bertrand Russell thought of Bolshevism in these terms (Gray, 2007) and Sean has, what might be regarded, as the defining features of a utopian belief system. He has a comprehensive set of ideas that literally provide an answer to every question. This body of beliefs has changed Sean, and he knows this and values it, and he now wants to change other people.

As indicated, Sean's political ideas are vehemently opposed to other utopian philosophies because he has a different vision for the world. Most significantly, Sean makes the classic assertion of religious purpose: "everything has led to this place, to what I am for a specific reason." Arguably, this statement is essentially the same as John's religious explanations concerning "where you come from and where you're going and why we're here."

At Time1, the respondents did not have partners and children, and they did not have fulltime jobs and careers. Work commitments are a new context of development that has substantial importance now, and it is one that is likely to have increasing significance in the future. All of the young people talk about their work, or about not having employment. Richard and Patrick badly want jobs. Damian works long hours in awful conditions and he hates it. Amber is ambitious, and probably realistically so, and Kerry wants office work, and this aspiration is unlikely to be fulfilled. Sean is too busy

to work, but he struggles with the prospect of a job, and there seems to be more to his employment situation than a lack of time.

Anna, John, and Jasmine are enthusiastically pursuing careers, and it is obvious that they are gaining considerable benefits from doing so. For instance, Jasmine says of her professional course that nothing could give her the same sense of pride and achievement. Feeling proud and having a sense of achievement relates to personal identity, and it is probable that this is the area to which jobs and careers can, potentially, make the greatest contribution.

### **Personhood and Identity**

This section is made up of two parts. The first of these is concerned with the ‘elements’ of personality and it covers constitution (physical wellbeing and health), affect, abilities, and actions (what people do and how they do it). The second part provides a review of the turning point events that the participants have experienced. In essence, the two parts contribute an ‘atomistic’ view of personality. This perspective is complemented by a more integrated understanding of the participants’ situations that is provided in the concluding section, and which is entitled ‘Building Blocks’.

It is suggested that it may be remarkably easy to ignore the role of physical factors in people’s lives in a psychology investigation. This probably would be a big mistake because whether a person is short or tall, slim or overweight, good looking or unattractive, and healthy or ailing can, presumably have a significant impact on how others respond to them, and on how they feel about themselves. Having said that, only three material points can be made about the physical aspects and wellbeing of the participants in the present study. Firstly, asthma was common in childhood. Secondly, the respondents were, nevertheless, engaged in many sports. And thirdly, the sporting involvements of the childhood years have generally not continued into emerging adulthood.

It is known that Anna, Amber, Richard, and Kerry had asthma as children, and other participants probably did as well. However, a number of the research group displayed sporting abilities at Time 1. Anna was described as ‘a real outdoors person’, Damian achieved excellent results in cross country, Amber loved netball and swimming, and Jasmine swam, and played tennis, tag, and volleyball. Yet, at Time 2, only Kerry showed persistence with a sporting pursuit; although he has now been joined by John, who evidences the same counter trend in sport that he shows in religion and other things.

The biggest developmental divergence with respect to sporting involvements is probably shown in the trajectories of Richard and Patrick. Both of these young people might be regarded as having been mocked by the sporting promises of childhood, and it is likely this situation largely arose from the same circumstances; neither of them had anyone on the sidelines (literally and metaphorically) providing them with support.

An array of categories relating to affect are available in the data and it is not easy to make sense of them. This complexity is probably to be expected and it points to the multi-component nature of emotional experience, the internal inconsistencies that may exist amongst relevant dimensions, and the relative inadequacy of some of the explanatory concepts that we use. Some consideration will now be given to four of the affective themes that were identified - self-awareness, self-esteem, positivity, and perceptions of difficulty.

Self-awareness might be conceptualised as a curvilinear attribute that has risks at either extreme. In other words, it is not a good thing to have either too little or too much self-awareness. However, this conception is only partially helpful because it does not incorporate the fact that the information that people have about themselves will be affected by selectivity and bias and, moreover, that denial can be a highly adaptive personal strategy.

Whereas Richard might be lacking in self-knowledge, both Sean and Jasmine could be positioned at the other pole in relation to this attribute. Sean's primary school teachers suggested that he was egocentric, and he certainly appeared to have an instrumental view of people at Time 1; "a best friend is someone who does stuff that I like." Jasmine admits to self-preoccupation, but this precondition of intrapersonal intelligence means that she can pick up when her eating disorder is intensifying; and she does believe that sometimes she is the victim of her overactive mind.

Patrick has a palpable understanding of his interpersonal situation and Damian, as well, has an acute appreciation of his learning deficits. Amber and Kerry provide contrasts with this level of awareness. Amber believes that she can pursue conventional success while being the partner of a gang member and having the reputation of a drug user. Meanwhile, Kerry seems to enjoy large doses of undue optimism. Of all of the respondents, Anna and John seem to have a simple and productive self-awareness, and they know what they want, and what they like being.

Self-esteem refers to the sum total of a person's evaluations of himself or herself (Santrock, 2008). It is a term with positive connotations and, it is contended, the self-esteem label is perceived to associate with personal wellbeing, constructive activities, and prosocial engagements. The case data presented here do not necessarily support such beneficent views and the application of them to girls and women may be particularly questionable. By any criteria, Anna and Jasmine are highly productive people and fine citizens but neither of them can own to much self-esteem. There are some similarities between the circumstances of these two participants in that they have both been extensively and intensively mentored and, as was intimated above, the effects of mentoring can be uneven.

At Time 1, Damian proudly presented his school report to the interviewer and it was a summation of his many scholastic deficiencies. At the recent assessment, despite

having no educational qualifications and working in an especially unpleasant unskilled job, Damian said that a lot of the time he felt good about himself. This personal situation notwithstanding, Kerry and Sean obtain self-esteem and confidence from external involvements, and they are karate and politics respectively. There are some glimmers of connection here; and one idea is that, for some males, self-esteem might be skill-based or related to an interest.

The hypothesis concerning the relationship of skills and self-esteem is strengthened by John's and Patrick's experiences. John thinks good things about himself and he knows that, for him, success is made up of hard work, sport, church, and being with friends. Patrick, however, lacks self-confidence, and he was devastated that he did not have the capacity to thank his family for coming to his son's funeral. A second supposition is probably also gender related, and it is that self-esteem is likely affected by what parents say to their children. The records show that Damian, Kerry, Sean, and John were encouraged in their interests whereas Patrick did not receive this support.

In keeping with emerging adults elsewhere, the research group contains positive and optimistic people (Arnett, 2006). And this is despite the fact that they have all experienced tough times, and that most of them seem to perceive life as difficult. At least two-thirds of the participants have (or have had) affect-related problems or preoccupations. Anna had a major episode of an affective disorder consequent on the breakup of her parents' marriage. Jasmine lives with anorexia. Richard, Amber, and Patrick smoke marihuana, and Sean has had problems managing his anger.

The young people tend to see life as challenging, which means (in effect) that their cognitions tally with their experiences, but there are differences in how life's difficulties are viewed. Damian and Patrick may see themselves as the victims of fate,

whereas John seems to regard events as personal learning experiences, and Sean believes that there are reasons and answers for everything.

Abilities are the implements with which people cut their life paths, and the relevant 'tools' for the participants have been intelligence, artistic abilities, a capacity to be open-minded, and a belief in their own competence. Three of the respondents do not think that they are intelligent (Anna, Damian, and Kerry); three of them think that they have a particular variant, or type, of intelligence (Richard, John, and Patrick); and three of the young people believe that they have above average intelligence, and they are Amber, Sean, and Jasmine. Arguably, Anna and Damian's conduct contradicts their poor self-evaluations. In Anna's case there are the crucial and beneficial choices that she has made that reflect adaptability, and there is her career; and for Damian there are his interests, and his longstanding friendship with Sean, who is an intelligent person.

Of course, whether or not someone is intelligent depends on the definition of intelligence that is applied and this issue is brought into sharp focus by the second trio of participants. Richard, Patrick, and John (and Kerry as well) believe that they possess a practical intelligence. In simple terms, they are 'doers' rather than 'thinkers.' Interestingly, the three respondents who consider themselves to be especially able also provide some additional perspectives on the meaning of intelligence. Amber sees her agility in learning as pertinent, and Sean favours a constructionist view; "you have to earn it. . .you have to push yourself."

Six of the respondents are, or have been, good at art and only Kerry is said (in school records) to have found art difficult. Why is this area of talent in such evidence? Three explanations are offered that arise directly from deficit theorising; which Glynn and Berryman (2005) describe as locating an issue within individuals, families, and cultural groups. Firstly, art may represent a way for children who are disadvantaged to



express themselves and, because of the participants' experiences, there is a lot to express.

A second observation is that children in challenging circumstances could do well in creative endeavours because the academic curriculum has little appeal, and there is more time for art when core studies have a lower priority. The last point in this series is that teachers in low decile schools might welcome the opportunity to praise something in their students and artistic abilities are encouraged by default.

The deficit explanations should be laid alongside two other possibilities, however. Apart from the obvious aspect, that the presence of artistic talent was a fortuitous finding, it could be that most people have some ability in art, and what was found was an artefact of studying lives in depth. The last matter to be mentioned relates to the paragraph immediately above; it is possible that artistic capability is connected with a practical form of intelligence, and we should not regard it as a totally distinct or separate ability.

Possessing 'independence of mind' is more a dispositional trait than an ability, but it is discussed here because it probably has an association with adaptive intelligence. The participants provided an array of perspectives on the meaning of independence and self-reliance. At Time 1, Damian's mother described him as 'a person on his own' and she said that he was a happy person "except when you come in on his territory." The following comments were made about Amber after her first month at primary school, and they reinforce the suggestion that self-sufficiency can start early:

Amber is a born leader. She has come to school with confidence and independence. Can be aggressive and pushy with other children. Can be extremely helpful and happy when in right frame of mind.

Anna is prepared to be assertive for her children, and she broke away from the maladaptive influence of the adolescent peer group. Patrick, similarly, got out of the gang scene and his appraisals of his family relationships show intellectual detachment.

John evidenced self-assurance in the interview situation at Time 2, as he co constructed what transpired and passed judgements about the interviewer. By contrast, Jasmine can be disadvantaged by her desire to stand alone from others.

Richard remains caught up in the collective of the gang. Kerry's self-sufficiency is compromised by his special learning needs. And while Sean sees himself as a nonconformist, his independence of mind is conditioned by the belief system that he has embraced.

In the beginning is the behaviour and we are what we do, or so the behaviourists say (Grant & Evans, 1994). In this section on *actions* we review the respondents' goals, their capacity to take advantage of available opportunities, their commitment and perseverance, their passions and interests, and the extent to which they are 'busy people.' Having life goals is like self-determination (to which it is undoubtedly related) and it seems to start relatively early in life. At Time 1, Anna and Jasmine were both thinking about going to university and John wanted to be a tradesman. At Time 2, Amber, John, and Jasmine were distinguished by their detailed life intentions.

Anna might now be thought of as living her goals and, with the exception of his job, Damian thinks he is following the right path. For Patrick and Anna, the ambit of choice is restricted by being a parent. Sean's visions are limited (to being able to speak at public meetings) because they must fit with, and be filtered through, his ideological framework and its priorities. Richard does not appear to have life goals and Kerry's appear unrealistic (to do animations and stunt work) in the light of his current skills.

Since secondary school, Anna has taken advantage of every opportunity that has been available, and her commitment to her education and to her family has been unwavering. Likewise, John has steadily moved through the steps to become trade qualified and he plays sport whenever he can, and wherever he is. Jasmine stands out as

the only participant who has been prepared to shift cities to study and, despite her health difficulties, she continues to ‘make her own luck.’

Damian has personal drive, but he has trouble crossing the barriers to better possibilities. Kerry has this difficulty and more. Meanwhile, Amber seems to need second chances with things, and shallow thinking and drug use can get in the way. Regarding the other respondents, Sean is locked into his ideology, Richard is engaged with the criminal justice system, and Patrick could be seen as enmeshed with his family.

A slightly different slant is provided when we summon up the participants’ passions, or the pastimes that capture their imaginations and emotions. Damian seems to have gone from one obsessional interest to another; trains, trucks, and transformers as a small boy to music and warfare at Time 2. Sean is defined by his passions, and karate is really big in Kerry’s life. Jasmine seems to bring emotional commitment to most things that she does, while John lives enthusiastically through his sport, religion, work, family, and friends.

Anna is preoccupied with her career and family and, if it was not for Jasmine, the question could be asked as to whether passions are a male preserve. Patrick is taken up with his children as well, whereas for Richard, the guiding support of sport appears to have waned, and for Amber, risk taking and socialising seem to be substitutes for personal interests.

A further and final perspective is provided on the participants’ engagements when we think about their use of time, or how busy they are. Five of the research group are busy people, and they are Anna, Jasmine, John, Damian, and Sean. In fact, the first four participants on this list are remarkably busy. Richard, Patrick, and Amber are not especially active, and Kerry could be like Sean, in being quite selective in what he does. ‘Busyness’ may be another example of a curvilinear variable that has dangers at either

end. It is interesting that Patrick sees inactivity as problematic while Jasmine know that, for her, being too busy is dangerous.

This first part of the section on Personhood and Identity concludes with a discussion of the developmental perturbations and turning points that the participants have passed through. The most pressing lesson is that the teenage years seemed to have really intensified the lives of many of them (notably, Anna, Richard, Amber, Jasmine, and Patrick) and, of this group, only Anna and Jasmine have made a reasonably complete return to the values and commitments of the pre-adolescence years.

It is probable that the predispositions were already in place for those who showed pronounced changes in their developmental trajectories, and the demands and freedoms of adolescence simply catalysed them into action. Three of the respondents who had difficult times as teenagers also experienced the breakup of their parents' relationship (Anna, Richard, and Amber), although alternative family forms are common among the research group. Of those who experienced marital transitions, Anna's mother feared the onset of adolescence, and Amber's mother wanted her to leave the study locality for her secondary schooling.

Damian, Kerry, Sean, and John were comparatively untouched by the turmoil of the teenage years, although it is possible that there are some different reasons for their relative immunity. The common feature that these participants have is that they are all male, and being an adolescent female may be especially perilous in socially disadvantaged areas. It is conjectured that Damian may have been exempt from some social pressures because of he had a victim status. Possibly, he already had a role to play and nothing he could do would provide a path to acceptance.

It could be that Kerry shared Damian's experience, but he may have been largely insulated by the strong protective factors that coalesce around him. Nevertheless, Kerry has very probably lost a lot by missing out on the social, substance and sexual

experimentation of adolescence, and his experiential and skill deficits may limit him for many years.

We do not know very much about Sean's teens, except that he stayed six years at secondary school when others of the group were happy to decamp after half that amount of time. Uniquely, perhaps, Sean was at school for an education, and we can speculate that what he thought and did was unlike anybody else.

John's adolescence should have been tumultuous but it was not. It is a fundamental psychological tenet that past behaviour predicts future behaviour (Meyer, Chapman, & Weaver, 2009), but John not only challenged this belief, he turned it on its head. One possible explanation is that John was burnt out in terms of acting out. What the data suggest, however, is that this young person was fostered by a highly competent family at a propitious time (before puberty), and that the new parents were insistent enough, consistent enough, and persistent enough to reverse the direction of his developmental trajectory.

