RISK AND RESILIENCE IN REFUGEE CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Resilience is a phenomenon that results from strong and well-protected adaptation systems. It is not a one-dimensional quality that either one has or does not have but is instead the possession of many skills and resources at different times and to varying degrees. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of three resilient refugee children regarding what they felt contributed to their positive adaptation after facing adversity. This study examined how the participants understood the variables inherent in parenting and the new social milieu (e.g. friends, the mosque or church, community agencies supporting refugees, school and community involvement, involvement in sport) promoted their resilience.

Three nine to twelve year old refugee children identified as resilient by their teachers were each interviewed three times at their school. Data analysis consisted of developing qualitative themes and patterns from the interviews. These themes and patterns were categorized using the constant comparative method.

This study supports and extends the existing understanding of the factors that contribute to resilience in school-age children. The children in this study perceived their families, their friends, and their teachers as protective factors in their positive adjustment following adversity. The vital role of the community coordinator in their school as a person who could facilitate their involvement in school and community events became evident. In addition, this study highlights the role of sport as a contributing factor to resilience. Involvement in sports appears to serve as a buffer against the vulnerabilities of resettlement in a new country for some refugee children. Further research on the importance of sport for children with refugee status would be beneficial for expanding our understanding of resilience, and would have implications for school and community programming.

As Canadian society becomes increasingly diverse, the need to discover the processes contributing to resilience in individuals with a wide range of cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds takes on greater importance. It is hoped that discovering the factors that help refugee children to develop resilience will create a deeper understanding of the processes involved for other children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

For all of my life I have been a learner and for the last two decades I have
also been a teacher. As both teacher and learner I have been privileged to hear the
stories of the children in my care. I have been shaped by all of their tales but those
stories that moved me most deeply came from the children who had faced war. So
many of these children had experienced life in ways that seem impossible to
imagine from the vantage of an educator in western Canada. These children had not
only survived experiences beyond my understanding but seemed to be happy and
coping well in their new lives in Canada. My need to understand the resilience of
these children began with my experience as a newcomer in a strange culture with a
seemingly indecipherable language. In 1990 I moved with my husband and two
young children to Scandinavia. What was to be a one year adventure became a five
year sojourn. Before leaving Canada, my husband and I decided to immerse
ourselves into the culture of our new home. Our children attended the local schools
and I took language classes.

Our first day in Europe was marked by the start of the Persian Gulf War.
Shortly thereafter, war broke out in the former Yugoslavia. Scandinavia opened its
doors to refugees from these wars. Because we were newcomers as well, we had
many opportunities to meet people fleeing from these conflicts. These people had
led lives that had followed rhythms similar to those of my family, but with the
advent of war had been forced into a new existence as refugees. Although our new
friends and acquaintances had endured much trauma and tragedy, many of them
strove to create healthy lives for their families. In a short period of time some of the
children demonstrated resilience by slipping into routines typical of many children.
They made friends, some of them with my children. They settled into school and
they seemed to be doing well.

When we returned to Canada my desire to stay connected to children who were experiencing a new culture, just as I had done, led me to pursue a change from that as a regular classroom teacher to an English as a second language (ESL) teacher. I was offered a position in an inner city school where I met Muhammed, Hasib and Nerifa*. Their stories and experiences have helped me understand some of the many faces of resilience.

Researcher Observations

All three children came to Saskatoon as refugees because of war in Afghanistan. Muhammed's father was a professor of Engineering in Kabul until the Taliban targeted him for arrest and possible execution. Muhammed's family escaped through the back door of their house as the Taliban were shooting through the front door. Three years later, Muhammed graduated at the top of his grade eight class and his classmates chose him as their valedictorian. Hasib's father, also a professor, was not so fortunate. He was imprisoned and later executed. Hasib and his mother fled to Iran and resettled in Canada after several years in a refugee camp. Hasib has great difficulties reading and writing, but fluently speaks four languages, and often acts as a translator for his school and other agencies. Nerifa's family left Pakistan when war in neighbouring Afghanistan touched their lives. Nerifa has worked hard to find a place where she can integrate her family's conservative Muslim beliefs with her desire to fit into western society.

Each of these children is resilient. They have all faced adversity and they are all discovering ways to integrate themselves into their home and school communities. By their own definitions, they are happy and feel that they are doing well. As their ESL teacher, I also felt that they were successful in many aspects of their integration

* All names of people and places used throughout this body of work have been changed.

into their new society. I became very interested in what these children and other successful refugee children perceived as factors contributing to their positive development following experiences of war and resettlement in a new country. I discovered that while there is a growing body of literature regarding resilience in children, there is very little qualitative research into the stories of individual children who have faced adversity and thrived.

1.2 Foundations of the Study

Over the last forty years, researchers have recognized and studied a group of children who have overcome great odds in the face of adversity. Werner (1995) described these children as resilient. Masten (2001) said of the studies of these children, that surprisingly, resilience is a common phenomenon; that resilience results from strong and well-protected adaptation systems; and that development will be good despite the risks or adversities. If, on the other hand, adaptation systems are compromised, developmental problems are more likely to occur (Masten, 2001). Resilience is not a one-dimensional trait that either one has or does not have. It is instead the possession of many skills and resources, at different times and to varying degrees that help children cope (Alvord and Grados, 2005). Resilience is not a personality trait, but is instead the individual's response to adversity (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

Adversity or risk factors are those stressors which threaten the healthy development of a child. This threat occurs to a child's material, social or emotional needs and capacities at a given point in time (Garborino & Ganzel, 2000). Risk can be categorized as mild, moderate or severe, and can be acute or chronic (Garmezy, 1983). Risk factors often occur with other stressors, and the accumulation of these factors leads to increasingly maladaptive behaviour (Appleyard, Egeland, van Dulmen, & Sroufe, 2005).Vulnerability processes are in place when an at-risk child's development is negative in direction (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

Masten (2001) proposed that competence is successful development as expected in terms of age, gender, culture, society and time. It is possible that a

competent child may not excel in any given area but performs well both in past performance and expected future performance, in combination with adaptive resources (Masten & Powell, 2003). Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) defined protective factors as positive environmental factors in childhood development that aid a child exposed to adversity to develop good outcomes.

Children who are refugees have encountered much stress and trauma during their lifetimes. The 1951 Geneva Convention (as cited by Amnesty International Canada, 2006) defines a refugee as a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..." Using this definition, refugees are those people who have lost, or possibly never had, the knowledge that their homelands were places where they could feel safe and well protected.

Despite exposure to adversity and challenges to their development, many refugee children function successfully in multiple aspects of their lives. They are able to draw on internal and external resources to not only survive, but also do well. These children are resilient. Research into the resilience, protective and risk factors for these children is becoming increasingly important. Citizenship and Immigration Canada identified 25,981 refugees entering Canada in 2003 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005). There were 32,686 refugees admitted to Canada in 2004 and 35,768 admitted refugees in 2005. If this trend continues, the number of refugees entering Canada will continue to grow. As Canadian society becomes increasingly diverse, the need to discover the processes contributing to resilience in individuals with a wide range of cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds takes on greater importance. By discovering what enables successful refugee children to do well, educators and others working with these children may more effectively design appropriate and culturally sensitive interventions to foster success. It is also possible that discovering the processes that allow refugee children to develop resilience will create a deeper understanding of the processes involved for other children.

1.3 Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of refugee children regarding some of the processes that contributed to their positive adjustment following conditions of adversity. Further understanding of how variables inherent in parenting and the new social milieu (e.g. school, the mosque or church, and community agencies supporting refugees) promote resilience was attained by interviewing three children who had not succumbed to negative outcomes in their overall development.

In particular, this research initially focused on:

1. How do children understand what their parents are doing to help them adjust to a new culture?

2. What factors in the new social milieu (e.g. school, the mosque or church, community agencies supporting refugees) do children identify that promote their resilience?

This research followed an emergent design where research questions evolved as new insight into risk and resilience of refugee children became evident during the data collection process (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

1.4 Summary

Many children demonstrate resilience following adversity. When children's adaptation systems are strong and well protected, positive adjustment is likely to occur. Competent children develop as expected in terms of their age, gender, culture, society, and time. A child might be considered at-risk for developmental problems following adversity if vulnerability processes are in play. An accumulation of risk factors often leads to maladaptive behaviour. Children who are refugees encounter many threats to their development. Despite this exposure, many of these children function successfully in multiple aspects of their lives. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of three refugee children regarding their understandings of the factors that contributed to their resilience.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Resilience

2.1.1 Historical Overview

The study of resilience has its roots in the works of Norman Garmezy (1974), E. James Anthony (1974), Murphy and Moriarty (1976), Michael Rutter (1979) and Emily Werner (Werner and Smith, 1982). Luthar (2006) noted that resilience first found its voice in the work of Norman Garmezy. Garmezy studied children of schizophrenics and concluded that a number of these children were developing normally despite their circumstances. Prior to Garmezy's studies, researchers considered children such as these anomalies or outliers and excluded the children from their research. Garmezy and his colleagues, with their departure form the medical model, initiated a shift in the research paradigm associated with psychopathology. At the same time, Anthony coined the term "invulnerable" in reference to these children. Murphy and Moriarty became interested in children who faced adversity in the form of naturally occurring events. It became evident to Murphy and Moriarty that resilient children had a group of character traits in common. These traits included social charisma and the capacity to relate well to others. In Murphy and Moriarty's model, resilient children also had the ability to both regulate and experience a wide range of emotions. Several years later, Rutter contributed to research in this area as he too identified a subgroup of children with traits similar to those noted by Garmezy and Anthony. Werner and Smith (1982), in their seminal work in the study of high risk children in Kauai found that one in ten developed into "competent and autonomous young adults who worked well, played well, loved well and expected well" (p. 153).

Initial studies of resilient children shifted the focus away from a deficit

model of child development toward models of invulnerability of a few children. This focus, in turn, gave way to the realization that resilience is a rather ordinary phenomenon (Masten, 2001). Masten (2001) noted that when a child's developmental systems were protected from harm and were working well, the child would continue to develop even in the face of adversity. Conversely, if a child faced difficulties with compromised developmental systems, he or she would be at much greater risk for impaired development. Threatening conditions compounded the risk if they were long term. Longitudinal studies such as Werner and Smith's (2001) Kauai study and Rutter's Romanian adoptee study (Rutter, et al. 1998) demonstrated that in the cases of children who had faced severe risk, the course of development could be reversed if protective factors were put into place. Garmezy's concurrent longitudinal study, called Project Competence, provided further insight into competency, adversity and internal functioning (Masten & Powell, 2003). Garmezy focussed his attention on the concept of competence. In its early stages, researchers on Project Competence investigated the connections among competence, adversity, internal functioning, individual functioning and family attributes. As this study shifted from a cross-sectional study to a longitudinal investigation, research focused on children who had experienced many levels of risk and adversity. From this seminal study, a framework for studying resilience developed (Masten & Powell, 2003).

