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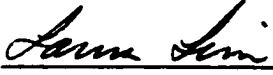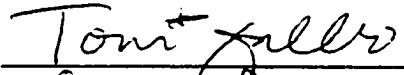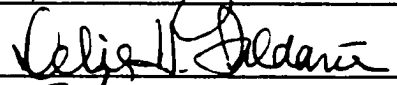
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THE ECOLOGY OF RESILIENCE IN THE INNER-CITY:
REDEFINING RESILIENCE IN THE LIVES OF
HIGH-RISK INNER-CITY YOUTH

Approved by
Dissertation Committee:

THE ECOLOGY OF RESILIENCE IN THE INNER-CITY:

REDEFINING RESILIENCE IN THE LIVES OF

HIGH-RISK INNER-CITY YOUTH

by

Lynda Marie Knox, M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

the University of Texas at Austin

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of the Requirements

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THE ECOLOGY OF RESILIENCE IN THE INNER-CITY:

REDEFINING RESILIENCE IN THE LIVES OF

HIGH-RISK INNER-CITY YOUTH

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Lynda Marie Knox, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Deborah Tharinger

This research questions the validity of current models of resilience for explaining outcomes of high-risk inner-city adolescents. It proposes that structural factors, specifically "ecological binds," are more closely related to adolescent outcomes in these environments than are individual characteristics or skills. Ecological binds exist when the demands of the inner-city and the adolescents' responses to these demands bring the adolescents into conflict with the laws and expectations of the larger society. When unresolved, these contradictory forces can deflect the teenagers into illegal activities and marginalized lifestyles. Successful outcomes are a consequence of the resolution of these ecological binds. Based on these findings, resilience is redefined as an attribute of the environment rather than of the youth. Resilient ecologies are considered to be those ecologies that contain few ecological binds and support positive outcomes in youth despite the presence of adverse economic conditions.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

"The fate of our country tomorrow will be decided by what
happens in our inner-cities today."

Seymour Sarason

The United States has the highest rate of child poverty of any
industrialized nation in the world except Australia (US Census Bureau, 1991;
Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 1995). In 1995, forty percent of the poor
in this country were under the age of 18 and of these approximately 9% lived
in poor urban communities where violence, decaying infrastructure, and
isolation from general society are elements of daily life (Lindsey, 1994).

Although much public rhetoric has been forthcoming on the condition
of America's poor children, few changes have ensued. Comparisons of
absolute poverty levels across years show the child poverty rate has been
increasing (Chase-Lansdale et al, 1995) and, unfortunately, this trend does
not appear likely to change. The current political climate and recent reforms
in welfare and immigration policies present new threats to the well-being of
our children. The Urban Institute estimates that the new welfare reforms will
push an additional one million children into poverty over the next ten years
(Clay, 1997).

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In light of these disturbing statistics, this dissertation research seeks to expand our understanding the challenges high-risk inner-city teenagers encounter in the inner-city and the factors that support positive life outcomes for these youth. Using resilience research as its starting point, the study argues that existing models of resilience are insufficient for understanding successful outcomes in the inner-city. To increase the effectiveness of our interventions with urban youth, more contextually-valid models of risk, competence, and protection must be developed.

In pursuit of this goal, this research used qualitative research methods to analyze the narratives of fourteen inner-city teenagers and five adults for information on the stressors and risks high-risk inner-city teenagers experience on a daily basis; and the factors that assist or hinder the youth in responding to these events. The data indicate that the primary adversity the adolescents experience in the inner-city is unmet survival and subsistence needs. A central feature of their need is the lack of parental support and ineffective institutional responses to their needs. In lieu of effective support from their parents and the institutions designed to serve them, the youth rely personal networks, work, and protective illusions to meet their basic needs.

The strategies the youth use bring them into conflict with societal laws and expectations. Specifically, the youth must assume adult roles in order to meet their needs, and this brings them into conflict with child labor laws and restrictions on their ability to seek and consent to services. In addition, the time the youth must dedicate to acquiring needed resources limits the time they have available to attend school and so they have difficulty meeting middle-class expectations that they attend school full-time.

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The conflicting demands of poverty and the societal laws and expectations result in "ecological binds" impede the teenagers' ability to respond to either the demands of the inner-city environment or meet the expectations of the broader society. When unresolved, these ecological binds can deflect the teenagers into illegal activities and marginalized lifestyles. Successful outcomes are a consequence of the resolution of these ecological binds.

Given this, the findings of the study support a radical redefinition of the meaning of resilience. While not excluding the role individual traits and characteristics play in supporting successful outcomes, this research argues that for high-risk inner-city youth, successful outcomes result primarily from structural factors. Thus resilience is reconceptualized as a characteristic of the ecology rather than of the youth. An ecology is considered to be resilient if it supports successful outcomes in the adolescents despite the presence of adverse economic conditions. More specifically, in a resilient ecology there are few contradictions between social institutions and regulations and the demands of poverty and the inner-city.

The following chapters discusses these findings and theoretical constructions in greater depth. Chapter one provides a review of the poverty and resilience literature and uses Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework as a tool for increasing the contextual attentiveness of this research. Chapter two provides a description of the research methods used in the study. Chapter three introduces the reader to the study participants and provides profiles of five of the teenagers. Chapter four describes the stressors and risks the youth encountered most frequently in their daily lives in the inner-city. Chapter

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five discusses the strategies the teenagers use to respond to these demands and chapter six considers the school and social system's response to the teenagers. Chapter seven synthesizes the study findings and defines and describes the existence and impact of ecological binds in the lives of inner-city teenagers. Finally, the conclusion redefines resilience as a characteristic of the environment rather than of the individual and discusses the implications this holds for intervention and future research.

CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the research. First, the literature is reviewed in the two topic areas central to this study: the impact of poverty on adolescent development, and developmental resilience. Second, the limitations of existing models of resilience are described. Third, Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework is introduced as a tool for increasing the contextual relevance of resilience research for inner-city youth.

Impact of Poor Urban Communities on the Adolescent

In a sobering comparison of war and inner-city poverty in the U.S., Garbarino, Kolstelny and Dubrow (1991) suggest that coping with life in the inner-city is in many respects more difficult and demoralizing than coping with war. In war, one has a clearly identifiable enemy; a sense, regardless of how long the conflict has been going on that it is a temporary state; societal support exists for one's sufferings; and individuals generally live within a

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community that is united by its aims and strong cultural traditions. In addition, there is often a political or ideological meaning in the conflict in which adults and youth can find a sense of meaning in their hardship and in which they can find solace.

Youth and families living in the inner-cities in the U.S. usually do not have the benefit of these protective factors. There is no clearly defined enemy to rally against, no sense that there will be an end to the experience of chronic poverty, and families living in chronic poverty are largely ignored and recently even scorned by the larger society. Such factors make it difficult to maintain a sense of community or to develop an ideology or meaning for their experience that affords them psychological protection against the hardships they face. Thus, individuals living in poor urban environments experience a unique and devastating form of physical and psychological stress that is not recognized by the larger society, and hardly comprehended by those who experience it (p. 146).

In support of this are studies that find that youth living in poverty and especially those in the inner-city are at heightened risk for almost every marker of maladjustment (Tolan, Henry, Guerra, Van Acker, Huesmann, & Enron, 1996). They are more likely than other youth to experience difficulties academically (Kozal, 1992; National Research Council, 1993; Bolger, Patterson, Thompson, & Kupersmidt, 1995), drop out of school (National Research Council, 1993), become involved in criminal activity (National Institute of Justice, 1992; National Research Council, 1993), have higher levels of aggression and psychopathology (Tolan et al, 1996), experience early school to work transition, and have difficulty finding

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employment beyond low paid service work (Edelman & Ladner, 1993; Jencks, 1992; National Research Council, 1993). In addition, they are significantly more likely to become teenage parents (National Commission on Children, 1991; National Research Council, 1993) and they are more likely to die from intentional injury (Centers for Disease Control, 1992). A highly distressing recent statistic suggests that a child living in the inner-city is more likely to die from violence than any other cause (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1992). A recent study found that more than 50% of youth living in poor urban communities have witnessed a violent attack in the previous year and even more reported staying home because of fear of violence (Attar, Guerra, & Tolan, 1994). Although it is clear that adolescents raised in poverty are disproportionately exposed to risk, limited research exists on how these environments impact the development of adolescents or how we might mitigate the impact (Jessor, 1993; Tolan et al, 1996).

Adolescence. Adolescence is a difficult and hazardous period of development in any setting. Defined as a stage of life that is distinct from childhood and from adulthood, it is a developmental period in which a variety of biological, cognitive, and psycho-social changes occur (Feldman & Elliot, 1990). A vast array of theories of adolescent development offer descriptions of the most pivotal tasks of adolescence and the processes of accomplishing these tasks including Erikson's (1959) theories of identity development, Marcia's (1980) exploration of processes of identity diffusion, Mead's (1950) focus on the role of culture in development, and Lerner's (1986) developmental contextualism. The "tasks" of adolescence include: coping with biologically induced changes (onset of puberty) such as emerging

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sexuality and changes in neural structures; negotiating changes in their relationships with family members; forming relationships with same sex and opposite sex peers; developing a sense of personal "identity"; and developing the skills required for successful adult functioning (Feldman & Elliot, 1990). In addition, there are developmental tasks that may be unique to minority youth. Garcia-Coll, Lamberty, Jenkins, McAdoo, Crnic, Wasir, & Vasquez-Garcia et al (1996) argue that unique developmental tasks that minority youth must accomplish include: learning to function within two different cultures (bi-culturalism); coping with differing levels of acculturation between themselves and their parents; bilingualism; and responding to discrimination and prejudice from other ethnic groups.

Unfortunately, in the past 40 years there has been a dramatic and decidedly negative shift in the experience of adolescence for youth of all social classes. First, there has been a substantial increase in the segregation of adolescents from adults and the concomitant loss of adult protection and monitoring. Young people in the U.S. have become increasingly segregated from their elders due to changes in schooling (extended schooling), the workplace (industrialization and limiting of young people's ability to participate in workplace); and family life (single-parent homes and women working outside of the home) (Steinberg, 1991).

Second, there has been an increase in the marginalization of adolescents in this society with an accompanying increase in their sense of rolelessness and loss of purpose. Adolescents have very limited access to meaningful roles and resources in society. Because of restrictions in work settings and reduced access to legitimate adult roles, it has become a period

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dominated by passive consumption. One of the few non-marginalized roles that an individual is allowed to pursue during his or her adolescent years is that of obtaining an education (Steinberg, 1991).

Finally, although societal laws deny adolescents access to meaningful adult roles they are encouraged to grow-up "faster." They are encouraged to assume the behavioral trappings of adulthood at the same time that their access to adult protection and viable role models is lessened (Steinberg, 1991).

Adolescents in Poverty. The situation is particularly grim for youth living in poor urban communities. Recent qualitative studies have called into question basic assumptions about the meaning of adolescence within these contexts and have suggested that demands placed on adolescents living in the inner-city may radically alter if not threaten the very existence of the developmental stage of adolescence in these environments (Burton, Obeidallah, and Allison, 1996).

Indeed, a review of history suggests that adolescence did not exist in pre-industrial societies as a separate stage of development (Modell & Goodman, 1990). The realities of economic and even physical survival required that children move almost immediately into adulthood, entering the labor force, marrying, and bearing children at a very young age. As in to pre-industrial societies, the hardships of living in the inner-city have the potential to profoundly alter both the relevance and meaning of adolescence (Burton et al, 1996; Allison and Takei, 1993).

Youth living in the inner-city are often required to take on what are considered in mainstream society to be adult responsibilities such as child-

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care and wage earning. Studies of parents living in the inner-city have found that they frequently expect their children to behave and function as adults when at home. Interestingly, this may create a range of "role conflicts" for the youth when he or she is in settings other than the home. Describing just such a role conflict, one adolescent relates, "[teachers] they don't know how it's like to hafta come to school late. 'Why'd you come to school late?' I had to make sure my brother was in school. I had to make sure certain things--I had to make sure that there was breakfast" (MacLeod, 1987:108-9). Another youth comments, "Sometimes I don't believe how this school operates and thinks about us. Here I am a grown man. I take care of my mother and have raised my sisters. Then I come here and this know-nothing teacher treat me like I'm some dumb kid with no responsibilities. I am so frustrated. They are trying to make me something that I am not. Don't they understand I'm a man and I been a man longer than they been a woman?" (Burton et al, 1996: 404-5).

The violence and frequent death that are often present in these communities can create a sense of urgency in youth and a concomitant sense of an accelerated life course. Adjusting to the sense of a shortened lifespan, youth may attempt to skip the adolescent stage and move directly into adulthood. When asked what it is like to be a teenager, one inner-city teen responded, "Me, a teenager? Be for real, lady. Who's got time for that? I'm a man. I'd better be one before I lose my life out there on these streets" (Burton et al, 1996: 409-10).

Teen pregnancy is another common occurrence in the inner-city. Partially in response to the sense of an accelerated life course, a substantial number of teenage girls in the inner-city become pregnant and choose to carry

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their pregnancies to term. The phenomenon of "children bearing children" results in the creation of "age-condensed" family structures where the mother may be 16, the grandmother in her early thirties, and the great-grandmother, a role typically reserved for a much older individual, in her 40's. This proximity in age creates an unusual blurring of boundaries between parent and child, and can result in children competing for the same resources as their parents (such as jobs and marriage partners). One adolescent explains, "It's hard for a man to get a job here. Sometimes me and my friends go to apply for a job, and our fathers and grandfathers are trying for the same jobs, too! It's not fair" (Burton et al, 1996: 408).

Although it is clear that adolescents raised in poverty are disproportionately exposed to risk, limited research exists on how these environments impact the development of adolescents or how we might mitigate their impact (Jessor, 1993; Tolan et al, in press). Studies of how youth adapt successfully to adverse situations can provide a useful framework with which to study adolescent development within the poor urban community. Because of its focus on successful development within conditions of adversity, resilience research is well suited for this purpose. Its hopeful perspective has led to the concept of resiliency being embraced by funders and service communities alike. Which, in turn, has resulted in the development of a wide range of programs designed to inoculate youth against the adverse environments in which they live, and by doing so to increase their level of "resilience." With its focus on successful development within conditions of adversity and its role in informing recent intervention efforts, resilience research offers a particularly relevant framework through which to

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study youth in poverty. The remainder of this literature review will provide an overview of the current status of resilience research and its relevance to understanding the development of urban youth.

An Introduction to the Concept of Resilience

One of our tasks as researchers and as a discipline is to identify the questions which are not being asked and then ask them. Resilience research has made an invaluable contribution to the study of human development by doing precisely this. Variation in individual outcomes following exposure to risk or stressful life events led some researchers to an often neglected question, "How is it that some children experience adversity and successfully negotiate the risks to their development while others failed to do so?" (Masten, 1994)

In addressing this question, resilience research focuses on three variables: the type and level of risk; the attainment of specific competencies or successful developmental outcomes; and the existence of specific factors that protect the individual from risk and facilitate successful developmental outcomes (Luthar & Ziglar, 1991). The term risk (or vulnerability) is used to describe those characteristics of the individual, his or her family, relevant institutions, and the broader environment which are thought to increase the likelihood of negative life outcomes for an individual (Garmezy, 1981).

Competence or successful outcome has been defined as the ability to "work well, love well, and expect well" (Werner & Smith, 1982). Garmezy (1991) defines competence as "the process of effectively dealing with the environment (adapting) so as to further continued development of the

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individual, the family, or society." Despite these broad and seemingly contextually sensitive definitions of competence, studies of resilience have relied almost exclusively on middle-class definitions of success such as completing school and successfully transitioning into the workforce (Luthar & Zigler, 1991).

The third factor in the resiliency equation is <u>protection</u>. Protective factors are "those attributes of persons, environments, situations, and events that appear to temper predictions of psychopathology based upon an individual's [risk] status" (Garmezy, 1981, p.73). Protection, like risk or competence, is not an absolute. A variable that is protective in one context may increase risk in another context. Thus, the distinction between protection and risk is frequently ambiguous. Protection may be the absence of certain risk factors or it may be the presence of distinct variables that function to protect a youth from harm (Rutter, 1993; Tolan et al, in press).

The most important aspect of protection may not be the specific factors that are believed to be protective, but rather the "<u>processes</u>" that underlie them. Rutter (1993) identifies four types of protective processes that underlie specific factors: 1) those that reduce the riskiness of risky behavior, or through altering a youth's exposure to or involvement in the risk behavior ; 2) those that reduce the likelihood of negative chain reactions stemming from the risk encounter; 3) those that function to increase a youth's sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy through the availability of secure and supported personal relationships or success in task accomplishment; and 4) those that open up opportunities of a positive kind for the individual.

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Concerns about the Applicability of

Current Conceptions of Resilience to Urban Youth

The studies and findings reviewed above are considered to be directly relevant to the lives of youth living in poor urban communities, as well as youth living in other conditions of adversity. However, problems exist in applying the results of these studies directly to urban youth. Recent work completed as part of the Chicago Youth Development Study draws into question the degree to which the findings of these studies are relevant to the lives of inner-city youth and questions the very existence of resilience in these ecologies. Tolan (1996) found that once adjustments were made for level of adversity experienced within the broader construct of poverty, not a single adolescent (N=342) who had been exposed to above average stress emerged as resilient using traditional measures of competence including academic success and absence of behavioral and emotional disturbance.

Questions concerning the nature of risk in the inner-city. Much of existing resilience research has relied on definitions of risk and stress that are derived from studies of middle-income Anglo families, or are specific to particular adversities, such as living in a home with a mentally-ill parent. Few studies have used models of risk and stress that are developed specifically for the ecology of the inner-city or that take into account the risks and stressors that occur in the lives of minority youth.

Resilience research has treated "poverty" as a monolithic variable despite the fact that sociological and anthropological studies have found that there are significant variations in experiences of individuals living within low-income communities. Some youth have had minimal exposure to risk despite

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living in poor urban communities, whereas others have been exposed to extreme levels of risk and may themselves be exacerbating the risk by engaging in risk-taking activities. The adolescent's age when first exposed to conditions of poverty, the length of time lived in poverty, the degree of material deprivation, the impact of poverty on the parent, the violence in the community, the number of stressful life events, the extent of participation in high-risk behavior, and a multitude of other factors determine the degree of risk to which a youth has been exposed (Brooks-Gunn et al, 1995).

Currently, specialized models of risk are being developed to characterize stressors unique to the inner-city environment (Anderson, 1991; Peters & Massey, 1983; Pierce, 1975; Tolan et al, in press; Gonzales, Gunnoe, Jackson, and Samaniego (in press) which include variables such as persistent violence, lack of infrastructure, lack of resources like the telephone, the transformation of routine tasks such as buying groceries into dangerous expeditions, media induced desire for material goods, and clashes between expectations at home and at school (Vega, Kohury, Zimmerman, Gil, & Warheit, 1993). Stressors unique to minority populations are also being recognized such as those associated with immigration status and acculturation, bi-culturalism, language barriers, and perceptions of discrimination and of a closed society (Garcia-Coll et al, 1996; Ogbu, 1981; Gonzales et al, in press). Even with the advent of these more contextually sensitive models, conceptualizations of risk and stress in the inner-city environment continue to be inadequate.

Questions concerning the nature of protection in the inner-city. Few studies of resilience have considered the possibility that protective

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factors and processes might occur differently in the inner-city than in other environments. A recent study completed by Tolan et al (in press), in which the coping strategies used by inner-city adolescents were examined, is an exception. After administering a standard coping measure and conducting a series of interviews with the youth, Tolan et al (in press) conclude that the models of risk and protection that currently exist are inadequate to describe the factors that protect youth living in the inner-city. They go on to suggest that rarely considered factors such as luck or happenstance may be as important in protecting a child in the inner-city as are active coping strategies. They also conclude that the very purpose of protection (or, in this case, coping) may be different in the inner-city than in less hazardous environments. In a more advantaged context, coping responses might function to minimize distress, solve problems, and increase mastery experiences (Compas, 1987); whereas in a disadvantaged and hazardous environment such as inner-city neighborhoods, the purpose of coping responses may simply be to keep the individual "out of harm's way" (Tolan et al, in press; Garbarino et al, 1991).

Further study of the factors and processes that create and sustain protection within the ecology of the inner-city is essential to the development of more effective intervention programs for youth within these environments. Without this understanding, intervention programs may have to depend on luck to produce positive outcomes in the same manner Tolan et al's adolescents depended on luck for protection. Even more disturbing, without a clear understanding of the processes involved in protection and "staying-out-

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of-harm's-way," intervention programs could actually heighten the risk to which these youth are exposed rather than mitigate it.

Questions concerning the definition of competence in the inner-city. Researchers have been criticized for "Americanizing" or "Anglicizing" the construct of resilience through the use of definitions of successful outcome that reflect middle-class Anglo-American values and that disallow other culturally and contextually valid outcomes (Gordon & Song, 1994; Burton et al, 1996). Rigsby (1994) suggests that the construct of resilience is an inherently Anglo-American construct, with roots in the American idealization of the individual who succeeds against the odds -- a modern extrapolation of the Horatio Alger myth. He challenges the use of existing models of resiliency to examine functioning in the inner-city because of their de-contextualized nature and the fact that much evidence suggests that success or failure in the inner-city is dictated as much by the surrounding ecology as it is by the individual.

Sociologists and anthropologists have tended to provide more contextually attentive examinations of development than psychologists, and, as a result, their writings on child development can contribute to a more contextualized understanding of competence. Obgu (1981) proposes a cultural-ecological model of development that is based, in part, on the work of Julian Steward. In this model, he contends that competence is defined based on the resources and structure of the environment. Thus, the characteristics that comprise competence are not universal but instead are dictated by the environment in which the individual lives. What is seen as a successful outcome in one setting might be considered a negative outcome in another.

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For example, in an ethnographic study of a low-income Puerto-Rican community, dropping out of school and obtaining a job--a behavior that would be defined as a negative outcome in mainstream society--was seen as an adaptive and even responsible move on the part of these teens when it helped to support their families.

Ogbu (1981) contends that a group develops "native theories of success" or explanations and models for how one succeeds in one's particular environment. Individuals who reflect this become "role-models" that parents try to socialize their children to, and children try to emulate. Similar to Garcia-Coll et al (1996), Ogbu asserts that groups that have been economically and culturally marginalized in the U.S. have had to develop different competencies in order to survive their impoverished environments. In a study of marginalized African-American adolescents, Ogbu (1981) found that the youth had developed a culture that was "oppositional" to mainstream society in which youth viewed school as "lame" and irrelevant to their lives. He hypothesized that the youth embraced an oppositional culture in response to their belief that mainstream work and social opportunities were not available to them. In this same study, Ogbu (1981) also identified other ecologically specific competencies such as "mutual exchange," "clientship," "hustling," "pimping," and "collective struggle."

Similarly, Stack and Burton (1993) found that inner-city parents defined activities such as "staying home to care for elderly relatives" as successful outcomes even though this runs counter to mainstream developmental theories that hold that adolescents should individuate from their families (Stack & Burton, 1993). In a more recent study of African-

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American youth, Burton et al (1996) found that inner-city African-American youth defined "survival on the streets" as one of the most relevant markers of successful development. Black youth and families in the inner-city were found to have developed a "revised American dream" in which the major markers of success were the ability to own material goods such as good clothing; the ability to be economically independent regardless of whether this occurred through legitimate employment, AFDC, or illegal activities such as drug dealing; and, finally, the ability to give birth to or father a child (Burton, et al, 1996).

Other successful outcomes identified in this study included fostering creative talents through activities such as rapping, voguing, and even doing hair and nails well; assuming roles in facilitating family cohesion; interpreting for parents and negotiating with social institutions; mediating between rival gangs; gaining access to mainstream opportunities; and visualizing alternative forms of successful developmental outcome when access to traditional employment and academic opportunities was blocked. From these research findings, and from the theoretical contributions of sociology and anthropology, it is clear that psychological researchers must be open to the idea that competence can assume a variety of forms.

Using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework
to Increase the Contextual Validity of Resilience

"What is most difficult of all? That which seems to you the easiest, to see with one's eyes what is lying before them." As Goethe observed, seeing the novel within the familiar, or the new within the obvious is a

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difficult if not impossible task. Yet, this is precisely the challenge that faces existing models of resilience. New, more ecologically valid models of resilience must be developed if resilience research is to continue to be useful in informing intervention programs and in expanding our understanding of how individuals develop successfully within adverse contexts.

The key to increasing the validity of the construct of resilience in the inner-city is to increase its attention to context and to the individual's subjective experience. The importance of context and subjective perception has been recognized for some time in psychological research, beginning with the work of Kurt Lewin (1951) and extending into Magnusson's (1981) theories of person-situation interaction. Yet, despite this early recognition of their importance, unless specifically concerned with issues of context or phenomenology, researchers in psychology have rarely moved beyond superficial consideration of these factors in their studies.

Partially in recognition of this neglect, in 1979 Urie Bronfenbrenner proposed an ecological framework for use in the study of human development. He argued that development is a process of interaction between the individual and the environment and, as such, cannot be understood separate from the context or ecology in which it occurs. He contended that due to researchers' failure to consider context, the majority of developmental research has been the study of the "strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time" (p.19).

Bronfenbrenner's model is comprised of four ecological levels: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The <u>microsystem</u>

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consists of the patterns of activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships that the developing individual experiences within various settings such as the home, the school, and the work place. The mesosystem is defined as "the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates such as for a child the relations among home, school and neighborhood peer groups (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25)." The exosystem involves the relationship between a setting that the individual actively participates in and one or more settings that the individual is not actively involved in but in which events occur that affect or are affected by the setting that contains the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem is the fourth and final level of the ecological model. It is defined as the "consistencies, in the form of content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.26). The impact of these different ecological levels on development is studied through examining the interaction between the different settings they involve including the home, the school, and the workplace, and by studying the different activities, relationships, and roles in which individuals engage themselves.

A central component of the ecological model is the primacy of the phenomenological world of the individual. Drawing on the work of Kurt Lewin, Bronfenbrenner (1979) asserts that the environment of greatest relevance for the understanding of behavior and development is reality, not as it exists in the objective world, but rather as it appears in the mind of the person. Thus, the mental ecology of an individual or his or her perceptions,

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his or her subjective interpretations of events, and the meaning he or she assigns to these events, is as important as and in some cases more important than objective reality in guiding developmental processes. The next section of the literature review provides an overview of factors at each level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework found to support successful outcomes in youth at-risk.

Level: Individual and the Mental Ecology
Characteristics of the individual found to support positive outcomes

A variety of individual characteristics have been identified that are believed to be "protective" for youth living in adverse situations. They include factors such as temperament, gender, intellectual ability, level of interpersonal awareness, empathy, activity level, sociability, and verbal ability (Masten, 1994). The activities an individual engages in have also been found to serve a protective function and, indeed, Rutter (1993) has stressed that protection does not "lie in the chemistry of the moment but rather in what individuals do about their stressful or disadvantaging situations." Coping strategies such as "adaptive distancing" or the ability to stand apart from distressed family members and friends in order to accomplish constructive goals have been found to be associated with positive adaptation to difficult circumstances (Chess, 1989). Responding positively to constraints in the environment through persisting in pursuing goals and engaging in problem-solving activities have also been found to be protective and promote resilience in African-American individuals raised in the inner-city (Gordon & Song, 1994). The ability to delay gratification, regulate impulses, and to maintain a future orientation have also been identified as

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"protective" for youth living in inner-city environments. Planning has also been found to be a crucial factor in the long-term resiliency of an individual. Specifically, it has been associated with more harmonious relationships with others, including significantly more satisfying and loving marriages. In addition, the presence of special talents such as athletic skill or musical ability have been associated with better outcomes in youth raised in conditions of adversity (Masten, 1994).

One of the most important protective factors that has been identified is the individual's unique perceptions of his or her world. Gordon and Song (1994) found individuals' interpretations of their life situation and their perceptions of the opportunities available to them played a pivotal role in determining their response to challenge and to their capacity to defy predictions by others of life failure. Similarly, in her studies of African-American youth in inner-city environments, McLoyd (1990) demonstrated how adolescents' subjective interpretations of their economic hardship were important mediators of the effects of poverty on psychological well-being.

Religion and belief in religious figures have also been found to be protective. In a follow-up study of 6 individuals who had lived in concentration camps as children, Moskovitz (1983) emphasized the role religious beliefs played in their "resilience." Similarly, Gordon and Song (1994) found that the majority of their resilient sample held strong religious beliefs. Concrete relationships with members of religious institutions and participation in religious activities have also been associated with better academic outcomes in high-risk youth (Masten, Best, and Garmezy, 1990).

