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Male college students' accounts of their resilience from risky behaviors during adolescence: a qualitative analysis

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Male college students' accounts of their resilience from risky
behaviors during adolescence: A qualitative analysis

by

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Human Development and Family Studies

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ABSTRACT

Using grounded theory with a constructivist perspective, this study sought to gain greater insight and understanding regarding how a select group of males were able to demonstrate resilience by overcoming risky behaviors. Male college students with past engagement in risky behaviors were interviewed to gain their perceptions of what helped them to discontinue their risky behaviors during adolescence and demonstrate resilience. Participants were asked to share what it was that specifically contributed to their risky behaviors and themes were developed based on their responses using a grounded theory method to further understand what helped them to demonstrate their resilience. Implications are discussed regarding how these results can help current adolescents who are struggling with engagement in risky behaviors and how adults surrounding these adolescents can provide the needed support and assistance with these behaviors, as well as ideas for future research.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Adolescence can be a very difficult stage of development. Many adolescents are exposed, in one way or another, to a wide variety of risk factors that can lead to their engagement in problematic behaviors. The more exposure adolescents have to certain risk factors the greater their chances of engaging in what are labeled as risky or delinquent behaviors (Bor, McGee, & Fagan, 2004). Delinquent and antisocial behavior among adolescents has been and continues to be very prevalent in our society and is considered to be a major public health and social issue (Hemphill, McMorris, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, Catalano, & Mathers, 2007). Engaging in risky and delinquent behaviors during adolescence can lead to adult criminal behaviors, and arresting, prosecuting, incarcerating, and treating juvenile offenders can cost states billions of dollars each year (Greenwood, 2008). Many adolescents, however, despite being exposed to numerous risk factors in their lives, are able to demonstrate resilience by either not engaging in risky and delinquent behaviors at all or having limited engagement to the degree that the behaviors do not appear to have any significantly negative impact on their adult lives. Many adolescents are able to prevent these negative influences from affecting them and are able to pursue and achieve a wide variety of goals including graduating from high school, attending college, finding employment, maintaining healthy relationships, and taking care of their emotional, mental, and physical health.

This study furthers our understanding of how young adult males who engaged in risky behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience from those behaviors. There is a substantial amount of literature that discusses what to do about risky and

delinquent behaviors after they have occurred and researchers have identified numerous delinquency-prevention programs that are either proven to be effective or have great promise (Greenwood, 2008). Where there appears to be a void in the research, however, is in regard to taking a qualitative approach that involves personally interviewing young male adults who have demonstrated an ability to overcome stressors, risk factors, and engagement in risky behaviors during adolescence as evidenced by their graduating from high school and college attendance. In order to help fill this void, a group of male college students with a past history of engagement in risky behaviors during adolescence were interviewed to gain first-hand knowledge regarding how they were able to demonstrate resilience and move away from those behaviors.

Although the participants for this study were all college students who demonstrated their resilience, at least in part through their academic attendance and performance, I fully recognize that there are many other ways to demonstrate resilience that are non-academic; education is not the only road to success. Education can be a very important component, however, in helping to overcome various risk factors in life. By finishing high school and enrolling in college, the participants in this study were pursuing a very positive avenue that may not have been possible had they not overcome the stressors and risk factors during their adolescent years. Understanding how this was accomplished could be very important for future generations by helping current adolescents who are exposed to risk factors to be able to demonstrate resilience, either through graduating from high school and attending college, or by other means that are helpful for them to find success. It is also hoped that this information will be helpful for those who are a part of these adolescents' lives including

family members, school administrators, mental health professionals, and researchers who are all working to help assist these youth toward greater success and achieving their goals in life.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this project was to gain greater insight and understanding regarding how males with a past history of engaging in risky behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience from those behaviors. Research is very clear in terms of what factors contribute to resilience and my hope was to verify these same findings. Due to the qualitative nature of this project, however, it was also my hope that I would be able to probe deeper into this issue through my interviews and gain greater understanding regarding how these particular males were able to overcome the risk factors in their lives and demonstrate resilience. The following sections provide a brief overview of stress and strain theories, risk factors, risky/delinquent behaviors, the problem with risky/delinquent behaviors, resilience, and protective factors and resilience that have all been defined and researched in the current literature.

Stress and Strain Theories

There are numerous theories that help explain human behavior, and more specifically for this study, stressors within the family and how family members cope and adjust to those stressors. Ivan Pavlov, John Watson, and B. F. Skinner have all contributed to our understanding of behaviorism as well as learning theory, which is “the fundamental process by which things become associated with one another” (Goldhaber, 2000, p. 67). Albert Bandura’s social learning theory suggests that behaviors are learned by observing the social environment (Bandura, 1977). Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, developed by Abraham Maslow in 1943, is typically portrayed in a pyramid and starting from the bottom to the top includes physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Maslow’s needs help contribute to our understanding of human behavior and motivation and

could certainly be applied to this study regarding possible explanations for engaging in risky behaviors as well as demonstrating resilience from those behaviors.

The original family stress theory was developed by Reuben Hill who created the ABCX Model (Hill, 1958). The different components to that model include “A (the event) → *interacting* with B (the family’s crisis-meeting resources) → *interacting* with C (the definition the family makes of the event) → *produces* X (the crisis)” (Hill, 1958, p. 141). Hill (1958) refers to the first variable, the crisis-precipitating event (A), as a stressor and defines this as “a situation for which the family has had little or no prior preparation and must therefore be viewed as problematic” (p. 140). The family’s crisis in meeting resources (B), the second variable, includes “a set of resources in family organization which, by their presence or absence, kept the family from crisis or urged it into crisis” (Hill, 1958, p. 144). The third variable, (C), refers to the way in which “stressors become crises in line with the definition the family makes of the event” (Hill, 1958, p. 141). The interactions of these three variables are what can lead to the crisis (X) which “has been conceptualized as a continuous variable denoting the amount of disruptiveness, disorganization, or incapacitatedness in the family social system” and “is characterized by the family’s inability to restore stability and by the continuous pressure to make changes in the family structure and patterns of interaction” (Burr, 1973, p. 10). In 1983, sociologists McCubbin and Patterson expanded on Hill’s ABCX Model by developing the Double ABCX Model which added post-crisis variables (coping mechanisms) to help explain how families recover from crisis and achieve adaptation over time (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

Both the ABCX and the Double ABCX Models are excellent resources for increasing understanding of family stress. The focus of these models, however, appears to be on the

family as a whole, rather than the individual and how the individual's relationships, emotions, and interactions with the environment impact engagement in risky behaviors and resilience from those behaviors. Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory seemed more appropriate in terms of looking at a theory to make comparisons with the results from this study. Agnew (1992) states the following about strain theory:

Strain theory argues that adolescents are pressured into delinquency by the negative affective states—most notably anger and related emotions that often result from negative relationships...strain theory...is distinguished by its focus on negative relationships with others and its insistence that such relationships lead to delinquency through the negative affect—especially anger. (p. 49)

A number of different conclusions can be made from Agnew's Strain Theory that are relevant to resilience from risky or delinquent behaviors. Agnew (1992) described factors that impact whether or not an adolescent copes with a difficult situation by engaging in delinquent or non-delinquent behaviors. Agnew (1992) suggests that adolescents with social supports are more capable of responding to objective strains in a non-delinquent manner. How an adolescent copes is also dependent on the adolescent's beliefs, particularly rules used by the adolescent that define what is considered an appropriate response when provoked (Agnew, 1992). In terms of relationships, "adolescents who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to be exposed to delinquent models and beliefs and to receive reinforcement for delinquency" (Agnew, 1992, p. 73). A final conclusion by Agnew (1992) is that "adolescents who attribute their adversity to others are much more likely to become angry [and]...that anger creates a strong predisposition to delinquency" (p. 73). In Chapter 4, I

compare the results from this study with some of Agnew's conclusions to demonstrate how my theory that is grounded in the data supports some of his ideas.

Risk Factors

Numerous risk factors have been identified that have the potential for leading to risky and delinquent behaviors in adolescents and identifying risk factors can help in the prevention of these behaviors. Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller (1992) suggest that the most promising route to developing effective strategies for the prevention of risky and delinquent behaviors during adolescence, particularly drug and alcohol abuse, is through a risk-focused approach. Just a few of the many different risk factors include but are not limited to: (a) gender (males are more likely than females to engage in risky behaviors); (b) hyperactivity; (c) risk-taking; (d) early manifestations of violence; (e) being raised in families with violence and antisocial values, norms and behaviors; (f) poor family management that includes parents not establishing clear rules, parents not monitoring adolescents' social interactions and behaviors, and using inconsistent or severe and abusive discipline; (g) poor academic performance by adolescents and a lack of interest in school; (h) associating with delinquent peers and engaging in antisocial behaviors; (i) living in a neighborhood with crime and drug selling and drug use; and (j) exposure to poverty, both at the family and neighborhood levels (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott, & Catalano, 2000).

Mitchell and MacKenzie (2006) discussed the relationship between low self-control and committing crimes and identified several dimensions of one's personality related to self-control. They stated that "individuals with low self-control lack diligence, prudence, sensitivity to the needs of others, high-level cognitive functioning, the ability to deter gratification, and the ability to control their temper" (p. 433). As a result, the ability (or

inability) to effectively manage and control one's behaviors, especially during adolescence, can be a risk factor that contributes to risky and delinquent behaviors.

Conflict between parents and children has been shown to be a predictor of early aggression and delinquency (Ingoldsby, Shaw, Winslow, Schonberg, Gilliom, & Criss, 2006). Palmer (2000) suggested that there is an inverse relationship between delinquency and high school adolescents who have a strong attachment to their parents. Harsh parenting styles, which have been shown to be an ineffective approach to discipline and control, are associated with poor adjustment in males (Conger & Elder, 1994) and detachment from parents, especially from fathers, is an important variable in determining delinquent behaviors (Johnson, 1987).

Brody, Stoneman, and McCoy (1994) studied the impact that parents and caregivers can have on childhood behaviors by looking specifically at former Head Start children attending kindergarten. They gathered information from caregivers about development goals, family processes, and the caregiver's own psychological functioning. Their results supported their own hypotheses that negative developmental outcomes for those children were associated with distress among the caregivers as well as conflicted family relationships.

Research has consistently demonstrated that adverse parenting factors further compound the likelihood of child conduct problems (Wasserman, Miller, Pinner, & Jaramillo, 1996). Parents play a major role in the lives of children and adolescents and support provided by parents as well as other adults in a child/adolescent's life, particularly for boys, is associated with problematic and anti-social behaviors (Conger & Elder, 1994). The parent-child relationship, along with the type of parenting being employed, is so important that even though socioeconomic status directly impacts delinquency, this impact

was found to not be significant after controlling for parental management, which consisted of parental monitoring and discipline (Larzelere & Patterson, 1990).

Herrenkohl et al. (2000) found that adolescents who were exposed to many risk factors were much more likely than other adolescents to engage in later risky and delinquent behaviors. It was determined that the odds for adolescents who are exposed to more than five risk factors to exhibit violent behaviors compared to the odds for violence of adolescents exposed to fewer than two risk factors at each age were seven times greater at the age of 10, 10 times greater at the age of 14, and nearly 11 times greater when they were 16 years old (Herrenkohl et al., 2000). This means that the older a child gets and the more risk factors he/she is exposed to, the greater the chances of exhibiting risky, violent, and delinquent behaviors.

Risky/Delinquent Behaviors

The term risky, which is used throughout the research literature to describe certain problematic behaviors exhibited by adolescents, can encompass a wide variety of behaviors which can sometimes make it difficult to know what specific kinds of behaviors are being referred to when this word is used. Delinquency, however, is a legal term that can be defined. Not all risky behaviors would be defined as delinquent, but all delinquent behaviors could be defined as risky. The term adolescent delinquent typically refers to an adolescent who has been adjudicated, meaning they have been found guilty of a crime in a court of law. At the beginning of this study it was unclear what kind of responses I might get from the participants in terms of whether they were adjudicated delinquents or if they simply engaged in risky behaviors during adolescence. In the end, some of the participants could have been labeled delinquent whereas the behaviors from others would more accurately be labeled as

risky. I have gone into detail here to define delinquency as it is discussed in the literature to at least provide a general idea of what is meant by risky and delinquent behaviors. Benner and Hill (1999), in the *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling*, refer to delinquency as “behavior that violates the law” (p. 660) and that “most states set the age limit for delinquency between 16 and 18” (p. 660). They discuss two different types of offenses that an adolescent can commit. The first is called a status offense and examples include truancy or possession of alcohol. Status offenses are unique to juveniles in that they would not be considered crimes if they were committed by an adult. Some of these behaviors could more accurately be defined as being risky rather than delinquent behaviors. The other type of offense is referred to as an index offense, such as murder, rape, assault, robbery, etc. These are considered to be crimes regardless of age. According to Benner and Hill (1999), some states reserve the term delinquency specifically for those juveniles who commit index offenses. Prosecuting these offenders can be complicated because in some cases a juvenile can be tried as an adult depending on the crime that was committed.

Similar definitions for juvenile delinquency are found throughout the literature and within various resources, one of which is the website for the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (2010), which states that a delinquent act is “any act committed by an adolescent that could result in prosecution, including crimes against other persons, crimes against property, drug offenses, and crimes against public order.” Another much more well-known online resource is Merriam-Webster (2010) which defines juvenile delinquency as “antisocial behavior that is beyond parental control and is subject to legal action.” Kadish, Glaser, Calhoun, and Risler (1999) refer to youthful delinquents as being those individuals whose behaviors do not conform to societal rules and norms. Many other resources could be

identified here to define this particular behavior but all give similar definitions. We know there are many adolescents who are exhibiting various risky and delinquent behaviors and we also know how much of a negative impact these behaviors can have. However, we can clearly define what delinquency is and can use this definition to help clarify what is meant by risky behaviors, and it is these behaviors that are greatly impacted by the exposure to the various risk factors discussed earlier.

The Problem of Risky/Delinquent Behaviors

Involvement in risky behaviors during adolescence can lead to engagement in what is defined as delinquent behaviors and extensive research has shown the negative impact of delinquency on society. Delinquency has been a serious problem in the major cities of the United States since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Eddy, Reid, & Fetrow, 2000) and juvenile offending is considered to be a pervasive social problem (Kadish et al., 1999; Tyson & Stones, 2002) that is threatening the well-being of families and communities throughout the country (Kadish et al., 1999). The number of adolescents being jailed and otherwise involved in the criminal justice system in the United States has continued to climb over the past two decades and the incarceration and criminal activity of youth are currently major problems in the United States, with more and more youth placed in state correctional, county jail, and juvenile delinquency facilities each year (Granello & Hanna, 2003). Delinquency has been shown to be a positive predictor of adolescent problem substance use (Mason, Hitchings, & Spoth, 2007). Conduct problems during the elementary and junior high school years are predictors of increased depression and are consistent with a failure model whereby a lack of certain skills along with continued engagement in risky and harmful behaviors can lead to pervasive failures and vulnerability to depressed mood (Capaldi, 1992).

From an economic standpoint, the costs of juvenile crime to society are significant; the estimated cost to society of just one adolescent who leaves high school and turns to a life of crime or drugs, or both, amounts to between 1.7 and 2.3 million dollars over his/her lifetime (Granello & Hanna, 2003). Because we know how problematic juvenile delinquency truly is, it is extremely important that every effort be made to help prevent these behaviors. Many different approaches can be used to help with this societal problem including prevention programs, judicial involvement, and various forms of outpatient, inpatient, and residential treatment.

Resilience

Ginsburg, Alexander, Hunt, Sullivan, and Cnaan (2002), who wrote about the struggles adolescents face living in very poor urban areas, stated that adolescents' ability to have a more productive and positive future is affected by supports in their life (e.g., family, school, community) as well as their own inherent resilience. Veselska, Geckova, Orosova, Gajdosova, van Dijk, and Reijneveld (2009) defined resilience as "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation in the face of challenging or threatening circumstances" (p. 287). Zimmerman and Bingenheimer (2002) discuss how resilience can help provide a better understanding as to why some youth who are exposed to risk factors choose not to engage in those behaviors associated with that risk. Two components of their explanation are the compensatory model and the protective factor model. The compensatory model suggests that risk factors can be counteracted or neutralized by positive factors in the adolescent's life, whereas the protective factor model states that there are some factors in an adolescent's life that may change the relationship between risks and outcomes (Zimmerman & Bingenheimer, 2002). Wille, Bettge, and Ravens-Sieberer (2008) point out that in the field

of developmental psychology, “research on resilience focuses on children and adolescents who show positive developmental outcomes despite experiences of significant adversity” (p. 134).

Understanding how some adolescents are able to demonstrate resilience despite their exposure to various risk factors while others exhibit delinquent behaviors can be very helpful in improving our understanding of juvenile delinquency. It can also help provide us with more tools to prevent this pervasive problem from occurring.

Protective Factors and Resilience

Protective factors in adolescence are those factors that help contribute to resilience and can include factors that are specific to the individual adolescent, the family, and the environment (Wille et al., 2008). Individual protective factors can include high self-efficacy and optimism (Wille et al., 2008). Familial protective factors have been frequently researched and include parental support, authoritative parenting (characterized by warmth, involvement, support of autonomy, as well as clear rules and expectations), and healthy family cohesion that includes a positive parent-adolescent relationship (Wille et al., 2008). It can be very challenging for parents to know what their children are doing and to help them engage in positive activities if they are not adequately supervising them. Parental supervision has been shown to be an effective way to help children and adolescents avoid delinquent behaviors, whereas poor parental supervision has been found among many of the families of juvenile delinquents (Palmer & Hollin, 2001). There are certain parental behaviors that need to be evaluated when it comes to addressing adolescent delinquency and one of those is in regard to general supervision of the child’s behaviors (Palmer & Hollin, 2001). Farrington, Loeber, Yin, and Anderson (2002) found poor parental supervision to be significantly related

to delinquency. Blechman and Vryan (2000) reported that poor supervision of activities can put children at risk for delinquency. Ge, Donnellan, and Wenk (2001) discussed how criminality in adults can be traced back to a child-rearing environment that included elements such as poor supervision. Sampson and Laub (1993) showed that poor parental supervision was significantly associated with delinquent behaviors and Caldwell, Beutler, Ross, and Silver (2006) found that parental monitoring (supervision) was negatively correlated with delinquency.

Children's behaviors can be reinforced both negatively and positively. Parents can greatly impact their children by how they communicate to their children, both verbally and non-verbally, and by how they respond to their behaviors including what they say and do to show their children how they feel about them. The type of reinforcement used, along with a lack of parental support (Abrams, Simpson, & Hogg, 1986), has been shown to be related to an increase in delinquent behaviors. Farrington et al. (2002) in fact found that low parental reinforcement was related to delinquency. Eddy et al. (2000) stated that younger children who display defiant and oppositional behaviors put themselves at risk of being disliked or shunned by other children and adults. This can lead to these children receiving less and less reinforcement for positive behaviors from those around them, including their parents. A lack of positive reinforcement can lead then to their children engaging in more and more negative behaviors that, over time, can contribute to delinquency.

Warmth and nurturance, which in this case is equivalent to positive parental reinforcement, were suggested by Palmer and Hollin (2001) as parental influences that need to be addressed to help with delinquency. They go on to state that "adolescents' perceptions of their parents as warm and understanding are related to low levels of self-reported

delinquency” (p. 95). Ge et al. (2001) also found that adult criminality could be linked to a lack of parental affection during childhood (affection by parents is another way to describe reinforcement). Because a lack of parental affection is a factor that is linked to criminal behaviors in adults, we can assume that it must also be linked to delinquency in adolescents which can lead to adult criminal behaviors. This was supported by Sampson and Laub (1993) who found that parental rejection was significantly related to delinquency. Brody et al. (1994) studied child-competence measures among former Head Start children attending kindergarten and the positive impact protective factors had on those measures. The protective factors they hypothesized and found to exist included healthy relationships between caregivers/parents and their children such as high self-esteem among caregivers/parents, positive support and communication from the caregivers/parents, and caregivers/parents who were engaged, responsive, and cognitively challenged their children.

The involvement of a child/adolescent in family activities is related to their involvement in delinquent behaviors and as children involve themselves more with activities with their family, they are less likely to be involved in delinquent behaviors, as discussed by Farrington et al. (2002), who found that low involvement of the adolescent in family activities was related to delinquency. A lack of positive adult engagement can lead children to befriend other rejected and deviant peers and the relationships with these peers can lead then to more serious acts of violence and criminal behaviors (Eddy et al., 2000). Positive family relations can aid in reducing the effects of a child’s associations with peers who are committing delinquent acts (Kadish et al., 1999). Research has consistently stressed that the family environment is a crucial factor in determining and predicting adolescent delinquency, and a lack of family cohesion has been found to be significantly related to the development

of delinquent behaviors (Matherne & Thomas, 2001). Involving adolescents in family activities, then, is an important factor toward strengthening this cohesion. Parental supervision has even been identified as “the universal protective factor” against behavior problems in adolescents (Piko, Fitzpatrick, & Wright, 2005).

Focus groups conducted by Ginsburg et al. (2002) with inner-city youth showed many significant insights as to what they felt would be most influential in helping adolescents demonstrate resilience, despite the risk factors in their lives, and achieve a positive future. This particular study was extremely helpful due to the fact that it was one of the few qualitative studies I was able to find related to this topic that included interviews with adolescents who discussed protective factors in their lives. Two items identified and highly prioritized by these youth were related to education and jobs. The adolescents interviewed appeared to understand the importance of education and felt that having an education is what would be the most helpful in being able to overcome the barriers they faced from their environment and pursue a successful career. What makes this information so important and meaningful is that these items were identified by the adolescents on their own, rather than chosen from a list of options.

Expanding one’s level of education greatly increases the chances of achieving one’s goals in life. The 2006 U.S. Census Bureau report showed that the average income for both males and females was greater for those with a high school diploma compared to those who did not graduate from high school and that the more college education one achieved the greater their reported income. Education not only increases one’s earning potential, it can also help in shaping one’s identity. Within the Gallup website, a survey conducted by Gallup in 2003 found that 83% of working Americans with a postgraduate degree stated their job

gave them a sense of meaning and identity, compared with 58% of college graduates, 50% with some college education, and only 47% with a high school education or less (Robison, 2003). This poll suggests that, similar to the U.S. Census Bureau report, the more education one has the greater the likelihood that one's job will provide a sense of meaning and identity.