The study of individual perturbations and turning points is really interesting and instructive, and here a perturbation is defined as a change in a trajectory with a negative outcome, and a turning point is an alteration with an adaptive outcome. For the research group, alternative living arrangements, whether occasioned by adoption, fostering, or the dissolution of parental relationships, tend to be perturbations. John represents a most dramatic exception to this rule and, for him, leaving Jan and joining his foster parents was a turning point.

John's new foster/foster placement was a single change that precipitated a sheath of benefits, whereas other participants (Anna and Jasmine) have benefitted from a series of turning point experiences. For Anna it was meeting her partner, getting pregnant, being sent to the activity centre, and attending the teen parent school; and for Jasmine it has been the new professional training course and meeting her current partner. The

good things in Jasmine's life course have had to compete with a collection of perturbations, such as the death of her grandmother, 'failure' at secondary school, and an eating disorder.

There a number of cautions that qualify the utility of the turning points idea. Firstly, by definition, the meaning of a turning point is dependent on an understanding of previous events. In large part, Damian thinks of his polytechnic music course as changing the direction of his life because it was a major success relative to the rest of his educational history. Secondly, there is no way of measuring the impact of a turning point, except retrospectively. At the time that it was announced, it is unlikely that Anna's first pregnancy (at 15 years) would have been seen as a circumstance that was likely to bring about an education and a career, and renewed relationships, as well as a new family unit.

A third issue with turning points is that, while they do good things for the person being observed, they might have adverse effects for the people associated with them. Becoming a parent has affected Patrick's identity and it has had other advantages, but his children are now being raised by his parents who, presumably, had no small part in his own developmental difficulties.

A further point is that parents work hard to prevent their children from having turning point experiences because they could turn out to be perturbations. As was said about Kerry's adolescence, it is probable that his collective protective forces are denying him the possibility of both perturbations and turning points. Opting for the developmental status quo can ultimately be self-defeating and unrealistic, but it is also understandable because routine can be reassuring.

Most of the members of the research group have had turning point experiences as they have trod their life course and it is these, perhaps, that have given them a sense of personal progress. Sean gives a classic statement of a lifespan perspective when he

describes his life as book that is being read. More in keeping with the electronic age, Jasmine established a website to chart her progress while studying in another city.

Richard and Patrick have both been prompted to look back on their lives by becoming parents, and to wonder what they were like when they were young. John recently had a meeting with his biological family, to find out where he comes from and to know his whakapapa. And Damian, Amber, and Anna, amongst others, have a strong sense of the future.

### **More than Building Blocks**

One absolutely basic lesson emerges from the case data and, simply stated, it is the greater the coherence of the parts that contribute to the making of a person, the greater is that person's adaptivity, positivity, and productivity. Several of the participants in the present study showed that they understood that an entity is greater than its constituents. Sean said "you have to integrate things into a whole" and Damian made this observation about the protective factors in his life: "I think the whole thing's important. Everything about it's important, 'cos after awhile it all fits into one little thing." The proposition that is being put forward here is a little different from the accepted notion that 'doing well' is proportional to the presence of protective factors (e.g., Masten, 2001), since it is suggested that it is better to have related and connected protective factors and assets, and it is also proposed that increments in coherence can translate into gains in personal competence and wellbeing.

All nine of the case studies contain important lessons and insights, and some of them are profound in the messages that they provide. John might be thought of as the touchstone for all the other personal situations, as he is a very positive, productive, and prosocial person, and the first decade of his life was extraordinarily difficult. What John has enjoyed for the last twelve years is a seamless envelope of supports. He lives on a marae with his family, and he works, worships, plays sport, and socialises locally.

For John, family, faith, friends, employment, and culture cross over endlessly, and each protective influence ceaselessly supports all of the others.

John's foster parents have been central to his personal accomplishments, and what has characterised their care giving over the years of this longitudinal investigation has been an unfailing faith in John and in their capacity to assist him. At Time 1, one of his foster parents said "What we're teaching him is what he's missed out on", and it is probably appropriate that John places family first, and before all of his other protective influences. It is contended that, this young man has modelled the care and concern that he has received, and it shows in his friendly and forgiving demeanour.

The interconnection of protective factors and supports that John now benefits from was in place for Jasmine at Time 1. As the years have passed, some protective forces have dropped away (religious adherence, sport), others have been retained or changed (parental support, culture, education), and some new ones have been acquired (career, partner). Possibly, Jasmine lost the potency and the beneficial synergy of the Time 1 protective factors, and this helps us to understand the development of her eating disorder.

Jasmine has had, however, a longstanding predisposition to anxiety. For example, a teacher at the first assessments said that she appeared as if she had the weight of the world on her shoulders. As the established supports receded in Jasmine's life, balance and equanimity may have diminished, and her undoubted drive and determination found self-destructive outlets. Hopefully for this young women, career and intimate relationships (and possibly children later) will give her the stimulation and sustenance that she seeks.

Anna had affective issues in childhood, and she presumably had both internalising and externalising problems in adolescence. This participant may have been 'turned around' by a succession of skilfully applied social service interventions;



firstly, at the activity centre, and secondly at the teen parent school. Both of these programmes were of sufficient breadth and depth that Anna was provided with relevant opportunities, and she also felt confident enough to take advantage of the openings that were on offer. For this reason, it is probably inappropriate to see this young person's turning points as chance events, and certainly Anna was closely supported as she transitioned between the teen parent education facility and her nursing course.

Anna always had the support of her mother and grandmother and, as she moved successively from secondary school to tertiary education, she divorced her delinquent associates and developed new relationships with dedicated students. By this and other means, Anna has contributed to, and benefitted from, a consistent array of protective forces that now includes her family, friends, partner, job, education, and career.

As with all of the other participants, Anna's story raises particular questions. This young person has been comprehensively loved (mother, grandmother, partner, children, social service agents) and she has repeatedly been the recipient of actions where people have put themselves out for her. It possibly is not a coincidence that Anna works in a care facility and that she is training to be a nurse. In fact, there may be a larger matter here, and it could be that there are specific patterns of protective factors that give rise to particular resilience outcomes.

Sean's personal situation lends weight to the notion that there could be an assortment of resilience packages. Nevertheless, it might be more accurate and useful to conceptualise this young man's circumstances as a response to risk factors and stressors rather than being occasioned by beneficent forces. Sean obtains many advantages from his political commitment, like identity, emotional regulation, ethics, and collegueship. However, this participant seems to be motivated mostly by anger, which could stem from a sense of social rejection and powerlessness in childhood. Moreover, Sean's dated ideological diversion does not, and cannot, translate into

constructive actions. Indeed, it tends to keep him at home and away from other people, while also making him contemptuous of intimacy and of having fun.

Radical political involvements may be the same as gang participation and represent substitutory engagements, which take things away, as well as giving things to a person. For Richard, the attraction of gang membership is completely understandable; his upbringing was fractionated and his needs were not met. Gangs provide acceptance, but the price is high because it means that all socially sanctioned supports are shunned and denied.

The interviewer was impressed by the strong feelings to affiliate that emanated from both of these young men. Both Richard and Patrick use their children to comfort them, and this could be seen as an emotional distortion, and as a potential contributor to another generation of personal difficulties.

Patrick tells us about the potential significance of parenthood for disadvantaged adult males, and he underlines the deleterious personal consequences of early rejection and fractionation. This participant's school records show that he attended ten primary schools and, possibly, Patrick represents hidden resilience (Ungar, 2004) because he has defied the odds in his own way.

Kerry has had extensive protection and scaffolding and, in contrast to Anna, John and Damian, this is going to have to continue. Interestingly, Kerry, Anna, John, and Damian, were all identified at primary school as having special learning needs and, in all cases, it seems to have worked to their advantage. It could be that struggling at school is beneficial in the longer term, or it may be that the special attention that the participants received helped them. It would be interesting to know about the mechanism that was in operation here. For instance, it could be that teachers responded to these particular children because they cared about them. Or, alternatively, the

presence of learning difficulties might have made the participants ‘targets’ for attention and caring.

Along with all of the other participants, Kerry provides us with a perspective on the place of anxiety and distress in people’s lives. Like many of the others, he also gives us a strategy for dealing to these difficulties and, for Kerry, it is trying to prevent other people’s judgements getting to him. Damian follows Kerry, in showing us that obsessional interests can be similar to denial and delusions and be protective.

Actually, Damian almost disputes the coherence principle because, arguably, he is doing reasonably well but there are not a lot of supports evident in his life. However, when we look below the surface we see quite a connection of family, personal interests, girlfriend, special friend, and mentor; and he had the primary advantage of a mother who loved him for himself as well. Having said this, there is a sense that Damian has been severely let down by others, who damned him with diagnoses, who failed to effectively remediate his situation, and who did not give him appropriate oversight and guidance.

Lastly, there is Amber and, with Sean, she gives us some lessons on the role of power in relationships. As well as loving her mother and trying to please her, the participant has bullied her, and it seems to have been to Amber’s disadvantage. John has two complaints about Jan; she left him alone and she did not discipline him. Amber’s mother was ‘soft’ on her, and it could have left her vulnerable to the risk factors of delinquent youth, drugs, and gangs; and risk forces are like protective factors in forming into consistent and comprehensible patterns.

Amber does not have John’s understanding of the connection between intention and action; “you can’t watch it happen, you have to make it happen.” She has personal goals, but they are likely to remain dreams unless she has a turning point experience. Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs, such as her attempts to re establish

relationships with her extended family, and this could be a building block that ultimately leads to a productive pattern of positivity and prosocial engagements.

## **Discussion**

### **Introduction**

This section of the thesis provides a culmination and an extension to the literature, methodology, and results that have been presented to this point. The Discussion begins with a second report on the research process and, specifically, on the contributions of the ‘mixed methods’ to this investigation. Next, the individual cases are revisited and the analysis is deepened through the use of relevant literature. In a sense, the new literature provides further contextualisation of the case studies (Yardley, 2000) and IPA allows this to occur at this stage (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The section on the individual cases addresses the multiplicity of pathways exhibited by the participants, the operation of risk and protective factors, the experience of poverty, the role of chance in people’s lives, and the standards of functioning debate. The ‘standards’ issue is dealt with differently in this part, and a number of additional vantage points are described.

The review of the individual cases is followed by additional analysis of each of the superordinate themes, and these are relationships, contexts of development, and personhood and identity. The relationships subsection looks at the skills of relationship building, and the contexts subsection considers, successively, schooling, culture and ethnicity, religious beliefs, and occupations and careers. Again, the personhood and identity division follows the same structure as the equivalent part in the Results section; and further perspectives are provided on the physical self, self-awareness, self-esteem, affective issues, goal setting, taking advantage of opportunities, the experience of adolescence, and turning point events.

The resilience model that follows arises logically from the foundational literature, the application of the research methods and the results that were obtained, and the further analyses of the Discussion section that precede it. The model has four

components; relationships, relationship synergies, executive functioning, and purposeful action. Each of these constituents is elaborated, and each of them already has significant support in the resilience literature. The resilience model provides some suggestions for further research and it also contributes to the concluding comments for the thesis, which comprise some general principles for responding to people who are experiencing tough times.

### **The research process: Multiple lenses**

As we know, this investigation calls on data amassed from participant interviews, tests, inventories and samples of written work, parent and teacher interviews, and school and specialist agency reports at Time 1 and, more recently, on personal interviews at Time 2. In large part, the way that the assessments were done here, moving from the judgments of others in the first instance to self-evaluations on the second occasion, reflects a standard difference between studies of resilience in children and in adults (Luthar, Sawyer, & Brown, 2006). However, Luthar and Brown (2007) also say that they are unaware of any investigator asking children about their feelings of happiness as was done in the present study at Time 1.

A number of judgements were made to accommodate the Time 1 and Time 2 data, like the decision to place the textual analysis under the headings of ‘protective factors’, ‘risk factors’, and ‘resilience’. These terms are clearly more distant from experience compared to some others, such as strengths, vulnerabilities, and coping. The reasons for doing this have been given, but as much as anything it was driven by a desire to bridge the worlds of ‘shared’ and ‘unshared’ experience.

A profound contribution of the phenomenological methodology is that it reveals the intelligibility of different patterns of behaviour, as Ungar (2003) suggests that it does. We can see the world as the participants see it. Sean is a prominent example of the power of the personal perspective in the present study; and according to this view

Trotskyism works very well for him, and there is no need for any continuing analysis or comment. Qualitative research (and IPA specifically) shows us how participants appraise events and relationships, and it provides Lerner's (2006b) 'individual laws' of development that can complement the general findings of quantitative resilience studies.

The qualitative interviews at Time 2 delivered rich personal understandings of present and past events and, equally, the number and variety of assessments at Time 1 intentionally gave a comprehensive and detailed appreciation of each child's situation. As it transpired, the broader assessment package that was used in 1998, and which included personal interviews, did suggest that there are limitations to sole reliance on the interview method. The Time 2 interviews did not pick up on some important aspects of people's lives that the investigator knew about, and one 'ghost' that lurked behind several of the transcripts was the presence of an absent parent.

Smith (2004) encourages the "interrogation" of one research approach by another, and each of the 'external' and 'internal' vantage points in this investigation made special contributions to our understanding of resilience. This thesis aspires to an integrated understanding of personal functioning and adaptation, and to provide an answer of theoretical worth to Yardley's (2008) question of "So what?"; which might be posed by a dispassionate observer in relation to any research study. It is contended that the availability of the Time 1 data plus the presence of more mature, and more reflective, participants at Time 2, meant that it was possible to model resilience as a complex developmental process, and this probably would not have been achieved if there had been reliance on either self reports or on the reports of other people entirely.

Ostensibly, there is a paradox in the findings of this investigation because an intensely subjective methodology (IPA) appears to show that influences outside of the individual (external protective factors and actions) have a higher salience than components such as self-awareness and reflection. There are at least two answers to this

supposed dilemma. Firstly, we hear what the participants tell us and what is meaningful to them. And as Schoon (2006) suggests, responses are not solely concerned with thoughts and feelings; they also encompass cognition and affect *about* events and behaviour.

Qualitative studies which involve listening to the voices of the study participants can generate new insights into how constellations of risk and competence are experienced by the individuals themselves and how these experiences are embedded in the multiple and wider aspects of their lives. (p. 153)

The second point is that it is no longer really appropriate to centre causation completely within the individual in a person-context conceptualisation of human adaptation and development. The interconnected quality of people and settings means that some resilience commentators, for instance, talk about the mother-child dyad (or the parent-child system), rather than a child alone, when discussing children's adaptive functioning (Seifer, 2003).

### **Individual cases**

The nine lives that have been studied over time show an accumulation, and the consequences, of person-context interactions and, inevitably, there are nine individual and unique patterns. Significantly, not one of the participants has evidenced a 'smooth trajectory' in the sense of having a steady progression, or an unremittingly positive or negative developmental sequence. Nevertheless, there are few surprises across Time 1 and Time 2 - and arguably neither should there be, given the explanatory power of the contemporary human development framework, and the depth of the personal assessments.