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Garbarino et al (1991) found that political and personal ideologies serve important protective functions. In their research on children living in war zones and in inner-city Chicago, they found that the more "fanatical" or extreme ideologies provided the most immediate relief from anxiety, depression, and grief. This is consistent with the observations of Holocaust writer Bruno Bettleheim (1943) who noted that individuals who embraced extreme ideologies such as orthodox Judaism or communism were less affected by adverse environments. But protection comes with a cost as in many situations, extreme ideologies also serve to perpetuate the conflict or the problem.

In contrast to the findings of Garbarino and Bettleheim, Viktor Frankl (1992) suggests that it is the ability of an individual to find personally significant meaning in adverse circumstances that is protective, rather than the extremity of the belief. Consistent with the theories of Frankl, a clear sense of purpose in life has been identified as an attribute that frequently appears in resilient children (Masten et al, 1990). Similarly, hope has been found to be a critical protective factor in conditions of adversity and may be a central component of successful intervention efforts (Masten, 1994).

Although associated with high rates of delinquency and mortality (Huff, 1993), gang membership may serve important protective functions by creating a "war-like" environment. In so doing, gang conflict may artificially introduce the protective factors Garbarino et al (1991) identified as being present in conflict zones, including: a clearly defined enemy, a "purpose" in the violence in the community (e.g. protect "territory," avenge insults, provide rites of passage), and a potent "role" to fill.

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Level: Microsystem

Factors in the Home That Promote Resilience

Research on protective aspects of the home setting has concentrated on the relationship between parent and child. A positive relationship with at least one parent and less frequent separations from caregivers during early childhood have been found to contribute to more positive developmental outcomes in the inner-city (Rutter, 1977; Werner et al, 1982). Family variables such as warmth, cohesion, and the absence of discord have also been found to protect youth against various conditions of adversity, including poverty (Garmezy, 1985).

However, the picture is not as straight forward as it appears. Context can determine the effectiveness of these protective factors. For example, parental characteristics and family relationships were found to be protective against antisocial behavior in youth residing in a variety of poor communities, but not for those youth living in the inner-city (Tolan et al, in press). In addition, developmental stage may determine the potency of certain protective factors (Rutter, 1993). Cauce, Felner and Primavera (1982) found that as youth entered adolescence, they viewed support from their family as less helpful than support from other informal sources such as their peer groups. Developmental stage, context, and protective factors may interact either to increase or to decrease the likelihood of positive outcome for youth in the inner-city.

The quality of the relationship between parents has also been found to play an important protective role for the child through improving the

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quality of maternal parenting. Researchers have found that strong support of the wife by the husband resulted in more effective parenting on the part of the mother and could compensate for a variety of deficits in the mother's background, including the presence of mental illness (Brown & Harris, 1978).

Parenting strategies have also been found to provide protection for youth living under conditions of adversity. Research suggests that an "authoritative" parenting style which employs a combination of warmth, psychological autonomy, and demanding behavior protects against the development of behavior disorders and depression (Clark, 1983).

Once again, however, context plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of these factors. In a comparison of parents of "competent" middle class white children and "competent" inner-city African-American and Hispanic children, Baldwin et al (1990) found that the parents were similar in their level of warmth and expectations for high achievement and responsible behavior. Families from more deprived and dangerous environments, however, were more restrictive, less democratic, placed greater value on self-control, and monitored their children more closely. Similarly, the challenges of belonging to a minority ethnic group requires different parenting strategies. Parents of minority youth are faced with the added task of preparing their children to cope with discrimination and racism. Parental efforts to "inoculate" their children against experiences of discrimination by protecting them from such experiences, fighting the "myths of society," and discussing the existence of discrimination and how to respond to it have been found to protect self-esteem for some minority youth (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Tolan et al, in press; Ramseur, 1989).

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Parents who have access to a strong social support network outside the home have been found to have lower stress levels and to use more positive parenting practices with their children (Garbarino, 1976; Giovanni & Billinglsey, 1970; McLoyd, 1990). For low-income parents, the types of activities that occur within the social network are also important. In one study, low-income parents perceived activities that were directly connected with providing childcare as the most supportive (Hashima & Amato, 1994). Although such support can have a significant positive impact on youth because of its impact on their parents, parents in poor urban communities are often unable to develop supportive relationships with others. The time required to meet basic needs may preclude the time necessary to nurture a friendship. In addition, parents in low-income urban communities are often hesitant to develop relationships with their neighbors because of concerns that the neighbor may be involved in criminal activities or drug abuse (Furstenberg, 1993).

Family structure also appears to be protective to the degree to which it facilitates adult monitoring and interaction with youth. Contrary to recent political rhetoric, an intact family system has not been found to be a correlate of positive developmental outcomes for youth. Garmezy and Neuchterlein (1972) found that the presence or absence of a father did not appear to have an adverse effect on academic achievement. What mattered was the mother's style of coping with, and compensating for, the absent father. Other studies have suggested that it is the density of adults to children that is the critical protective factor in low-income settings rather than simply the presence of

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both parents in the home (Baydar, Brooks-Gunn, & Senior, 1995). Similarly, the existence of extended kinship networks and extended family living in the home have been found to be protective against antisocial behavior, especially for children living in situations of poverty (Garcia-Coll and Vazquez, 1995; McAdoo, 1982; Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan & Buriel, 1990).

Finally the roles the child or adolescent is allowed to assume within the home have been found to protect against present and future risk in situations of economic deprivation. In his longitudinal study of the impact of economic hardship on child and adolescent development, Elder (1974) found that youth who were allowed to assume a "useful" role, such as caring for siblings or taking a job, fared better than those who were not allowed to participate in some meaningful way. In his words, "these children had productive roles to perform. But in a more general sense they were needed, and, in being needed, they had the chance and responsibility to make a real contribution to the welfare of others. Being needed gives rise to a sense of belonging and place, of being committed to something larger than the self" (p.291). Similarly, Werner and Smith (1982) found that assigned chores, caring for brothers and sisters, and contributing to income through part-time work enhanced low-income children's self-esteem, sense of self-efficacy, and ultimately resilience.

The impact of the parents' work on the child or adolescent has also been a focus of study. Kohn (1969) found that the nature and structure of the work setting has a marked impact on the home. Specifically, the degree to which the parent is allowed to function autonomously versus the degree to which he or she is subjected to the authority of a supervisor or employer is

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evident in the parent's values and parenting practices. Parents who work in settings where they are given little autonomy tended to socialize their children to comply with authority and to limit initiative; whereas parents who work in settings where they are allowed a high degree of autonomy, socialize their children to work independently, solve problems, and take initiative. Interestingly, Kohn found that greatest impact of the work situation on the home and the child was the effect the husband's work setting had on his wife and her parenting practices.

The type of work available to the parent also has important implications for the home setting and the adolescent. Employment available to low-income individuals frequently consists of low-paying jobs in the service industry that require long hours and often include work at night, on holidays, and on weekends (Wilson, 1987; Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov, Liaw, & Duncan, 1995). Working these types of jobs reduces parents' availability to their children, as well as their ability to monitor their child's behavior. As adult monitoring is an important factor in reducing involvement in delinquent and high-risk activities, the constraints created by parents' work schedules can have a significantly negative impact on the youth's development.

Level: Microsystem

Factors in the School that Promote Resilience

The school is the second most frequently studied setting in the adolescent's microsystem. Most studies involving school settings have focused on individual- and school-level factors that contribute to positive academic outcomes. Few have examined the school's role as a source of

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protection for the youth in non-academic areas, although it is clear that school can be an important protective factor for inner-city youth. Indeed, dropping out of school is the single most accurate indicator of later involvement in high-risk activities (Dryfoos, 1990).

Certainly, individual characteristics such as intelligence contribute to successful outcomes in a variety of settings, including the school. High achieving students from high-risk backgrounds have been found to have a positive sense of self, a sense of academic competence, an appropriate attribution of failure, a bi-cultural or "raceless" social identity, a sense of responsibility, and determination to overcome obstacles (Clark, 1983).

However, research suggests that factors within the school setting are more likely to contribute to successful behavioral and academic outcomes in a youth than any particular individual characteristic. Nowhere is this more evident than in Rutter's (1979) classic study of inner-London schools, Fifteen Thousand Hours. He found that the school and its climate were more predictive of academic and behavioral outcomes than the individual characteristics of the youth attending it. Other studies have found that a positive school climate has its strongest effects on the academic and behavioral outcomes of the most disadvantaged students (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, 1995).

The structure of schools has also been suggested as a factor that fosters positive academic and behavioral outcomes in youth living in high-risk environments. Examining the goodness-of-fit between the developmental stage of the student and the structure of U.S. middle schools, Eccles and her colleagues (Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Biechanan, Reuman, Flanagan &

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MacIver, 1993) hypothesize that the structure of schools, including the roles and activities they allow adolescents to assume, the degree of autonomy they allow, and the connectedness they promote, can have a significant impact on the adolescents' social and academic success.

Resilience research has found that the presence of a positive relationship with a caring adult in the absence of a positive relationship with a parent is protective for a child. Adults within the school environment, especially teachers, are a significant source of this alternate adult support. Werner (1989) found that favorite teachers became role models for "at-risk" children and were often the ones to whom children confided their concerns about family members.

Peer influences are another important aspect of the school setting that can contribute to or impede successful academic and behavioral outcomes (Cauce et al, 1982; Ogbu, 1981). Close friendships with peers who value education have been found to foster successful academic outcomes in conditions of risk (Clark, 1991). However, peer relationships have also been found to have a deleterious impact on the academic achievement of adolescents (Cauce et al, 1982). For poor minority youth, doing well in school is often seen as "acting white" or as "selling-out" one's peers and cultural group (Ogbu, 1981). Thus, the capability to "cloak" one's success in school from peers has been found to be protective for low income minority youth (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Other strategies such as attending private schools were also found to contribute to the successful academic outcome of low-income minority youth (Ogbu, 1991).

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Parental involvement in the school is a factor that researchers expected to lead to better student outcomes and, indeed, some studies have supported this hypothesis (Comer, 1986; Connell, Spencer, & Abner, 1994). However, other studies have not found a connection between parental involvement in the school and student achievement (Ogbu, 1974). Researchers found that direct parental involvement in the school was not as important as the availability of learning opportunities, frequent parent-child conversations, and higher education expectations in supporting positive educational outcomes (Peng, 1994). Similarly, Gordon and Song (1994) found that the presence of educational resources in the home such as paper and pencils and a dictionary, as well as the strategies parents use to provide educational opportunities for their children, are correlated with more successful academic outcomes.

Levels: Microsystem and Mesosystem
Factors in the Street and the Community that Promote Resilience

For youth residing in poor urban environments, a third setting must be considered: the streets. Although sociologists, social workers, and anthropologists have long been aware of the salience of the "streets" as a setting for adolescents living in the inner-city (Ogbu, 1981), developmental researchers in psychology have rarely recognized the streets as a distinct setting, much less considered factors within this setting which may provide some protection for the adolescent.

Various community and family resources can provide protection for youth in the "street" setting. The presence of opportunities to engage in prosocial activities as a diversion from more antisocial street activities, the

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presence of adults to "monitor" activities on the streets including police, parents, business owners, and adult members of the community; and relationships with adults and prosocial peers are all resources that can increase the protection available to youth in the street setting.

Neighborhood factors can contribute substantially to the protection available to youth on the streets. It is clear that neighborhoods can have a profound effect on outcomes. In his comparative study of delinquent careers among low-income young men in three neighborhoods, Sullivan (1989) found that variation in the social ecology of the neighborhoods, rather than individual differences, was associated with variation in rate and nature of criminal behavior. Neighborhood characteristics that are believed to impact adolescent development include: resources, social networks, and social integration; informal social controls, normative consensus, legitimate and illegitimate structure of opportunities and psychosocial orientations, and behavior of adults and youth in the neighborhoods (Jessor, 1993).

Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanvo, and Sealand (1993) suggest that available economic resources, positive adult role models, and monitoring of youth by adults in the community are neighborhood factors that contribute to positive development of youth. Bernard (1991) found that availability of social organizations that provide an array of resources to residents and a consistent expression of social norms and what constitutes desirable behavior are some additional factors that can provide protection for youth. Other studies have found factors such as social-networks that provide access to desired sectors of the labor market and household networks that include employed males who exercise informal "social-control" in the local area

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provide protection against involvement in delinquent behavior (Sullivan, 1996).

Finally, the importance of being allowed to assume a "useful" role emerges once again in these studies. Opportunities for children and youth to participate as valued members in the life of the community have been found to be protective against risks associated with low-income environments (Bernard, 1991).

Level: Macrosystem
Factors in the Broader Society that Promote Resilience

In a study of the impact of national change on psychological functioning, Luria (1976) found that significant changes occurred in individuals' cognitive styles in response to a radical restructuring of the social system from a rigid, religiously dominated structure to that of socialism. Adults showed a steady movement from more concrete and practical styles of thinking to more abstract and theoretical approaches. Perception, deduction, generalizations, reasoning, imagination, and interpretation of internal life all varied as the conditions of social life changed. The implications this has for the impact of the macrosystem on adolescent development are potentially disturbing, but the implications for introducing protection are equally powerful.

Unfortunately, research on protective processes operating at the macrosystemic level is even more scarce than research at other levels of the social ecology. Factors such as the economic conditions of the country, the social and political climate, and the formation of "protective" sub-cultures are

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variables which can increase or decrease the protection available to adolescents in inner-city environments.

The economic condition of the country is a factor that has significant implications for children and adolescents living in poverty. Long and Valient's examination of a group of low-income males found that many of the youth raised in poor neighborhoods went on to do well in terms of employment and family life, and that this was facilitated in part by larger societal factors such as a burgeoning economy and the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years. The favorable economic conditions increased opportunity and functioned as a "protective" factor for youth in low-income environments.

Social climate and public policies are additional examples of macrosystemic influences that can have a significant impact on the level of risk or protection in poor urban communities. Unfortunately, studies suggest that recent changes in welfare have the potential to dramatically reduce protection provided to youth living in the inner-city. Indeed, some expect that recent changes will push more than one million more children into poverty, and will substantially reduce the health and mental health services available to these children (Urban Institute, 1996).

Racial discrimination is another macrosystemic factor that can increase risk and decrease protection. For example, the unemployment rate of black youth can be attributed in part to racial discrimination (Hahn & Lerman, 1985). Although access to higher education can be protective for low-income youth by providing access to a greater range of life opportunities, proposed changes to affirmative action policies promise to have a profound impact on

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the educational opportunities available to low-income minority youth by reducing their access to these systems.

On a more positive note, proposed changes in the educational system may increase protection for some low-income youth. Dismantling the existing "tracking" systems in education in favor of more accelerated programs may improve the quality of education available to high-risk youth (Romo & Falbo, 1996; Wheelock, 1992).

A final form of protection that resides at the macrosystemic level is that of developing an alternative culture. In his study of inner-city communities, Ogbu (1981) argues that families and individuals in the inner-city may develop protective sub-cultures that are not represented in mainstream research. He discusses the existence of an "oppositional cultural frame" to mainstream U.S. culture that results from experiences of racism and thwarted opportunity. In some instances, these adaptations may have deleterious effects. In others, they may result in unique competencies and responses and provide protection against the impact of discrimination (Garcia-Coll et al, 1995). Following is a diagram of the loci of different variables found to be associated with successful outcomes in youth living in adverse environments. The four concentric circles represent the four levels of Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework. The off-set circle represents the overlay of the individual's mental ecology across all four ecological levels. The line along the bottom represents movement through time.

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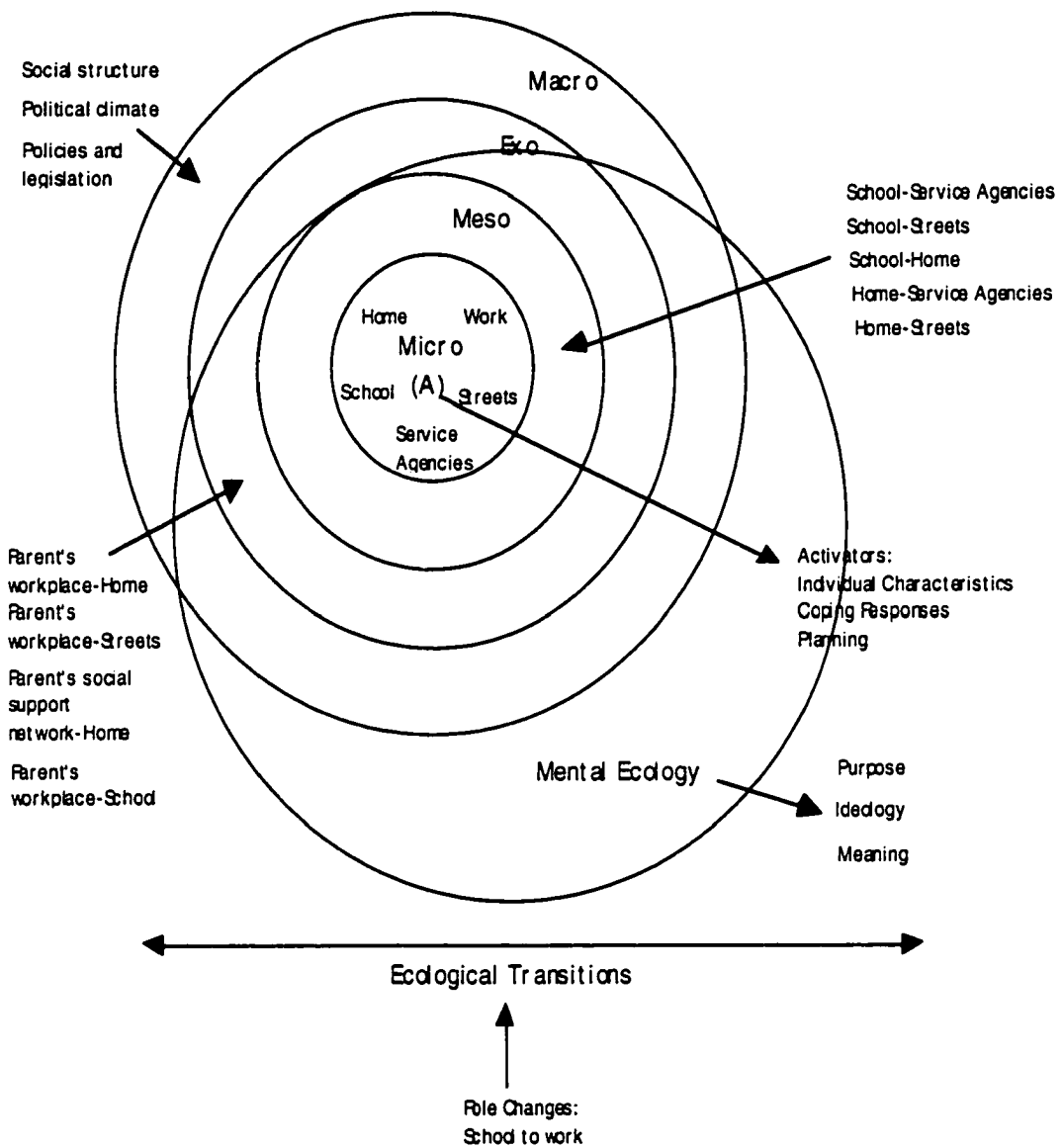
Figure 1.1. An ecological framework for resilience

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Questions Raised by an Ecological Consideration of Resilience

Rather than generating definitive answers to the social problems we face, more often than not the result of psychological research is to reveal what it is we don't know. This dilemma is echoed in the words of Cronbach (1986) who states that, "social science is cumulative, not in possessing ever-refined answers about fixed questions, but in possessing an ever-richer repertoire of questions" (p. 91). Ultimately then, the quality of a study is determined not only by the answers it provides, but also by the quality of the questions it asks.

The preceding review and synthesis of the literature leads to a number of questions concerning the nature of resilience in the inner-city. It suggests there are limits to our current understanding of each of the primary constructs of resilience: the nature of risks in the inner-city; our understanding of what constitutes competence within this environment; and finally, the processes that are likely to be protective for youth living in these environments.

What is needed at this juncture is to re-examine the construct of resilience in the urban setting and question all of its assumptions as it relates to this context. The nature of risk, protection, and competence must all be revisited with greater attention to the ecology in which they are embedded, their relation to the day-to-day events and activities of the urban adolescent.

Only by examining and questioning the concept in this manner can we hope to establish an understanding of what responses actually assist these youth in negotiating the demands of the inner-city environment, and only in examining the concept as it relates to their daily lives can we hope to use it to guide us in the development of intervention strategies that are truly useful.

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CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

The following research study is a qualitative case study of fourteen adolescents living in a low-income urban community in the Southwestern United States. The goal of this research was to examine the nature of stress and protection in the daily lives of inner-city adolescents in order to increase the contextual validity of the concept of resilience. Given the exploratory and theory-building purposes of this study, the research questions it addressed were intentionally broad. The central questions pursued included:

1. What is the nature of risk and stress for youth living in an inner-city ecology?

2. How do the youth and the surrounding microsettings of the home, school, and social service agency respond to these risks and stresses?

3. How do the experiences and responses of the youth inform our current understanding of resilience?

Although quantitative methods of research have contributed much to our current understanding of resilient development, qualitative methods of research were selected for use in this study for three reasons. First, they

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allowed for the study of the daily experiences of the youth at a level of detail which quantitative methods do not allow. Second, they allowed access to the youths' phenomenological experience which is more difficult to obtain in quantitative studies. Third, the flexibility of qualitative methods of research allow for the pursuit of emerging questions and constructs which is important in studies whose primary intent is exploration and theory building.

Sampling Procedures

The population of youth sampled was composed of those youth who had lived in the Southwestern urban community from 1991 to 1995, and who were current or past participants in a local service program called the Youth and Family Support Program (YFSP). Selective and strategic sampling methods were used in order to obtain data on a continuum of experiences in the inner-city, and to facilitate the development of a saturated theoretical model of resilience. The following criteria were used to select participants from the population of YFSP participants.

Risk-level. The study focused on youth who were considered at high-risk for negative developmental outcomes. This decision was made because it was believed that the unique aspects of risk and protection in the inner-city would be most visible in youth who were on the borderline between good functioning and severely-impaired functioning. However, in for purposes of comparison and in order to facilitate the identification of variations within constructs, youth from other risk categories were also

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included in the study sample. The taxonomy of risk recommended by Burt, Resnick and Novick (1992) was used to determine each youth's level of risk.

a) The lowest category of risk contained the "at-risk" youth. At-risk youth were defined as those adolescents who had been exposed to environmental antecedents of negative development outcome such as poverty and a high-crime neighborhood, but who did not show system markers of difficulty such as poor school performance, contact with authorities, or problem behaviors.

b) The second category of risk contained youth at "moderate risk." These teenagers also had exposure to negative environmental antecedents and display mild markers of difficulty such as declining school performance and problem behaviors that were severe enough to come to the attention of the adults in the teenagers' immediate environment, but not severe enough to require specialized placement or intensive intervention.

c) The third category of risk included teenagers at "high-risk" for negative developmental outcomes. These teenagers evidenced one or several system markers of difficulties such as school failure, restrictive school placements, dropping-out of school, and probationary contact with the juvenile authorities. These youth also evidenced moderate to severe behavior problems including mild to moderate drug usage and moderate to severe impairment in their role performance.

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d) The fourth category of risk included teenagers at "very-high-risk." These youth displayed a significant number of system markers of difficulty including school failure, school drop-out, evidence of behavior problems including involvement in violent and delinquent activities to such an extent that the youth had experienced or were at imminent risk of incarceration due to their behavior.

Age. Youth were selected to represent a range of ages from 11 to 18.

Sex. The sample emphasis was on males, but some females were included in the sample for purposes of comparison and to facilitate the definition of the range of each construct and category. The quality and depth of information provided by two of the female participants caused their data to play a much more significant role in the analysis and study conclusions than was originally expected.

Description of Sample

Eleven boys and three girls ages 11 through 18 participated in the study. Of these fourteen youth, two met the criteria for very-high-risk, five were categorized as high-risk, two as moderate-risk, and four as at-risk.

Concurrent with the youth interviews, three parents living in the community and three service providers working in the community were also interviewed. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain corroboration of community-wide events discussed by the youth, as well as additional perspectives on events, responses, and outcomes in the community.

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Data Collection

Subject Recruitment

The teenagers and their parents were initially contacted by a member of the YFSP program staff who explained the project to the youth and his or her parents, and arranged a time for them to meet with the researcher. Whenever possible the staff member accompanied the researcher to this first meeting. During this meeting with the parent/s and or teenagers, the researcher explained the project and asked for the parents' and teenagers' consent to participate in the study. The youth were offered $5 in goods or a gift certificate from a local grocery store for each interview completed and pizza during the interview as incentives to participate. The youth were given the option of completing the interviews in their homes or at the YFSP offices and the first interview was scheduled. All but two of the teenagers chose to be interviewed at the YFSP offices. Follow-up interviews were scheduled as dictated by the qualitative methods used.

The Investigator

All interviews were conducted by the researcher, a candidate for the Ph.D. in School Psychology. The investigator's access to the teenagers who participated in this study and to the community was provided by two service workers who have lived and worked in this community for over 20 years. In addition, a third service provider played an important role in facilitating the youths' acceptance of, and openness with, the investigator. This third

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service provider was held in exceptionally high esteem by the high-risk youth in the community and by many of their families and had been able to gain access to parts of the community where other workers, including police officers, have difficulty gaining entry. The teenagers perceived the investigator as being the ally and friend of this service worker, and this perception played an important role in the teenagers' openness with and trust toward the investigator.

Given the fact that the interviewer was female, Anglo, and middle-class and the majority of the participants were Mexican origin, male, and low-income, the potential for the youth biasing their answers is particularly strong. However, the particularly strong relationship the teenagers had with the third service provider and the teenagers' perceptions of the investigator as being a support for this individual appeared to increase the teenagers' willingness to speak candidly with the interviewer. In addition, the fact that the interviewer had worked with the program for three years as an evaluator, and was familiar if not well known to the youth also increased the teenager's comfort with the interviewer. The youths' comfort with the interviewer was evident in their comments to other teenagers such as, "she's our homegirl." Finally, comparison of information shared by the youth in these interviews with data from other ethnographic studies in which interviewers and youth were matched by ethnicity and gender show striking similarities and suggest that interviewer effects were mitigated by the above factors.

During the six months of data collection, the investigator became an active, although short-term, participant in two of the teenagers' networks. Specifically, she functioned in a participant-observer capacity in assisting one

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teenager in searching for work, which provided the investigator with detailed case-study data about the ecology's response to this teenager's employment efforts and she participated in a second youth's public speaking engagement with an area Foundation on the needs of youth in this community.

The investigator's knowledge of the community was enhanced by her three-year involvement with the social service program as program evaluator and her three-year involvement with the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health as a research associate for the School of the Future Demonstration Project conducted in this community from 1991-1995.

This exposure to the community and to the youth was both a benefit and a liability to the study. Prior experience with this community resulted in the researcher developing a number of perceptions, beliefs, and opinions about the youth and the surrounding ecology. This experience increased the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher (Glaser, 1978) and assisted in the analysis of complex data and concepts. However, this experience also biased some of the researcher's perceptions of the youth and the surrounding environment.

A variety of methods were used to ameliorate the biasing effects of the researchers' experiences including the completion of two member checks (one with the key service provider, one with a youth participant), the maintenance of an interviewer's journal, regular consultation with other professionals familiar with urban poverty, and adherence to the data analytic methods suggested by recognized authorities in qualitative and grounded-theory methods: Miles and Hubberman (1994) and Strauss and Corbin (1990).

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Measures

Interview. A series of one to five semi-structured interviews were conducted with each adolescent and adult in the study over a six month period of time (October 1997 through March 1998). Basic demographic and descriptive information was obtained from the youth and followed by a critical incident interview in which participants were asked to describe specific events that occurred during their day, their perceptions of these events and their outcomes, and their perceptions of others' responses to the events. The critical incident interviewing approach was used because it was believed that the processes of risk and protection that are the most relevant to teenagers living in the inner-city would be the most apparent in the day-to-day activities of the teenagers. The interview protocol can be found in the Appendices.