Several other factors mentioned by the adolescents in the study by Ginsburg et al. (2002) included having meaningful relationships with adults—which clearly has been shown in the research to effectively reduce the risks for engaging in delinquent behaviors—and also productive use of their free time including after-school programs and other activities that often simply provide a safe place for adolescents to go. The availability of social supports outside of the nuclear family such as friends or teachers, and involvement in healthy activities such as sports, clubs, or church that encourages coping and contributes to individual competence has also been shown to be extremely important in reducing the risks for delinquency (Wille et al., 2008).

Summary

Risk factors, risky/delinquent behaviors, resilience, and protective factors are all key concepts that needed to be defined and understood in order to help answer the research question for this project. Risk factors in this study refer to those factors that can negatively impact an adolescent and potentially contribute to that adolescent engaging in risky and delinquent behaviors. Risky/delinquent behaviors exhibited by adolescents can be both illegal and have a very negative impact on the individual adolescent as well as the adolescent's friends, family members, and society. Resilience describes the process by which an adolescent who is engaging in risky behaviors is somehow able to discontinue those behaviors and to essentially bounce back from the potentially very negative path s/he was on

and lead a more positive and productive life. One key to resilience involves protective factors that can include anything in an adolescent's life that contributes to demonstrated resilience. These key concepts are all tied together in that risk factors can contribute to risky/delinquent behaviors and protective factors can lead to resilience. Understanding how these concepts impact each other is what led me to my research question for this study.

Research Question

The research question acts as a guide for the methodology and methods I have chosen to conduct this study. My research question is "What is the process by which young adult male college students who engaged in risky behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience?" The hope is that the results of this study are of value in regard to helping current adolescents who are exhibiting risky behaviors to make the necessary changes that could help themselves to demonstrate resilience. From this exploration, I hope that the information gained will offer valuable insight and first-hand knowledge directly from the interviews with these participants. This research is not only valuable for today's adolescents, but also for society in general, as well as the professional field of marriage and family therapy. The information I gained as a result of this project will help researchers, clinicians, teachers, and others working with adolescents to become better informed and make changes for the greater good.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The purpose of this project was to gain greater insight and understanding regarding how males with a past history of engaging in risky behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience. A select group of young adult male college students from a Midwestern state university who had a past history of exhibiting risky behaviors during adolescence were interviewed to help answer the research question for this project: “What is the process by which young adult male college students who exhibited risky behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience?” A type of qualitative research known as grounded theory was used to help analyze, interpret, and understand the data, and aided in the formation of a theory based upon the information obtained from these participants.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research consists of studying social phenomena (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) and there are a variety of methods or traditions that can be used to accomplish this task such as case studies, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative inquiry/biography, and hermeneutics (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). For this study, I chose to use the qualitative method known as grounded theory so that I could form my own theory from this study that is grounded in the data.

Grounded Theory

Developed from work done in the 1960s by sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (Charmaz, 2006), grounded theory is a form of qualitative research in which the researcher’s role is to “generate or discover a theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the research participants” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 11). Strauss and Glaser discovered this method through research they conducted on death and

dying with seriously ill patients in the United States. Charmaz (2006) gives the following description of this research:

Glaser and Strauss gave their data explicit analytic treatment and produced theoretical analyses of the social organization and temporal order of dying. They explored analytic ideas in long conversations and exchanged preliminary notes analyzing observations in the field. As they constructed their analyses of dying, they developed systematic methodological strategies that social scientists could adopt for studying many other topics. (p. 4)

Glaser and Strauss's book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, was written in 1967 and discussed using strategies that involved developing theories from research that were grounded in data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from theories that already existed. Over the years, grounded theory has developed and changed with both Glaser and Strauss moving in different directions. Although Glaser remained consistent with the originally formed ideas, Strauss joined with Juliet M. Corbin and incorporated new ideas and technical procedures that Glaser disagreed with (Charmaz, 2006).

The intent of a grounded theory study is to generate a theory from the data or add to an existing theory (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), which can help to clarify and increase our understanding of certain concepts that might be related by means of relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) or any situation where individuals interact, take action, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Within grounded theory there are many different methods, but the specific grounded theory approach that I used for this project was very similar to the method used by Pomrenke (2007) in her qualitative analysis of resilience in pre-teen children of high-conflict families. She identified grounded theory as "a method of

social inquiry...[that] utilizes generalized knowledge that is derived from specific observations of phenomena from the field...[and] can be used to build theory” (p. 358). The basic idea then, from a qualitative approach, is that a specific methodology is used to collect data, the data collected are analyzed using specified coding procedures, and then a theory of relationship is developed based upon ideas, categories, and themes developed from those analyses. Some of the steps used by Pomrenke (2007) that were also used here consisted of the following: (a) data-gathering methods were implemented; (b) three methods for coding the data were utilized that included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding; and (c) a theory was generated from the coded data.

Because the purpose of a grounded theory study is to form a theory that is grounded in the data, the information that is collected and coded is extremely important. Charmaz advocates for “gathering rich—detailed and full—data” (2006, pp. 10-11). “Rich data get beneath the surface of social and subjective life” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 13) and obtaining rich data means seeking “thick” description (Geertz, 1973) such as field notes from observations, or narratives from transcribed interviews (Charmaz, 2006). I provided descriptions that were rich and thick based upon the information given by the participants in this study. Part of the challenge was that through the coding process it became clear that some of the participants were able to provide more detailed information than others and there became an imbalance in quoting certain participants more than others. The length of each interview was also different for each participant because some of them provided plenty of detailed information whereas others simply answered the questions and were not as open with sharing detailed information about their lives. I balanced this out as best as I could but the reality is that every participant was unique and provided information that was relevant to their life. I felt that certain

information from some participants was more beneficial than others for answering the research question for this project so thicker and richer descriptions are provided for that data. I do not want to minimize the importance of any of the participants for this study. Each and every one of them had a unique story to tell. In the next section I describe more about the participants and how they became part of this study.

Sample

Participant Recruitment

In order to give every male student at the Midwestern state university an equal chance to be involved in this project, a request was made through student services on campus for a bulk email to be sent out to every male student. The student services office was able to accomplish this by having data available to them that identified every student as either male or female. Using this data, they were able to send out an email to every male student enrolled at the university which totaled just over 15,000. In the e-mail, prospective participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the criteria for involvement, what would be required of them if they chose to participate, and how to contact this researcher if interested (see Appendix D). Participants were informed that individual face-to-face interviews would be conducted with each of them, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes, and that those interviews would be audio recorded and then transcribed at a later date by me. Participants were also informed that follow-up contacts with each of them would take place for member checks (which will be described later in more detail).

Of the 15,000 emails that were sent out, approximately 75 male students responded stating that they might be interested in participating in this study. Of those 75, about 20 agreed to be interviewed. The others either declined to be interviewed after receiving more

information about the project or did not respond back. Several of those 20 scheduled an interview but then either cancelled or simply did not show up. A total of 11 participants completed interviews. I could have made attempts to follow-up with the other participants who either cancelled or did not show but I felt that I had reached saturation (which will be defined later) after the interviews with those 11 participants.

Participants

The 11 participants for this study were between the ages of 18 and 25, and had a past history of exhibiting risky behaviors during their adolescence. This particular age range was chosen primarily because of the fact that the least amount of time had elapsed for these students between adulthood and adolescence and it was hoped that this would help to improve the participants' ability to recall the risk factors they were exposed to, the risky behaviors they exhibited during adolescence, and the ways in which they demonstrated resilience. Of the 11 participants, 7 reported their race/ethnicity as white/Caucasian, 1 white/native American, and 3 reported their race/ethnicity as Asian with one of those three reporting he was Korean and another reporting he was from China. Their year in college included 4 freshman, 3 sophomores, 2 juniors, 1 senior, and 1 graduate student. Many different majors were reported including business, psychology, and engineering, and grade point averages ranged from 1.12 to 3.73 (on a 4.00 scale). Nine of the participants reported they were employed whereas 2 stated they were not. Their future career plans varied extensively and included going to graduate school, working as an engineer, working in athletics, or just finishing college and finding a job. In terms of their relationship status, 9 reported they were single, 1 reported having a girlfriend, and 1 stated that he was not married. The table in Appendix A gives an overview of the 11 participants and I have also

provided a brief description of each of them, with pseudonyms to help protect their identities and maintain confidentiality.

Matthew. The first participant I interviewed was Matthew who was an 18-year-old freshman at the university. Matthew identified himself as being both white and Native American. He listed his major as performing arts but also shared that he had not really decided yet for sure what he wanted to study. He discussed some of his future career interests as wanting to be a baker, an aerospace engineer, or possibly a stage/lighting designer. Out of all of the participants I interviewed, Matthew seemed to have had the most difficulties in his life and described in detail all of the major struggles he experienced growing up including abuse and being in and out of the foster care system. Matthew reported having a history of substance use, vandalism, getting bullied, neglect, having an alcoholic parent, and assault. Matthew was very emotional during the interview for this study and it was apparent how much he was truly impacted by his past and how difficult it was for him at times to share some of these difficulties.

Mark. Mark was a 21-year-old junior in civil engineering and reported his race/ethnicity as white. If Matthew was on one end of the spectrum in terms of the number of difficulties and risk factors he was exposed to during adolescence, Mark was probably on the other end. He did not experience any significant struggles growing up and attributed this to his parents as well as his religious beliefs, sharing that he and his family are all Christians. Mark actually apologized during the interview because he felt that maybe he had misread the email that had been sent out and that he was not sure he was appropriate for this study. He did experience some difficulties as an adolescent in school and was involved in some altercations at school with other students. I assured him that this was still significant and that

he would be able to provide valuable information for this study. Mark was extremely polite during the interview and it was clear that he was very proud of who he was and the values that were taught to him from his family. He was doing very well in the engineering program with a fairly high grade point average.

Luke. A freshman in business, Luke was 20 years old and identified his race/ethnicity as white. Luke presented as being much more mature and intelligent than his stated age. He shared his future plans as wanting to be a venture capitalist and talking with Luke during the interview at times felt like I was talking with a much older and highly successful businessman, not a 20-year-old college freshman. Luke reported that as an adolescent he became involved in internet hacking and that he was self-taught. He reported that he was making very good money as a teenager with his involvement in internet hacking but got caught after working on a virus that he said could have been used to infiltrate the U.S. military (his father was in the military). He was sent to a residential treatment program for this and shared how difficult that experience was for him. Luke described having learned many valuable lessons from his experiences and wanted to share those lessons during our interview.

John. At age 25, John was a sophomore in software engineering with a low grade point average and was struggling academically. John's reported race/ethnicity was white. John showed very little emotion on his face during the interview. He was very tall, well over six feet, but had a very soft voice and appeared to be very shy. He shared that adolescence for him was a fairly awkward stage because he was very tall back then as well but was not very athletic and did not play any sports. He shared that he was picked on, had very few friends, and felt like he just did not really fit in anywhere. This led to what he was arrested for which

was trespassing with a group of kids and ended up being put on probation. He shared that he knew it was wrong but was so excited to be asked to do something he just did not care. He described other incidents where he became associated with peers who were in to substance use and he participated in this as well in order to try and fit in. I got the impression that at the time of the interview John was still struggling to fit in and he reported that he still did not have very many close people in his life.

Peter. Peter was a 21-year-old junior in mechanical engineering with a fairly high grade point average. His reported race/ethnicity was white. Peter had a smile on his face throughout the entire interview and came across as very relaxed and care-free. He discussed how he never really felt like he fit in with the rest of his family, which included his sister and parents, who he described as being quite “conservative” and “logical.” Peter shared that during his adolescence he engaged in a lot of alcohol use, marijuana use, shoplifting, and breaking into people’s homes. He recognized early on that he was on the wrong path and realized this after he started to make changes but his friends who did not follow him with those changes ended up getting into significant trouble, much more so than what Peter reported he experienced. His future plans were to graduate and work as a mechanical engineer.

Jonah. Born in Korea, Jonah was a 21-year-old freshman with no identified major at the university. I did not see Jonah smile once during the entire interview and he appeared very sad. Jonah reported that he was raised primarily by his grandparents in Korea while his parents moved to the United States for his father’s career. Jonah then moved to the United States at the age of six to be with his parents which he described as being very “weird” for him and from his perspective likely contributed to his engagement in risky behaviors during

adolescence. Jonah talked about a language barrier between him and his parents due to his parents mostly speaking Korean and Jonah primarily speaking English. Jonah shared that he frequently ran away from his home and that he became involved with significant alcohol use, marijuana use, and painkillers/prescription drug use. He reported having depression in the past and that this was still something that he struggled with. His substance use and depression both worsened shortly after a close friend of his died. Jonah shared that he was still not sure exactly what it was he wanted to do with his life but did report that he wanted to do something in the science field.

Noah. Noah was a 20-year-old senior in psychology. He reported his race/ethnicity as Caucasian. Noah was doing quite well in school with a high grade point average and reported that he was planning to pursue graduate school, possibly a Ph.D., and also wanted to pursue his other interests that included both film and music. Noah shared that one of the primary concerns he struggled with during high school was not feeling challenged enough academically which resulted in feeling bored and led to him getting in to trouble. Noah shared that he also consumed a lot of alcohol as an adolescent, which led to getting arrested, and that he also smoked marijuana pretty regularly. Jonah talked quite a bit about the impact his parents' divorce had on him, which possibly contributed to some of the risky behaviors he engaged in during his adolescence. He shared that he was given a lot of freedom as an adolescent which enabled him to "experiment" in behaviors that had the potential of being very unhealthy and getting him in to a lot of trouble. Noah did not show very many facial expressions during the interview and seemed very serious.

Isaac. Isaac was a 25-year-old graduate student in architecture who was from India. Isaac was extremely polite and smiled throughout most of the interview. Because he was

from India and was only here in the United States for his schooling, his English at times was difficult to understand but he was fine with me asking him to repeat certain words or phrases if I did not quite understand. Isaac was able to provide some very helpful and insightful information regarding the topic of risky behaviors and the cultural differences between the United States and India. Isaac described some instances in India in which he was involved in behaviors that got him in trouble with the local police. Isaac shared that he wanted to stay here in the United States after he graduated and work in an architectural practice but that he was not sure if this was going to happen.

Adam. At 21-years-old, Adam was a sophomore in mechanical engineering who was originally from China. He came to the United States to attend the university and reported that he hoped he would be able to stay in this country after he graduated. Similar to Isaac, Adam was able to provide information regarding the cultural differences between the United States and China, especially in the areas of education and risky behaviors among adolescents. Similar to Mark, Adam was another participant who did not report having any major struggles growing up or being exposed to any significant risk factors. He was still able to provide helpful information regarding protective factors as well as having first-hand knowledge regarding the cultural differences between the two countries he had lived in. The risky behaviors he engaged in during adolescence were limited to a few altercations with some of his friends where they got into fights with other peers.

James. James was a 23-year-old sophomore in mechanical engineering whose stated race/ethnicity was white. James shared a number of risky behaviors he engaged in during adolescence including marijuana use, alcohol use, tobacco use, trespassing, and getting into fights. He shared that he had two felonies from when he was 18 years old that included

getting charged with burglary and assault on a police officer. James presented at times during the interview as feeling very angry and that he had somehow been “wronged” by the judicial system in this country. James shared that when he was younger his self-esteem was very low and that his low self-esteem as well as his involvement in “heavy” substance use was likely contributed to by his parents’ divorce. James talked quite a bit about personal responsibility and how realizing the importance of this for himself is what he felt led to him moving away from some of the risky behaviors he was engaged in.

Joseph. Joseph was a 19-year-old freshman in business whose identified race/ethnicity was Caucasian. Joseph shared that he played a lot of sports in high school and that the importance of fitting in with others on the team likely contributed to his engagement in risky behaviors. He also discussed having to move to a different school during the middle of high school and how sports, along with continuing to engage in risky behaviors, helped him fit in. Joseph was arrested for an incident that involved vandalism and that while engaging in this particular behavior he knew that it was wrong but that feeling accepted helped him justify this behavior. Joseph’s parents played an important role in helping him disengage from risky behaviors and he also talked about observing how others around him were impacted by their decisions and the consequence they had to face; consequences he did not want for himself. Joseph’s future plans included graduating from college and obtaining a job in athletics.

Risky/Delinquent Behaviors.

It might be difficult to understand why all of these participants, or anyone for that matter, would choose to engage in risky or delinquent behaviors. Although the purpose of this study was to understand how resilience from these behaviors was demonstrated, I felt

that understanding this resilience would be aided by further understanding why the 11 participants engaged in these behaviors in the first place, since not exhibiting these behaviors would have eliminated the need to display resilience. The participants also needed to fit the specific criteria of this study which included having a past history of exhibiting risky behaviors during their adolescence. To help provide a better understanding of the participants' history of engagement in risky behaviors, I asked each of them during the interviews to specify some of the risky behaviors they engaged in during their adolescence. The following, then, is a summary of just some of the risky behaviors that were exhibited by the 11 participants in this study: shoplifting, trespassing, fighting with peers, fighting with the police, assault, running away from home, violating curfew, operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol/drugs, vandalism, and substance use that consisted of tobacco use, alcohol use, marijuana use, cocaine use, and painkiller/prescription drug use.

Males vs. Females

I chose to use only males for this study because my initial experience into the field of counseling involved working in a residential treatment center for delinquent males. The relationships that I developed with those adolescents had a tremendous impact on my life and those young men are the primary reason why I chose to pursue graduate school and become a family therapist. Through my experiences working at that treatment center as well as all of the adolescents and their families with whom I have worked with over the years, I have seen first-hand the negative consequences of juvenile delinquency. Similarly, female adolescent delinquency is definitely a problem in this country and research has shown that over the years female delinquency rates have actually been and continue to be on the rise (Cauffman, 2008). Looking specifically at delinquent offenses, however, the rate of male arrests exceeds

the rate for female arrests in every category (Cauffman & MacIntosh, 2006) and boys are twice as likely as girls to exhibit behaviors that lead to their arrests (Cauffman, 2008). Risk factors for adolescents were identified earlier in this paper and Herrenkohl et al. (2000) stated that “gender itself is a risk factor for violence...males appear to be much more likely to engage in serious violence than females” (p. 177). Higher rates of serious juvenile offending are consistently self-reported by boys during late adolescence than by girls and the most serious delinquency is committed by males (Fagan, Van Horn, Hawkins, & Arthur, 2007). Bennett, Farrington, and Huesmann (2005) stated that “studies of crime rates have consistently shown proportionally higher rates of offending by males than by females, and especially higher rates of violence by males” (p. 264). Research has also shown there are many different gender related factors that contribute to the process through which males and females engage in delinquent behaviors which include age differences, early sexual development, the relationship between behavior and psychiatric diagnoses, intelligence, and the role of risky behaviors in both male and female adolescent development (Lenssen, Doreleijers, van Dijk, & Hartman, 2000). For this project I chose to focus only on males and believe every effort should be made to gain a better understanding of what leads to males engaging in risky behaviors and what should be done to help males demonstrate resilience and overcome these behaviors.

One suggestion that had been made early in this project was the possibility of interviewing the parents of the participants in this study. Although I realized after the completion of this project how beneficial this may have been and I talk about this in the future research section of Chapter 5, my interest and focus early in this project was solely on the individual and how each participant was able to demonstrate his own resilience. As

discussed in Chapter 5, interviewing the parents of juvenile delinquents could very well prove to be a very interesting and important future research project.

Ethical Considerations

Any time participants agree to be interviewed, they run the risk of exposing themselves to harm as a result of answering questions, particularly if those questions are about their lives, choices they have made, and behaviors they have exhibited. Through the informed consent process, any potential risks that were involved in this study were made known to the participants before they agreed to be interviewed. Although my role for this project was that of researcher/interviewer, I used my experiences as a therapist, as well as my awareness of my professional responsibilities to maintain the highest ethical standards. This meant maintaining the participants' confidentiality and not doing anything that might cause any mental, emotional, or physical harm. I treated the 11 participants in this study with the utmost respect and applied the same standards to the participants that I adhere to with the clients I work with in my professional practice, as outlined in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Code of Ethics. Using the informed consent document (see Appendix B) as a reference, I explained the study to the participants and allowed time for them to ask any questions about the study. Each of the participants was then given a copy of the document to keep. I did not have the participants sign the informed consent document in order to protect their identities and help ensure confidentiality.

One specific concern that I needed to address that had the potential of impacting my relationship with the participants was the fact that I interviewed participants with past involvement in risky behaviors and the concern was in regard to what my responsibility was if past illegal behaviors were reported to me, which they were. Although I did ask the

participants if they were willing to talk about some of their past risky behaviors, I decided to not ask them to go into any great detail or share any specific knowledge regarding past (or present behaviors) that might be illegal unless they decided on their own to share this information. If illegal behaviors were shared with me, however, then this information would still be considered confidential. I found the following quote to be very helpful regarding my responsibilities as a therapist which could also be applied to my role as researcher for this project:

If psychologists had to report all crimes about which they had knowledge, the idea of confidentiality would be lost and psychotherapists could end up as little more than police informants. Most courts have respected the importance of therapist-client confidentiality and restricted the responsibility resulting from the *Tarasoff* decision to serious threats of violence. Those threats must be imminent. Ethically, because of the fiduciary relationships, therapists' primary responsibility is to the client...unless there is reason to believe that breaking confidentiality might protect others in the future, there would be little reason to report the client...except to have him punished. (Kitchener, 2000, p. 89)

Although my role for this project was that of a researcher, not therapist, I still had confidential information that was shared with me and I believed that information should be handled in the same manner regardless of my specific professional role. The informed consent document that I used (see Appendix B) was based upon the outline listed from the Iowa State University website for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) regarding what information should be given to participants to help them decide whether or not they should agree to participate in a study. (No references on that site were made regarding what the

responsibilities are for researchers if and when past illegal behaviors are shared by participants with the researchers.) Approval to interview the participants for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) which addressed any concerns that might arise regarding the treatment of participants in this study (see Appendix C for the IRB approval).