We begin our further analysis of individual cases with Sean and, arguably, this participant has been affected by events in his early life. Young children probably need to believe that their parents will protect them from danger (Luthar, 2006), and this participant experienced quite the opposite in his mother's attempts to suffocate one or



more of her children. Sean states that it is a parent's obligation to care for his or her children, and his own early experiences do seem to have coloured the lens with which he now views relationships. It is probable that the participant's parents are paying a huge price for the mother's treatment of her children. Sean's mother barely rated a mention in his interview and his father, with whom he spent so many hours watching war movies as a child, is now characterised as possessing a "kind of liberal pretence."

Richard and Patrick joined gangs, and what other option was realistically open to them? Human development theorists of whatever orientation typically have an appreciation of the importance of caregiver responsivity, or maternal sensitivity or warmth (Dishion & Patterson, 2006), and it seems likely that this quality (however defined) was lacking in the upbringings of these two participants. Patrick's mother was a drug user and it is possible that, like other drug addicts, she neglected her son (Luthar et al., 1998, cited by Kumpfer & Summerhays, 2006), and there were also clear indications of excessive punishment when the participant was at primary school.

Richard was subjected to a lot of pressure to achieve as a sportsperson, but without there being any real understanding of what this involves; and this deficiency may be fairly common in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Seaman, Turner, Hill, Stafford, & Walker, 2005). The upshot was that both Richard and Patrick found substitute families and, in the short term, gang participation probably can work well for young people in these circumstances (Masten & Obradovic, 2006), but these involvements have also had the effect of "confining them within the social niches of marginal adjustment" (Dishion & Patterson, 2006, p. 520).

Anna and Jasmine have had zigzagging developmental trajectories that exemplify Rutter's (1990) protective processes. Both of these young women had bad experiences, and both of them attempted to contain their difficult times and to open up new and more productive pathways. When Anna became aware that she was pregnant

at 15 years-of-age she took herself into the shower and took out all of her piercings and, in doing so, she symbolically removed herself from her deviant associations (Deschesnes, Fines, & Demers, 2006).

Similarly, Jasmine has learnt from her periods of eating difficulties that her cognitions can be aberrant and that they can cause her problems. Jasmine also now knows that she needs other people around her to validate and encourage her; “I need to be growing in the right greenhouse.”

Schoon (2006) suggests that there are complexities in female adult development that do not apply to men as they typically have to integrate more social roles, and we see this in the lives of Jasmine and Anna. However, for Jasmine there could well be other sources of complexity as she has high levels of ego development, and this tends to bring with it more introspection and self-criticism, as well as greater maturity (Luthar, 2006).

Interestingly, there are parallels between Jasmine and ‘Rachel’ in Hauser et al.’s (2006) longitudinal investigation, as there are across other identified participants in the American study and the current research, and the parallels might be seen as representing some form of reliability check on the present project. For instance, Hauser et al. (2006) make the following observation regarding their Rachel, which could equally apply to Jasmine:

Rachel’s ten-year plan for her life is so expansive and ambitious that when she comes a cropper she hits the ground hard [. . .] Having recognised that change is possible, she puts herself in the way of it. She makes risky decisions and sometimes she suffers for them, but the direction she’s moving in is good. [. . .] Once aimless nearly to the point of paralysis, she regroups after every frustration, setback, disappointment, and – yes – failure, and gets back in the saddle again, a better rider. (p. 266)

An individual developmental trajectory occurs in association with other people’s lives, which are also in progress. Luthar (1999) makes the point that a mother’s own upbringing often impacts on her relationships with her children, and it may be of some

significance, for instance, that Amber's mother had difficulties in adolescence. Equally, all of the participants' actions have consequences for some other people.

Elder and Shanahan (2006) discuss how an early teenage pregnancy can change the lives of a young person's mother and grandmother, and Anna's first pregnancy certainly had effects on her grandmother's life as she spent most weekdays with her. Intimate relationships with a prosocial partner (Anna, Jasmine, and Damian) can contribute in a variety of ways to resilience and law abiding conduct (Laub & Sampson, 2003), whereas a relationship with an antisocial partner (Amber, and possibly Richard and Patrick earlier) is perilous (Dishion & Patterson, 2006).

The participants' siblings are generally shadowy figures in the present research and, in part, this is an artifact of the person-centered methodology. Both risk and resilience theorists see brothers and sisters as potentially powerful forces with respect to developmental outcomes. Luthar (2006) says that siblings can modify the effects of high risk and Patterson (1986, cited by Dishion & Patterson, 2006) believes that they can act as fellow travellers on the road to an antisocial career.

To grow up in the study locality is to grow up amidst patent social disadvantage. This fact may not be immediately apparent in the case studies, as they convey a strong sense of dynamic lives. Ironically, the imprint of poverty may not be especially obvious because it is actually all pervasive as it impacts on people's health, their family structures and social relations, their interests and pastimes, and their personal attitudes. A number of the participants had asthma in childhood and there were other health issues that could be related to socioeconomic status, such as Damian's mother dying from emphysema caused by smoking.

Teen pregnancy, solo parenthood, and divorce are more prevalent in the ecology of poverty (Karney & Bradbury, 2005) and the demographics of the present research group reflect these trends, although it should be emphasised that the participants are not

a representative or typical group of people. Close relationships in socially disadvantaged areas have fewer supports and face greater challenges, and Karney and Bradbury (2005) provide evidence that shows that any intimate associations which were subject to these stressors would be likely to experience difficulties.

The research group makes reasonably frequent references to direct action and violence. Kerry has age mates who were stabbed and some sort of vigilante response was contemplated. At the Time 2 assessment, Richard was awaiting sentencing on a serious assault charge and as we know, Patrick and Amber also have gang associations. Notably, Patrick tells us that he (only) hits back when he is hit first. Anna was prepared to confront the caregiver of the child who was bullying her son. And Jasmine, who has arguably transitioned from the 'lower' class to the middle classes, has whanau who have been physically attacked.

It is questionable whether a middle class youth would become a Trotskyite like Sean. Similarly, all of John's interests and pastimes (rugby league, trade occupation, minority religious denomination) are typical for the study locality. Indeed, when John was seen at Time 1 he was attending a high decile school and he was distinctly unhappy; "They say I wear stink clothes."

Jasmine's situation now is somewhat different from the other participants as her professed interests include yoga, photography, design, art, politics, the environment, and women's rights. Significantly, perhaps, even when she was rebelling against her own and other people's expectations for her to excel, she worked as a receptionist rather than in a factory or on a super market checkout.

Something that is difficult to describe, but which may permeate every impoverished area, is a sense of tired, intense, and stressed functionality - or so it seemed to the writer on occasions. Obviously, some of the participants in the present study have detailed ambitions and hopes, and these are probably key components in

their resilience as Seaman et al. (2005) and others suggest. But what is being referred to here is something that is more atmospheric, or a matter of ambience, and it probably arises from, amongst other contributors, the innumerable children and teenagers who are to be seen on the footpaths, the seemingly endless stretches of standard state houses, the volumes of vehicle traffic that appear to be constantly passing through the arterial routes, the occurrences of graffiti and wilful damage, the presence of shops protected by roller doors, and the sensation of personal danger when walking the streets at night.

These aspects aside, the study locality and similar environs are places where people enact their lives, and research shows that many children and parents in socially disadvantaged areas can have a positive view of where they live (e.g., Seaman et al., 2005). Findings from the New Zealand survey of adolescent health and wellbeing (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008b) provide a comparative perspective on this topic and, according to this study, teenagers in less affluent areas like their neighbourhood less than youth in more affluent areas. Young people in 'poor' places trust people less and do not feel as safe, and they also complain more frequently about the quality of the physical environment. Nevertheless, home is typically the place that we know, and when Richard was asked why he liked the study location he said, "It's just family, friends and that are there."

We might speculate on how things could have been different for the research participants. Luck plays a colossal role in our lives and some social scientists, like Gagne (Gagne, 2003), explicitly include the operation of chance in their models. Hauser et al. (2006) say of their patients that they have all been lucky in certain respects, but they have also had unenviable lives; "how many of us would choose to have grown up in their shoes?" (p. 285).

There is probably little to be gained from conjecture on what might have been for our young men and women, but several situations can be cited to underline the

significance of chance in people's lives. For instance, John had supreme good fortune in being fostered into the family that he was and, with perhaps equal force, Patrick was the victim of an inopportune adoption.

Some researchers believe that it is a person's attitude to the events in their lives that makes the difference (Davis et al., 1998 and Affleck et al., 1991, cited by Luthar, 2006), and amongst our research group, Jasmine exemplified this characteristic of 'benefit finding' in her constructive response to the misfortune of her grandmother dying; [if she had not died] "I wouldn't be the strong person I am now. . .or maybe I'd be strong in a different kind of way."

Masten and Obradovic (2006) list ten issues and controversies in resilience theorising and research, and the first question on the list is: "Who decides or defines the criteria for judging good adaptation?" (p. 20-21). The developmental tasks response to this matter has been canvassed in the first part of the thesis, with related cautions, and here it is intended to deepen the debate and to personalise it in relation to the participants' circumstances. We begin by looking at resilience in a quasi-biological sense as 'survival', and then we consider how some of the young people are doing according to the implicit standards of the majority culture, or middle class. After this, we consider the utility of asking the participants for their views on their functioning; as we are enjoined to do so by Harvey and Delfabbro (2004) and others. Next, the idea is presented that we could examine individual resilience in terms of relative developmental complexity and, specifically, in relation to the development of character. This section concludes with an attempt to resolve the vexed question of standards of functioning.

The conceptualisation of resilience as survival comes in a series of gradations. On the first level, resilience is simply contextualised, and this is reflected in statements like that made by Stanley et al. (2000) with respect to the younger Richard. At Time 1,

it was said that Richard might be viewed as being resilient “in the context of his personal, neighbourhood and sociocultural circumstances” (p. 54). A slightly different perspective is contained in the view that resilient adaptation entails making the most of whatever is available in the environment; “The issue here is one of resources rather than categorical judgements about what is and is not successful adaptation under stress” (Ungar, 2008, p. 221). This perspective could easily encompass Patrick’s situation when he was living by his wits as a street kid in the study locality and in Auckland.

The most intensely biological view of resilient adaptation, which is our third ‘survival’ level, is completely devoid of value considerations (whether explicit or implicit), other than that behaviour has evolutionary significance. According to this interpretation, severe adversity can be good for the perpetuation of the species because it means that some organisms are conditioned by this experience (Hofer, 2006). For instance, we know that highly adverse early environments for rats and monkeys produce an array of physiological changes and the author suggests that these can resemble the effects of poverty and social upheaval for humans.

The physiological changes that are occasioned in animals by stressors include increased appetite, highly reactive adrenocortical responses, a propensity for depression, some cognitive differences, and earlier sexual maturation. In addition, we also now know that some acquired maternal behaviours (less attentive responding) resulting from adversity can be transmitted across generations. Hofer (2006), comments:

These traits have one thing in common – they increase the chances that a greater number of offspring will survive under these particular conditions in subsequent generations. Offspring with “normal” and “healthy” patterns of behaviour and physiology are less successful under such chaotic and persistently threatening conditions. (p. 261).

Clearly, biological reductionism can take us to unhelpful places, and the invocation of hegemonic, majority social discourses and standards to judge people’s functioning seems almost refreshing by comparison. Middle class values are often

assumed and rarely examined (Power, Edwards, Whitty, & Wigfall, 2003), but they are reflected in tangible form in many of our social institutions such as the legal system and education. Patrick, Richard, and Amber have committed crimes and they are light on educational qualifications. Sean and Kerry have had intermittent employment, and it is likely that few people would aspire to Damian's employment as a yard person at the freezing works – and those that did favour the job would not include Damian himself. Hence, the application of presumed middle class criteria could reduce the 'success quotient' of the research group to three people (John, Jasmine, and Anna) and, as indicated above, probably only Jasmine has the requisite co-curricular activities and interests to make the cut.

Harvey and Delfabbro (2004) argue for self-estimations of resilience and personal functioning, but they also seem to have a conditional view of their value. Equally, Schoon (2006) does not advocate that individual determinations should be the sole determination. Rather, this author recommends that "The identification of positive adaptation *should not be concluded* without reference to the voices, interpretations and viewpoints of those individuals, families and communities experiencing the adversity" (p. 153, italics added). Interestingly, all of the participants in the present study believe that they are 'doing okay', and many of their self-evaluations resonate with resilience. For example, Patrick concluded, "Compared to what I was. . .what's happened, I reckon I've done pretty good. . .excellent."

In his interview at Time 2, Sean said "you have to ask people what they live for. . .it's a question mark for them to consider." Actually, the place of personal meaning, and more specifically morality, within standards of functioning is a question that we should consider. Sean knows what he lives for, and his political commitment has lifted him beyond preoccupations with culture to internationalism ('workers of the world unite'). Similarly, Jasmine hopes to serve the peoples of the Pacific through her chosen



profession, and she is the epitome of self-improvement; “I’ll change myself if I think I need to improve as a person.”

John has practical dimensions that are also in keeping with advances in character development. He does not drink, smoke, or consume other drugs and yet he appears to have a normal social life. John’s abstemious behaviour relates to his religiosity, but it also says something about his strength as a person. Stanley, Rodeka, and Eden (1999) found that, amongst year 7 and 8 students who identified themselves as Maori in Porirua, 37 percent had smoked a cigarette in the last month, and 38 percent had consumed alcohol. As these data may suggest, a young Maori male in his early twenties who has eschewed all substances is likely to be distinctly atypical.

Sean, John, and Jasmine voice their ethical convictions, whereas Anna seems to just get on with leading a good life as she defines it. What we may have represented here is the conflict between the cognitivist school of moral development, most notably expressed in Kohlberg’s stage theory, and Gilligan’s feminist critique (Santrock, 2008). According to the latter view, logic and abstract principles may mostly dictate how ethical men behave, but women have a warmer, relationship-based morality that gives consideration to connectedness, interpersonal communication, and concern for others. Anna does express a relationship-based ethic, but then so does Damian, Kerry, and Patrick; and also Amber and Richard to an extent.

Clearly, how people judge the adequacy of human functioning is a very difficult and complex question. By way of a conclusion, it is intended to give an intimation of a possible solution but, before that, there are some additional issues to consider that might be seen as miring the matter even further. The first issue is that resilient people are unlikely to be conventional people, so how relevant are conventional standards to them? In her analysis of the British Cohort Study and the National Child Development Study,

Schoon (2006) found that resilient participants had different preferences from low-risk adults and, by definition, resilient individuals choose idiosyncratic pathways.

Externalising behaviours pose a second complication to any assessment of human competence. We have problems with resilient adaptation that is accompanied by internalising aspects such as anxiety and depression, but what about when it is in league with anger? Hauser et al. (2006) say that a common denominator amongst all of the children that they dealt with was that they were “very, very, very angry” (p. 25). Finally, there is the matter of where feeling ‘special’ as a human being fits into the scheme of things. Amongst the participants in the present research there are people like Kerry, and karate means that he does not feel “ordinary. . .like a normal person.”