The basic structure of the interview remained the same throughout the project; however, as the study progressed some modifications were made to the protocol to allow for closer examination of emerging constructs. The participants' responses were audiotaped and transcribed and a secondary set of field notes was maintained by the researcher detailing important events and contextual issues that occurred during the course of the study.

Data Analysis

Following the recommendations of Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Miles and Hubberman (1994), the data were analyzed using three different coding procedures. The first procedure used was open coding, which

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involved identifying themes in the transcribed data and categorizing and dimensionalizing the transcribed data. Consultations with faculty familiar with qualitative studies of urban poverty, comparisons between two or more phenomena, and comparison of emerging phenomena with existing literature were conducted to increase theoretical sensitivity. The second coding procedure used was axial coding, during which connections were made between categories and relationships between categories defined. Categories, themes, and relationships were verified against the existing data, and through the collection of additional data from selected participants. The final form of coding used was selective coding. During this stage the concepts that emerged in the data were linked together to identify overarching themes and patterns and additional data was collected from selected youth to increase the conceptual "density" and "specificity" of the emerging model.

Validity of the results was established through constantly comparing recent data to previously collected data and challenging emerging categories, themes, and theoretical constructs with newly collected data. Confirmatory interviews concerning preliminary (completed in May 1998) and final results (completed in September 1998) were also conducted to increase the validity of the findings. Finally, results were compared to existing poverty literature including ethnographic studies of inner-city youth.

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CHAPTER THREE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

This chapter provides an introduction to the study participants and is intended to offer a holistic presentation of the teenagers and their day-to-day lives. Ensuing chapters provide a more detailed and necessarily categorical analyses of specific aspects of their lives. Descriptive information is provided for all the youth who participated in the study followed by profiles of five of the teenagers who were most central to the study.

Three girls and eleven boys who lived in this southwestern urban community for at least six years and who attended the YFSP youth program participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 11 to 18 years old. Using the categories described in chapter two, five of the youth were considered at-risk, two were considered at moderate-risk, five were considered at high-risk, and two were considered at very-high-risk for negative developmental outcomes.

There was considerable variation in the youths' living, school, and legal situations. Of the fourteen participants, five were living in a home with two parents, four were living with a single or divorced mother and occasionally her boyfriend, two lived with their aunts, two were living with friends, and one was living on the streets. Although seven of the teenagers were still enrolled in school, six had dropped out of school in the last two

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years. Of the six who had dropped out, one had successfully completed his GED and four were actively attempting to return to school. Two of the teenagers held formal jobs, four worked informally for a relative, and three acknowledged involvement in the sale of drugs. One had a warrant out for his arrest, six of the teenagers were currently on probation and two more had histories of arrest but were not currently on probation.

Youth	Sex	Eth nicity1	Age	Risk2 Level	School status3	Legal status 4	Wor k 5	Drug use6	Liv sit 7	No. Int.
Carlos	M	M	14	VHR	D-8th	W/I		H	St	1
Jose	M	M	17	VHR	D-10th	P/I	F	H	F	2
Octavio	M	M	18	H	D-12th	P P	F	H	S	5
Maria	F	M	15	H	D-10th		L	H	F	5
Mario	M	M	15	H	D-10th		I	H	S	3
Amador	M	M	14	H	E-9th	P	I	H	P	1
Chope	M	M	15	H	E-10th	P	I	H	P	2
Paulo	M	M	17	M	D-10th	PP/I	F	L	P	3
Angel	M	M	14	M	E-9th	P		L	SP/B	3
Delmi	F	M	14	L	E-10th		S	N	SP	1
Francis	M	M	17	L	E-12th		I	N	P	2
Vicki	F	M	16	L	E-11th			N	P	1
Beto	M	M	12	L	E-8th			N	SP	1
Felipe	M	M	11	L	E-6th			N	SP	1

1 M = Mexican origin
2 VHR = Very-High-Risk; HR = High-Risk; M = Moderate Risk; L = Low Risk
3 Enrollment status and last grade enrolled in. E = Enrolled in school; D = Dropped out
4 Probation status: P = on probation; PP = on probation in past 24 months; W = warrant issued for arrest; I = incarcerated in past; 5 Work status: F = formally employed; I = informal employment through relatives/friends; L = actively looking; S = school or city work program
6 Drug use: H = heavy use including regular use of cocaine and/or heroin; M = moderate use of marijuana, Rx medications with occasional or no use of cocaine/heroin; L = light use of marijuana, Rx medications and no use of cocaine or heroin; N = no acknowledged use of drugs.
7 Living situation: St = streets; P = both parents; SP = single parent; SP/B = parent and boyfriend; S = sister; F = friend.

Figure 3.1. Participant demographics

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The adults who participated in the study included three service providers and two parents. Two of the service providers were Anglo and both had lived and worked in the community for over 20 years. Each completed two interviews. One service provider was of Mexican origin and had worked in the community for over 9 years (completed 3 interviews). The two parents interviewed (ages 23 and 40) were also of Mexican origin and had lived in the housing project within the community since they were children. Each parent completed one interview.

The community. The Southwestern Inner-City Community is ethnically homogenous. Ninety-seven percent of the individuals are of Mexican origin. Unlike many inner-city communities, portions of this community have a strong communal feel, perhaps reflecting communal aspects of the Mexican and Mexican-American cultures. As one service worker explained, "I am surprised by how much people help each other out here. It's like a real Mexican barrio." The community has a strong sense of its ethnic roots. Spanish is spoken in almost 70% of the homes. Alters to the Virgin Mary adorn many of the front yards of many of the houses in the community as well as the interiors of the home. Traditional Mexican healers known as curanderas are frequented by the older generations and traditional Mexican and Mexican-American celebrations such as the quinceanera are an important part of the social life of the community.

The community also qualifies as an inner-city community. At least 40% of its population lives at or beneath the poverty live (Lindsey, 1994). It is characterized by high density with many one bedroom homes housing four to six people; a high teenage pregnancy rate, in fact, one of the highest in the

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nation; a large number of single parent homes; high rates of substance abuse; high unemployment; and gang activity.

This community shares some similarities with other inner-city environments such as Cabrini Green in Chicago or the Watts area in Los Angeles. Like Cabrini Green and Watts, the community is ethnically segregated and geographically isolated from the rest of the city. In addition, although new construction is occurring, there is considerable disrepair of the physical structures of the area. Tag writing and graffiti are prevalent in most public spaces, parks are unsafe and the site of gang fights and drug dealing. A number of the houses in the community are in considerable disrepair and in these areas of the community parents describe times when there has been raw sewage in the street.

On the other hand, this community is different from the Chicago or Los Angeles inner-cities in that the social disorganization is less severe. Although unemployment is a serious problem in the community, there is a strong working class presence in the community, and the construction of affordable housing promises to increase the presence of working class and even middle-class families in the community. In addition, although the area is known as a high-crime area, the rates of violent crime have declined almost 20% over the last four years and are lower than those in Chicago or Los Angeles.

Because of the social problems in the area, the community has been the site of a number of state and city level service initiatives. In the early 1990s three of the area schools participated in the School of the Future Project sponsored by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health during which

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time school-based health and mental health services were integrated into the schools. There are several churches in the immediate area along with a cultural arts center, a planned parenthood office, and an early childhood intervention program, a homeless shelter and gang intervention program are located about a mile from the community.

The Youth and Family Support Program. All of the teenagers in this study had also participated in the Youth and Family Support Program (YFSP), a program which grew out of the earlier School of the Future Demonstration Project. The YFSP is a multi-component intervention and prevention program designed to reduce the incidence of violence within the Southwestern housing project and the surrounding community. The primary mission of the YFSP program is to develop a stronger, safer, and more unified community through providing a range of services designed to empower the community and to increase the use of non-violent methods for resolving conflict. The YFSP program is part of an organization that builds affordable housing in the community, and is housed with one of the best known social support organizations in the community, the Volunteer Partners Organization, a long-standing grass-roots volunteer social service organization that provides a variety of services for the surrounding community.

Profiles of the Teenagers

Following are profiles of five of the teenagers who participated in the study. These five youth were selected for inclusion in this section because their narratives contributed significantly to the findings of the study.

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Octavio

(17-18 years old; high-risk)

Octavio is a lithe, poised, and stylishly dressed young man. I became acquainted with Octavio three years ago when I began working with the youth development program located in the community. During the first two years he would be at the program offices helping the counselors almost every time I visited. Octavio has an unusually charming manner with people, and is what many would term a natural leader in the community. Many of the area teenagers and children go to Octavio when they need advice, and even the service providers in the community seek out Octavio when they are faced with a particularly difficult youth or need advice on how to approach different families or teenagers.

Octavio began working at the age of 14 in order to support himself and his younger brother. Any emotional support Octavio received during his early years came from his older sister or one of his aunts.

At one point Octavio was involved with a local street gang, but more commonly, Octavio exists as a "neutral person," not belonging to any particular group, but rather socializing with friends he's known from the community for many years. However, because his family members are extensively involved with gangs and illegal activities, Octavio is frequently falsely believed to be associated with a gang. As recently as three months ago, shortly after completing one of our interviews, a group of teenagers fired shots at Octavio in an attempt to kill him as he stood talking to one of his friends at a basketball court about a block from the program offices. Fortunately the shooters missed him, but the bullets ricocheted off the truck

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they were standing by and came within 6 inches of striking another study participant. Now he is afraid to go to the basketball courts and prefers to stay at home. Despite incidents like this, Octavio is fiercely protective of his community and resents anyone referring to it as a "bad" neighborhood.

Over the past two years, Octavio became a fixture at the YFSP program offices. He developed an especially close relationship with one of the staff members who helped him reduce his drug use and encouraged him to complete school and to believe in himself. Relationships with Octavio are rarely one way and he assisted the program in any way he was allowed. He regularly helped staff with clerical tasks, served as a teen leader for the groups, and served as a mentor to younger teenagers and children. He even gave presentations to professional organizations about the program and the realities of being a teenager in his community. Last summer, as part of the youth development program, Octavio worked for a local health organization teaching other teenagers about infectious diseases and helped in the organization of a city-wide meeting on youth and education. However, since September 1997, major changes have occurred in the program's direction and philosophy and have had a significant impact on the staff member's availability. Octavio was profoundly hurt by the changes and, as result, he chose not to participate in the program any longer. Shortly after leaving the YFSP program, Octavio also dropped out of school, only a few credits short of graduation. He explained that his "depression" had become so bad he could not get up in the morning.

Despite his depression, Octavio has been determined to stop using drugs and so chose to stay in his house so he would not see anyone who

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could give him drugs. "If I don't see them, I won't use them." However, as drugs are also frequently in his house, he had to shut himself up in his room to keep from seeing them. As of our last interview, he had been clean for 3 months. Similarly, even though he dropped out of school, Octavio has been determined to graduate from high school. At the end of February he passed all three sections of the diploma exam and was awarded his GED. At our last interview, Octavio had just been hired by the city jail to work as a telephone operator for their inmates. The jail hired him based on the experience he had obtained working with "high-risk" youth in assisting YFSP staff. The local juvenile detention center also wanted to hire him, but was unable to because Octavio did not have a driver's license.

Maria
(15-16 years old; high-risk)

Maria is an attractive, slender, vibrant young woman with thick long black hair that she wears loosely arranged over her shoulders. With her piercing brown eyes and curt no-nonsense responses, Maria can be intimidating on first meeting. One gets the impression that Maria is not one to waste time on fools, and neither is she one who will easily tolerate the overtures of awkward middle-class researchers. Yet when one makes it past the first meeting, one finds a disarmingly frank, devastatingly direct young woman who is as articulate and astute as any college student I've had the opportunity to know.

Maria is also a teenager without a home, at least by most middle class definitions. At the time of this study, she lived with the mother of a past

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boyfriend, when she is not "hanging" at the house of an older woman she befriended at the basketball court three months ago. Only a few months ago, she was living about 10 blocks away with her grandmother, before that with her aunt, and before that alone with her younger brother in a friend's house. The location of her few possessions matters little. Until recently, Maria spent most of the hours from 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM roaming the streets, a habit she developed at about age 14 to avoid the advances of her mother's boyfriend.

Like Octavio, Maria's life has been difficult as long as she can remember. In her early years she was a frequent witness to violent fights between her mother and father. She remembers her father, a man for whom she has "no love," waking her and her siblings "to watch him beat my mother till she was bloody." Her mother finally divorced her father, but promptly took up with a boyfriend who pursued Maria and her older sister sexually. When Maria told her mother of his advances she refused to believe her. Yet Maria is one to whom family means much. She is intensely loyal to her younger brothers, her older sister, and her five nieces and nephews and dreams of the day when she will make enough money to care for them. Despite their differences, Maria has always held respect for her mother, something she learned from church years ago. In her words, "I respect her and honor her because she is the one who gave me life."

Maria is as loyal to her friends as she is to her family and like Octavio, Maria is a natural leader. Many of the young girls in the neighborhood seek her out for advice, many look up to her as a role-model, a fact of her life that she takes very seriously and one that takes a toll on her.

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Maria, too, is neutral and avoids associating with any particular crew or gang. But, like Octavio, many of the individuals in her life are involved in these activities and like it or not, this impacts her life.

Maria prefers to hang out with "guys" and her "guy friends" watch out for her when she is wandering around at night, a habit she developed to avoid her mother's boyfriend's sexual advances. Maria has felt betrayed in most of her friendships with girls. Either they have "talked about her" behind her back, tried to fight with her about boyfriends, or have taken advantage of her generosity. Recently, however, Maria has developed a friendship with a woman who is 6 years older than she. She credits this relationship with reducing her use of drugs and keeping her inside during the nighttime hours since this friend does not use drugs because of drug testing at work.

Maria had her first sexual relationship with a boy when she was 13, an experience she says was a "big mistake" but one she believes has made her smarter and more mature. She is acutely aware of, and protective of, her reputation and does not want to be known as "hoodrat." She has made the decision not to have sex again until she is sure she can "trust the guy." She hopes that one day she will get married, but right now does not believe she's anywhere close to being ready for a family.

Maria is also a school drop-out. As she explains it, "I made a stupid mistake." Although she was making good grades, excelling in sports, and excited about her health career's class, Maria left school in the fall of 1996 to "smoke pot and hang out" with her friends. "I thought it would be fun, doing drugs and hanging out. But I was wrong." Since she dropped out of school, Maria believes she has become a "nobody."

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Today she wants to return to school, not only so she can "be somebody" and get a job that pays well, but also so she can convince her younger brother to go back to school too. However, she feels she can't go back to school until she makes enough money to buy some clothing. With recent changes in the dress code at the school, Maria has only two sets of clothing that she can wear, and to have to wear the same set of clothing to school every day would be too embarrassing for her to bear.

Maria is also a young woman to whom work matters a great deal. She hates the welfare system. Last year she spent several months looking for work so she could make money to buy the clothes she and her brother needed to be able to return to school, only to discover that at 15 no one would hire her. As a school drop-out, she was not even eligible for the summer work programs the city sponsors for low-income youth. But beyond the issue of buying clothes, Maria found herself so pressed for money that when she and her brother were living alone she would have to use dishwashing liquid to keep herself clean because she could not afford shampoo and tampons.

Then the parent of one of her friends offered her a position selling drugs for him, heroin or "brown" to be specific. It was easy money for Maria, netting her up to $80 a day. It paid for new clothes for her and her brother, and clothes for 14-year-old Camilla. Camilla is a friend whom Maria took in, fed, cleaned and cared for until she ran off with an older female friend and had her "head bashed in at a bar" by three men because "she had a big mouth." The money also paid for diapers for her sister's 5 children. In Maria's words, selling drugs was a "big risk" and the day she turned 16 she stopped selling drugs and started looking for work again.

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Jose

(17-18 years old; very-high-risk)

Jose is a thin, rather unhealthy looking young man. When he stands his shoulders slump and he appears tired and even depressed. His clothes and hair are rumpled and somewhat unkempt. Except for his gang type clothing, Jose is the type of boy you might not even notice if you passed him on the street. He is, however, an amiable young man.

Jose's legal address is a small housing unit in the "courts" which he shares with his mother, his mother's boyfriend, and his younger brother, but, like Maria, Jose is without a consistent home. Jose and his mother have frequent fights. This powerhouse of a woman is fiercely protective of her sons, but equally fierce in her disapproval of Jose. Jose feels his mother favors his younger brother, Angel, which he attributes to the fact that he and his brother have different fathers. She gives Angel more money, takes him with her on trips to visit her past husband in prison, and rarely criticizes him. But she doesn't do the same for Jose. She rarely gives him money, and recently took the stereo and Nintendo his grandfather gave him for herself. She even kicked Jose out of the house--ran him out with a baseball bat and called the police when he came back to get his clothes. On weekends, she drinks, and when she drinks she's mean. So Jose lives with different people. Three months ago, he was staying with his "homeboy," before that with his sister. Now he stays with his girlfriend's family on the Northside. Jose takes pride in his ability to find different places to stay. "She thinks I don't have any place to stay, but I have plenty of places to stay." But despite the conflict that frequently occurs between Jose and his mother, Jose has recently

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been spending more time at her house. His mother's home is close to school so he and his girlfriend sleep there on the living room couch during the school week, and he can stay with his girlfriend's mother during the weekends.

Jose has never been particularly successful in school. He is not academically gifted and has had great difficulty learning. The school does not have high expectations for him and neither does he. Jose drops in and out of school like someone else might visit the grocery store. But Jose is a gifted artist. His artistic bent is evident in his tagging (street graffiti). Someone at school noticed his ability and offered him a scholarship to participate in a summer college art program. Jose didn't participate, he says, because his mother never filled out the paper work and it really didn't interest him much. Jose re-enrolled in school five months ago after a year long absence in order to increase his mother's welfare benefits. "They go down," he explains, "when I'm not in school." Jose doesn't really mind going back to school because there is nothing to do during the day when everyone else is in school. In fact one isn't sure whether it was his mother's wish to restore her benefits or boredom that propelled Jose back into school. But as soon as Jose was back in school, he was out again, this time on suspension. A police officer smelled marijuana on his hands one morning as he was entering school, and the next thing he knew he was in In-School Suspension. This wasn't too upsetting to Jose. He has learned to take these things in stride.

Jose's real trouble had more to do with sleep. Jose has trouble staying awake during school hours. In fact, he frequently sleeps through his regular classes and the teachers that know him don't seem to mind. But the new teacher in ISS did mind. After a few surly exchanges between Jose and

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the teacher, Jose found himself suspended from school for a week while he waited for placement at the alternative school for the remainder of the grading period. Sleeping has been a problem for Jose for as long as he can remember. Noises, disruptions at home, and most recently, itchy skin have made it difficult for him to sleep. Right now Jose and his girlfriend have scabies -- small bugs that crawl under the skin like chiggers and cause itching. So instead of sleeping, Jose is up most of the night itching.

Jose has also been in a gang. His stories are full of guns, near misses, and arguments over the color of "rags." He's been in and out of juvenile detention three or four times. In fact, to Jose, juvenile detention is not such a bad place to be. There are things to do, and he gets ointment for his itchy skin. His mother will come visit him. He gets to see friends who are also locked up, and he helps out so he gets released relatively quickly. Jose has a rather long relationship with the legal system. He's even friends with the police in his neighborhood, who know him from his middle school days. "They watch out for me, and I tell them if I know if anything is going down. They believe me more than they do those other guys." Jose uses pot and cocaine. When some of his homeboys started "shooting-up" heroin, Jose was ready to leave the gang. That, "and it was a hassle." "I'd go visit my friend and next door the guys would start making a problem."

Jose has worked. He found a job at a fast food restaurant about 5 miles away from his girlfriend's house. It was "ok," he said. He'd go after school and he liked having the money. But he felt some of his co-workers were taking advantage of him because he was younger than they were. Besides, he was having trouble getting to work. He would borrow his

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girlfriend's mother's car, but he couldn't do that every day. So he quit. He wouldn't mind working again. He was planning on walking to the fast food restaurant a few blocks from his house the day following his interview because he heard they are hiring. To get to other places costs money, and Jose's not very good at saving money. His mother doesn't give him much. But his girlfriend's mother feels sorry for him and will give him $25 here and there, and pay for the food and clothes he needs.

Jose doesn't think much beyond each day. He doesn't have any real dreams about the future. In fact, Jose can't remember ever dreaming about doing or being anything, even as a child. The only person he can think of that he might like to meet is his father, whose name he doesn't even know. He lives in town, Jose hears. His mother even gave his father Jose's address and phone number. But the father doesn't call because the mother's boyfriend doesn't like it and it might cause a fight. If he knew his father, Jose thinks, then maybe he could go live with him and things would be better there. "I'd probably have more money. And a place to stay."

Felipe
(11-12 years old; low-risk)

At eleven years old, Felipe is the youngest participant in this study. He is a diminutive fireball of an individual. Engaging, inquisitive, and almost constantly in motion, Felipe is difficult to keep up with.

Despite his energy, this has not been an easy year for Felipe and his family. His parents divorced earlier this year and now Felipe and his mother live alone in the community that surrounds the housing project. Also his

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mother recent lost her job. She had a steady, good-paying job working at a manufacturing plant, but the company recently moved its manufacturing facility to Mexico. Now she does odd jobs, cleans the house of a police woman who lives in a neighboring community, and receives money from a suitor hoping to marry her.

Felipe and his mother get along well. He is respectful of her and tries to remember not to enter their small home until he's knocked on the front door in case she's changing her clothing. Little Felipe is the man of the house now. But even a man would have difficulty protecting his family against the problems he and his mother encounter. Indeed, Felipe is enormously preoccupied with the artifacts of violence. The morning of our first interview there had been a shooting in front of Felipe's house. A 15-year-old boy had be shot in the back. Felipe was fascinated by the pattern the wood made when the bullets had slammed through the fence beside his house. His mother saw the whole thing, he said, but avoided getting involved. "It's not smart," Felipe advised me, "because maybe they will come back and do something worse to you." It happens, he says. "That is why the police hang out so long after a shooting."

Felipe insists on wearing clothing that is highly prized in the community, Tommy Hilfiger and a gold chain, even though the week before the interview he was assaulted and his chain was stolen when he was walking home. Felipe counts on being faster than his youthful assailants, but at that time he wasn't. Although his 17-year-old uncle would normally avenge his assault, he is on probation right now and doesn't want to go back to prison. So Felipe and his running shoes are on their own.

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"It works out, though," Felipe reasons. He and his friend found a bicycle leaning against a post near a dumpster, "just sitting there." Surely its proximity to the dumpster meant that nobody wanted it, so he and his friend took it. It was a short lived triumph, however, as the bike was stolen from his front yard only hours later.

Paulo
(17-18 years old; low-risk)

Paulo is a well-groomed and exceedingly polite young man. He is reserved and graceful in his manner, and quite easy to talk to. One is struck by the juxtaposition of maturity and naiveté that seem to exist within him.

Paulo has lived with his mother and father and various siblings about 3 blocks from the YFSP program offices for almost all of his life. His house is small, but inside the chain link fence that wraps around the house, every inch of the yard seems ready for action. It is filled with children's toys, weightlifting equipment, cars, and a satellite dish. The windows of the house are prepared for action too, but of an entirely different nature. Steel panels cover each window from the base to a few inches below the top, his mother's response to the drive-by shootings that used to occur so frequently in this community.

According to him, Paulo's life as a gang member started with the sidewalk. By his own account his induction into street life occurred slowly. The front yard was safe, his parents could see him. But then he ventured out of the view of his parents into the street, with the mobility provided by a bicycle. In middle school he and his best friend finally joined a local street

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gang. His friends all belonged to the gang and he "hung out" with them on the streets. During this time Paulo had guns, but never shot anyone. Paulo did drugs, but never "shot-up." Paulo did time in juvenile, a couple of times for fighting with other gangs. And Paulo lost friends, eight of them to be exact. Paulo left the gang when his best friend was killed. Now Paulo abhors gangs. He rankles at the young kids who show-up at the basketball court sporting a "rag," the "wannabes." He and the older men that pick-up games at the court run them off.

Paulo is a hard worker. Since he was 4 years old, Paulo's father has taken him to construction job sites. Paulo knows how to frame houses, drywall, and even make sidewalks, and he doesn't mind the work. In fact, he earns money doing repairs on his mother's rental properties and has a part-time job he got through his sister. He works for a catering company mixing drinks and moving tables. The pay is not bad, but the hours are irregular, making it difficult for him to continue with his education. He also knows how to fix cars. His uncle taught him how. He was almost killed several months ago when a bullet intended for one of his friends ricocheted by his head as he worked on his truck. Paulo listens to his parents now and tries to stay inside at home, until he can move out of the community.

He dropped out of school last year. He was bored and says they weren't teaching him anything useful. He was a good student too, earning B's and C's. Middle school was better than high school, he says. "There the teachers really tried to teach you something. They got you involved." Paulo is now working on his GED and the teachers there are better than any he had in high school. He's not sure when he will take the test, or how many times

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he can fail it. He knows he will take it because he wants to be a computer technician—like his older brother—a job that pays $18 an hour. His older brother will help Paulo get a job once he's finished training. His older brother "made it out" of the area. Paulo wants to make it out, he wants to make it to Corpus Christi.

Paulo is also a father. His former girlfriend delivered a baby girl on Dec. 30th, 1997. Paulo worried about the baby being a girl. They are more difficult to raise than boys, he says. But he's determined to keep her safe. He'll take her places like the video arcade, movies, and clubs. He'll go with her. That way she won't end up on the streets like he did. Paulo is serious about being a father. He spent the last four months preparing for his baby. He sold the truck he's been fixing-up for a year and intending to race, to buy a sedan. They are better for driving babies around, he says. Trucks are too cold in the winter. He also changed his video collection. He's gotten rid of almost all his "Die Hards" and "Terminators" and replaced them with "Toy Story," "Cinderella," and "Jungle Book."

CHAPTER FOUR

STRESS AND RISK IN THE DAILY LIVES OF

HIGH-RISK INNER-CITY ADOLESCENTS

Analysis of the data gathered for this study indicates that the

adolescents were confronted with three primary stressors: material hardship;

threats to their physical safety; and an actual or perceived lack of parental

involvement and support. Thus the principal adversity the teenagers

encounter in their daily lives is most accurately conceptualized as being one

of need. Specifically the youth experienced persistent material, safety, and

support needs.

Material Need

First, the procurement of basic physical resources such as shelter,

clothing, hygiene and medical care emerged as a central concern for the youth,

and as an activity to which they were required to devote a substantial amount

of their time and energy.

Food. Service providers indicated that many of the high-risk youth

experienced days without adequate food. According to one service provider

this occurs fairly frequently, although none of the teenagers discussed this

during their interviews. The service workers explained that for most of the

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teenagers the problem is not a total lack of food, but rather insufficient quantity. "In these families there is enough to eat, but not enough to feel satisfied." For example, 14 year old Chope began to have problems getting enough food after his mother was debilitated by an illness. While the mother was able to feed the family on a very tight budget, "she could feed them on papas and frijoles for a week," Chope, his brothers, and his father lacked this skill. As a result, Chope is hungry often. Since his mother's illness Chope has been the first one to volunteer to work in the program's kitchen on group nights and the service worker indicates that she sees him hiding food in his jacket while he is working.

Obtaining food can be especially difficult for those teenagers who have dropped out of school and no longer have access to the free or reduced lunch program. The teenagers and their friends find creative ways around this problem. Angel slips out of school during lunch to give his brother (who had dropped out of school several months before) food he hides in his pocket, and another teenager who had been expelled from school continued to eat lunch at school until security was informed he was not allowed on campus.

Shelter. Although the frequency and severity of the problem varied, eight of the fourteen youth who participated in this study, and all but one of the high-risk youth, spoke of problems finding "a place to stay." Sometimes the difficulty they experienced was the result of their parents' financial problems. In other instances the teenagers were unable to stay in their homes because they were unsafe, or because their parents "kicked them out." Regardless of the reason, these teenagers and particularly the high-risk youth were left with the challenge of finding shelter for themselves and sometimes

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even their younger siblings. Seventeen-year-old Jose tells how every time his mother gets drunk, "she comes after me with a bat and kicks me out of the house." Carlos must keep moving from house to house because he is on the run from the police since he violated his probation agreement. Maria can't stay at home because her mother's boyfriend tries to molest her. Twelve-year-old Camilla, Maria's friend, was removed from her mother's home because of abuse, but ran away from the group home they placed her in because she "missed her friends and family." Although she hoped to stay in the house of one of her relatives, each one has turned her down because she is a minor and they are concerned about the legal consequences should the police find her in their home.

