


Examination of Specific Factors that Influence Resilience among High School Students

by

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ABSTRACT

For this research study, resiliency is defined as the ability to thrive in spite of risk or adversity. Reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors also greatly impacts resilience development in youth. The RURAL project in Kansas provided services to increase resilience in at-risk youth and their families. The school climate survey utilized in the RURAL project was also to measure specific factors that influence resilience among 96 southeastern Wisconsin high school students for this study. Results from the current study revealed several factors known to inhibit resilience among the population sampled. Positive factors were also identified. A comparison of 2000-2002 archival data from the RURAL project to data of this study indicated far more protective school factors among students of the archival data. Greater reporting of positive factors identified in the archival sample may be explained by the implementation of RURAL programming in the school. It is clear that RURAL programming for high school students makes a substantial difference in their overall assessment and development of resilience.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Youth in contemporary society seem to possess a substantially higher level of potential for encountering adversity compared to their counterparts of generations past. Such adversity includes surviving within an era of technological advances, dramatic transitions in family life, in addition to mastering competency skills associated with developing productive relationships (Frydenburg, 2004). This being said, it then seems reasonable to deduce that, “The fostering of personal agency is an important component in inoculating young people against [adversity] and equipping them with life management skills” (Frydenberg, 2004, ¶ 2).

Personal agency is considered to be essential for developing resiliency. Educational settings provide a context within which children resiliency can grow. Schools set the stage for both the framework and foundation of youth resiliency in that both teachers and other educational professionals become valuable adult influences within young individuals’ lives. According to Smith and Carlson (1997), teachers are an important adult resource for children. They provide a solid source of support and also act as a determinant for student success (Frydenberg, 2004). According to Frydenberg, a substantial amount of students’ time apart from family is spent with teachers, who are frequently the most important connection for a young person and often the first contact for many issues. Segal (1988) contended the development of resilience in youth can partially be attributed to the presence of one charismatic adult, a person with whom they can identify and gather strength. Interestingly, this individual takes on the form of a teacher (Bracken, 2000).

In comparing this literature to the format of today's schools, it seems students spend a significant portion of their lives with educators, teachers, and other school faculty who have been trained to recognize and understand the diverse types of social and emotional issues that arise from students within their progression through the educational system (Frydenberg, 2004). If not identified and remedied, these personal dilemmas experienced by youth can manifest into more serious circumstances which may then negatively impact the youth, school, and the surrounding community.

It appears when the notion of resilience in youth was first investigated by human development and educational scholars, it was initially conceptualized in models and theories as an entity possessed by the individual. According to such models, both external and internal environmental factors may have influenced the degree to which a young individual acquired resilience-based characteristics, as resilience is an aggregate of inner strengths and external supports (Brendtro and Longhurst, 2005). One such model included Benson's 40 Developmental Assets. Benson (1997) ascertained youth can acquire specific internal and external assets which serve as positive agents in building resilience. Internal assets include commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. External assets often consist of support, empowerment, boundaries, expectations, and constructive use of time (Simms-Shepard, 2004).

More recently, researchers have begun to expand their conceptualization of resilience. Rather than primarily associating this term with solely the individual, it was expanded and applied to the familial context. Resilience models and theories now focused upon understanding certain family strengths and capabilities which safeguarded

the familial network from crises and disruptions associated with a variety of stressors (Lustig, 1999). One such model includes the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation (Lustig, 1999). This framework served as a basis in answering the critical question of why certain families deteriorated when faced with change or crises while other families encountered troubling situations with relative ease by identifying new patterns and resorting and revising former patterns of functioning (Lustig, 1999).

Additionally schools have achieved phenomenal success by integrating resilience-based programs. Many educational professionals have found, “When a protective environment is established, students will achieve academically and will be less inclined to participate in unsafe and dangerous behaviors” (Bowers, 2004, ¶ 1). Furthermore, “By increasing protective factors in schools, students will have more opportunities to achieve academically and will be less vulnerable to becoming involved with such things as alcohol, tobacco, drugs, gangs, violence and sexual activity” (Bowers, 2004, ¶ 1).

The last transition within the evolution of resilience-based theory occurred via the creation of models and frameworks emphasizing the importance of community involvement in youth resilience development. Understanding resilience in the context of the individual, family, and school is critical, but to also recognize youth resilience as a community responsibility created increased opportunities for young individuals to acquire and display resilience and coping mechanisms in a long-term fashion, possibly spanning their entire lives (Doron, 2005). One model which has been associated with resilience includes Urie Brofenbrenner’s Ecological model (Brofenbrenner, 1977).

Though often utilized in disciplines such as the environmental sciences, this framework can also be applied to the fields of psychology, education, and human development. Bronfenbrenner's work consisted of an approach emphasizing the notion that each individual is affected by experiences and interactions spanning over several overlapping ecosystems. The individual is located at the center of the model. The first ecosystem level to interact with the individual is deemed the Microsystem. This consists of the family, classroom, peers, neighborhood, and church. The next level comprised of the Exosystem which includes the school, community, health agencies, and mass media. The last ecosystem level is referred to as the Macrosystem and constitutes political systems, economics, society, nationality, and the culture overall (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Though it may not seem initially apparent how resilience is related to each system or to the Ecological framework, both the systems and Bronfenbrenner's theory overall played an integral role in understanding how resilience is acquired and maintained by youth. When scholars first defined the concept of resilience, they only applied and generalized it to the individual. Gradually, sources of or supports for resilience also rested in families, schools, and communities. These institutions, which also make up two of Bronfenbrenner's systems (Microsystem and Exosystem), played crucial roles in assisting in the process of teaching individual youth how to cope with and become resourceful individuals in spite of adversity and negative circumstances. They also impacted one another in terms of the degree of success each youth achieved in gaining protective factors and resilience-based traits. Political systems, found within the Macrosystem level, were also influential, as they delegated money towards resiliency programming. Another system, the entire culture itself (Macrosystem), delineated the

specific norms, rules, and values that defined the importance of youth resilience development. This is the same culture that may become hostile towards youth, both presently and in the future as they grow into adults. In sum, it appeared all of Brofenbrenner's systems within the Ecological model played upon and influenced one another in shaping young individuals' abilities to survive when adverse circumstances were encountered.

When protective factors and rules and expectations of appropriate and acceptable youth behavior were consistently integrated by larger community, youth were more inclined to acquire resilience and be protected from risk at the highest level (Resiliency Factors, Partners for Peace, n.d.) Utilizing a school or community-based resilience model also assisted in emphasizing important issues that may help all young individuals and their families deal with significant changes and adverse life experiences (Doron, 2005). Communities can be organized to construct strengths (Brendtro and Longhurst, 2005). When both schools and communities bestow opportunities for positive development, youngsters thrive and achieve their potential (Brendtro and Longhurst, 2005).

One solution for both reinforcing and cultivating resiliency characteristics within young people involved integrating school and community-based programs, which not only provided the opportunity to acquire these skills, but also enhanced a youth's overall functioning and well-being. As a result, it was beneficial that school-based programming, which strived toward the goal of increasing the quality of students' social and emotional affect, be developed and implemented (Frydenberg, 2004). One such invaluable resource includes the Rural Underpinnings for Resiliency and Linkages (RURAL) project.

The Rural Underpinnings for Resiliency and Linkages (RURAL) is a school-based program which provided services to children, youth, and families in a rural Kansas county. It was developed to focus on closing specific gaps in services provided to at-risk and high-risk youth and families, in addition to accentuating prevention of aspects that could increase at-risk behaviors (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Founded from a public-health model, RURAL was divided into five project functions which consisted of prevention, intervention, treatment, community outreach, and evaluation components. The first step in implementing the RURAL program was to identify the most conducive method of strategy selection for a school and community by way of determining risk factors, community needs, and available resources. The prevention component integrated school-based activities which targeted preschool through middle school students (due to the greater chance for prevention of risk behaviors to occur). The intervention component included social work staff assigned to particular schools or programs. Individual and family services were then implemented by this staff within either the home or school setting, with an emphasis placed on family-driven and solution-focused strategies. The treatment component included the provision of support and assistance from a mental health facility. The community outreach component encompassed the creation, dispersion, and integration of numerous RURAL programs on both the local and national level which consisted of various types of information, strategies, and resources related to resilience development. Lastly, the evaluation component was comprised of extensive supervision and analyses which assessed the level of comprehensive progress made towards project goals and objectives (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

The public health model demonstrated an eclectic approach by fostering partnerships between various disciplines, professions, organizations, and community stakeholders in which health concerns and changes of personal practices held eminent interest and became key goals (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Other important goals within this particular approach comprised of increasing student perceptions of school safety and promoting the development of resilience competencies within all students.

The RURAL model held a more applied, goal-oriented, community and school-based method for health advancement and maintenance. This approach accomplished these tasks by recognizing problems and creating solutions for certain population groups via data collection describing the nature, incidence, trends, and prevalence of the problem. Following the determination of risk and protective factors, universal and effective interventions were constructed and education endeavors were coordinated to establish public awareness on these specific issues (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Crucial to the key development, implementation, and management of the RURAL project included school psychologists who educated and offered technical assistance to school staff to sustain and extend specific programs. School psychologists were intentionally placed at the forefront within the RURAL project due to their high skill level demonstrated in executing a proactive, leadership-based role within the educational and community contexts. Acting as facilitators within the consultation process, school psychologists were catalysts for managing school activities and assistants in the development of strategic plan designs for crisis response and bullying prevention within the RURAL program (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

### *Statement of the Purpose*

The purpose of this study was to examine specific factors that influence resilience among high school students.

### *Research Objective*

The primary objective of this study was to examine the extent to which students in a small southeastern Wisconsin high school report experiencing and having access to school-based factors known to promote and hinder resilience among youth.

### *Definition of Terms*

For purposes of this literature review, ten terms were defined to establish further clarification within this investigation.

*Attachment* – The ability to connect with and relate to other people (Perry, 2002).

*Developmental Assets* – The foundation of healthy development that can assist youth in growing up to be healthy, caring, and responsible (Benson, 1997).

*External Assets* – Resources provided by outside individuals and/or institutions (Benson, 1997).

*Internal Assets* – Resources possessed internally by youth (Benson, 1997).

*Protective Factors* – Characteristics, attitudes, or environmental circumstances that assist an individual, a family, and/or a community in learning to cope, adapt, and adjust to everyday stressors (Cooper, Estes and Allen, 2004).

*Parenting Style* – A complex set of enduring attitudes and beliefs regarding parenting (Prevatt, 2003).