Perhaps psychology cannot answer the standards of functioning debate which, in different guises, has challenged centuries of philosophers and theologians, as well as contemporary social scientists in disparate disciplines. Alternatively, behavioural psychology might suggest a comparatively simple and straightforward solution in the conception of single-subject research designs. The twists and turns in the developmental trajectories of Anna, Jasmine, and John resemble the reversal designs of behavioural psychology, where the participant is his or her own standard, and progress can be graphically obvious (Kerr & Nelson, 2002).

Another, potential, psychological answer is provided later in the Discussion by way of a resilience model and, as with the alternative from behavioural psychology, the answer is more within the scheme itself. It is suggested that it is by means such as these that we might increasingly avoid the subjectivity and suspicion of external criteria.

### **Themes across cases**

The US National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004, quoted by Luthar & Brown, 2007), stated that “relationships are the ‘active ingredients’ of the environment’s influence on healthy human development” (p. 943). This point is

pursued in the next section of the Discussion, which contains the resilience model, but at this juncture we can usefully ask how it is that some people access and enjoy relationships, while other people are socially disconnected. Werner (1982, cited by Newman, 2004) observed that resilient young people are adept at recruiting support from surrogate parents, and Stanley (2003b) and others note that social isolation is a common and defining characteristic of children who are at risk.

Hauser et al. (2006) have made an attempt to identify the mechanisms that are used to solicit positive and sustaining relationships by comparing the attitudes and actions of their resilient participants with those of their contrast group. Fundamentally, resilient young people regard relationships seriously, and they are motivated to engage with others, and this may be despite “an appalling accumulation of losses, abuses, inconsistencies, rejections, and abandonments” (p. 276). They watch other people closely, they monitor their own behaviour in relationships, and they continually learn from their engagements.

Members of Hauser et al.’s (2006) contrast group did not devote the same energy and attention to social connections, and so they were not well positioned to take advantage of opportunities as they arose. As well, they had more difficulty accepting themselves and other people, they failed to revise their interpretations of relationships and, for them, anger and resentment were dominant emotions.

How individuals identify other people who have the capacity to provide them with support is a serious research question, as is the associated issue concerning the characteristics of support providers (Thompson, Flood, & Goodvin, 2006). Neither of these questions was addressed in the thesis research and we can only speculate on their relevance and significance. Without in any way attempting to be flippant, it appears as if Kerry was born into social support, Anna, Jasmine, and Damian (and to a lesser extent

Amber) have refined their support acquiring skills, and John had a ready-made package of supportive relationships thrust upon him.

Each of the four contexts of development that have been identified across the cases, like any of a number of other topics associated with the present investigation, could be a major study in its own right. With respect to the participants' secondary schooling, it is intended to restrict the commentary to a brief developmental systems analysis. Pianta (2006) says that educational research typically does not utilise general systems theory, which is surprising, perhaps, given the prominence of this approach in other human development disciplines.

The transition to high school itself can be a problematic event, and especially for young people living in poor communities and who have some history of academic difficulties. Eccles and colleagues (1996, 1997, 1998, cited by Pianta, 2006) conclude that the movement from primary school to secondary school tends to produce declines in interest and intrinsic motivation, and in self-concept and academic self-confidence. Effectively then, the new year 9 student starts on the back foot, but he or she quickly finds that the peer group is available to provide solace, support, and some serious distractions. Steinberg and Brown (1989, cited by Pianta, 2006) make clear that, while parents have the early impact on academic trajectories, it is a student's peers who subsequently determine his or her daily behaviours, school enjoyment, and whether they do their homework.

Secondary school begins differently, and the changes just continue. Many of the catalytic developments are within the young person and, most obviously, there are the pubertal changes of adolescence. These physical changes are accompanied by cognitive and behavioural imperatives for autonomy and selfhood and, as studies show (e.g., Harter, 1996, cited in Pianta, 2006) student-teacher relationships change in high school,

becoming less personal, more formal, and evaluative and competitive to a greater extent.

These alterations that adolescents experience may defy their relational needs and negatively impact on the mediation of student learning. Pianta (2006) concludes his review of Harter's research by saying that, "In this way, teacher-child relationships (which are typically viewed as potential resources for amelioration of risk) can actually exacerbate risk if they are either not positive or do not match the developmental needs of the child" (p. 517).

We did not seek data on the quality of the education that the participants in the present study received, and this is obviously significant information. Secondary schools do differ markedly in how well they serve their students (see, for instance, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979) and three common qualities of schools that promote resilience are caring relationships, high expectations, and meaningful engagement (Cefai, 2008).

Ethnicity may be like socioeconomic disadvantage, and its meaning could be obscured by the vitality and optimism that generally associates with emerging adulthood. Actually, race is lived on a daily basis. Spencer et al. (2006) also say that the lives of ethnic minority youth are often not considered from a developmental perspective and, consequently, their needs, complexity, and circumstances are insufficiently appreciated.

Racism and discrimination are powerful challenges for minority families (Luthar, 2006), and children and adolescents encounter a myriad of obstacles to the successful accomplishment of developmental tasks. In addition, Spencer et al. (2006) suggest that there are specific gender related issues, with minority group females having special challenges around body image and appearance, and males being seen as physically threatening. Spencer (2006) says of African American teenage males, that

“they are expected to shoulder the traditional negative stereotypes associated with male adolescence, along with the added burden of enhanced, often unacknowledged negative imagery linked with minority status” (p. 857).

As stated above, the writer sensed that other people were trepidatious of Richard and Patrick when he was with them in public places and they were only being themselves. Cultural stereotypes undoubtedly have numerous effects; some subtle and others overt. For instance, it is unlikely that very many (if any) of the participants were exposed to positive academic role models at secondary school. According to Luthar (2006), high achieving minority students can experience much anxiety. Jasmine did very well at secondary school until she suddenly disengaged, and it is possible that she was the victim of conflicting expectation effects. On the one side, there could have been societal presumptions about failure and, on the other side, there seem to have been demands from her school to constantly excel, and for her to become the role model that others could emulate.

Religion can be an important source of protection for young people, and it seems to do this by promoting reasonably adaptive coping strategies and by providing support networks (Luthar, 1999; Luthar, 2006). Masten and Obradovic (2006) comment that, although religious beliefs and practices have a regular place in resilience findings, they have been relatively neglected as areas of study. The problem, according to Oser, Scarlett, and Bucher (2006), is that the history of research into religious and spiritual development “has been a history of negative bias and prejudice” (p. 986).

Pejorative judgements about religion are certainly evident in some popular publications, such as Hedges’s (2007), *American fascists: The American right and the war on America*. In this book, Hedges contends that Christian converts have been lonely and angry people, who have sought meaning and safety; “They seek safety, the

safety that comes with a utopian vision that tells them they are protected, loved, guided and blessed” (p. 48).

Hedges’s (2007) explanation does, perhaps, have resonance in some of the sentiments that Sean expresses. For instance, there is this comment that “Trotskyism has always been a movement for the best and for the brightest.” However, Oser et al. (2006) suggest that ‘historical’, or circumstantial, answers may be more relevant in explaining how people come to join cults (so-called), whose members they say, are no more maladjusted than people at large. According to these authors, joining a minority religious group is more probably a case of being in a certain place at a certain time than anything else.

There may be some similarities in the influences that lead young people to join religious movements and gangs. Richard and Patrick grew up with, attended primary and secondary school with, and recreated with, the people with whom they subsequently joined gangs. Possibly, we too readily embrace ‘psychological’ answers, and especially about phenomena that are unfamiliar, when more straight-forward explanations would suffice. Moreover, the psychological interpretations that we choose do tend to stress aberrance and personal disturbance. By way of a contrast, Ungar (2008) provides an analysis of why a young man in rural India might wish to join a paramilitary group, and it is about achieving a sense of belonging, personal meaning, self-efficacy, skills acquisition, and identity; and psychopathology is simply not in the picture.

The final context of development that was identified in the recent interview data was jobs and careers. In various ways, occupations mean a lot to the participants in the present investigation, and studies by Kohn and Schooler (1983) and Ryu and Mortimer (1996) point to the developmental significance of work. Kohn and Schooler (1983, cited by Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2000) followed a group of men (24-64 years) over a ten year period and they found that that the greater the complexity of their jobs (in terms of

requiring creative flexibility and independent judgement), the larger were their gains in intellectual performance.

There are benefits, seemingly, in having challenging work, but the *type* of job that we aspire to may be largely determined by our parents. Ryu and Mortimer (1996, cited by Elder & Shanahan, 2006) found that if a mother had extrinsic work values (e.g., money, security), or intrinsic values (autonomy, job interest), then it was likely that a daughter would have the prominent preference as well. Sons are somewhat different, and the extent to which they pursue jobs with intrinsic values is related to the degree of parental support that they receive.

We begin the review of relevant topics within personhood and identity by considering the physical self. Masten et al. (1990, cited by Newman, 2004) mention individual attractiveness as a protective factor, and in their supplementary notes Hauser et al. (2006) say that attractiveness to other people is often cited as significant.

Arguably, this aspect does not get as much attention as it deserves. Even babies prefer an attractive face to a plain one (Langlois et al. 1990, cited by Hoffman, Paris, & Hall, 1994), but since Sheldon's somatotypes (described by Turner & Helms, 1983) there seems to have been some retreat in developmental studies from considering the power and influence of fine features and physique. John was described in the records for Time 1 as good looking, and this characteristic may well have smoothed his way.

Nevertheless, physicality can also be a distraction, and it would be unhelpful in our work to mistake youth and vigour for competence and coping.

The psychological attribute of self-awareness requires some capacity for reflection, and Hauser et al. (2006) see reflection, along with personal agency and relationships, as a pivotal component of individual resilience. It has already been said that there are some strong parallels between the resilient young adults in the psychiatric



hospital study and the present investigation, and it is difficult not to think of some of our participants when reading words like these:

The resilient kids suspect early that the inner world requires as much skill as the external environment; they look for the rocks that shipwrecked them before, the better to steer clear. In that search, and sometimes just out of curiosity, they are willing to look inward. They observe what goes on in their heads, and their observations accurately show them the conflicting pulls of emotional life. They know themselves as complex. (Hauser et al., 2006, p. 271)

However, while self-awareness and reflection can be a refuge and a source of emotional vitality, as Hauser and colleagues suggest, these traits can also be impediments when they are in excess, and without point or purpose.

Self-esteem, like self-awareness, is associated with complexities. High self-esteem can be protective, but excessively positive views of the self are often maladaptive (Luthar, 2006). Newman (2004) recommends a cautious approach to the promotion of self-esteem which, he says, is often invoked as a panacea for problems of living.

Two specific caveats concerning self-esteem will be briefly made. Firstly, self-esteem does not have inherent moral worth; criminal offenders, as well as the people we favour, can have good self-esteem. Secondly, self-esteem (and affective states generally) can have limited ‘causative’ influence, and it may more generally function as a behavioural correlate, or epiphenomena.

Amongst the participants in this study there is a young person with an eating disorder, and other young people who abuse substances and who have trouble managing their anger. Hence, we return to the question regarding the place of problem behaviour in a resilience profile. Hauser et al. (2006) see resilience and disturbance as inevitable and inseparable; “For children of adversity *are* wounded, often severely. To imply otherwise is to deny the acuteness of suffering in children, who don’t “come” resilient but *become* resilient – *after* they have been hurt” (p. 4, italics in original). However,

Newman (2004) says that the idea that there is some sort of persisting ‘price’ to be paid for resilience is probably wrong. It is suggested that many people have some sadness arising from childhood events, and adult adjustment is about achieving an effective balance and coping with emotional burdens.

The next three topics that we will look at have been strongly implicated in resilient functioning by some theorists, and they are goal setting, taking advantage of opportunities, and being active and energetic. According to Kumpfer and Summerhays (2006), having purpose in life is probably the most important resilience promoting characteristic. Likewise, Dishion and Patterson (2006) contend that a capacity for goal-directed action is critical to individual resilience, and a significant aspect of this planfulness is choosing conducive friends and partners.

In regard to choosing conducive partners, Quinton and Rutter (1988, cited by Rutter, 2006) found that some young women raised in institutions deliberately selected a nondeviant spouse, and this got them away from their families and previous associations. Nonetheless, Schoon (2006) is undoubtedly right when she says that life planning is an acquired skill, and this sentiment is starkly exemplified in the contrasting circumstances of some of the participants in the present study.

Magnusson and Stattin (2006) state that “one of the central problems in individual development lies in the synchronisation of the individual’s mental, biological and behavioral capacities with the demands, opportunities, and restrictions of the proximal and distal environments” (p. 429). Nevertheless, resilient people probably ‘make things happen’ more often than less resilient individuals. The choices and turning points, however, can be a long way back down the chain. For instance, Gustafson et al. (1989, cited by Magnusson & Stattin, 2006) showed that girls who dated boys early were more likely to be destined to traditional homemaking than to a career in early adulthood.

Ungar (2008) uses the terms ‘navigation’ and ‘negotiation’ in respect to individual functioning, and essentially resilience is about making the most of what is available in this formulation. Hauser et al. (2006) say that resilient individuals can expend enormous energy endeavouring to influence their environments, and the authors observe “that it is sometimes tempting to wonder whether this might be the trait that ultimately distinguishes resilient people” (p. 269).

Finally, in this section, we look at the experience of adolescence, and also at the impact of turning points in people’s lives. The majority of the participants in this study had fairly turbulent teen years, and they were exceptional in this way. Santrock (2008) says that the “storm-and-stress” view of adolescence, originating with G. Stanley Hall, has been disputed by international research, and troubled and troublesome youth are a minority.

There are four additional points from the literature on adolescence that are worth repeating here, because of their relevance to the present investigation. Firstly, Ungar (2003) is very likely right when he says that peer pressure is a myth. Patterson et al. (1992) make much the same point, and the ‘pull’ factors are far greater than any ‘push’ factors when it comes to joining an antisocial peer group. The second point originates with Kumpfer and Alvarado (2003, cited by Luthar, 2006), and it is that skilled parenting is the best way to ameliorate adolescent problems.

The next two observations come from Hauser et al. (2006), and together they represent an injunction for us to extend sensitivity and tolerance towards teenagers. The authors contend that we should view the loud, gross, and harsh behaviours of adolescents as exercises, or experiments, in managing themselves and shaping their worlds. Further, Hauser and colleagues alert us to the individual pathways and trajectories that are operating beneath such common adolescent characteristics as

impulsivity and instability, since participants are differentiated as people by the time that they are in their mid-twenties.

Actually, the experience of the present investigation is that any commonality of adolescence is well gone by 22 years of age. Hauser et al. (2006) also suggest that when we use descriptors such as ‘responsibility’ and ‘competence’ we are judging teenagers by adult standards, and we may need to learn to “see in the dark” and “to recognise signs of health even when they are obscured by troubled behavior” (p. 287).

Turning points and developmental perturbations can give an impression of chance that is misleading. Development is defined by continuity and, for every one of us, our present circumstance “is the child of the past and the parent of the future” (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006, p. 419). Nevertheless, the consequences of a seemingly random environment-person interaction are not necessarily predictable, and a small, single event can have large and reverberating effects.