Clothing. During adolescence, appearance and dress take on particular importance. Youth use clothing to project an image to their peers and as a way to "fit-in" with different groups and individuals. This importance of appearance and clothing does not change because a youth is poor or lives in a low-income community.

For the teenagers in this study, clothing played a particularly important role in their lives. Lack of proper clothing was one of the reasons they gave for missing days of school and also for dropping out of school completely. Some teenagers said they owned several changes of clothing but were not able to wear them to school because of recent changes in the dress code. Still others discussed not being able to dress-out for particular activities such as physical education class. Most were concerned that their peers would tease them.

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Several of the teenagers explained that they would not return to school until they had the means to purchase better clothing because they were afraid of being "teased" or seen as "poor." As Maria explains, "[I wont' go back to school until I get a job] 'cause I don't got nothing to wear...I only have these pants, a black wind breaker, a blue wind breaker that are all dinged and then it's really cold. You know how really cold it is outside and all that. All the rest I have is shorts and short dresses and I can't wear short dresses to school. [I can't wear them] 'cause it's a dress code. I'd be wearing this like three times a week. It's embarrassing. The others would say something, you know."

In another instance, Chope stated he did not attend the first two days of school because the only shoes he owned were sandals and they were against the school's dress code, and a service worker describes how other youth at school would tease Chope about his clothing. "They call him things like 'mojado' [translates as 'wetback'] because of his dress." On a recent home visit, the worker found only two pairs of pants hanging in Chope's closet, one for him and one for his brother.

Although there were certainly other factors that interfered with the teenagers' school attendance, the service providers interviewed contend that clothing was a serious concern for these teenagers. According to one worker the community emphasizes visible signs of affluence as symbols of success and this magnifies the importance of clothing for the inner-city youth. "Name brand clothing is more important in these [low-income] communities. It's who you are, how many 'Tommy's' you own, or how many Nikes. It

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doesn't matter if your house is leaking or if you don't have enough food as long as you have your name brand."

Hygiene. Staying "clean" was another concern for the high-risk youth. A number of the teenagers commented on not having enough money to buy "personals" or hygiene products such as shampoo or tampons and service workers indicated many of the youth in the study lacked even the most basic of

items that more affluent individuals take for granted, such as toothpaste or a pillow upon which to sleep.

Basic amenities such as access to a bathroom could become a problem. The crowded living conditions of the teenagers' homes can make the logistics of hygiene complex. Angel is frequently late to school because he has to wait for the bathroom in the morning, and Vicki stays up late to shower so she does not have to fight with her three brothers in the morning for their one bathroom. But overcrowding is not the only factor that must be considered. Depending on the stability of the people in the family, day-to-day hygiene activities can even become hazardous. As one teenager explained to her service worker, "…what do you do if your family members are drinking or shooting-up. I mean, taking a bath is not so hard if you have twelve brothers but if they are all high or if their friends are there and they are drunk then it makes it real hard."

Despite the difficulty the youth experience meeting their basic hygiene needs, the teenagers were almost always clean and well-groomed. A service worker observed that the teenagers go to great efforts to "smell good" and "look clean" and she rarely sees one of them disheveled. "I never see

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them dirty or their hair messed-up. It's very important to them that they smell nice and look clean even though they may have very little available to them for these purposes. When one shows up dirty or with their hair all ratted-out it's usually because they are getting into the drugs heavy, there has been a family crisis, or they're real depressed or something like that."

Health Care. The high-risk teenagers described a wide range of physical and emotional problems including scabies, chronic intestinal cramping, insomnia, and symptoms of depression. Half of the youth in the study indicated that they had thought of suicide and four indicated that they had attempted suicide in the past twenty-four months. Angel tried to cut his wrists after a particularly violent fight with his mother. His girlfriend intervened and talked him out of it. Following the suicide of his best friend, Mario swallowed a bottle of Valium he purchased on the street and had to be admitted to a local hospital for observation, and Maria spoke openly of her desire to kill herself when her mother did not protect her from the boyfriend's advances.

A number of the high-risk teenagers also described symptoms commonly seen in individuals diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), including frequent and recurring nightmares, preoccupation with the distressing event (which included shooting deaths, assault of peers and witnessing violence against family members), and flashbacks of the event/s. For example, Maria describes flashbacks after witnessing a fight in the street. "Miss, I just froze you know. I wouldn't move. It was like I was seeing my dad how he would hit my mom when we were little...like I was seeing it for real."

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Despite the obvious need for medical and mental health support, the teenagers had difficulty obtaining health care. The high-risk youth could not depend on their parents to help them access the care. For example, even though Juan's mother did get him to the doctor for treatment she never filled his prescription because of the cost of the medication. In another example, a service provider believes that Mario was denied pain medication for 12 hours after being shot in the shoulder because the hospital could not find his mother to obtain her consent for treatment. His mother was finally located in a crack house.

Neither could the teenagers access care on their own. While adults have the legal status to approach service agencies and federal support programs for assistance, the youth in this study do not. The teenagers are placed in the unique and untenable situation of needing to assume adult roles (become primary caretaker, breadwinner, provider of housing) while at the same time lacking the legal status to do so. This is a theme which emerges repeatedly in the youths' narratives and which will be discussed in greater detail in chapters six and seven.

Other Basic Resources. As a society becomes richer, the individual citizen's needs increase. Items that were once considered luxuries gradually become basic necessities (Jencks, 1992). Telephones, reliable transportation, and even, to some degree, computers have become basic necessities in this society. A child who does not have access to these technologies is at a distinct disadvantage to those who do. Yet for the teenagers in this community, access to these types of resources is inconsistent and often non-existent.

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Take, for example the telephone. At least half of the youth who participated in this study did not have a telephone in their home. Not only does this make it difficult for the teenagers' parents and the school to communicate, it makes it difficult for the youth to participate in the post-industrial teenage activity of socializing with peers on the telephone. Some youth solve this problem through using pay phones. One youth who participated in this study regularly uses the pay phone in his neighborhood to call and talk to his girlfriend who lives about a mile away. But this solution is not without hazards. While the pay phone is located near his housing unit, it increases his exposure to the frequent violence that occurs in the area.

The lack of a telephone also creates barriers for the youth when they begin to look for work. They are not able to carry out the research needed to determine potential job prospects, nor are they able to receive calls from employers with whom they have left applications. Employers are unlikely to persist in locating the youth after the first or second attempt to contact them and are likely to move on to other prospects.

Then there is the problem of transportation. Although the city provides bus service, the cost of using the bus regularly is often outside the means of the youth. Even if they are able to save for a bus pass, using the bus can require a considerable amount of time for them to arrive at their destination. It took four hours on a bus for one teenager to obtain an application from a near-by grocery store and submit it at the chain's headquarters. In addition, it can increase the risk to which they are exposed. For example, because of shortened daylight hours in the winter months the youth may not be able to arrive home before dark. Finally, for some youth

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who live in areas where gangs are particularly active, having access to an automobile can make the difference between being assaulted or shot, and safety. Without a reliable, efficient, and safe means of transportation, the youth are quite literally blocked from job and educational opportunities outside the immediate community.

Finally, there is the problem of privacy. A number of the teenagers, and the service workers, discussed the problem of space. Most of the teenagers live in overcrowded homes. For instance, in Vicki's one bedroom, one bath house there were living three adults and four children, and often a visiting sibling, aunt or uncle as well. Unable to find the privacy most teenagers require during this developmental stage, the teenagers would take to the streets for space. Marie described how she would "go to the park," a local drainage ditch, when she needed space. Unfortunately this is also the place where drug dealers and gang members congregate. A mother and service worker who lives in the community observed that the lack of space greatly intensified conflicts in the teenagers home. "In crowded homes with no place to go, normal teenage moodiness and surliness becomes a big problem. The kids don't have the space to be average moody teenagers. Instead it becomes a big problem." There are few, if any, safe and supervised recreational spaces in the community where the teenagers can go when things get too tense and too tight at home. So they are left with few options but to retreat to the streets or the neighborhood basketball court in search of space.

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Threats to Safety

All of the teenagers' narratives (regardless of risk level) contained discussions of violent incidents, whether the events occurred in their home, on the streets, or in school, and whether the teenager was in the role of victim, witness, or perpetrator. However, despite its prevalence the nature of the violence that occurs in this community is not immediately apparent.

Gang Violence. Because of its sensational aspects, the media and service agencies have emphasized the gang violence in the teenagers' community. Numerous stories in the past two years have documented gang-related violence, and without a doubt, gang violence is a serious and disconcerting problem for the community. Of the youth who participated in this study, one had to be removed from the community for a period of time to protect him from death threats made by rivals to a family member's gang, two narrowly missed being struck by bullets in gang-related drive-by and walk-by shootings, one was shot in the shoulder, and the close friend of one was hospitalized due to injuries received when he was "jumped" by rival gang members.

Tales of clashes between rival "gangs" and "crews" were common in all of the adolescents' narratives, regardless of risk level, and some youths' narratives were entirely consumed with discussions of violence. Oddly, the teenagers rarely spoke of concerns they had for their safety, although some joked about the possibility of dying or being injured. For example, during the period when he was heavily involved with a local street gang, Paulo shared that he would joke to his mother about dying. "I'd tell her she should take

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out life insurance on me because I probably wouldn't last long on the streets. I was joking, but then, in a way, I wasn't."

Domestic Violence. Despite the high profile nature of gang-related violence, domestic violence is a more common, if less visible, problem in the teenagers' lives. As one service provider explained, "Gangs get so much attention but our neighborhood isn't all gangs. There is a lot of violence that happens because of love, a jealousy kind of thing. Perhaps because sometimes people don't have anything else to hold onto in their lives other than the person that is loving them."

The majority of the high-risk teenagers' narratives contained descriptions of incidences of domestic violence. In many of their families, violence is an accepted aspect of domestic life. Maria was required to engage in a fist fight with her aunts in order to earn the right to stay in their home. Apprised of the fight, one of the service workers tried to intervene, but Maria explained, "Miss, this is the way it's always been done in our family. We just have to do it our way."

The violence occurred between parents, siblings, and members of the extended family. One teenager talks of witnessing her sister-in-law "stab her brother and have to take him to the hospital." Another speaks of his mother assaulting him with a baseball bat when she is drunk and another of witnessing his mother stab herself in the abdomen in a failed suicide attempt.

The teenagers were often put in the situation where they had substantial responsibility for preventing the violence. Angel plays a central role in protecting his mother from harm. His father is currently in prison, a fact that doesn't bother Angel, "cause he goes in and out of prison all the

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time." He continues to write to Angel's mother even though she is now involved with another man. The new boyfriend reacts violently when he hears of any contact between the two so at his mother's request, Angel hides his biological father's letters in his room. "The mailman gets there early so she reads it right away, and then she gives it to me when I get home from school and she tells me to hide it. I go put it in my room because my Mom's boyfriend doesn't have any rights to go into my room. When it comes to my dad, I don't want him to know because he might end up arguing with my mom and they might end up fighting and stuff and I don't want that cause he already knows that if I see him hit my Mom, I am going to go at him too, because he already knows the way I get if he tried hitting my Mom."

Violence is such a part of the teenagers' everyday life that they consider it normal and something to be integrated into their lives rather than avoided. Their efforts to develop an identity in relationship to violence is a theme that emerged repeatedly in their narratives. One example of this is Angel's discussion of learning how to treat girls, "Miss I don't hit girls....if she hits me I'm not going to do nothing to her because I don't hit girls. I don't do that....In 5th grade Mr. J taught the boys not to hit girls in his class ...I mostly take care of them now. Whenever I see anybody hitting one of the girls that I know, I go up to them and tell them to respect her. And they leave her alone, 'cause they already know how I am."

Random and Retaliatory Violence. The risk of becoming an accidental victim of a gang-related shooting or of being randomly assaulted is also ever present. Paulo almost became an accidental victim just a block away from the offices where these interviews were conducted. Early one Saturday

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afternoon a carload of youth from the housing project drove by the local basketball court and shot at Octavio, another study participant. The bullets missed the intended victim but ricocheted off the metal frame of Paulo's truck and came within inches of striking him in the head. He describes his encounter with the shooters, "I went to go talk to them and I told them hell, you know, you hit my truck...and they go, hey I'm sorry...we didn't know it was you....they go we're sorry...we were aiming for Octavio and John. They said they'd pay to repair my truck, but they never came back."

The possibility of being assaulted for the clothing or jewelry one is wearing also is high. Ironically, it is the very items that protect the youth against teasing and embarrassment from their peers that increase their risk of being assaulted. Twelve year-old Felipe speaks of how he was "jumped" on his way home from school for his Tommy Hilfiger baseball cap and how his mother was "jumped" for the gold bracelet she was wearing.

The teenagers also described a disturbing type of retaliatory violence that occurs when someone breaks the unspoken rules of behavior in the community. Maria tells about a brutal assault on her 12-year-old cousin, an event she believes occurred because her cousin broke two rules: She talked too much and she was too pretty. "I bet you anything it was a set-up 'cause Camellia's real pretty and she has a big mouth and guys don't like girls with big mouths." Twelve-year-old Beto explains that his father is in prison for murdering a man "because he broke my sister's bracelet." Later Maria was involved in "jumping" the same woman she believes encouraged the assault of Camellia for hurting her friend and refusing to pay Maria the money she owed her from a recent drug sale.

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Perceived Violence. The presence of violence does not end when the actual physical violence does. The teenagers must also contend with threatened and perceived violence. In this community even the most innocuous of events can be misinterpreted as preludes to violence. One of the most violent altercations that occurred in the community during the course of this study was precipitated by two 14 year-olds who were playing with firecrackers (Blackcats) in their backyard. Two youngsters playing nearby thought the teenagers were shooting at them with guns and told their older brothers. Retaliation was swift and brutal. Within 24 hours, one of the offending teenagers was in the hospital with head injuries, broken teeth, and a fractured shoulder.

Not surprisingly, the majority of the teenagers in the study were highly vigilant for signs of violence around them. For example, Chope described how the hair on the back of his neck "will stand up when something is going to go down," and how he has a rule that "no one, not even my homies walk behind me." This vigilance for potential violence in the environment has survival value for the youth in this community. It is an adaptation to the realities of daily life that must be considered protective. However, it also has the potential for creating problems for the teenagers when they move into settings where there is less threat.

The school and the work place are two places where the adolescents' vigilance toward aggression created problems. Several of the youth perceived the school as a violent place, not because of the violence among the youth but rather because they perceived the teachers as acting aggressively toward them. This is evident in Angel's recounting of a recent experience with his teacher.

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"I went outside and that's when he came behind me and pushed me from my arms. I go 'don't be pushing me' ...he started screaming at me and he kept on pushing me.... so I just ran away or else I would've hit him."

Canada (1998) discusses the miscommunication that can take place between middle-class adults and inner-city youth in <u>Reaching Up for Manhood</u>. In order to survive on the streets, Canada maintains, a teenager learns to appear "tough" and must never allow himself or herself to be bested by another. To appear weak is to make oneself a target for ridicule and assault. When teenagers sensitized to the demands of the inner-city enter the school setting a conflict occurs. Interpersonal exchanges which in the middle-class setting are innocuous or appropriate exertions of authority, may be perceived by the youth as threats to their "image" on the street, and hence safety.

This collision of middle-class and inner-city perceptions and behavioral norms was not confined to the school, it also occurred in the workplace. Jose describes the aggression and disrespect he believes he experienced at the fast food restaurant where he was working. "There were some people there that tried to take advantage of me and my homeboy 'cause we were the youngest ones. [They] tried to boss us around. I told him I might be young and shit but I ain't no little punk like other kids and stuff. I don't care how old you are, how big you are or what, I'll still throw you down. I just played it cool till it got to the point before I hit him. Then I just quit." Clearly Jose's interpretation of the situation was different than his superior's. The rules Jose has had to live by on the street, foremost among

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them being to never allow someone to "disrespect" you or put you down, put him in direct conflict with the operating procedures in his place of work.

Both of these teenagers believed that a violent encounter was inevitable if they remained in the situation, and both withdrew from the settings before the situation escalated to violence. Angel stopped going to his math class because he was afraid he would end up hitting his teacher and end up in jail. "My probation officer's already told me I'll end up going to jail 'till I'm 21, and that's too long for me." Jose stopped going to work for the same reasons.

Drugs. A discussion of the safety needs the youth face in the inner-city would not be complete without a discussion of the role of drugs in their lives. As for many youth across the United States, drugs are an ever present concern for the teenagers who live in this community. All of the high-risk teenagers who participated in this study use drugs regularly, although some of the older teenagers are currently trying to "go straight." Most have sold drugs as a means to generate needed income for themselves and their families, or as a means to buy drugs for themselves and their friends.

Their drugs of choice include prescription medications such as Valium, Xanax, and Ritalin; "weed" (Marijuana); "white" (cocaine); and "brown" (heroin), and a few have also sniffed what is commonly known as the poor man's drug, freon or "spray." The teenagers vary in their rates of usage, with some using on a daily basis and others confining their drug use to the weekend. They have no problem obtaining drugs. Everyone knows who sells drugs in the community and some of the dealers will even "give [them] a hit for free" if they do not have the money on a particular day. Mario's parents

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even attempted to deliver drugs to him after he moved to another house in order to stop using drugs. The teenagers' reasons for using varied. Some used drugs to "relax" or to "have some fun." Others cited peer pressure and the fact that the drugs were "there" in the house where they were hanging out. Those who sold drugs explained the difficulty of not using when they had "balloons of brown lying around."

Like violence, concern with drugs invades even the most innocent of teenage developmental concerns. This is evident in 14-year-old Amador's deliberations about the cause of his pimples, "Pimples -- they bother me. I scratch them. That's why I got all this...look...by scratching them. I don't like them. They look ugly...[My dad] doesn't care. He thinks its drugs. It could be but probably he knows. Yeah...if you get high you get pimples."

Lack of Parental Involvement and Support

The third stressor that emerged from the teenagers' narratives was the physical or emotional absence of their parents. All but the two youngest participants in the study described feeling abandoned by their parents. For some teenagers this disengagement took the form of actual physical abandonment. Fourteen-year-old Amador speaks of his mother leaving him two years ago. "...she left me and my sister... I wanted to go with her but she left me at home. She left a note that there was 'no room for mi hijo.' There's something for you to put in your book, Miss."

Other teenagers were abandoned through discrimination. Jose and Maria's half-brothers were virtually shut out of their nuclear families because

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their birth fathers were different from their mothers' current husband/boyfriend. Maria describes how her father treated her half-brother. "My father would always tell [my brother], I hate you. You are not my son...get away from me and you nigger and this and that...'cause his father was different you know."

Other teenagers describe feeling like they have had to "grow up" without guidance or support from their parents. Maria explains how she learned to conduct herself without her mother's help. "[My mom] was never ever there telling me 'hey, you know, don't do this cause this is wrong, don't do that cause that's wrong.' I learned on my own. I know what to do now because of me, you know. I had to teach myself how to be a lady. My mother didn't help me at all."

All of the high-risk teenagers felt as though their parents had given up on them and interpreted their lack of intervention on their behalf as a lack of love. As Mario explains, "They don't tell me nothing. See that's the problem...they don't tell me to stop doing drugs or stop being on the streets or nothing like that...cause, like they don't care, I guess." Similarly, 16-year-old Maria describes her mother's reaction to her dealing drugs. "I told [my mother], 'you know what, I'm selling drugs' and she just looked at me. She just looked at me. She didn't say nothing. I started crying and I said, 'I'm doing it because for one, I said, I'm supporting me and my brother. What you can do, you can...at least get up and go get a job. You just want to be there in the house all day long with that you know man.' I told her all that stuff and started crying as soon as she left."

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Finally, in contrast to the image that teenagers desire less contact with their parents, the high-risk teenagers did not feel their parents were involved in enough "fun" or recreational activities with them. The only recreational activity the teenagers shared with their parents with any consistency was that of watching TV and none considered this an adequate form of shared recreation. Teenager after teenager discussed their wish for their parents to join them in activities outside the home such as playing basketball together, going to the park, going to video malls, or attending "teen clubs" as a family.

Several went so far as to suggest that their parents' lack of involvement in recreational activities with them contributed significantly to the problems they are experiencing now. Chope explains, "My father, he used to do lots of stuff with us, take us to the park and things like that. But then when we moved [from Mexico] he just stopped. He didn't do that stuff no more. That's why I think I got into gangs and stuff like that, you know. 'Cause he wouldn't do nothin' with us anymore. He would just sit at home and watch the TV." Eighteen-year-old Paulo shares Chope's sentiments. Although his parents bought him "every toy and game" available in an effort to keep him off the street, these items could not replace the physical presence of his father. He discusses how he will be different with his new baby. "If he wants to go somewhere I'll say 'lets go', 'cause my dad was never like that. He would never want to get out of the house. I see all these kids that their parents are like that too, so I think if my son or daughter, you know, if they want to go, we'll just go, you know, and have fun with them. That way they won't have to go out on the street. That way they won't be like we were."

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Paulo describes how the lack of parental presence, even when developmentally proscribed, led him into gang activity. "There's the sidewalk and then there's the streets. When you're little and on the sidewalk your parents are right there and they are watching you...but when you get older they stop and then you're on the streets and there's nobody telling you nothing. Other parents won't because maybe they're afraid of you...[When I got my bike] I would be gone all day with my friends...and there wasn't nobody telling us nothing."

The media frequently represents teenagers, and especially inner-city teenagers, as rebellious, authority-defiant youth who have little desire for closeness with their parents, due either to their developmental stage or due to the harshness of their home environments. These stereotypical portrayals of the rebellious adolescent obscure the loss and concomitant grief the teenagers experience.

The impact parental absence had on these youth is illustrated in the experiences of Mario, who, at age 16, continues to long for his mother's love and involvement, even though she essentially abandoned him when he was five years old. A service worker describes a recent interaction with Mario. "I would tell him, come on Mario, stay in school. And that's when he said 'no, you don't get it. I don't have the support. I don't have what I need at home. I don't have a mom and a dad that are there for me and I don't have this and I don't have that.' And I would tell him, 'Mario I realize that we can't be mom and dad for you but hey we'll be there for you as much as we possibly can. And he was like, 'yeah, Miss, but it's not the same.' And you could hear the pain and the anger in his voice."

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Shortly after this conversation Mario was expelled from school for being the "class clown," despite the fact he was making excellent grades and showed much potential as a leader. Six months later his service worker convinced him to return to school, but the absence of his mother's support led to his decision not to re-enroll. Although the school was willing to accept the signature of his sister as proxy for his mother's, Mario insisted that his mother go to school to sign the necessary re-enrollment papers. After three weeks of trying to get his mother to "sign him up at school" Mario lost his drive to return and decided to babysit for his sister and do odd jobs for his uncle instead.

Even the most defiant and high-risk of the teenagers longed for more contact with his parents. Jose has been a member of a street gang, involved in violent and criminal activity, and incarcerated on three different occasions. During the first interview he insisted he had no "dreams" or goals for the future. "I don't think about those things" he said. "I don't have none." At the end of the second interview, however, Jose muttered under his breath, "No...the main thing I want is just that if I get to see my dad. I want to like...know him." Life would be better, Jose believed, if he could live with his father. But the only person who would talk to Jose about his father was Jose's grandmother, and she died last year. Jose's father has known his son's address for years and has never attempted to call or see him.

If the absence of parental support was paralyzing for some teens, finally receiving the support of a parent, even if only for a brief period of time, could be transformative. Maria describes how a recent conversation with her mother changed her perspective on her life. "My mom, she told me

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she was sorry .... but that she loved me. Before she said that to me I didn't care about anything. I might change my socks every two days. I didn't care about my life. You can even ask Marta [her service worker from the YFSP program]. I wanted to commit suicide. None of us in my family had ever told each other 'I love you.' [Then] my mother told me and everything changed you know. I started saying to myself 'I can't be like this.' And I told myself, 'I can't be dirty no more.' Now I'm real clean. I take care of myself. I'm going to try hard to show her I can be somebody, you know."

Conclusions: Need as the Primary Feature of the High-Risk Adolescent's Environment

The lack of basic material, safety, and emotional needs was the principal adversity the teenagers confronted in their daily lives. McHale and McHale (1977) propose three hierarchical but overlapping categories of need: threshold or deficiency needs, which consist of basic biophysical needs such as food, shelter, and clothing to which every person should be entitled; sufficiency needs, which must be met to maintain living standards at a level above marginal survival; and growth needs, the satisfaction of which allows for individual development above material sufficiency and the enjoyment of non-material ends and aspirations. The majority of the needs the high-risk youth contend with on a daily basis are contained in the two most basic categories of need.

When an individual does not have adequate food or shelter, his or her attention and energies are mostly consumed by efforts to obtain these

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resources (Maslow, 1971). Consistent with this, the youth were necessarily

preoccupied with meeting these most basic needs.

Material
hardship

High-Risk
Adolescent

Violence

Parental
absence
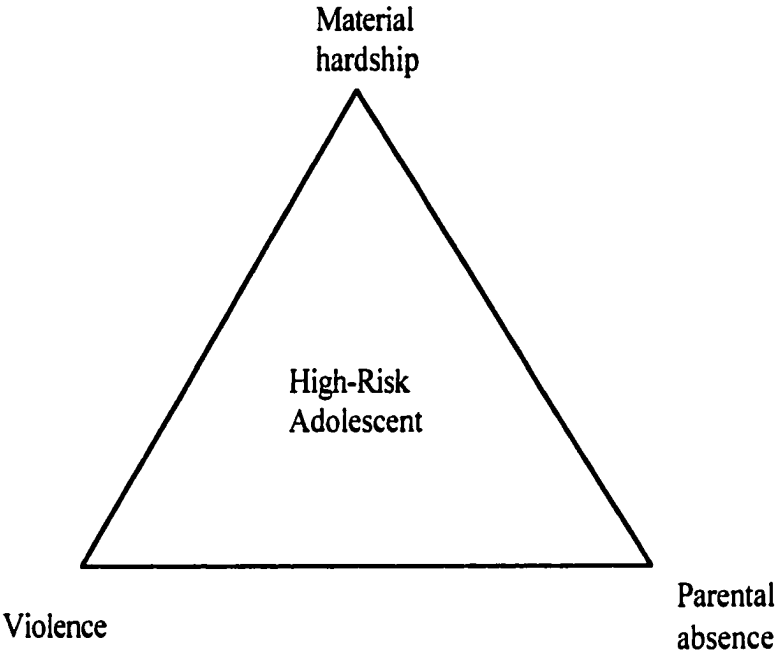
Figure 4.1. Needs experienced by high-risk inner-city adolescents

CHAPTER FIVE
THE ADOLESCENTS' RESPONSE TO
THE DEMANDS OF THE INNER-CITY

Study data indicate that the high-risk teenagers responded to the needs they encountered in their daily lives in three different ways. First, they used personal networks to obtain needed resources. They developed these networks through calling on family ties, developing relationships with unrelated adults, building alliances with their peers through gang and crew membership and through dating, and by participating in sporting events. Second, the teenagers tried to find work in order to earn money. Sources of work available to them included school and city work programs, formal employment, underage and informal work, and selling drugs. Third, the teenagers normalized the violence in their community and constructed illusions about their personal safety.

First Adolescent Response: Relying on Personal Networks

The high-risk teenagers relied heavily on personal networks as a means of meeting their basic survival and subsistence needs. The teenagers were able to obtain a wide variety of resources from their networks ranging

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from food and shelter to information on jobs and transportation. When Maria had to leave home to avoid her mother's boyfriend's sexual advances, she relied on individuals in her network for a place to stay, "personals" (hygiene products), clothing, and parental guidance. When their parents were incapacitated by drug addiction, Octavio and Mario turned to individuals in their network for protection from gang violence, food, access to work, and transportation. Chope relied on individuals in his network for comfort after his mother abandoned him, and in order to obtain drugs.

The teenagers' networks consisted of family members, peers, and adults from the surrounding community and they developed their networks by calling on family ties, forming alliances with their peers through joining gangs or crews and dating, and participating in sports activities.

Building networks through relying on family ties. All of the high-risk teenagers who participated in this study included members of their immediate and extended family in their networks, although notably, only a few included their parents. Typically the teenagers turned to older siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents for support. The first place Maria sought shelter after leaving her mother's home was with her grandmother. Since he was very young, Mario has depended heavily on his older sister and his aunt for almost all his survival and subsistence needs. Francis looks to his older brother for a place to stay when he and his mother fight or his father becomes violent.