*Risk Factors – Circumstances that increase the likelihood a youth will develop an emotional or behavioral disorder compared with children from the general population (Smith and Carlson, 1997).*

*Temperament – A child's disposition (Smith and Carlson, 1997).*

*Self-Awareness – The ability to recognize and acknowledge one's strengths and weaknesses, accept one's reality, and strive toward one's future potential (Hippe, 2004).*

*Youth - Individuals ages five through eighteen years of age.*

#### *Assumptions and Limitations*

It was assumed the research reviewed and incorporated into this thesis was valid, unbiased, and reliable. It was also assumed that the benefits assessed within the RURAL program were measurable and accurate. The limitations of this study were that the survey instrument only used high school grade-levels as demographic information and only frequency counts and percentages were used. This limited the type and depth of information gleaned from this research project in terms of the sample population and results of this study. The subjects were from a small town in southeastern Wisconsin so their responses may not necessarily be generalizable to culturally diverse subjects living in urban areas.

## Chapter II Literature Review

This chapter will begin with a review of research regarding individual, familial, parental, school and community related components associated with the development of resilience among youth. Just as the theories of resilience have expanded from solely focusing on the individual to including broad-based definitions and applications (family, school, community), the components will be discussed on a narrower, more individual level and then expanded to a broader, more global spectrum. These include child temperament, attachment, mentoring, gender and age, intelligence, self-awareness, parenting style, peers, and school and community involvement. A discussion on reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors will also be provided. A historical overview of the origins behind one community-based resilience project, the Rural Underpinnings for Resiliency and Linkages (RURAL) program, will be supplied. In addition, the five components of the RURAL project will be explained in greater detail along with further elaboration on the role schools play within the execution and implementation of this program. Several evaluation methods utilized to gauge the efficacy of the RURAL program within youth resilience education will also be discussed. This chapter will then conclude with a restatement of the purpose and objectives of this study as it relates to the RURAL project. Specific reasoning as to why Wisconsin high school students were chosen for this study will also be explained. Lastly, a brief discussion will be included as to how the data from this study will further benefit professionals and practitioners in the field of education.

### *Child Temperament*

A child's temperament or disposition can greatly influence his/her level of personal resilience (Smith and Carlson, 1997). Research has found that children who are identified as difficult or slow-to-warm are less likely to be able to cope with stress compared to "easier" children (Smith and Carlson, 1997). Within older youth, personality traits such as sociability and humor have been found to express protective characteristics for older children (Smith and Carlson, 1997).

### *Attachment*

"Children are biologically programmed to find other humans as the most interesting and important objects in their world" (Brendtro and Longhurst, 2005, ¶ 43). They did not develop attachment in a random fashion, but instead, formed connections with individuals who met their needs (Brendtro and Longhurst, 2005). When this occurred, children were likely to model and learn from them (Brendtro and Longhurst, 2005).

Literature has shown, "Children are wonderfully resilient creatures capable of surviving harsh experiences and transforming them into personal strengths" (Brown, 2004, ¶ 1). However, this does not occur overnight nor does it develop solely within young people independently. One critical component associated with youth resilience consisted of caregiver attachment. Children who were able to securely attach to at least one individual, usually a caregiver, were more apt to become resilient in the face of stress and trauma (Perry, 2002). Youth who bonded poorly with a caregiver experienced more attachment problems and were less apt to be resilient (Perry, 2002). This phenomenon may be related to the significance that lies in connecting with other people when stress,

crises, or traumas were experienced (Perry, 2002). In addition, youth who displayed meager social and emotional connections were highly susceptible to distress. These young individuals were then more vulnerable to develop maladaptive styles of coping and exhibit symptoms such as impulsivity, aggression, inattention, and depression (Perry, 2002).

### *Mentoring*

As children grow and expand their circle of attachment, they gain support from family members, teachers, peers, and mentors (Brendtro and Longhurst, 2005). According to Perry (2002), children who possessed extended and invested family members, neighbors, caring teachers, and community members experienced far fewer issues with severe stress and trauma. Youth who were able to be influenced by positive role models and mentors experienced heightened opportunities to become resilient (Brown, 2004). It is believed that praiseworthy mentors provided inspiration and motivation to their clients consistency through both their words and their actions (Brown, 2004). Mentors contributed to the end product (the child) in his/her own unique way.

### *Gender and Age*

One interesting aspect related to the acquisition of resiliency in youth involves gender. Frydenburg (2004) contended that compared to boys, girls were more disposed to, "Turn to others, think hopefully, and resort to tension-releasing strategies" (¶ 13). In addition, they were more inclined to engage in these behaviors as they became older (Frydenburg, 2004). However, studies conducted by Frydenburg and Lewis (2000) also found by the time girls reach the age of 16, they were more apt to declare personal helplessness and an inability to cope compared to boys (Frydenburg, 2004). In addition,

Frydenburg and Lewis (2000) identified that a critical period exists regarding the acquisition and solidification of resilience in youth. These periods occurred between the ages of 13 and 15 for both girls and boys (Frydenburg, 2004). Participation in religious activities, physical recreation, and adhering to social norms decreased between the ages of 12 and 14. Turning to professionals for help with problems decreased significantly at the age of 15 than at the ages of 13 and 17 (Frydenburg, 2004). Given these findings, it appears imperative that youth be provided with coping strategies and other resilience-based mechanisms by the age of 16 (Frydenburg, 2004).

### *Intelligence*

Intelligence level also appeared to contribute to resilience development in youth (Kitano and Lewis, 2005). While it is important to note that high cognitive ability was not a prerequisite for resilient outcomes, it seemed to be a supporting factor, especially as it related to coping (Kitano and Lewis, 2005). Reviewers of literature also agreed that average to above average intellect supports youth resilience (Kitano and Lewis, 2005). Osofsky and Thompson (2000) contended that cognitive ability may be the most important personal quality which serves as a protective factor. It seemed that a child who learned quickly and could also learn from minimal experiences tended to undergo an easier time calling upon his/her own experience and his/her capacity to imagine a future that is happy and safe (Perry, 2002). Frydenburg (1997) ascertained that these youth were also more apt to utilize problem-solving skills, work hard, and achieve more as compared to their peers who possessed lower intellect (Kitano and Lewis, 2005). In addition, Frydenburg (1997) also found children who demonstrated average to above average cognitive ability were less likely to engage in wishful thinking, more likely to invest in a

close circle of friends, and use positive means to reduce stress and tension (Kitano and Lewis, 2005).

### *Self-Awareness*

A youth's level of self-awareness was another precursor to successful development of resilience. Self-awareness allowed a child to identify strengths and weakness in a frank and realistic manner (Hippe, 2004). Related personal resources such as self-esteem, confidence, acceptance, and optimism have also been recognized as resilience protective factors (Smith and Carlson, 1997). Hippe (2004) contended that providing environments which encourage self-awareness and allow youth to work through personal issues and areas of challenge were also key. Such environments could be supplied through parents and caregivers. Hippe (2004) identified two primary elements for instilling resilience in youth. The first element included reducing the occurrence of harmful influences of television, computer games, and music that portray violence, sexism, misogyny, or projections of unrealistic body images for boys and girls to imitate. The second element consisted of developing resilience in youth by way of modeling empathic caregiving. According to Hippe, "A caregiver who is empathic will be more able to identify with the child, more effectively demonstrate true interest, and help the child identify their strengths and areas of challenge" (2004, ¶ 11).

Lavoie (2003) also provided additional insight into ways an individual, usually a parent or caregiver, can foster self-awareness in a child. These aspects are comprised of praising, encouraging, and maintaining interest in the child (Hippe, 2004). Lavoie (2003) maintained when praise and encouragement are combined together, they can be powerful motivators for a child, as they help to instill self-esteem, pride, foster cooperation, build

positive relationships, highlight unique skills and abilities, and assist youth during difficult times. When interest in a child is consistently demonstrated by a caregiver or other significant adult, it tended to convey the notion that he/she was accepted unconditionally. It also sent a message to the child that he/she was able to accurately identify significant areas of strength (Brooks and Goldstein, 2001).

### *Parenting Style*

Baumrind's (1996, 1991) classification of parenting styles provided a basis for a multitude of research to be developed regarding the interaction and overall relationship between parenting and child outcomes (Prevatt, 2003). This appeared to convey an important message that parent(s) can demonstrate resilient-based characteristics through personal interactions with their children. Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick, and Sawyer (2003) found parents who displayed warmth, encouragement, assistance, high expectations, a belief in the child, and a non-blaming stance were more likely to produce resilient children who were able to cope well with adversity (as cited in Cooper, Estes, and Allen, 2004). Parents who also provided support and guidance when personally experiencing stress and disadvantage were more apt to instill resilience in their children (Smith and Carlson, 1997).

Parenting styles that decreased the possibility for a child to be resilient included characteristics such as neglect, abuse, and parental negative reactions to chronic stress.

### *Peers*

The nature of the peer group and how a young individual interacts with this group was also a critical component to how youth acquire resilience. Smith and Carlson (1997) contended that at-risk children tended to withdraw from peers or interact with them in a

hostile and aggressive manner. Smith and Carlson (1997) also asserted these behaviors tended to be followed by friendships or peer associations with equally less adapted youth who then reinforced this deviant conduct. This may have paved the way for future juvenile delinquency or substance abuse (Smith and Carlson, 1997). However, positive peer relationships also provided worthwhile and valuable experiences for children, which may then have increased the likelihood of resilience acquisition and adaptive coping mechanisms. “Connections with peers and activities that are socially rewarding and that also foster social values and connectedness have been found to have protective value” (Smith and Carlson, 1997, p.240).

#### *School and Community Involvement*

The environment beyond the family also provided ample opportunities for children to become resilient (Smith and Carlson, 1997). Supportive school professionals and community members have been highly correlated with protective factors. Other protective factors related to the school and community included providing services and specific resources to combat personal or family-based adverse circumstances.

#### *Reducing Risk Factors*

One predominant theme exhibited within the resilience literature encompassed the detrimental nature of risk factors and the level to which they can inhibit resilience to become instilled in youth. Specific risk factors will be briefly discussed in this section of the literature review. Although these factors are not all encompassing, they provided a solid idea of the types of behaviors and circumstances related to lowering the incidence of resilient youth. These risk factors included parental joblessness, physical or emotional abuse, neglect/maltreatment, economic disadvantage, substance abuse, personal or

family-based isolation, dangerous and disorganized neighborhoods and communities, marital dissatisfaction, divorce, familial conflict, mental illness within the child, parent, or other family member, and unsupported teenage mothers (Smith and Carlson, 1997).