2.1.2 Models of Research in Resilience

In any developing field of study, different perspectives on the concept in question form following extensive research. Luthar and Zelazo (2003) recognized risk and resilience paradigms of research that guide most studies on resilience in children. The risk paradigm developed in the 1970's as Garmezy and other researchers began to study children who were resilient in the face of genetic or experiential adversity (Masten, 2001). Researchers using the risk paradigm generally looked for the presence or absence of developmental maladaptations and negative influences in a child's development (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003).These researchers were interested in anomalous experiences, effects of disordered

parenting as it played out in disturbed family scenarios and generally disadvantaged environments (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984).

The resilience framework has its roots in the risk framework and is concerned with children who have faced great threats to their development and their ability to remain competent in spite of these adverse conditions (Masten &Powell, 2003). In the resilience framework, focuses are on protective factors such as dispositional attributes, biological predispositions and environmental influences (Garmezy, Masten & Tellegen, 1984). Considerable attention centres on understanding children's competence and strengths as well as their deficits. Researchers place emphasis on exploration of vulnerability and protective factors and their importance in a child's resilience. Resilience research is empirical in nature and has progressed from identifying these factors to understanding their effects (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

Although not a focus of this study, a third model for studying resilience has its base in the biological components of adaptation. Scarr and McCartney (1983) posited the theory in which an individual's particular genotype would determine the experience of the person's environment, what effects the environment would have and how the individual's responsiveness influences environmental opportunity. These authors argued that a child's genotype influences his or her environment in that parents and others will not treat children alike but will instead respond differently to differences in the children. Genetically determined differences in talents, personality and interests account for experiences children are attracted to in their environments. For example, a child interested in sports will not be as drawn to music experiences as will a child who is musically inclined. Alternately, a child who is antisocial in nature may choose to associate with other like children (Rutter, 2003).

Rutter (2003) further stressed the importance of the gene-environment interaction as one that would influence differences in an individual's sensitivity to occurrences in the environment. The association of certain gene variations with liability or moderation of some risk factors is possible with advances in molecular genetics. For example, Rutter (2003) provided evidence that individuals without

certain gene forms were much less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease following head injury. Caspi, McClay, Moffitt, Mill, Martin, Craig, Taylor, and Poulton (2002) reported that DNA studies of levels of certain neurotransmitting enzymes facilitated the prediction of predisposition to development of antisocial behaviour. Individuals were more likely to suffer depression following a major life event if close relatives also evinced the same response to their environments (Kendler, Kessler, Walters, MacLean, Neale, Heath, & Eaves, 1995). Rutter (2003) further averred that the interactions between genetics and environment are important in the development of protective factors and maximizing their effects. Genetic differences in terms of a child's sex were also determined to be important.

In her review of the literature, Luthar (2006) suggested that the ability to regulate one's emotions is of great importance when faced with adversity. Resilient individuals recover quickly from negative events (Davidson, 2000) and this recovery occurs, in part, at a biological level. Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) identified asymmetry in brain functioning with the right hemisphere more involved in negative emotions and the left hemisphere demonstrating involvement in positive emotional states. As technology for assessing brain functioning improves, as in the case of Medical Resonance Imaging and Computed Tomography Scans, advances in the understanding of neurological involvement and environmental influences on brain development will increase and provide more insight into the contribution of these processes to resilience.

2.1.3 Operational Definition of Resilience

Masten (2001, Masten & Coatsworth, 1998) defined resilience as a good outcome (or competence) despite a significant threat to adaptation or development. A resilient child will perform competently in the face of adversity. Resilience is not a personality trait, but is instead the individual's response to adversity (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Resilience does not cause a child to do well under adverse conditions but is a measure of the way children use and develop their resources to positively adapt to life (Yates, Egeland, & Sroufe, 2003).

2.1.4 Competence

Masten (2001) defined competence as successful development as expected in terms of age, gender, culture, society and time. Simply stated, competence involves "effective functioning in important environments" (Masten, Morrison, Pellegrini, & Tellegren, 1990, p. 239). Competence can be domain specific encompassing academic success, peer social success and conduct in children. In adolescence, the definition of competence expands to include romantic and job competence. A competent individual may not excel in any given area but will perform well, both in past performance and expected future performance, in combination with adaptive resources (Masten & Powell, 2003). Competence is a pattern of adaptive behaviour and, as such, allows for pockets of poor performance (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Assessment of behavioural outcomes on salient developmental tasks determines performance levels (Masten, Coatsworth, Neeman, Gest, Tellegen, & Garmezy, 1995). Luthar (2006) referred to competence as positive adaptation where a child's behaviour is considerably better than expected given the adversity he or she faces. Knowledge that is cultural and communicated from generation to generation among members of the community relevant to the child's life provides expectations for behaviour (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Masten and colleagues (1995) determined that competence was a multifaceted concept. They identified the coordination of multiple mental and physical processes, the plethora of routes to positive developmental outcomes, and the variety of internal and social determinants as key components of achieving competence. Developmental tasks are further dependent on a child's age and can encompass several domains (Yates, Egeland, & Sroufe, 2003).

Children who demonstrate competence in one domain may not be resilient in dissimilar domains (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). Luthar (1991) noted that children who had experienced adversity and were overtly successful often struggled with depression and posttraumatic stress disorder. In such instances, one must decide whether competence in one domain takes priority over others or if the

domains should be combined (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Furthermore, it is possible that a child viewed as competent in one community is not so from the context of another community. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) gave the example of youth living in inner city neighbourhoods where the community favourably viewed survival activities such as membership in gangs and engagement in illegal activities. Mainstream society takes the opposite view.

Finally, the definition of competence may include the absence of psychopathology in the form of mental heath problems rather than achievement in academia or with peers. Resilient children do not evince or are able to overcome negative emotionality, antisocial behaviour or other conduct problems in their development (Masten & Powell, 2003).

2.1.5 Adversity or Risk Factors

Adversity or risk factors are those stressors, which threaten the healthy development of a child. This threat occurs to a child's material, social or emotional needs and capacities at a given point in time (Garborino & Ganzel, 2000). Risk can be categorized as mild, moderate or severe and can be either acute or chronic (Garmezy, 1983). Risk factors often co-occur with other stressors and the accumulation of these risk factors leads to increasingly maladaptive behaviour. Rutter (1979) noted a threshold effect where after the presence of four risk factors, the combined effect is much greater than merely adding their single effects. Cumulative risk in instances where children have few assets or resources is also associated with an increase in behavioural problems or difficulties with social competence. Sameroff, Seifer, Zax, and Barocas (1987) described ten environmental risk factors for children. They include: (1) maternal mental health; (2) high maternal anxiety; (3) rigid parental attitudes, beliefs and values regarding child development; (4) few positive spontaneous reactions by the mother toward the child; (5) unskilled occupational status reflected in family financial status; (6) maternal education less than high school; (7) disadvantaged minority status; (8) family social support defined by the absence of the father in the household; (9) stressful life events such as job loss, deaths in the family or physical illness and (10) large family size.

Appleyard et al. (2005) suggested that the larger the number of these risk factors present in a child's life, the more maladaptive the child's development would be. They also noted that multiple risk factors present in early childhood could predict effects into middle childhood and later adolescence.

Masten and Powell (2003) distinguished between nonindependent and independent risks. Independent events are factors that occur externally to a child and include such occurrences as war, the death of a parent or poverty. Nonindependent events are those related to the behaviour displayed by the individual. These events may include expulsion from school, gang involvement, unhealthy lifestyle choices, etc. Garborino and Ganzel (2000) described risk as not only originating from direct threats to development but also from the absence of normal and expected opportunities. For example, economic inequality and racism increase the effect of risk factors. Luthar (2006) further identified vulnerability factors as those determinants, which worsen the negative effects of risk. If adversity is high as in the case of poverty a child may be at greater risk if his or her cognitive functioning is low or if parenting quality is hampered (Masten & Powell, 2003).

Luthar (2006) noted that socio economic status (SES) is an all-encompassing risk factor. Parental unemployment, limited access to quality preschool and effective schools, and neighbourhoods characterized by a high degree of community violence are often factors associated with poverty. If physical survival is threatened, the endangerment of all developmental processes occurs. Children exposed to chronic community violence may suffer a host of internal problems including anxiety, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder. School performance also suffers (Luthar, 2006). According to Luthar (2006), research indicates that long-term community violence affects children's neurobiology. Depending on when in a child's development and for how long the violence lasts, specific brain areas develop abnormally. Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) demonstrated an increase in startle response arousal and sleep disturbances as characteristic of children in these conditions. Sustained community violence may also intensify feelings of hopelessness and helplessness in parents who may impart these feelings to their children in turn (Osofsky & Thompson, 2000). Additionally, some parents

traumatized by violence may have coping issues of their own and may not be able to meet the emotional needs of their children. Others may respond by becoming overprotective and have difficulty encouraging autonomy in their children (Osofsky & Thompson, 2000). Earls and Buka (2000) concluded from their studies of low SES communities that approximately 25% of urban youth had witnessed murder, and that one in ten children under the age of six had witnessed at least one violent event. Posttraumatic stress disorder and externalizing behavioural disorders were common among these children.

Children exposed to parental psychopathology suffer further risk to their development (Werner, 1995). These parents are often severely dysfunctional and their parenting styles can lead to maladjustment and behaviour problems in their children. Furthermore, this particular risk factor often occurs in conjunction with other risk factors such as substance abuse, maltreatment and adolescent pregnancy (Osofsky & Thompson, 2000). Osofsky and Thompson (2000) recognized maternal depression as a risk factor that often occurs in lower SES families and those where the mother is under great stress. These mothers are often hostile and unavailable to their children and produce similar behaviour patterns in their children (Osofsky & Thompson, 2000). According to Osofsky and Thompson (2000), moderately depressed mothers are also at risk for abusing their children.

Serious maltreatment such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse seriously risks the likelihood of resilience developing in children (Luthar, 2006). Parents who are harsh or unresponsive to their children's needs pose risk situations (Werner, 1995). Osofsky and Thompson (2000) reported that mothers with addiction issues showed much lower levels of interaction with their children and were often preoccupied with their drugs. Many of these mothers had faced adversity themselves in the form of violence, substance abuse by a parent and psychopathology. Substance abuse was associated with other risk factors such as homelessness, violence both between adults and directed toward the child, poverty and lower educational levels. Children reared in these homes lived chaotic lifestyles in which they had confusing and changing roles- at one time treated as children, at another forced to care for the parent (Osofsky & Thompson, 2000).

Parental divorce is a large risk factor in the positive development of children. Watt, Moorehead-Slaughter, Japzon and Keller (1990) described child and parental adjustment following divorce as being unsatisfying and full of conflict. The findings from this study revealed children who thought their parents were both needy and less able to cope with the stressors present in their everyday lives. The children tended to disengage themselves from their parents and their peers, especially if relations with the custodial parent were poor. In short, they received little or no important emotional support. Teachers rated these children as deliberate, sombre and emotional. The children demonstrated lower academic competence and had less confidence in their abilities. Following divorce, families often experience an economic decline, which corresponds to decreased competence in a multitude of areas of development (Watt, Moorehead-Slaughter, Jazpon, & Keller, 1990).