In addition, the youth speak of turning to older brothers or "uncles" for protection against gang members or bullies at school or in the community. Repeatedly the youth tell of how peers will not "tell them something" or

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aggress against them because they are "so and so's" brother, nephew, or sister. Jose looks out for his younger brother when gang members start to pick on him. Felipe turns to his 16-year-old uncle for help as his bodyguard. Octavio keeps a close eye on his younger brother Mario.

A central feature of the youths' networks is its reciprocity. Just as they receive support from their relatives, the teenagers in turn provide support to the adults. Paulo, for example, gets up at 5:00 most mornings to care for his 2-year-old nephew while his sister goes to work. In addition, when he works, he gives his mother at least 50% of the money he makes. "It's the only way I can pay her back...for all the grief she's had to put up with raising me." Mario takes care of his sister's four children and works as an apprentice for his uncle in his uncle's construction business. Angel's sister pulls him out of school early so he can babysit her six- and 24- month-old children while she visits their father in jail.

Both males and females spend a substantial amount of their time providing domestic support, usually childcare, for their relatives. At times, the domestic requirements are demanding enough that the teenagers escape to the streets in order to "have some fun." A service provider observes that "lots of the kids don't really want to go home. It isn't necessarily because [home] isn't a shelter, but because they just want to be a kid and they can't do that [at home]. Once they get home there are other kids to take care of and other relatives also."

Building networks through gang and crew membership. For many of the youth, participation in high-risk activities was one of the most effective methods of developing their networks. When a youth became a

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member of a local crew or gang or neighborhood group, he or she dramatically expanded his or her access to basic physical and psychological resources. Jose described how his gang members helped him find places to stay when his mother threw him out of the house. "When my mom used to kick me out...I used to go to one of my other homeboy's house to go stay over there cause his mom treated me like if I was her son. She told me, whenever you want to know where to stay, Jose, you go ahead stay here...there is food there and everything and stuff. And I go, okay. I stayed over there for like two-months-and-a-half or so." Amador relied on his fellow crew members to cope with his mother's abandonment. "Sometimes I think about [her leaving]. But I try not to because...for what? Instead I go out and do something...cause I still have my friends around here, you know." Chope looks to his crew members for clothing to wear to school.

For some teenagers, involvement in high-risk activities and gang fights gave them a sense of personal importance and purpose as is evident in Chope's discussion of his participation in clashes with rival crews. "One day I'm going to tell younger people what I did when I was young, fight and do other junk and do drugs and all that stuff. Just like the older guys [older men at the local basketball court]...tell stories about things they are proud of when they were young." More than anything, it is the stories he anticipates telling others when he is older that he seems to value.

An alternative to gang or crew membership that offered equal possibilities for networking was that of maintaining neutrality. Not as simple as it sounds, neutrality is established not through lack of association with gang members, but rather through forming complex and often volatile alliances

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with individuals from several different gangs and crews as well as with non-gang-involved peers.

Neutrality in the absence of any prior association with gangs or crews was by far the easiest for the youth to establish and maintain. These youth could associate with, and maintain, friendships with members of opposing gangs. Their gang-involved friends were tolerant of this to the extent that they had assurance from the "neutral" youth that he or she would not discuss their activities with their rivals.

Of the youth who had been associated with gangs or crews in the past and who attempted to establish themselves as "neutrals," few were successful for more than a couple of months at a time. They were continually suspect among individuals who had once been their formal rivals and were immediately redefined as enemies when tensions between rival gangs and crews erupted. Although the youth would define themselves as "neutrals," they would enter into gang or crew altercations with minimal provocation. This is evident in Mario's narrative. At one point Mario was the leader of a local crew. The crew has since disbanded, but Mario continues to be the target of rival crew members and, although he insists on his current neutrality, he is quick to enter into fights with these youth. The youth who were successful in establishing themselves as neutrals following gang involvement were only able to achieve this through isolating themselves from the community as much as possible. To do this they avoided public areas like the basketball court, relied on automobiles as a means of transportation rather than walking, and spent the majority of their free time in relatives' homes or in the home of someone outside the community.

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Building networks through dating. Dating is also important in the development of the youths' networks. In a number of instances, forming romantic ties to peers had the effect of dramatically expanding the size of the teenagers' networks and the resources available to him or her. Even short-term relationships could lead to long-term expansions of the youths' networks.

Octavio's romantic attachment to an individual from outside of the community provided him with needed and desired resources such as clothing, transportation, and a sense of "belonging." It also provided him with what, from the youths' narratives, appeared to be rare access to a more affluent setting outside his immediate community and exposure to the social skills and dress codes he would need to adopt to function in this environment.

Jose's romantic attachment to 13-year-old Camilla virtually eliminated his high-risk activities. His girlfriend kept a tight rein on his whereabouts, and refused to let him go out without her. Not only did his association with her reduce his delinquent and self-destructive behavior, but her family became a major source of support for him. His girlfriend's mother provided him with spending money for entertainment, helped him obtain a job, provided him with transportation to and from the job, bought him the clothing he needed to be able to work, and provided him with a safe place to stay on the weekend when criminal activity was particularly bad in his own neighborhood.

The benefits of romantic attachment were not equally realized for boys and girls, however. They appeared to be significantly more protective for the boys than for the girls. In all instances the boys became less active in their gangs and crews and stayed home more at night instead of roaming the

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streets. The girls, however, were soon having to contend with concerns about pregnancy, developing a "reputation," and providing childcare for their boyfriend's parents. The girls also had to cope with a sometimes subtle, sometimes not so subtle, "disrespect" toward girls thought to be sexually active. Maria talks of her concerns in this area after she became sexually active. "I don't want people talking shit...saying 'she's just a hoodrat' or something" and Paulo explains how the teenage boys speak about the girls in front of them "I see other guys that are saying 'that bitch' this and 'that bitch' that and talking about they've already 'trained' her. They're like 'I've fucked her' and this and that. And the girls are right there like listening to this."

Building networks by developing relationships with unrelated adults. Many of the teenagers also developed supportive relationships with unrelated adults in their community. These relationship were most frequently the product of relationships the teenagers had developed with the individual's children through gang or crew membership or through dating. As with their relatives, the high-risk youth spent a substantial amount of time caring for the children or young relatives of the unrelated adults in their network.

Maria's relationship with an adult in the community to whom she is not related provides one example of this. Lorena is the mother of Maria's ex-boyfriend, Carlos. Maria developed a friendship with her when she was dating Carlos and that relationship had continued even after Maria and Carlos terminated their dating relationship. Lorena provides Maria with a place to stay, gives Maria motherly advice, bought Maria a pregnancy home test kit

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and even offered to "raise her baby" when Maria thought she was pregnant. In exchange, Maria helps Lorena with her children and the house. She watches Lorena's three youngest children while Lorena is at work, cleans the house, and cooks for Lorena and her children. Finally, because of her involvement with the drug world, Maria is able to assist Lorena in monitoring the safety of Carlos who is currently "on the run" from the police. Carlos stays in places that Lorena cannot enter without endangering her life, but Maria, because of her own dealings with the drug world, can move in and out of those environments at will.

The need to rely so heavily on adults who are not their parents creates custody dilemmas for the teenagers and the adults in their network. Although the majority of the support the teenagers receive comes from individuals other than their parents, rarely do the adults providing the support obtain legal custody of the teenagers. They do not seek custody in order to protect the absent parent and to prevent that parent from losing benefits or worse. This, however, blocks the youths' access to a number of important services. Without parental consent the teenagers cannot obtain needed healthcare, food stamps, participate in work programs, even enroll in school. Without legal guardianship of the teenager, the adults in their networks cannot provide access to these services either. Therefore, even with a strong network, there are many services and resources the youth cannot access due to their minority status and the lack of an available legal guardian. Despite this, particularly resourceful adults have found ways around the problem of custody and access to services, at least as it relates to health care. For example, several months ago Mario needed medical attention for an intestinal flu. He did not

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have access to Medicaid because of his mother's concomitant failure to apply for aid and refusal to relinquish custody of Mario. To assist Mario in obtaining the medical care he needed, an adult with a son about his age took him to the health clinic and presented him as her son who was eligible for benefits. In this way, Mario was able to see a doctor and obtain the medication needed to resolve his health problem.

Most of the teenagers interviewed for this study believe that the relationships they form in the community are a significant source of protection for them. As one service worker notes, a teenager's safety is connected to the people he or she knows in the neighborhoods and where these individuals live. "[The teenagers'] safety comes from who they know or who they are related to on that street."

The youth know where they can go if trouble breaks out, and identify specific houses where they go when there is a shooting or other manifestation of violence. One house in particular is perceived as a "safe haven" by these youth. Located close to a recreation area where drive-bys and walk-bys occur, the youth speak with respect of the woman who lives there. "She won't put up drugs in her house. She'll throw you out. But when the shooting starts she's always getting us inside and giving us a place to stay. We can go in there and be safe."

Building networks through developing relationships with special skills peers. The youth also find protection through developing relationships with peers who have special skills or connections. Sometimes the "special skill" that is important can be as simple as the peer's size. For example, Felipe is the youngest and most diminutive member of the study.

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He is engaging, inquisitive, and "into everything." Felipe also has a penchant for wearing the most fashionable clothing of the moment, which, at the time of this study, was Tommy Hilfiger knock-offs he purchased with the money his mother's most recent suitor gives him each week. His affection for expensive clothing and his taunts to the older boys make him a frequent target for assault. Indeed, only a few days before his interview with me he had been assaulted on his way home and had his hat stolen. A conspicuous target yes, but Felipe is also quite resourceful in his efforts to protect himself. Primary among his strategies is developing relationships with "bodyguards." Felipe tells how he has deliberately cultivated a friendship with the "biggest" boy in school so that none of the other kids will pick on him.

Unfortunately for Felipe, like most protection in the inner-city, his strategy comes with a cost. His bodyguard likes to extract "loans" from the young man which, of course, are never repaid. In a recent attempt to deal with this problem of the loans, Felipe turned to his 16-year-old uncle for help collecting the "loan." Unfortunately, Felipe's uncle had just been placed on probation and was unwilling to risk his probation by assisting his nephew. The conclusion of this study found Felipe still searching for a means to collect his debt.

The teenagers also seek out relationships with two youth who could be described as "teenage sages." Both of these teenagers were participants in this study – Maria and Octavio – and all of the high-risk teenagers who participated in this study mentioned one or both of these individuals as being central to their support networks. Neither of these two teenagers would be considered "resilient" using traditional middle-class markers. Both have

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dropped out of school. Both have attempted suicide in the past year. Both use drugs heavily, and both deal drugs from time to time. Despite their personal difficulties, however, both teenagers are unusually effective in building networks and obtaining resources from them. In addition they have strong relationships with members of the underworld (e.g. adult gangs trafficking drugs) and members of the service community. Remarkably, these teenagers are able to traverse mainstream settings such as the school and service agency, and underworld settings such as crackhouses, with equal ease. As a result they are of considerable help not only to their peers but also to service providers and family members attempting to reach crime-involved youth.

On a number of occasions they found housing for their distressed peers even when they were unsure where they themselves would be staying. In one instance, Maria obtained police protection and emergency medical care for a 14-year-old girlfriend who had been assaulted, while at the same time keeping her friend off her mother's property to prevent her mother from being arrested for harboring a minor, and also keeping herself in hiding so the police would not arrest her for truancy and suspicion of gang activities. Similarly, Octavio describes how he prefers his friends to use drugs in his house rather than elsewhere because he could monitor the purity of the drugs they were using and the amount. "Miss, I'd rather that they use here because I can cut them off when they maybe are going to do too much. At least here, they can be safer." Both Octavio and Maria have been known to walk into local drug houses where their friends may be using and escort them out if they have concerns about their friend's safety.

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Building networks through participating in sports. A surprise finding of this study was the protective role of sports in these teenagers' lives. School sports emerged as an exceptionally important and unique factor in the youths' networks. Specifically, the teenagers' desire to participate in school sports emerged as one of the only bridges that connected the high-risk youth to the schools. More than any other factor, the youth mentioned school sports as the reason they decided to stay in school or were trying to return to school if they had dropped out. As one teenager explained, "I want to go back [to school] so I can play in sports. I miss being on the team. Out here it's just boring."

School sports was also a reason some of the youth gave for resisting gang membership, or dropping out of their gang or crew. Sporting events also provided one of the few opportunities for the entire family to share in a recreational event together. Notably, participating in sports might be the only experience a parent and his or her child experienced in common growing up. For example, Vicki's mother dropped out of school when she was in 6th grade. With her daughter now in high school, she has almost no teenage experiences common to her daughter. For example, while she was on the streets involved in gang activities during her teenage years, her daughter is concerned about math tests and Valentine dances. What they do have in common is volleyball. Until she dropped out of school Vicki's mother played on the school volleyball team, and today her daughter plays volleyball. One service provider observed, "Sports are extremely important for the families in this community. It is something that everyone shares. It

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may be the only time they see their parents. Especially with the girls...the mothers will be there cheering them on."

Equally notable is the fact that the coach was the only school professional that the high-risk youth described as being "helpful" in their daily lives. Three of the youth included the coach as a member of their network, and perceived the coach as a surrogate parent who provided parental advice on everything from menstruation, to how to treat girls, to how to find a job. From the youths' narratives it appears to be the role of the coach as much as the person himself that makes him important to the teenagers. The nature of his involvement with the youth was more relevant to the daily demands of the youths' environment than that of other school professionals. In addition, the nature of the central activity, team sports, was more consistent with the communal survival strategies (e.g. networks) the teenagers used to respond to the inner-city.

Informal sports activities also played an important role in the youths' networks. The local basketball court is a frequent gathering site for the teenagers. It is a place where they learn of job opportunities, receive advice from older men, and develop new relationships that may lead to the acquisition of needed resources. Paulo learned of a job opening at a near-by cabinet maker from an individual he met during a pick-up game. Fifteen-year-old Maria met her "best friend," Rosa, while hanging out at the local court. Chope learns from the older men at the court.

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Second Adolescent Response: Finding Work

Relying on relationships or networks is the adolescents' most obvious response to the demands of the inner-city, but analysis of study data indicate the teenagers rely on other strategies as well. In addition to using networks, the teenagers tried to find other ways to obtain needed resources. Stealing is one method the high-risk teenagers use frequently. The youth may steal items simply because they want them. For example, although he has sufficient clothing, and clothing that does not elicit ridicule from his peers, Angel will steal jewelry and clothing simply because he likes the items. At other times he will steal items that he can later pawn in order to raise money. The teenagers also steal when they have no other way to obtain the resources they need. During the months she is unable to afford tampons, Maria will shoplift them from the local grocery store. They also resort to stealing when their access to support services are blocked. For example, Chope stole cough syrup and cold tablets from the corner store to give to his brother. Although shoplifting, pawning, and even borrowing money from friends were all methods the youth used to obtain resources, by far the most preferred and valued method for obtaining resources was that of making money at a job. A job might consist of legitimate employment with a near-by employer, working underage in a legitimate industry, or getting work through the underground economy -- specifically selling drugs to individuals in the community.

As they did with basic resources, the high risk teens turned sometimes consciously, sometimes serendipitously, to their networks for help finding work. Relatives and adults in the youths' immediate network are the most

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frequent source of information on work opportunities. For example, Paulo obtained his job with a local catering service through his older sister and Mario found his job as a part-time carpet layer through his uncle. However, study data suggest that finding a job is not easy for these high-risk youth. More times than not, these high-risk youth described being in the untenable situation of needing to work in order to meet their basic needs, but being unable to obtain work due to legal age restrictions, program restrictions, employers unwillingness to hire teenagers, or lack of resources such as transportation and proper clothing that would support the ability to work.

School and city work programs as a source of work. The school and the city both sponsor work programs for teenagers in this community. The school provides job counselors and work programs once a student has completed a certain number of credits toward graduation. The city sponsors the SANYO program that assists special needs teenagers in finding jobs.

Unfortunately for the high-risk teenagers, neither of these were effective means for finding work or off-setting their financial hardship. Many of the high-risk teenagers had dropped out of school, or they lacked sufficient credits so the school work program was not available to them. Those who were eligible were required to withdraw from highly-valued school activities such as sports or ROTC. Angel, for example, not only excels in ROTC but takes great pride in his accomplishments in it and hopes to join the military someday. He has developed a mentor-type relationship with the teacher who heads the program and good relationships with his peers there. But, in order to participate in the school work program, Angel says he must withdraw from ROTC.

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The city work program was equally disappointing for the teenagers. Again the program gives priority to youth who are attending school, so most of the high-risk youth in this study, although eligible to participate, were last on the list for jobs. In addition some of the teens were not eligible because their parents either did not qualify for welfare or had not applied. For example, Chope's family became eligible for assistance following his mother's illness, but his father was too proud to apply for assistance. As a result, even though Chope felt considerable pressure to work, he was not eligible for SANYO, and because he lacked sufficient school credits and had a spotty attendance record, he was not eligible for the school work program.

The work programs also require parental consent, yet many of the teenagers' parents were unavailable to provide this consent. Mario had been accepted into the city work program and all he needed was his mother's signature giving him permission to participate in the program. Mario eventually had to withdraw from the program because his mother was too incapacitated with her drug addiction to provide the signature. Sadly, this scenario happened not once but twice when after being offered a second job through the program, Mario again had to withdraw because of his mother's unavailability. Finally, the city work program is short-term, lasting only through the summer months. Thus, even if they succeeded in gaining admittance to these programs, participation did not offset the youths' need to earn during the remaining nine months of the year. Not surprisingly, the teenagers do not perceive the local service and educational institutions as being of much assistance to them in getting work, and often chose to rely on their own resources to find work instead.

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Formal employment as a source of work. A few of the older
teenagers had been successful in obtaining formal employment. Most
typically their job becomes an expansion of previous informal work for a
family member, usually a son working for his father or uncle. Only two
teenagers in the study had been successful in obtaining formal employment.
Paulo obtained his job with a local catering service through his sister who
works for the same agency. Octavio obtained his job as a telephone operator
at the local jail through the assistance of his service worker at the YFSP.

Without access to jobs through relatives it was rare that the teenagers
found formal employment. Although the number of the youth in this study
prevent any generalizations, this seems to be especially true for the girls.
Where the boys had usually learned some type of marketable skill such as
carpentry or carpet laying at an early age and were able to "unofficially" and,
later, officially accompany family members or friends to job sites and earn a
wage, the girls rarely had similar skills or the access. Instead, their expertise
was most often in the areas of domestic services and child care, skills that do
not lend themselves to the "apprenticeships" available to the boys or offer a
comparable pay scale. Their training lent itself only to working as a cleaning
person at near-by motels but these settings rarely hired individuals under age
18 and frequently paid less than minimum wage.

Underage and informal employment as sources of work. Finding
themselves in the position of needing to assume the role of provider, but
lacking the status that allows them access to employment, the youth turned
to informal sources of work. Most frequently the teenagers worked for the
businesses of family members or family friends. Mario for example, works as

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a carpet layer for his uncle's friend after apprenticing for several years. Francis finds work in his father's foundation business. And Amador works with his father doing construction work.

Selling drugs as a source of work. The youth did not speak of selling drugs as "work," but it emerged in their narratives as a viable, and sometimes only way the teenagers could earn some money. All of the youth knew who the local dealers were and the high-risk youth were often recruited to sell the drugs by their friends or their friends' parents.

When they did sell, they received payment by being allowed to keep a certain amount of the drugs they handle. The teenagers then had to decide whether to sell the drugs and keep the money or consume the drugs themselves. This proved to be a difficult choice. Only one teenager in the study was willing to speak openly of involvement in this activity so it is difficult to draw conclusions beyond the fact that selling drugs was an important source of money for these teenagers.

Third Adolescent Response: Normalizing Violence and Creating Protective Illusions

As mentioned earlier, the community the teenagers live in is notable for the level of violence that occurs on the street and in the home. In addition to relying on networks for safety, the youth also responded to the threat of violence by normalizing the level of violence in their lives and by constructing protective illusions about their safety.

Desensitization to violence. One of the most common responses to chronic violence is desensitization. Through this process, individuals become both physiologically and psychologically less reactive to the noxious stimuli. Individuals who have become desensitized in this manner become numbed and even apathetic toward the violence in their environment. A number of studies have described inner-city youth as becoming desensitized to the violence in their daily lives. The teenagers in this study seemed to have a different response to the violence in their community however.

Instead of being detached from the violence, the teenagers' and the service workers' narratives revealed the youth as being preoccupied with violence, having difficulty sleeping because of concerns about violence, avoiding certain places because violence was more frequent in these areas, and talking about their fears of being injured. For example, a service worker discussed how Mario, Chope and Amador each shared with her individually that they were afraid of shootings and assaults that occurred in their neighborhood, and they were concerned about being injured. "They act like they don't care about what happens around them [the violence], like it doesn't bother them. But you can see the fear in their eyes when they talk about it. The other day Mario told me that he was afraid of getting beat-up or even shot, that he didn't want these things to happen to him and wanted to get out of here [the neighborhood] so he didn't have to watch his back." Further evidence that the teenagers are preoccupied with, rather than desensitized to, the violence around them is Chope's description of how the hair on the back of his neck goes-up when "something's about to go down." This suggests a high level of alertness and reactiveness to violence in the

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community. The responses the service provider describes suggest that the youth feel anxious about the violence and hence are not desensitized to it. Her narrative also suggests that both the teenagers and the service providers construct certain illusions about violence in the community that enable them to carry on with daily tasks in the midst of threat.

It is difficult to explain why these teenagers do not show as much evidence of desensitization to violence as is described in other studies of youth in urban areas. One explanation may be that the violence in this community is severe enough and frequent enough to constitute a real and chronic threat, but not frequent enough to result in desensitization.

Normalizing violence. Instead of becoming desensitized to violence, the teenagers in this study distanced themselves from the threat by normalizing it. In essence, they defined violence and physical threat as normal and accepted parts of daily life. Although this does not necessarily result in the individual feeling safer, it does make the threat less remarkable and so less preoccupying. In their words, violence occurs so frequently in their lives that they do not perceive violence as being an unusual or remarkable event. It becomes ordinary. For example, Octavio explains that violence is such a frequent part of daily life that it warrants no special response. "I think it's a familiarity thing…violence is an every day life thing … the kids play around it every day. [I] don't think it is any different [from anywhere else]. I don't think its an issue. I think it's just part of everyday life."

Constructing protective illusions about violence. A third response common to individuals who are exposed to chronic threat is that of

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creating protective illusions. Before proceeding further in the discussion of illusion, however, it is important to distinguish between the terms illusion and delusion. A delusion is defined as a persistent distortion of reality that is so extreme that the individual mistakes the delusion for reality. Delusions imply the existence of severe psychopathology and severely impairs the individual's ability to function. Illusions, on the other hand, do not imply the presence of severe pathology. Most humans construct protective illusions about various aspects of themselves and their lives, and an individual's ability to construct these illusions have actually been found contribute to mental health rather than reflect psychological disturbance (Taylor and Brown, 1988). Illusions do not depart significantly from reality, but rather, modify some aspect of reality to make it more palatable.

An individual's ability to construct illusions can be particularly important in protecting them in situations of adversity. For example, Greenwald (1981) found that in adverse situations individuals have a tendency to create positive illusions about themselves and their surrounding environment. Similarly, Becker (1973) in his seminal work The Denial of Death contends that individuals create positive life-affirming illusions as a means of coping with uncertain and frightening living situations. In a 1988 review of research on illusion and cognitive distortions, Taylor and Brown conclude that illusions about oneself and one's environment are almost always present, but are especially apparent in situations of adversity. Both teenagers and the adults interviewed for this study maintained a number of illusions about their immediate environment and their behavior.

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Constructing illusions of non-violence. The youths' and service providers' protective illusions become apparent when one examines the juxtaposition of discussions of highly violent events in the community with assertions that the community is not violent. Interestingly, one of the most striking examples of this came from a service worker who is also a member of the community. This individual emphatically stated that the community "is not a violent place" and then spent the next 20 minutes discussing the drive-by shooting death of one of the fathers in the community, a 15-year-old who had been shot in the back the day before the interview, the drive-by shooting that occurred at the local basketball court 4 weeks prior, and the potential of a "hit" being put out on a 14-year-old boy who had run afoul of an adult drug gang. She never caught the contradiction inherent in her conversation and when asked to reconcile her statement with the information she shared, she did so by explaining that the community was much less violent than it had been in the past.

There is some truth to her contention of declining violence. The level of violence in the community has declined in the past 4 years and this, she believes, is the result of changes in the nature of street gangs in the community. Four years ago the gangs were highly organized and could easily rally 100+ members to meetings to discuss the need for a shooting or other activity. But over the years the leaders have either been killed, gone to jail, or gone on to have families. New, less violent collectives such as tagging crews and neighborhood gangs have taken their place.

Most of the teenagers, regardless of risk level, also described their community as non-violent. Some simply stated that their neighborhood and

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community were not violent. The older youth, especially, adopted a very "matter of fact" attitude toward violent events. Angel talks about "not caring" about [violence] 'cause I see it all the time." Francis describes how he and his family calmly walked into their house when shooting broke out across the street. Only the youngest participant in the study, Felipe, still appeared to be struggling with detaching from the violence occurring around him. During his interview he spoke of almost nothing but the violence around him: describing the damage a bullet had done to the wood fence beside his house; discussing how his mother had been assaulted a year earlier; explaining how last week he was "jumped" and his bracelet and hat stolen. But even Felipe was beginning to develop the "matter-of-fact" attitude of the older teenagers as is apparent in his reaction to the shooting that occurred across from his house on Thanksgiving Day. "We just ducked down 'cause that's the only thing you can do. Then we just went inside and ate. You just get used to it. You just get on with your life."

Similarly, a service provider described how although she and the teenagers were aware of the threat around them, they ignored it in order to be able to get on with daily living. "You wouldn't believe all the things [violence] that happen around here, and I mean just during the day even. If I actually thought about the things I've heard about and seen that happen in this community, I'd have to quit because I'd be too afraid to leave the offices. It's the same with the kids. If they let themselves think to much about it, they'd be too afraid even to walk to school. You just start telling yourself it isn't so bad, and that you know what to do to keep it from happening to you. You tell yourself that the people that get hurt or killed were doing something

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they shouldn't have been doing and that you aren't like that. It's this kind of thinking that allows parents to let their kids walk home from places at 10 o'clock at night."

Becker (1973) and other researchers (Taylor & Brown, 1988) concerned with cognitive distortions would contend that acknowledging the reality of the violence in the community would result in paralyzing fear and anxiety for these teenagers. The youths' safety needs are grossly unmet, so they must respond to this need by adopting illusory beliefs about their community to reduce subjective distress and in order to meet their need for a sense of personal safety.

Constructing illusions of predictable violence. In conjunction with a denial of the level of violence in the community, the teenagers also shared the belief that the violence that does occur is predictable. They believe there are certain "rules" they can follow and if they abide by these "rules" they will not get hurt. As one of the teenagers explained, "It's violent to outsiders but if you live here it's not violent. You know where to go, where not to go. Who to hang out with, who not to."

Again, there is some truth to this. As described earlier, familiarity provides the teenagers with a considerable amount of safety. When it is not possible to deny the existence of violence, the teenagers rely on the belief that the violence that occurs is rule-bound and as such can be predicted and avoided.

This belief in the rule-bound nature of violence is well illustrated in 17-year-old Francis's description of an incident in which he was recently involved. Francis is a conservative young man and an excellent, college-bound

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student. He has never been involved in gangs and prefers instead to maintain neutrality. Around 8:00 PM one Saturday evening when Francis was playing basketball with a friend of his a firecracker exploded nearby that "sounded just like a gun." His friend, a member of a local street gang, quickly dropped to the ground to protect himself from the possible gunfire. When asked if he, too, threw himself on the ground Francis laughed and responded, "Not me, I'm not in a gang. It doesn't have anything to do with me so I wouldn't think that."

Francis's response reveals the strength of his belief in the predictability of the violence around him. If a person is in a gang, they will get shot. If they aren't, they won't get hurt. The possibility of randomness, that he might accidentally be struck by the mythical bullet rather than his friend did not occur to him -- even in light of the fact that at least two people had been killed in his immediate neighborhood in the past year by "random" events, usually misdirected bullets during drive-bys.