Overview of Methodology

Sampling Strategy

Two types of sampling strategies were used for this study as defined by Kuzel (1992) and Patton (1990). The first was convenience sampling, which was utilized for this study in order to save time, money, and effort, and the second was criterion sampling, which consisted of all cases meeting some criterion, which was necessary for this study and will be defined more clearly in the data-gathering methods section.

Data-Gathering Methods

According to Pomrenke (2007), using a grounded theory approach means that “data should be collected and analyzed in a way that allows the basic social, psychological, and structural processes in a given phenomenon to emerge naturally” (p. 359). I accomplished this through the interviews that I conducted with a very specific sample. The participants who comprised this population were recruited from a Midwestern state university out of convenience because the university provided easy access to a large population of young adult males. The specific criteria needed in order to participate in this study included young adult males who were attending college and had exhibited risky behaviors during adolescence. The importance of education was discussed earlier in this paper and has been shown in the research to help open the doors to providing a more successful future. Participants chosen for

this study who engaged in risky behaviors during adolescence, and yet were on their way toward earning a college degree were able to provide some very important insights regarding this subject matter, specifically in regard to how they were able to overcome those behaviors and demonstrate resilience.

Participant interviews. Each interview for this project was conducted on the campus of the university, where the participants were enrolled, in a therapy room used by the Couple and Family Therapy Clinic within the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. At the start of each interview, I reviewed with each participant the informed consent document that described the purpose of this project, the procedures involved, risks, benefits, costs and compensation, participant's rights, confidentiality, and where and whom to direct all questions and/or concerns. Each participant stated that they had read and understood their informed consent and they were each given a copy of the informed consent document to keep (see Appendix B). I did not have the participants sign the consent form in order to help protect their identities and ensure confidentiality. I also assigned each participant a pseudonym as another way to protect their identities.

Participants were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E) in order to help me gain a better understanding of them (without giving away their identities), and to explore how their demographics compared to the answers they gave during the interviews. I started each interview by reminding the participants that by agreeing to participate, they identified that during adolescence they engaged in risky and behaviors and that they were willing to respond to questions regarding these past behaviors.

Interview questions. I formulated a number of interview questions that I used as a template for interviewing the participants in this study. I wanted, however, to develop a

dialogue/conversation/discussion with the participants rather than simply having a question and answer session, so these questions were simply used as a guide to be followed, and unique follow-up questions for each participant were asked in response to the answers that were provided. The following is a list of the questions I developed for my template (also provided in Appendix F) along with brief explanations for why I chose to ask those particular questions:

(1) What are some of the first memories that come to your mind when you think about your adolescence? I decided to start with a fairly broad question to help get the interview started in order to help spark their memories and help the participants start to think about this crucial time in their lives.

(2) Risk factors are identified as any factors in one's life that have the potential of contributing to or leading to delinquent or illegal behaviors. What were some possible risk factors that you may have been exposed to during adolescence? When necessary, I provided the participants with specific examples of research-based risk factors if they asked for examples (which some of them did) but only if they asked because I preferred not to have the examples from the literature influence the examples provided by the participants. The purpose here was to discuss those factors that may have influenced how they felt, how they behaved, their relationships, etc.

(3) Did you engage in any risky or delinquent behaviors as an adolescent and would you be willing to discuss what some of those behaviors were? The criteria for participating in this study included males who engaged in risky behaviors, so the purpose here was simply to make sure that the participants met the inclusion criteria. Although I did not ask the participants to go into any great detail regarding those past behaviors, I was still interested in

the types of behaviors they were engaged in and discussing those behaviors helped contribute to further insights for understanding their resilience.

(4) How much do you feel these risk factors impacted you and influenced your behaviors?

The purpose here was to determine the extent to which the risk factors impacted the participants' lives as well as their behaviors.

(5) Of all the risk factors in your life during adolescence, which one(s) had the greatest influence on you? I asked this question as a way to rate which factors may have had the greatest impact during adolescence with the hope of identifying some of the more influential (and less influential) risk factors to determine how they might have been related to their resilience, which leads to the next set of questions.

The next step in the interview was to remind the participants of the other requirement for being able to participate for this study which was that they had overcome those risk factors in their lives and demonstrated resilience. The following is the next set of questions:

(6) How were you able to overcome your exposure to risk factors during adolescence and demonstrate resilience in your life? What are other ways in which you may have

demonstrated resilience? This was a chance for the participants to identify who or what in their life impacted their ability to overcome difficulties that they faced and delinquent behaviors they exhibited during adolescence.

(7) Who in your in life had the most impact on your ability to demonstrate resilience?

(Examples such as a mentor, friend, family member, teacher, counselor, etc. will be provided if necessary)? Questions 6 and 7 were the crux of this entire study so I wanted to get as specific as possible, and question 7 was a way to help the participants be very specific in their responses regarding how they were able to demonstrate their resilience.

(8) In your opinion, what can/should current adolescents who are exposed to risk factors and possibly engaged in risky and delinquent behaviors do to overcome this and demonstrate resilience in their lives? The purpose for this question was to gain information to help future generations of adolescence as well as those who work with adolescents or are involved in their lives. Research has shown how problematic delinquency is and information obtained from this particular question can be extremely useful to help prevent these behaviors from occurring.

(9) Are there any questions you think I should have asked you that I didn't, or is there any other information you would like to share with me that you feel might be helpful for this project that you did not share with me yet? Although I thought through each of the questions I asked, I considered the participants to be the true experts of their own lives and I found that many of them shared important insights and information with me that might not have been obtained by only asking the questions I had formulated. This provided an opportunity to gather any information I may have missed or overlooked and several of the participants took advantage of this opportunity and asked me questions or provided follow-up information. The coding process, which is discussed next, led to more questions emerging that went above and beyond the interview questions that I had originally formulated. This was the exciting part of conducting this research because as more questions emerged I was provided with more information that contributed to helping me answer my research question.

Coding

A specific set of grounded theory methods were used to analyze the information gathered from the interviews with the participants. This approach included a procedure known as coding that involved a specific method for analyzing data collected from the

interviews. Coding involves defining and naming the data that have been collected with a label that categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of that data, enabling the making of analytic interpretations (Charmaz, 2006). The coding process involved the generation of codes which led to categories/sub-categories, and finally themes that helped formulate a theory. Three coding steps were used in this process that consisted of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Open coding. Several different types of initial coding can be used with a grounded theory method, but this project incorporated open coding, which consisted of comparing and contrasting concepts to form initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). More specifically, open coding for this project involved examining, line-by-line, all of the transcribed texts from the interviews. As discussed by Pomrenke (2007) I coded specific ideas that emerged from the text. An example of one of the interview transcripts with initial coding can be found in Appendix I and a list of all of the open codes can be found in Appendix J.

Axial coding. Axial coding was the next step and involved assembling the data in new ways after open coding to identify interconnectedness and relationships of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Charmaz (2006) states that “axial coding relates categories to sub-categories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data you have fractured during initial coding to give coherence to the emerging analysis” (p. 60). Conducting axial coding, according to Pomrenke (2007), “allows the researcher to begin identifying the central phenomenon from the categories and defining how this category is related to the others” (p. 363). Pomrenke (2007) discussed the importance of constant comparison and how it involves looking through all of the gathered data, making

comparisons between coded themes, looking for connections between those themes, and beginning to identify a central phenomenon or idea that ties all of the categories/sub-categories and themes together. Examples of axial coding can be found in Appendices K and L. (The coding at that point was labeled as “Risk Factors” and “Protective Factors” because that is how they are defined in the literature so initially I used those labels but decided later to define them differently as is discussed in the results section in Chapter 4.) As I developed the categories/subcategories, I was able to get much more specific with each interview rather than starting out as broad as I did with earlier interviews.

Selective coding. Selective coding involved identifying a story line that integrated the categories/subcategories in the axial coding step (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and helped in the development and formation of themes that led to an initial theoretical framework (Pandit, 1996). Selective coding was the final step I used in the coding process and it helped in the formation of a central idea and theory that was developed from this final stage, which, as identified earlier, is the primary objective of the grounded theory approach.

Marylyn Lichtman, in her text *Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide* (2006), discussed the three C's of data analysis that involve codes, categories, and concepts, and I think that it helps to further clarify the grounded theory coding process that I used for this project. The idea was that initial codes were generated to begin to help make sense of the collected data (open coding). Categories/sub-categories were then developed based upon the initial coding that helped form meaningful connections and relationships within the data (axial coding). Finally, key concepts were identified that attached meaning that were then used to generate ideas and theories (selective coding).

Memo Writing

A very important component to using a grounded theory approach is the use of memo writing throughout the coding process, and it is considered to be the pivotal step between the collection of data and writing a draft of the results (Charmaz, 2006). The following, according to Charmaz (2006), is a detailed description that describes the purpose of memo-writing:

Memos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue. Through conversing with yourself while memo-writing, new ideas and insights arise during the act of writing. Putting things down on paper makes the work concrete and manageable—and exciting. Once you have written a memo, you can use it now or store it for later retrieval. In short, memo-writing provides a space to become actively engaged in your materials, to develop ideas, and to fine-tune your subsequent data-gathering. (p. 72)

I used memo-writing throughout the data collection and coding process for this project as a tool to aid in the formation of themes and ideas that helped me to generate a theory.

Appendix H provides examples of some of the memos that I wrote and used.

Saturation

Knowing when it was time to stop collecting data was determined by whether or not the categories that were being developed from the coding processes became saturated. Charmaz (2006) states that “categories are ‘saturated’ when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (p. 113). Before conducting the interviews it was difficult for me to predict exactly how many interviews it was going to take before saturation occurred so it was

imperative that during the coding process I needed to pay close attention to the themes that were being generated and make sure that I did not stop too soon but that I was also able to recognize when new information was no longer being generated. As a starting point, my goal was to conduct approximately 10 to 12 interviews and I ended up reaching saturation with 11 interviews.

Researcher as Instrument

In an experimental design for a quantitative study, scientific scales and instruments are typically used to measure change. Lichtman (2006), however, reminds us that for a qualitative study, “the researcher plays a pivotal role in the qualitative research process” and “the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (p. 12). One of the keys that separates qualitative research from quantitative research is the extent to which the researcher is directly involved with the participants as well as the entire research process.

Charmaz (2006) discusses this concept called reflexivity and defines it in the following way:

[Reflexivity is] the researcher’s scrutiny of his or her research experience, decisions, and interpretations in ways that bring the researcher into the process and allow the reader to assess how and to what extent the researcher’s interests, positions, and assumptions influenced inquiry. (p. 188)

Charmaz (2006) states that “a reflexive stance informs how the researcher conducts his or her research, relates to the research participants, and represents them in written reports.” I was very aware of my “reflexive stance” throughout this project as is evidenced through my writing, the opinions I shared, and how the participants as well as the results from this project impacted me. As a starting point then it was extremely important for to understand what my role was as the researcher and what led me to study this particular topic.

Many years ago as an undergraduate student I was struggling to figure out what I wanted to do with my life, had changed majors several times, and was close to dropping out of school. I heard about an opening position for a youth counselor at a nearby residential treatment facility for male juvenile offenders. It sounded interesting to me so I applied and got the job. The time that I spent there was life-changing for me and I learned much more about myself through working with those adolescents than they could have ever learned from me. I always felt that I wanted to do something with my life that involved helping other people and working with those adolescents really cemented this for me. From that point on I had a much clearer understanding of what I wanted to do with my life and as a result was able to finish college and earn degrees in Psychology and Sociology. I pursued graduate work and completed my master's degree in counseling, followed by further graduate work to pursue a Ph.D. in couple and family therapy. As a result of this new direction that my life took, I have had many opportunities over the years to work with countless numbers of adolescents and their families who are struggling in life. A passion and desire has grown in me to help guide adolescents and help them find meaning, purpose, and success in their lives. I believe all of this starts with gaining a better understanding of what influences adolescents and the choices they make, particularly when it comes to examining delinquent behaviors and the risk factors that contribute to those behaviors, as well as what contributes to adolescents' abilities to overcome those risk factors and delinquent behaviors, which is the primary purpose of this study.

I currently work full-time as an individual, couple, and family therapist, working with a wide variety of people from all walks of life who bring into the therapy room a wide range of difficulties and struggles. I have seen first-hand the negative consequences that adolescent

delinquent behaviors can have, not just on the adolescent, but on their family and friends, and these behaviors can greatly impact their future. Quite often adolescents are brought in to therapy unwillingly by those closest to them in hopes that their behaviors will change. Although each and every adolescent is unique, as are the behaviors they are exhibiting, the overall goal is always the same, which is to help adolescents change their behavior and be more successful both at home and school. I discussed reflexivity earlier and understanding who I am and the kind of work I do is extremely important as my own biases greatly impacted the entire coding process of this study. It is important to remember that the primary instrument used in this project was me, the researcher, and many factors in life have influenced who I am, have contributed to my own development and understanding of the world, and impacted both the research and the results for this project.

Theory from Grounded Theory

The purpose of a grounded theory method is to develop a theory that is grounded in the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). One concern with using a grounded theory approach, however, is that it is not always clear where the theory comes from, and Charmaz (2006) even asks the question “Where’s the theory in grounded theory?” (p. 133). Evidently this is a question that is asked by many researchers in the field. She points out that many authors who claim allegiance to a grounded theory approach give varying views as to what the theory really is. Some of them claim it is an empirical generalization, a category, a predisposition, an explication of a process, a relationship between variables, an explanation, an abstract understanding, and/or a description (Charmaz, 2006). For the purpose of this project, the theory I developed was based upon and grounded in the data that I collected.

In grounded theory qualitative analysis, there are many different ideas regarding what a theory is and how it should be developed and used. Charmaz (2006) identified several of these views including positivist, interpretive, constructivist, and objectivist definitions and approaches to theory. What I like about the grounded theory method is that it is a qualitative approach to gathering data but incorporates many quantitative ideas, especially from a positivist perspective. Charmaz (2006) states the following regarding taking a more positivist perspective in qualitative research and what it was that led to qualitative research moving more toward quantification:

Every way of knowing rests on a theory of how people develop knowledge. Beliefs in a unitary method of systematic observations, replicable experiments, operational definitions of concepts, logically deduced hypotheses, and confirmed evidence—often taken as *the* scientific method—formed the assumptions upholding quantitative methods. (p. 4)

Charmaz (2006, p. 126) stated that the objectives of theory from a positivist perspective are “explanation and prediction” and that “positivist theory seeks causes, favors deterministic explanations, and emphasizes generality and universality.” The hope for this project was that the theory, as Glaser (2001) points out, could be theoretically coded in many different ways and that it would help to resolve a main concern or problem that has been identified.

One of the primary concerns I had, however, with taking a more positivist approach to the grounded theory method was the idea of “deterministic explanations” as stated by Charmaz (2006, p. 126) who also pointed out that the positivist approach “can result in narrow, reductionist explanations with simplistic models of action.” Based upon the research

I studied as well as feedback from other professionals in the field, it is my understanding that the constructivist approach to grounded theory is much more in line with where grounded theory is going in the field of qualitative research. Charmaz (2006, p. 130) states that “a constructivist approach places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants.” Even though I like aspects of the positivist approach, I felt that a more constructivist approach matched well with the idea of reflexivity that was discussed earlier regarding the role that the researcher plays in the research process. For this study then, that meant developing a theory that provided a greater understanding as to how young adult males who exhibited delinquent behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience from those risk factors and overcome delinquency. Taking a constructivist stance meant understanding how the participants in this study constructed meanings and actions related to their own personal experiences with juvenile delinquency and resilience from those behaviors.

Visual Model

Creating a visual map, model, diagram, figure, or chart is considered by many grounded theorists to be an intrinsic part of grounded theory methods and can provide concrete images of ideas as well as help to further identify, construct, and analyze relationships found within the data (Charmaz, 2006). For this project, I created a visual model of my findings from the data that helped provide a graphical representation for my results and the theory I developed that can be found in Appendix M. This model is further discussed in Chapter 4 of this study.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

Trustworthiness and rigor are about maintaining standards of high quality in regard to performing qualitative research, and are considered to be a “systemized, ordered, and visible approach to research methods” (Davies & Dodd, 2002, p. 280). Trustworthiness “encompasses detachment, objectivity, replication, reliability, validity, exactitude, measurability, containment, standardization, and rule...[and] is the authoritative evaluation of good research and the unspoken standard by which all research is measured” (Davies & Dodd, 2002, p. 280). There are a number of concepts that can help to address issues related to trustworthiness and provide criteria for evaluating qualitative research. Lichtman (2006) addresses four common criteria that in the past typically have been used as a standard for evaluating qualitative research. Those four include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility (or internal validity) is the extent to which the researcher is measuring what is intended to be measured, transferability (or generalizability/external validity) is how well the results can be transferred to other settings, dependability (or reliability) addresses the responsibility the researcher has for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how those changes affected the researcher’s approach to the study, and confirmability (or objectivity) is the degree to which the results can be corroborated or confirmed by others (Lichtman, 2006). Another key concept that is typically used with qualitative research is the idea of triangulation, which in some aspects is very similar to both credibility and confirmability, and refers to the idea that multiple sources can bring more credibility to an investigation (Lichtman, 2006).

I addressed trustworthiness and rigor in several ways. I used grounded theory and followed the methods for conducting a grounded theory qualitative study that included open,

axial, and selective coding, as well as memo writing. The specific grounded theory method that I incorporated into this study helped address the concept of credibility and providing rich descriptions of the findings, which I was able to accomplish as a result of the coding process, helped with transferability. In order to help document the emergent process that typically occurs in qualitative research and address the concept of dependability, I documented all aspects of this project including ideas that emerged from the research, the entire coding process from the grounded theory method, memos, notes, themes and categories and how I arrived at them, as well as the decision-making process that occurred along the way.

As I developed my themes and started making some conclusions, I used member checks with the participants as a verification process to gain feedback regarding themes and conclusions, and this was one way that I addressed the concept of confirmability. Member checking generally involves going back to the participants who were interviewed and sharing with them ideas generated from the data to gain feedback from them as well as to simply verify the accuracy of the data that was collected (Charmaz, 2006). I performed member checks by contacting the participants using email after they had been interviewed during the coding process as I began to form ideas and identified possible themes. This information was presented to the participants through e-mail to gain feedback from them regarding my impressions of the information they provided during the interviews. To help balance my own biases, and to address the concepts of both confirmability and triangulation, I had select members of my dissertation committee, my major professor, and others outside of my committee help me evaluate and review the themes I generated as well as any conclusions/theories that resulted from those themes.

Because I used grounded theory for this study, I felt that it was important to take the concept of trustworthiness and rigor one step further in terms of specific criteria that can be used, not just with a qualitative project, but criteria that are unique to one that incorporates a grounded theory method, such as the one used for this project. It was also brought to my attention that the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability that are typically associated with qualitative research have started to become dated. Charmaz (2006) discusses four criteria specific to grounded theory that are more contemporary in the field of qualitative research and include credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness.

Credibility

Credibility includes ideas such as whether or not the data are sufficient to merit the claims being made, the importance of systematic comparisons being made between observations and categories, and whether or not enough evidence has been provided to allow the reader to form an independent assessment and agree with the claims being made by the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). As discussed earlier, the grounded theory method that I used, including the entire coding process, is what helped the themes, conclusions, and theory that was developed to be more credible.

Originality

Originality asks whether or not the categories are fresh and offer new insights, addresses the importance of providing a new conceptual rendering of the data, the importance of the social and theoretical significance of the study, and whether or not the grounded theory challenges, extends, or refines current ideas, concepts, and practices (Charmaz, 2006). In Chapter 5, I provide evidence for how this study adds to and helps to fill a gap in the current literature, reasons that I believe help to address this concept of originality.

Resonance

Resonance is about making sure the categories portray the fullness of the studied experience, whether or not links can be drawn between larger collectivities or institutions and individual lives, and to what extent the grounded theory makes sense to others who might share the experiences of the participants in the study as well as offering deeper insights about their lives (Charmaz, 2006). In the literature review for this study, I showed how much impact juvenile delinquency has not only on the juvenile and those who are close to him/her, but the extent to which all of society is impacted by delinquent behaviors. The participants in this study spoke about their own personal experiences with adolescent delinquency and the themes and categories developed from their shared experiences matched up well and helped reinforce research that has already been conducted in this area. This study addresses real experiences from participants who are continuing to live their lives and making decisions that impact our world and because of this, the information they provided for this study has the potential for resonating with a wide variety of individuals and institutions.

Usefulness

Usefulness addresses the importance of making sure the analysis from the study offers interpretations that people can use in their everyday worlds, whether or not the analytic categories suggest any generic processes or spark further research in other substantive areas, and in general, how the project or study helps contribute to knowledge and to making a better world (Charmaz, 2006). Everything about this study was intended to provide real-world usefulness by addressing a specific problem and working toward gaining greater insight and understanding regarding the process of that problem and how that problem was addressed. The 11 participants in this study shared their unique experiences related to demonstrating

resilience from delinquent behaviors and the hope was that the experiences of these individuals could be used for the greater good to better our society.

Risky Behaviors, Not Delinquent Behaviors

One final note that I felt I needed to be transparent about before sharing the results for this study was a change that occurred in this project from my original focus. At the beginning of this study, I wanted to focus primarily on juvenile delinquency and in much of the information for this project, including the consent form, the research questions, the email that went out to the students, etc. I used the term delinquency. I also spent time in the literature review providing information about juvenile delinquency. Although at times this word might be interchangeable in the literature with risky behaviors, the reality is that delinquent behaviors are typically defined as those behaviors that involve getting arrested and being found guilty in a court of law, as was discussed above. Risky behaviors, however, are certainly problematic but are not necessarily as severe as those behaviors that might be labeled delinquent. Even though I specified in the original email I sent out to the participants that I was seeking individuals who had been found guilty of committing a crime in a court of law during their adolescence, many of the participants did not quite meet this criteria. I do not know if they misread the email or were simply uncertain as to whether or not the behaviors they engaged in would be considered delinquent. Although a few of the participants did meet these criteria, the majority engaged in risky behaviors that might not have been behaviors that would more typically be labeled delinquent. For this reason, I made the decision to change the focus of this study from delinquent behaviors to risky behaviors to more accurately reflect the data I collected.