2.1.6 Protective Factors

Protective factors are resources available to the child to moderate the impact of adversity on development (Masten & Powell, 2003) in a positive direction (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). They include internal qualities the child has in the form of an engaging temperament, good communication skills, strong problem solving skills, the ability to recognize and seek out supportive caregivers, special skills valued by others and belief that their actions will lead to positive outcomes (Garborino & Ganzel, 2000). Protective factors may occur in the form of external resources as well. Alvord and Grados (2005) noted the importance of competent parents, positive connections with peers, good support networks and the availability of effective schools. When faced with adversity, children with protective factors in play generally cope better than children who do not have them (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Unlike risk factors, the buffering effects of protective factors tend to be general and occur in children of all cultures and in a wide range of social contexts (Garborino & Ganzel, 2000). The protective systems available to a child are both versatile and allow the child to respond to a wide range of challenges (Masten &Powell, 2003). These processes are not rare or extraordinary, but are available to many children and thus lead to Masten's (2001) conceptualization of the

ordinariness of this phenomenon. Werner (2000) noted that protective factors, like risk factors, often occur together. Some resources can stand in for others at a given point in time and may produce the same results as other similar factors. These factors help to provide an understanding of how certain children respond to adversity in very individual ways. Some factors may facilitate the formation of other factors later in time. Werner (2000) gave the example of a young child with an easy temperament making friends more easily as an adolescent.

2.1.7 Characteristics of Resilient Children

Masten (2001) coined the term "ordinary magic" to describe the common attributes of many children, their relationships, their families and their communities when resilience occurred. Initial studies of resilient children concluded that they were invulnerable or invincible but as research continued into the characteristics of these children, it became clear that rather than being special, these children were simply ordinary. Masten (2001) further averred that if protection of children's basic adaptational systems took place, most children would continue to develop well even if they experienced adversity. Developmental problems were more likely to occur to compromised adaptational systems before or after adversity or if adverse situations continued over time. Drawing from a review of resilience literature and observations in their clinical practice, Alvord and Grados (2005) delineated six categories of protective factors that, if present, would serve as buffers to risk situations. These categories include a proactive orientation, self-regulatory abilities, proactive parenting, connections and attachments to family and friends, the influence of effective schools and positive community support. They noted that factors in these categories often worked together or related to other protective factors.

The most salient characteristic resilient children have is that of self-efficacy or self-worth. This proactive orientation (Alvord & Grados, 2005) allows children to be realistic. Wolin and Wolin (1998) portrayed proactive children as envisioning themselves as survivors. These children are able to distance themselves both emotionally and physically from adversity. They are creative and use humour to

cope with difficult situations. Werner (2000) described these children as optimistic about their futures and feeling that they could change their situations. They actively look for solutions to their problems and see success because of their own actions. They view negative events as temporary and as situations they can overcome by hard work. Werner and Smith (1982) described resilient children as responsible and more socially mature than their peers. Resilient children demonstrate a strong desire to do well in their lives.

Alvord and Grados (2005) identified self-regulatory attributes as another intrinsic characteristic of resilient children. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) described this trait as one in which the child is able to control his or her attention, behaviour and emotions. As children develop control over their attention, they can either shift or focus their attention as the situation demands. The ability to maintain attention relates to prosocial behaviour, which in turn leads to peer acceptance. Children who are not able to regulate their attention often exhibit attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, are antisocial and have academic difficulties. Children's ability to regulate their behaviour also determines prosocial behaviour. Children begin to develop compliance to social rules early in their lives. Social compliance is strongly linked to effective functioning at school and with peers. Werner (2000) identified low emotionality, or the ability to control one's emotions as a central feature of resilient children. These children tend to be more nurturing and empathetic, traits which carry on into adulthood. Werner (1995) also noted that resilient children develop coping patterns in early childhood that allow them to combine their sense of autonomy with the ability to ask for help when needed. These children usually had a special talent, skill or hobby of which they were proud. These factors allowed the children to develop confidence in their abilities leading to a strong self-concept.

In a child's external environment, the family is the most enduring factor in the child's development (Luthar, 2006). Werner (2000) stated that resilient children form close attachments with at least one person. They receive good nurturing and they are able to develop a sense of trust. Similarly, Osofsky and Thompson (2000) observed that a strong, positive relationship with a competent caregiver was

predictive of social competence in older children. Werner (2000) identified maternal competence as one of the most powerful protective factors in a child's environment. According to Osofsky and Thompson (2000) the presence of a father or father figure is clearly beneficial in a child's life if that father is interactive in a positive way, is available to the child and is responsible to the child in that he ensures that the child's primary needs are met. Fathers' roles tend to centre on play activities and encouraging assertiveness in their children. In lower SES families, the presence of a father figure has been associated with stronger skills in children (Osofsky & Thompson, 2000).

Masten and Coatsworth (1998) identified a close relationship with a parent figure as key to resilience. Furthermore, effective parents are authoritative in nature. That is, they are warm, build structure into the children's environment and have high expectations for their children (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). They communicate well with their children and are responsive to the children's needs (Luthar, 2006). Luthar (2006) noted that effective parents monitor their children's behaviour closely. They are very aware of whom their children's friends are and where the children were when they are not at home. They set limits for their children regarding where they can go and when. They restrict association with deviant peers. Parents of resilient children maintain close bonds with their children as they approach adolescence while allowing the children to develop autonomy. Authoritative parents are able to enhance discipline techniques by being warm and responsive to their children's needs. Protection against externalizing disorders and enhancement of self-regulatory behaviours develop in children because of this parenting style. Children of authoritative parents demonstrate higher motivation to do well. They are able to persist on difficult tasks and show a higher positive affect. Effective parents are able to recognize their children's strengths and encourage their growth and development (Alvord & Grados, 2005).

Resilient children may demonstrate educational competence. They enjoy school and use whatever talents and abilities they have available. They often make school a refuge when home life is chaotic (Werner 2000). Schools that effectively promote resilience in high-risk youth are remarkably similar to protective homes.

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Werner (2000) noted that these schools were responsive and nurturing. They were organized and had a clearly delineated set of responsibilities for their students. They allowed children to assume those responsibilities. School rules were well defined and consistently enforced. Alvord and Grados (2005) described resilient students as those who took part in extracurricular activities that allowed them to be part of prosocial groups and receive recognition for their efforts. In Werner and Smith's Kauai study (Werner, 2000), teachers were often found to be positive role models. They served as protective buffers for children with home lives characterized by adversity and the presence of risk factors.

Several researchers have suggested strong cognitive ability plays a major role in resilience. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) posited cognitive ability as one of the best predictors of academic success. Werner (2000) credited above average intelligence as a factor in good language and problem solving skills. Werner (1995) also identified a strong link between intelligence, school competence and the ability to overcome adversity. On the other hand, Luthar (1991) found that the effects of intelligence varied across areas of competency. She concurred with Masten and Coatsworth's (1998) findings of intelligence as a protective factor regarding disruptive behaviours at school but found that economically disadvantaged, bright adolescents under high stress conditions actually fared worse than their less intelligent peers. They seemed to be more sensitive to the effects of adverse conditions. Luthar (2006) noted other situations where good cognitive abilities may be a risk factor. Traditional methods of achieving self worth such as obtaining good grades may instead be regarded as detrimental in a subculture where school achievement is not highly regarded. These bright children can, and sometimes do, invest their talents in illegal activities.

Luthar (2006) suggested that the premise of resilience is rooted in strong, effective relationships. However, nurturing caregivers are not always present in the form of parents to act as buffers against stress. In the case where competent parents are not available, resilient children are well able to seek out adults such as grandparents, relatives, neighbours or siblings to act as stand-ins. They are, in fact, quite adroit at finding substitutes to provide the nurturing they need to develop into

competent individuals (Werner, 2000).Werner and Smith's Kauai Longitudinal Study (Werner, 1995) showed that resilient children tended to use community resources during times of need. Luthar (2006) noted that community supports such as high quality preschools and effective schools played an important role in ameliorating the effects of adversity for high-risk children. Werner (2000) further elucidated the effects of the wider community in the form of friends. She described the ability of resilient children to make strong friendships with children who could provide emotional support and maintain those friendships into adulthood. Associations with competent children and their families often provided perspective on the chaotic and dysfunctional families from which the resilient children came. Werner (2000) also noted the influence of strong religious orientations as a protective factor for some resilient children.

In her review of the literature, Werner (2000) compiled a list of protective factors, risk factors and the developmental period in which they were most influential. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 list these factors.

Table 2.1 Protective Factors Within Individuals, Replicated in Two or More Longitudinal Studies of At-Risk Children First Identified Before the Age of Six *Reproduced with the permission of Dr. E.E. Werner

Protective Factors	Developmental Period	Risk Factors
Low distress/ Low emotionality	Infancy-Adulthood	Child abuse/neglect Poverty Multiple risks
Active; alert; high vigor; drive	Infancy	Poverty Multiple risks
Sociability	Infancy	Child abuse/ neglect Parental mental illness Poverty Multiple risks
"Easy," engaging temperament (affectionate; cuddly)	Infancy	Child abuse/ neglect Parental mental illness Poverty Multiple Risks
Advanced self-help skills	Infancy-Childhood	Poverty Multiple risks

Average-above average intelligence (language and problem solving skills)	Early childhood	Child abuse/ neglect Parental substance abuse Poverty Multiple risks
Ability to distance oneself; impulse control	Childhood-Adulthood	Parental mental illness Parental substance abuse Poverty Multiple risks
Internal locus of control	Childhood-Adolescence	Parental mental illness Child abuse/ neglect Poverty Multiple risks
Strong achievement motivation	Childhood-Adolescence	Parental mental illness Parental substance abuse Poverty Multiple risks
Special talents, hobbies	Childhood-Adolescence	Parental mental illness Poverty Multiple risks
Positive self-concept	Childhood-Adolescence	Divorce Poverty Multiple Risks
Planning, foresight	Adolescence-Adulthood	Teenage parenthood Poverty Multiple risks
Strong religious orientation Faith	Childhood-Adulthood	Parental mental illness Parental substance abuse Poverty Multiple risks

Table 2.2 Protective Factors within the Family and Community Replicated in Two or More Longitudinal Studies of At-Risk Children First Identified Before the Age of Six
*Reproduced with the permission of Dr. E.E. Werner

Protective Factors	Developmental Period	Risk Factors
Small family size <4 children	Infancy	Teenage motherhood Poverty Multiple risks
Mother's education	Infancy-Adulthood	Teenage motherhood Poverty Multiple risks
Maternal competence	Infancy- Adolescence	Child abuse/neglect Poverty Parental mental illness