It appeared unrealistic to believe children will never encounter any of these factors or situations within their lifetimes. Given this seemingly inevitable circumstance, Rutter (1985) provided two methods to buffer the effects of risk factors upon children. These consisted of modifying exposure to risk and modifying perceptions of risk. Many times this is done by integrating professionals such as social workers, physicians, mental health counselors, guidance counselors, school psychologists, or other service providers to assist in eliminating or decreasing the incidence of specific risk factors within an individual or family.

#### *Enhancing Protective Factors*

In reducing risk factors, it seems also essential and necessary to replace these negative features with protective factors. Smith and Carlson (1997) contended that enhancing self-esteem and improving academic achievement are two viable options. According to Simms-Shepard (2004), educational professionals can build resiliency in contemporary youth by providing chances for meaningful engagement and participation through the implementation of interesting, relevant learning activities. Simms-Shepard (2004) also argued that successful academic achievement can be sought through supporting various learning styles, strengths and preferences. In doing so, students were able to express their intellect and abilities which may then have allowed them to take part in learning on several levels (Simms-Shepard, 2004). Modeled after Howard Gardner's

Multiple Intelligences framework, this educational philosophy appeared likely to hold great promise for fostering resiliency within the classroom.

*History of the Rural Underpinnings for Resiliency and Linkages (RURAL) Project*

The need for a program such as the RURAL program can be traced back to the rough and arduous heritage possessed by the state of Kansas. Its past was one marked by “famous lawmen and gunfighters of the American West...home to some of the most unsavory saloons” (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003, ¶ 1). In addition, gunfights and murders were quite prevalent in its history. These tumultuous historical roots paved the way for residents within later years to cope with a steeply declining farm economy, harsh climate, and even worse recession (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). This brief chronicle of state history can be deemed as relevant to this literature review in that these events and attitudes expressed by former residents seemed to precipitate and then become manifested by future generations through an expression of ambiguity that was conveyed toward alcohol and drug use, as well as an enduring advocacy for the right to bear firearms (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). “[County] rates of underage alcohol use were higher than state averages and marijuana and methamphetamines were [becoming evolving] concerns” (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003, ¶ 2). Entities such as alcohol, drugs, and firearms were also easily accessible to students (Connect Kansas, 2001, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Almost 14% of youth residing within Ellis County, Kansas lived in poverty and 27% were strained economically (Census, 2000; Kansas State Department of Education, 2002, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Graduation rates within the school district decreased from 97% in 1997 to 90.7% in 2001 (Kansas State Department of

Education, 2002, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Also, various other risk factors within this community encompass a heightened number of births to single adolescents, increased foster placements, and a growing incidence of child abuse (Kids Count, 2001, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). The number of juveniles processed within the judicial system also increased dramatically, with approximately 29% of 2001 arrests for DUI belonging to Ellis County youth aged 14-21 (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). In addition, past surveys developed by local community partnerships which assessed students within grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 revealed that significant increases in drug use had arisen within Ellis County youth since 1995 (Connect Kansas, 2001, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

To add to this increased occurrence of youth at-risk activity, gang affiliation and membership has also been an emerging epidemic. Other adverse circumstances impacting Ellis County youth comprised of lenient attitudes toward alcohol and illicit drugs, diminishing levels of parental involvement, and escalating rates of crime-related activity (Connect Kansas, 2001, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Furthermore, along with being located on a widely recognized “interstate route for drug trafficking” (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003), Kansas stood as the second highest state in illegal methamphetamine labs and ranks as the fifth state nationwide in drug trafficking seizures (Legislative Division of the Post Audit, 2001, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). According to Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, local law enforcement, “Seized eleven illegal [methamphetamine] labs in 2001 [alone]” (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003, ¶ 2).

As a result of these factors, local awareness of and need for a youth-based resilience program sparked the formation and materialization of the RURAL project.

Modeled as an example of the Safe Schools/Healthy Student (SS/HS) project, this program was designed to serve both youth and families in rural Ellis County. At the time of the study, it served 5,500 students in Ellis County (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). The foundation of the program lies within strengthening and collaborating with existing alliances among three school districts, the community mental health care center, law enforcement, the local prevention center, and Fort Hays State University. A vast number of evidence – based approaches were applied within the schools and community, with the intention of increasing school safety and encouraging healthy behaviors (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). The approaches consisted of universal prevention strategies for the student body, early intervention for at-risk youth and families, along with an intensive provision of services to those young people with the greatest needs.

*RURAL Framework – The Development of the RURAL Partnerships and Coalitions.* Although the population of Ellis County has experienced a high level of at-risk and dangerous illegal activity committed by its youth, those working within the helping professions within this geographical area were fortunate to develop and maintain a long and productive history of agency collaboration. For example, the district’s school psychologists, mental health center staff, social and rehabilitation services, along with other agencies combined financial and staff resources to maintain multiple local social programs. In addition, the community also possessed numerous multidisciplinary teams and alliances that address issues such as child abuse, substance abuse, child protection, and early childhood (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Given that several programs had been previously founded to focus on juvenile crime and substance abuse, the Rural

Underpinnings for Resiliency and Linkages (RURAL) project seemed the most beneficial and viable step on the pathway to developing effective youth resilience programming.

Upon the creation of the RURAL project, several goals and objectives have stemmed from its design. Considered an asset to this program, the acquisition of additional staff and funding allowed for the development of numerous committees. These committees were responsible for establishing increased support, resources, and monetary means to then be distributed across the county to assist in identifying the most beneficial services for at-risk populations. In addition, addressing concerns, needs, and gaps within the community were also of great interest. Task groups were also generated as smaller sub-committees to construct and implement strategic plans to assist in the resolution of community dilemmas; several of these plans achieved high success since their implementation (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

The RURAL project has widened its coalition memberships and created adequate support with the end result encompassing the successful accomplishment of instilling resilience within the young people of Ellis County (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Another valuable asset which can be deemed as crucial to the success of the RURAL project entails frequent communication, both on a formal and informal level. The members of the coalition engage in quarterly steering committee meetings which involve discussion and individual input in regards to planning, resource sharing, goal setting, decision making, and evaluation of the RURAL project.

*Strategy selection component.* Strategy selection within the RURAL framework was based upon specific risk factors and needs of Ellis County, but also upon available resources. Those individuals working within the RURAL project determined which services and agencies were most utilized and effective within the community. These resources were then enhanced via the provision of additional staff training and social work services (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

In addition, adopting research-based programs was another essential aspect so that the results could be deemed as being measured in a more predictable, cost effective and appropriate method for the community (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Prevention programs were chosen on the “quality of their research base, appropriateness for the population, and recognition by [other community] agencies” (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003, ¶ 15). Supplementary strategies were selected based upon what past literature illustrated as prerequisites to enhancing resilience and protective factors. These methods encompassed school-based mentoring programs, “Crisis response planning, after-school planning support, tutoring services, and youth advisory group development” (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003, ¶ 15).

Social work support was chosen due to the disparity in school to home linkages as well as the need for early intervention for families who encountered problems with parenting, accessing resources, as well as other issues (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). These services were aimed towards young children, their families, in addition to school-age students and entailed individual, family, and group intervention strategies (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

In assistance with the community mental health center administration, therapy was designated as another appropriate treatment resource due to the increased population of juvenile offenders and the growing need for an effective approach for servicing dysfunctional families. Other treatment approaches consist of programs which addressed dropout prevention, recovery services, underemployment, substance abuse, crime, and other counterproductive behaviors (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*Prevention component.* Prevention activities selected were school-based and intended for preschool through middle school youth due to the greater possibility for preventing at-risk behaviors (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Rather than implement RURAL in a mandated, top-down fashion, it was decided that individual schools would determine their desired level of collaboration and participation, with the anticipation that the positive attributes of the programs would be apparent once teachers and support staff recognized their effectiveness. Following this occurrence, schools would then “own” their chosen programs, possibly resulting in improved and enhanced implementation (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

The role of the prevention team, which included school psychologists and a social worker, entailed training and providing technical assistance to school staff in order to cultivate and broaden prevention programs. The prevention team applied a strategic change approach which stressed awareness, support, and sustainability. Instructors could request differing levels of support, which comprise of modeling, handouts, corrective feedback, and/or consultation (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). In addition, schools or teachers could also request other resources such as posters, videos, customized handouts,

to support new, additional strategies. The prevention team held primary responsibility for offering support and allocating requested resources (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Each school involved with the RURAL project assembled school safety personnel groups which consisted of a school psychologist, principal, school counselor, and one or more teachers. Individuals belonging to this team were responsible for, “(a) accessing the safety needs of their school through safety audits... (b) hold [investigations] of crisis drills, and (c) assess concerns such as communication gaps between [various school employees and departments]” (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003, ¶ 21). Student climate data was provided in addition to the utilization of plans which addressed such issues as bullying, social isolation, and equity in enforcing school rules and policies. Each team was provided with possible methods and strategies selected by RURAL which could potentially determine appropriate strategies to adopt (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Incidentally, each school personnel team’s request for additional support and/or resources needed to be connected to each school’s safety school personnel plan. These plans were deliberately and carefully created for each building, with some concentrating on the needs on the entire school population, while others focused on a particular, individual strategy. Also, some schools modified their plan annually, revising specific aspects based upon changing needs and perceptions on what was desired or needed (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*Intervention component.* The intervention team consisted of social work staff designated to certain schools or programs. Due to state funding specifications, school social workers in the state of Kansas were only utilized with children who received special education services. With the acquisition of the RURAL program, any child or

family was eligible. In 2001, 164 families obtained services (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). In addition, these services were voluntary, linked to schools, convenient for families, and possibly most importantly, free (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

The intervention included individual and/or family services, specific school-based services, parent education, and advisory and staff development for early childhood programs. Also, needs-based appraisals were conducted at each individual school in order to establish which school-based services were appropriate (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Individual or family assistance were implemented within the home or school environment, during daytime or evening hours, which also were provided through a family-driven, solution focused approach (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Issues characteristically addressed basic parenting strategies, supervision, boundaries, academic attendance, discipline, and resource allocation. Family-based concerns also typically included depression, loss, financial stress, divorce, and/or mental illness. Case management and referrals to additional agencies and services were also available. The referral process encompassed parents or teachers denoting particular children as requiring assistance provided via a school psychologist or school counselor before referring them to RURAL. This strategy could be perceived as beneficial, as it guaranteed that there was an evident and well-defined need for services and that the referral itself was not an attempt to circumvent a more appropriate referral to the community health center or a special education team (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). If additional, more extensive referrals were required, allowing a school employee to contact the family would primarily serve to diminish barriers to the acceptance to services for their children (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Parenting support and education exhibited high interest as

demonstrated by full, regularly-attended classes, waitlists, and additional extra sessions. Fifty-two adults participated overall (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

In addition, psychoeducational and specifically aimed school-based groups were habitually co-led with the school's psychologist or counselor. Subjects discussed entailed dating, healthy relationships, and depression. Targeted students engaged in anger management or social skills acquisition groups. Short intervention groups were also developed for high school students who had infringed upon school substance abuse policies (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Thirty-one students took part within the 2001-2002 academic year (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*Treatment component.* The treatment component of RURAL consisted of dropout prevention and recovery services. Curriculum was customized according to client need and self-paced in nature. Materials such as computer-assisted instruction, videos, CD-ROMS, books, magazines, and newspapers were utilized (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Child care and evening hours were typically used by those who are parents or who work during daytime hours. Individuals who utilized these services could earn high school credits for failed classes following school or during the summer. Also, the learning center adopted by RURAL also served as an alternative educational placement (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Individuals who dropped out of the primary educational system enrolled in the recovery program. Within a two year period, 25 individuals received high school diplomas due to the implementation of this program (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). This piece of information holds extreme significance in that a majority of students enroll with few high school credits and may be able to only attend and participate in a few hours of

class time weekly (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). To date, dropout prevention and recovery services have assisted 200 individuals (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Overall, 450 individuals enrolled at the community learning center from June 2000 to June 2002 (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Not only could these resources be applied to at-risk or high risk students, adult English courses were also available and were used by seven adults in 2000-2001; 80 in 2001-2002 (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). In addition, parents participated in evening classes located in a local neighborhood school in which free child care was provided to promote attendance.