The next chapter is a documentation of the results from the grounded theory method I used in the analysis of the collected data from the participants that helped me to generate a theory from my own perspective and analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to help further our understanding as to how young adult males who exhibited risky behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience from those behaviors and overcome their delinquency. A grounded theory approach was used that consisted of interviewing a select group of participants who met criteria for this study and then critically analyzing the data obtained from one-on-one interviews with those participants. Themes were then developed, along with a visual model of those themes and findings, and finally a theory was produced in order to help answer the following research question for this project: “What is the process by which young adult male college students who engaged in risky behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience?”

Although many different questions were asked during the interviews , most of the information provided by the participants appeared to fall into one of two primary categories from the research that were previously discussed earlier as risk and protective factors. Numerous risk factors have been identified in the research that has the potential for leading to risky and delinquent behaviors being exhibited during adolescence. To counter those risk factors, research has also identified numerous protective factors during adolescence, which are those factors that can help contribute to resilience. Rather than taking the information from the participants and simply placing it in one of these two categories, however, I wanted to talk about the participants’ own experiences in a much more personal way and try to find meanings and connections that were unique to the participants in this study. Some of the previously discussed research was used to help form and understand some of these categories/themes, like Wille et al. (2008) who was quoted earlier as identifying sub-

categories that are specific to the individual adolescent, the family, and the environment. The rest of the categories/themes developed, however, were based entirely on the information provided by the participants and used to help answer the research question for this project.

Understanding the process through which these participants engaged in risky behaviors and then what it was that helped them find the motivation to move away from those behaviors meant using what I knew about risk and protective factors from the research and personalizing it for the participants in this study. The way I accomplished this was by exploring two ideas that were very important to help answer the research question. The first was in regard to “Why we engaged in risky behaviors” which involved understanding what it was that may have led these 11 participants to engage in risky behaviors during adolescence, understanding their personal experiences, people in their lives, and various other factors that influenced their behaviors. The second involved “How we demonstrated resilience” which consisted of the participants describing what it was they learned about themselves, their experiences, and people around them that helped them to demonstrate their resilience from their engagement in risky behaviors. The grounded theory coding process I used to answer these two questions was described in Chapter 3 and in the next section I revisit those steps to help explain the attained results.

The Coding Process

Looking specifically at the coding process described in Chapter 3, I went through several steps which led me to the themes and theory made for this study. After I completed each interview, I transcribed the audio from that interview. It had been suggested by some that the laborious process of transcribing would have gone much faster if I had someone other than myself conduct the transcribing. While going through this process there were

certainly moments when I would have agreed with this. Conducting my own transcribing, however, enabled me stay much more connected with the participants, since transcribing meant spending a considerable amount of time with the participants own words which I believe helped with the development of the codes, categories/sub-categories, and themes.

Appendix I is an example of a partial transcript from Matthew, one of the 11 participants in this study. My initial transcripts were typed all the way across the page. After completing this, however, I edited the margins to allow extra space along the right side of each transcribed page. This gave me room to identify codes as I went back through and read the transcripts. This was the beginning of the open coding step. Looking at Appendix I, some of the sentences are underlined and certain key words are in bold. This is where the idea of reflexivity becomes important since it is very likely that if someone else read through these transcripts they might underline and highlight different words and sentences compared to what stood out for me. It was important for me to keep going back to my research question and look for ideas and key words from the text that I felt might help me to answer my research question. In the very first sentence from Matthew in Appendix I, I underlined the part where he said he was “an outcast from right from the beginning” and in the margin I coded that as an “outcast” he probably felt different from everyone else. To me this sounded like a possible risk factor based upon the research I had conducted so it was potentially a category or theme I could use to help understand why Matthew may have engaged in risky behaviors and what he learned that may have helped him demonstrate his resilience.

In the second page of Appendix I there is another example of a partial transcript from another participant, Jonah. In the second paragraph of that transcript, I underlined a sentence where he stated he “was always like separated, kind of, cause my parents and my sister are

pretty close, I never really stuck with them.” He spoke earlier about being raised by his grandparents and not really having any kind of a relationship with his parents when he was young. Similar to Matthew’s experiences, I identified codes from this based upon the research I had done for this project. Several other examples for both Matthew and Jonah are provided in Appendix I and this was the same process I used for each of the 11 participants’ transcripts in this study. Appendix J provides open codes from all of the participants. During this step I simply took all of the codes that were written down in the space along the right hand side of the transcripts and listed them all in one place.

Once I was able to see all of the codes together, I wanted to start to look for potential categories/sub-categories. Patterns involved looking for the same words being used by different participants or similar codes from each of the transcripts. Looking at the first five codes in Appendix J, the similarities already become apparent. Each of the first five examples (felt different from everyone else, school was an escape, bullied and mistreated by other kids, name calling, and behavioral problems) are codes that came from several different participants yet it would be easy to assume these all came from the same person. From the research, these would all be possible risk factors that could contribute to risky behaviors and thus provide a pattern that helps to connect each of these participants with one another. They most likely did not know each other and all of them came from differing backgrounds, places, and experiences, yet they all seemed to share the same story regarding what may have contributed to their engagement in risky behaviors and their resilience from those behaviors.

Appendix K shows the next step of the coding process in which categories/subcategories were developed from the codes. I began this process by merging all of the codes together and then began to look for possible categories. The two main categories

that I found included risk factors and protective factors, which are both extensively described in the literature. I used my knowledge from the literature to be able to identify those codes as being either risk factors or protective factors. Appendices L and M provide examples of some of the codes separated into the two main categories of risk and protective factors.

Reading through the codes and categories, it became very easy to see many similarities among the participants and it was at this stage that I also began to pick up on a general pattern that I felt was very important. The key pattern that emerged throughout all of the interviews, especially in regard to understanding why the participants engaged in risky behaviors had to do with their emotions and what happened as a result of those emotions. (Reflexivity came in to play again here because as a family therapist, I spend a great deal of time helping clients identify, express, understand, and accept their emotions, so it is possible that my own biases and experiences with people's emotions cued me in on this theme more so than what someone else may have identified.)

Appendix N shows the axial coding step in which sub-categories were developed from categories, followed by the selective coding step in which themes were developed from the categories/sub-categories. During the selective coding step I began to create a story line based upon all of the participants' experiences and attempted to give each of them their unique voice while at the same time connecting each of their stories together. I used this key pattern of participants' identifying emotions and certain factors that were impacted by those emotions to further understand what it was that may have led the participants in this study to engage in risky behaviors as well as demonstrate their resilience. The themes helped me create my visual model in Appendix P that led to my theory in Appendix Q that is grounded in the data.

Why We Engaged in Risky Behaviors

The 11 participants described situations during their adolescence in which they identified a feeling, talked about what may have contributed to that feeling, and then described the behaviors they engaged in which were likely impacted by that particular feeling. As this conversational pattern emerged, I began to notice just how important emotions really were to the participants (at least based upon my reaction to what they were saying) especially during their adolescence, including what influenced their emotions and how powerful emotions are in regard to the behaviors that can result from feeling a certain way. I felt that the best way then to describe the experiences of the participants in this study was to use the very same format that they used in describing their adolescence to help understand why it was that they engaged in risky behaviors during adolescence. The following sentence, which I created, emerged as a result of the coding process and represented the way the participants talked about their engagement in risky behaviors: “The interaction between various factors in my life (F) and the different emotions I felt (E) contributed to my engagement in risky behaviors during adolescence.” Looking at this sentence, (F) represents factors that impacted the participants’ lives during their adolescence, and (E) represents emotions identified by the participants that they felt during their adolescence. It is this interaction between factors (F) and emotions (E) that helped provide a better understanding regarding reasons that likely contributed to the participants’ engagement in risky behaviors during their adolescence.

Factors (F)

Factors (F) are one of the two sub-categories that I developed from the category of risk factors and are shown in Appendix N. They consist of what the participants in this study

identified as factors that interacted with and were impacted by many of the emotions (E) they were feeling during their adolescent years. Although I have separated out each of these factors, it is important to understand that there is overlap with all of them, meaning that many of the participants in this study were impacted by many different factors at the same time and some experienced certain factors more so than others. Those factors consisted of family stressors, interactions with peers, and school difficulties.

Family Stressors

Each of the 11 participants in this study talked about their family and the influence their family had on both their behaviors and their emotions during their adolescence. Various factors within the family were identified by these participants, most of which had to do with their relationship with their parents. Just a few of those consisted of the following: alcoholic parents, severe punishment by their parents, having a poor relationship with their parents, not feeling connected to their parents, experiencing neglect and abuse from their parents, not feeling understood by their parents, having overly-controlling parents, parents who gave them too much freedom, parents whose involvement was limited, violence between family members, divorce between parents, and siblings who were engaged in negative activities.

Looking at all of these factors, three sub-themes emerged from within the family that appeared to be consistent with each of the participants in regard to either their own experiences or their personal opinions regarding the ways in which the family can contribute to how an adolescent feels along with their engagement in delinquent behaviors. Those themes included family relationships, parenting styles, and changes within the family structure.

Family relationships. Matthew, who experienced both abuse and neglect as an adolescent, talked about the impact these experiences had on his life.

Nobody should have gone through that [what he went through], nobody. It's a terrible burden to take on. It's something that marks you, not physically, but mentally marks you. Therefore you act different for the rest of your life. There's no way to change it, the only way to do it is to cope with it, to try to cope with it and embrace it and use it to your advantage.

Matthew was talking about the extent to which he was mistreated by his own family and the impact the severely strained family relationships had on his life growing up. While discussing these past stressors, Matthew was very emotional when discussing these past stressors, sharing with me that the emotions he was feeling were still very strong, indicating that even though these events happened years ago, he was still presently impacted by what he had gone through.

Not every adolescent experiences abuse or neglect like Matthew did, but all of the participants in this study talked about the impact their family had on them. Luke described an important time in his life where he began to behave in ways that resulted in him getting into a lot of trouble and that he attributed part of this to his relationship with his mother, stating that "my mom and I started growing further and further apart" meaning that at one time they were close but when their relationship became more strained this impacted him in a way that likely contributed to his engagement in risky behaviors. He was able to see a clear correlation between the increasing distance between his mother and him, and the risky behaviors that he started to involve himself with. Peter shared that he felt like his parents did not understand him and that he had very strained relationships with his parents and sister when he was

younger and that like Luke, this greatly impacted the behaviors that he exhibited as an adolescent. James shared similar feelings stating that his parents “never got it” meaning that he felt like they never truly understood him.

Jonah was born in Korea but was raised by his grandparents due to his parents moving back to the United States for career purposes. He discussed how not having any kind of a relationship at all with his parents growing up greatly impacted his development and the behaviors he engaged in as an adolescent.

It was weird meeting my parents for the first time [coming here to the U.S.] like that. I was always like separated, kind of, because my parents and my sister are pretty close, I never really stuck with them.

Jonah used to run away frequently when he first moved in with his parents because he never felt a close connection with them. He was just not happy living in their home and being expected to follow their rules.

Noah talked about how the relationships he had with both of his older siblings greatly impacted him. He stated that “they were 2 and 4 years older than me and would drink and party and things like that so I guess the way I was really introduced was probably through them” and “my brother and sister had a big influence on me for that type of lifestyle in high school.” James described a very strained relationship he had with his parents and because of this relationship felt that “it’s almost as if they were trying to keep me down so I had farther to go but it didn’t work out like that.” James felt that his parents were not there for him and that for whatever reason he felt that they did not support decisions he was making. James shared that he never really felt like his parents understood him and said “...I don’t know why my parents, they never got it...” meaning that the he felt they never really understood what

kind of a relationship James needed from them. By not getting his needs met from the relationship with his parents, James turned elsewhere, primarily toward his friends where he “started using drugs pretty heavily.” He talked about how it was possible that he might not have started using drugs had the relationship with his parents been healthier.

Parenting styles. Research indicates there are parenting styles that are healthier than others in terms of having a positive impact on child development. Luke talked specifically about what it was like growing up in what he described as an overly controlling atmosphere and how his parents’ past experiences, particularly his mother’s, likely contributed to that atmosphere.

It was a terrible experience for her [his mother] she had a terrible high school, terrible college life, lots of drugs, lots of sex, lots of everything because of that environment. Then she married my dad, a clean military guy, so she decided we weren’t going to have any part of that. We grew up in a very controlled bubble. No one I’ve ever met actually grew up in a bubble like we did. We weren’t allowed to read Harry Potter because it might invoke certain thoughts and ideas. She controlled who our friends were, what we read, what we watched, what we listened to. It was very very structured. My parents had to approve every one of our friends. Everything we did she [mom] analyzed. It was my way [using the internet, hacking, etc.] of breaking out of the bubble...My mom and I started growing further and further apart.

Feeling distant from his mother, Luke felt the need to break away from feeling “smothered” by the overly-controlling parenting he was experiencing and he shared that this “most definitely” contributed to his engagement in risky behaviors.

On the opposite end of the spectrum of Luke's experience was Noah, who admitted that he was one of those adolescents who was probably given a lot more freedom than what he should have had, and he talked about this freedom and the impact it likely had on his engagement in some of his risky behaviors.

I never felt that they [his parents] didn't love me or anything like that but my father was kind of away not living with us and out of the picture and my mom, I guess she just, maybe a mid life crisis or maybe she just trusted us a lot or had faith in us, maybe didn't know about things or didn't want to know, so I guess all of those things, not having the parental, not having my parents watching over us and watching our every move definitely contributed to us being able to experiment and do kind of what we wanted... .

Matthew shared that he experienced some extreme forms of parenting styles from not getting his needs met to being overly punished.

...most of the time I just ate cereal practically three times a day, that was because my mother was an alcoholic as well as she smoked, therefore she was quite neglectful and because of her neglect I was one of those children that was always a little bit curious, always got into things, and in doing so I got punished a lot, sometimes I would be spanked when I was real little.

Matthew attributed many of the struggles he experienced growing up with the unhealthy parenting styles that were used on him.

Changes within the family structure. John was one of several participants in this study who experienced divorce between his parents and he described the impact this change within his family had on him during his adolescent years.

My sister and I, we were older. My youngest brother, he probably could have used the father figure more. We still went to see him every couple of weeks but it was kind of a formalized thing, it wasn't like we were just hanging out, it was like every two weeks we were with him for the weekend. That kind of made it a little weird because it wasn't like we were seeing him cause we wanted to it was because this is how it is, kind of like going to church, that's how it is, there wasn't any say on whether you want to or don't want to go. So, being a kid in that respect is a little sad cause even if they do have a strong mind, it's not that I didn't want to go see my dad on the weekends it's the fact that it's only the scheduled times.

One comment made by Matthew described just how much impact changes within the family structure can have on adolescents when he stated that "our family was very very broken apart. I would have depression and wish to die." He was talking specifically about all of the different changes that occurred within his family, such as his parents getting divorced, having to move around a lot, getting placed in foster care and living with many different families, going to different schools, and being separated from his siblings. Matthew shared that as a result of all these changes, he viewed his family as being "broken" and this contributed to some of the suicidal thoughts that he struggled with at times during his adolescent years. Since Jonah was raised by his grandparents in Korea, once he eventually moved to be with his parents in the United States he talked about how much of a struggle it was for him to go through this transition. He stated that when he first started to live with his parents he would run away frequently. Due to the language barrier (his parents primarily speak Korean and know very little English while he reported that he used to know some Korean but has lost most of it so he primarily speaks English) he never really felt a close

connection to them and was never fully able to adjust to living with them and building a relationship with them. Noah reported that it was “pretty upsetting” for him when he was an adolescent and found out that his parents were getting a divorce. He talked about how he knew that they both still loved him but he felt that the changes within the family that resulted from the divorce potentially contributed to some of the risky behaviors he engaged in during adolescence.

It was pretty clear to me that it was just between the two of them, just couldn't get along, other than the fact they had to sell the house because [they were] living apart... so that kind of, I guess maybe that ended a chapter in my life with the whole big house, big hill, lots of toys, all that type of thing, and then I was just kind of abruptly shifted into almost like a single mom kind of lifestyle...

This abrupt shift represented a change in the family structure and was a difficult transition for Noah during that time in his life.

Interactions with Peers

Wanting and needing to fit in with their fellow peers was described by these participants as being extremely important during their adolescence and they discussed a number of different risk factors experienced as a result of their interactions with peers who likely contributed to their engagement in risky behaviors. Those interactions included the need to be accepted by their peers, getting picked on and bullied, not having a lot of friends, not fitting in or feeling popular, and feeling peer pressure to engage in negative behaviors, which was identified earlier as a result of feeling different. John described one incident where he acted out in a way that was uncharacteristic of him but was a result of ongoing bullying that never let up.

...some kid was calling me a name in recess, so after weeks and weeks of getting this harassment from this student I just clocked him in the teeth with one punch and chipped his front tooth. He ended up changing schools a year later. It was embarrassing for him, I felt bad because it turned out he had to pay to get his tooth fixed. I didn't even know it was chipped until a day later, I just wasn't even thinking about it, just this built up rage.

Matthew admitted that he was frequently bullied throughout his childhood and adolescence which led to feelings of anger and risky behaviors. Mark said the following about some of the peers in his life:

There were a few periods of time in my life where I was influenced by some real negative factors that kind of affected my behaviors a lot...and I would be different today if those issues wouldn't have been addressed.

The "issues" that Mark was talking about consisted of some of the pressures from other peers at school who were attempting to convince Mark to engage in risky behaviors that he did not want to engage in, behaviors such as alcohol and drug use. Those issues were mitigated by some of the protective factors in his life that countered the peer pressures at school such as having a positive relationship with his parents and using his religious beliefs for guidance. John was bullied growing up and in describing several of the incidents he was involved with, he pointed out how much influence peers had on getting him to engage in risky activities. "It wasn't my idea and I wasn't part of that group...I didn't have too many friends at that time so I was just excited somebody invited me somewhere."

The running theme among all of the participants for this study in regard to peers in their lives was that the majority of the risky behaviors they engaged in as adolescents were

done while they were with friends or peers. They were influenced by experiences with peers that involved engaging in risky behaviors that they would not have otherwise engaged in had they not given in to the pressures of the group.

School Difficulties

Although most of the interactions with peers occurred at school, this particular category was identified in order to address the academic influences on adolescence, which in this case were identified by some of the participants in this study as feeling bored in school, not motivated, or not feeling challenged academically. What I learned from the participants in this study was that some of them were getting poor grades because they were so bored and felt so unchallenged academically that they just didn't try. For Peter, this changed once he got further along in his schooling.

I think when I got in to high school, [the curriculum] got a little bit more challenging and that helped a lot. Especially the, I really like the science courses in high school and that's kind of why I went into engineering but 8th grade was, school, the classes were so easy to me that I would just get bored and try to entertain myself.

Participants also reported that many of the other difficulties they were struggling with in life made it very difficult for them to focus in school and feel motivated to do well academically. This led to them experiencing difficulties with their academics and contributed to their involvement in other behaviors that got them into trouble. Jonah felt that high school for him was much harder than junior high and this contributed to the struggles he had with motivation. When asked about his general attitude toward school, he replied "I just think that I just never had that motivation to do well in school. If I had, like, was motivated, I probably would've put more time into it." Noah, whose academic experiences were similar to Peter's,

said “I wasn’t maybe stimulated enough in high school so I would just find humor in things and I’d be able to think kind of past what other people were thinking and maybe get myself into trouble that way.” Adam, who was from China, spoke extensively about the differences between the educational system in China and what he had experienced so far in the United States. Adam felt that in China much more emphasis is placed on doing well academically than here in the United States so students are under much more pressure to succeed. Adam said that his experience attending school in the United States was much more positive for him compared to the pressure he felt to succeed academically in China. He talked about how, it is very difficult to find a “good job” in China without an education, so there is added pressure to go to school and be successful in earning a degree. He felt that in the United States there are more opportunities to be successful that do not necessarily include getting a formal education, resulting in less stress and anxiety compared to what is felt in China.

...in China they [those who don’t go to college] find a job like wash the plate in restaurant...so if you can’t go to college you will have big trouble to find a job in China. I have to study although I don’t want to but I have to.

Joseph engaged in risky behaviors but shared that he probably did not participate in behaviors that were as severe as others primarily because of how much his parents stressed that he do well academically.

Emotions (E)

A wide variety of emotions were reported by the participants in this study regarding personal struggles they encountered during adolescence. Some of those emotions appeared to be directly connected to the risky behaviors they engaged in whereas others were much more indirect and simply described general feelings they had when they were younger that likely

contributed in one way or another to their behaviors. I was able to identify emotions (that were shared by the participants in the interviews) during the coding process.

After examining all of these emotions, I discovered some consistency related to how each of the participants felt and was able to identify five different emotions they reported feeling during their adolescent years. These five emotions can be found in Appendix N, which shows how they developed as the second sub-category for the risk factors category. Those emotions included boredom, uncertainty, anxiety, anger, and loneliness. I found that in general it is not always easy to separate and categorize emotions with nice examples for each one but for the purposes of this project it seemed beneficial to try to talk about some of the unique ways that these participants experienced their emotions during their adolescence. Similar to the factors that were discussed previously, it is important again to understand that there is overlap between all of these sub-categories.

Feeling Bored

One of the initial themes that came up with these participants was a feeling of boredom that appeared to be present during their adolescence. Although none of the participants could explain exactly why it was they felt this way, they all discussed the need they had to keep themselves busy and engaged in various activities, regardless of whether these activities were healthy, harmful, or illegal. As long as they were doing something, that's all that really mattered, and it was that feeling that for many of these participants contributed to their engagement in risky behaviors. John's opinion was that "it seems like for a lot of people they need an outlet, something to do." He discussed how part of his boredom was helped by his own curiosity and he shared that "I was surprised I didn't get into more trouble for getting in to situations just out of curiosity." Unfortunately, that curiosity and that

need for an outlet for many adolescents can result in delinquency. Why not, then, engage in healthier and less risky activities? For many of these participants, they talked about the need for excitement, to push the boundaries and see what they could get away with. Luke, who got involved in computer and internet hacking, talked about feeling bored and the power and excitement he felt by engaging in this particular activity, even though he admitted that he knew it was wrong at the time.