Close bond with primary caregiver (who need not be biological parent)	Infancy-Adolescence	Child abuse/neglect Poverty Parental mental illness Parental substance abuse Teenage motherhood Poverty Multiple risks
Supportive grandparents	Infancy-Adolescence	Child abuse/neglect Divorce Parental substance abuse Teenage motherhood Poverty Multiple risks
Supportive siblings	Childhood-Adulthood	Child abuse/neglect Divorce Parental substance abuse Poverty Multiple risks
For girls: emphasis on autonomy with emotional support from primary caregiver	Childhood-Adolescence	Poverty Multiple risks
For boys: structure and rules in household	Childhood-Adolescence	Divorce Poverty Multiple risks
For both boys and girls: assigned chores: "required helpfulness"	Childhood-Adolescence	Parental psychopathology Poverty Multiple risks
Close, competent peer friends who are confidants	Childhood-Adolescence	Divorce Poverty Multiple risks
Supportive teachers	Preschool-Adulthood	Divorce Parental mental illness Parental substance abuse Poverty Multiple risks
Successful school experiences	Preschool-Adulthood	Divorce Parental mental illness Poverty Multiple risks
Mentors (elders, peers)	Childhood-Adulthood	Poverty Multiple risks

2.2 Risk and Resilience in the Refugee Population

2.2.1 Background

Summerfield (2000) reported that in the non-western world at least two hundred wars and armed conflicts have occurred since the end of World War II. At any given time 40 conflicts are occurring somewhere in the world. During these wars, children are shot and killed, lose limbs, raped, and witness the deaths and tortures of their families and friends. They lose their homes and their ways of life. They often receive little or no medical assistance. Some children become soldiers by coercion from local armies. In some countries, elimination of street children occurs regularly and others are sexually exploited or fall into drug abuse. The separation of children from their families is all too common. Since 1970, the number of refugees has increased dramatically. It is imperative that people providing service to these families understand how best to support these children and their families by promoting the assets and protective factors in their lives, while minimizing risk factors. It is also possible that knowledge gained from understanding refugee children can be generalized from the refugee population to other populations of children (for example other cultural groups) enabling service providers to generate high quality programs for a wider group of children.

Some refugee children do well in life despite experiencing great adversity in their lives. Other refugee children come from equally adverse environments and do not succeed (Davies & Webb, 2000). Davies and Webb (2000) wrote that many refugee children have qualities of resilience that developed because of their experiences in war. They had made many contributions to their own survival and did not wish to be viewed as victims. By discovering what enables some refugee students to thrive, educators and others working with these children will be more able to design effective interventions that will foster success by recognizing and using these strengths. Fazel and Stein (2002) argued that there is a great need for a variety of treatment approaches for refugee families. These approaches need to include focus on the individual and family and need to include medical services, cognitive and behavioural treatments and school-based interventions.

Protective factors appear to transcend ethnic, social class and geographic boundaries (Werner, 2000). Even so, research has demonstrated that universal assumptions about development do not explain the development processes for all populations. It is necessary to understand refugee children within the contexts of their families and their immediate and larger sociocultural environments (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 2000). Interventions provided to refugee families must be culturally sensitive, or there exists the potential to replace one form of severe adversity with another (Webb & Davies, 2000).

Researcher Observations

Some families arrive from countries where amenities are non-existent. In my role as an ESL teacher, I became aware of a Sudanese family settled into an apartment with a refrigerator and stove. This family had lived in a village in their home country without electricity. A social worker visited the home a month after the family arrived following complaints from the building supervisor about the smell coming from the apartment. The children's teachers had also expressed concern about the general health of the children. Upon arrival, the social worker discovered large amounts of rotting food. When the social worker interviewed the mother, she found the mother unable to cook the food provided for the family because the mother did not know where to start a fire. It was at this point the social worker realized that the mother did not know how to use a refrigerator or stove. Even though the family had food, they were unable to eat it and, except for food that the children were eating and stealing from school, the family was starving.

Children rarely cope with trauma and adversity on their own. Instead, they experience these events with their families and peers. The particular community from which they come will determine how children explain violence and will provide them with strategies to deal with it (Punamaki, Qouta, & El-Sarraj, 2001). Punamaki, Qouta and El-Sarraj (2001) noted that essential factors in children's resilience during and following trauma included strong social support, positive emotional ties with parents, and conditions of trust with parents. According to

Groce and Zola (1993) culturally based belief systems and practices are the social facts which guide decisions made by individuals and their families. The family's culture provides the basis for how and why decisions are made.

2.2.2 Culture and Resilience

Culture can be defined as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO, 2002, p. 1). According to Padilla and Perez (2003), acculturation occurs when those involved in cultural transitions must decide how or whether they will integrate themselves into the host culture. The authors state that some refugees will develop social competence in that they will learn to function in a way that is consistent with the values, beliefs, mannerisms and language of the host culture. All refugees must adapt in some form and the expectations of the host culture influence that form.

Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000) presented the argument that much research to date into the acculturation of refugee families has come from the viewpoint that it is a highly stressful situation. Writers often portray children as caught between the parent's culture and that of the host country. The negative results of learning a new language and culture often overshadow the benefits gained by both the children and their families. There is an assumption that the parenting practices evinced in these families are faulty and need to be remedied (Garcia Coll, & Magnuson, 2000). The host culture might expect the refugee families to adopt white, middle class ideals and values. Rather than viewing these parenting factors as risk factors, Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000) suggested that the refugee families be studied from the perspective of resilience rather than that of the risk framework.

Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000) argued that in order to study cultural differences between refugee families and the host country, cultures must be observed as they really occur rather than as some idealized concept of what should be. Many differences exist within and between cultures and people working with

and studying refugee families must guard against attributing their own cultural values to a child's success or failure. Perceived Asian students' success in school, for example, is an attribution of an assumed cultural advantage in academics. The reverse is sometimes considered true for children of African American or First Nations descent.

One must also recognize differences within cultures and families (Garcia Coll, & Magnuson, 2000). Families may differ in their desire to maintain traditional cultural practices versus immersion in the host culture. Some families, for example, may want their children to speak their native language, and others may encourage their children to speak only English. There may also be variance in the desire on the part of the families to acculturate fully, or to maintain aspects of their traditional cultures (Summerfield, 2000). Children, because of their exposure to the host culture, may be at a different level of acculturation from their parents. Furthermore, a first generation family will demonstrate a different level of cultural involvement as opposed to a fourth generation family. Differing levels of acculturation may produce conflict and severely strained family functioning (Garcia Coll, & Magnuson, 2000). Children and wives, for example, may begin to question the authoritarian role of the father in a traditional, hierarchical home leading to strife and confusion within the family. In other families, the consequences of change may not be as strong. The length of time in the host culture may temper the positions that women and female children in a traditional family have. The women may work, drive cars and make day-to-day decisions once predominantly made by the male head of household. One could suppose that all family members may regard these changes in familial relationships as acceptable.

Stodolska and Livengood (2006) demonstrated that selective acculturation might also occur when refugees accept some aspects of the host culture and reject others. An example exists in young Muslim women who choose to retain their traditional clothing, but still participate in western culture. These women put themselves in danger of losing their connection to their traditional cultures while not becoming fully accepted by their host culture. This sense of not belonging to one culture or another can be perceived as a risk factor for these girls and women

(Padilla & Perez, 2003). Sometimes these young women rebel against the strictures of their home cultures.

Researcher Observations

Take the case of Nerifa, for instance, whose father decided she should wear a hijab (a scarf to cover her hair) when she reached the age of twelve. Nerifa attended school in Canada for several years and had become quite westernized. She interacted with boys in her class, which would never have occurred in her home country and, in fact, had a Canadian boyfriend. When her father demanded she wear her hijab, she refused. He responded by not allowing her to take part in extracurricular activities at school. Nerifa then wore her hijab when leaving home, but, as soon as she was out of sight, took it off. When Nerifa's father discovered what she was doing, he became very angry and beat her, as was his right in his home country. Social workers became involved, and the relationship between Nerifa and her father remains tenuous at best. Nerifa confesses to feeling guilty for disobeying her father, but is angry at the way she perceives him to be clinging to the "old ways".

Some families experience a sense of cultural bereavement. Their lives have been disrupted, they have lost the social status they held in their country of origin (Summerfield, 2000), and they may face discrimination in their new country (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 2000). Furthermore, many refugee families move into situations where they are part of a small group of people from their home cultures or, in some cases, are the only family sharing a same culture. There are fewer people who have the same cultural patterns, thus leading to further culture shock and loss of customary daily life (Summerfield, 2000). Eisenbruch (1991) found that families who were able to participate in some traditional ceremonies and practices and were pressured less to conform to the host country's social norms fared much better than those in dissimilar situations did.

Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000) argued that culture in and of itself does not pose a risk to children because most parents will act in ways they perceive to be

in the best interests of their children. It becomes a source of risk to view these cultural differences as deficits needing repair. They further asserted that the most important cultural forces necessary for child development are beliefs around child rearing practices, conceptualizations of family member roles and appropriate child and parental behaviour. They gave the example of attitudes to child employment. In the western world, a belief often held is that children should be allowed a childhood in which they are given a chance to play, explore and learn. In other cultures, children are an important part of the economic viability of the family and their participation in work is both necessary and acceptable. Summerfield (2000) posited that these children tend to view themselves as active survivors with an integral role in their families' health. The degree to which a family recognizes the host culture's perspective on child development will help determine whether these factors become risk or protective in nature. Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000) noted that often the view promoted by researchers and government agencies is that the parenting practices from different cultures are inferior. The attitude of the parents will also determine the experience of the children in their new country and culture (Summerfield, 2000).

Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000) proposed that risk, delay or disability in one culture might not be recognized as such in another. They posited that the surrounding culture of the child is the primary means of communicating from one generation to the next what is judged as risk or not. Groce and Zola (1993) noted that a nation's history, legal system and social structure shape these perceptions. If the refugee family's perspective differs from that of the host country, it may create an additional risk factor for the child. Furthermore, problems that a refugee family classifies as important are often very different from problems defined by the host culture, which may result in a disengagement from help on the part of the refugee family (Webb & Davies, 2000). Some cultures involve the extended family in decision making about the family or have a strict gender hierarchy that makes intervention dependent on the support and approval of the male head of household (Summerfield, 2000). Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000) argued that when the family's ideals are different from the host societies, the diverse viewpoints might

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pose a greater risk to the children in the form of less effective service for the children (Davies & Webb, 2000).

Researcher Observations

Tanwir, for example, was typical of many refugee boys in that he externalized his problems by becoming aggressive at school. His father came to the school for a meeting with the principal, the school counsellor and the school social worker. When the father learned of his son's behaviour, he refused assistance with his son because he understood neither the problem nor the offer of help. He explained that in their home country, boys were expected to solve their problems in a physical manner, and that adults did not get involved. He was not willing to have his son change his behaviour at school because he was afraid that Tanwir would lose face and become a victim of other children.

People working with refugee families must be cognizant of the way in which the refugee families are likely to view them. Refugees may see service providers as professionals with money, status and a powerful place in society. This may encompass everything the refugee family has lost (Summerfield, 2000).The social status of the service provider may be important to the parents. Some families may be reticent to share information about their children with someone they feel may disapprove of their actions or with someone they feel is socially inferior (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 2000). Li (2004) noted that Chinese students learn to show respect for their teachers and be grateful for their lessons. Students show respect by not asking questions of their teachers, and only answering questions when called upon. This practice is quite dissimilar to that encouraged in many western classrooms, and may create an unintentional distance between students and their teachers.

Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000) indicated that the degree of westernization might also influence seriousness given to interventions. Some traditional cultures attribute their children's difficulties to supernatural causes, and may not accept the host culture's advice when difficulties arise with their children.

Many use traditional folk remedies and, if they sense disapproval from their children's service providers, will not tell them about their use. Parents and extended family members may also not agree that their own behaviour needs to change, and thus may not aid service delivery to the child. Hubbard, Realmuto, Northwood and Masten (1995) reported on the reticence of many refugees to report problems or acknowledge difficulties when members of their communities are present. Young people especially had difficulty admitting problems in front of older and respected members of their communities.

Summerfield (2000) presented an argument for the importance of service providers keeping their biases in check. He cited the case of children from Sierra Leone who fought for the army as young as eight years old. These children fought, killed, looted and did their best to stay alive. Like children who fled from war in Sudan, the children were able to draw on culture specific coping skills. The majority of these children did not report their experiences of war as reasons to be unhappy although almost all missed friends and family. There is a tendency in the western world to expect traumatization of these children by war and to rehabilitate them accordingly. There is a tendency to portray these children as vulnerable but, by their own definitions, they are resilient, and Summerfield (2000) proposed a need for recognition of this resilience when dealing with them. Wolin and Wolin (1998) posited that resilient children envision themselves as survivors. While they have faced great adversity, treating these children as victims is not in their best interests, and such a practice may lead them to believe the same things of themselves. What these children need most of all is a supportive environment to establish themselves in their new homes (Summerfield, 2000).

2.2.3 Post Traumatic Stress Disorders

Hubbard et al., (1995) indicated that approximately one quarter of children who experienced severe, prolonged childhood trauma may suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as young adults. PTSD may co-occur with depression and anxiety. Some young adults in Hubbard et al.'s study who became refugees as children also experienced social phobia. According to Hubbard et al.

(1995) this social phobia strongly correlated with poor acculturation. Very few of these youths demonstrated substance abuse and Hubbard et al. (1995) theorized that cultural effects played a role in this finding. Young women experienced more post trauma symptoms in general and somatoform pain disorder in particular. This finding may be due to the differing opportunities for acculturation experienced by the two genders. Stoldoska and Livengood (2006) wrote that parents of girls typically do not allow them as much freedom of mobility. They spend a greater amount of time in their homes or associating with members of their cultural group, often with other traumatized individuals. Hubbard et al. (1995) argued that because of this limited interaction with the host culture, girls' symptoms worsened while at the same time their access to the new culture slowed. Furthermore, some girls (Muslim for example) experience exclusion from some activities because of modesty requirements and restrictions on mixed-gender interactions (Stoldalska & Livengood, 2006).

Garborino and Kostelny (1996) presented evidence to support their claim that repeated exposure to violence, the types of threat and the length of exposure to adversity further increased developmental risk. The accumulation of risk factors such as the gender and age of the child, as well as family dysfunction and community disorganization considerably increased the chances of permanent harm to development. Serious impairment to family functioning occurred following the arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child's father, particularly if that child was young. In contrast to the findings of Hubbard et al. (1995), Garborino and Kostelny (1996) found that boys were more vulnerable to risks than were girls. Werner (1990) speculated that increased responsibility girls and their mothers assumed during times of high violence buffered risk factors associated with that violence. With the reduction or loss of protective factors such as structure or supervision, boys became more susceptible to risk (Garborino & Kostelny, 1996). Loss of male role models, increased unemployment for men, and the diminished status of the men in the family further compounded the risk for the boys.

The age of the child when adversity begins strongly influences a child's coping strategies (Garborino & Kostelny, 1996). Garborino and Kostelny (1996)

postulated that the immature neurological resources and the lower level of coping strategies available to young children lead to the presence of more risk factors. Preschool children often mirror their parents' response to stress (Jensen & Shaw, 1993).Older children are more capable of accessing their cognitive processes, and are more able to find resources when they were not available within the family (Garborino & Kostelny, 1996).

Ai and Park (2005) reported that studies of traumatized individuals have shown the inverse relation of optimism to PTSD particularly for those who lose family members. Resilient individuals expect future good events, and show both determination to achieve their goals and the ability to generate plans to meet these goals. Vulnerable individuals, on the other hand, tend to be pessimistic and predict future trauma for themselves and loved ones. In order to escape the negative moods associated with their trauma, it is common for these vulnerable individuals to develop risky behaviour.

2.2.4 Parental Contributions to Resilience in Refugee Children

Fazel and Stein (2002) noted that the response of refugee children's parents to adversity had an enormous impact on their children's resilience. In particular, Short and Johnston (1997) argued that maternal distress was a predictor of boy's behaviour, and maternal support was a predictor of girl's outcomes. They also noted the lower stress levels of refugee mothers who had higher levels of English language fluency. Punamaki, Qouta and El Sarraj (2001) examined the relationship between the mother's ability to control horrifying images and her coping responses with children's resilience and vulnerability. They found that parents and children face adversity together and that their relationships and responses will correlate highly with the degree of psychological adjustment the family experiences. Punamaki et al. (2001) found that parental relationships with their children and each other were predictive of adjustment. Loving parenting provided protective factors and hostile parenting produced vulnerability in children. Punamaki et al. (2001) further described situations in which children perceived their mothers to have positive attitudes toward them combined with negative parenting from their fathers

to be highly detrimental to children's developmental processes. They described mothers as providing a stress buffer to traumatic events.

Garborino and Kostelny (1996) noted that functional family systems served as buffers for most children exposed to risk factors and adversity. In contrast, children who experienced family dysfunction along with adversity associated with refugee and war status were more likely to experience significant developmental problems. In their interviews with Palestinian children in refugee camps, Punamaki, Qouta and El Sarraj (1997) found that war and conflict interrupted the most basic parenting functions of providing protection for and building trust and security in children. Many children assumed behaviour traditionally granted to adults. The coping models these children employed resulted in increased negative consequences to development especially if their parents were unable to provide buffers in the forms of emotional affection and good discipline. Children who were vulnerable to risk tended to take on roles of heroism, often overwhelmed by the adverse conditions they faced.

2.2.5 Socioeconomics

Waxman (2001) noted several factors that served as either protective or risk factors with regard to economic resilience of refugees. Poverty is highly associated with risk for all people (Luthar & Goldstein, 2004) including refugees. Waxman (2001) identified limited or no competence in English to be the greatest deterrent to finding work for refugees. Interestingly, refugees imprisoned or incarcerated before leaving their home countries are more likely to look for work actively. Waxman (2001) speculated that surviving this trauma might have been a source of resilience for these people. In most cases, former financial status or qualifications are not indicators of employment status in the host country. In fact, even though university educated, many refugees expect only lower paying menial jobs. Some refugees work at unskilled jobs and are unable to attend English classes further delaying a potential upgrading of skills. There is little likelihood of refugees previously holding professional standing to regain that status. For women, especially single parents or widows, the employment prospect is particularly bleak. Poor access to

childcare only compounds their difficulties. All of these factors are more likely to lead to refugees living in poverty situations, and poverty is determined to be a greater risk factor to the development of children than is war (Summerfield, 2000).

2.2.6 Religious Involvement

Understanding the roles of spirituality and religion in helping individuals cope with adversity is taking a more prominent place in resilience research (Miller & Thoresen, 2003). In her review of the literature, Chatters (2000) noted that religious involvement predicted better outcomes for people recovering from physical or emotional ailments. These effects, while moderate for those with physical problems, were strong for individuals with mental health issues. The protective benefits were strongest for those who attended religious services regularly. Adolescents who were actively involved in their faiths showed considerably lower levels of substance abuse and higher levels of health promoting behaviours. Some religions specifically prohibit behaviours that are health risks such as the prohibition of alcohol use for Muslim people (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006). Participation in a religious group enhanced the development of supportive networks, thus allowing the individual the sense of being cared for by others. Some religions, such as Islam, emphasize strong family and community ties, and use faith to pass on traditional moral behaviours to subsequent generations (Stoldska & Livengood, 2006). Chatters (2000) also proposed that religious coping strategies could afford an individual the opportunity to reframe negative life events. Those individuals with strong religious connections tended to experience strong positive emotions regarding themselves.

Stoldoska and Livengood (2006) argued that religion could pose a risk factor for refugee children when conflict appears between traditional and moderate factions of their religion. In their interviews with Muslim girls in particular they noted that some of these girls suffered criticism for being less devout. This tendency was particularly apparent for children who were still in school. The constant negotiation between the old society and the new created some stress, and thus risk, for the children.

2.2.7 Ethnic Resilience

Lee (2005) defined ethnic identity as part of a person's self-concept that derives from membership in a particular ethnic group. Ethnicity is a multidimensional construct involving emotions, values and behaviours associated with that group. Some, but not all, individuals who perceive themselves as discriminated against based on their ethnicity will experience significant stress. Those individuals who display resilience tend to use problem solving coping skills and avail themselves of ethnic support. Furthermore, individuals who display a positive attitude toward members of other ethnic groups will also develop protection against discrimination (Lee, 2003).

In their review of the literature, Stodolska and Livengood (2006) described the process of ethnic resilience that many refugees undergo. In this study, refugees adopted certain strategic traits of the host culture in order to facilitate positive adjustment. At the same time, they kept salient ethnic traits to ensure maintenance of the native culture. These traits usually included eating traditional food and listening to traditional music, as well as participation in strong family groups and leisure activities. For Muslim families, strong family ties took on a deeper meaning. These families tended to be collectivistic in nature, and group needs took priority over individual needs. Muslim children saw themselves as part of their religious group, and emphasized the relationships that occurred within that group (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006). These relationships afforded refugee children protective factors in that they provided access to significant others who were strong role models. Unfortunately, these role models can also pose great risk to young people when they encourage the young people to take part in activities that are both illegal and life threatening as is evident in recent world events.

2.2.8 Educational Resilience

In many instances schools become the setting in which refugee children first begin the process of acculturation (Summerfield, 2000). Fazel and Stein (2002) noted effective schools and teachers have the potential to promote resilience in

refugee children by becoming the focal point for educational, social and emotional development. The authors further argued that schools could provide a link to the community for both parents and children. The stable support schools provide can enhance resilience in refugee children by promoting their competencies. In order for promotion of resilience to occur, Webb and Davies (2000) pointed out that teachers must recognize several salient features of refugee children that may distinguish them from their non-refugee peers.

Webb and Davies (2000) found that refugee children from war torn countries often have great difficulties adjusting to school in their new country. They usually speak little or no English and some have had no experience with school at all. Even so, the expectation exists for refugee children to fit into local educational systems. According to Webb and Davies (2000) it is common for refugee children to find school restrictive and confusing following lifetimes dominated by war. Many of these children had assumed tremendous responsibilities in their home countries and experienced more status and self-esteem than children in the host country did. The skill set of refugee children is often quite different from children in the host culture. When teachers and others assume that development is intrinsically the same as that for western children, it poses a significant risk factor since these young people often no longer see themselves as children.