*Community outreach component.* RURAL demonstrated a high level of engagement and participation within Ellis County (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). This occurrence was evidenced by RURAL project staff establishing media contacts by way of television, radio, and newspaper. In addition, local public service announcements were implemented and broadcasted numerous times daily (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

A RURAL resource library was also open to all residents within the community and provides over 500 resources. District school psychologists, counselors, and teachers utilized several of the materials offered within the library. Parents and local agencies also utilized resources when needed. These materials encompassed reference books, government publications, games, videos, program guides, parenting programs, and counseling resources (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Subject material found within the resources comprised of crisis response, parenting, child development, divorce, death, alcohol and drugs, psychological disabilities such as attention deficit disorder, home visits, cultural competency, tolerance, school safety, violence prevention, conflict management, peer mediation, and bullying (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Lastly, local, state, and nationwide programs and conferences were the primary mode of external communication for the RURAL project. Such conferences and programs held nationwide included If Children are the Future, Parents Hold the Key Initiative, which brought particular issues to the surface such as substance abuse and domestic violence through means of positive parenting skills and community resources (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Presentations at the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) (Paige, Francis, and Schiada, 2002; Paige, Hodgdon, Douglas, and O'Day, 2001, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003), the National Conference on Advancing School-Based Mental Health Programs (Paige, 2002b, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003), along with the Safe Schools/Healthy Students National Conference (Cohen and Paige, 2002; Paige 2000b, 2002a, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003) were also methods for conveying RURAL's message on a national level. RURAL was featured prominently at the Surgeon General's Community Forum on Youth Violence (Paige, 2001b, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003) and the Centers for Disease Control SafeUSA Leadership Conference (Paige, 2001c, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Articles pertaining to the RURAL project were also included in national newsletters such as the *Communiqué* (Paige, 2000a, 2001a, as cited in Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003) and the *Challenge* ("Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative", 2001; Paige, as cited in Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Additional collaborative enterprises included Safe Instead of Sorry Conference which addressed school violence and substance abuse prevention and developmental assets.

On the state level, the RURAL project was a primary feature at several school psychology association conferences (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*The role of school psychologists.* The function of the school psychologist played an essential role within the development, implementation, and evaluation of the RURAL project. RURAL was constructed and written by two school psychologists who became the future Project Director and Prevention Team Coordinator (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). The prevention team was also comprised of school psychologists due to the need for these individuals' skills and experience with systems modification and consultation as well as their reputation as proactive members within the academic setting. Furthermore, school psychologists were key, active players at the building level, as they often drove school team activities and helped design strategic plans for crisis response, bullying prevention, and other project objectives (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*Evaluation planning and process evaluation development.* All school sites involved within the Safe Schools/Healthy Students programming as well as the RURAL project were mandated to evaluate and monitor the progression towards program goals and objectives. The evaluating agency of interest utilized the Docking Institute of Public Affairs, a research branch of Fort Hays University. Being involved with the RURAL project since its creation, this establishment ensured that appropriate measures were taken to secure familiarity with the components of RURAL as well as their evaluation processes (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). The steps taken to construct an evaluation plan were as follows: 1. *Defining goals and objectives.* This was conducted by converting project goals and objectives into "straightforward and tangible items" (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003, ¶ 39). Those involved within the evaluation process delineated goals and objectives into seven components: a) the provision of selected school services, b) the provision of selected social services, c) the provision of selected mental health services,

d) lowering the rates of substance abuse, violence and crime, e) enhancing school safety, f) implement school safety codes and policies, and g) evaluating the activities of the RURAL project (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

2. *Identifying major RURAL components and categories.* Some components were particular programs that operated on an independent level, while others functioned in a more continuous fashion. Those who evaluated RURAL created a plan that measured and monitored specific information for broader RURAL components. RURAL project components were arranged into five categories of prevention: a) programs, b) intervention/treatment services, c) staff development, d) school policies, and e) community awareness (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

3. *Selecting Tracking Procedures.* Following the identification of the components, tracking methods were created. These methods were initially developed for semiannual collection, but as the federal tracking initiation took place, it became evident that there would be duplication and overlap with some of the measures when evaluating a few of the RURAL programs set in place by both the project staff and the national evaluator. As a result, the local evaluation process comprised of concentrating on a specific unduplicated set of monitoring procedures which largely encompassed satisfaction surveys and service application tracking procedures (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

4. *Evaluating questions developed by component categories.* Overall, each new program or service was evaluated from the perspective of those accepting or providing services. Also, the views of parents and the community itself were acquired. If needed, certain items featured case studies (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

5. *Developing surveys to address evaluation questions.* The types of surveys utilized included process evaluation-related surveys which measured satisfaction in addition to surveys which measured

project outcomes or attitudes of students, parents, teachers, other school personnel, community members, and RURAL staff. All surveys possessed an open-ended and multiple-choice question format. In order to compare different service components and respondent types, terminology was kept as similar as possible within all the surveys (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). 6. *Planning of confidential process interviews.* The final step in the evaluation process entailed confidential interviews with RURAL staff, service providers, and/or the prevention team. This was designed to service two purposes: 1) to identify particular case studies to supplement the more encompassing outcome measures, and 2) to improve information from the process evaluation surveys (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*School and community climate surveys.* Several of the goals and objectives of RURAL were associated with developing positive changes within both the schools and the community on issues related to violence, drugs, safety, and the utilization of mental health and social services (Paige, Kitzis, & Wolfe, 2003). Consequently, assessment efforts were focused on tracking *attitudinal* and *behavioral* changes. Two surveys were constructed with this sole prospect in mind. A school climate survey which consisted of questions pertaining to school affiliation, rule adhesion, bullying, violence, alcohol awareness, drugs or weapons brought onto school grounds, isolation and emotional support, academic support, parent and community involvement, teacher/principal/school staff relations, and school building environment was developed (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). In addition, a community climate survey was introduced in which the questions concentrated on awareness and willingness to accept new RURAL services, school safety

topics, substance abuse, and the incidence of violence within the community (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Following the implementation of the two climate surveys, it was found the questions differed greatly across both surveys and were administered differently within each school building. Given these findings, it was determined that developing a school climate survey which included all the desired survey characteristics was a productive strategy. This survey was created by researching other survey instruments. The end result encompassed age-appropriate terminology and included questions to be addressed within the RURAL school climate survey (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Incidentally, the RURAL project evaluation process utilized both data extracted from both process and outcome evaluation measures. Following the distribution and completion of the above mentioned surveys, data were provided to RURAL staff and utilized to serve individual school-needs assessments (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Individualized reports were supplied to every building so that problem areas could be identified and remediated. As an outcome measure, climate data were also applied to determine whether bullying, substance abuse, school violence, school alienation, as well as other indicators had transformed over time (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*Climate administration.* Due to the potential intrusiveness involved and difficulty in gauging small climate changes when applying pre-test/post-test methodology within this evaluation process, a continual random sampling agenda was utilized. At the onset of the academic year, each school district provided evaluators with classroom lists from each building. The prevalence of surveying a specific school was dependent upon the number of classrooms. Schools with smaller numbers of student enrollment, usually

consisting of elementary schools, were surveyed once each semester or year whereas larger school such as the middle and high schools were sampled on a pre-created sampling schedule. Within the first survey year, baseline sampling was implemented into all buildings during the fall, with continual sampling during spring semester. Survey year 2 encompassed continual sampling throughout the entire year. In addition, to decrease student impact and time to complete the surveys, students were recommended to complete either the school or community survey, rather than complete both at one time. This was achieved by surveying in-classroom pairs (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Teachers and staff were also assessed using a continuous random sampling format identical with the student sampling. In addition, parents from all schools were sampled during activities such as parent/teacher conferences or school events (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*Impact outcome evaluation.* The goals and objectives of the RURAL project along with the requirements of the federal component provided the foundation for the selection outcome measures (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Education measures consisted of attendance and dropout rates, suspension and expulsion rates, informal disciplinary reports, and academic tests scores. Social measures entailed child abuse/neglect reports, and births to single teens. Criminal justice measures encompassed juvenile court decisions, criminal court filings, and reported alcohol/drug rates (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*Case study interviews.* Case studies were deemed as a highly crucial component to the evaluation process, but also equally essential was the maintenance of anonymity of clients within a small community. In order to gain this type of unidentified status,

RURAL staff was interviewed rather than their clientele (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). An instrument was created and provided in advance to all interviewees. Approximately half of the interviews focused on process evaluation topics mentioned previously, while the remaining portion was concerned with asking staff and service providers to discuss and describe what was personally considered to be relevant experiences of success and failure found within their clients (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Findings indicated positive and noteworthy endings for clients. It appeared that the RURAL project has provided necessary, adequate, and appropriate support to those families in need (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

*Success of research-based programs.* The last aspect of the RURAL project evaluation process encompassed gathering information and data regarding the implementation and impact of its evidence-based prevention programs (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

As stated before, the staff and service providers of the RURAL project made a decision before the onset of the project that programs would be implemented and administered from a “grass roots” approach. This was established with the perspective that utilizing a top-down method would result in maladaptive and counterproductive activities to occur within the school districts (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003). Rather, it was assumed that applying a bottom-up method in which buildings could take part in programs on an individually-desired level would potentially result in teachers and school staff witnessing successful outcomes and then further implement additional programs over time. This seemed to occur within Ellis County. It was estimated that participation

would increase on a steady rate over the course of time and will soon achieve 100% participation within most schools (Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe, 2003).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine specific factors that influence resilience among high school students in a small town located in southeastern Wisconsin. The primary objective of this study was to examine the extent to which the Wisconsin high school students reported experiencing and having access to school-based factors known to promote and hinder resilience among youth as they compared with students in the RURAL study. Criterion for sampling Wisconsin students was solely based on convenience to the researcher. It is important to note that students from the RURAL study were provided resilience programming and resources from the RURAL project prior to data collection. The Wisconsin high school students were not provided programming specific to the RURAL project. It relates to this study because the data gleaned from the Wisconsin investigation was compared to student data gathered from the RURAL project to see if differences related to resilience factors could be identified for students who received resilience programming versus students who did not. In future time this may assist professionals and practitioners in the field of education who have not implemented resilience programming in their schools to acquire a more in-depth understanding of certain problem areas and factors known to inhibit resilience in their students. Resilience programs and additional supports may then be put in place to address weak areas, provide skills to enhance youth resilience, and provide opportunities for adolescents to acquire a strong sense of resilience.

### Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter will describe the subjects who participated in this research study and how they were selected for the inclusion of this project. In addition, the instrument that was developed and used to collect information will be discussed. Data collection and analysis procedures will then be presented.

#### *Description of Subjects*

The subjects for this study were adolescents in grades 9-12 enrolled in a social studies class during the spring semester, 2008, at a public high school located in southeastern Wisconsin. A total of 96 students participated in this study. The sample included 15 freshman, 4 sophomores, 68 juniors, 4 seniors, and 5 students identified as other. Other is defined as those students who decided to not provide a current grade level or identified two current grade levels (i.e., 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade) on the survey.

#### *Sample Selection*

The students in the class were asked if they would be willing to voluntarily participate in the study. They were given an overview of the study and told what their involvement and participation would entail. The students were assured all information collected during the study would be treated in a confidential manner. Students were also given information about counseling services available at the high school. The students were provided consent forms that they could keep if they had future questions or concerns (Appendix A).

#### *Instrumentation*

The content of the survey was initially developed for a resilience study conducted by Paige, Kitzis, and Wolfe (2003) of Fort Hays Unified School District 489 and Fort

Hays University: Hays, Kansas (Docking Institute of Public Affairs, Fort Hays State University: Hays, KS). The researcher of this paper obtained consent from the Fort Hays researchers to utilize the exact survey used in the RURAL study as a way to measure specific factors that influence resilience among high school youth (Appendix B).

The subjects were asked to give only their present grade level as demographic information. The questions of the survey focused on asking high school students' perceptions of a multitude of aspects within their school. These aspects included the structural condition of the school, student overcrowding, teacher attitudes, students' attitudes, peer groups, substance use, school rules, parent, teacher, and administrator involvement, extracurricular activities, student support services, and teacher-student relationships.

#### *Data Collection*

The instrument was explained and administered during the class period. The survey instrument was a 45 item, self-administered questionnaire which could be completed in class in approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Of the 45 items, 41 questions were based on a scale with 1 = Yes, 2 = No, and 3 = Don't know. Four questions were open-ended in nature for which the student could provide their own response to a specific survey question. Once consent was obtained the surveys were distributed to students for them to complete. Students returned the surveys to the class teacher who placed the anonymous surveys in a folder. The surveys were not marked or coded in any way to assure confidentiality

*Data Analysis*

Frequency counts and percentages were used to calculate the data. For scale-based survey items, numerical frequencies and percentages were used. For open-ended items, themes were identified within students' responses and then transformed into numerical frequencies.

*Limitations*

The limitations of this study were that the survey instrument only used high school grade-levels as demographic information and only frequency counts and percentages were used. This limited the type and depth of information gleaned from this research project in terms of the sample population and results of this study. The subjects were from a small town located in southeastern Wisconsin so their responses may not necessarily be generalizable to culturally diverse subjects living in urban areas.

## Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which students in a small southeastern Wisconsin high school report experiencing and having access to school-based factors known to promote and hinder resilience among youth. This chapter will present the data calculated from the 96 students who agreed to complete the survey.

### *Factors of Resilience: Item Analysis*

The data presented help to validate the fact that: (a) students report they have access to things in their schools that promote resiliency; (b) the extent to which they feel that there are risk factors present in their school, and (c) the extent to which they, themselves, feel connected with their school. Responses to all survey items are included in this chapter.

The goal of this study was to identify school climate as it relates to adolescent resilience, so positive factors will be identified as well as negative factors for examination in the future by school administrators, staff, and other school personnel.

*Q.1. Structural condition of the school.* A majority of the adolescents sampled in this research project perceived their school to be in good condition ( $n = 82$ ; 85%). Six (6%) students believed their school was not structurally sound; another six students (6%) did not know if their school was in good condition; and two students (2%) answered yes and no to if they perceived their school to be structurally safe.

*Q.2. Neatness and cleanliness of the school.* When asked if your school was neat and clean, seventy-seven students (80%) endorsed the response that they perceived their school to be neat and clean. Seven (7%) believed their high school was not; eleven (11%) did not know; and one student (1%) answered both yes and no.

*Q.3. School crowding.* Sixty students (63%) surveyed perceived their school to be too crowded. Twenty-five (26%) believed it was not; nine (9%) responded that they did not know; and two (2%) responded both yes and no.

*Q.4. Student enjoyment in attending school.* When asked their perceptions if students enjoyed attending this particular high school, student responses were mixed. Thirty-four (35%) thought students did enjoy attending the high school; twenty-seven (28%) responded that students did not enjoy attending school; another thirty-four (35%) did not know; and one student (1%) responded both yes and no.

*Q.5. Teacher enjoyment in teaching at the school.* For this question, students were asked if they believed teachers enjoyed teaching at your school. Forty-seven (49%) answered yes; ten (10%) responded no; thirty-seven (39%) responded they did not know; and one student (1%) answered both yes and no.

*Q.6. Teacher and principal involvement in school activities.* A majority of students believed that both teachers and principals are involved in school activities (n = 66; 69%). Eight percent perceived that teachers and principals do not involve themselves enough in school activities; twenty-one (22%) did not know; and one (1%) thought both yes and no.

*Q.7. Student involvement in school activities.* Sixty-two students (65%) thought that the student body at this high school was involved in school activities; twelve (13%) thought that students were not involved enough; twenty-one (22%) did not know if students were involved; and one (1%) responded both yes and no.

*Q.8. Adequate programming and activities for students at school.* This question asked students if they perceived their school to have enough school programs and

activities for students at school. This question was significant. Fifty-seven (59%) responded yes; sixteen (17%) answered no; twenty-one (22%) responded they did not know; and two students (2%) answered yes and no to this question.

*Q.9. Cliques at school.* Thirty-eight students (40%) believed there were too many cliques at their school. Thirty-four (35%) endorsed the response that there were not; twenty-one (22%) did not know, and three (3%) responded yes and no.

*Q.10. Equal treatment of students at school.* Students were asked if they thought all students were treated the same at school. Twenty responded yes (21%); forty-eight (50%) answered no; and twenty-eight students (29%) did not know if all students were treated the same in the school setting.

Among those students who answered no to this question, the following groups were identified as treated differently at school: students in special education (n = 11); all students (n = 9); 'cutters'/Goth students (n = 7); athletes (n = 4); teachers' pets (n = 4); different races (n = 3); smart students (n = 3); females (n = 2); low-income students (n = 2); bullies (n = 1); homosexuals (n = 1); less attractive students (n = 1); N/A (n = 1).

*Q.11. Students' concern about school.* For this survey item, students were asked if they perceived other students cared about school. Thirty students (31%) responded yes; another thirty (31%) answered no; thirty-five (36%) did not know; and one student (1%) answered yes and no.

*Q.12. Students' anxiety over safety in school.* The question asked if students worried over being safe in their school. This question is considered important. Thirteen (14%) answered yes; fifty-two (54%) responded no; twenty-nine (30 %) believed they did not know; and two (2%) did not answer this survey question.

Of the students who responded yes, the following were identified as specific groups that students experienced worry over: gangs/gang violence (n = 4); bullies (n = 3); knives (n= 3); fights (n = 1); different races (n= 1); N/A (n = 1).

*Q.13. Student perception of teachers' safety at school.* Students were asked to respond if they believed teachers worried about being safe at their high school. Thirteen (14%) answered yes; forty-one (43%) responded no; another forty-one students (43%) responded I don't know; and one student (1%) responded both no and I don't know.

*Q.14. Bullying and teasing at school.* Forty-one students (43%) believed that bullying and teasing was a problem at their school; twenty-two (23%) answered it was not; thirty-one (32%) did not know; and two (2%) answered both yes and no.

*Q.15. Punishment for kids who bully and tease at school.* This survey question asked students if they believed that kids who bully and tease other students at school get punished. Thirty-eight students (40%) answered yes; thirty-nine (41%) answered no; eighteen (19%) responded that they did not know; and one (1%) student responded both yes and no.

*Q.16. Students' knowledge of school rules.* Of the students surveyed, a vast majority believed students knew the school rules (n = 68; 71%). Fifteen (16%) responded no and thirteen (14%) answered I don't know.

*Q.17. Student compliance of school rules.* For this item, students were asked their perception on if they believed students obeyed school rules. The responses to this question were found to be significant. Nineteen (19%) answered yes; fifty-five (57%) responded no; twenty-one (22%) did not know; and one student (1%) answered yes and no.

*Q.18. Teachers' knowledge of school rules.* Seventy-six students (79%) answered yes that they thought teachers knew the school rules; seven (7%) responded no; and fourteen (15%) endorsed the response that they did not know.

*Q.19. Kids who break rules and do not get into trouble.* This question was identified as important, as seventy students (73%) answered yes; twelve (13%) responded no; and fourteen (15%) did not know if students broke rules and did not get into trouble as a consequence.

*Q.20. Students bringing weapons to school.* The item asked students if they had heard of a student bringing a knife or gun to school. This question was significant, as thirty-six (38%) responded yes; fifty-five (57%) answered no; and five students (5%) did not know.

Of the students who endorsed that they did hear of a student bringing a knife or gun to school, the following frequencies were identified: 1 or 2 times (n = 25); 3-5 times (n = 4); 5+ times (n = 3); N/A (n = 4).