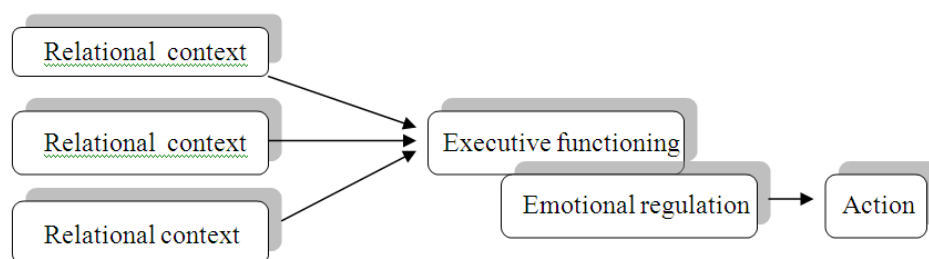
Magnusson (1988, cited by Magnusson & Stattin, 2006) observes that dramatic personal change is more probable when the individual is in a state of disequilibrium. This can often occur at transition points in a person’s life, when there are new opportunities and threats (Newman, 2004). In addition, Schoon (2006) says that many different events are associated with turning points and this is apparent in the developmental trajectories of the study participants. Some of the experiences that produce significant changes in people’s lives are beyond individual control (e.g., prevailing economic conditions), while other changes do reflect deliberate personal choice and action (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006; Schoon, 2006).

### **Resilience model**

The resilience model that is presented below arises from the nine case studies of the present investigation. What became apparent in the analysis of the longitudinal data was that some of the participants presently (or previously) had multiple protective

factors operating in their lives and, furthermore, there often appeared to be connections between and among the pertinent protective factors. In the ‘Building blocks’ section of the thesis the idea was put forward that it is the coherence across protective factors that produces resilience, and one of the study participants, on his own, appears as positive proof of this idea. ‘John’ seems to have a virtually seamless array of positive influences in his situation, and it is difficult to doubt that these factors have been responsible for transforming him from the disturbed and disturbing individual (self-defined) that he was a little more than a decade ago to the pleasant and positive person that he is today.

The model carries the coherence view several steps further and it is contended that resilience particularly, and adaptive responding more generally, in children and youth is determined by the nature and quality of the relationships that are both contained within developmental settings and that exist across relevant contexts. As well, it is suggested that positive and prosocial relationships tend to promote productive executive functioning (and emotional regulation specifically) and these cognitive/affective capacities can translate into intentional actions and the realisation of personal goals. An array of material has been assembled to support this view, which is inherent in the risk and resilience literature, as it also underlies the case studies themselves.



**Figure 3.** Resilience model

## **Relationships.**

Dishion and Patterson (2006) observe that relationships define the proximal environment in which all human development and change occurs. A little more specifically, Hauser et al. (2006) state the “mastery of human emotional and social interaction may be the crucial culmination of all the other aspects of resilience” (p. 280). These authors suggest that social connections, which are engendered by relational skills of the sort discussed in the previous subsection, expose resilient young people to ‘healthy contexts’, and give them access to new satisfactions. Given the pivotal contribution of good relationships to positive adaptation, it is understandable that Luthar (2006) enjoins us to know more about the functional dynamics of effective social interactions.

In fact, when various sources of information are put together, it is apparent that we already know quite a lot about relationships that enhance development. Starting at conception, research shows that there is a reasonably high heritability in either the ability to identify, or to experience, social support (reported by Taylor, 2007). Parents contribute the relevant genes, and they also provide the early care giving relationships.

And the nurturance, support, and modelling that the young person receives from his or her parents is probably mediated through attentional, emotional, and behavioural regulation, and manifested in social competencies and the capacity to elicit additional sources of support.

Masten (1994) summarises the processes that parents and other significant adults deploy with children and youth. In addition to nurturance, support, and modelling, these strategies include teaching, coaching, reinforcing, advising, advocating and providing opportunities for engagements.

As development proceeds, siblings, peers, and teachers bring new relational contexts, and Dishion and Patterson (2006) say that we should see these as representing

layers of influence. Patterson and colleagues (see Reid, Patterson, & Snyder, 2002, for collected papers) utilise microsocial, or moment-by-moment, analyses of social interactions. From these studies they contend that a person's way of responding to their social world becomes both stable and automatic during adolescence. Dishion and Patterson (2006) suggest that relational sets, once established, provide "a basis for ongoing shopping for relationships and settings that support previously established behaviors and patterns" (p. 533).

The menu of processes and skills that make for good relationships is probably predictable; sharing of joint activities, situations structured with intent, support, validation, and self-disclosure and conflict resolution skills, amongst other abilities (Dishion & Patterson, 2006; Taylor, 2007; Thompson et al., 2006). Good marital relationships may be a model of the possibilities for synchronisation and mutual regulatory influence in our social lives (Elder & Shanahan, 2006).

As we know, relationships can become embedded (or deepen) over time, and a mechanism that could be operating in these circumstances is the accumulation of small social investments that become too great in total to lose (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Interestingly, resilient people are not necessarily 'nice' people (Rutter, 1985), but 'unpleasant' people still do have partners and friends, and clearly these individuals can engage in the mutually sustaining activities that characterise continuing relationships.

The potential benefits of social support, or simply of *perceived* social support, are substantial; and they can be life saving on occasions. For instance, Taylor (2007) reports that people who are socially connected are less likely to get sick and, if they do become ill, they will get better quicker than people without such connections. As this example shows, social support can have stress-preventive and stress-buffering functions and, for resilient individuals, both functions can operate simultaneously (Thompson et al., 2006).

Giving support, receiving support, and the psychological effects of support may, in fact, be at the core of cultural differences in adaptive personal functioning.

Thompson et al. (2006) catalogue the relevant issues that may apply, and they include cultural understandings of relationships and social networks, expectations regarding reciprocity and equity, commitments to the group or collective, ideas about what ‘help’ is, and attitudes towards professional assistance.

Taylor et al. (2000, cited by Taylor, 2007) put forward the idea that males and females respond to stress in fundamentally different ways that are biologically based. Whereas males engage in flight-or-fight (aggression or withdrawal), it is suggested that females ‘tend-and-befriend’; which mean, in other words, that they nurture and network. Certainly, there is an array of evidence that indicates that it is probably more beneficial (for both sexes) to have female friends and relatives in a time of trouble than it is to have male connections and associations (Taylor, 2007).

Taylor (2007) says that there could be endocrinal underpinnings that make women better providers of social support, as the ‘affiliative’ hormone oxytocin is enhanced by the presence of estrogen. Indeed, we might begin to speculate that any advantage that females enjoy with respect to resilience could be in differences in relationships and in their biological correlates.

### **Coherence across contexts.**

The idea that there are ‘keystone protective factors’ (Fraser & Galinsky, 1997, cited by Ungar, 2003) is achieving increasing prominence in resilience theorising. Masten and Obradovic (2006) say that the first three waves of resilience research have exposed ‘hot spots’, or central process, that make substantial contributions at multiple levels. Pianta (2006) more explicitly defines these processes in relational terms, and he suggests that they are threaded through the settings that young people occupy. Similarly, Dishion and Patterson (2006) assert that it is a challenge for the future “to



think systemically about the joint influence of multiple relationship contexts on social behaviour” (p. 525).

As it is, notions of multiple causation and contextual cohesion pervade both the risk and resilience literatures, and it is possible to identify six closely related ‘principles’ that are relevant to the argument that is being presented. Briefly, these principles or themes are:

1. Risk factors, and protective factors, associate. Jessor and Jessor (1977) are often identified as early contributors to this idea, but it is also expressed in medical terms as comorbidity (Fergusson, Poulton, Horwood, Milne, & Swain-Campbell, 2004) and, as psychosocial attributes rather than as symptoms, it continues to have currency (Boles, Biglan, & Smolkowski, 2006).
2. There are particular ‘groupings’ of risk factors and, presumably, of protective factors as well, that are related to specific situations. For instance, there are the risks that are associated with divorce, like interpersonal problems and difficulties caused by reduced earnings for mothers (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003).
3. Risk factors and protective factors have additive effects. This principle was classically shown in research by Sameroff and colleagues (see Sameroff & Rosenblum, 2006, for a recent summary) where each risk factor in a child’s environment reduced their IQ by four points, on average. Similar work has been done with respect to the Christchurch Health and Development Study (Fergusson & Horwood, 2003).
4. Risk factors and protective factors can have synergistic effects. Luthar (2006) refers to a seminal study by Rutter (1979) which showed that children’s outcomes can be far poorer when risk factors act in concert rather than in

isolation. Rutter (2006b) observes that interactions occur among genes, within environmental factors, and across genes and environments.

5. Some risk and protective factors can have *cascading effects*. Luthar (2006) talks of risk modifiers with high promotive potential; and early family relationships fall within this category because they are generative of other assets.
6. Risk factors and protective factors can contribute to a configuration that could not be discerned by the examination of separate parts. Magnusson and Stattin (2006) include a quotations that exemplifies this holism principle in relation to the sustainability of planet earth; “Understanding components of the Earth System is critically important, but it is insufficient on its own to understand the functioning of the Earth Systems as a whole” (p. 432).

Simply, the suggestion that is being made here is that resilient people are connected to other positive people, and that these relationships have additive, multiplicative, and generative effects. Further, the matrix of relationships produces personal forms, or individuality, that can obscure the relevant contributions, and this is because the developmental processes have superseded them.

These ideas are implicit, and more clearly voiced, in much academic research and theorising; and, as well, they have the support of common experience. For instance, Elder and Shanahan (2006) remind us that we tend to go through life with a ‘convoy’ of significant others, and they suggest that when we change our personal direction or life style it usually involves changing our best friends.

### **Executive functioning.**

Rutter (2007) asserts that we need to know how environmental influences are ‘understood’ by the individual and how they impact on brain processes. Within human development studies, the conscious control of thought is generally referred to as

executive functioning and it encompasses emotional regulation and problem solving (Greenberg, 2006). Significantly, in terms of the present argument, Berg et al. (1998, cited by Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2000) found that most problem solving definitions, for individuals of all ages, involved interpersonal concerns.

As we know, cognition and affect are intimately connected and, over time, through processes of structuring and restructuring, they give rise to belief systems, and these allow for the phenomenological interpretations of events. The prefrontal lobes of the brain have a primary role in executive functioning, and neural plasticity ensures that the formation of the brain is an extended malleable process (Cicchetti & Blender, 2006).

Self-regulation deserves special attention, as it seems likely that it is central to personal agency. For instance, Dishion and Patterson (2006) say that self regulation confers the capacity to navigate the life course and, perhaps even more to the point, the authors suggest that it does this by moderating the connection between an individual's relationships and actions. Reference has already been made in this exposition to the contribution of the early care giving environment to emotional regulation, and contingent parenting might be seen as the prototype for social support (Taylor, 2007).

The mechanisms that enable self-regulation are relatively stable, and can persist throughout life (Mischel, 2004). This means that resilient young people can continue to select and shape their futures by choosing relational contexts that are conducive to their goals, and by avoiding those situations that do not promote their purposes and wellbeing.

### **Action.**

A propensity to a course of action is one thing, but having an opportunity to act is quite another, and Rutter (2006b) reminds us that a new set of influences is likely to apply at the action phase. A further consideration is whether a proposed course of action is within the capacity and competencies of the individual. In this regard, there

are stressful situations that occasion sensitisation and distress for some people and yet these same circumstances can also have ‘steeling’ effects and make other people stronger. Hauser et al. (2006) say that there are potential dangers when people stay (or are kept by caregivers) within their ‘comfort zones’ because such constraint is likely to curtail relationships and possible achievements.

The vaccination analogy is well known in resilience writings, and it implies that a controlled exposure to a stressor can build up coping responses for subsequent engagements with adversities. Most likely, there are optimal discrepancies between what a person can easily accomplish on their own and what they might usefully accomplish with support. There is a close parallel with Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development and scaffolding here as it applies to contingent support (Santrock, 2008). Kumpfer and Summerhays (2006) say that “Wise parents naturally titrate a child’s temperament, capabilities, and resilience with levels and types of stressors before allowing or encouraging new challenges” (p. 152).

### **Conclusion.**

Additional empirical support for a relational model of resilience exists elsewhere. For instance, Elder and Conger (2000, cited by Elder & Shanahan, 2006) report on highly competent and resourceful young people living in rural Iowa whose lives were linked in relationships across family, church, and community. According to the authors, “In this social world, linked lives regulated and empowered personal development” (p. 696); which included fostering social responsibility and scholastic achievement for these adolescents apparently.

It is contended that the personal difficulties that some emerging adults experience in this country (as evidenced in the statistics for problem behaviours) arise primarily from a reduction, or ‘thinning’, of relational supports. The numerous social role changes that characterise this new developmental period are about changes in

relationships, and the stress that this ensues may be responsible for the increased incidences of serious psychiatric disorders (Oakley Brown et al., 2006; Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006), amongst other problems.

Elder and Shanahan (2006) observe that there could also be costs, as well as benefits, for a teenager living in a cohesive community, such as less access to new opportunities. Notably, when we start talking about the attractions and detractors of a life path we have re entered the standards of functioning debate. As indicated earlier, the relational resilience model might be seen as an attempt to answer the question about what is desirable in development and it largely does this without invoking external criteria.

‘Good’ relationships are reciprocal relationships, and a system of relationships can be self-sustaining. It may be appropriate to reiterate several points at this juncture. Firstly, individual life courses, and their associated relational systems, come in many forms, and hence there are competent people across places and cultures. The second point is that people clearly do make choices about the direction of their lives, but the choices that they make about new relational contexts will likely be influenced by aspects of self-regulation that are embedded in their current and past relationships.

A final matter is that there is a connection between this human development model and personality theory as espoused by Mischel (1968, 2004). Briefly, Mischel’s position is a response to the fact that traditional trait-state conceptions of personality (e.g., conscientiousness, dependency) cannot necessarily account for the way people behave in diverse situations. What Mischel says is that individuals do respond similarly across contexts, but the situations need to have functional equivalence to permit the display of a “behavioural signature of personality” (2004, p. 8).

Significantly, Mischel (2004) says that situations with functional equivalence can be other people and, moreover, that the dynamics of interpersonal relations have an

identifiable character, which is more than the sum of the individual personalities of which it is composed. From a risk and resilience perspective, people are seen as choosing relational settings that align with their goals, developmental histories, and biological dispositions. These choices of relationships can potentiate them, and they can confirm their developmental pathway and trajectory.

### **Further Research**

By any standards, the story of ‘John’ in the thesis research is a fascinating account. It is the ultimate resilience narrative and, consequently, it raises many questions. Stanley et al. (2000) made this comment just after the participant changed where he lived: “The new school and living situation are deserving of a study in their own right as they contain critical compensatory factors that are capable of creating, at least temporarily, a conventional developmental course” (p. 63).

What John was given was an interrelated, and highly conducive, composite of new relationships; and we need to know much more about these sorts of relationships, and about the interconnections that they can contain. Specifically, further resilience research is needed on the following five dimensions of facilitative interpersonal relations: cognitions, emotional self-regulation, behaviours, biology, and influences that cross contexts.