Webb and Davies (2000) further noted that girls frequently internalize their problems while boys both internalize and externalize them. The boys in their study were often truant, they stole and they were aggressive. Schools were ill prepared for the needs of the refugee children and placed the onus for controlling the boys' behaviour on the families. McBrien (2005) contended that many refugee students who had attended school in their countries of origin or refugee camps had experienced it as a strictly controlled environment where the mode of learning was memorization. The culture of western schools is quite different and is often viewed by refugee students as places where there are no behavioural rules, resulting in significant discipline problems. Adjustment problems combined with survival behaviours developed in refugee camps further compounded behaviour problems (McBrien, 2005).

In contrast, Waxman, Huang and Padron (1997) found educationally resilient students shared some common features and promoting both protective resources and the student's attitudes toward and perceptions of school while decreasing risk factors would further increase this resilience. A key variable was not holding children back in school. Waxman and his colleagues (1997) classified over half the children held back in school as non-resilient. There is a tendency on the part of schools to place refugee children in grade levels lower than those of same age peers or in special education classes because it is assumed, rightly or otherwise, that their skill levels are not on par (McBrien, 2005). McBrien (2005) contended this practice is not effective and in fact becomes a risk factor for many children. She further noted that many refugee children deal with adversity when migrating to a new country and learning a new culture and that learning a new language of instruction further compounds these efforts. Refugee children try to meet the cultural demands of their parents and their new peers, attempts clouded with discrimination and racism. Many students drop out of school because of the hostile environments they encounter. McBrien (2005) noted that the aim of most English as a second language (ESL) programs was to have students learn English quickly and exit programs quickly. These children become competent quickly in colloquial English but lag behind in their development of academic English. In their desire to learn English, many children lose their home language fluency and become further disconnected from their parents.

Promotion of parental involvement increases success of students in school (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). However, the parents of many refugee children are often victims of trauma themselves and are unable to provide emotional or academic support for their children (McBrien, 2005). In her review of the literature, McBrien (2005) found that these parents may not learn English as quickly as their children and cannot help with homework. They often experience a different frame of reference concerning their role in supporting their children at school. They may view teachers as experts and not expect to be involved at all. Parent teacher conferences are something with which they may not be familiar. Teachers may interpret this as a sign of disinterest in the children's education.

Gordon (1996) noted that resilient refugee children have high academic aspirations further supported by high expectations on the parts of both their school and parents. Other protective factors included the personality traits of persistence, positive work habits and a strong belief in their own ability (Gordon, 1996). Gordon (1996) in her review of the literature further noted that certain factors of educational resilience were similar across ethnic groups. Schools were supportive of both the student and the family. Their standards and expectations for student performance and behaviour were high. Teachers accepted their students' cultures. They were sensitive to communication styles and language issues. Lastly, the teachers gave effective praise frequently.

2.2.9 Cognitive Competence in Refugee Children

Punamaki et al. (2001) proposed that the dynamic qualities of resilience would become risk factors in some circumstances but allow children to flourish in others. They found that children who had responded actively to violence during war suffered higher levels of emotional disorders than passive children did. Several years later, however, the actively involved children demonstrated much lower levels of emotional distress than their more passive peers did. Punamaki et al. (2001) also noted that children's creativity was associated with positive post war adjustment. Highly creative children were less susceptible to emotional disorders in times of peace. Conversely, during times of violence, creativity did not serve as a protective factor. When faced with overwhelming violence, children tended to assume unemotional, analytic styles. These children also evinced more concentration, attention and memory problems than other children did (Punamaki et al., 1997) even though their intelligence, creativity, visuo-motor performance and ability to organize symbolic material remained intact (Qouta, Punamaki, & El Sarraj, 1995). Other risk factors to development of   cognitive competence included poor living conditions (Sameroff et al., 1987) during wartime, during time spent in refugee camps and in the host country (Qouta et al., 1995). When children live in great poverty, the effects on cognitive growth are potentially large. During war, children inadequately housed, if housed at all, face starvation and freezing temperatures.

Illnesses may go untreated and they may experience stress related to encampment (UNICEF, 1996) in addition to stressors from the war going on around them. In fact many more children die from deprivation of the basic needs to stay healthy than they do from actual conflict during war.

2.2.10 Summary

Resilient refugee children share many, if not all, traits of other resilient children. They face great adversity that is unimaginable at times. Once the immediate danger to their survival has passed, they must cope with the challenges involved in leaving what remains of their homes and families and beginning life in a new country, a new culture and a new language. Their families may fracture and they may face discrimination, racism and social systems that are not prepared for their arrival. Even so, many of these children go on to build lives that are productive and happy. They make friends and they find ways to become part of their new communities. They go to school and some go on to university. In the words of Anne Masten (2001), these very ordinary children who have lived extraordinary lives, achieve magic.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study used a qualitative approach to investigate the perceptions of three refugee children regarding their development of resilience following adversity. I chose to do a qualitative study because while there is much research done on risk and resilience in children, there is a paucity of research where the children have been asked for their perceptions regarding their positive adaptation. To achieve this end, interviews with each of the children took place in accordance with Behavioural Research Ethics Board Guidelines and Approval (see Appendix A). This chapter will describe the participants, consent, procedures for the protection of confidentiality, data collection and data analysis used to complete this study.

3.2 Participants

Participant selection was purposeful. Three participants were selected from a group of refugee children at Riverbend Community School, a western Canadian urban school. Resilient children demonstrate competence or successful development as expected in terms of age, gender, culture, society and time (Masten, 2001). Academic and behavioural competence as reported by their current classroom teachers in part determined positive adaptation in the children participating in this study. All children in the study came to Canada as refugees and resided in Canada for between two and three years. They lived in Canada long enough to develop English language skills so that interpreters were not necessary but not so long that they had forgotten their initial experiences as refugees. Participants were between the ages of nine and twelve at the time of the study. Exact date of birth was not known for two of the children in this study. January first birthdates and assumed

year of birth are given to refugee children when their birthdates have not been recorded and this was the case for two of three of these participants. The age of the third participant was known and fell within the stated parameters.

The participants had previously been students of mine and had developed a trusting relationship with me. They will not be students of mine in the future. It was clearly stated in the information letter that no child would be refused participation in the activities of their school if they chose not to participate in the study, and no data would be recorded about them for the purpose of this study. The data of students who withdrew from the study part way through would be destroyed at the point at which they withdrew and no further data would be collected from them.

3.3 Consent

Following approval by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board, a copy of the certificate of approval was submitted to the Public School Board along with the completed Request to Conduct Research for approval.

Prior to the start of the study, a Letter of Information (see Appendix B) about the study, and a Parent Consent and Student Assent Form (see Appendix C) were sent by the school to the parents of students identified as potential participants in the study. In all cases, written consent of the parent(s), guardian(s) or caregiver(s) were obtained prior to proceeding with the interview (see Appendix C). The child's assent was also obtained (see Appendix C). The reading level of the Letter of Information was established as grade 7.6 and the Parent Consent and Student Assent Form was established as grade 8.3 according to the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Scale (Microsoft Office Word 2003).

3.4 Procedures for the Protection of Confidentiality

Upon approval from the University of Saskatchewan and the Public School Division, information letters and consent forms were sent to all guardians of

children identified as potential participants in the study. Upon receipt of signed consent forms, each file was assigned a pseudonym to identify it. This pseudonym was used for all data associated with the individual participants and is being kept in a location separate from the data collected for the study. Any information obtained from or about individual participants that had identifying information (e.g. if a student named a parent or teacher in the interview) was transcribed and the identifying information was replaced with a pseudonym. Names and /or ID numbers routinely used by the school were not used as pseudonyms.

All data associated with this study is being stored by Dr. T. Paslawski in a secured location accessible only to her in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan for a period of five years, and will then be destroyed. In addition, to assure further confidentiality, all data were identified by pseudonyms only. The master list for the pseudonyms will be stored separately for a period of five years and then destroyed.

3.5 Data Collection

An empirical inquiry into three refugee children's perceptions of processes that contributed to their positive adjustment was conducted. Data was collected over a six week period of time in the form of individual interviews with each child. Each child was interviewed twice at the child's school at a time convenient for both the child and his/her teachers. The interviews took place in a conference room in the school. Each participant was reminded that he/she could decline to answer any question without penalty and that he/she could withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. If a participant decided to withdraw from the study, all data gathered from that participant was to be destroyed. The interviews were audiotaped. The administration time was approximately one hour for the first interview and one hour for the second. A third interview to clarify questions arising from the first two interviews and to review summaries of the interviews with the participants was conducted. During the third interview the participants verified the accuracy of the summaries and corrected errors made during the transcriptions of the interviews.

Data collection followed the use of an emergent research design. In this format, important directions identified early in the interviews determined subsequent questions (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The interviews consisted of a set of broad interview questions to be covered with each child. Interview guides (see Appendix D) were developed to explore this series of topics with each participant. It became apparent early in the first set of interviews that the participants' receptive language skills, or what they understood, were stronger than their expressive language skills, or what they were able to say. This finding was not unexpected as Morely (1991) noted that most people understand twice as much as they hear compared to what they speak and this ratio is even larger for children learning English. The questions from the first interviews were rephrased and answers were paraphrased to ensure the participants' responses were clearly understood. The second set of questions sought clarification with respect to statements made by the participants in the first interview. The third meeting consisted of having the children listen to summaries of the interviews and verify the accuracy of the summaries. The participants had the opportunity to add any further information at this time. During the data collection process, I assembled comprehensive field notes. These field notes included a description of the setting of the interviews and a description of the school. Demographic data obtained from Statistics Canada regarding the neighbourhood was also included in the field notes. The field notes included findings, thoughts, encountered problems and decisions made regarding interview questions during the interview process.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of developing qualitative themes and patterns using content analysis procedures described by White and Marsh (2006). According to White and Marsh, the initial foci of the study provide foreshadowing questions to guide the research. As relationships emerge, categories will be continually refined and emerging patterns tested as new data is compared with existing data. Qualitative content analysis focuses on forming a picture of the phenomenon as it is within a

certain context. Fleisher (2006) described this procedure as one in which narrative data is coded into major categories or themes. The categories derive from the interviews rather than from a preconceived notion of what the categories are.

In this study, the first two sets of interviews were transcribed and then summarized. Member checks with the participants were done to verify that the analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions I reached accurately represented the participants' realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants had the opportunity to volunteer additional information and correct any errors in interpretation.

Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Following this method, incidents from the interviews were coded for categories. They were then compared with previous incidents in both the first category and other categories. As relationships became more apparent, the categories were refined. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described this process as delimitating and noted that fewer modifications are required as more data is processed. Field notes kept by me regarding my thoughts and feelings about the interviews also became part of the analysis of data.