*Q.21. Students bringing alcohol to school.* Student responses to this survey item were deemed important. Forty-nine students (51%) responded yes; forty-two (44%) responded no; and five (5%) answered I don't know.

Of the students who endorsed that they did hear of a student bringing alcohol to school, the following frequencies were identified: 1 or 2 times (n = 25); 3-5 times (n = 11); 5+ times (n = 13).

*Q.22. Students bringing drugs to school.* This question asked high school students if they had heard of a student bringing drugs to school. A majority of students responded yes (n = 71; 74%); eighteen (19%) answered no; and seven (7%) answered I don't know.

Of the students who endorsed that they did hear of a student bringing drugs to school, the following frequencies were identified: 1 or 2 times (n = 14); 3-5 times (n = 7); 5+ times (n = 31); N/A (n = 14).

Of the students who responded yes, the following were drugs identified: marijuana (n = 37); cocaine (n = 12); don't worry about it (n = 7); methamphetamine (n = 4); mushrooms (n = 3); ecstasy (n = 2); heroin (n = 2); morphine (n = 2); vicodin (n = 2).

*Q.23. Punishment of drug use.* The question asked students if they perceived drug use to be punished enough at school. Forty-nine students (51%) responded yes; twelve (13%) answered no; thirty-four (35%) believed they not know; and one student (1%) responded yes and no.

*Q.24. Punishment of alcohol use.* This question was identified as important for this study. Fifty-one students (53%) endorsed the response of yes; twelve (13%) answered no; and thirty-two (33%) answered I don't know.

*Q.25. Incidence of Fighting at School*

The item asked students if they believed there was too much fighting at their high school. Twenty-two (23%) responded yes; sixty (63%) responded no; thirteen (14%) did not know; and one (1%) responded yes and no.

*Q.26. Teacher assistance for students having problems.* This item asked if students perceived that teachers in their school helped students who were having problems. Sixty-six students (69%) answered yes; sixteen (17%) answered no; thirteen (14%) responded I don't know; and one student (1%) responded yes and no.

*Q.27. Students' respect toward teachers.* Thirty-seven students (39%) thought that students respected their teachers; twenty-four (25%) responded no; thirty-two (33%) responded I don't know; and three students (3%) answered both yes and no.

*Q.28. Additional teacher assistance for students who need it.* The item examined whether teachers provided extra help to high school students when they needed it. Seventy students (73%) responded yes; eleven (11%) answered no; twelve (13%) responded I don't know; and three (3%) answered both yes and no.

*Q.29. Teacher discussion with students about homework and grades.* The question asked students if they perceived teachers talk to students about homework and academic progress. For this item, eighty-three students (86%) endorsed that teachers did talk with them about homework and grades; four (4%) believed they did not; seven (7%) responded I don't know; and one student (1%) responded both yes and no.

*Q.30. Fair treatment of all students.* Twenty-four students (25%) thought that all students were treated fairly at their school; forty-nine (51%) perceived that they were not; twenty-one (22%) answered I don't know; one student (1%) responded both yes and no; and another student (1%) answered no and I don't know.

*Q.31. Difficulty of instruction delivery due to student misconduct.* The question examined if students believed it was hard for their teacher to teach because of a misbehaving student. Sixty-seven students (70%) answered yes; fifteen (16%) responded no; and fourteen students (15%) answered I don't know.

*Q.32. Student loneliness at school.* Thirteen students (14%) endorsed yes; seventy-nine (82%) answered no; and four (4%) answered I don't know.

*Q.33. Student perception that others cared about them at school.* This survey question asked students if they believed that no one at their school cared about them. Eight percent (n = 8) answered yes; eighty-two (85%) responded no; and six percent (n = 6) did not know.

*Q.34. Friends of students at school.* This survey item asked if students believed they had friends at their high school. Eighty-eight (92%) responded yes; four (4%) answered no; and another four students (4%) responded I don't know.

*Q.35. Student knowledge of who to go to for problems.* Fifty-seven (59%) answered yes they did know who to go to if they had problems; ten (10%) responded no; and twenty-nine students (30%) answered I don't know.

*Q.36. Individuals whom students sought for assistance with problems.* This question was open-ended in nature and was identified as important for this study. Students were asked who they went to for help with their problems. The following groups of support staff were identified by high school students in this study: School counselors or school social workers (n = 66); friends (n = 9); don't care (n = 8); don't know or not sure (n = 5); N/A (n = 5); family (n = 2); religious individuals (n = 1).

*Q.37. Teacher assistance from the principal.* Twenty-six students (27%) believed that teachers received adequate assistance from the principal; twenty-three (24%) responded no; and forty-seven (49%) answered I don't know.

*Q.38. Teacher discussion with parents about their children's school work.* For this survey item, sixty-four students (66%) perceived that their teachers talked with their parents about school work; thirteen (14%) answered they did not; and nineteen (20%) responded I don't know.

*Q.39. Parent involvement in school activities and attendance of school events.* For this question, forty-eight students (50%) answered yes; nineteen (20%) answered no; twenty-five (26%) did not know; three (3%) answered both yes and no; and one student (1%) responded both no and I don't know.

*Q.40. Speaker/visitor attendance at school.* The question asked students if they believed speakers or visitors came to their school/classroom to talk with them or give presentations. Sixty-four (66%) responded yes; twenty-two (23%) responded no; nine (9%) answered I don't know; and one student (1%) answered both yes and no.

*Q.41. Student perception that the principal is seen around school.* Seventy-two students (75%) endorsed that they often saw the principal around the school; eight (8%) answered no; and sixteen students (17%) responded I don't know.

*Q.42. Teacher and principal relationships .* This question asked students if they perceived that both teachers and the principal got along. Forty-four (46%) believed they did; eleven (11%) answered no; and forty-one students (43%) did not know.

*Q.43. Principal interaction with students.* The survey item examined if students believed the principal spoke to those he/she saw in the halls. Seventy students (73%) answered yes; nine (9%) answered no; sixteen (17%) responded I don't know; and one student (1%) answered both yes and no.

*Q.44. Student fear of getting into trouble and going to the principal's office.* This item asked if students were afraid of getting into trouble and going to the principal's office. Twenty-six students (27%) answered yes; thirty students (31%) responded no; thirty-six students (38%) responded I don't know, and four students (4%) answered both yes and no.

*Q. 45. Strong enforcement of school rules.* Forty-one students (43%) believed school rules were strongly enforced; twenty students (31%) believed they were not; thirty (31%) answered I don't know, four students (4%) responded both yes and no; and one student (1%) responded both no and I don't know.

In sum, the data analysis presented here indicated several factors present at this high school known to enhance resilience. Overall, these factors comprised of students perceiving they had access to positive, caring adults who were actively involved and were easily accessible if students encountered problems.

The data analysis also revealed factors known to inhibit resilience in youth. These involved a large proportion of students possessing or being cognizant of other students possessing alcohol, drugs, and or weapons on school grounds. These issues may need to be further examined by school administration and staff to increase resilience in this particular student population.

## Chapter V: Discussion, Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This chapter includes an explanation of the study population in addition to findings and results. The identification of specific trends within the results and possible explanations for these trends are also presented in this chapter. Comparison data of a similar population of youth where resilience programming is implemented is also examined along with limitations of this study. Lastly, recommendations for future research are explained and discussed.

### *Discussion*

The results of this study indicate that surveyed students reported experiencing several factors that have been shown to inhibit resilience among youth.

In this study there were many supports currently in place to make students feel well-adjusted and cared about within the academic setting at this school. Those supports include: (Q1.) It is in good condition, (Q2.) The school is neat and clean, (Q5.) Teachers enjoy attending and teaching at school, (Q6.-7.) Heavy involvement of students, parents, teachers, and administration staff in school activities is present, (Q8.) There are adequate programs/activities for students, (Q12.) Most students feel safe at school, (Q16. and 18.) Students and teachers are knowledgeable of school rules, (Q23. and 24.) There is punishment of alcohol and drug use, (Q25.) Minimal fighting at school is observed, (Q26.) Teachers help students who are having problems, (Q28.) Teachers provide students extra help when needed, (Q29.) Teacher discussion with students and parents regarding academic progress is present, (Q32.) A majority of students do not feel lonely at school, (Q33.) Students feel that others care about them at school, (Q34.) Students believe they have substantial friendship support at school, (Q35.) Most students know

who to go to if they have problems, (Q36.) Most students identified an appropriate support staff member to go to for problems, (Q37.) Students perceive teachers receive adequate support from administration, (Q38.) Teachers talk with parents about children's school work, (Q40.) Individuals come to speak and/or present at school, (Q41.) Students often see administration walking around the school, (Q42.) Positive relationships with teachers and administration are witnessed by the students and, (Q43.) Principals positively interact with students. The teachers, high school administrators and other personnel associated with this high school can be encouraged by these data.

Additionally, there were several factors identified in this study that may need to be addressed by school administration and staff to increase resilience. Specifically those factors of concern include: (Q3.) School overcrowding, (Q10.) Unequal student treatment at school, (Q19.) Lack of punishment for student misconduct and disobedience of school rules, (Q20.-22.) Students bringing weapons, alcohol, and/or drugs to school, (Q30.) Unfair treatment of students and, (Q31.) Difficulty of instruction delivery due to student misconduct.

Some of the reasons these factors were identified as important include the following: (a) a high number of students may not feel connected to the school due to unequal treatment of students, (b) a proportion of students may not be able to learn in a successful manner due to misbehaving students, (c) due to the perception of minimal punishment for student misconduct, students may not have a clear idea of school rules and boundaries in which more rule-breaking may occur, and (d) some students may feel intimidated to attend school because they are highly aware that other students bring alcohol, drugs, and/or weapons to school. On the opposite end of the continuum, a

number of students may feel more included to bring alcohol, drugs, and/or weapons to school because they perceive that disobedience of school rules is not strongly enforced.

Three issues about the results should be noted and further explained. The first issue examines why several students responded to both yes and no, or no and don't know to specific survey questions. This may be explained by Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development. When individuals reach the stage of adolescence, "Thought becomes more abstract, incorporating the principles of formal logic. The ability to generate abstract propositions, multiple hypotheses and their possible outcomes is evident" (Child Development Institute, 2007). Because teens tend to think in less black and white terms, many of the adolescents surveyed in this study could not provide only one response to an item. This may also solve the question of why a substantial number of students responded "Don't Know" to certain questions. As teens leave the stages of egocentrism and concrete thinking and enter the stage of more abstract and hypothetical thought, they begin to understand others may have opinions different from their own that they may not be able to gauge.

The second issue examines why there were conflicting responses among the survey questions within this study. This may be the result of different perceptions of students sampled. Possibly a significant proportion of the high school students surveyed may have perceived an issue on school grounds while another substantial amount of students surveyed may have observed this issue to be of minimal importance.