Luthar (2006) says that more research is needed on practical intelligence as a protective factor, and this is especially so when people situations are construed as practical problems. The intriguing interconnection of cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes invokes the topic of emotional self-regulation, and Mischel (2004) says that there has been speculation about this subject since Adam and Eve failed to demonstrate inhibition. Further work is indicated, and it would undoubtedly be helpful to deepen the developmental perspective on self-regulation, and to demonstrate how early externalised control gives rise to autonomous personal functioning.

We need to know a lot more about how relationships transpire, about the consequences of different relationship patterns in different settings, and about the implications of gender and culture for relationships. These are fundamental and foundational questions that lead onto other, equally important matters such as, what are the demand characteristics that deepen relationships and promote progressively more complex interactions? And, specifically, with respect to social support, what works for whom, and under what circumstances?

Personal appraisals are central to the study of relationships and it is here that qualitative work can make unique contributions, as it has to the present project. But microsocial analyses are probably important as well in the study of relationships, because what people think and feel about social connections does not necessarily align with what observational studies say about their dynamics. For example, Dishion and Patterson (2006) report that care givers who attend child guidance clinics rarely consider that they are doing anything that is contributing to their children's problems. In addition, these authors observe that "Youth are often unaware that their friends are moving them toward behaviors and decisions that will certainly undermine their health and development" (p. 512).

The present writer would like to raise three specific questions for future behaviour and personality investigations:

1. Is there an affiliation mechanism, which matches the coercion hypothesis (Patterson et al., 1992), whereby individuals extend warmth towards others, and attract other people towards them? If it does exist, it will probably be like the coercion strategy and be so smooth in its execution that it is almost imperceptible.

2. What sorts of experiences stress proof people? One response to consider, which is in keeping with the thesis argument, could be to provide successful exposure to a succession of negative relational contexts.
3. Are there distinctive resilient personality types, with specific behavioural signatures? While acknowledging the limitations of personality theorising, it is likely that some people do share such a common organisation of social relations that identifiable (and predictable) resilient personality configurations arise.

We should have research that embraces multiple-levels-of-analysis (Cicchetti & Blender, 2006), and this means that the resilience agenda must include biology as well as psychology (Rutter, 2007). There are very good reasons for considering neuroanatomy and physiology, as a further instance may show. The example concerns support giving, and Taylor and Turner (2001) and Batson (1998) (both cited by Taylor, 2007) report that giving support to others can strengthen a relationship, give a sense of meaning, and show that a person matters to other people.

The psychosocial benefits of support giving are, in fact, biologically mediated. For instance, Rilling and co workers (2002, cited by Luthar & Zelazo, 2003) demonstrated that reciprocal altruism is associated with neurological activation that is consistent with reward processing, and it involves the rostral anterior cingulate cortex, nucleus accumbens, caudate nucleus, and ventromedial frontal/orbitofrontal cortex.

Masten and Obradovic (2006) talk of the interconnected systems in which human development unfolds and we should now look at the structural synergies that cross relational contexts. A first priority has to be the examination of the mechanisms or pathways of positive parenting. Luthar (2006) comments that “although families are commonly viewed as engines of change in early interventions, the mechanism by which parenting improves remains largely opaque” (p. 762).



Early care giving is central in any developmental conceptualisation of resilience, and Luthar (Luthar, 2006; Luthar & Brown, 2007) raises a really important issue when she suggests that there should be further exploration of parenting as a dependent variable. This researcher cites studies that show that about 60 percent of mothers seeking services for their children have anxiety, depression or another mental health issue, and in Luthar's opinion, maternal depression probably has more negative consequences for offspring than maternal substance abuse.

There are quite strong indications that the social connections within societies such as our own are severing, and it is important for our collective wellbeing to know if this is really so. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) cite annual surveys in the US that reveal a loss of faith amongst youth in social institutions, in others, and in themselves over the last several decades. Giddens (2006) discusses the concept of social capital, which he describes as "the ties that bind" (p. 673), and he also quotes Putnam (2000) who concludes that, over much the same timeframe as the annual US surveys, "we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities" (p. 675).

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) contend that trends towards social disassociation are enormously significant and they make the following statement:

In the United States it is now possible for a youth, female as well as male, to graduate from high school, or university, without ever caring for a baby; without ever looking after someone who was ill, old, or lonely; or without comforting or assisting another human being who really needed help. The developmental consequences of such a deprivation of human experience have not as yet been scientifically researched. But the possible social implications are obvious, for – sooner or later, and usually sooner – all of us suffer illness, loneliness, and the need for help, comfort, and companionship. No society can long sustain itself unless its members have learned the sensitivities, motivations, and skills involved in assisting and caring for other human beings. (p. 825)

### **Final comments**

Understanding resilience is very difficult. Theorists, themselves, acknowledge this (e.g., Kumpfer, 1999), and a part of the problem is the amount of material that is now available on the subject (Luthar, 2006). Fundamentally, however, the difficulties

lie in the abstract quality and the seemingly simplicity of the lead constructs, such as adaptation, risk factors, protective factors, and standards of functioning.

What began, a mere 50 years ago, as an attempt to account for unexpected positive outcomes in populations subject to risk has developed into analyses that attempt to explain the greater part of human functioning. There are parallels from other disciplines that show how a different initial question can lead to new frameworks of understanding and to innovative practices, and the work of the bacteriologist Alexander Fleming is a relevant instance. Fleming questioned the role of the contaminating mould on one of his culture plates, rather than seeing it simply as an inconvenience to his main purpose, and the foundations for the development of penicillin therapy were laid (Porter, 2001).

This thesis is densely theoretical; with the available literature being extensively utilised to illuminate the nine case studies, through to the derivation and elaboration of a resilience model. Nonetheless, as Masten and Powell (2003) observe, “Theoretical and empirical models of how good developmental outcomes and adjustment happen, particularly in the context of risk, inherently represent models of intervention” (p. 180). The present research contains a number of suggestions for responding to personal difficulties, and the more important of these will now be briefly discussed.

Most urgently, we need social and economic policies, and other preventative involvements, that seek positive developmental outcomes for all children. We know from Elder’s research (Elder, 1999), as well as from the present investigation in a disadvantaged area, that distal systems impact on proximal settings, and that they affect relationships and individual development. As Masten and Obradovic (2006) remind us, most sources of threat to young people are actually preventable.

Professional interventions and agency involvements for problem behaviours can be seen as being invariably supplementary to, or substitutory of, authentic

developmental processes. During the first decade of John's life there were innumerable psychologists and social workers involved with him, and in the last ten or so years he has had nothing more, or less, in his life than a composite of caring amateurs. On this matter, Newman (2004) concludes that "The transient involvement of professionals is unlikely to be a good exchange for a lifetime commitment from family, friends, and kinfolk" (p. 26).

'Changing the odds' is preferable to having to provide support so people can 'beat the odds' (Seccombe, 2002 cited by Ungar, 2008), but when people do need external assistance, it should be deployed in ways that sustain and strengthen relationships. It is a fact that much of what is presently provided by the social services in this country is unproven for clients in terms of beneficial, long-term change (Church, 2003; Stanley & Stanley, 2005). This is seriously concerning, and recommendations are now being promulgated (Ministry of Social Development, 2009) to the effect that programmes which are adopted by government agencies should be of proven efficacy.

Efficacious parenting programmes, such as *The Incredible Years* parent programmes (Fergusson, Stanley, & Horwood, 2009), are pivotal to making real differences for children and families. Relationships are central to resilience, and the implication of research from contrasting theoretical traditions is that the early caregiving environment can be crucial to subsequent relationships and their effects (Dishion & Patterson, 2006; Luthar, 2006). Quite simply, as Webster-Stratton and Reid (2006) state, "parent intervention continues to be the single most effective avenue for preventing conduct problems and promoting social competence in young children" (quoted by Luthar, 2006, p. 943).

Parents and families deserve best practices, and they should not have to find their way through a maze or labyrinth to access them (Jenson & Fraser, 2006a). Again, the need for coordinated and integrated programmes in welfare, education, and mental

health is increasingly being recognised in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2007; Stanley, 2008). These developments are fully supported by the thesis research, as the coherence of resilience is clearly a case for a holistic service. The present study also very strongly suggests that very little, if anything worthwhile, can be achieved without a close and collaborative relationship with a 'client', and this association must also acknowledge and respect his or her phenomenological view of relationships.

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## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix A, Permission to use Time 1 data
- Appendix B, Ethical approval, Time 1 assessments
- Appendix C, Teacher identification form Time 1
- Appendix D, Information sheet for caregivers Time 1
- Appendix E, Child interview schedule Time 1
- Appendix F, Caregiver interview schedule Time 1
- Appendix G, Letter to research group 2005
- Appendix H, Participant information sheet Time 2
- Appendix I, Participant consent form Time 2
- Appendix J, Interview schedule Time 2
- Appendix K, Sample of textual analysis

## Appendix A, Permission to use Time 1 data



15 March 2002

National Office

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Thorndon  
P O Box 1666  
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New Zealand

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www.minedu.govt.nz

File: 17 568

Mr Peter Stanley  
Senior Lecturer  
Tauranga University College  
The University of Waikato  
PO Box 12 027  
Tauranga

Dear Mr Stanley

Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2002, concerning research material produced by yourself and others, when the Ministry of Education contracted the Specialist Education Service for the Drug Education Development Programme.

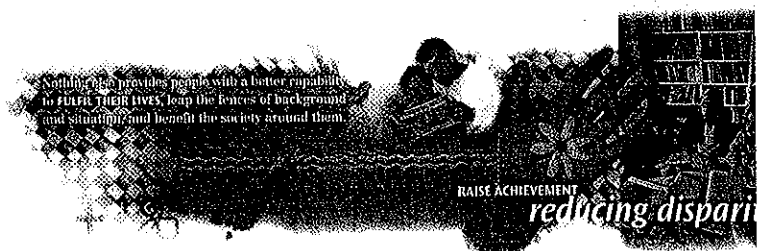
The Ministry requested that you obtain permission from Katy Laurence and Peter Rodeka to use this research material because they also contributed to the development of it. Thank you for attaching letters from them giving this permission, because as you initially advised the Ministry, you intend to use this material as part of your PhD study.

You have also attached an article about the Drug Education Development Programme that you wish to publish. The Ministry has no objection to you publishing this article.

I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely

Colin Brown  
Senior Manager  
Curriculum Division





**Central Health**

*Te Ihonga Hauora*

*a division of the Transitional Health Authority*

WELLINGTON  
ETHICS COMMITTEE

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ext: 5185  
Facsimile 04 385 5840  
Email: sharonb@wec.org.nz

6 November, 1998

Mr Peter Stanley  
Project Director  
Whatuora Project Centre  
PO Box 50-136  
PORIRUA

Dear Peter

**98/118 - Ethical review of part 2 Whatuora Project**

Thank you for your letter of 30 October addressing the issues as set out in my letter of 28 October.

As the clarification and further information provided in your letter satisfactorily address the points raised by the Ethics Committee, final approval for the above project is granted by the Chairperson under delegated authority from the Wellington Ethics Committee.

It is a condition of Ethics Committee approval that you provide a brief progress report no later than November 1999 and at the completion of the study a copy of any report/publication for the Committee's records. Please notify the Committee if the study is abandoned or changed in any way.

I would like to particularly thank you for recognising the need for ethical review and the responses to the various issues raised by the Wellington Ethics Committee. I hope the project goes well and we wish you success with your research. If we can assist you further in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me at the ethics committee office.

Yours sincerely

Sharron Cole  
CHAIRPERSON

## Appendix C, Teacher identification form Time 1

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Martin Street  
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**WHATUORA**  
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### INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

#### ASSESSMENT FORM FOR TEACHER IDENTIFICATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE 'AT RISK' OF DRUG USE AND OTHER PROBLEM BEHAVIOURS

The student assessment forms attached are the first step in the development of guidelines for the early identification of young people 'at risk'. The early identification of 'at risk' youths is vitally important - allowing intervention in the young person's life before the problem behaviours become too well established. It is the project's aim to develop a practical information package that will assist teachers in the early identification of 'at risk' young people.

We believe that a young person's life is the integration of different environments (family, school, peer groups, community, culture). In most young people's lives there is a balance of negative aspects (poverty, family problems, conflict) and positive aspects (supportive family members, community, church, friendships). However, when the negative aspects of a young person's life begin to outweigh the positive, the young person can become seriously 'at risk' of drug use and other problem behaviours (disruption, violence, depression) which may prevent them from reaching their own optimal social and personal development. A proportion of these young people, faced with the same negative life experiences, do not become involved in problem behaviours, but instead demonstrate positive behaviours. These young people we define as resilient, that is, they have adapted successfully despite challenging and threatening life circumstances.

Our project is interested in both of these types of young people - those 'at risk' because they are in need of early identification and support intervention, and those who are resilient because they can help us to understand what skills and strategies can be fostered in those young people 'at risk'.

In this initial stage, we want to work with teachers, drawing on their professional knowledge of young people, to accurately identify the most 'at risk' young people and the most resilient young people in year 7 only.

Specialist Education Services A He Tohu Ūmanga Mātauranga

Level 1 • State Insurance Building • Hagley Street • PO Box 50-136 • Porirua • New Zealand  
Telephone (04) 237 6670 • Facsimile (04) 237 5808



We ask you to read and reflect on the attached Student Assessment Forms before completing them. We encourage you to make comments on each individual student and on the Student Assessment Form itself. Please complete one full Student Assessment Form for each year 7 young person that you believe is most 'at risk' and most 'resilient' in your class (use as many forms as is required).

Please note - to ensure student anonymity please do not write the students full name anywhere on the form. Please complete the identification code using the first 3 letters of your school name, your first and last name initial (teacher), and the student's first and last name initial. We urge you to qualify your answers by writing about each student using the comments sections provided throughout the form. We have also included some blank spaces for you to add further variables or factors which you think should be included in the Student Assessment Form. Overall comments would also be appreciated.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

Peter Stanley, Peter Rodeka and Peter Eden

**Please bring the completed forms to our next arranged meeting  
for further discussion**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT FORM

Please complete this form for those **year 7** students in **your class** whom you believe to be most 'at risk' of drug use and other problem behaviours and those whom you believe to be most 'resilient'

PLEASE TICK: Is the student 'at-risk'

☐

'resilient'

☐

**Your code:** Please put a code on this sheet instead of a name (to ensure anonymity)

**How to make up your code:** The code is made up from the first three letters of your school name, your first and last name initial (teacher) and the student's first and last name initial.