Constructing illusions of invulnerability to drugs. The final illusion that emerged from the youths' narratives concerned drugs. Without exception, all of the youth who used drugs spoke of their personal limits, which universally involved the act of "shooting-up." Maria explains, "I use brown about twice a week. But I'll never shoot-up. I don't want to end up a junkie like my friend Carmen. She steals and everything just so she can stick a needle in her arm." Mario shares that, "..shooting-up, that's nasty. I'd never do that." Jose is considering dropping out of his gang because his fellow gang members were starting to shoot-up. "I ain't gonna do none of that. They're starting to shoot-up and stuff so I'm just gonna tell them bye."

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The teenagers believe that as long as they do not cross the line between "using" and "shooting-up" they are safe from the dangers of drugs. This specific illusion is not unique to these youth and, in fact, crosses temporal and geographical barriers. Canada (1998) speaks of this same phenomenon during his years growing up in Harlem where the teenagers also believed that they were safe from drug addiction as long as they did not use needles.

The Role of Culture in the Youths' Responses

Garcia-Coll et al (1996) make a convincing argument for developing culturally-oriented theories of development and suggest that minority youth, regardless of heritage, face unique stressors and must develop unique skills in response to these stresses.

Interestingly, the youth in this study expressed very little concern about their ethnicity or other individual's ethnicities. Instead they were more likely to identify other by the location of their home (in the "courts" or not in the courts); where they spent their recreational time (the basketball court vs. the park vs. a friend's house); their gang or crew affiliation (He's a "brown" or he "hangs with Mario's crew); or the gang or crew affiliation of their family members (His father belongs to the Mafia or his uncle is a member of the LA Boys). To a lesser degree the teenagers also distinguished others through their use of drugs (She's a crack head) and by their status in school (dropped out or still attending). At times the teenagers also identified themselves based on the closeness of their association with Mexico. Youth who had recently immigrated to this country or whose parents still

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maintained strong connections in Mexico might be teased and called a

"mojado" (a Spanish term meaning "wetback"). The only instances in which

the teenagers' ethnicity emerged as a central concern was when conflicts

occurred at the school with Anglo or African-American teachers or when the

new Anglo director arrived at the YFS program.

Five culturally related themes did emerge from the youths' narratives.

The most frequent of these being a concern with language. Octavio explains

how the youths' use of both Spanish and English impacts their ability to

move into settings outside the community. "It's a problem, Miss. I mean

that's how they speak--one word in English, one word in Spanish--that's

how they talk in real life. The employers hear that and they don't like it."

Generational conflicts were also evident in the narratives. Chope, for

example, describes how his father expected him to find work in the same

manner he had while growing-up in a small Mexican border town and the

conflict this created for him. "He expects me to be able to go out and do what

he did. To clean shoes, or windshields or do stuff at other people's houses.

He's always mad at me for not doing something to help out." What was

viable and accepted work in when his father was a boy in Mexico would

generate little income in the U.S. and could result in Chope being teased or

even worse perceived as weak and lead to harassment by rival crews or gang

members.

Cultural influences were also evident in the parents' strategies. For

example, Vicki's U.S.-born mother and Mexican-born father followed

conservative parenting strategies used in Mexico by insisting she be escorted

by a brother or by her mother any time she left the house. Discrimination

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emerged in several of the teenagers' narratives as their explanation for why they were having difficulty in school. For example, Angel explains recent conflicts with his teachers by saying that the "teachers were prejudiced against Mexicans," and Mario talks of how he didn't think the new Anglo director would be able to understand him. "She's ok Miss, but she's a [spanish term meaning white bread]." Finally, the cultural phenomenon of machismo was evident in almost all of the boys' narratives. Specifically, the teenage boys felt a need to appear tough or strong to others. Octavio discusses the presence of this cultural feature. "It's difficult Miss, trying to be yourself in all this Mexican Macho stuff. The way they talk and act and things."

In addition, prior studies of Mexican-American communities and families have emphasized the communal nature of these systems which one might hypothesize plays a role in the youths' use of networks as a means of responding to the needs they experience. However, other studies have also found evidence of communal strategies being used in poor Black communities (Stack, 1991), so it is not clear whether the communal nature of the youths' strategies reflect ethnic traditions or a universal response to deprivation.

There is no question that culture and heritage play an important role in most individual's lives, and certainly in the lives of these youth. However, the youths' relative lack of concern with issues ethnicity and culture, and the fact that there was little ethnic variation in the study participants, makes it difficult to examine the role culture may have played in the teenagers' stress, their response, and their interactions with service institutions. In future studies, it will be useful to expand the current study to include a youth from

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differing ethnicities. This would allow for a more direct examination of the intersection of culture and the inner-city in defining the youths' daily life experiences. For the purposes of this study however, the influence of cultural factors can be acknowledged, but cannot not be explored with any intensity.

Conclusions: The Cost of Meeting Needs

In most instances, the high-risk teenagers were successful in meeting their basic survival and subsistence needs. They accomplished this, however, at considerable personal cost. First, they had to assume adult roles such as caretaker and breadwinner without access to the status or support resources available to most adults. Filling these roles required a considerable amount of time and energy from the teenagers and interfered with their ability to participate in and succeed in school. Second, in some instances the teenagers engaged in high-risk, illegal, or marginalized activities in order to meet their basic needs. Third, consistent with the idea that protection in the inner-city is double-edged, at the same time their strategies assisted them in meeting their basic needs, the strategies also introduced new forms of risk into the teenagers' daily life. Using networks exposed the youth to personal conflicts that might arise within their networks and at times encouraged their involvement in risky or illegal actions. Finding work and accessing needed services placed the youth in conflict with societal laws governing age of majority, child labor, and child custody. Finally, the normalization of

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violence and the illusions they created about their environment and behavior

encouraged their continued exposure to violence and illegal and high-risk

activities.

Demand

material hardship
violence
parental absence

**Risk introduced
by response**

Response

**Relationship
networks**

**Getting a
job**

**Normalization
and Illusion**

Access to resources

Food, clothing, shelter, protection from
violence, a "home," parental guidance,
information about employment,
transportation
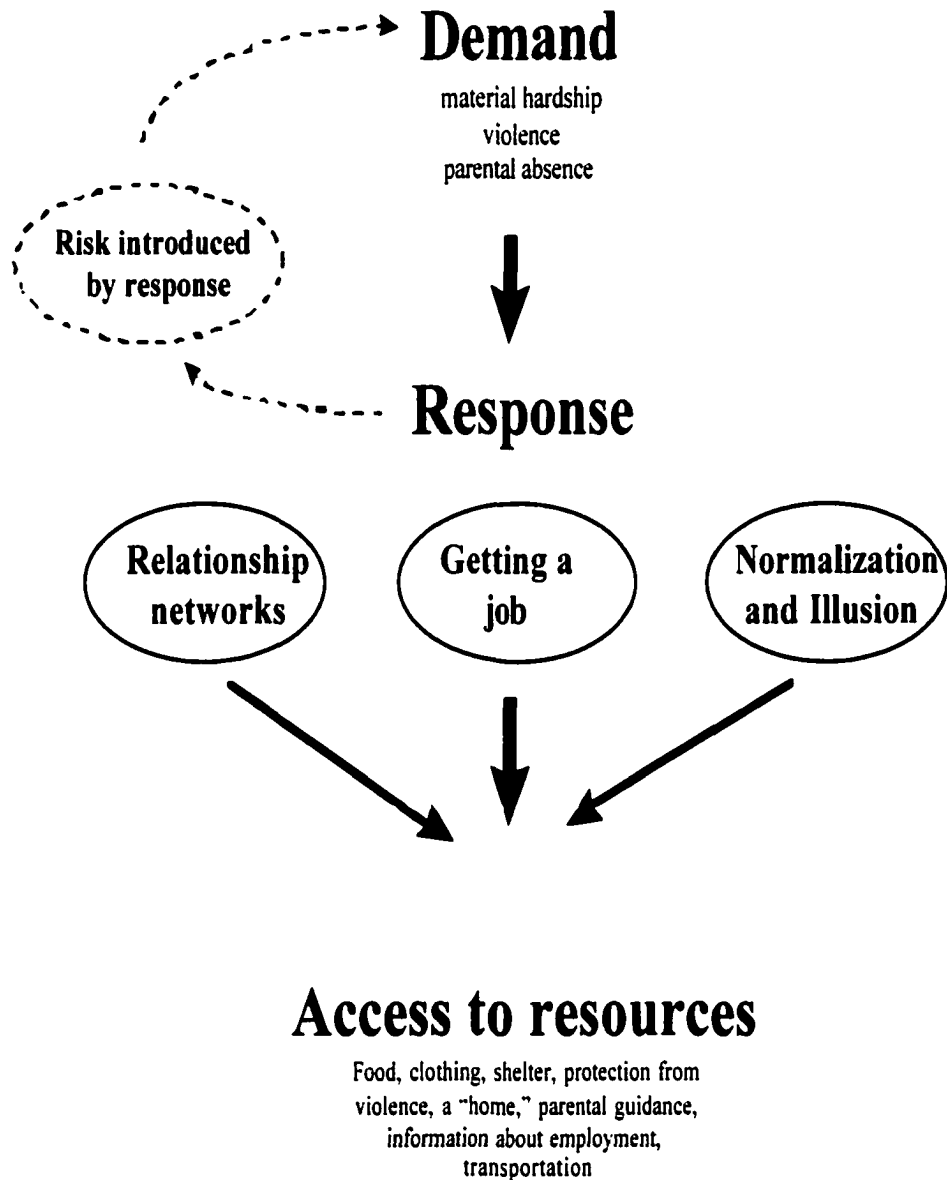
Figure 5.1. Adolescents' response to the demands of the inner-city

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CHAPTER SIX

THE RESPONSE OF THE SCHOOL AND SOCIAL SERVICE
AGENCY TO THE HIGH-RISK YOUTH

In addition to examining the responses the youth make to the adversity they encounter, this study is also interested in examining how the microsettings most relevant to supporting these youth respond to the youths' needs. Overall, the data in this study suggest that there is a lack of congruence, or a disconnect, between the teenagers' needs and the support they perceive as being available from their school and the social service program.

This chapter will explore the school's and the social service agency's response to the high-risk youth and their needs. First, the school's response to the teenagers' basic material and safety needs is examined. Second, the social service agency's response to the high-risk youth is considered. Third, the broader social ecology's response to teenagers' attempts to find work is examined.

The School's Response to the Needs of the High-Risk Youth

Although there is extensive debate over the role the education system should assume in responding to students' needs, the reality remains that for

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many youth in this country the school functions as their first line of defense for a variety of problems. This is especially true for the high-risk youth in this study who often lack adequate parental support.

However, having said this, in the case of these high-risk teenagers the school was not prepared to address the most immediate and pressing needs of the youth. The incongruence between the youths' needs and the school's response is illustrated in two separate examples. The first example outlines the school's response to a teenager's health problems.

Health needs: The case of Jose.

For several months, Jose has complained to his mother and his teachers of "itchy skin" and stomach aches. His skin itches so much, he explains, that he is unable to sleep at night and he has started skipping breakfast in the morning because he becomes nauseated and "throws up." It is not difficult to believe Jose's physical complaints when one sees him. He is unusually thin, perhaps a reflection not only of his gastrointestinal distress but also his past drug use. His color is sallow. His shoulders droop, he appears fatigued and listless, and the skin on his arms is covered with a scaly white and red rash.

Jose explains that he dropped out of school three months ago because he was "too tired" to go to class. Unfortunately, however, his dropping out created a number of problems for Jose and his family. His mother insists that her welfare payments have been reduced as a result of his school status and his Medicaid benefits terminated. Although his dropping out was connected at least in part to his health problems and ensuing fatigue, his mother's

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perception that he lost benefits has made it impossible for the mother to obtain medical care for Jose.

Before proceeding further it is important to address the possibility of Jose's mother being misinformed concerning the termination of Jose's benefits. Although it is true that her welfare benefits are reduced, it is possible but unlikely that her son's Medicaid benefits were also terminated. Her beliefs concerning benefits may be a reflection of misinformation about recent changes in welfare as much as it is a reflection of actual regulations. Researchers working in the Texas-Mexico border region have recently identified a growing problem of low-income individuals, particularly those of Mexican origin who may feel especially vulnerable due to immigration issues, receiving false information concerning eligibility and nature of social services available to them. This same process may be occurring in urban communities also.

Four weeks prior to the interview for this study, Jose's mother talked Jose into returning to school because, according to Jose, "she wanted her welfare money back." He agreed to return because he found being out of school even more distasteful than attending school. "All my homies are working or have babies ... or are going to school so everyone's busy during the day." With the help of the school administrator and his mother, Jose returned to school. Jose promptly fell into conflict with his teachers and the administration, however. First, he found that his regular teacher who "understood me" had been replaced by a substitute for the remainder of the year. This new teacher was unsympathetic toward Jose's fatigue and would send him to the office for falling asleep in class.

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Although Jose's re-enrollment in school will result in the restoration of his health benefits, there will be at least a four week waiting period between the time his mother files the needed papers and the time his benefits are actually restored. Unfortunately, his health problems began impacting his school performance within three days of his return.

Since he is enrolled in school, the school based health clinic offers an alternative for accessing health care but Jose refuses to use it. He is afraid his peers will find out about his problems. "It's embarrassing, Miss, to go in and say you've got bugs in your skin." And in the past when he has tried to use the clinic he discovered that the nurse could not provide him with the medication he needed.

Ultimately, Jose's conflict with his substitute teacher over sleeping in class leads to a fight, a referral to the office, placement at the alternative learning center, and Jose's decision once again to drop-out of school. "It's too much hassle, Miss," Jose explains. His medical needs still unaddressed, a few days after dropping out of school the second time Jose is arrested by the police for stealing a car and placed in the juvenile detention center. There, Jose finally receives the medical care he needs to resolve his scabies and intestinal problems. Jose explains, "There they helped me a lot, Miss. They even gave me stuff for my skin." Ultimately, only the juvenile detention center responded in a manner that effectively met Jose's basic physical needs.

Below is a diagram of Jose's, his service worker's, and his mothers' perceptions of the school's (and other microsettings') responses to Jose's medical needs and how these responses 1) leave him without the medical intervention he needed and 2) contribute to his failure in school. It is not the

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intention of this diagram to suggest a direct causal relationship between the youth's medical problems and subsequent withdrawal from school and incarceration. However, it is the intention of the diagram to show the basic unresponsiveness of the immediate ecology to this high-risk youth's basic needs and how this may have contributed to his ongoing problems.

The diagram reveals a response pattern in the ecology that also emerges in other high-risk youths' narratives. The pattern is one in which the institutions and agencies most closely associated with the youth either fail to consider or do not respond to the youths' most basic or immediate needs or if they do, assistance is offered in such a manner as to make it difficult or developmentally unappealing for the high-risk youth to access it.

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Child   **Parent**   **School**   **Other agencies**

Health problems:
Insomnia
Gastric distress
Scabies

Failure to attain
medication prescribed
by MD

Youth embarrassed
to tell nurse has "bugs"

Perception school
nurse cannot help
"she can't even give
you cough syrup"

Problem behavior in class
including:
sleeping in class
frequent bathroom visits

Youth assigned to
alternative learning
center

Probation officer
recommends youth
withdraw to avoid
trouble with gang
youth at ALC

Youth withdraws
from school

Belief
Medicaid benefits
removed b/c
not in school

Continued health
problems

Mother re-enrolls
youth in school
to restore benefits

1 month +
lag in restoration of
benefits

Continued health
problems/continued
behavior problems

School places youth
in In-School Suspension

Not allowed to sleep
in ISS like regular
classroom

Fights with ISS teacher
Walks out of school

Placed in "in-home"
suspension

Youth drops out

Youth steals car

Arrested and placed in juvenile
detention facility

Receives medical care
"they gave me cream and I
stopped itching"

Figure 6.1. Ecology's response to adolescent's health problems

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Safety needs: The case of Maria.

The events that led to Maria's decision to withdraw from middle school provide a second example of the disconnect between the high-risk youths' immediate needs and the school's response. At 13, about to turn 14, Maria was an A student and an excellent volleyball player. Having just completed a health sciences class, she had decided she would like to become a physical therapist. "They make good money, and it's a bit like being a maid isn't it? You take care of people and stuff." Maria was an honor student and little trouble to the school. Teachers were fond of her, as were the administrators, and they were all aware that Maria had a difficult home life.

About midway through the year, however, Maria began to have new problems at home. Her mother's boyfriend was pursuing her sexually. Although she turned to her mother for assistance, her mother ignored her. So Maria took to crawling out her window at night to avoid his advances. She began to "stay out all night" and fell in with a group of teenagers that smoked marijuana and also used a little "brown" and a little "white."

Staying out on the streets all night is not conducive to school life and Maria's academic performance began to deteriorate. After being out all night she was frequently too tired to go to school. Soon her absences came to the attention of the vice principal. According to Maria's service provider, the vice principal liked Maria and wanted to "cut her some slack" on her attendance. Trying to be supportive of Maria, he did not take steps to end her truancy, hoping that in time she would come around. Time passed, however, and Maria's situation worsened. She did not return to school. She spent most of her time on the street and became involved with drugs.

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After six months, the school was no longer willing to overlook her absences, and, according to Maria, sent "a principal, a counselor and two police" to her home to take her to school. Maria simply "skipped out" as soon as no one was looking. Finally, in desperation, the school announced it would levy a $1000 fine against Maria's mother if Maria did not return to school. Maria realized her mother would never be able to pay the fine and so she convinced her mother to withdraw her from school. At the conclusion of this study, Maria has been out of school for 2 years. She keeps hoping to return to school, but is having trouble marshaling the resources she needs to return, such as clothing, information on how to "re-enroll", and her mother's willingness to fill out the necessary forms.

The diagram below provides an outline of Maria's and her service worker's perceptions of the responses her family and the school made to her problem, how these responses left her without the protection she needed, and how they ultimately contributed to her withdrawal from school. In looking at each of the columns, it is clear that both her family's and the school's response were ineffective in resolving her problems and in some instances actually exacerbated them. As with the previous diagram, it is not the intention of the diagram to suggest a direct causal relationship between the school's response to Maria and her subsequent withdrawal from school. However, it is the intention of the diagram to demonstrate the school's (and other microsettings') lack of relevance and responsiveness to Maria's basic needs and how this impedes her ability to stay in school.

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Child	Parent	School	Other agencies

A & B student, excelling in sports

Step-father attempts to molest youth

Youth requests assistance from mother

Mother denies youth's allegations

Youth begins staying out at night to avoid advances. Becomes member of peer group who hang out on street at night.

Says too tired to go to school in the morning so begins skipping school, performance declines

Attempts to support youth by ignoring absences and academic decline.

Youth's truancy persists. Begins to use marijuana, white and brown regularly. Engages in unprotected sex with peer.

Sends police to home to bring youth to school.

Youth skipsout of school when adults not looking.

School threatens $1000 fine against mother for youth's truancy

Youth asks mother to withdraw her from school.

Mother withdraws youth from school.

Youth reports no follow-up from school

7 months later: Youth stays on street. Talks about wanting to return to school. Concerned does not have proper clothing. Not sure how to re-enroll. Mother declines to re-enroll her until she is sure Maria is "serious" about school.

Figure 6.2. Event diagram of ecology's response to unmet safety needs

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The Social Service Agency's Response
to the Needs of the High-Risk Youth

Since the success of Headstart, there has been a concerted press both legislatively and in the service and funding community to promote preventive interventions. In the past 10 years, millions of dollars have been allocated to prevention programming, and extensive studies have been conducted to try to determine exactly what types of programs prevent the development of behavioral and emotional problems in at-risk youth.

The press for prevention programming is of little use to the majority of the youth in this study, however. In fact, prevention programming appears to have the unanticipated effect of excluding many of these youth from services. Too difficult to be considered merely "at-risk," and not yet difficult enough to come under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Justice Department, many of the youth in this study could not find a service niche in which they were welcome.

The prevention orientation of local service agencies contributed to the development of services that were irrelevant at best, and a hostile one at worst to those youth who were experiencing more difficult living circumstances. Unable to deal with the challenges presented by these high-risk teenagers, the service program ultimately pushed the youth out of their services. By the end of the study all but the two youngest participants in this study were either expelled from the program for displaying precisely those behaviors that had brought them into services in the first place, or they left voluntarily when the redesigned services ceased to be relevant to their

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needs. Chope's experience with the YFSP program is used to illustrate the incongruence or disconnect between the prevention-oriented social service agency and the needs of the high-risk youth.

It is important to emphasize the fact that the YFS program administrator has had a long standing commitment to the families and youth in this community and is close to the families of several of the youth in this study. His decision reorganize and restructure the program was due, in large part, to pressures he felt from his funders to reach as many teenagers in the community as possible. When the YFS program emphasized services for high-risk youth, its staff to client ratio was approximately 1:10, for a total of 30 to 40 youth served during a 12 month period. Since its shift to at-risk youth, the program reports a staff to client ratios of 1:50, for a total of 120 to 160 youth served during a 12 month period.

When Chope first entered the service program he was 14 and clearly high-risk. He was involved in gang activities, although he was not yet considered a "gang-banger." He used drugs, such as marijuana and cocaine, regularly. He was having trouble at school, both with the work and with his behavior, and was planning to drop out. His family was having problems. His mother suffered a debilitating illness a year before the interviews began and was confined to bed and this had created significant financial and emotional stress for the family. His father worked double shifts and was rarely home and Chope was beginning to believe his father no longer cared what happened to him. Chope began to fall into a routine of sleeping all day and then going out at 2:00 AM with all the risks this entails.

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Chope first heard about the YFSP program from a friend. The word on the street was that it had "good eats" and the staff was promising chances to go skating, to movies, and to visit places in the city he had never seen. At first, Chope saw the program as an easy mark; a place to get food, do fun things and "hang" with his friends. Not too long after he began to participate, however, he found himself beginning to look forward to conversations with one of the program staff. "She would let me stay in her office, and just talk and joke with me and my friends. She'd ask me how things were going and we'd just talk." Stopping by the offices to visit with Marta and her associate Greg became a daily event for Chope. Although at first he did not realize it, his thinking about the future was changing as a result of the visits. As he explained in one interview, "I never thought I could graduate from school, you know. I figured it wouldn't matter. But after talking to Marta I've started thinking a lot more about it. I'm going to stay in school and graduate. She really made me care about my future and made me think I could do it, you know."

Chope was not an easy client, however. He would act out during the educational groups and on several occasions showed up "high" to the group sessions. Despite his growing interest in completing school, he was still in the alternative learning center. He also continued to participate in fights with rival crew members from the courts. He did, however, have someone to talk to and accompany him to meetings with his probation officer. He also had someone who would talk to the school on his behalf after he got in trouble for fighting on the school grounds, someone who was worried about him being out late at night, and someone who cared enough to come looking for him

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when he didn't show up for group. Marta's relationship with Chope and her methods of intervention were different from those found in traditional agency-based mental health programs. The YFSP's parent organization had envisioned a more traditional program that consisted of weekly training sessions where the teenagers would be taught conflict resolution skills such as the use of "I" messages and active listening techniques. They were not comfortable with the intensity of involvement Marta had with her clients. They considered her daily check-ins, street-based meetings, attendance at probation meetings, and efforts to track down Chope when he did not show up for group unprofessional and even destructive to Chope because they "fostered dependency." In the end, Marta was demoted and pushed out of the program partially because of her intervention approach. So were the high-risk youth with whom she worked. The director who replaced Marta immediately discontinued the daily check-ins and all of the street-based services. If the youth missed more than two sessions they were discharged from the program. If they acted-out, they were suspended from group and had to complete individual counseling sessions before they could return to the main program. Meals were discontinued. Outings were reduced to once a month and youth could participate only if they had not been reprimanded the preceding month.

Shortly after the new director took over Chope showed up on a night he was not supposed to, high, and was sent home. The director required that he attend individual counseling sessions before returning to group. He declined. A short time later he received a letter from the program explaining

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that because of his behavior he was being dismissed from the program. Needless to say, Chope never returned.

The diagram below outlines the development of the YFSP program and Chope's participation and subsequent dismissal from it. The parent agency's response to the YFSP program and to the youth reflects a lack of tolerance for the difficulties inherent in serving high-risk populations and discomfort with the high intensity, low staff-to-youth ratio necessary for these youth.

High-Risk Teenager   **Service Agency**   **Parent Organization**   **Funders**

Involved in a gang, using drugs, planning to drop out of school

Funding to provide social services for high-risk and at-risk youth

Begins involvement with program

Director develops non-traditional street and home-based services

Comes to offices daily after school to 'check-in' and do homework

Serving 30 high-risk youth

Pressure from one of two principal funders to report higher number of youth served by program

Attributes decision to stay in school, and improved grades to talks with service worker

Existing director persists in use of non-traditional intervention methods

Decides to eliminate non-traditional services due to time intensity and resplace with short-term counseling and social skills training program

Describes program as his "family"

New director eliminates daily visits, most home visits, street-based services Terminates youth participants who miss more than 2 sessions

Existing director demoted; New director hired

No longer allowed to come for daily check-ins

Focuses on providing after-school social skills groups in local elementary schools

Hostile environment toward demoted director - she resigns

Shows up high on day he is not scheduled for services. Cusses out new director

Sends letter requiring counseling sessions with new director

No response to letter

Sends letter informing teenager he is "expelled from the program."

By April '98 all 30 high-risk youth have "dropped out" or have been dismissed from the program.

Figure 6.3. Social service agency's response to high-risk youth

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The Ecology's Response to the Teenagers' Attempts to Find Work

From the high-risk youth's narratives, two things are clear: They want to work and they face many barriers in finding work. In his book, The Truly Disadvantaged, Williams Julius Wilson (1987) details how the shift from a manufacturing to a service- and technically-based economy in the United States has impacted the inner-city poor's ability to obtain work. Manufacturing jobs have moved out of the inner-cities and have been relocated to other countries. Inner-city residents lack both the technical training and the supportive infrastructure, such as reliable transportation, to enter technical positions. This transition in the economic base of the U.S. has reduced job opportunities for poor urban families and their children. Minority youth have been particularly hard hit.

Clearly the youth in this study are facing a similar situation: needing to work, but being unable to because of a wide range of barriers both personal and structural. The micro and macrosystems surrounding the high-risk adolescents are for the most part unresponsive to their need to work and this unresponsiveness pushes the youth away from what is currently considered "resilience" and toward high-risk, illegal activities.

Maria's experience trying to find work is particularly illustrative of this unresponsiveness and its effects. Maria is a young woman to whom work matters a great deal. She receives little consistent support from her parents and as a result she experiences a significant degree of material and safety need. Partially as a result of these needs, Maria dropped out of school two years ago, but now hopes to return and to convince her brother to return as well. In her mind, however, her return is contingent on her ability to "find

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work" so she can buy the clothing and "personals" she and her brother need to be able to attend school. She also needs work so she can help her older sister to buy diapers and clothing and food for her five children.

Work, though, is also more than just a means for obtaining money for necessities. Despite her current level of need, for Maria having a job means much more than just having money. As she told me, having a job will "get me a life, let me be somebody, and give me something to do other than hanging out on the streets doing nothing all day."

Shortly after she turned 15, Maria began her quest for employment. She spent several months looking for work only to discover that at 15 no one would hire her. She even approached the local service agency for help, but found she was not eligible for the summer work programs the city sponsors for low-income youth because she was a school drop-out.

After four months of looking and applying at 10 to 15 different businesses she had yet to be hired. Finally in her fourth month she received her first job offer. The "job" was selling drugs, heroin to be specific, for the father of one of her friends. Needing money for herself and her siblings. and seeing no possibility of obtaining employment, Maria accepted. It was easy money, netting her up to $80 a day. It paid for new clothes and food and personals for her brother, her sister, the babies, her cousin, and herself. But, in Maria's words, it was a "big risk." Not only could she be arrested, but she was beginning to use more heroin "because it was around." Maria had sworn to herself she would never become like the junkies she sees in her community. On the day she turned 16 Maria stopped selling drugs and started looking for work again.

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Unfortunately, 16 wasn't any more magic a number for Maria than 15. After our interviews Maria asked me to take her "around" to look for jobs. We'd drive ten to twenty minutes to a fast food restaurant or retail store that Maria had heard was hiring, a trip that would have taken Maria an hour by bus and cost her several dollars, only to find that they had run out of applications or that they only accepted applications at their central processing center on the other side of town. Undaunted, dressed in her best pair of shorts, Maria braved the line of 25 adults and the unresponsive attendants at the HEB Grocery Chain's processing center in order to turn in her application, and arrived at our next meeting with a new list of potential employers, a cover letters to explain to HEB why she needed the job, and new plans for calling employers to check on the applications we'd left behind the week before.