Lastly, it's important to also discuss why a question may have been deemed important if a majority of high school students responded "Don't Know" to a survey question; as there were questions within the instrument where it seemed detrimental to

resilience development if students answered “Don’t Know”. Resilience research noted in the literature review of this study has indicated that certain factors enhance resilience among adolescents. If a majority of students respond “Don’t Know” to questions that examine these factors, this may indicate a potential lack of resilience among youth.

Compared to 2000-2002 data collected by the Docking Institute of Public Affairs (2003), the Kansas students surveyed by DIPA for the RURAL study indicated they were equipped with many more protective factors, whereas the students in this study of Wisconsin youth indicated being equipped with far fewer factors. Overall, it appears that youth who have established positive relationships with caring adults and peers and who actively participate in school-based activities and programs develop more protective factors to protect themselves when negative situations present themselves. These findings suggest that when Kansas students were provided with resilience education, programming, and resources, those students reported several more protective factors to assist them as compared to the students in Wisconsin who did not participate in any type of resilience programming.

#### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to examine the presence of specific factors known to influence the development of resilience among youth in grades 9-12 in a small town located in southeastern Wisconsin. The subjects for this study were high school students enrolled in a social studies class during the spring semester, 2008, at a public high school located in southeastern Wisconsin. The research sample included 15 freshmen, 4 sophomores, 68 juniors, 4 seniors, and 5 students identified as other. A total of 96 students participated in this study.

The students in the class were asked to participate in the study. The content of the instrument was initially developed for a resilience study conducted by three researchers of Fort Hays Unified School District 489 and Fort Hays University, Hays, Kansas (Docking Institute of Public Affairs, Fort Hays State University: Hays, KS). Permission was asked by this researcher to utilize the instrument for this study. Permission was granted by the original researchers.

The subjects were asked to give only their present grade level as demographic information. The questions of the survey focused on high school students' perceptions of the structural condition of the school, student overcrowding, a teacher's attitudes toward school, students' attitudes toward school, peer groups, substance use, school rules, parent, teacher, and administrator involvement, extracurricular activities, student support services, and teacher-student relationships.

A total of 96 high school student completed the survey. The data indicated that the following issues exemplified development of resilience in the Wisconsin youth: It is in good condition, the school is neat and clean, teachers enjoy attending and teaching at school, heavy involvement of students, parents, teachers, and administration staff in school activities is present, there are adequate programs/activities for students, most students feel safe at school, students and teachers are knowledgeable of school rules, there is punishment of alcohol and drug use, minimal fighting at school is observed, teachers help students who are having problems, teachers provide students extra help when needed, teacher discussion with students and parents regarding academic progress is present, a majority of students do not feel lonely at school, students feel that others care about them at school, students believe they have substantial friendship support at school,

most students know who to go to if they have problems, most students identified an appropriate support staff member to go to for problems, students perceive teachers receive adequate support from administration, teachers talk with parents about children's school work, individuals come to speak and/or present at school, students often see administration walking around the school, positive relationships with teachers and administration are witnessed by the students, and principals positively interact with students.

The responses that concern this researcher and seem to indicate areas of resilience that were inhibited include: school overcrowding, unequal student treatment at school, lack of punishment for student misconduct and disobedience of school rules, students bringing weapons, alcohol, and/or drugs to school, unfair treatment of students and, difficulty of instruction delivery due to student misconduct.

The reasons for these responses may include the following: a high number of students may not feel connected to the school due to unequal treatment of students, a proportion of students may not be able to learn in a successful manner due to misbehaving students, due to the perception of minimal punishment for student misconduct, students may not have a clear idea of school rules and boundaries in which more rule-breaking may occur, and some students may feel intimidated to attend school because they are highly aware that other students bring alcohol, drugs, and/or weapons to school. However, a number of students may feel more included to bring alcohol, drugs, and/or weapons to school because they perceive that disobedience of school rules is not strongly enforced.

A survey item was considered important if a substantial number of high school students chose a response to a survey question that inhibited rather than enhanced resilience development. Factors found to inhibit resilience need to be identified and discussed. These negative factors could then possibly be examined more closely in the future by school administrators, staff, and other school personnel.

In comparing the current data with that from the RURAL Kansas data, it is clear that resilience programming makes a dramatic difference in the responses of the students to questions about their development of resilience. The Kansas RURAL program was a comprehensive, multifaceted program designed to intervene, develop, and monitor resilience in a specific community. It is not surprising that the students in the RURAL study indicated greater and more comprehensive responses to resilience that the students in this current study. It is simply further documentation that strategic, planned and active resilience programming makes a difference in the lives of youth.

#### *Limitations*

The limitations of this study were that the survey instrument only used grade-level as demographic information and that only frequency counts and percentages were used. This limited the type and depth of information gleaned from this research project in terms of the sample population and results of this study. Additionally, the responses of the subjects cannot be generalizable to other high school students.

For this research project survey items were considered important if 45 or more students responded to yes, no, or don't know. If a specific survey question revealed a substantial number of high school students chose a response that inhibited or enhanced factors known to resilience development, then it was identified as important by this

researcher for this study. The goal of this study was to identify school climate as it relates to adolescent resilience, so positive factors were identified as well as negative factors for examination in the future by school administrators, staff, and other school personnel.

### *Conclusions*

This study has revealed the high school students sampled encounter situations in the academic setting where a strong foundation of resilience is important. Although it seems students endorsed survey items that suggested strong resilience development, there also appeared to be a substantial proportion of responses that indicated resilience development was minimally present or not yet developed. Additionally, when comparing the responses of the subjects of this study to the archival study responses, it is clear that resilience programming for high school students makes a definite difference in their overall assessment of resilience. It is vital that professionals who work with high school youth be aware of the specific areas within their school environments that potentially make it difficult for adolescents to make positive choices when adverse situations or circumstances arise. If this can occur, resilience programs and additional supports can be put in place to address weak areas, provide skills to enhance youth resilience, and provide opportunities for adolescents to acquire knowledge on the factors that enhance resilience development among their age group.

### *Recommendations for Further Research*

Future researchers may want to compare and contrast resilience development according to gender and ethnicity. It may be interesting to see if resilience development differs when these characteristics are examined. It may also be of interest to investigate

factors of resilience development by specific grade level rather than by grade levels 9-12 as a whole. Additional data may be gathered by focusing on the specific factors of resilience versus a multitude of factors. Future researchers may also want to examine types of support utilized by students when they encounter negative circumstances within their lives. Factors of data could be identified based upon race, gender, and/or grade-level.

Regardless of what additional data may be acquired in the future, the current research demonstrates that resilience is critical to human development, especially in adolescents. “In order to succeed, people need a sense of self-efficacy...together with resilience to meet the obstacles and inequities of life” – Albert Bandura (2008, ¶ 1).

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**Appendix A – Student Consent**

**Consent to Participate in University of Wisconsin-Stout Approved Research**  
**Title: Examination of specific factors that influence resilience among high school students**

**Investigator:***Jennifer Johnson**Ph: 262-348-4000 Ext.4018**E-mail: jennifer.johnson@badger.k12.wi.us**Lake Geneva Schools***Research Sponsor:**

Dr. Leslie Koepke

**Ph:** 715-232-2237**E-mail:** koepkel@uwstout.edu**Office:** 102 Home Ec.Bldg.

Dear parent or guardian:

I am a school psychologist for the Lake Geneva school district. I am currently writing a research paper in an effort to earn my educational specialist degree in school psychology. This paper involves identifying specific characteristics that influence resilience among high school students. Generally speaking, resilience refers to the ability to thrive in spite of challenging circumstances and situations. In order to identify these specific characteristics, I would like to survey your child. The study will involve students completing a brief survey. This survey will require students to answer questions related their opinion on the school environment.

Every research situation comes with risks and benefits. Rarely, students may feel emotional distress while completing the survey about their opinions on the school environment. Any such students will be referred to the school counselor or school psychologist to process feelings they experience and may withdraw from the study at any time. The major benefits of this study include the knowledge that the student, school, and society will be able to gain from this research. Educators will also be able to gain insight into what influences students to thrive and function in spite of adverse circumstances. In addition, the student may feel good about himself or herself because their opinion is valued.

It will take students approximately 20 minutes to fill out the survey. There will be no monetary compensation for taking part in this survey.

The student's name will not be included on any documents. Neither the specific school or school district will be named in the final paper. We do not believe that anyone can be identified from any information gathered during this research study. The informed consent will be kept separate from any other documents completed with this project.

The student's participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The student may choose not to participate without any negative consequences to him or her. Should the student decide to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, he or she may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have questions, concerns, or reports regarding your child's rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

**Investigator:**

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Dr. Leslie Koepke  
 715-232-2237  
*koepkel@uwstout.edu*

**Statement of Consent:**

**I do** give consent for my child to participate in the survey.

**I do not** give consent for my child to participate in the survey.

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 Student's Signature

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 Date

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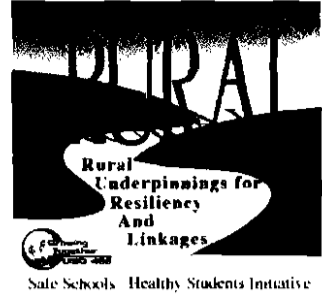
 Parent or Guardian Signature

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 Date

Appendix B – Research Survey

**SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY**  
For Students, Teachers, and Administrators



No teachers, principals, or school administrators will see your answers to this survey. You should try to answer as many of the questions as possible and answer them truthfully. If a question bothers you, or if you feel you cannot answer a question, skip it and go on to the next question.

**Please circle your answer. If the answer you circle has an arrow, follow it and answer the next question in the lines provided.**

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Q1. Is your school in good condition? (Walls are not cracking and peeling, playground equipment is not broken).....	1	2	3
Q2. Is your school neat and clean?.....	1	2	3
Q3. Is your school too crowded?.....	1	2	3
Q4. Do students enjoy attending your school?.....	1	2	3
Q5. Do teachers enjoy teaching at your school?.....	1	2	3
Q6. Do both teachers and principals get involved in school activities?.....	1	2	3
Q7. Are many students at your school involved in school activities?.....	1	2	3
Q8. Are there enough programs or activities for students at your school?.....	1	2	3
Q9. Are there too many "cliques" at your school? (Do some kids group together and let no one else work or play with them?)....	1	2	3
Q10. Are all students treated the same?.....	1	2	3

If no, what students are treated differently? (Please write your answer in the space provided.)