Please write your code below:

--	--	--

First three letters  
of school name

--	--	--	--

Your initials

Students initials

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT SCALE

Please circle the number on the continuum scale which best fits your student - where 1 equals poor and 10 equals excellent.

a) poor social skills,  
eg. excessively  
introverted behaviour

• excellent social skills,  
eg. friendly, out going

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

comments

b). poor self esteem	• excellent self esteem										
<table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td></tr></table>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
comments _____											
_____											
_____											
_____											

c). poor self control eg. frequent temper outbursts, violence	• excellent self control, eg. deals with challenges very well										
<table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td></tr></table>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
comments _____											
_____											
_____											
_____											

d). pessimistic, negative and lacking hope	• optimistic, positive and hopeful										
<table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td></tr></table>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
comments _____											
_____											
_____											
_____											

e). high anxiety	• low anxiety										
<table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td></tr></table>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
comments _____											
_____											
_____											
_____											

f). poor effort in school  
work

• excellent effort in  
school work

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

g). disruptive in class,  
eg. prevents others  
working productively

• cooperates fully with  
teachers and other  
students

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

h). negative relations  
with teachers

• very positive relations  
with teachers

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

i). unpopular with  
classmates

• popular with  
classmates

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



<b>j). rejected by classmates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accepted by classmates</li> </ul>
-----------------------------------	--

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<b>k). negative relations with parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive relations with parents</li> </ul>
--	---

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<b>l). poor academic achievement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• excellent academic achievement</li> </ul>
--------------------------------------	--

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<b>m). poor school attendance /punctuality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• excellent school attendance /punctuality</li> </ul>
--	--

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

n). confusion over  
cultural identity

- identifies clearly with  
cultural group

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

o). possesses no  
special skills

- possesses special  
skills, eg. art, music,  
woodcarving etc.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please use these blank scales to add variables you consider important.

p).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

q).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

r).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

s).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

General student comments:

General comments about the Student Assessment Form:

## STUDENT RISK AND RESILIENT FACTORS

Please tick 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know' for each of the student factors and please use the comment boxes.

STUDENT RISK FACTORS	yes	no	don't know	comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low academic ability</li> <li>• learning disability</li> <li>• hearing, eyesight, mobility deficit</li> <li>• general poor health</li> <li>• poor nutrition</li> <li>• physical abuse</li> <li>• sexual abuse</li> <li>• psychological/emotional abuse</li> <li>• recent loss/death of significant person</li> <li>• other traumatic life events</li> <li>• association with antisocial peers</li> <li>• family conflict</li> <li>• disturbed parent child relations</li> <li>• separation/divorce of parents</li> <li>• excessive parental drug use</li> </ul>				

STUDENT RISK FACTORS	yes	no	don't know	comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• antisocial siblings</li> <li>• mental or physical illness or disability in household</li> <li>• long periods unsupervised</li> <li>• large family</li> <li>• family poverty</li> <li>• child neglect</li> <li>• family mobility</li> <li>• school change(s)</li> <li>• issues in regard to puberty</li> <li>• is a victim of bullying</li> <li>• bullies others</li> <li>• family involvement with outside support agencies</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> </ul>				

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STUDENT RESILIENT FACTORS	yes	no	don't know	comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• religious faith or affiliation</li> <li>• sporting interests</li> <li>• other special areas of interest</li> <li>• special talents</li> <li>• connections to competent adults</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> <li>• other _____</li> </ul>				

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

Please answer these questions by ticking in the appropriate box for your nominated student

- Student age

- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 13 years old |

- Student gender

- |                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boy | <input type="checkbox"/> Girl |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|

- Student ethnicity - tick more than one group if necessary, or Don't know

- |                                       |                                     |   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maori        | <input type="checkbox"/> Samoan     | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakeha/NZ European |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cook Islands | <input type="checkbox"/> Tokelauan  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tongan             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fijian       | <input type="checkbox"/> Niuean     | <input type="checkbox"/> Indian             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English      | <input type="checkbox"/> Scottish   | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese      | <input type="checkbox"/> Cambodian  | <input type="checkbox"/> Khmer              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lao          | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sri Lankan   | <input type="checkbox"/> Iraqi      | <input type="checkbox"/> Somali             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |                                     |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know   |                                     |   |

## Appendix D, Information sheet for caregivers Time 1

Project Centre  
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**WHATUORA**  
Porirua Drug Education  
Development Project  
*Fostering skills and relationships  
for positive futures*



January 1999

### Information Sheet for Participants - Whatuora Project

#### *The development of guidelines for the identification of students at-risk of drug misuse and other problems.*

You are invited to take part in a research project that is being run by Specialist Education Services (SES). You do not have to make a decision today about joining the study, and you do not have to take part at all if you do not want to. If it is convenient, we would like to hear your decision whether you will join the project or not in the next week.

SES have been asked by the Ministry of Education to write some guidelines so that students who are at-risk of drug misuse and other problems can be identified and given special help. We need to talk to young people and their caregivers to be able to write these guidelines. We want to understand the factors and influences in people's lives that place them at-risk and that stop them from getting into trouble.

To get this research underway we asked SES Porirua caseworkers to send out letters to families they are working with who could contribute to our research project. That letter made it possible for us to have a first contact.

You will be interested in knowing that about thirty other children and their caregivers have been asked to be involved in this study. It is planned to have individual interviews with students and caregivers. With your permission we would also like to meet with your child's teacher and any social service and health agencies, like the Children, Young Persons and their Families Service and Puketiro, if your child has been seen by these services. As well, it would probably be useful for us to talk with your SES caseworker and look at your son or daughter's SES file. Again, any consultation would be done only with your prior permission.

At our interviews with you we will ask questions, and discuss, your child's progress at school, their interests and hobbies, their friendships, their behaviour at home, the difficulties that they experience, and matters like that. We will cover similar matters when we talk to your child on their own.

The interviews with children and caregivers will take about 1½ hours. There may be follow up interviews. In other words, we may ask if we can come and see you again. We hope to have all the interviews over by the end of February.

If we can, we would like to record the interviews on a tape recorder. We do this because it is very easy to miss important information. After the interviews we play the tapes and write down what was said. We then wipe, or clear, the tapes.



*Development of guidelines for identification of students at-risk*

We will not tape your interviews if you do not want us to. In any interview, whether it is taped or not, you do not have to answer all the questions, and you may stop the interview at any time.

You need to know that you and your child's interview answers will be anonymous, as names will not be recorded. When all the information is written into a final report, no one will know who gave what information. All information will be confidential to the research project and no outsiders will have access to it. Written material will be kept in a locked cabinet and it will be destroyed when it is no longer needed for the project.

You are probably wondering why you want to be bothered taking part in this study, especially as we cannot pay you for taking part! A reason for being involved may be that other young people will benefit when we have the guidelines in place. Schools will be able to identify children at-risk early on and this is the first step to them getting the sorts of help when it is most needed.

You need to know that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary (your choice). You do not have to take part in the research and if you choose not to take part you can still have involvement with your SES caseworker.

If you do agree to take part you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.

You may have some other concerns. These may be of a practical sort such as whether an interpreter can be provided if you need one. The answer to this question is yes. Other information can be provided by the Whatuora team and a contact is given below. If you have any worries about this study, you may phone the Wellington Ethics Committee at Wellington Hospital whose number and extension is: 385-5999 ext. 5185.

It is planned to send a summary sheet of the research findings to all those involved in the project later on this year.

This study has received ethical approval from the Wellington Ethics Committee.

Please feel free to contact the Whatuora team if you have any questions about the study.

Principal Investigator: Peter Stanley  
Specialist Education Services  
PO Box 50-136  
Porirua

Ph. 237-7112

## Questions – Student Interviews

Children do not need to answer questions and questions are not asked if they are irrelevant or could be upsetting.

### School

#### Literacy levels

Describe your teacher/classmates

Attendance	)	
Attainment	)	now and
Effort	)	previously
Behaviour	)	
Relationships (teachers/students)	)	
Discipline/management	)	

Career intentions

Favourite subjects/activities

Most liked/disliked teacher

Best time/worst time at school

Feelings about attainment, effort, behaviour, relationships and discipline

Would you like to change school?

Why/why not?

Are you happy at school?

Why/why not?

3 wishes about your school life

How important is school in your life? Now and in times past.

How relevant is school to your future intentions?

What do you do when you are unhappy at school?

Would you make any changes/do things differently if you could start again at school?

## **Family**

Who are the most important people in your life?

Who are the members of your family and who lives at home?

What are their ages?

What sort of things does your family do together?

What do you do for holidays?

How are you disciplined now and in times past?

Tell me about what your family does each day/does in the weekend.

Describe your family members.

Supervision.

Arguments and conflicts

Family rules

Relations with other adults

With whom in your family do you have the best/worst relationship?

Why?

What are the best times at home/worst times?

How do you feel about the discipline you receive/have received at home?

Are you happy at home? Why/why not?

3 wishes about your home life

What do you do when you are unhappy at home? Where do you go?

If you have a family later what will you do differently/the same as your family at home?

## **Peer Relations**

Who are your friends? Ages?

Describe your friends

What do you do with your friends – at school, after school and in the weekends.

How much time do you spend with you friends?

Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend? Nature of relationship.

Peer group language, rites of passage, uniform, norms of behaviour

Qualities of best friend

Best/worst time with friends

Most exciting time.

Sufficient friends?

Desirable qualities in a friend

Personal popularity/peer status

Parents acceptance of friends

Wishes/desired changes re peers.

How important are your peers to you?

Who do you prefer to please – peers, parents, teachers – dress, homework, etc.

Why are you friends important?

## **Personal**

Hobbies and interests

Church involvements

Sport and other organised participations

Television, videos, video games

Cultural events, participation

Health – disabilities, accidents, hospital stays

Transitions – family and school

Piers – Harris

Strengths/weaknesses – self description.

Favourite recreational activities.

Best time at church/in cultural pursuit.

What do you like about your life?

Best/worst/most important thing that has happened to you.

Best/worst/most important thing that could happen to you.

Things that cause you distress – now and in times past.

If you could make some changes in your life what would they be?

When things go wrong at home, school and with your friends, who is usually to blame? Why?

Who do you see yourself as being like as an adult?

If you become a parent what would you like for your children.

What are your plans for the future?

What do you think may help you achieve your plans?

What may stop you from achieving your plans?

What advice would you give other kids about life?

What makes life tough for some kids?

How do you know when a kid has a tough life?

How do you know when a kid is doing O.K.? How do they behave?

Think of a person you would describe as having a tough life but is doing O.K. Without telling us who that person is, can you tell us something about that person?

Think of a person you would describe as having a tough life but is NOT doing O.K. Without telling us who that person is, can you tell us something about that person?

How do you think these kids will turn out in the future? Make some predictions. Why do you think that?

What could happen in these kids lives that could change all that?

*Thank you very much for being part of this study. What I would like us to do today is to talk about a number of things, such as school life, home life, your child's friends those kinds of areas. I would like to ask questions like what is your child good at, what are they not so good at? What do they enjoy about school?, what do they dislike about school?...questions like that.*

*Learning more about how your child is in school, in the family, with their friends and in the community is an important part of our research. And will help teachers in schools to develop ideas and strategies for helping other young people.*

*Just to say again that you do not have to answer a question if you don't want too, and you can end the interview at any time that you want.*

*Can we start off with school life....*

#### ***Education***

So has your child always gone to (name of school) school?

What schools did they go to before that?

What were reasons for sending your child to their present school?

How has your child found settling into new school?

At present is school a good place for your child?

How is school good for your child?

What parts of school are not so good/fun for your young person?

Has school ever been good/not good for your child?

How does your child get on with their teacher and the other teachers in the school?

What is it about school that is fun/not fun for your child?

How important do you think schooling is for your child?

What do you think schools could do better for your child?

Do you think that high school will be better or worse for your child?

What do you think your child will be doing in 10 years?

#### ***Family***

Can you tell us who is in your family ?  
and can you tell us a little about each one of them? (ages and relationships)

Who lives in the house at the moment?

Have you all been living together for a long time?

Who are the important people in your child's life?

What makes them important?

With whom doesn't s/he get on well with?

What makes it not so good?

When your child misbehaves, what are some of the things they do wrong?

What do you do when they do that?

Can you tell us what sorts of things your family does together?

Can you tell us about some of the best times that you and your child have had?

Can you tell us about some of the worst times that you and your child have experienced?

What do you think are some of the most important things to have happened in your child's life?

Is your child having an easy, OK or hard life at this time?

What is it about your child's life that makes it easy, OK or hard?

So has life been easier/harder in the past?

### ***Siblings***

How does your child get on with his brothers and sisters?

Can you tell us about some of the times when they get on well?

And can you tell us about some of the times they don't get on well?

### ***Parental relations***



If the parents are separated...

How does s/he get on with Mum/Dad?

Do they go and stay with them ?

How does s/he get on with stepfather/mother?

*Others out of the house - extended family relations*

Does your child ever go and stay with others family members of others?

*Health Issues*

can you tell us about any major illnesses in your their life?

any disabilities that?

Like problems with their hearing, and eye sight?

Have they ever had any problems with asthma?

major injuries or broken any bones in their life?

stays in hospital?

Has there been anyone that was close to your child that has died or moved away?

*Friends*

can you tell us about your child's friends?

What kind of influence are they on her?

What things do your child and his/her friends do together?

Where do they mostly go to play/ do these things?

We know that sometimes kids drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and marijuana, do you think that your child's friends ever do these things?

Do you think that your child has ever tried these things?

Do you think that your child's friends have been in trouble with the police?

Are there times when he/she doesn't come home after playing with his/her friends?

**Personality**

What does your child like doing the most?  
(Hobbies, interests, TV)

What does your child like doing least?

Does your child enjoy playing any sports?

What is your child best at?

What is your child worst at?

Does your child ever ask you for help when they can't do something?

Can you tell me about some of the best times for your child, when they were the happiest?

Can you tell me about some of the worst times for your child, times when they were  
unhappy?

Do you think that your child is happy at the moment?

What are some of your hopes for your child in the future?

***Community  
Religion***

Does your family go to church?

Is the church and religion a big part of your child's life?

Has church ever/always been an important part of life for your child and your family?

Does your child have friends at the church?

***Ethnicity***

What ethnicity does your child identify with?

What do you think being Maori/Pakeha means for your child?

***Regional feelings or suburban feelings***

Does your child enjoy living in Porirua?

Has Porirua been a good place for you and your family?

Was life better or worse where you lived before?

## Appendix G, Letter to research group 2005

### SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

The University of Waikato  
At Tauranga  
Private Bag 12 027  
Tauranga  
New Zealand

Phone +64 7 577 0620  
Fax +64 7 577 5327  
<http://uwt.waikato.ac.nz>



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

TAURANGA CAMPUS

15 February 2005

Dear

It was great to catch up with you again last week. I managed to see eleven of the original sample of twelve students so my trip was a great success.

As I indicated, I am keen to bring our study alive again. It would be really interesting to see how things have changed for the young people in the sample over the last six or so years. What I need to do now is to get approval from the University to do more research. This is important to ensure that the study is not a negative experience for those who are involved. As approval may take some time to obtain, I do not expect to be in touch again until towards the end of this year. If you have any questions in the meantime do not hesitate to give me a call on 07 577 5309. As well, I would be really grateful if you would contact me if you change your address.

Again, it was great to see you.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Peter Stanley  
Senior Lecturer  
Department of Human Development and Counselling

# Participant Information Sheet

**Date Information Sheet Produced:**

1 May 2006 (Revised May 2008)

**Project Title**

**Risk and resilience: A follow-up study**

**Invitation**

In 1998, twelve intermediate-age students were involved in a research project that looked at the risk and protective factors in their lives. We wish to advise you that the research project is restarting and we hope to interview the original group of young people again. We would like to invite you to take part in the present research project. It is really important for you to understand that being part of this project is completely voluntary and you do not need to have anything to do with it unless you want to.