Four months into her second search she still has not found work. Few of the places she applied to called her back at all. Those who did told her she was still too young. "We don't hire anyone under 18 years of age." The diagram below provides an outline of Maria's perceptions and researcher's observations of responses to her efforts to find work. When one examines the diagram, it becomes clear how few effective responses emanate from the various microsystems surrounding her. Her parents are almost completely absent. The school is of little assistance, and the help she receives from the social service agency is ineffective. The sole source of consistent support Maria receives is provided by members of her network, but even this assistance is ineffective in the end.

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The diagram also illustrates the number of structural barriers she encountered in her efforts to enter the workplace: transportation, age, school status, competition with unemployed adults, and lack of knowledge or access to any type of work opportunity beyond low skill minimum wage positions.

In analyzing the diagram, one might hypothesize that Maria might have been able to find a means to access the job market if she remained in school. However, it is important to remember that Maria was not in school, in part, because of her economic needs. Maria's efforts to find a job illustrate a fundamental aspect of the high-risk youths' daily lives—the contradictory forces in their environment. In this instance, Maria is caught between two opposing forces. She must be in school to qualify for the job programs available to inner-city teens, but she needs a job in order to be in school.

Figure 6.4. Ecology's response to adolescent's efforts to find work.

Child	Parent	Network	School	Service Agency	Workplace

Parents fail to provide for material and safety needs

Experiences material / safety needs (lack of clothing/shelter other)

Decides wants to be physical therapist after taking life sciences class

Siblings experiencing material need

Drops out of school

Material support from various adults/friends in network

Provides child care, house cleaning, companionship

Begins search for work at age 15

No resources available b/c not enrolled

Applies at local business (approximately 6)

No response or Rejected b/c too young

Approaches social service agency

Refers her to summer work program

Continued material need

Rejected b/c not in school

Friend's father offers work selling heroin

Begins dealing heroin at 15 yr., 10 months (nets $80 a day)

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| Child | Parent | Network | School | Service Agency | Workplace |

Tells mother dealing because of material need

No response

Buys clothing, personals for: self, brother, sister, sister's 5 children, and cousin

Concern about risk of arrest

Day of 16th birthday stops dealing, resumes job search

Friend tells of opening for sacker at HEB

Completes application at local store

Transportation from researcher

Store refuses application, refers her to midtown processing center 6 miles away

Transportation from researcher

Transportation from mother

Transportation from researcher

Processing center takes application, says will call in 7 days (25 unemployed adults in line at center)

Applies at Payless shoes 4 fast food restaurants (sites are 2 miles from home)

No calls

Consults with teenage sage re: HEB job

Writes letter to HEB explaining why not in school and why needs job

No response from HEB

Adult friend brings application for job at local hotel cleaning rooms

Applies at hotel

Refused. Told must be 18 yr. old

Applies

Adult friend brings application from local convenience store

Refused. Told must be 18 yr. old

Continues to experience material/safety needs

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Conclusions: The Cost of Institutional and Societal Unresponsiveness

The school was not prepared to respond to the level of need these youth were experiencing. The responses the school did make to the youths' fundamental survival needs were either: 1) superficial, in that they failed to actually resolve the need; 2) inaccessible to the youth, in that the services offered required the consent of an unavailable parent; or 3) were developmentally out-of-sync in that they required the teenagers to expose their need to others and by doing so leave themselves open to feared ridicule from their peers.

Like the school, the social service program also failed to respond adequately to the high-risk youths' needs. Emphasis on prevention programming, skills acquisition intervention models, and high youth-to-staff ratios resulted in services that were appropriate for lower-risk, lower-need youth, but of limited relevance to the high-risk youth in this study. Finally, the broader ecology itself was unresponsive to the youths' indigenous approaches to meeting their basic needs as was evidenced in the labor market's response to Maria's efforts to find a job.

Overall, the institutions most relevant to the youths' daily lives failed to recognize the complexity of the demands in the teenagers' environment, the nature of the teenagers' needs, and the nature of the strategies the youth used in order to meet their basic survival and subsistence needs. The figure below depicts this disconnect between the institutions and the needs of the youth.

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Sufficiency needs

Service agency/School
Response ➤

(Skills training, mental health
counseling, monetary fines,
non-eligibility for services,
supporting by ignoring school
absences, coercing attendance)

◄═══ **High-risk adolescents'
immediate needs**

(Shelter, clothing, safety,
a "home," parental support
and guidance)

Deficiency needs
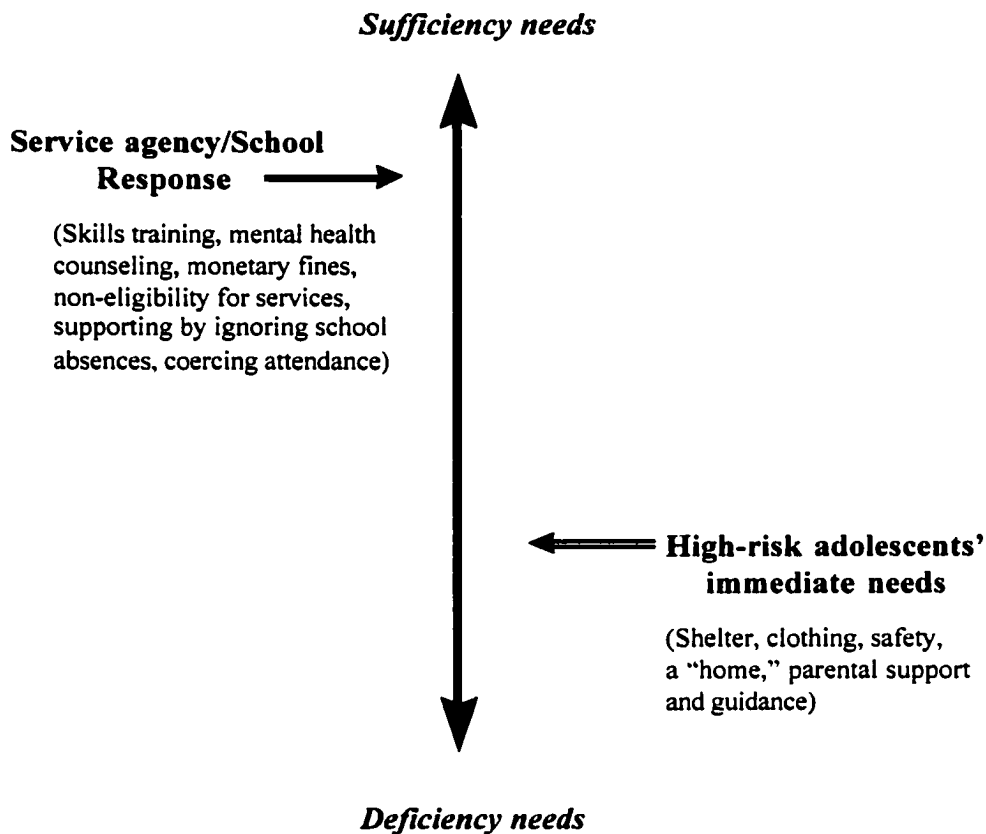
Figure 6.5. Disconnect between school, service programs, and the high-risk
adolescent

This institutional and ecological unresponsiveness had a marked

impact on these high-risk teenagers. Although it is not possible to argue that

this unresponsiveness pushed Jose into criminal activity, it is clear that

Jose's unmet needs and the ecology's failure to adequately respond to these

needs contributed to his withdrawal from school and subsequent involvement

in illegal activities. Ironically, delinquent behavior succeeded where prosocial

behavior did not, as it was the consequences of Jose's illegal behavior that led

to the resolution of his

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medical needs; and Maria's drug dealing that finally brought her the money to buy needed material goods.

Interestingly, it is the indigenous approaches that the youth develop themselves: the friendship and kinship networks, the underground labor market, and the normalization of violence and construction of illusions, which emerged as the more effective methods for supplying the youth with needed physical and psychological resources and supporting their survival.

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CHAPTER SEVEN
ECOLOGICAL BINDS AND THE HIGH-RISK INNER-CITY ADOLESCENT

This chapter provides a summary and expansion of the findings discussed in the preceding chapters and then proposes that conflicting demands in the high-risk youths' immediate environment, termed ecological binds, constitute a central feature of the high-risk teenager's daily life. Examples of the binds are provided and their potential impact on the adolescents' development is discussed.

Need and the High-Risk Adolescent

The high-risk teenagers who participated in this study were experiencing a significant degree of material need. They spoke of days without a safe place to stay; difficulty obtaining treatment for health problems; and problems acquiring hygiene products and clothing that met school dress codes and did not elicit teasing from their peers. According to service workers interviewed the teenagers did not go without food, but they often did not have enough food to satisfy the appetite of a growing teenager. These same youth also experienced frequent threats to their physical safety as a result of domestic violence, gang and crew clashes, and random assault.

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Finally they experienced a lack of parental support due to the demands of the parents' work schedules or the parents' problems with substance abuse.

In contrast, the lower risk youth were less preoccupied with survival and subsistence level needs than the high-risk teenagers and the adults in their lives were more frequently available. Although they were still concerned with a lack of resources, the lower risk youth did not experience the same intensity or breadth of need. Although study data do not allow one to draw a causal relationship between level of risk and level of need, the data do suggest that one way in which the high-risk youth differ from their lower-risk peers is in their level of need. In almost every case, high-risk youth were also high-need youth.

Disconnect between the high-risk adolescents' needs and the schools' and social service agency's response. For the most part professionals in the school setting and the social service agency failed to address the high-risk teenagers' survival and subsistence needs. For example, after its reorganization, the YFS program offered conflict resolution and social skills training to the teenagers but no services to assist them in acquiring needed material resources. Similarly, although the school provided a school-based health clinic for its students, the services were unavailable to teenagers not enrolled in school and were perceived as ineffective and potentially embarrassing.

The mismatch between the teenagers' needs and the responses made by the school and the service agency may result from the fact that the youths' poverty is not easily visible to individuals living outside the community. The teenagers do not evidence the visible markers (e.g.,

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distended abdomens and substandard clothing) that this society associates with poverty. The adults providing services to these teenagers are often unfamiliar with the realities of the teenagers' daily lives. As one service worker explained, "the teachers here are off-ramp teachers. They come to work on the freeway. Get off on the off-ramp. Park. Teach all day. Get back in their cars and get back on the freeway and drive home. They have no idea the lives these children are living." Finally, the youth themselves attempt to camouflage their need in response to the developmental imperative of "fitting-in."

The unresponsiveness of the schools and service system is also driven by the funding community's current emphasis on prevention programming. This combined with funders' and the public's expectations that service programs should reach as many youth as possible make it impractical and even fiscally perilous for programs to provide services for high-risk teenagers given the amount of resources this requires.

Ultimately, no service niche exists that is specifically responsive to the needs of these high-risk youth; neither is there a service niche in which these teenagers are welcomed. Ironically, their needs are too basic and their behavior too problematic to be adequately addressed by prevention programs, but at the same time their behavior is not severe enough (yet) for them to fall under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system beyond superficial probationary action.

The high-risk adolescents' response to the demands of their daily lives and the need to assume adult roles. In the absence of support from the adults in their lives--their parents, teachers and service providers--

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the teenagers assume the task of meeting their survival and subsistence needs. They used three primary strategies to acquire needed resources. They relied on personal networks; they found work; and they both normalized and constructed illusions about their safety. Through these responses the teenagers were able to meet the majority of their basic needs.

It is important to note that these strategies are not unique to the high-risk youth nor are they unique to the inner-city environment. Individuals of all economic levels and ages rely on personal networks; most teenagers begin to make preliminary forays into the workforce by the age of 15 or 16; and most individuals construct protective illusions about themselves and their lives. However, certain characteristics of each of these responses are unique to the teenagers and to their environment. Where the networks of more affluent individuals are likely to focus on growth experiences, the networks of the inner-city youth are necessarily focused on attaining basic survival and subsistence resources. Where more affluent youth enter the workforce as a part of a socialization process rather than as a result of need, the high-risk teenagers enter out of necessity and in the role of breadwinner for themselves and their family members.

In order to obtain resources from networks and enter the workforce the high-risk teenagers were required to assume roles typically reserved for adults in this society. These roles include those of primary caretaker and primary breadwinner. Octavio, for example, became the primary breadwinner for himself and his younger brother at age 14. Similarly, at 15 Maria became primary caretaker and breadwinner for her brother, younger cousin and at times her older sister. The adolescents varied in their abilities to fill these

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roles, and in the frequency with which they were required to assume these roles. Some of the teenagers found it necessary to function as primary caretakers and breadwinners on a daily basis. Others only needed to step into these roles intermittently.

As with networking, working and using protective illusions, most teenagers in the United States assume adult roles periodically. In less adverse settings, however, when teenagers step into adult roles it is temporary, perceived as practice for adulthood, and does not interfere with their school attendance and ability to participate in other activities central to adolescence. Not so with the high-risk inner-city youth. In most cases the teenagers assumed adult roles in earnest, not in order to practice, and their assumption of these roles interfered with their ability to attend school.

The Phenomenon of Ecological Binds

The high-risk teenagers' necessary assumption of adult roles brings them into conflict with the institutions in their immediate environment and with restrictions society places on minors. Specifically, societal regulations and institutional expectations prevent them from assuming adult roles; and the demands of poverty prevent them from participating in the role this society assigns to adolescents, that of student.

In the United States, children and adolescents are denied certain liberties in the name of protecting them from exploitation and harm. They are prohibited from entering into legal contracts, their ability to enter the workforce is limited, and school attendance is compulsory. These restrictions

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are predicated on the assumption that the adolescents' parents or legal guardians will provide for and protect them. However, this assumption breaks down in the case of the high-risk youth. Their parents were frequently unavailable or unable to fill these roles and alternative guardianship arrangements were rarely pursued. As a result, the teenagers were required to seek resources for themselves but without the legal agency provided to adults. This limited the teenagers' ability to obtain resources and, as will be discussed later in this chapter, contributed to their involvement in marginalized and illegal activities.

The contradictory forces that occur in the high-risk inner-city teenagers' lives will be termed "ecological binds" and are a central feature of these young peoples' daily existence. The primary binds in the high-risk inner-city teenagers' environment are the conflicts that arise between the demands that result from poverty and parental absence which require the teenager to assume adult roles, and societal laws that deny the youth adult status and expect their full participation in school. The binds immobilize the youth, impede their ability to succeed in the schools and in the workplace, and if unresolved can deflect the teenagers into illegal activities and marginalized lifestyles. Below is a diagram of the process of ecological binding as it occurs in the lives of high-risk urban youth. On one side of the bind are the demands of poverty and the teenagers' immediate life situation, on the other side are the regulations and expectations of the broader society.

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Deflection into illegal or
marginalized activities

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Urban
Adolescent

Demands of inner-city
   Material need
   Violence
   Lack of parental support

Youths' response strategies
   Resource networks
   Going to work
   Normalizing and creating
   protective illusions

Demands of larger society

Restrictions on adolescents' liberties
   Child labor laws
   Inability to provide consent to services
   Inability to apply for services

Expectations of larger society
   Primary role of adolescent is student
   Compulsory school attendance laws

Unresponsiveness of support institutions
   Social skills training programming
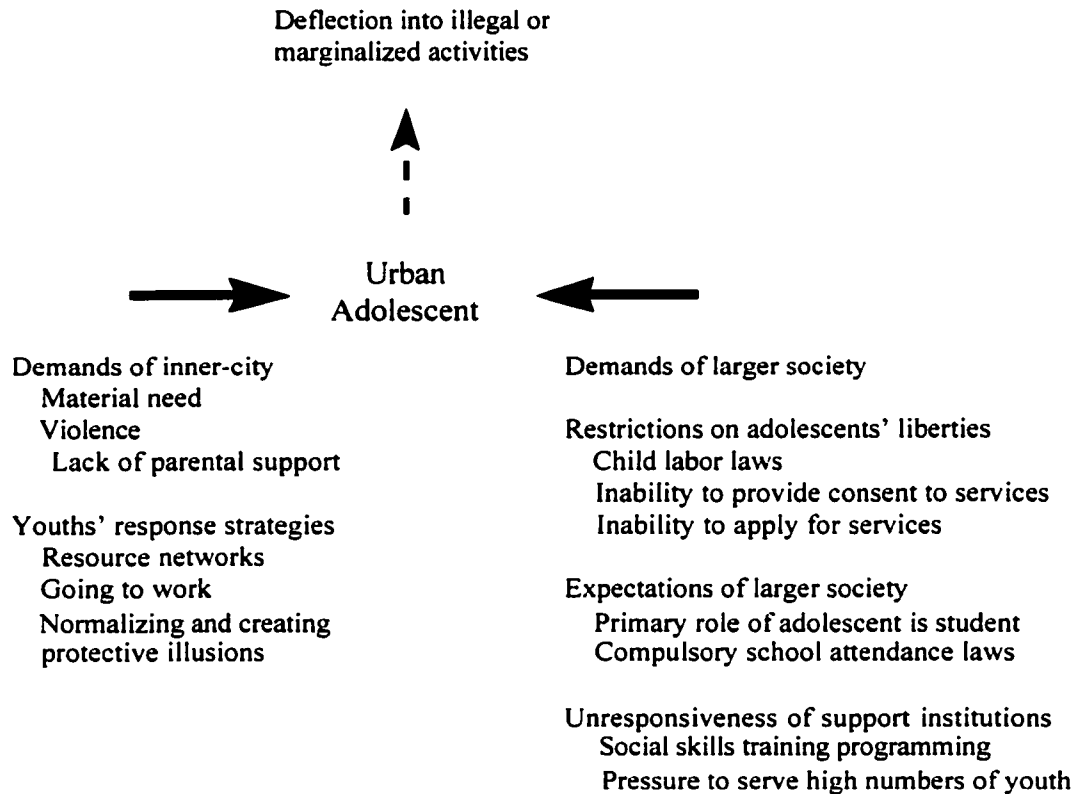   Pressure to serve high numbers of youth

Figure 7.1. Ecological bind and resulting deflection into marginalized activities

Other binds also occur in the lives of these youth. For example, the

time the teenagers must invest in sustaining their resource networks can place

them in conflict with compulsory school attendance rules; and more extreme

methods of supporting a network such as becoming a member of a gang can

bring the youth into conflict with laws which govern criminal behavior.

Following are three examples of ecological binds that emerged from the

narratives of the high-risk youth. The first example involves a conflict

between Maria's need to find work and child labor laws. As discussed in an

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earlier chapter, the realities of Maria's immediate environment made it necessary that she provide herself and her siblings with a variety of basic resources. She attempted to do this through finding work. However she encountered barriers to obtaining work, the most prominent one being her age. Local businesses would not hire her until she turned 18. In addition, Maria's eligibility for city and social service run youth work programs was limited because she was not attending school. Maria could gain access to work if she were enrolled in school, but she is unable (and unwilling) to enroll in school until she gets work. Ultimately, Maria responded to the conflicting forces in her environment by selling drugs in order to earn money. The diagram below depicts this bind.

Sells drugs

↑
|

━━━━➔ M ◄━━━━

Demands of inner-city poverty

Lack of consistent shelter
Need for clothing for self and siblings
Need for diapers for nieces
Need for hygene products

Demands of larger society

Child labor laws
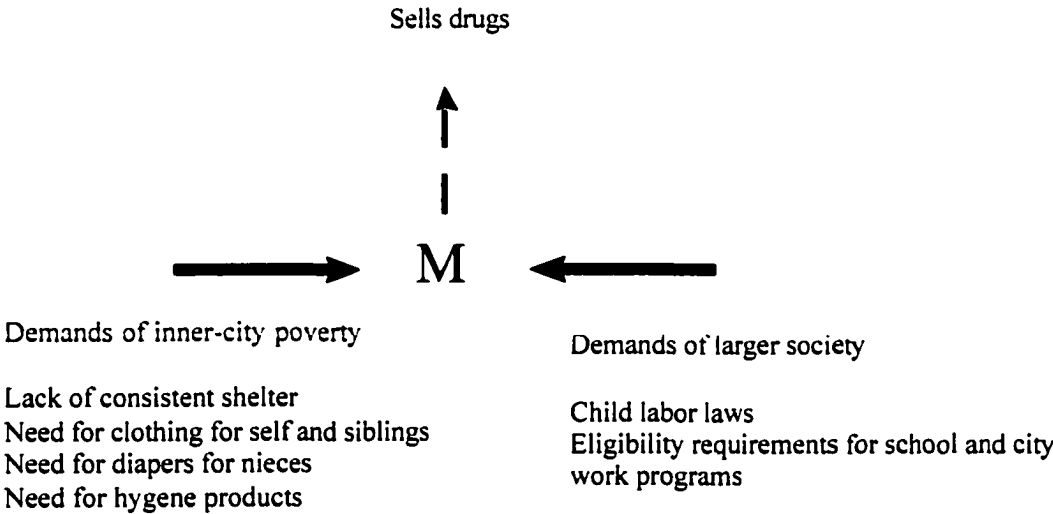Eligibility requirements for school and city work programs

Figure 7.2. Ecological bind encountered by Maria

The second example concerns the conflict between Mario's attempts to re-enroll in school and the school's need for parental consent. Mario dropped-out of school in the fall of 1997 and twelve months later he decided to re-enroll. In order to re-enroll however, the school required that Mario's

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mother provide legal consent. Unfortunately his mother was so impaired by her drug use that she never made it the school to sign the consent forms. The school agreed to accept Mario's 27 year old sister's signature in lieu of his mother's but in the end Mario grew discouraged and gave up on his attempts to re-enroll. Shortly after this incident, he became increasingly withdrawn and depressed. In response to his service worker's attempts to encourage him by citing examples of other teenagers in the community who had completed school and even gone onto college (one of Mario's aspirations) he responded "it's ok for them miss, but it's too late for me." Below is a diagram depicting Mario's efforts to re-enroll himself in school, the conflict that occurred due to the need for parental consent, and the subsequent appearance of symptoms of depression.

Withdrawal,
depressive symptoms,
does not return to school

↑
❘

⟶   M   ⟵

Parental absence   Inability to enter into contract as minor
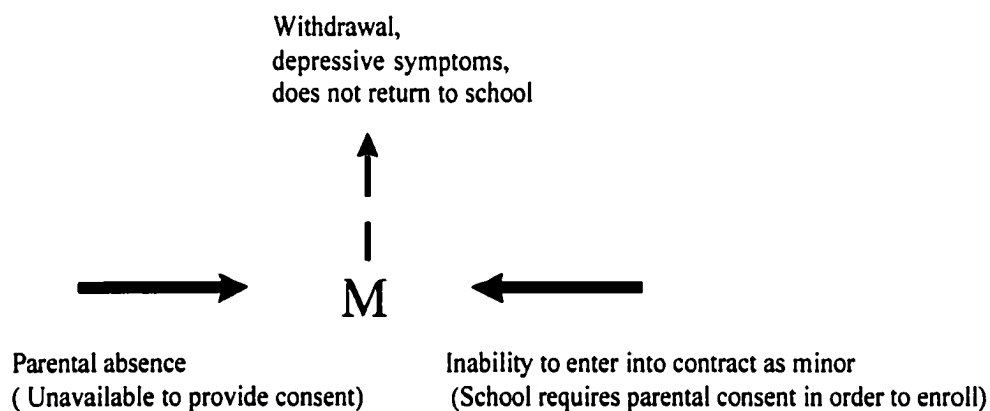(Unavailable to provide consent)   (School requires parental consent in order to enroll)

Figure 7.3. Ecological bind encountered by Mario.

The third example concerns Maria's friend Camilla's need for medical care and the lack of parental consent. In the winter of 1997 while staying with Maria, Camilla became ill. Maria took her temperature and found she was running a temperature of 100 degrees and she complained of chills,

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coughing, sore throat and body aches. Maria encouraged her to go to the

health clinic for medication, but the health clinic would not provide services

to her without her parent's consent. Unfortunately Camilla had not seen her

mother in several months and was rumored to have moved out of state. The

school health clinic was not an option because Camilla was truant from school

and feared being arrested if she appeared on campus. Ultimately, she and

Maria accessed health care by stealing medication from the local grocery

store. The diagram below depicts this bind and the teenagers' response.

Steals medical supplies from
grocery store

↑
|
C

——→   ←——

Parental absence
(unavailable to enroll youth for
medical benefits; unavailable to
provide consent)

As a minor, is unable to apply for services
(medical clinic requires evidence of
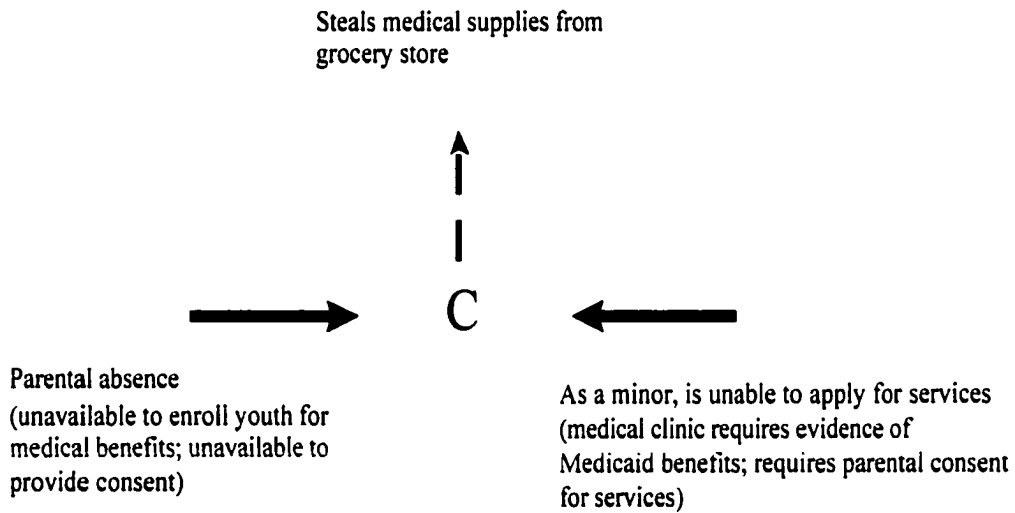Medicaid benefits; requires parental consent
for services)

Figure 7.4. Ecological bind encountered by Camilla and Maria.

Not all of the youth who experienced these contradictory forces

resorted to illegal or delinquent activities or withdrew from school. Some of

the binds were resolved successfully. However, consistent with Tolan et al's

(in press) assertion that protection in the inner-city may be as much a

function of luck as any other factor, the binds were resolved through

happenstance and fortuitous circumstance. In Paulo's case, the bind he

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experienced from needing to work and being blocked from the labor market was resolved through his turning eighteen. In essence, Paulo aged out of the ecological bind. His changed legal status combined with a sister's ability to provide him with an introduction to an employer dissolved the bind and opened a channel through which Paulo was able to move into the workforce. Below are two diagrams illustrating this. The first depicts the conflict between the demands of unmet basic needs and societal restrictions on minors, and the second depicts the resolution of this bind through Paulo's attainment of partial majority status.