It was just that realization that, hey, I'm a little kid, but holy cow, look at the impact I'm having, whether it's good or bad, it's that moment where you can actually all of a sudden see impact...where people are getting upset and recognizing that one person can have a serious impact and that was exciting, especially at that age.

Peter described some of the behaviors he engaged in during his adolescence and how the risky behaviors he engaged in were "fun" and gave him "a pretty good rush." When Jonah was asked about why he was hanging out with kids who were not motivated, were skipping school, and engaging in risky behaviors, he simply responded by stating "it was fun." Joseph, when talking about some of the behaviors he engaged in, stated that "I kind of thought it was fun, kind of a stress reliever." Peter talked during the interview about how engaging in some of the behaviors helped with his boredom.

Our friends, we would skateboard up to the gas station and nab some candy and some sodas and walk out. That was kind of a fun thing to do I guess, so that was when I was like 13 or 14. And then I started drinking sometime around freshman year high school. That was illegal at that age. Started getting pretty regular by sophomore year, kind of once we could drive, almost, then we could kind of get away more. Definitely by junior year that's just kind of what everyone did on the weekends. In terms of drug

use, [I used] some marijuana here and there, but nothing any harder than that. We liked to, when we were in high school, probably around sophomore year, started doing garage-hopping...drive around and look for open garages and then we'd go in and if they had a fridge nab some beer. We wouldn't grab like tools or anything like that, it was more just like being 16, and you can't really buy beer, and it was fun too, I mean, it was a pretty good rush.

Not every adolescent has the same struggle with boredom but for some, including the participants in this study, it seemed that boredom was seen as a negative emotion, and engaging in fun and exciting activities helped with that feeling, as was the case with Peter.

Feeling Uncertain

Isaac talked about the “teenage struggle” and the importance of “finding your own identity” which for these participants meant engaging in behaviors that helped them learn more about who they were. Peter reinforced this idea regarding the need to discover who he was as an adolescent.

I think I was trying to figure out kind of who I was and, my parents were both, I mean they're both accountants, they're both very logical, analytical people, and my sister is too, I mean she was an electrical engineer here [at the university he was attending]. I think I was trying to figure out like was I this creative spontaneous person, was I, you know, like my parents, and I don't think my parents, I think a lot of it, they wanted me to just be a lot like my sister, I felt kind of like they were saying, her friends never came over and cursed at us, or whatever, so I felt like there was a little bit of pressure there.

The experiences of the participants in this study seem to indicate that their identities growing up were greatly impacted by those around them as well as the connections (or lack of connections) with important people in their lives. Matthew, who was part of the foster care system growing up, demonstrated this by sharing how detached he felt from his family and that a big part of the uncertainty he felt about himself was influenced by this system. He gave a touching account of what it felt like for him to be a part of the foster care system and his thoughts regarding why many foster kids struggle and/or engage in delinquent behaviors.

[Foster children] who can walk through a crowd and nobody will even take a look at them. Nobody will know that they're there. So they think they can get away with stuff, that's why a lot of the people in the juvenile court system were at one time in foster care. Because they essentially lost all that was caring so their heart goes hard.

Feeling Anxious

Adolescence can be a very stressful time for many young people and some of the participants in this study described their adolescence as a time in their lives that consisted of a lot of anxiety due to instability in their lives. They described various changes that went on around them that likely contributed to the stress and worry they were feeling on the inside and some of the risky behaviors they were engaging in on the outside. Matthew described feeling anxious from “moving around a lot” while others mentioned all kinds of changes that contributed to feeling this anxiety in their lives such as parents getting divorced, changing schools, and trying to live up to expectations placed on them. Some of the stress contributed to feelings of depression, which for several of the participants came as the result of divorce or even the death of a family member, friend, or loved one, like Jonah, who said that “after my close friend died I actually went to inpatient treatment for depression.” James talked

about the stress and anxiety he felt from changes within his own family and the attempts he made to help himself feel less anxious and bring more stability to his life.

I guess, it was kind of a hard time, my parents got divorced when I was about 13, 14 maybe, so when that girl [someone who was interested in him] kind of, she like, I don't know, it was like a sense of stability with that girl, she started liking me and it was a strange matchup, she was the first girl to ever really show an interest in me, so it was, I was like, you know, it's cool, like, nobody ever really was interested in me before, so, you know, I kind of snagged on to that...cause, you know, naturally it's like stability, you're grasping for stability...

Feeling Angry

The participants in this study also identified feeling angry during their adolescence and it was this anger that for many of them led to acting out with aggression. They talked about feeling the need to rebel against their parents when they didn't agree with their parents and how important it was for them, whether it was healthy or not, to be able to express this disagreement, and demonstrate their own independence. Some of the anger that Luke felt contributed to some of his feelings of selfishness and not paying much attention to how other people in his life who were close to him were feeling. He stated that "all I cared about was what was right here and I couldn't see the situation from another perspective." Peter shared that as an adolescent he was "pretty angry at that age, people would try to tell me to do something and I would just react angrily." Matthew said the following about his anger:

...because I did have behavioral problems, they knew I had to be in some treatment center, so progressively I went from one, then went back home for a little bit, would do something to anger my grandparents, had me taken away. I had lots and lots of

anger during that time, very very angry, just not happy with myself, my mom, very very angry...

Some of the participants, like Matthew, discussed how they probably didn't always know how to verbalize some of their anger in a healthy manner, so similar to feeling stressed, they experienced many confrontations with others as well as engaging in risky behaviors as a way to help them manage the anger they were feeling.

Feeling Lonely

Another emotion that greatly impacted some of the participants in this study during their adolescence was the loneliness they felt from feeling that they were unpopular or different from everyone else. It was very apparent from the interviews that one of the most important aspects of being a teenager, at least according to these participants, is the desire to fit in and not stand out or be different from everyone else. Many of the participants discussed feeling unpopular, awkward, and unsure of themselves, which contributed to sadness and loneliness. One of the first things that Matthew said in our interview in describing his adolescence was that he "was always an outcast from right from the beginning...the kid that nobody talked to, that nobody dealt with." Many of them described having a low self-esteem and that this contributed to feeling shy, lonely, and sad. Luke said "I basically got to the point where I realized that I had all these goals and dreams. I really started saying, look, everyone thinks I'm this terrible screw up, this failure, and I know that's not me, and this is the amount of work I have to do to repair it." Luke saw himself as a failure and realized that feeling that way about himself was not going to get him what he wanted out of life.

The participants in this study talked about the desire to fit in and not feel so lonely, and how pressure from other peers led to engagement in risky behaviors that they might not

have normally participated in but did so anyway to help them feel less different. John, when describing one of the events he engaged in, said “I didn’t have too many friends at the time so I was just excited somebody invited me somewhere.” He talked about how for him it was actually better to do something, whether it was illegal or not, than to do nothing at all and feel that he was not part of the group, which would only reinforce just how different he already felt at the time. John acknowledged that “I don’t really know what it’s like to be the popular elementary student or the popular junior/high school student.” He further described how he felt as an adolescent the following way:

I was the kind of person where I only had one or two friends at one time, I was just really shy. I was extremely tall, awkward, I was terrible at basketball. I don’t really know what it’s like to be the popular elementary student or the popular junior/high school student. I always had my own small group, if any, of friends. Most of the time they chose me, if someone wanted to be friends with me I would be like, OK.

Based upon the information shared by these participants and the need to not feel different, it seems that the need to fit in and feel part of the group is a very powerful force that can potentially lead to the engagement in risky behaviors. Understanding how the participants demonstrated resilience from those behaviors is examined next.

How Resilience Was Demonstrated

The purpose of this study was to better understand resilience and how the participants in this study exhibited resilience from their engagement in risky behaviors during adolescence. I have described this resilience here as being aided by understanding what the participants learned that may have helped them to have a healthier future. The path the participants for this study were on while exhibiting delinquent behaviors was one that would

likely have led to a very unhealthy, unproductive, and unhappy future. This was evidenced earlier by research shared in this paper regarding the effects that continuing to engage in risky behaviors can have on an adolescent's life. What the participants in this study learned was aided by a number of factors which are very similar to the protective factors that are discussed in the research literature and also were described earlier in this paper as being those factors that can help contribute to resilience from delinquent behaviors during adolescence.

Understanding why the participants in this study may have engaged in delinquent behaviors was conceptualized earlier based upon how the participants talked about these experiences during the interviews. I felt this was the most effective way to accurately describe their experiences and I chose to do the same here to help understand what it was the participants learned that may have helped with their resilience. In similar fashion to help understand why the participants engaged in risky behaviors, I also created the following sentence which emerged from the coding process to help understand what the participants learned that may have contributed to their resilience from adolescent delinquency: "I learned X which helped me to demonstrate resilience."

Several areas were identified by the participants that provided learning opportunities for them to move away from their engagement in risky behaviors and demonstrate resilience. Appendix M provides examples of protective factors that were codes from the transcripts of the participant interviews. Appendix N shows that resilience became the sub-category from the category of protective factors. This developed from what I have learned from the literature which is that protective factors can help with resilience from risky behaviors. Seven sub-categories for resilience emerged from the coding process and I identified them as taking

personal responsibility, connecting with parents/family, having friends/peers, doing well in school, importance of culture, guidance through religion/spirituality, and maintaining positive supports. In Appendix N, I provide examples of both transcripts and codes that helped in the development of these sub-categories. It is also important to continue to understand the overlap with all of these sub-categories and that even though I have separated them and categorized each of them, they all greatly impact each other.

Taking Personal Responsibility

One of the most consistent themes that became apparent from the interviews with all of the participants in this study was the realization that each of them had to take personal responsibility for their choices if they truly wanted to change. During the interviews, this concept of personal responsibility came up time and time again regarding how important it is to take responsibility for one's own actions in order to be able to overcome difficulties in life. James, as well as others, talked about personal choice and that all adolescents have the ability to take whatever path they want and the importance of not blaming anyone else for decisions that were made that resulted in going down a particular path in life.

...it's a learning experience, I mean, if you're going to go down the wrong path, this is kind of what my dad told me too, like, regardless if you're going to make your own choices, if you're going to be given the ability to choose, and if you choose the path that, you know, there's two paths, you got like the real fun, exciting, that looks like everything, it looks like, you know, fun in the sun, that old, I don't know how to explain it, you have two choices, you can join the crowd that's like laughing about nothing, absolutely nothing, smoking weed, like, probably induced laughs by the weed, or whatever, or you can like you can be in the books, you can continually push

yourself forward and it's going to take work to do that, so, I guess the path of least resistance...is the path where a lot of students get in trouble, and, you know, if you look at it from a different perspective, you could call it the path with the most resistance...

Along with recognizing the power to choose, some of the other ideas the participants talked about included perseverance, improving self-esteem, setting goals and having future-oriented thinking, learning from personal mistakes as well as the mistakes of others, making use of willpower, recognizing and using intelligence to make healthy choices, and finding personal motivation from within.

Perseverance. Matthew talked about all of the struggles he faced and how most of the time he was “just trying to get through life” and that he accomplished this because he felt that “some reason inside me somewhere is this very strong will to survive.” He wasn't able to specify exactly what this was, only that it came from within and that he took personal responsibility for the direction his life was going, mostly out of necessity once he realized he could not trust those around him to take care of his needs. When Luke was sent to a rehabilitation facility for computer hacking, he described his experience there as being extremely difficult. He knew he wanted more out of life, however, indicating that he “had all these goals and dreams” that he was not ready to give up on yet and focusing on his aspirations is what kept him going.

Not blaming others. Mark talked about the importance of taking personal responsibility for one's own choices and not blaming anyone else.

...people today, they've got every excuse in the book because if they don't have my family, they don't have my school, if all their friends, they feel they didn't have a

choice of friends and so they got sucked right in this they do have every excuse but at the end of the day they did make the choice and so it takes a lot of strength for them to be able to say, OK, I messed up and they get to the point that they see it's harmful and say I messed up, what more can I do to get better and that takes a lot of humility. So that attitude and being able to develop that habit when you mess up is going to go a long ways toward helping you overcome those things and so I wouldn't be very wise if I was saying I'm never going to do those things because I'm not, but going down the road of life with that plan I think that if whenever you run into bumps in the road and you understand that you've messed up and can move on I think that's a very important approach.

Learning from mistakes. Learning from one's own mistakes as well as the mistakes of others was an important concept identified by the participants that helped with personal responsibility and several of them discussed what they learned from the experiences of watching friends or family members like Noah and the struggles his sister went through.

I think for me at least and I think for him too [his brother] we were able to see that and see how bad that was for her, definitely that influenced me a lot, to see all the stuff that she had to go through and all the legal proceedings and court dates and probation and this and that and being suspended from sports at school and just kind of the stigma that was created around her and people would kind of look at her, hear about her and kind of think she was maybe a bad kid, that definitely influenced me to, if not just nip those behaviors, definitely keep them under wraps and hide them and not let them become the biggest part of me.

Joseph had similar experiences and said that for him he “just kind of saw what other kids were doing and how their choices would affect their future and [I] just didn’t want to be like that at all” and he went on to give the following advice regarding personal responsibility and learning from others’ choices:

I’d just have to like show them [adolescents engaged in delinquent behaviors] examples of where your life could be if you chose that path, I mean, and then it would just kind of be like a wake-up call for them that they got to straighten their act up.

Luke started to look at his own life, how he saw himself as well as how he felt others saw him.

I basically got to the point where I realized that I had all these goals and dreams. I really started saying, look, everyone thinks I’m this terrible screw up, this failure, and I know that’s not me, and this is the amount of work I have to do to repair it.

Self-esteem. Luke probably said it best that in terms of taking personally responsibility for one’s actions it is extremely important to improve self-esteem which can help provide more confidence to make healthier choices. He reinforced how this can also be beneficial to others by stating that “the more you work on yourself, the more you are able to go and help other people and really make a difference.” Matthew talked about the importance of being around people who “don’t judge” and allow you to “be confident” and be yourself. Pursuing interests can help improve self-esteem. Peter pointed out that “finding something you’re interested in that you can kind of channel your passion into” is what helped him to feel less anger toward himself and others and helped him feel more confident. Other people can help with this as well, as pointed out by Noah who shared that he had an uncle who “just really let me know how proud he and everyone else was and how many life opportunities I

could have if I just kept learning.” Noah began to receive more positive feedback like this from his uncle, something he had never really experienced before from his parents, and this helped him feel better about himself. James noted that “what it really comes down to is self-esteem” meaning that “there are many things in life that can make life difficult and you can blame what is happening to you on those situations but that ultimately it is about how you feel about yourself.”. Joseph shared that his parents helped him improve his self-esteem when he was struggling by “pushing me to just reach my potential.”

Personal choice. The general theme in regard to personal responsibility for the participants in this study seemed to be the idea that life is about making choices. They talked about all of the different factors in one’s life that can impact those choices but that ultimately it is up to the individual to take personal responsibility for the choices they make. Noah summed it up in the following way:

I think it’s just important to realize that new things will always be enticing; the unknown will either scare you to death or just make you really really curious or maybe both at the same time. Some things you just have to experience no matter what people tell you, it’s just important to know that experience and time changes everything and what seems really important to you right now could be just totally off the radar in a year or a month and it’s important to think about your future, if you value living your life past your adolescence and you think there is a future ahead and you want a future and you want a long life you have to kind of live that way and live for the future and not just be in your moment. Things seem really fun and really important; it takes strength, you just have to look past that and those things are always going to be there, it’s not like they’re here now for you and if you don’t partake

they're gone, they're always there for you if you choose to have them, it's just important to keep an open mind and look at all your options before you kind of narrow yourself in these behaviors and these choices cause there's so many different routes you can take with life and there's so many different choices that you can make, it's pretty stupid to just choose certain behaviors or certain choices just because they're new or because they're something that you're doing right now. You just have to realize that there's choices in life, choice is life. You can choose to do whatever you want.

Matthew shared that when he was at his worst and was struggling with suicidal thoughts, "the only person that got me out of it was me." He made the decision himself to not end his life; this was a personal choice and he reported that he is thankful every day for making that choice.

Connecting with Parents/Family

Of all the factors that were discussed by the participants in this study, the family, and more importantly parents, was by far talked about the most in terms of helping them demonstrate resilience from their engagement in risky behaviors. Just a few of those consisted of having healthy family supports, accountability for their actions, parents who were interested and involved in their lives, healthy family values that were taught to them, close relationships with each member of the family particularly with their parents, and clear rules and expectations within the home provided by the parents. Matthew stated that "what's very essential to any child's development is to be attached to somebody, to have essentially a connection to somebody, a connection that is deep, an all-consuming connection." All of the participants in this study talked about the connections in their lives during their adolescence

and how the deepest connections that had the most positive impact on them were with either their parents or close members of their family. I categorized the themes that were discussed by the participants into the two sub-themes of parental involvement and family relationships.

Parental involvement. All eleven participants in this study talked about their parents as well as members of their family and the impact these individuals had on their ability to demonstrate resilience. Mark stated “I got to give a lot of credit to my parents” regarding how it was that he was able to keep himself from continuing to engage in risky behaviors. He talked about how some might describe his parents style of parenting as “sheltering” and this did contribute to some of the negative behaviors he was engaged in but it also helped him stay focused on doing well and making good choices. When asked who the number one support in his life was, John identified his mother as having the most impact on him in a positive way by supporting him, even during difficult times, and feeling that she never gave up on him. When asked who or what it was that had the most impact on his life, Adam stated “parents, of course, my family is the most important thing.” Mark stated that “I think the number one source of support for someone like that [a juvenile delinquent] starts with the family” and he specifically talked about how his parents should have been the primary ones who should provide this support. Jonah stated that even though he felt he didn’t really have any kind of a close relationship with his parents “they were still a big help getting me into school.” He acknowledged that “it matters a lot about parents [because] they guide their kids.”

Family relationships. Along with the involvement of their parents, the participants in this study talked about various members of both their immediate and extended family who helped them through difficult times, provided them with the support they needed, helped

them feel important and loved, and greatly contributed to them feeling better about themselves which aided in their resilience from risky behaviors. Luke described some of his more positive experiences that helped him when he was younger.

Tons of memories with my brothers and sisters, I was home-schooled up until high school. I have three younger siblings and my mother is an exchange student coordinator so every year we would have at least one or two exchange students from other countries. That was probably the best thing that ever happened to me growing up.

Matthew, unfortunately, did not have as many positive experiences as some of the other participants and described many of the “ups and downs” and struggles with his own family. To help with this, he talked about the important role his grandparents (and others) played in his life who helped meet various needs that he had that no one else was providing.

My grandparents were the main factor [in helping him demonstrate resilience]. My grandparents took all my crap that I dealt out and stood by my side. They’ve always stood by my side and they’re staying by my side, supporting me and any decision I take. My brother was a big part in keeping me kind; he was the father figure for early on in my life. Later came a few other men throughout the treatment centers that acted like father figures...The other major father figure was my grandfather. I’m crying because I don’t know exactly how ever to thank them, cause I know the pain I have caused them. My grandpa had an accident while I was in [a treatment facility] and that was the scariest point in my life ever since childhood cause I don’t know what I would do if either my grandma or my grandpa passed away.

Having Friends/Peers

Factors identified in regard to friends/peers were simply the importance of having positive friends in life as well as the importance of distancing oneself from peers who are a negative influence. This could also simply mean setting boundaries with friends so that they could still hang out with them but not engage in behaviors at an extreme level, meaning a level that has the potential of leading toward more negative consequences. Several of the participants in this study found that after continually getting into trouble with one particular peer group or group of friends they recognized that if they wanted to stop getting into trouble they had to find new friends and for some this was identified as one of the most important decisions they made that helped them with their resilience. Mark identified how friends for many adolescents can be all they have to hold on to when everything else in their life isn't going well, and if that's all you have then the friends you choose are likely going to influence your decision-making more than anything or anyone else.

...if you don't have all these guards around you to protect you from things like that, it really is choosing the right friends. And it's tough, I really don't know what would really, for people who haven't grown up like that [with good supports, family, friends], why would they not do drugs, if everyone else is? And if it gives you that buzz or that high then why wouldn't you do it?

Peter talked a lot about the changes he made with friends and peers and how he could still have friends but remain true to himself. He described this by talking about the ways that some of his interactions with his friends changed.

And I think alcohol almost played a role in that too. Like, they'd be like, "Let's go get messed up on this stuff" and I'd just be like, "Just going to have a few beers" and I

still had a good time. And it was cheaper, it was, I don't know, didn't feel like I was kicking my liver to the curb. And I guess part of that was probably social acceptance too, you know, I was still cool, I wasn't like "I don't do drugs cause those are bad" I was just there sipping on a beer. Yeah, at that age for sure [the importance of social acceptance]. And I think kind of one of the other things that later on in high school it was almost like I wanted to show that I can be pretty intelligent but still have a pretty good time.

Peter also talked about what it was like for him after he made changes with which peers he would associate with and how observing what those previous friends continued to behave helped reinforce to him the importance of making healthy choices and questioning behaviors that might be harmful.

I could tell when I entered high school I would look at some of the people I used to be friends with and they'd be messed up or high in class and just sitting there, and I could just tell...advice would just be looking at the people you're hanging out with and kind of make a, kind of see through their persona and just see what they're doing, and if that makes any sense, like, "Why are you popping pills in school, that's just dumb."

Doing Well in School

Since academics play such an important part of an adolescent's life, school can be used as a way to help contribute to resilience from risky behaviors. The participants in this study identified school factors such as getting involved in school programs and activities, recognizing the importance of performing well academically and focusing your energy toward this, and making positive connections with teachers.

Academics and extracurricular activities. Like many of the participants, as evidenced by their graduating from high school and their current enrollment in college, Jonah had a turning point in his life where he finally recognized the importance of using education to help him be more successful in life.