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	Yes	No	Don't Know
Q11. Do most students care about school?.....	1	2	3

Q12. Do students worry about being safe in your school?.....	1	2	3
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If yes, what is it that makes them worry?  
(Please write your answer.)

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	Yes	No	Don't Know
Q13. Do teachers worry about being safe in your school?.....	1	2	3

Q14. Is bullying and teasing a problem at your school?.....	1	2	3
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Q15. Do kids who bully and tease get punished?.....	1	2	3
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Q16. Do students know the school rules?.....	1	2	3
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Q17. Do students obey the school rules?.....	1	2	3
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Q18. Do teachers know the school rules?.....	1	2	3
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Q19. Are there kids who break the rules and do not get into trouble?.....	1	2	3
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Q20. At your school, have you heard of a student bringing a gun or knife to school?.....	1	2	3
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If yes, how many times?    1 or 2    3-5    5+    ←

Q21. Have you heard of a student bringing alcohol (beer or wine) to your school?.....	1	2	3
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If yes, how many times?    1 or 2    3-5    5+    ←

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Q22. Have you heard of a student bringing drugs to your school?.....	1	2	3
If yes, how many times?    1 or 2       3-5       5+   ←			
What drugs? (Please write your answer.) _____			
_____			

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Q23. Is drug use punished enough at your school?.....	1	2	3
Q24. Is alcohol use punished enough at your school?.....	1	2	3
Q25. Is there too much fighting at your school?.....	1	2	3
Q26. Do teachers in your school help students who are having problems?.....	1	2	3
Q27. Do students in your school respect their teachers?.....	1	2	3
Q28. Do teachers give students extra help when they need it?.....	1	2	3
Q29. Do teachers talk to students about homework and grades?.....	1	2	3
Q30. Are all students treated fairly?.....	1	2	3
Q31. Has it been hard for your teacher to teach because of a misbehaving student?..	1	2	3
Q32. Do you sometimes feel lonely at your school?.....	1	2	3
Q33. Do you sometimes feel like no one at your school cares about you?.....	1	2	3
Q34. Do you have friends at your school? .....	1	2	3

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Q35. Do students know who to go to if they have problems?.....	1	2	3

Q36. Who do students usually go to for help with their problems?  
(Please write your answer.)

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	Yes	No	Don't Know
Q37. Do teachers get enough help from the principal? .....	1	2	3
Q38. Do teachers talk to parents about childrens' school work?.....	1	2	3
Q39. Do parents get involved in school activities and attend school events?.....	1	2	3
Q40. Do speakers or visitors often come to your school or classroom to talk to students or to give presentations?.....	1	2	3
Q41. Is the principal often seen around the school?.....	1	2	3
Q42. Do teachers and principals get along?.....	1	2	3
Q43. Does the principal speak to those that he/she sees in the halls?.....	1	2	3
Q44. Are students afraid of getting into trouble and going to the principal's office?.....	1	2	3
Q45. Are the school rules strongly enforced?.....	1	2	3

If you are a student, what grade are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for helping us with this survey!

Appendix C - Student Frequency of Survey Items

(\* Indicates important item)

<u>Question</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
* Q1. Is your school in good condition? (Walls are not cracking, peeling, playground equipment is not broken)	Yes; n = 82 No; n = 6 Don't Know; n = 6 Yes and No; n = 2
* Q2. Is your school neat and clean?	Yes; n = 77 No; n = 7 Don't Know; n = 11 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q3. Is your school too crowded?	Yes; n = 60 No; n = 25 Don't Know; n = 9 Yes and No; n = 2
Q4. Do students enjoy attending your school?	Yes; n = 34 No; n = 27 Don't Know; n = 34 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q5. Do teachers enjoy teaching at your school?	Yes; n = 47 No; n = 10 Don't Know; n = 37 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q6. Do both teachers and principals get involved in school activities?	Yes; n = 66 No; n = 8 Don't Know; n = 21 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q7. Are many students at your school involved in school activities?	Yes; n = 62 No; n = 12 Don't Know; n = 21

- Yes and No; n = 1
- \* Q8. Are there enough programs or activities for students at your school?  
 Yes; n = 57  
 No; n = 16  
 Don't Know; n = 21  
 Yes and No; n = 2
- Q9. Are there too many "cliques" at your school?  
 (Do some kids group together and let no one else work or play with them?)  
 Yes; n = 38  
 No; n = 34  
 Don't Know; n = 21  
 Yes and No; n = 3
- \* Q10. Are all students treated the same?  
 Yes; n = 20  
 No; n = 48  
 Don't Know; n = 28
- If no, what students are treated differently?  
 Special education students; n = 11  
 All students; n = 9  
 'Cutters'/Goth students; n = 7  
 Athletes; n = 4  
 Teachers' Pets; n = 4  
 Different races; n = 3  
 Smart students; n = 3  
 Females; n = 2  
 N/A; n = 2  
 Low income students; n = 2  
 Bullies; n = 1  
 Homosexuals; n = 1  
 Less attractive students; n = 1
- Q11. Do most students care about school?  
 Yes; n = 30  
 No; n = 30  
 Don't Know; n = 35  
 Yes and No; n = 1
- \* Q12. Do students worry about being safe in your school?  
 Yes; n = 12  
 No; n = 52  
 Don't Know; n = 29  
 N/A; n = 2
- If yes, what is it that makes them worry?  
 Gangs/gang violence; n = 4  
 Bullies; n = 3

	Knives; n = 3
	Different races; n = 1
	Fights; n = 1
	N/A; n = 1
Q13. Do teachers worry about being safe in your school?	Yes; n = 13 No; n = 41 Don't Know; n = 41 No and Don't Know; n = 1
Q14. Is bullying and teasing a problem at your school?	Yes; n = 41 No; n = 22 Don't Know; n = 31 Yes and No; n = 2
Q15. Do kids who bully and tease get punished?	Yes; n = 38 No; n = 39 Don't Know; n = 18 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q16. Do students know the school rules?	Yes; n = 68 No; n = 15 Don't Know; n = 13
Q17. Do students obey the school rules?	Yes; n = 19 No; n = 7 Don't Know; n = 21 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q18. Do teachers know the school rules?	Yes; n = 76 No; n = 7 Don't Know; n = 14
* Q19. Are there kids who break the rules and do not get into trouble?	Yes; n = 70 No; n = 12 Don't Know; n = 14
* Q20. At your school, have you heard of a student bringing a gun or knife to school?	Yes; n = 36 No; n = 55 Don't Know; n = 5
If yes, how many times?	1 or 2; n = 25 3-5; n = 4 5+; n = 3

	N/A; n = 4
* Q21. Have you heard of a student bringing alcohol (beer or wine) to your school?	Yes; n = 49 No; n = 42 Don't Know; n = 5
If yes, how many times?	1 or 2; n = 25 3-5; n = 11 5+; n = 13
* Q22. Have you heard of a student bringing drugs to your school?	Yes; n = 71 No; n = 18 Don't Know; n = 7
If yes, how many times?	1 or 2; n = 14 3-5; n = 7 5+; n = 21 N/A; n = 19
What drugs?	Marijuana; n = 37 Cocaine; n = 12 Don't worry about it; n = 7 Methamphetamine; n = 4 Mushrooms; n = 3 Ecstasy; n = 2 Heroin; n = 2 Morphine; n = 2 Vicodin; n = 2
* Q23. Is drug use punished enough at your school?	Yes; n = 49 No; n = 12 Don't Know; n = 34 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q24. Is alcohol use punished enough at your school?	Yes; n = 51 No; n = 12 Don't Know; n = 32
* Q25. Is there too much fighting at your school?	Yes ; n= 22 No ; n= 60

	Don't Know; n = 13 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q26. Do teachers in your school help students who are having problems?	Yes; n = 66 No; n = 16 Don't Know; n = 13 Yes and No; n = 1
Q27. Do students in your school respect their teachers?	Yes; n = 37 No; n = 24 Don't Know; n = 32 Yes and No; n = 3
* Q28. Do teachers give students extra help when they need it?	Yes; n = 70 No; n = 11 Don't Know; n = 12 Yes and No; n = 3
* Q29. Do teacher talk to students about home work and grades?	Yes; n = 83 No; n = 4 Don't Know; n = 7 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q30. Are all students treated fairly?	Yes; n = 24 No; n = 49 Don't Know; n = 21 Yes and No; n = 1 No and Don't Know; n = 1
*Q31. Has it been hard for your teacher to teacher because of a misbehaving student?	Yes; n = 67 No; n = 15 Don't Know; n = 14
* Q32. Do you sometimes feel lonely at your school?	Yes; n = 12 No; n = 79 Don't Know; n = 4
* Q33. Do you sometimes feel like no one at your school cares about you?	Yes; n = 8 No; n = 82 Don't Know; n = 6
* Q34. Do you have friends at your school?	Yes; n = 88 No; n = 4

	Don't Know; n = 4
* Q35. Do students know who to go to if they have problems?	Yes; n = 57 No; n = 10 Don't Know; n = 29
* Q36. Who do students usually go to for help with their problems?	School counselors/school social workers; n = 66 Friends; n = 9 Don't Care; n = 8 Don't know/not sure; n = 5 N/A; n = 5 Family; n = 2 Religious personnel; n = 1
* Q37. Do teachers get enough help from the principal?	Yes; n = 26 No; n = 23 Don't Know; n = 47
* Q38. Do teachers talk with parents about children's school work?	Yes; n = 64 No; n = 13 Don't Know; n = 19
* Q39. Do parents get involved in school activities and attend school events?	Yes; n = 48 No; n = 19 Don't Know; n = 25 Yes and No; n = 3 No and Don't Know; n = 1
* Q40. Do speakers or visitors often come to your school or classroom to talk to students or to give presentations?	Yes; n = 64 No; n = 22 Don't Know; n = 9 Yes and No; n = 1
* Q41. Is the principal often seen around the school?	Yes; n = 72 No; n = 8 Don't Know; n = 16
Q42. Do teachers and principals get along?	Yes; n = 44 No; n = 11 Don't Know; n = 41
* Q43. Does the principal speak to those that he/she sees in the halls?	Yes; n = 70 No; n = 9

	Don't Know; n = 16 Yes and No; n = 1
Q44. Are students afraid of getting into trouble and going to the principal's office/?	Yes; n = 26 No; n = 30 Don't Know; n = 36 Yes and No; n = 4
Q45. Are the school rules strongly enforced?	Yes; n = 41 No; n = 20 Don't Know; n = 30 Yes and No; n = 4 No and Don't Know; n = 1
If you are a student, what grade are you in?	9; n = 15 10; n = 4 11; n = 68 12; n = 4 11 or 12; n = 1 13; n = 1 N/A; n = 3