3.7 Summary

In accordance with Behavioural Research Ethics Board Guidelines and Approval, three refugee children were purposefully invited to take part in this study. This is an empirical study and I gathered data by interviewing each child twice. I met with the children individually a third time so that I could read summaries of their interviews to them. They had the opportunity to correct any mistakes and volunteer new information. I analyzed the data by looking for themes and patterns as they developed. Throughout the course of my research, I organized the themes and patterns into categories. Results are presented in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four

RESULTS

      The purpose of this study was to examine the processes that contributed to the positive adjustment of refugee children following conditions of adversity. By interviewing children who had not succumbed to negative outcomes in their developmental process, it was hoped a greater understanding would be reached regarding how particular variables affected their competence. This study focused on the mediating effects of parents, and the new social milieu (e.g., school, the mosque or church, community agencies supporting refugees) as perceived by three refugee children. In this chapter I have described the context of the interviews, the participants, and provided a glimpse of my role as researcher. In order to answer the research questions generated for the purpose of this study, I aggregated the children's responses to the interview questions.

4.1 Context

      Riverbend Community School is a small public elementary school with a population of 280 students. Of the 280 students, 70 % are Aboriginal, 4.3 % are refugees, and 25.7 % are of other ethnic backgrounds. The community is highly transient. In the 2006-2007 school year, the student turnover rate was 102 %. Many of the children came from single parent families. Most of the children in the school lived in a cluster of apartment buildings where the crime rate was high. Some of the children lived in rental homes. Very few lived in homes owned by their families. Statistics Canada Census of Population 2001 figures indicated the average income for individuals over the age of 15 living in this neighbourhood was 20,871.00. This figure is considerably lower than the average income of 39,465.00 for individuals over the age of 15 for the city as a whole.

      In the 2004-2005 school year, the large number of refugee students in the

school prompted the Public School Division to establish an ESL program in the building. Prior to this time, the children were taxied to another school for ESL services. Hamid, Saif and Zabura received ESL support on a daily basis for two years after arriving in Canada. At the time of this study, they continued to attend ESL classes for assistance with reading and writing skills. Zabura attended separate classes with the special education teacher for help with all academic subjects.

Saskatchewan Learning (1998) described the Community School Program as one that initially was developed to address urban Aboriginal poverty. One emphasis of the community school was that of developing holistic, culturally affirming programs for children who faced barriers to their learning. Community schools focused on parent and community involvement, integrated services and community development. This mandate resulted in increased support staff, the development of prekindergarten programs, and the establishment of nutrition programs. Riverbend Community School also had a Family and Schools Together (FAST) program coordinated by the community school coordinator. In this program, eight to twelve families came to the school for one evening a week over a period of eight weeks. School staff members volunteered to run the program. During this time, the participants shared a meal together, the parents discussed parenting issues, and the children had playtime. One of the families in this study participated in FAST in the 2005/2006 school year; the other family took part in the program in the 2006/2007 school year.

The children in this study all received assistance from the Educational Assistants in their classrooms, had younger siblings who attended the prekindergarten class and occasionally ate in the lunch program. Each community school has a community coordinator whose function is to coordinate programming both within the school and with outside agencies. At Riverbend Community School, the community coordinator was also involved in developing programs designed to invite parents and community members into the building. These services were available in community schools but are not part of regular suburban school programs. According to Henderson and Milstein (2003), schools that facilitate the full participation of community members become resilience-building organizations.

The increased support for all children in community schools ensures that refugee children living in these neighbourhoods receive assistance not available to refugee families who live in communities that are more affluent.

A number of the Aboriginal children in the neighbourhood belonged to gangs and have in the past, during my tenure at the school, tried to intimidate the refugee children and other children who attend the school. The response of the refugee children was to band together. Since that time the gangs have generally left them alone. The refugee children in this neighbourhood came from several different countries and for the most part spoke either Farsi or Arabic as their first languages. The older children looked out for the younger ones and the siblings in high school looked out for everyone. When the children talked about their weekends and holidays, they generally spoke of sports. Participation in sport seemed to be a place where all problems among groups were set aside (excerpt from field notes, April 4, 2007).

4.2 The Researcher's Background

My position in the school was that of ESL teacher and resource teacher for the senior students in the building. It was both a dynamic and challenging position that I enjoyed immensely. Not being a classroom teacher allowed me the flexibility to spend more time with the students in my charge if they needed it, or to reduce services if the students were coping well. When I worked with the children in this study as their ESL teacher, it was in a small group setting. The children in this study all arrived in Canada within three weeks of each other and, at first, appeared to be at the same grade level academically. They worked together with me on a variety of things from learning their first words in English, to understanding the hidden language on the playground, to reaching grade level in academic subjects. We had a trusting relationship and the children felt free to ask me many things that they did not understand about Canadian culture. When school became difficult for them in their classrooms or they were tired, they often came to my classroom for a break and an opportunity to regroup. I developed a tremendous respect for their

perseverance when school was challenging or when they found it hard to understand the demands their teachers and the other students placed on them.

As their former teacher, I came to the research with biases I needed to be aware of when interviewing the children and analyzing their responses. I had to set aside my beliefs that all three children were doing unequivocally well in all domains and listen to their understandings. I had to recognize that my perceptions of what they found helpful were those of an adult, Canadian teacher and I had to keep reminding myself of this bias during the interviews and while I was analyzing the data. I needed to change my stance from that of their former teacher with fond memories to that of a researcher with an interest in understanding their stories from their point of view. I continually reminded myself that my role was to encourage the children to express themselves freely, not tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. I needed to understand their perceptions, not mine as I remembered them.

During the interviews I found that the children and I slipped into the pattern of conversing that we had used when I was their ESL teacher. I often repeated or paraphrased what they said. I found myself saying 'good' or 'excellent' when they said something using good English. These were strategies I used when teaching English to the children in this study and it quickly became the way we interacted during our interviews. When I made a statement or asked a question during the interviews, the children were not hesitant to agree or disagree with me or correct me if they felt I had misrepresented what they were trying to say. I felt that we were able to arrive at an accurate portrayal of their thoughts.

4.3 The Participants

Prior to the study, the children were students at Riverbend Community School for two and a half years. Hamid and Saif are brothers and were refugees from Syria. Zabura is a girl and came to Canada from Sudan after a stay in a refugee camp in Lebanon. All three children were in the same class at school and were between nine and eleven years of age. The exact age of the boys was not known because their birth dates were not recorded in their home country. The following

descriptions of the participants are based on my initial interviews with the children (transcript #1, # 3, #5, field notes April 4, 2007, April 5, 2007).

On the morning of the first interview, I got to the school just after recess. When I went to the classroom to find the first child that I planned to talk to, I discovered that he was not there. Instead, Hamid was waiting outside the principal's office. When I asked him if he was in trouble, he said no but he looked upset and did not want to tell me what was going on. According to the staff, there was a group of children in the school that morning who were difficult and created problems for the other children on the playground. When the difficulties had been resolved, I was a little surprised at how quickly Hamid settled into the interview and answered my questions. He was serious and thoughtful with his replies. In the past when I worked with him, he was flippant on occasion. During the interview, he was very polite. I was impressed with how respectful Hamid was and how much he appeared to want to help me. He was tidy and wore clothing that would fit into any Canadian school. My previous recollection of Hamid was that he was always sparkling clean and well fed which was not always the case for the other children in this school. During our conversations before the interviews I found Hamid's English to be progressing well. It appeared that he understood much of what I said to him. Hamid was not happy that I would not identify him in my thesis. He wanted people to know what he said and he wanted his name attached to the interviews.

My interviews with Saif were quite unexpected. I thought he would be the one to be most open with me. Instead, he told me the tape recorder made him nervous. I reassured him that no one except my supervisor and me would listen to the tapes but he still confessed to feeling shy. He often glanced at the recorder, put his hands over his face, or put his head down. Saif is Hamid's brother and like Hamid, spoke respectfully and fondly of his parents. He talked about feeling shy and for the past two years has done most things with his brother as opposed to activities with friends outside the family. At the time of this study, Hamid and Saif were both starting to make separate friendships and were beginning to pursue their own interests. When the first interview was over, Saif surprised me once again by telling me he thought he would like to keep talking to me about his life in Canada,

suggesting his initial shyness had dissipated.

The third participant, Zabura, was initially reluctant to sign the consent form. Following the protocol approved by the Behavioural Ethics Review Board, I explained the purpose of the study to her parents and reassured them that Zabura did not have to answer any questions with which she was uncomfortable. She could withdraw from the study at any time or they could withdraw her from the study at any time and there would be no repercussions at school. If she withdrew, I would destroy any information she had provided to that point. After this, Zabura agreed to participate in the study and signed the assent form without hesitation. When I first got to the school, she was leaving with the school choir to perform at a senior citizens home. When Zabura got back to the building, she came right to the interview room to find me. She marched in and tested the equipment as if she had done it many times before. She made sure the tape recorder was close to her so that I would hear everything she had to say.

Zabura spoke repeatedly of how important her friends were to her and when the first interview was over, several of them came to find her to go to lunch. This child was very social and learned English very quickly. When I taught her, I was concerned that she may have a learning disorder because she was not learning to read and write or do math as quickly as expected. Zabura told me that these subjects were still very difficult for her and there was an undercurrent of sadness when she spoke.

4.4 The Interviews

I spoke with the children a week before the first set of interviews took place so they were expecting me the day of the interview. A week before the interview I gave them an idea of the questions I would pose by asking them to think back to when they first started school in Canada and to also think about the present. I asked them to consider the things that were important to them and to have in mind what had helped them become the successful young people they were.

Each interview was forty to sixty minutes in length. I conducted them during

the school day at a time acceptable to both the teacher and participants. The interviews took place in a conference room in the centre of the school. Although large windows overlook the foyer of the school, the children sat with their backs to the windows and interruptions were minimal. During each of the interviews, the children appeared to be focused on the interview questions. They maintained eye contact, answered questions appropriately and in a timely fashion, and were not distracted by activity outside the interview room. At the beginning of the interviews, they all confessed to feeling shy and being aware of the tape recorder. Hamid and Zabura quickly overcame their reticence to share information. Saif remained conscious of being taped, repeatedly looking at the tape recorder and moving away from it.

Before each interview the students were reminded that everything they said was confidential. I audiotaped all interviews with the permission of the students and then transcribed the interviews. Following the first set of interviews, I formulated additional questions to clarify or seek more information from the participants. When I transcribed both sets of interviews, I summarized them and then made an appointment to return to the school. I read each participant the summary of his/her interview and gave him/her the opportunity to correct or clarify what I had written.