I think I maybe just realized that if I went with where everyone else went I would always be doing the same things I did in high school. I realized that you gotta, I don't know, do well in school if you're gonna do something in the future.

Along with making changes to his peer group and the friends he was involved with, Peter also pursued other interests and as a result of those interests found new friends.

...I got involved with band and debate and, I really liked debate, that was a lot of fun, and I kind of saw from that like, hung out with a lot of the older kids in the debate squad, I mean we'd travel and go to tournaments and stuff and you kind of saw that, here's these guys that are obviously real smart, they're doing real well in debate and school, they still have a good time, so I guess I kind of looked to them a little bit more.

Positive connections with teachers. Several of the participants talked about teachers who had positive impacts on them during their adolescent years. Peter talked about how important this was for him and the impact it had on his life. Peter had described earlier the difficulties he had connecting with his parents and not really knowing who he was. He was able to get this need met by connecting with some of his teachers.

Definitely some teachers, as weird as that sounds, cause I, I really, and I still probably have a pretty strong dislike of authority, but there were some teachers I had, 8th grade especially, I was just kind of a little wild child but I had a history teacher in 8th grade,

and he was kind of an ex-hippie, and, I mean he would bring his guitar to class and sing songs about history, he was just really laid back, I would do stuff to get a rise out of him, and he would just kind of sit there and just be like “You’re making a fool of yourself” but he’d do it in a way that didn’t piss me off and I just would kind of be like “Yeah, I guess I am” and I guess he was also just really “So, you’re anti-authority, let’s look at some historical examples, and tell me what you think of these from your perspective” so he kind of channeled it a little bit more. He was a really good guy. I mean that kind of helped, I think, just having someone that was obviously an authority over me but I really respected them. And then there was guided education, the gifted kids program, and the teacher for that in middle school was really cool, she kind of got me.

Importance of Culture

A few of the participants in this study listed other countries besides the United States as where they were originally from. This provided an excellent opportunity to discuss some of their culture and the impact this may have had on their resilience. Isaac, from India, talked about his culture, which in many ways is quite different from what many experience here in the United States. Despite these differences, however, the importance of the family was still reinforced, as evidenced by the use of what Isaac described as a spiritual guru.

...those people, spiritual gurus, they have the rule that you have to go back to your family, you have to love them, you have to, so they have those things to get them attached to their family again.

He went on to talk about how much his culture stresses the importance of family and the impact having a family can have on your decision-making so that you are no longer just

thinking about your own needs but recognizing how your decisions impact others. This in turn greatly impacts the kinds of decisions made, leading to less delinquency and healthy and more productive choices in life.

...getting married and making a family, getting the responsibility, so if you don't have the responsibility coming on your head, then you might not think again "it's my life I can spoil it" but if this life has some care for others like others have some demand for you, you have to do something for that, then you have something, like in India, every person has a responsibility to other family, it could be the younger brother, sister, or parents, grandparents, you have to build your own house for the parents, you have a lot of things to do...the other thing, the background of this is people stay in the family after they are married, they are not separated from the family, either they stay inside or stay away but totally connected, so it's not a separate family concept yet, everywhere, but it's starting, but not just everywhere. And that is one thing that helps...joint family.

Adam, from China, also described the kind of culture he grew up in and all of the many differences between that culture and here in the United States. Like Isaac, however, he also talked about the importance of the family, especially his parents, when it came to his own resilience.

Yeah, my parents often teach me to behave well from when I was a child, when I was a little child, my parents need me to behave myself very well and even now my parents also teach me how to do something or not to do something and when I stay in United States my parents told me that I should study hard and never use the drugs...

Despite the different cultures represented in this study, the same themes appeared to be present across participants, primarily in regard to the importance of family and the impact ones family can have on behaviors.

Guidance through Religion/Spirituality

Mark talked about becoming a Christian and when asked what it was that helped him to be able to make healthier decisions in life he said “that would be my faith, no doubt.” He talked about how he learned these values and beliefs from his parents and that even though there were times when he struggled and admitted to engaging in behaviors that he should not have been engaging in, it was his religious beliefs that helped him find the strength to move away from those behaviors and make healthier choices. Initially he held these beliefs because it was what his parents taught him but over time he talked about how he started to believe what he did on his own and found value in continuing to go to church and read the *Bible*. Mark shared that one of the primary sources for his Christian guidance came from school.

I went to a small Christian school, I went to a Bible college for two years, and it was bigger. It’s not like people didn’t drink, I mean there were people that did that kind of thing in school and so it was around but it was a lot easier to pick the right friends cause I think that’s really what it comes down to—who you hang out with is who you are going to be.

Another example of religion/spirituality came from Isaac, who was from India. He talked about the importance of a spiritual guru in his country who he said is “used to help those who are struggling.” He said that parents will take their children to a guru when their children are not making healthy choices. He shared that he never needed to go see a spiritual

guru but he talked about a distant relative who was struggling with alcohol and the immediate family members took this individual to the guru for help.

Matthew talked about some of the important connections he made after joining a club called Real Life Ministries which he said was a Christian organization. Describing those connections, Matthew said “all of them I am close to, I can be myself, they don’t judge.” For him, along with the relationships that he formed from that club, the morals and values that were taught through that particular religious organization helped guide him, helped him feel better about himself, and helped him make healthier choices in life.

Maintaining Positive Supports

Several of the participants in this study identified individuals in their lives who had a positive impact on them who were not necessarily friends, peers, teachers, or close family members. Some of the participants described these individuals as “mentors” and talked about how important they were in their lives. In most cases it seemed that the participants in this study were introduced to these meaningful and important individuals by either seeking them out themselves or were led to them by other friends or family members who wanted to help but weren’t sure how to help them themselves. Matthew talked about people in his life with whom he developed a close bond, people who helped fill the need that was not being fulfilled by friends and family.

I got close to a lot of people, who those people I trust very much. All of them I am close to, I can be confident, I can talk to them, I can just hang out, be myself, they don’t judge. It took me five years to get them [connections with other people in his life] and I’m still trying to hold on to them.

Noah had someone in his life who he felt was very important, someone he could connect with and definitely had a positive impact on his life and helped him turn his life around.

I looked at him [his uncle] as like kind of this really smart, successful, really knowledgeable guy and at the same time so funny, and I just loved being around him, he would just make me laugh, and he just seemed kind of like everything I wanted to be, just a full person who was well established and has a good grasp on life and knows how to flourish in life I guess. I'm not sure [how that relationship developed], maybe he saw a little of himself in me growing up, I'm just not sure about that. He had a good relationship with my dad, and, I don't know, I think it was just mostly he noticed that I was intelligent and doing well in academics and that probably got him excited.

Luke also talked about a specific individual who had a great impact on his life and he described how thankful he was that this person was there for him.

This was someone my dad had met and thought he might be a good person for me to know. He had figured out that I had been having some problems. His own son had had his own problems. I considered him [dad's friend who was in the Army] my best friend because back when everything fell through I reached out and the only person I could grab for was him.

When asked what his best advice might be in regard to helping adolescents overcome their engagement in risky behaviors and demonstrate resilience, Luke used his own experience by giving the following advice:

This biggest thing I would say is, and it not only helped me back then but helped me since is to have mentors. Having someone there who doesn't judge you no matter what you say and would just be there for you and help you get through things.

This quote from Luke demonstrates and reinforces the importance of relationships and how much impact people can have on each other and according to the participants in this study this is especially true during adolescence. Having a positive support system, whether it is peers, friends, family, parents, teachers, mentors, etc. is extremely important and can contribute toward being able to move away from risky behaviors and demonstrate resilience from those behaviors.

Visual Model of Findings

I discussed earlier in Chapter 3 how creating a visual map, model, diagram, figure, or chart is considered by many grounded theorists to be an intrinsic part of grounded theory methods and can provide concrete images of ideas as well as help to further identify, construct, and analyze relationships found within the data (Charmaz, 2006). For this project, I created a visual model of my findings from the data in order to help provide a graphical representation for my results and the theory I developed. The visual model that I created can be found in Appendix P and was used to help form a theory that is grounded in the data from this study.

In the visual model, the first two boxes represent the interaction that occurs between factors and emotions as described by the participants in this study. It is this interaction that I briefly described earlier as the Interactive Risky Behavior Process because it was how the participants in this studied described what it was that contributed to their involvement in risky behaviors. As a result of this interaction, looking at the model then leads to the larger

box, as indicated by the arrow, which describes what it was that the participants learned that helped them to demonstrate resilience from their engagement in risky behaviors.

Theory from Grounded Theory

Looking at the visual model in Appendix P, it is apparent, at least from the participants in this study, that each of them engaged in a particular process that contributed to their resilience from risky behaviors during their adolescent years. I originally viewed this as more of a linear process, which is similar to what is represented in the research and was discussed earlier in this paper. The linear process involved looking at risky behaviors in terms of risk and protective factors, with risk factors leading to risky behaviors and protective factors leading to resilience from risky behaviors. What seems to be more accurate for the participants in this study, however, is the interaction that occurred for them between various factors in their lives and the emotions they felt during adolescence. As a result of this interaction, very specific themes emerged that helped to explain how resilience was demonstrated by these participants from risky behaviors.

Looking specifically at my research question for this project, which was, “What is the process by which young adult male college students who engaged in risky behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience?” I used a constructivist approach to grounded theory to help me answer my research question. Using this approach helped me create the visual model for this study and it was that very model that was then used to generate a theory. As discussed earlier, the constructivist approach for this project was about understanding how the participants constructed meanings and actions from their own experiences. The following is the theory (which is also found in Appendix Q) that I

developed that is grounded in the data provided by the participants in this study and can be used to help answer the research question:

An interaction occurs between various factors and emotions during adolescence that I call the Interactive Risky Behavior Process. Factors can include family stressors (strained family relationships, unhealthy and extreme parenting styles, and difficult changes within the family structure), interactions with peers (getting picked on or bullied, having few friends, and pressure to engage in negative behaviors), and school difficulties (not being challenged enough academically and not getting needed help). Emotions can include feeling bored, uncertain, anxious, angry, and lonely. The interaction between factors and emotions can contribute to engagement in risky behaviors during adolescence. Resilience from those behaviors comes from what is learned about the interaction between factors and emotions which contributes toward taking personal responsibility for one's own actions, connecting with parents/family, having positive friends/peers, doing well in school, recognizing the importance of one's culture, guidance through religion/spirituality, and maintaining positive supports.

As a part of the ongoing member-checking process, I shared this theory with the participants and the feedback I received (although limited, which is discussed in Chapter 5) indicated that the participants felt that this theory was an accurate representation of how they felt, what they learned, and the meanings and actions they constructed that helped them move their lives in a more positive direction.

One key distinction that I feel is important to note here is to understand that there are different ways that juveniles can demonstrate resilience and that one does not necessarily

need to engage in risky behaviors in order to demonstrate resilience. As discussed earlier, the research talks about resilience in terms of overcoming risk factors that might lead to engaging in risky behaviors. The theory that I developed was based solely on the data gathered from the participants in this study who shared that they had engaged in risky behaviors during adolescence. Although the resilience they exhibited was partly attributed to the interaction of both factors and emotions, my interest for this study was their resilience from their engagement in risky behaviors and my theory is an attempt to help explain this resilience, as demonstrated by these participants. It is very likely that there are many other mechanisms that can lead to resilience and future studies could help us to identify and further understand those processes.

From Risky Behaviors to Resilience

Once the entire coding process was complete, including the development of categories, sub-categories, and themes, and finally a visual model and theory developed that was grounded in the data, I felt it was necessary to give further voice to three participants as examples and share their stories from exhibiting risky behaviors toward demonstrating resilience. The reader can follow through all of the steps in the coding process that are shown in the appendices as well as see how the visual model is relevant to each of the examples.

Matthew experienced many changes within his family growing up. He was neglected as a child and had an alcoholic parent. At school he was bullied and felt like an outcast. He felt anxious and very stressed from all of the changes within his family and felt a lot of anger because of how he was being treated at school. The interaction between these factors and emotions likely contributed to him engaging in risky behaviors such as getting into a lot of fights and using drugs. The visual model in Appendix P shows this interaction between

factors for Matthew (family stressors and school difficulties) and emotions (anxiety and anger). Matthew persevered, however, and despite these difficulties he realized from positive interactions with healthier supports that life could be so much better. He felt what it was like to be able to trust people, to get positive reinforcement, and noticed his self-confidence begin to improve. His grandparents were the healthiest supports in his life by being there for him when his parents were not available. With their help, as well as help from other positive supports, religious guidance, and his own personal strength to succeed, Matthew was able to demonstrate resilience from the risky behaviors he was engaged in. Looking again at the visual model in Appendix P, this is represented in the box on the right which shows resilience from risky behaviors. He finished high school and began his college career with hopes of graduating from college and pursuing a career.

Growing up, Peter felt very disconnected from his parents and did not have a very healthy relationship with them. What made things even worse was that his older sister had a very positive relationship with his parents so at times he felt like he was being compared to his sister and was questioned why he could not be more like her. Feeling confused and uncertain about who he was during his adolescence, Peter began to associate with other peers who in many ways were feeling the same way he felt. They were “anti-authority” and full of a lot of anger. Looking at the visual model in Appendix P, the interaction between factors for Peter (not feeling connected with his parents and not feeling challenged at school) and emotions (boredom and feeling uncertain about life) contributed to him and his friends engaging in risky behaviors such as burglary and substance use. As school became more challenging for him, Peter began to find interests in certain subjects like science and also connected with a teacher in high school who seemed to understand Peter in a way that

nobody else had before. He became more involved in extracurricular activities which helped. He also distanced himself from the friends he engaged in the risky behaviors with after seeing their lives get worse and worse. Each of these factors helped contribute to Peter's resilience from risky behaviors. Like Matthew, Peter was able to finish high because of his resilience and at the time of this interview was maintaining a very high grade point average in mechanical engineering at the university he was attending.

James had fairly low self-esteem when he was young which became even lower after his parents divorced when he was about 13 years old. He was very angry at this time and felt all alone. The divorce contributed to him feeling a lack of stability in his life and it became difficult for him to find more stability in his life, especially since he did not feel like he had very many friends. Looking at the visual model in Appendix P, the interaction between factors (parents' divorce was a family stressor) and emotions (feelings of anger and loneliness) contributed to James' risky behaviors such use of marijuana, cigarettes, and alcohol during his early teenage years and during his later teenage years was charged with burglary and assault on a police officer. James received felony charges for the risky behaviors he was involved in and it was at this point that he realized that his life was going in a direction he no longer wanted it to go. He realized the importance of going to school and began to take personal responsibility for his actions. James used words like "willpower" and "motivation" to describe how he changed his life around and also felt that having a girlfriend helped because that experience led to him seeing himself in a more positive way. These decisions helped him demonstrate resilience from his risky behaviors.

Each of the above examples demonstrates this entire process of what can lead to adolescents engaging in risky behaviors and what can also contribute toward their resilience

from those behaviors. Even though each participant was unique and shared their own personal stories in the interviews, there was a consistent pattern among each of their stories and the coding process I used for this study is what helped to reveal this pattern. This contributed toward the final theory that was grounded in the story lines from each of the participants' lives.

Other Findings

It is important to note that not all of the information shared by the participants fit into the categories and themes that I developed, and thus were not incorporated into the final theory from this study. Other findings emerged from the data that were interesting and noteworthy but there was not enough data to support separate categories for these findings.

During my member checking stage, Isaac stated "one more factor can be the economic background of the family that sometimes influences the juvenile decisions of choosing a wrong path." I felt that this was a very important point to make and one that I did not account for with the participants in this study. Economic status, specifically poverty, has been identified as a potential risk factor for juvenile delinquency (Pagani, Boulerice, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 1999) but future research could further investigate the extent to which one's economic background can impact resilience from delinquent behaviors.

As identified earlier, there is a great deal of emphasis in the literature placed on education and there seems to be this assumption that finishing high school and attending college is going to automatically improve one's life. I certainly agree with how important and beneficial education can be, but this may not be true for everyone. Something that I did not discuss in this study, mainly because it was not the primary focus, was the current status of the participants, meaning how well they were functioning at the time of the interviews.

Although I did not specifically ask for this information, the impression I got from a few of the participants was that in many ways they were still struggling. Part of this came from my own experiences working as a therapist and picking up on subtleties in the interviews that made me feel as if they were still experiencing difficulties. A few of them identified having very low grade point averages but I did not gather any information regarding why they may have been struggling academically. A couple of the participants shared some pretty strong emotions during the interviews such as sadness and anger. My impression was that the difficulties they had in the past were still impacting them. All of the participants felt that for the most part they had demonstrated resilience from adolescent delinquent behaviors but some of the factors in their lives that contributed to their engagement in those behaviors were still present and negatively impacting them. I do not think it would be accurate to say that the research is misleading regarding how beneficial school can be, but public opinion seems to lean toward education being the solution to many problems and what might be overlooked is how many of the problems that teenagers struggle with can stay with them throughout college. I further discuss this concept in the future research section in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this study was to help further our understanding of how young adult males who engaged in risky behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience from those behaviors. This purpose came out of my own early experiences working with the juvenile delinquency population and recognizing the need to not just further our understanding of risky and delinquent behaviors but to continue to seek out new ways to help adolescents move away from those behaviors. The research is very clear regarding how much of a negative impact risky and delinquent behaviors have on society and the importance of doing whatever we can to help adolescents make healthier choices. Although the literature tends to explain risky behaviors in more linear terms that consist of risk and protective factors, my goal was to describe these behaviors as more of an interactive process and to understand this process from the unique perspectives of the participants in this study. I used a qualitative approach known as grounded theory to analyze the data obtained from interviews with the participants as well as a constructivist perspective to help form a theory that was grounded in the data. A model was also created to help give a visual representation of the results that helped form the developed theory. All of the grounded theory steps that I used for this project were extremely important to help present all of this information in a way that holds true to the standards of qualitative research from a grounded theory approach to accurately represent and give voice to the participants in this study.

As a way to help further understand the relevance of the results for this study, I discussed the results by comparing and contrasting what I learned from the participants in

this study with what I discussed in Chapter 2, the Literature Review. I decided to cover three areas that include how the findings added to the literature, supported the literature, and challenged the literature.

What This Study Added to the Literature

From the research that I conducted, I was unable to find literature that specifically looked at, from a qualitative perspective, the process through which young adult male college students who engaged in risky behaviors during their adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience from those behaviors. Because of this apparent gap in the research, this is one of the most significant ways that this study adds to the current literature, and looking specifically at ways that we can add to the current research that is already out there is what helps to further our understanding and find solutions to the world's problems.

Studies have been conducted that look at risky behaviors and resilience, but a great many of them involve adolescent participants who were exhibiting risky behaviors at the time of the study. Pomrenke (2007), using grounded theory, "identified factors that contributed to children's ability to utilize their resilient attributes" (p. 356). This particular study was the one I found that was closest to my study in both the topic and the theory/structure used for gathering and analyzing the data. Similar to other research that is available, however, the population of Pomrenke's participants involved adolescents (specifically 9-12 year olds in her study) who came from what were described as high-conflict families. Ginsburg et al. (2002) conducted focus groups with inner-city youth which revealed many significant insights as to what they felt would be most influential in helping adolescents demonstrate resilience. Similar to the study by Pomrenke (2007), however, it was the adolescents who were interviewed. Gathering information from adolescents is extremely

important and should continue, yet we should always be looking for new and meaningful ways to gather information.

It is imperative that we do whatever we can to help those adolescents who are struggling and it certainly makes sense to conduct research that involves gathering information directly from those adolescents. My argument, however, and the reason I conducted this study, is that if those adolescents understood why they were exhibiting those behaviors and had a clear understanding as to the consequences of those behaviors, it is possible that they would not be exhibiting those behaviors in the first place. It has been said that “hindsight is 20/20” meaning that, similar to having perfect 20/20 vision, we can all look back on our lives and clearly see the mistakes we made and what we learned from those mistakes. I believe the benefit and uniqueness of this study was to give voice from the perspective of young adults who had a past history of engagement in risky behaviors. It is this perspective that appears to be lacking in the research and, in my opinion, is a perspective that is extremely important. This study adds to the literature by offering this unique perspective and the hope is that this will spark future researchers to put more focus in this area.

Looking specifically at some of the results obtained from the data, one of the most consistent themes that developed from all of the interviews with the participants in this study was the idea of taking personal responsibility for their choices if they truly wanted to change. During the interviews, this concept of personal responsibility came up time and time again regarding how important it is to take responsibility for one’s own actions in order to be able to overcome difficulties in life. The participants talked about personal choice and that all adolescents have the ability to take whatever path they want and the importance of not

blaming anyone else for decisions that were made that resulted in going down a particular path in life. Personal responsibility and independence seem to be concepts that are heavily stressed here in the United States, probably more so than any other culture, so it is possible that participants from other cultures, possibly cultures that are more collectivist and dependent on each other, might place less emphasis on the need for personal responsibility. (Personal responsibility was a concept that was certainly taught to me very early on in life which likely contributed to me keying in on this idea while coding the data and is a good example of reflexivity.) The participants in the study who were from other cultures, however, also discussed the importance of personal responsibility, so it is unclear if that was taught to them from their culture as well or if they picked up that idea since living here in the United States. The age of the participants certainly impacted the results and it is possible that further insight, above and beyond simply attributing their resilience to personal responsibility, might have been attained had the participants been older. The age of the participants is discussed further in the future research section.

A very important concept that I took from the participants and described earlier as the way in which they shared their experiences was the importance of emotions and the extent to which emotions impacted behavior. As the participants talked more and more about their emotions during adolescence I began to see the interactive process between emotions and various factors that can lead to delinquency. Many of the themes I developed were very similar to the research which resulted in initially labeling those themes as risk and protective factors, as they are described in the literature. Understanding the participants' emotions, however, led to me describing their experiences as more of an interactive process rather than one that was more linear. Using this perspective enabled me to give voice to the participants

by describing their unique experiences and adding each of their voices to the current literature.