**What is the purpose of this research?**

The aim of the research is to gain an understanding of the forces that affect people and that make it either easier, or more difficult, for them to cope with things in their lives. A follow-up study like this one is a really useful way to understand the forces that affect people because we can see the impact of them over time. As well, we can get a good understanding of what needs to be done and when it needs to be done to help people to cope even better with their lives. Your views on this are important, and we will be interested in hearing from you about the sorts of assistance that children and young people should receive.

This research project has some additional purposes. It is a study for a university degree, the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Auckland University of Technology, and it may provide the basis for some journal articles or even a book. Another possibility is that the present investigation will continue on into the future. We first met the group of twelve young people when they were 11-12 years of age, we hope to talk to them again now that they have turned 20, and maybe we can meet them again within the next ten years. As you will appreciate, the longer the study goes on the richer is the information that it can provide. However, continuing the research is only a possibility and it is the expectations of the present project that we are looking at here.

**What happens in this research?**

As you are one of the original group of twelve young people, we would like to interview you about how you are coping with the demands and circumstances of your life, and also about how you have done so in the past.

The interview will cover topics like experiences at school, jobs and employment, friendships and personal relationships, family involvements and responsibilities, recreational interests, and cultural and religious commitments. We would like to do some assessments with you of these forces and influences in terms of whether they have been positive or negative and whether there are any trends to them. In sum, we're looking at what's made things the way they are for the members of the original group of young people.

If we can, we would like to record the interviews on a tape recorder. One of the reasons that we do this is because it is easy to miss important information. The interview is turned into a transcript, which is just a typed-up version of what was said. We will not tape your interview if you do not want us to. In any

interview, whether it is taped or not, you do not have to answer all the questions, and you may stop the interview at any time.

What happens next? We study all of the interview transcripts and we look for patterns. For instance, it is likely that several of the young people are doing, or have done, similar things to improve their lives. Equally, all of the group could possibly have benefited from some sort of assistance at some point when they were growing up. As you can see, it is at this stage of the research project that the individual life stories give us new understandings and knowledge.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

Participating in this research project is probably not a very risky undertaking but there is the possibility of some discomfort associated with talking about your past experiences. Your wellbeing is regarded as very important by the researcher and so we need to consider every negative consequence that might arise from being involved in this investigation. Firstly, you could find that talking about yourself is difficult, embarrassing, or perplexing. A second, and altogether more serious possibility, is that the interview, or just being part of the research, could bring to light something about yourself that is a significant personal concern. The third possibility is that personal or family relationships could be damaged by participation in the research project.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

Let's go through each of the possibilities that have been mentioned and look at what can be done about them.

#### *(i) Making the interviews less difficult, embarrassing, and perplexing*

The researcher's name is Peter Stanley and he will do his best to make you feel relaxed and comfortable. Peter has worked with young people and families over many years and he knows the sorts of issues and problems that people can encounter. If there are matters that are especially sensitive for you, then you are under absolutely no obligation to talk about them. With respect to anything that perplexes you, it is hoped that the interviews will be more like conversations and that we are able to discuss the likely answers to various questions. Please tell Peter if you find anything difficult, embarrassing or perplexing at any point.

You may find it helpful to have a support person of your own choosing at the interview. For instance, you may like to be accompanied by someone from your culture. If you do not know someone suitable to act as a support person, the researcher will probably be able to make some suggestions.

#### *(ii) Responding to significant personal concerns*

Peter Stanley can arrange counselling and other forms of support for you if you feel that you need it. You can also talk to Peter about accessing services for other people. Whether you or another person actually obtains help is obviously a voluntary matter except when someone's life or welfare is threatened and in these circumstances we may have to call for assistance. Again, please tell Peter if you have significant personal concerns.

Please note that while Peter is a trained psychologist, his involvement in this project is as a researcher. When people try to be psychologists and researchers at the same time it usually does not make for very good psychology or very good research. It is for this reason that Peter will not be able to help with any personal problems himself and, instead, will assist or advise on referrals to other professionals.

#### *(iii) Preserving relationships*

This is a responsibility that we will all have to share and provided that people have good will and intentions it should not be a problem.

### **What are the benefits?**

After the fairly detailed discussion of discomforts and risk you would hope that there are some benefits from the project!

For you, personally, being part of the research project is really an act of generosity. You will be giving your time to talk about yourself and the purpose is to get new knowledge that will help other people at some future time. The information that comes out of this investigation will be unique and it will almost certainly give us some original insights and suggestions for making life better for the children and teenagers of tomorrow.

You may find that participating in the project is useful to you. It is an opportunity to think about life, about the things that influence us, and about what is important to us. These times of reflection can be quite special.

For the researcher, there will be a direct and practical benefit as Peter Stanley is hoping to obtain a university degree. Peter may also publish some articles and possibly a book about it and it is by these means that other people will learn about the results of the study.

#### **How will my privacy be protected?**

The information that you provide in an interview will be kept confidential. As indicated, the only exception to this situation is when someone's life or welfare is being threatened and this rarely occurs.

The audiotapes will be kept in a locked cabinet, the typist who transcribes the tapes signs a confidentiality agreement, and the interview tapes themselves will be securely housed. We are required to keep all of the research material for six years but we would like to store it for double that amount of time because of the possibility of the study being picked up again in the next 6-12 years.

The interview material will be presented in Peter Stanley's thesis and, as indicated, it is also likely to appear in publications. Your name will never be attached to any comments or conclusions.

#### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The only cost to you will be giving up some of your time. The original group is likely to be involved in interviews for a total of 1-2 hours.

#### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Peter Stanley would like to call back and see you in a week's time to hear your decision as to whether you wish to join the research. It is important that you have some space to think about the project. You might have some questions that you want to ask Peter or you might want to talk to some other people.

We would like to say again that being part of this investigation is your choice and you must not feel pressured in any way. As well, you can withdraw from the study right up until our interviews have been completed simply by giving Peter a call. There is nothing wrong with not wanting to participate now or pulling out later. Thank you for considering this invitation.

If you do decide to go ahead we will arrange a time for an interview that is convenient for you. Peter is available in the evenings and during some weekends.

#### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

You will need to complete a Consent Form, which will be provided by Peter Stanley.

#### **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

At the end of the project we will provide you with a report which will contain a summary of the findings.

#### **What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Kerry Gibson, [k.gibson@massey.ac.nz](mailto:k.gibson@massey.ac.nz), phone: 09 414 0800, extension 414241.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTC, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 09 921 9999, extension 8044.

**Who do I contact for further information about this research?**

**Researcher Contact Details:** Peter Stanley, [peter@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:peter@waikato.ac.nz) University of Waikato, Private Bag 12027, Tauranga, phones; 021 115 9180, 07 577 5309

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:** Kerry Gibson, [k.gibson@massey.ac.nz](mailto:k.gibson@massey.ac.nz), Massey University, Private Bag 102 904, Auckland, phone: 09 414 0800, extension 414241.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 May 2006, AUTC Reference number 06/55.

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH



Title of Project: **Risk and resilience: A follow-up study**

Project Supervisor: **Dr Kerry Gibson**

Researcher: **Peter Stanley**

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project (Information Sheet dated 1 May 2006 and revised May 2008)
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research: tick one: Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant signature: .....

Participant name: .....

Participant Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 May 2006 AUTEK  
Reference number 06/55.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.



## **Interview schedule**

### **(A) Orientation to the interview**

#### ***Check:***

Comfort  
Confidentiality  
Audiotaping  
Any questions/issues

#### ***Remember, to avoid expectation effects:***

Use words and structures of the participant  
Follow questions with non-directive probes  
Create conversation and discussion

(Burns, 2000)

'Can you tell me more about that?'

'How did that make you feel?'

'What do you think about that?'

(Smith, 1995)

### **(1) Relating**

You may remember that ten years ago you were part of a research study that looked at how things were going for you at that time. I would now like to look at how things are now, how they have been over the last ten years, and how things have fitted together for you over your life up until now.

So, we are looking at what's happened, what's stayed the same, what's been difficult, and what's worked out well.

Later in the interview, it would be good to think a bit about the things you did, or that other people did, that kept things the same in your life, or that made things better or worse.

Towards the end of the interview, it would be really good if you could give me your 'recipe' for doing well. In other words, and in a bit more detail, what is it that makes life work for you even when there a stressful things happening.

At the end of the interview, I would like to hear about your hopes for the future.

Something that I hope for in the future is that we will meet again and catch up some more on what has happened.

When we did the original study ten years ago we kept some records about you and, from time to time today, I may ask a question about things that were happening back then.

### **(2) Recounting**

- **Present circumstance**

*Please tell me about what you are doing now?*

Specific questions in relation to:

Employment  
Participation in education/training

Peer/personal relationships  
Family-parents, siblings, dependents  
Health  
Interests, sport  
Religion  
Culture

- Last ten years, T1-T2

*Please tell about how it has been for you over the last ten years?*

Specific questions in relation to:

Secondary education  
Attendance  
Behaviour  
Attainment  
Relationships  
Employment  
Personal relationships  
Family-parents, siblings, dependents  
Health  
Interests, sport  
Religion  
Culture

- Childhood to present

*Let's look right across your life, and we'll think about the highs and lows, and whether there are any patterns or trends in your experiences.*

Specific questions in relation to:

Physical growth, development, and health  
School, education, and skills  
Family  
Relationships  
Interests  
Religion  
Culture

### **(3) Reflecting**

Thank you for sharing your personal information. What I would like to do now is to go over some of the same ground again, but this time I would like you to tell me how some of the things that I will mention actually helped you *or* how they caused you problems. When you are thinking about your comments, it may be of use to you to think of the things that neither helped nor hurt you, as being the things that did not have any impact on your life. The people and events that really helped you or that caused you lots of grief may have been the influences that changed the direction of your life.

Specific questions in relation to:

Intelligence

*Have you done well because you are intelligent or has this been a problem for you?*

Disposition

*Would you describe yourself as appealing/unappealing, easygoing/hard going, sociable/unsociable, and how has this worked against you or for you?*

Self efficacy, self-confidence, self-esteem

*Are you a confident person? Are you a person who can get what they want? Do you feel good about yourself? How have these feelings about yourself influenced your life?*

Talents

*Are there things that you are good at? How has having/not having talents influenced your life?*

Faith

*How has your faith/lack of faith influenced your life?*

Closeness/lack of closeness in relationship with parent figure

*When you were growing up did you have a close or distant relationship with your main parent figure? Has the nature of this relationship had any impact on your life?*

Structure and expectations in parenting

*Do you think that the ways in which your main parent figure related to you (strict/not strict, picking up on your needs and feelings) have had a bearing on how your life has gone?*

Socioeconomic circumstances

*In what ways has your life been influenced by having/not having money and possessions?*

Connections to extended family networks

*Do you have lots of relationships with your uncles, aunts, and cousins? Do you think that having these relationships/not having these relationships has changed your life?*

Bonds to prosocial adults outside the family

*Do you any have close relationships with responsible older adults outside of your family. How do/would these relationships benefit you?*

### Connections to prosocial organizations

*Are you involved in any community organizations? How do/would these relationships benefit you?*

### Attending effective schools

*Did your primary or secondary school have much impact on you? How?*

### (4) Redefining

- (1) You have had some difficult things in your life. As a person today, do you think that you have done OK?*
- (2) Can you make clear what 'doing OK' means for you?*
- (3) Are there times in your life that you have done better than at other times? (early-middle-late childhood/adolescence/emerging adulthood)*
- (4) How do you think other people see you now?*
- (5) How do you think that other people would have seen you in the past?*
- (6) What are some of the things that you do now that help you to cope? (actions/thoughts/feelings)*
- (7) What are some of the things that you have done in the past that have helped you to cope? (actions/thoughts/feelings)*
- (8) What are some of the things that you have done in the past that have caused you problems? (actions/thoughts/feelings)*
- (9) If you had been offered some help earlier in your life, what sort of help would you have really benefitted from? (early-middle-late childhood, adolescence)*
- (10) What are your hopes for the future? (things to do, work/career, relationships/family)*

### Some other possible questions

*What are areas of risk for you?*

*What are areas of strength for you?*

*How would you describe yourself as a person?*

*In what ways have you changed over your life?*

*Are there particular changes that have occurred for you since you left school?*

## Appendix K, Sample of textual analysis

- bio. family  
Maori lang. J. Oh yeah ... recently I've met up with my biological mother, in January, and I met my biological family, which was pretty cool and ... just finding about where I come from and my whakapapa and ... yeah, where I come from. Family
- 03.8 I. That's excellent. Physical/Health  
J. My health ... the doctors say that I'm just awesome and I'm a superman. ... my interests ... did you want to talk about my injury?  
I think we've pretty much covered it. It's a broken bone that's not healed, isn't it?  
J. Yeah ... my interests ... well I love sport ... I'll give anything a go ... but  
at the moment I like rugby ...  
I. Do you play in a team John? Sport  
J. Well ... yeah I did ... I did. Oh, this year I was playing for [ ... ] Club, that was just rugby ... I want to go back to league, it's much more fun. I Goal/aspiration  
have a dream ... not a dream, but ... I wouldn't mind playing NRL, which would be pretty cool, so hopefully one day ... ah, I'm a ... church-goer. I Religion  
go to [ ... ] Church every Sunday with my family ... three hours every Sunday and any other meetings that I have. I'm New Zealand Maori ... Culture  
yeah ... that's [all right?].  
I. Do you identify with your culture much?  
J. Pardon?  
I. Does your culture mean much to you, or ...? It's a bit of a loaded question ...  
J. Well, yeah, I'd rather be Maori ... I'm proud to be Maori ... yeah, I like to see Maori succeed.  
I think that's great ... John, please tell me about how it has been for you over the last ten years.
- 05.8 J. The last ten years ... [ ... ] secondary school at ... I attended [high school]. Education  
I think I wasted my time ... I regret now not doing the best that I could in school ... umm ... but then I guess things happen for a reason and ... I'm  
here today. My attendance ... at school? ... well I was there every day. I went to every class. I think I wagged English two periods and as soon as I wagged my teacher told my parents, so I got a punishment, so I never did it again. My behaviour, I think, I was ... a very energetic person. I liked to be ... work with my fingers and I worked with my hands and be active. I think I found it a bit hard to concentrate on something ... but with my secondary education I ... I liked to ... I liked the feeling of passing my assignments and I think when I was Fifth Form, English and maths were not my greatest subjects and something I am proud of today is that I got top of the class for both of those classes. So I just think that it goes to show that ... you know, I put my mind to it and I achieved ... I didn't expect to win, but ... I'm just part of that. ... What does this one mean? Goals  
Attainment ... did you pass any NCEA or ...  
J. Oh yeah ... I passed NCEA ... and when I was Fifth Form, I think I was doing maths, English, I was in the sports academy, I was doing geography and economics. Economics and geography were the hardest subjects, I ... Education  
didn't really understand them, but I got a merit in geography, which was