P

Demands of immediate
environment
Needs to work in order to
obtain basic material
resources

Child Labor Laws
Local businesses will not
hire until turns 18 b/c of restrictions

Turns 18
Access to work
through sister

P ◄ Minor status

Need to work
to obtain
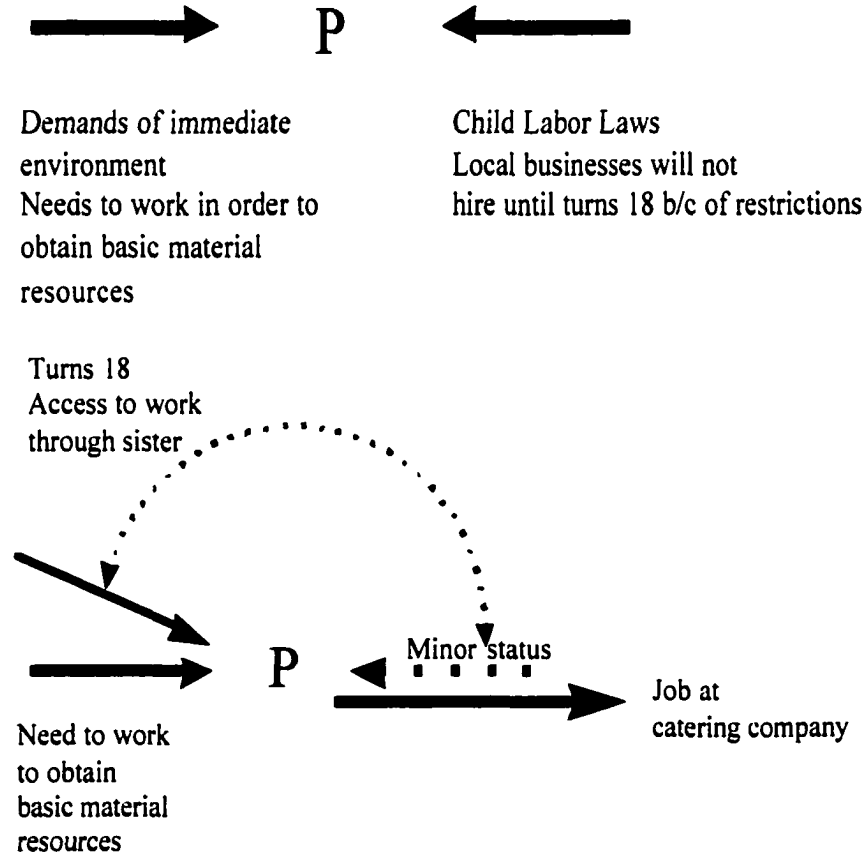basic material
resources

Job at
catering company

Figure 7.5. Bind and resolution through attainment of majority status.

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Similarly, Octavio found it necessary to go to work at age 14. The conflict between his need to enter the labor market at age 14, child labor laws and compulsory school attendance laws were resolved by his aunt who "unofficially" hired him to wash dishes, picked him up every afternoon and drove him to work, and provided similar transportation to school. The figure below depicts the initial bind and its dissolution through a relative providing him with access to underage work opportunities. A secondary bind involving the time Octavio had to devote to working and societal expectations that he attend school full-time was resolved through the actions of Octavio's aunt (providing transportation) and the school principal's willingness to adjust the school day to allow Octavio to arrive an hour late each morning.

Works at aunt's restaurant

O

Need to work
to obtain
basic material
resources

Minor status
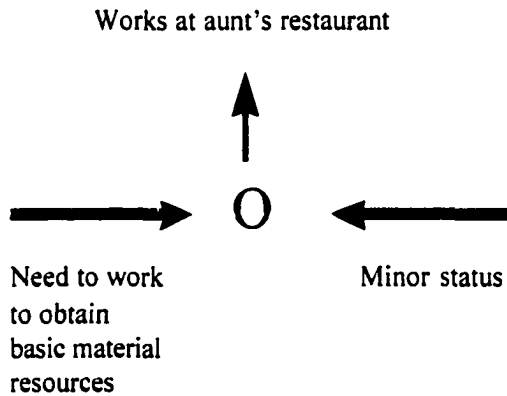
7.6. Resolution of bind through access to underage work opportunity

Finally, not all teenagers living in the inner-city experienced ecological binds. The lower risk youths' narratives contained significantly fewer accounts of binds. For example, because of his parents were able to save

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some money, Francis did not feel pressure to enter the workforce early and so was able to devote his energies to school. He is expected to graduate from high school in 1998 and has already begun taking college courses at the area community college.

Conclusions: The Cost of Contradiction

The high-risk youth in this study repeatedly encountered contradictions between the responses they were required to make to the demands of poverty and the inner-city, and the regulations and expectations of the broader American society. The ecological binds resulted from legal restrictions placed on the teenager; the structure of schools and social service programs; and societal expectations that the primary role of the adolescent be that of student.

These contractions or binds made it difficult for the teenagers to meet their survival and subsistence needs and for them to meet societal expectations that their primary role be that of a student. In addition, they made it difficult for the teenagers to pursue their own aspirations which included completing school, finding a good job and raising a family. When unresolved, the binds contributed to negative or non-resilient outcomes such as dropping out of school and selling drugs to earn money. Ironically, when considered in light of the binds these "non-resilient" behaviors appeared to be adaptive and even protective responses to adversity.

Prior research has suggested that opposing environmental forces can lead to aggressive (Fannon, 1963) or alternately, passive or helpless (Freire,

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1968) behavior in individuals and entire groups of individuals. The binds also appeared to contribute to emotional withdrawal and even depression in some of the teenagers.

Ecological binds were associated with the teenagers' levels of "resilience." Specifically youth such as Francis who encountered fewer ecological binds were more likely to achieve positive outcomes and so be considered "resilient." In contrast, youth who were exposed to numerous ecological contradictions were less likely to achieve positive outcomes, at least in the short-term, and so were less likely to be considered "resilient" despite their obvious skills in obtaining needed resources under difficult circumstances.

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CONCLUSIONS

IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY FINDINGS FOR MODELS OF

RESILIENCE

This research study begins with a discussion of resilience and ends

with a description of ecological binds. The question that still remains to be

answered is what do the findings of this study contribute to our

understanding of the construct of resilience? Before moving into a discussion

of the implications of these findings for resilience, it is important to mention

that in many ways the construct of resilience has become the victim of its

own success. The term has been embraced by politicians, funders, service

providers and the general public and as often happens when a term is

popularized it has been reduced to its most simplistic state and as a result has

lost much of its original meaning. Thus, resilience, or successful outcomes

under adverse conditions, is understood by many to be the result of

characteristics and traits residing within the child or adolescent and is used as

an adjective to describe youth (For example: "This is a resilient child."). This

use of the term has resulted in a unique form of blaming the victim in which

youth who fail to attain middle-class outcomes such as graduating from high-

school are explained away as not being "resilient enough." As such, the

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construct overemphasizes individual traits and de-emphasizes environmental and interactional processes that impede or support successful outcomes in youth at-risk.

The findings of this study suggest that current conceptions of resilience have limited validity when applied to the lives of high-risk inner-city youth. For example, individual characteristics such as intelligence or social skills appeared to have little direct relationship to the high-risk teenagers' outcomes. To wit, both Octavio and Maria were exceptionally bright, articulate and socially skilled teenagers. Both had been enrolled in honors classes and both got along well with their teachers and the school administrators. Despite possessing two individual traits thought to result in resilient outcomes, neither teenager achieved these outcomes. Both dropped-out of school before graduating and both became involved in illegal activities. This was due, at least partially, to the ecological binds in their immediate environment. Both withdrew from school, at least in part, because unmet survival and subsistence needs impeded their ability to participate in school. Both began selling drugs, at least in part, because their access to the job market was limited due to their age. Certainly there were additional factors that contributed to Maria's and Octavio's decisions but it is clear that conflicting demands in their ecology and the lack of effective adult intervention played a central role in preventing them from achieving mainstream indicators of success.

High-risk inner-city adolescents' outcomes were determined more by the conflicting forces in their immediate environment and the responsiveness of the adults and institutions in their lives, than by factors

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identified in prior studies of resilience. Given this, study results argue for a radical redefinition of the construct of resilience at least as it relates to the lives of high-risk inner-city teenagers. Specifically, the construct of resilience needs to be reconceptualized as a description of the ecology as opposed to being understood as a description of the adolescent. Rather than residing in the individual, resilience is best conceptualized as a reflection of processes in operation in the surrounding ecology.

In this redefinition, characteristics of the child or adolescent are most salient in how they function to activate the existing protective processes within the environment rather than as protective factors in and of themselves. Paradoxically, individual factors that are termed "risks" may in some instances prove to be protective in that they may result in the activation of protective processes in the surrounding ecology. For example, a child evidencing developmental delay (typically considered a risk-factor in high-risk environments as well as a negative developmental outcome) is identified by the school and begins to receive services from an early childhood program. In turn, the parents learn new more positive ways to interact with their child which lead to better outcomes.

Ultimately, it is the response of the surrounding ecology that determines whether an individual's characteristics will function as risk or protective factors. In this redefinition, resilience is defined as representing the responsiveness of the broader ecology to these activators and the key processes of protection are defined as the specific manner in which the environment responds. Rather than there being resilient youth, instead there are resilient ecologies that support successful outcomes despite the existence

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of adverse economic conditions. The microsettings in resilient ecologies, such as the school and the social service agency, are responsive to, rather than in conflict with, the specific needs and indigenous responses of the youth. As a result they contain few ecological binds and support successful outcomes in the youth.

When resilience is reconceptualized as a characteristic of the environment rather than the individual, attention is shifted away from the individual and toward the role of the ecology (in this case the school, the service agency and federal regulations) in supporting or impeding the youths' successful outcomes; and the search for pathological processes is no longer focused on the adolescent but rather on the relationship between the demands of the youths' immediate environment and the institutions that serve the youth. The focus of intervention is no longer the adolescent but rather the ecological forces which surround the youth (in this case the demands of life in the inner-city and the responses made by the service and educational community). The emphasis shifts from teaching the teenagers skills in an effort to increase protection, to one of increasing the responsiveness of the service and educational community to the demands in the youths' immediate environment, and the indigenous strategies he or she uses to respond to them.

This conceptualization of resilience is both similar to and different from existing models of resilience. It is similar in that it recognizes the centrality of the interaction between the teenager and the environment in producing "resilience." It departs from existing models in that it defines the ecology as the entity most relevant for "diagnosis" and intervention, rather than the adolescent.

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Implications for Intervention

The findings and theoretical conclusions of this study hold a number
of implications for interventions with high-risk inner-city adolescents. First,
it implies that to improve outcomes for these teenagers, interventions must
address the structural contributions to the youths' problems, not just increase
the teenagers' skills. The focus of interventions with high-risk inner-city
youth need to be on identifying and resolving the binds in the youths'
immediate environment. To do this, institutions involved with the youth
must become the focus of intervention. The contradictions between the
institutions and the youths' environment must be identified and resolved.

These contradictions can be addressed at multiple levels. They can be
addressed at the macrosystemic level through changes in federal regulations
governing the legal status of youth; at the exosystemic level through changes
in funding practices; at the microsystemic level through changes in the
structure and expectations of the school and social service agencies, the
availability of the youth's parent/s; and at the individual level through the
provision of needed resources and support in resolving existing binds. The
figure below depicts interventions at different levels of Bronfenbrenner's
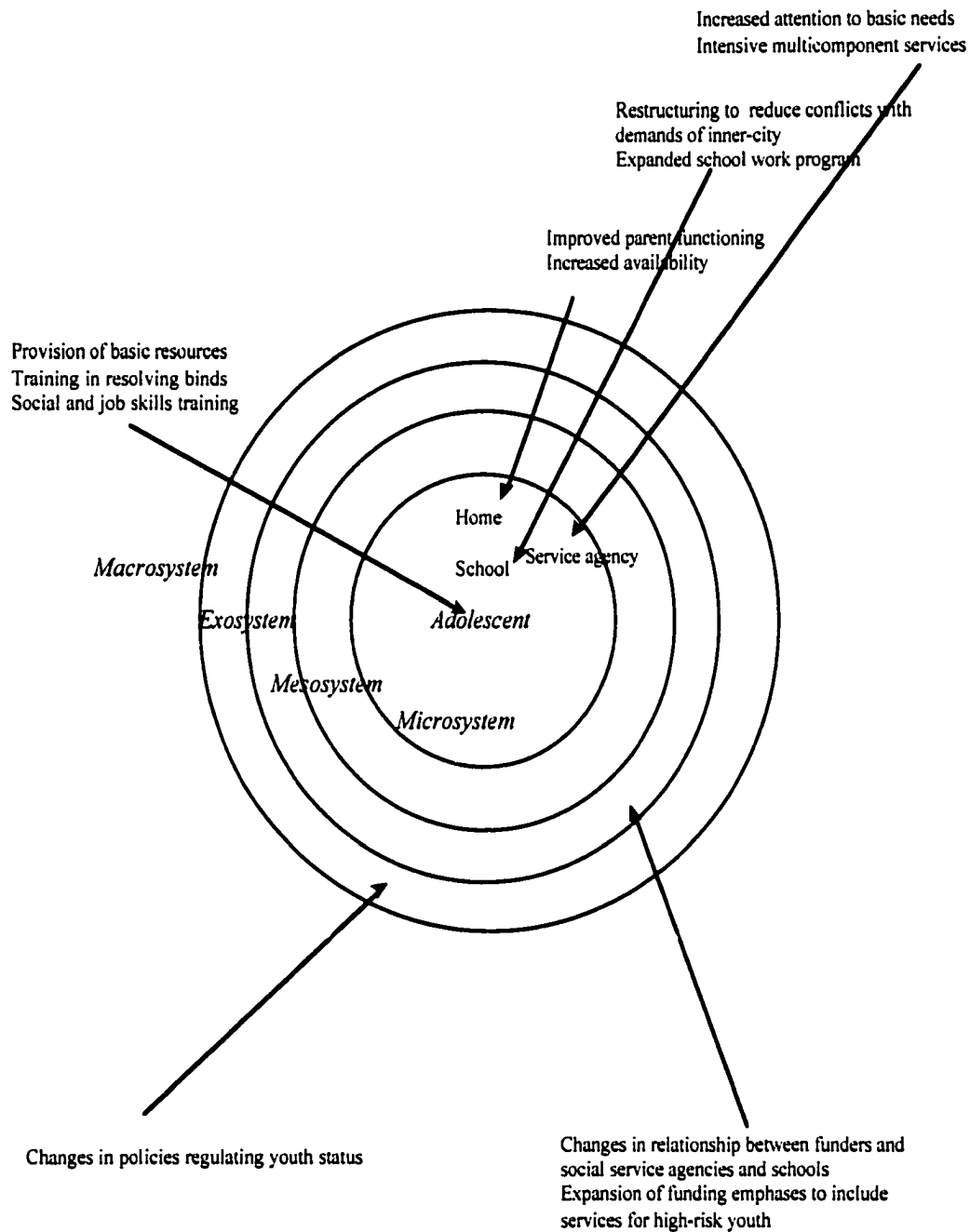ecological model.

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Increased attention to basic needs
Intensive multicomponent services

Restructuring to reduce conflicts with
demands of inner-city
Expanded school work program

Improved parent functioning
Increased availability

Provision of basic resources
Training in resolving binds
Social and job skills training

Macrosystem

Exosystem

Mesosystem

Microsystem

Home

School   Service agency

Adolescent

Changes in policies regulating youth status

Changes in relationship between funders and
social service agencies and schools
Expansion of funding emphases to include
services for high-risk youth

Figure 8.1. Interventions at different levels of ecology

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A second implication of the study concerns the need to create a service niche for these youth. This will require funders to increase their support for programs that provide intensive and comprehensive services for smaller numbers of youth. Funders, service providers and educators must remember that despite their difficult manner, most of these teenagers are traumatized youth. They have been exposed to situations which most middle class youth would have difficulty negotiating. Routine activities such as bathing are difficult and even dangerous. Basic resources ranging from food and shelter to telephones are scarce and inconsistent. They have witnessed frightening and repeated acts of violence. They have lost friends and family. They long for the support of their parents and grieve their absence.

Third, contradictions between poverty and the inner-city school must be reduced. Initiatives such as providing boarding schools for inner-city teenagers have the potential for dramatically improving the outcomes of our inner-city youth. A boarding school would provide for the youths' basic need (e.g. shelter, food, clothing) thereby leaving the teenager free to participate in the schooling process.

School work programs remain an undervalued and underdeveloped resource within inner-city schools. In order to make an impact, the programs will need to be restructured as apprenticeship programs which lead to employment opportunities in industries offering living wages. To be maximally effective, the apprenticeship experience will need to be integrated into the school curriculum. For example, mathematical principles might be taught concurrently with teaching the youth to design plumbing or air and heating systems or as in one eastern inner-city school, evaluating stock

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potential. Existing requirements for participating in school work programs will need to be discarded and new ones designed which ensure early, consistent and long-term access to the program.

The suggestion that resilience can be increased through structural interventions is not made to the exclusion of interventions that focus on factors in the adolescent and his or her family. Individual agency is essential to the achievement of positive outcomes. Individual interventions have been de-emphasized in this discussion because they are unlikely to improve outcomes until the structural barriers are resolved.

The teenagers may benefit from attending training sessions in conflict resolution once a week, but the skills they learn are unlikely to lead to a place to stay that evening, or result in clothing needed for school, or provide access to the local food pantry. Programs must first assist the youth in meeting their most immediate needs and do so in a manner that is developmentally appropriate and does not expose the teenagers to ridicule. Second, schools and service programs need to acknowledge and build on the strategies the youth and their families use to survive in the inner-city.

Implications for Future Research

The findings and theoretical conclusions of this study suggest a number of areas for future research. First and foremost, the study leads to further questions about the model of resilience proposed. More research should be conducted into the nature of the ecological binds identified in this study including the forces that create them, their duration, the intensity of the

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binds, and their impact on the adolescent's functioning and life course. Study of how the binds contribute to depression, violence and even processes of learned helplessness in inner-city teenagers would also be useful. Finally testing the hypothesis suggested by this study that resilience is the consequence, at least in part, of the resolution of these binds would assist in the validation of the theoretical constructs proposed. Research into strategies the youth, their families, and service providers use to resolve these binds is also needed and could inform the development of interventions for high-risk inner-city youth.

Second, there is a need for continued study of the strategies the youth and their families use to respond to the demands of the inner-city. More detailed examination of the youths' use of networking, the strategies they use to find work, and the role of illusion in their life could also provide valuable information on means of effective intervention in these communities. Research on additional adaptations the youth and adults have made to the inner-city would also be helpful. Research into the ways the adults' and teenagers' respond to custody laws and legal guardianship and the way these laws may block high-risk youths' access to needed services could have important implications for policies in this area.

Further study of the relationship between the youths' cultural heritage and the youths' responses will lead to more culturally valid models of resilience and also lead to more effective and culturally sensitive methods of intervention with these youth. Finally, comparative studies between poverty in developing nations and the United States can enrich our understanding of the impact of poverty. Specifically, the contradictions that

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exist in postindustrial nations between the demands of poverty and the expectations of the larger society may be more numerous and larger than those that exist within developing nations. As such, these contradictions may represent a unique type of risk to which poor individuals in this country are exposed.

Finally, the effectiveness of the two teenage sages in this study, Octavio and Maria, lead to questions about indigenous forms of successful outcomes. Further study of these non-traditionally resilient youth could lead not only to new definitions of success but could also provide information on unique protective factors that operate within the inner-city ecology. Equally useful may be the examination of "missed" opportunities in the lives of inner-city teenagers. Study of the forces in the environment and the personal factors that lead to the loss of opportunity could provide information that is useful in making services more accessible and compelling for the teenagers.

Finally the study raises questions about the external pressures placed on schools and social service agencies by funders and government agencies and the manner in which these pressures impact the institutions' ability and willingness to respond to the needs of the high-risk youth. Funding organizations' emphasis on innovative prevention programming, measurable client outcomes, and high service numbers appear to have the unintended effect of making service agencies less able to provide services to high-risk youth. Further study of these processes will be important and could hold important implications for policy as well as funding and evaluation practices.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Consent Forms

Parents

School of the Future Project
Follow-up Study

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health would like to invite you and your child to participate in a follow-up study of the School of the Future Project that will focus on the mental and physical health of the children and adolescents in this community, the experiences they have had in this community and the ways they cope with these experiences. My name is <u>Name of Research Associate</u> and I am a research associate for the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. We hope to learn what specific things children and teenagers in this community experience, what things they do to cope with these experiences, and how this relates to their mental and physical health and how well they do at school, at work, at home, and with their friends. You and your child were selected as a possible participant in this study because your child attended a School of the Future Demonstration School between 1991 and 1995 or because you and your child have participated in the Youth and Family Support program. You will be one of 20 families (parent and child) chosen to participate in this from all of the families who live in this community. Your child will be paid for his or her participation in the survey with $5 gift certificate good at any H.E.B. grocery store.

If you give permission for your child to participate, we will ask your child to complete a questionnaire about different experiences he or she has had in his or her life. We will also ask your child about the things that he or she does to make him or herself feel better, and what he or she dreams about doing in the future. Because it is very hard to write as fast as someone speaks, we would like to audio-tape your child's answers to these questions. This will allow us to transcribe your child's answers to paper after the interview is over. Because we want to give your child enough time to think about and answer the questions, we e would like to meet with your child 2 or 3 times over the next couple of weeks at the YFSP offices. Each visit will take about 1 hour.

Although we don't anticipate that the surveys and interviews that we ask your child to complete will create any discomfort, it is possible that some of the questions could make you or your child feel uncomfortable.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Your decision whether or not to participate and whether or not you want your child to participate will not affect your future relations with the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

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or the School of the Future or the YFSP program. If you and your child decide to participate, you and your child are free to discontinue participation at any time.

You are making a decision whether or not your child is going to participate in this study. Your and your child's signature indicate that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw your child at any time after signing this form, should you or your child decide to discontinue participation in this study.

If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any additional questions later, Wayne Holtzman, Ph.D. at (512) 471-5041 or Research Associates Name at (512) 471-5041 will be happy to answer them.

You may keep a copy of this form. We will provide you with a copy if you request it.

_____   _____
Signature of Parent Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Adolescent Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

Adolescents

**School of the Future Project
Follow-up Study**

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health would like to invite you to participate in a follow-up study of the School of the Future Project. Teenagers often are not asked about what they think about the world, about their neighborhood, about the things they think help them and their friends do well in life, and handle difficult things that happen to them. In this study we are interested in getting your opinion about these things.

My name is Name of Research Associate and I am a research associate for the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. I am interviewing about 20 teenagers that live in this community about their experiences in this neighborhood, and what things they do to cope with these experiences. You were selected to be interviewed because you attended a School of the Future Demonstration School between the years of 1991 and 1995, or you have participated in the Youth and Family Support program.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill-out a short survey (it will take about 15 minutes), and then you will be asked to answer some questions about what you think helps you and other teenagers get along well in school, at home, with friends and just in life in general. Because asking all these questions at once would take a long time, we would like to be able to talk to you 2 or 3 times over the next couple of weeks and ask you a few questions each time. Each time we meet it will take about an hour.

Because it is very hard to write as fast as someone speaks, we would like to audio-tape your answers to these questions. We would then transcribe your answers to paper and destroy the audiotape. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Both the tapes and the transcripts will be destroyed when the study is finished.

Although we don't think that the surveys and interviews that we ask you to complete will create any discomfort, it is possible that some of the questions could make you uncomfortable. It is OK for you to decide not to answer a question or to stop the interview entirely. All you need to say is "I don't want to answer that question", or "I don't want to do this interview anymore." Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health or the School of the Future of the YFSP program.

If you do decide to participate in this study we would like to thank you for your participation by giving you a $5 gift certificate to HEB. You are making a decision whether or not you are going to participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time after signing this form, should you decide to discontinue participation in this study.

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If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any additional questions later, Wayne Holtzman, Ph.D. at (512) 471-5041 or Lyndee Knox at (512) 471-5041 will be happy to answer them.

You may keep a copy of this form. We will provide you with a copy if you request it.

Signature of Parent Participant   Date

Signature of Adolescent Participant   Date

Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

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APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

Tell me about your day today/yesterday.

1. Morning events
   a) activities
      i) wake-up routine
      ii) breakfast
      iii) hygiene
      iv) chores
   b) interactions
   c) their perceptions of
   d) others' response to

2. School time events/daytime events
   a) activities
      i) classes
      ii) between classes
      iii) extracurricular
   b) interactions
   c) outcomes
   d) their perceptions of
   e) others' response to

3. After-school events/late afternoon events
   a) activities
   b) interactions
   c) outcomes
   d) their perceptions of
   e) others' response to

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4. Evening events

    a) activities

    b) interactions

    c) outcomes

    d) their perceptions of

    e) others' response to

5. Night events

    a) activities

    b) interactions

    c) outcomes

    d) their perceptions of

    e) others' response to

6. Was that day usual or unusual? Tell me about a day that was more usual/unusual.

7. Aspirations

    a) what wants to be doing in 5 years

    b) what thinks will really be doing in 5 years

    c) things they are doing toward this end

    d) things others have done that have assisted/hindered their goals

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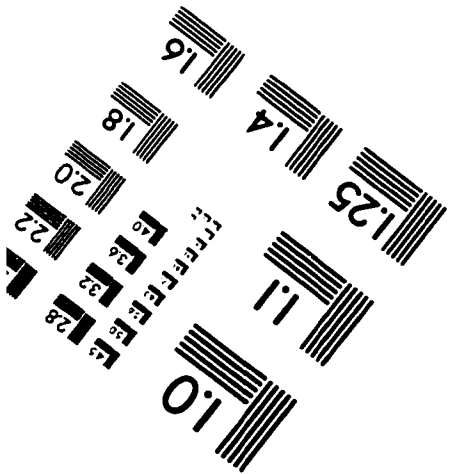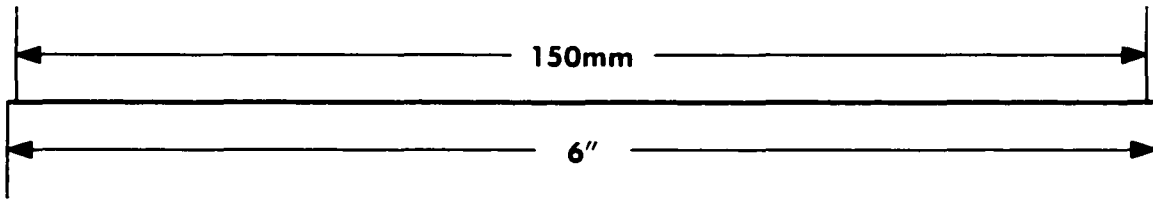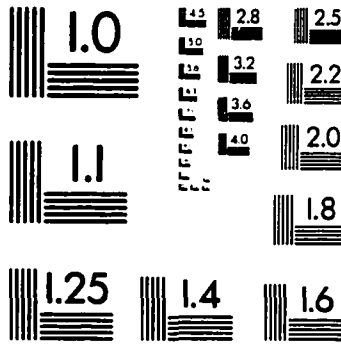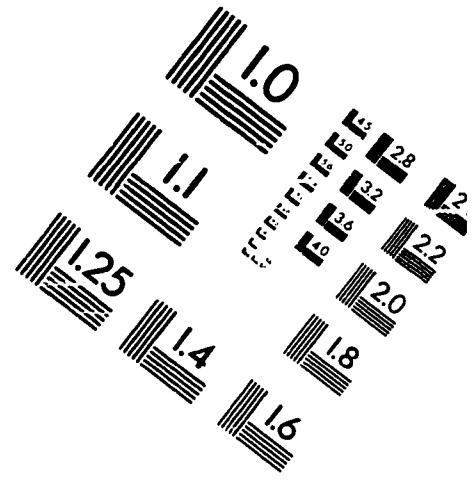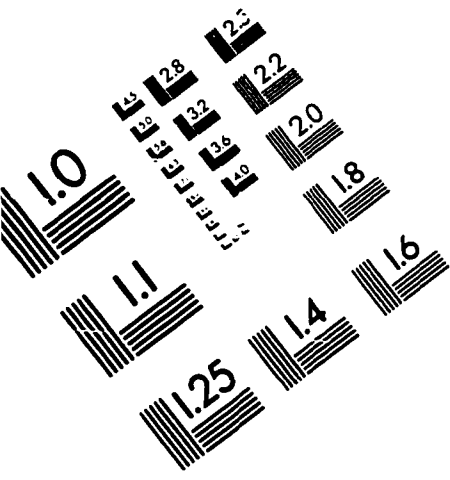
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VITA

Lynda Marie Knox was born in Midland, Texas on June 28, 1963, the daughter of Mary Alice Butler and Gordon Sheldon Knox. After completing a Bachelors degree in Plan II at the University of Texas and a Masters degree in School Psychology at Trinity University, she was licensed as a professional counselor by the State of Texas and worked for four years as a psychotherapist in both inpatient and outpatient settings in San Antonio, Texas. In the early 1990's she entered the Doctoral School Psychology program at the University of Texas and was awarded a Hogg Foundation Program Evaluation Fellowship in 1993 and completed a National School Psychology Internship in Washington, DC in 1995. She worked as a research associate for the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health for three years and began consulting in program evaluation research in 1996.

Permanent Address: 8050 North Madrone Trail, Austin, Texas 78737

This dissertation was typed by the author.

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IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

1.0

1.1

1.25   1.4   1.6

2.8   2.5
3.2   2.2
3.6
4.0   2.0
      1.8

|←————————————— 150mm —————————————→|

|←————————————— 6″ —————————————→|