Along with emotions and recognizing the power to choose, some of the other ideas talked about by the participants included perseverance, improving self-esteem, setting goals and having future-oriented thinking, learning from personal mistakes as well as the mistakes of others, making use of willpower, recognizing and using intelligence to make healthy choices, and finding personal motivation from within. These concepts are not necessarily lacking in the literature but were discussed by the participants in this study at great length, especially in regard to personal responsibility. Adding new information and ideas to the current literature is extremely important and the information provided by the participants in this study achieved that objective.

How This Study Supported the Literature

Delinquency and resilience are described in the literature in terms of risk and protective factors, and much of the information that I gathered from the participants in this study matched up well with the research. These participants described various factors that led to their engagement in risky behaviors as well as factors that contributed to their resilience from those behaviors, and comparing their information with current research showed very few differences.

I discussed earlier Agnew's General Strain Theory and mentioned a number of conclusions that can be made from that theory regarding engagement in risky behaviors and resilience from those behaviors. Several of the components to the theory grounded in the data from this study appear to match up well with some of Agnew's conclusions. It was suggested by Agnew (1992) that adolescents with social supports are more capable of responding to

objective strains in a non-delinquent manner. Participants in this study identified the need to maintain positive supports in order to demonstrate resilience from risky behaviors. How an adolescent copes is also dependent on the adolescent's beliefs, particularly rules used by the adolescent that define what is considered an appropriate response when provoked (Agnew, 1992). The importance of culture as well as guidance through religion/spirituality was discussed by the participants in this study and could define what Agnew referred to as the adolescent's beliefs. In terms of relationships, "adolescents who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to be exposed to delinquent models and beliefs and to receive reinforcement for delinquency" (Agnew, 1992, p. 73). Participants from this study identified the importance of having positive friends/peers as well as distancing one's self from negative friends/peers. Agnew (1992) also suggested that "adolescents who attribute their adversity to others are much more likely to become angry [and]...that anger creates a strong predisposition to delinquency" (p. 73). Taking personal responsibility, including not blaming others for personal struggles, was very important to the participants in this study for resilience and supports this final conclusion from Agnew.

Three areas that were overwhelmingly identified by the participants in this study as being very important and contributed to the interactive process that contributed to their involvement in risky behaviors included limited family connections, negative peer influences, and academic struggles, and the research I looked at supported this. In regard to connections within the family, the research supports the importance of these connections and labels them as protective factors within the family which can include parental support, authoritative parenting (characterized by warmth, involvement, support of autonomy, as well as clear rules and expectations), and healthy family cohesion that includes a positive parent-

adolescent relationship (Wille et al., 2008). Parenting style, along with parents simply being involved in their lives, was discussed by several of the participants in this study and how much this can contribute to an adolescent's behavioral choices. As noted earlier, Eddy, Reid, and Fetrow (2000) demonstrated that a lack of positive adult engagement can lead adolescents to befriend other rejected and deviant peers and the relationships with these peers can lead then to more serious acts of violence and criminal behaviors.

Almost all of the participants in this study acknowledged how much impact peers had on their engagement in risky behaviors and how their association with certain peers was a direct result of them feeling a lack of support and involvement from family. Several of the participants reported that as they felt they were experiencing more and more positive support from their family, they felt more confident in not associating themselves with negative peers. Kadish et al. (1999) supported this idea that positive family relations can aid in reducing the effects of an adolescent's associations with peers who are committing delinquent acts. Research has consistently stressed that the family environment is a crucial factor in determining and predicting adolescent delinquency, and a lack of family cohesion has been found to be significantly related to the development of delinquent behaviors (Matherne & Thomas, 2001).

Children and adolescents spend a significant amount of time in an academic setting so it makes sense to consider that setting when looking at risky behaviors, and many of the participants in this study identified improving their academic performance as being a critical component toward their resilience from those behaviors. As discussed earlier, the U.S. Census Bureau has consistently demonstrated how furthering one's education can greatly increase one's income, and polls conducted by Gallup have consistently shown that the more

education one has the greater the likelihood that one's job will provide a sense of meaning and identity, which helps improve self-esteem and helps provide resilience from negative influences in life.

Several other protective factors discussed by adolescents in the study by Ginsburg et al. (2002) included having meaningful relationships with adults—which has been clearly shown in the research to effectively reduce the risks for engaging in risky behaviors—and productive use of their free time including after-school programs and other activities that often simply provide a safe place for them to go. The availability of social supports outside of the nuclear family such as friends or teachers, and involvement in healthy activities such as sports, clubs, or church that encourages coping and contributes to individual competence have also been shown to be extremely important in reducing the risks for delinquency (Wille et al., 2008). All of these findings were reinforced by the participants in this study as being extremely important toward helping them demonstrate their resilience. Several participants talked about the importance of mentors as well as building relationship with extended members of the family when the immediate family was not available. They also talked about the importance of religion as well as involvement in extra-curricular activities as helping with their resilience, which are all supported by previous research.

How This Study Challenged the Literature

Adding to and supporting current research is very important, but learning new information that challenges what other researchers have found provides opportunities for discussion and debate. For this particular study, however, limited information was reported by the participants that I felt was in direct conflict or disagreement with the current literature. Most of what I learned from these participants matched up well with what the literature

shows regarding risk factors that can lead to risky behaviors as well as protective factors that can lead to resilience.

Limitations

There were a few limitations for this study that need to be discussed because these limitations impact the generalizability of the results and the theory formulated from those results. The primary concern was that the participants for this study all came from and attended the same Midwestern state university, so the amount of diversity represented in the sample of volunteers who chose to participate in this study is questionable. The values for many people who live in the Midwest might be very different than those living in the south, or from the west coast or east coast. Different values might mean different perspectives and even different definitions for delinquency and resilience. Part of the reason for interviewing students from a university was to obtain a diverse sample (students from different cultures, different geographical areas, having different values/beliefs), since many of the students who attend a university do come from other parts of the country, and even other parts of the world. In some areas of the country where living conditions might be especially difficult or where there is extreme poverty or very high crime rates, behaviors that are more typically defined as being risky or delinquent might be viewed by some in those areas as simply ways to survive. Interviewing young adults from those areas may have produced very different perspectives and thus might have led to very different results in this study. It is also important to note that even though a few of the participants came from countries outside of the United States, most of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian which greatly limits the generalizability.

Another concern was that this entire project was primarily conducted by one person, me. I was the only one who interviewed the participants, the only one who transcribed the interviews, wrote the memos, coded the data, interpreted the results, and formulated a theory. All of this was from my own perspective and all of my experiences, education, and personal biases had an influence on what I wrote, which is what the concept of reflexivity is all about. To help balance my own biases, I had selected members of my dissertation committee, my major professor, as well as others outside of my committee who helped me evaluate the themes I generated as well as any conclusions/theories resulting from those themes. Using member checks also helped somewhat with the themes I developed but for the most part this proved to be not nearly as helpful as I had hoped.

Future Research

Like any study, there are always limitations to what can be accomplished, and this project was no different. One of the benefits of conducting qualitative research, especially a study that involves interviewing participants, is the wealth of information/data that is shared above and beyond what is being investigated. As more and more data are collected, more insights are gained, which results in more questions being asked. This is what makes research so exciting because there is always more to be learned. I went into this project with a specific purpose by asking a research question and then striving to answer that question to the best of my ability based upon the data collected. The results presented here, however, are just the tip of the iceberg and hopefully will help open the door to further research in this area. In this section I have discussed just a few of the ideas that came from this project that are in need of further investigation and research.

Interviewing students from a fairly large university can be beneficial because of the potential for cultural diversity that might not otherwise be found in other samples. I was fortunate to have several participants in this study who originated from a country other than the United States. This allowed me to be able to investigate some of their cultural differences. I unfortunately did not anticipate or plan for this as well as I should have and probably missed an opportunity to ask more questions from these individuals to further explore these differences. It would be very beneficial to investigate more about the differences between cultures regarding risky behaviors, the kinds of behaviors exhibited, how resilience is demonstrated, and what we can learn regarding these differences between cultures to help with the problem of delinquency.

One of the assumptions that I made throughout this entire project was that it made sense for the college participants to eventually move away from their engagement in risky behaviors as was evidenced by their resilience. They could have chosen to continue their engagement in risky behaviors but each of them made the decision not to do so. My focus was more on the process of how they demonstrated their resilience but I think it would be very important to understand more about why this process is important and how to help motivate current adolescents to no longer engage in risky behaviors. Discontinuing this behavioral pattern makes sense, especially to adults, and there is plenty of research to support this. For many adolescents, however, it is not always easy to convince them that they should no longer engage in the behaviors that they are exhibiting. This project helped answer the question regarding how resilience can be demonstrated but a question for future research might be to further investigate more effective ways to help teenagers see this importance in a way that makes sense to them.

One of the participants in this project spoke very adamantly about the importance of his religious beliefs and how helpful those beliefs were with his resilience. Another one of the participants who was from India gave one example of a particular religious/spiritual belief in his country that is used to help those who are struggling, especially with risky behaviors among adolescents. A future research question might be to ask what impact religion/spirituality can have on helping adolescents demonstrate resilience from risky behaviors. The focus could either be on one particular religion or could involve comparing and contrasting specific religious/spiritual beliefs and the impact those beliefs have on delinquency and resilience.

All of the participants in this study spoke about the importance of the parent-child relationship and the impact this relationship has on adolescent behaviors. Some of the participants talked about a change that occurred between them and their parents that helped them with their resilience. It would have been interesting to know more about this shift and have the participants talk more about how the parent-child relationship moved from one that was difficult to one that was more helpful. Was this due to a change in the adolescent's behaviors? Did the parents change, and if so, what was it that they changed? How did they do this? The importance of parental involvement was supported by every participant in this study. As these participants transitioned from engagement in risky behaviors to resilience, it is clear that their parents were helpful during this transition, but what is unclear is exactly how the parents were important, specifically in regard to their parenting styles. Future research might involve interviewing the parents to determine if they made any kind of shift in their parenting style or relationship with their adolescent to help the adolescents move away from exhibiting risky behaviors and demonstrate resilience. The research clearly indicates the

impact that different parenting styles can have on adolescent delinquent behaviors and this research was discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. I chose to focus more on the individual participants but a future study might involve looking specifically at the different parenting styles to help determine which one best supports adolescent resilience from risky behaviors.

What was also clear from the participants in this study was how important it is to seek out supportive family members, especially when immediate family is not available. How was this decision made, though, and how did they know when to do this? The definition of family has changed over the years and there are many adolescents who do not necessarily have the traditional family system at home that consists of an identified mother, father, and siblings. When these immediate family members are not involved, meaning they are either present and not involved or not available at all, then what needs to shift in order to help fill this void? Future research might involve looking at what role extended family members can have in helping adolescents demonstrate resilience and what exactly is involved in that process that leads to those extended family members providing the needed support and guidance to those adolescents who are struggling.

A theme that was consistent across all of the participants in this study was the idea of personal responsibility and that adolescents need to not blame anyone else for their struggles. It would be interesting to see what a future study might look like to determine just how much impact personal responsibility can have on helping adolescents demonstrate resilience from risky behaviors. Taking this one step further, it might also be interesting to interview older adults with a past history of engagement in risky behaviors. Many of the participants in this study attributed their own personal responsibility for the resilience they demonstrated and in some cases made it sound simple in terms of simply “buckling down” and starting to make

the right choices. I would be curious to know as these young adults grow older and look back on their experiences if their descriptions change, become more insightful, or if they still attribute their resilience to personal responsibility.

Another area for future research could be in regard to the degree to which adolescents who exhibit delinquent behaviors continue to struggle with those same behaviors despite finishing high school and attending college. Something that I did not ask the participants in this study about was how well they felt they were currently doing at the university they were attending. It would be interesting to know whether or not they had sustained their resilience and if not, why. It would also be interesting to know how much of an impact does education truly have on resilience and what about those individuals who continue to struggle with resilience despite being in college?

The importance of seeking out supportive family members was identified earlier, but what was unclear was exactly how the participants knew when to seek out these other family members. For those who sought out those other family members, they acknowledged how extremely important it was for them to do this but what was not shared in the interviews was the process they went through that helped them make this decision. In the counseling and marriage and family therapy education and training I have received, emphasis is placed on a family system's perspective, meaning that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors from one member of a family, or system, impact everyone else who is a part of that system. A future study could look at this process regarding how the family system is impacted by juvenile delinquency, what factors can help determine when to seek out help from extended family members, and what the family system as a whole can do to help with resilience.

I had each of the participants complete a demographic questionnaire because early in the project I felt it would be an interesting way to describe the participants in greater detail. I also stated that the information gathered might be useful to explore how their demographics compared to the answers they gave during the interviews. In the end I did not devote much time toward analyzing the demographics simply because I didn't think the information that was provided was useful for the purpose of this project. A future study, however, could include a deeper analysis of specific demographics and any relationships between those demographics and resilience from engagement in risky behaviors.

Emotions have been discussed throughout this entire study as being very important in helping understand what I labeled as the interactive delinquency process. The participants in this study described situations during their adolescence in which they identified a feeling, talked about what may have contributed to that feeling, and then described the behaviors they engaged in which were likely impacted by that particular feeling. Future research could further investigate the impact emotions have on both risky behaviors and resilience. This could be particularly helpful in the field of counseling/therapy because so much of what occurs in therapy involves identifying, verbalizing, and processing feelings.

I noted earlier toward the end of Chapter 3 that this study changed from having a focus on delinquent behaviors to a study that was more focused on risky behaviors in order to more accurately represent the individuals who agreed to participate. A future study could be conducted using the same format as this one but instead recruit participants who more accurately fit the definition of having exhibited delinquent behaviors during their adolescent years. It would be interesting to see if the results were the same or different regarding how

adolescents demonstrate resilience from delinquent behaviors rather than from risky behaviors, which became the focus of this particular study.

Several other ideas that could lead to future studies include investigating female college students (this study only looked at males), interviewing young adults who are not in college, determining if certain college majors or particular jobs/careers help with resilience more than others, and the extent to which mental health counseling and psychiatric interventions really do help with resilience.

Conclusion

I am certainly not the same person at the end of this project compared to who I was at the beginning. I initially thought I had a very clear understanding of what I hoped to gain from this study and where I wanted it to go. As I went through this entire process, however, one thing I probably learned more than anything else was to expect things to change, and in many ways to embrace this change as it occurred and as the project grew with more insights and new information. My understanding is that this is what is meant by the emergent nature of qualitative research, as opposed to the more predetermined aspects of quantitative research. I have not had as much experience with conducting quantitative research but it would seem to me that in a qualitative project such as this one it is extremely important to be much more open to things not going according to plan, and for the allowance for change which is where growth occurs, and it is this growth that I believe is the whole point of conducting qualitative research.

I learned that within the field of qualitative research there are many different perspectives one can take that will greatly impact the interpretation of the data. An example

is provided by Lichtman (2006) who points out that “those who see themselves as constructivist speak of relativism and constructed realities” (p. 17). This is in contrast to taking a more positivist approach which for me at first seemed to make more sense until I realized that forming a research question and then answering that question was not nearly as simple as I thought it would be. I now feel that the constructivist approach to conducting grounded theory was much more appropriate, especially for this project. I thought that I would simply conduct my interviews and use the information gained to help answer my research question. As I started to gather the data, however, I quickly realized the diversity of both the participants involved and the information they provided, and attempting to find meaning in all of this information was a daunting task. I think I have started to understand more about the idea of “constructed realities” and what that means in the field of qualitative research.

It was extremely important for me to understand how much impact I as the researcher was going to have on this project. In the end, however, I am still not sure I fully realized this concept. Charmaz (2006) reminds us that “constructivism fosters researchers’ reflexivity about their own interpretations as well as those of their research participants” (p. 131). For me this simply reinforces the importance of the researcher in qualitative research and the extent to which the researcher’s own interests, ideas, and assumptions influence the entire process.

My hope is that the information I have provided here is of value in regard to helping current adolescents who are engaging in risky behaviors make the necessary changes that could help them demonstrate resilience, possibly by finishing high school and attending college, just like the participants in this study. I hope that the knowledge gained from this

research offers valuable insight directly from the interviews conducted with the participants. This research is not only valuable for today's adolescents, but also to society in general, as well as the professional field of marriage and family therapy which I am a part of in my profession. The clinical arena, which happen to be the area I work in, can be greatly impacted by this study as well as any future research in the area of risky behaviors and delinquency. As clinicians we are always looking for new ways to help people improve their lives and at times it can be especially difficult and frustrating working with the adolescent population. When I work with adults who report that they exhibited risky or delinquent behaviors during adolescence I usually ask them what, if anything, would have helped them during that difficult time. This study helps answer that question and can be used by any clinician who is currently working with the adolescent population. Along with clinicians, my hope is that the information from this project also helps parents, researchers, teachers, administrators, and others working with adolescents to become better informed and help make changes for the greater good.

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APPENDIX A

	Participant Pseudonym	Age	*Race/Ethnicity	Risky Behaviors Engaged in by Participants During their Adolescence	Future Career Plans
1	Matthew	18	White/Native American	Assault on police, resisting arrest, vandalism, getting in to fights, running away, substance use	Baker, aerospace engineer, and stage/lighting designer
2	Mark	21	White	Getting into fights at school	Graduate, get a job
3	Luke	20	White	Internet hacking, fighting with parents and peers	Venture capitalist
4	John	25	White	Trespassing, possession of drug paraphernalia	IT – software engineering
5	Peter	21	White	Shoplifting, breaking in to people’s homes, street racing, alcohol use, marijuana use	Employment as a mechanical engineer
6	Jonah	19	Asian/Korean	Running away, alcohol use, marijuana use, Painkiller use, prescription drug use	Something in the science field
7	Noah	20	Caucasian	Driving under the influence, alcohol use, Marijuana use, fighting	Graduate school, PhD film and music
8	Isaac	25	Asian	Disrupting the peace, confrontation with law enforcement	Architectural practice
9	Adam	21	Asia (China)	Alcohol use	Engineer
10	James	23	White/Caucasian	Trespassing, tobacco use, alcohol use, marijuana use, resisting arrest, assaulting a police officer, fighting, stealing	Finish college
11	Joseph	19	Caucasian	Vandalism, curfew violation	Graduate from college, obtain a job in athletics

Table 1: Participant Demographics

*Written as it was identified by the participants to an open ended question about their race/ethnicity.

APPENDIX B

Participant Informed Consent

Title of Study: Male college students' accounts of their resilience from risk factors during adolescence: A qualitative analysis.

Investigators: Matthew T. Hiveley (student researcher)
Megan J. Murphy, Ph.D. (major professor)

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

Introduction

This study is being conducted by Matthew T. Hiveley, a graduate student at Iowa State University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy through the department of human development and family studies.

This study seeks to further our understanding as to how young adult males who have been exposed to risk factors during adolescence and committed delinquent acts during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience from these factors and overcome their delinquency. There is a substantial amount of literature that discusses how to treat delinquent behaviors after they have occurred and researchers have identified numerous delinquency-prevention programs that are either proven to be effective or have great promise. Where there appears to be a void in the research, however, is in regard to taking a qualitative approach that involves personally interviewing young male adults who have demonstrated an ability to overcome stressors, risk factors, and delinquency during adolescence as evidenced by their graduating from high school and college attendance.

Description of Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will include a one-on-one interview that will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will be conducted as your schedule allows. The interview session will be audio-recorded. The tape will be transcribed by the researcher.

Risks

The risks of this study are very minimal. You may experience some discomfort if you are uncomfortable answering questions during an interview that is being audio-recorded.

Benefits

It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by enhancing the understanding of how young adult males who have been exposed to risk factors during adolescence and may have also exhibited delinquent behaviors during adolescence were able to demonstrate resilience from these factors and overcome their delinquency. This information may lead to future studies that further investigate how future adolescence can demonstrate their own resilience.

Costs and Compensation

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will receive a \$10 gift card to the university book store for participating in this study.

Participant Rights

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer and you may stop answering questions at any time. You may decide not to participate in this study or you may leave the study early for any reason and it will not result in any penalty.

Confidentiality

You will NOT be asked to provide any personal information that would identify who you are. You will be assigned a number that will help to differentiate you between other participants.

Questions or Problems

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study and you may contact the following people if you have any questions:

- Matthew T. Hiveley (student researcher) by phone at (515) 294-0534 or e-mail at mhiveley@iastate.edu
- Dr. Megan J. Murphy, Ph.D. (major professor) by phone at (515) 294-2745 or e-mail at mjmurphy@iastate.edu

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DATE: December 2, 2009**TO:** Matthew T. Hiveley
3007 Wessex Dr. #161
Ames, IA 50014**CC:** Megan J. Murphy
4380 Palmer Bldg., Suite 1325**FROM:** Office for Responsible Research**TITLE:** **Male college students' accounts of their resiliency from risk factors during adolescence:
A qualitative study****IRB ID:** 09-541**Approval Date:** 2 December 2009**Date for Continuing Review:** 1 December 2010**Submission Type:** New**Review Type:** Full Committee

The project referenced above has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

Your study has been approved according to the dates shown above. To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- **Use only the approved study materials** in your research, including the **recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.**
- **Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes** to the study by submitting the "Continuing Review and/or Modification" form.
- **Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences** involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) **any other unanticipated problems involving risks** to subjects or others.
- **Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses**, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- **Complete a new continuing review form** at least three to four weeks prior to the **date for continuing review** as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Research investigators are expected to comply with the principles of the Belmont Report, and state and federal regulations regarding the involvement of humans in research. These documents are located on the Office for Responsible Research website [www.compliance.iastate.edu] or available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office for Responsible Research, 1138 Pearson Hall, to officially close the project.

ORR 09/09

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
1138 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207
515 294-4566
FAX 515 294-4267

APPENDIX D

Email sent for Recruitment of Participants

To all male ISU students,

Would you like to receive a \$10 gift card to the Iowa State University Book Store by participating in a study?

I am a doctoral student here at ISU completing a study and I am looking for approximately 20 volunteers to be interviewed for this study.

The only requirements for being able to participate are that you are an ISU male student between the ages of 18-25 and that when you were an adolescent (teenager under the age of 18) you were found guilty of committing a criminal act by a court of law and would be willing to talk about this.

Each volunteer who participates in an interview will receive a free \$10 gift card to the Iowa State University Book Store.

Please e-mail me directly at mhiveley@iastate.edu if you are interested or if you have any questions.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Matt Hiveley

Matthew T. Hiveley, MS.Ed.
Couple & Family Therapy Doctoral Candidate
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APPENDIX E

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

Participant # _____

Age: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____

Year in college: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate

Major you are studying: _____

Current cumulative grade point average (GPA): _____

Along with attending school are you also employed? Yes No

If yes, what type of work do you do? _____

Future career plans: _____

Current relationship status: _____

APPENDIX F

Participant Interview Questions

Participant # _____

In order to participate in this study, you identified that during adolescence you were exposed to some of the risk factors that can contribute to risky and delinquent behaviors and that you were also found guilty by a judge in juvenile court to have committed a violation of the criminal law which is labeled a delinquent act.

- (1) What are some of the first memories that come to your mind when you think about your adolescence?
- (2) Risk factors are identified as any factors in one's life that have the potential of contributing to or leading to delinquent or illegal behaviors. What were some possible risk factors that you may have been exposed to during adolescence?
- (3) Talk about some of the delinquent behaviors you committed while you were a juvenile.
- (4) How much of an impact do you feel the risk factors you identified had on your engagement in risky or delinquent behaviors?
- (5) Of all the risk factors in your life during adolescence, which one(s) do you feel had the greatest influence on you?

Another requirement for being able to participate for this study is that you were able to overcome those risk factors in your life and demonstrate resilience by finishing high school and attending college.

- (6) How do you feel you were able to overcome your exposure to risk factors during adolescence and demonstrate resilience in your life?
- (7) Who in your life had the most impact on this (a mentor, friend, family member, teacher, counselor, etc.)? Any other factors that may have influenced your resilience, such as your age, specific events, legal involvement, your own determination, etc.?
- (8) In your opinion, what can/should current adolescents who are exposed to risk factors and engaged in risky and delinquent behaviors do to overcome this and demonstrate resilience in their lives, possibly by finishing high school and attending college, just like you were able to do?
- (9) Are there any questions you think I should have asked you that I didn't, or is there any other information you would like to share with me that you feel might be helpful for this project that you did not share with me yet?

Thank you very much for your time and for participating in this study!

APPENDIX G

Follow-up Email for Member Checks

To participants in the juvenile delinquency study,

I am writing to each of you for follow-up regarding the juvenile delinquency study that each of you participated in. I wanted to thank you again for your willingness to participate. This is the last time you will hear from me and I wanted to share with you some of the themes I developed from all of your interviews. I would appreciate it if each of you would respond to this e-mail letting me know what you think of these themes, whether they seem accurate based upon the information you provided, and any further information you could provide me that might be helpful for my study. Thank you.

Themes from interviews:

Many different emotions were expressed regarding the reasons for engaging in delinquent behaviors. Some of those emotions included feeling bored, feeling uncertain about who you were as an adolescent, feeling stressed, feeling angry, and feeling different.

There were many factors shared that may have contributed to the above emotions including family relationships, parenting styles, changes within the family structure, peers, and academics at school.

What you learned that helped you to move away from delinquent behaviors or prevent future delinquent behaviors came from learning about personal responsibility, learning from your parents/family, learning from your friends/peers, learning from school which included improving academics, engaging in school activities, and making positive connections with teachers, learning from your own culture, and learning from other positive supports in your life like mentors.

Matt Hiveley

Matthew T. Hiveley, MS.Ed.
Couple & Family Therapy Doctoral Candidate
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APPENDIX H

Examples of Memos

There appears to be a spectrum where at one end you have adolescents with a lot of risk factors and very few protective factors. On the other end are adolescents with many protective factors and almost no risk factors. The students I interviewed seemed to fall somewhere in the middle where they did engage in delinquent behaviors due to risk factors in their lives but they also had protective factors to help counter these concerns. This resulted in their resilience.

A cultural component is the difference between how children are raised here in the United States compared to other cultures around the world. One of my participants from China stated that he felt the American education was better because it allowed more freedom to choose but stated that this increase in freedom might be what leads to adolescents exhibiting delinquent behaviors. Another participant from India stated that in his culture there is less desire for independence due to the families being very closed and that almost all issues are dealt with within the family and that because of this there is less desire in his culture for teenage rebellion. More freedom means more control over one's own life but also means more personal responsibility.

The biggest theme that seems to be present throughout all of this, which I think works well from a systems perspective, is how much of an impact the family appears to have on all aspects of an adolescent's behaviors. It seems that every theme that I have come up with in one way shape or form can be connected to the family. I think this will be part of my main discussion regarding the theory I develop from the grounded theory approach.

A change that needs to be accounted for is that this study originally started out focusing on juvenile delinquency but as a result of the participants and the types of behaviors they engaged in, labeling them as delinquents does not quite seem accurate. It seems more accurate to describe the majority of their behaviors as being risky so that means a slight change in focus for the rest of this study.

APPENDIX I

Open Coding – Example Interview Transcript Excerpts

Participant #1 “Matthew”	Codes
<p>What stands out the most was that I was <u>always an outcast from right from the beginning I was always an outcast</u>, the kid that nobody talked to, that nobody dealt with, <u>I mostly stuck to school because it was a sanctuary</u>. If I was anything outside of class I was being bullied one way or another. <u>My brother, who was four years older than me, he was very very protective, he was by best friend</u>, he helped me get some food from wherever in the house, make something, most of the time I just ate cereal practically three times a day, that was because <u>my mother was an alcoholic</u> as well as she smoked, therefore <u>she was quite neglective</u> and because of her neglect <u>I was one of those children that was always a little bit curious, always got into things, and in doing so I got punished a lot</u>, sometimes I would be spanked when I was real little, the earliest memories I have is when I was around 3 or 4, shortly before my sister was born, then we continued on.</p> <p><u>My past is very very negative and dark.</u></p> <p><u>My first 8 years was definitely negative and dark.</u></p> <p>My brother met some friends because <u>we moved around, my mother moved around a lot cause she was trying to keep getting money from the state</u> and all of that. So we moved around, we went to this one place...then in that area my brother found a friend that he would talk to and all of that. I was 5 or 6. One night, because <u>my mother always goes out a lot to drink at bars</u>, we went to his friends house where his mother would be babysitting us and all of that, of course since I always followed my brother, I adored him, I followed him upstairs with his friend and <u>got caught in their sexual acts, and that’s where the abuse happened</u>, shortly after my mother found out, <u>got DHS involved</u>,</p>	<p>Felt different from everyone else.</p> <p>School provided an escape for him.</p> <p>Possible protective factor provided by brother.</p> <p>Mother was an alcoholic and was neglectful – potential risk factors for him.</p> <p>Parenting style? Extreme parenting that included frequent punishments.</p> <p>Negative and dark past. What did this look like for him and how did it impact him?</p> <p>Frequent moves – risk factor.</p> <p>Mother who abuse the system. Misused state funding.</p> <p>Ongoing alcohol use by parent – possible neglect.</p> <p>Experienced sexual abuse – state involvement from the department of human services.</p>

Participant #6 "Jonah"	Codes
<p>I was actually <u>born in Korea</u>, and my parents had me there and <u>they actually moved back to the U.S.</u> so my dad could finish my college work. They had me in Korea and they left after like a month and then since I didn't get a visa, my dad had to go back, <u>I was raised by my grandmother till I was six.</u> Then I came over here and met my family.</p> <p>It was weird meeting my parents for the first time [coming here to the U.S.] like that. <u>I was always like separated, kind of, cause my parents and my sister are pretty close, I never really stuck with them.</u></p> <p>I've gotten a few citations; at a park after closing, <u>possession of alcohol, and possession of marijuana.</u> It was all one incident.</p> <p>I was never in to anything until high school, where <u>my sister introduced me to a few things.</u> I went to a pretty big school, about 4,000 kids, so there's always those bad group of kids, and that's who I hung out with. Just didn't try hard in school. There was always a lot of drugs available in my neighborhood.</p> <p><u>I never really had that relationship with my parents,</u> I used to run away a lot the first time I got caught by the cops, I was out for two weeks, and they caught me on a <u>runaway charge,</u> and those friends I was with, pretty much let me be with them.</p> <p><u>I rarely talked to them [parents]. (What about today?) Well, they mainly speak Korean, and I'm not, I mean, I used to be pretty fluent but not anymore and that's, we already have a language barrier. And they don't understand curfews and stuff, cause that culture is very different.</u> First of all, they're very conservative, and they just don't understand the culture here.</p> <p>Well, I had a very <u>close friend of mine die</u> at the beginning of my senior year.</p>	<p>Cultural differences/influences. Separation from parents.</p> <p>Did not have an early relationship with parents.</p> <p>Potentially strained and distanced relationships with family members.</p> <p>Delinquent behaviors.</p> <p>Sibling's influence on his engagement in delinquent behaviors.</p> <p>Again, not having a relationship with his parents. How did this impact him and his behaviors? Ran away from home frequently once he was reunited with his parents.</p> <p>Besides the physical separation from parents also experience cultural/language barriers. Not feeling understood by parents.</p> <p>Close friend died and how this may have impacted him.</p>

APPENDIX J

Open Coding Examples

Felt different from everyone else.
School was an escape.
Bullied and mistreated by other kids.
Name calling.
Behavioral problems.
Negative and dark past.
Neglectful and alcoholic parent.
Parenting style consisting of a lot of punishment.
Lack of stability in his life/unstable living environments.
Parent who abused/misused funding resources.
Childhood abuse.
State involvement.
Foster care.
Treatment facilities.
A brother who was the main source of support.
Death of a loved one/family member.
PTSD diagnosis from past abuse.
Fear/anxiety/stress.
Domestic arguing/violence between parents.
Being falsely accused of abuse.
Running away.
Shooting out glass windows with a BB gun.
Assault on a police officer.
Counseling/therapy.
Religion.
Anger.
Forgiveness.
Being sent away.
No friends.
Grandparents as supports.
No relationship with parents.
Empathy toward others.
Suicide attempt.
Lost hope.
Felt like he was a burden to others.
His own perseverance.
Learning to trust others.
Importance of social supports.
Not caring/heart goes hard.
Importance of accountability.

APPENDIX K

Axial Coding – How Categories Developed from Codes

Categories	Example Transcripts	Example Codes
Risk Factors	“mother was an alcoholic...was quite neglectful”	Parents not available, children’s needs not getting met.
	“I was extremely tall; awkward...didn’t really know what it’s like to be popular.”	Few friends, feeling different, possible low self-confidence.
	“being bullied one way or another”	Picked on by other peers at school.
	“She controlled who our friends were, what we read, what we watched, what we listened to.”	Overly-controlling parenting style.
Protective Factors	“grandparents was the main factor...[they] stood by my side.”	Support from extended family.
	“I realized it’s all about working on yourself, improving yourself.”	Self-improvement and taking personal responsibility.
	“I was trying to participate in a club...a Christian organization...all of them [those in the club] I am close to...they don’t judge.	Religion/spirituality. Feeling accepted by others.
	“it was like a sense of stability with that girl, she started liking me...nobody was ever really interested in me before...I kind of snagged on to that.”	Close relationship with peer. Provided more stability in his life.

APPENDIX L

Risk Factors Categories

Felt different from everyone	Bullied	Mistreated
Name calling	Behavioral problems	Childhood neglect
Alcoholic parents	Severe punishment by parents	
Lack of stability	Parents abusing system	Childhood abuse
Foster care	Death of a loved one	
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	Fear	Anxiety
Stress	Domestic Violence	Running away
Vandalism	Assault/Fighting	Anger
Few friends	Poor relationship with parents	
Suicide attempt	Loss of hope	Low self-esteem
Not caring	Friends	Curiosity
Few friends	Own ego/selfishness	Controlling parents
Feeling like a failure	Trespassing	Boredom
Peer pressure	Friends using drugs	Bullying
Angry outbursts	Few friends	Lonely
Anger/Aggression	Awkward	Shy
Not fitting in	Not popular	Friends
Shoplifting	Alcohol	Marijuana
Trespassing	Boredom	Rebelling against parents
Not knowing self	Not connected with parents	
Not challenged academically	Trying to fit in	Parents don't understand
Anger	Need for social acceptance	
Culture	No relationship with parents	
Alcohol use	Marijuana use	
Availability of drugs and alcohol in his neighborhood		Sibling influence
Not caring about school	Parents not understanding him	
Painkillers/prescription drugs	Running away	Death of a loved one
Depression	Bipolar	Suicide threats
Friends	Parents divorce	Parents fighting
Changes in family structure	Limited parental involvement	
DUI	Alcohol use	Marijuana use
Not challenged academically	Trying to fit in	Influence of siblings
Too much freedom	Domestic violence	
Parents not taking time to build relationship with kids		Gender (being male)
Too much freedom	Too much control by parents over kids	
Too much freedom	Marijuana use	Tobacco
Alcohol	Trespassing	Fighting
Confrontation with police	Parents divorce	Low self-esteem
Lack of stability	Few friends or close relationships	
Vandalism	Curfew violation	Picked on by other kids
Stress	Need to be accepted	

APPENDIX M

Protective Factors Categories

An escape (school)	Family support	Religion
Forgiveness	Perseverance	Trust
Social supports	Accountability	Empathy
Inpatient/outpatient treatment	Friends	Religion
Parents	Personal responsibility	No alcohol/drugs
Own intelligence	Mentor	Family
Inpatient treatment	Improving self	Having goals
Being thankful for what you have		
Feeling embarrassed about what he did that was wrong		
Church	School	Parents
Having an outlet to vent frustrations		Probation
After school program	Alcohol education classes	
Distancing self from friends who are a negative influence		
School activities	Connecting with teachers	Own intelligence
Positive outlets	Learning from watching others	Positive friends
Watching others succeed	Moving away from friends who were a negative influence	
Inpatient/outpatient treatment	Family	Church
Sports	Activities	Own intelligence
Parental disappointment (they cared)		
Distancing from friends who were a negative influence		
Positive friend choices	Family values	
Learning from others' mistakes	Mentor	Goals
Future thinking	Personal responsibility	Close family
Culture	Less emphasis on independence (less desire for rebellion)	
Religion	Learn from watching others	
Culture	Academics/studying	Friends
Parents	Family	Teachers
Academics	Motivation	Willpower
Own intelligence	Parents	
Learning from own mistakes	Personal responsibility	
Involved/interested parents	Friends	
Clear rules at home		
Extra-curricular activities	Positive outlets	
Learning by watching others	Good relationship with parents	

APPENDIX N

Axial Coding – How Sub-Categories Developed from Categories

Categories	Sub-Categories		Example from Transcripts	Example Codes
Risk Factors	Factors	Family	“my father was kind of away and not living with us”	Absent parent.
		Peers	“getting this harassment from this student”	Picked on by peer.
		School	“I wasn’t maybe stimulated enough in high school.”	Not challenged academically.
	Emotions	Boredom	“the idea was there was just somewhere to go”	The need to stay busy.
		Uncertainty	“finding your own identity”	Who am I?
		Anxiety	“I’m just scared around any number of people”	Social worries.
		Anger	“people would try to tell me to do something...would just react pretty angrily”	Reacted poorly to feedback.
		Loneliness	“didn’t have too many friends at the time”	Few social connections.
Protective Factors	Resilience	Personal Responsibility	“[I] just didn’t want to be like that [how other kids were behaving]”	Learned from watching others.
		Parents/Family	“number one source of support starts with the family”	Family is most important.
		Friends/Peers	“it really is choosing the right friends”	Impact of friends.
		School	“I realized that you gotta just do well in school if you’re gonna do well in the future”	School is important for success.
		Culture	“in India, every person is responsible for family”	Cultural priorities.
		Religion/Spirituality	“parents are both Christians...going to church”	Importance of religion.
		Positive Supports	“someone my dad had met and thought he might be a good person for me to know”	Other positive role models.

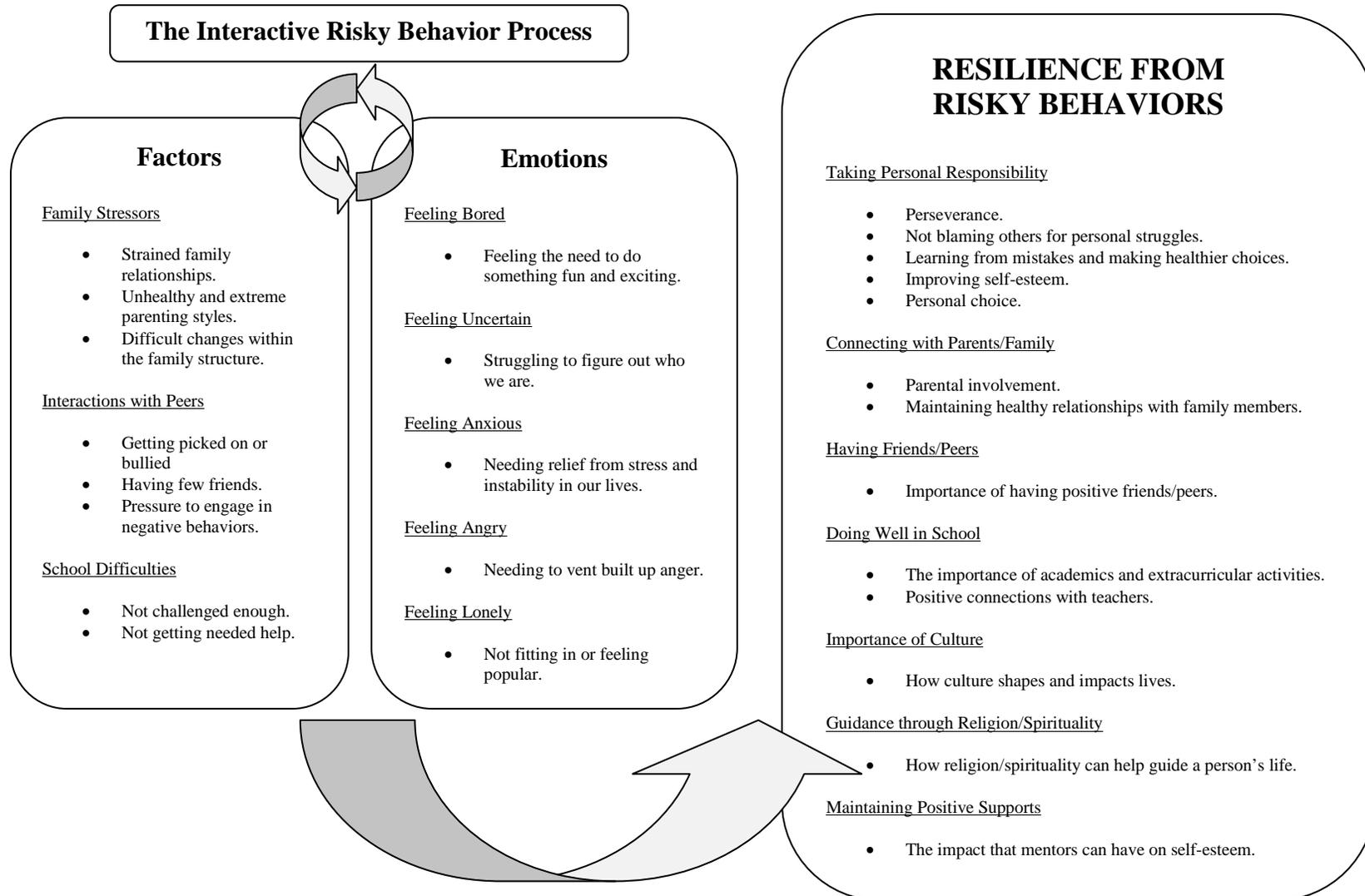
APPENDIX O

Selective Coding – How Themes Developed from Categories/Sub-Categories

Categories	Sub-Categories		Themes
Risk Factors	Factors	Family	Strained family relationships, extreme parenting styles, and difficult changes within the family likely contributed to risky behaviors.
		Peers	Getting bullied, having few friends, and feeling pressure to engage in negative behaviors resulted in engagement in risky behaviors.
		School	Not feeling challenged enough and/or not getting the needed help resulted in disruptive behaviors.
	Emotions	Boredom	Feeling the need to do things that are fun and excited typically resulted in risky behaviors.
		Uncertainty	Struggling with self-identity led to engagement in risky behaviors to help with this struggle.
		Anxiety	Feeling the need to relieve stress from instability and changes resulted in risky behaviors.
		Anger	Built up anger that needed to be released was typically done through risky behaviors.
		Loneliness	Not fitting or feeling popular led to engagement in risky behaviors to feel less lonely.
Protective Factors	Resilience	Personal Responsibility	Not giving up, not blaming others, learning from mistakes, improving self-esteem, and making healthy choices helped with resilience.
		Parents/Family	Parents who were involved and adolescents who maintained healthy relationships with parents and family were able to demonstrate resilience.
		Friends/Peers	Having positive friends who are a good influence is key to resilience for adolescents.
		School	Good academics, involvement in extracurricular activities and positive connections with teachers helps with resilience from risky behaviors.
		Culture	Using one's culture to help form a positive self-identity contributes to resilience.
		Religion/Spirituality	Religion/spirituality can provide guidance toward healthier choices and resilience.
		Positive Supports	Mentors can help improve self-esteem and aid with resilience from risky behaviors.

APPENDIX P

Visual Model of the Process of Risky Behaviors and Resilience



APPENDIX Q

Theory that is Grounded in the Data

An interaction occurs between various factors and emotions during adolescence that I call the Interactive Risky Behavior Process. Factors can include family stressors (strained family relationships, unhealthy and extreme parenting styles, and difficult changes within the family structure), interactions with peers (getting picked on or bullied, having few friends, and pressure to engage in negative behaviors), and school difficulties (not challenged enough academically and not getting needed help). Emotions can include feeling bored, uncertain, anxious, angry, and lonely. The interaction between factors and emotions can contribute to engagement in risky behaviors during adolescence. Resilience from those behaviors comes from what is learned about the interaction between factors and emotions which contributes toward taking personal responsibility for one's own actions, connecting with parents/family, having positive friends/peers, doing well in school, recognizing the importance of one's culture, guidance through religion/spirituality, and maintaining positive supports.