4.5 Results

Using the constant comparative method of analysis of the interviews, it became clear to me that what the children perceived as important contributors to their positive adjustment following and during conditions of adversity were their families, their friends, and their teachers. All three children spoke of the impact that playing sports had on their lives. The vital role of the community coordinator in the school became evident. She facilitated their introduction to and involvement in the school and the wider community. Therefore 'friends', 'school and community events' and 'involvement in sports' were added to research question two. This question then read 'What factors in the new social milieu (e.g. friends, school, the mosque or church, community agencies supporting refugees, school and community

events, involvement in sports) do children identify that promote their resilience?'
Community organizations that support refugee families appeared to have a distal
effect on the children, as did membership in the mosque. All three children had
advice for newly arrived refugee children, their parents and their teachers. Their
advice was aimed at making the adjustment to Canadian life a positive one for other
refugee children.

*4.5.1 Research Question #1: How do children understand what their parents are
doing to help them adjust to a new culture?*

One of my first questions to the children was to ask what was most
important to them. All three children identified their parents first. As the interviews
progressed, the children's strong connections to their parents became even more
evident. When Hamid spoke of his parents, especially his mother, his fondness and
respect for her was very evident (field notes, April 4, 2007). Saif's first words to me
in our second interview were to excitedly tell me that just he and his father had gone
on a special trip to a city several hours away (transcript # 5). Zabura told me that her
favourite times were when she and her mother sang and danced together in their
kitchen (field notes, April 30, 2007).

All three children spoke of being very nervous before they started school in
Canada. The children then reported that both sets of parents reassured their children
by telling them not to be nervous, that everything would be okay. The parents
accompanied their children to school on the first day, but left once the children were
settled (transcript # 1,# 3,# 5) allowing the children to develop a sense of autonomy.
In each of their interviews the children noted that dress in their home countries was
a little different than dress in Canadian schools and they told me that their parents
made sure they had new clothes that were like those of their Canadian peers.

Hamid, Saif and Zabura are Muslim in a predominantly non-Muslim school.
Before school started, their parents gave them advice on how to navigate situations
that could pose conflicts with their religious beliefs. There was a lunch program at
the school, for example, and parents told the children to eat foods they recognized
or to eat only fruit (transcript # 4, transcript # 6). The children enrolled in the school

at the end of November, just in time for Christmas preparations. Both sets of parents gave permission for their children to join the concerts and other activities. The families received presents for Christmas from community organizations their first year in Canada and although they did not celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday, continued to give presents each year (transcripts # 1, # 3, # 5).

All three children had chores to do at home. They all helped with the dishes. Hamid took his mother's turn when she was tired (transcript # 1). They were all responsible for cleaning their rooms, making their beds and caring for their toys. Zabura has two young brothers and she often baby-sat them. Hamid and Saif helped their younger brother with his homework. Their parents were just learning English and the boys were further along in their schoolwork than their parents were. The boys took great pride and enjoyment in being able to help their parents learn English. Saif told me that his parents had not been to school as young people and that they were not able to read or write in either Arabic or English. He commented that his favourite times with his parents were when he was able to help them read and with their homework (transcript # 4).

Both sets of parents set limits on when and where their children could play. They allowed the children to play outside for a set amount of time each day. The children were to stay on the apartment playground and ask permission from their parents if they wanted to go elsewhere. The parents did not allow the children to play outside at night. Hamid called his parents' rules "good safety rules" (field notes, April 30, 2007). The children recognized that the neighbourhood in which they lived was dangerous and were happy to comply with their parents' requests.

The parents in both families made an effort to spend time alone with each of their children. Saif and Hamid's parents had friends from their city of origin in another Canadian city. Periodically one parent took one of the children for a special trip to visit. The boys enjoyed these trips tremendously (transcript # 1, # 3)**.** Zabura's mother was a master at braiding hair. She rebraided Zabura's hair regularly and intricately. This process took two or three days and Zabura told me that she liked being able to talk and sing with her mother during these times (field notes April 30, 2007).

The children also did things together with their families as a unit. Hamid and Saif went to the mall with their parents. A recurring theme throughout the interviews with Hamid was a fear of getting lost. He made it his responsibility to remember the location of exits and doors. The family occasionally went to a small lake close to the city. Although they did not spend the night, they swam and played sports with other families who also went. Zabura's family went to the zoo for special occasions. All three children took part in the Family and School Together (FAST) program offered at the school. This activity was a favourite for all of them. They each spoke of the pleasure they received in being able to spend this time with their parents and siblings (transcript # 5, field notes April 30, 2007).

The children were beginning to speak a mix of Arabic and English to their parents. Although Zabura spoke primarily Arabic with her mother, she did say that at home "our whole family speaks English at times, sometimes Arabic, so we trade a little" (transcript # 6). All family members were able to move freely back and forth in both languages and Zabura's mother acted as an interpreter for the school. Hamid and Saif spoke Arabic with their parents but Saif confessed to "forgetting most of it" (transcript # 4). All three children spoke English to their younger siblings and Arabic speaking friends when they played. The tension between maintaining their mother tongue and becoming fluent in English became more apparent as the children in this study became more immersed in Canadian culture.

In summary, Hamid, Saif and Zabura had strong connections to their parents. The parents guided and gave advice to their children about how to navigate this new culture. They placed limits on what their children could do when playing outside, which the children accepted as reasonable. The children took pride in their roles in their families and were given responsibilities commensurate with their ages and cultures. The parents made sure they recognized the children as individuals who merited special attention. The major threat to the relationships between two of the children and their parents appeared to be the weakening of a common shared language. Zabura's parents seemed to have found a balance between maintaining their mother tongue and integrating English into family communications.

4.5.2 Research Question # 2: What factors in the new social milieu (e.g. friends, school, the mosque or church, community agencies supporting refugees, school and community events, involvement in sports) do children recognize that promote their resilience?

Friends. After their families, Hamid, Saif and Zabura listed friends as the most important people in their lives. Zabura's first memories of life in Canada revolved around being befriended by a classmate during the first few days of school (transcript # 6). All three children called both Canadian and other refugee children friends and they enjoyed playing with both groups equally. For the most part, friends came from school or from the apartment complex in which the children lived. The children rarely played inside their apartments, seeing their friends either at school or on the playground at their complex. Hamid, Saif and Zabura were quick to state that their parents liked their friends even though the other children were rarely in their homes (transcript # 1, #3, #5). When I asked Hamid how his parents could know whether they liked his friends he told me that his mother met them on the playground when she came to check on him or was coming and going from their apartment (field notes, April 30). It seems too, that the friends the children referred to as not coming to their homes were the Canadian friends. Both sets of children spoke of going on outings and visiting with families that they had met through the Open Door Society or the Mosque (transcript #3, # 5).

All three children talked of speaking English when they played. Hamid commented, "We play in English because if somebody knew a different language like we can't talk to them. So we do English." (transcript # 2). Most often, the children played sports with other children. Saif found it easy to make friends playing sports (transcript # 3) as did Zabura (transcript # 6).

School. Along with family and friends, Hamid, Saif and Zabura named their teachers as important in their lives. All three children noted that Canadian teachers were quite different from the teachers in their countries of origin. Each of the children attended school for two or three years before moving to Canada and each of them spoke of the teachers hitting them and not liking school. Hamid related

"kids in Syria want to run away from school...... They just put one foot on the wall and they jump over the wall and they go down" (transcript # 2). Zabura remembered the teachers as "mean". When asked why she said "cause if you didn't get one hundred percent on your spelling or you never studied that good you get like...sometimes they get a pokey ruler or something and you have to open your hand and they have to hit you." (transcript # 6). Saif explained "if you don't do your work...they get really mad and they find a ruler, a little one and here they ...hit you". He recalled his parents asking after his first day at school if the teachers had hit him. He was relieved to say no (transcript # 3).

The children used words like nice, kind, perfect, respectful and happy to describe their Canadian teachers. The children all found their teachers willing to explain difficult concepts. They each felt the teachers "teach a lot of things" (transcript # 4). The children felt the teachers helped them by pairing them with other students on their arrival at school. They noted they continued to rely on other students to support them in class. When I asked the children what they did if they did not understand something in school each child talked of asking friends and teachers for help. Hamid and Saif spoke of other students they were partnered with who helped with hard words. They also commented that they were able to help other students in their class at times (transcript # 1, # 3). Zabura said "My friends help me and the teachers help me and lots of friends help me and more teachers" (transcript # 5). Zabura received support from the special education teacher several times a week and all three children continued to attend ESL classes.

The children identified attendance in the ESL program as key to their positive adaptation to school. On their first day of school, all three children were surprised to learn that students in Canada did not speak Arabic. They spoke of the ESL classroom as a place where they learned new words, learned how to write and worked on the computer using The Rosetta Stone Language Learning Program. They found the Read to Succeed∗ program used in their school system and ESL class as instrumental in helping them learn to read. Hamid felt that it would be better if non-English speaking children could work together in the ESL classroom for several months before moving into the regular classroom. He thought that

children would have more time to establish their English skills. He noted that doing school work took longer for him than his peers and felt that if he had more time in ESL he wouldn't have to worry so much about falling behind (transcript # 2). Zabura, on the other hand, while recognizing the importance of ESL classes, thought that children should be integrated into their regular classes right away. She pragmatically stated, "You can't stay in one place forever" (transcript # 6).

Relative to schools in their countries of origin, Hamid, Saif and Zabura found Canadian school facilities to be better. Hamid spoke of his school in Syria being smaller and not having a library. The playground was walled in and bricked. There was no room to play sports (transcript # 2). Zabura's school was in a refugee camp and was in much more dire condition. She described the bathroom as "the most thing that scared me there...They keep on saying that there was kids missing and I never went in that bathroom...It was really scary. It was like really dirty and not even like

light and the bathrooms were broken and stuff like that" (transcript # 6). Upon arriving in Canada, the school the children initially attended was an older building. In the fall of 2006, a new building opened a few blocks away from the original structure. The children liked the new facility but would have liked a bigger library and more classrooms (transcript # 1).

Hamid and Saif felt they were doing well academically (transcript # 1, # 3).They liked to read and enjoyed the academic subjects. Both boys talked of having aspirations for the future. Hamid wanted to be a doctor (transcript # 1). Saif wanted to be a pilot. Hamid believed that by studying harder, he could do better at school (transcript # 1). Both children had strategies firmly in place to ensure they would do well academically. They did their homework (transcript # 1, # 3) and would miss sports and going to the mosque if they did not complete their schoolwork (transcript # 2).

*This program is based on the Picture Word Inductive Method developed by Emily Calhoun (1999). The focus is on teaching vocabulary and reading and writing skills as well as promoting reading skills for children who exhibit reading delays of at least two years below grade level.

Zabura, on the other hand, was something of an enigma. When she talked about how she was doing in school, there was an air of sadness about her that I did not recall from the last year I worked with her (field notes, April 21, 2007). When I asked her to talk about school she described her learning situation in the classroom as "lots of time when she (the regular classroom teacher) is teaching ...me, she says it, but I don't really get it. I have to try to do it by myself."(transcript # 6). "Sometimes the work like looks easy, but I just don't understand and like that's easy but I just don't know. I'm just too shy to tell" (transcript #5). Even though she was afraid to ask for help, Zabura did so. She enlisted the help of the ESL teacher, the special education teacher and the educational assistants in her class. She joined a homework program in her apartment complex established by volunteers from a separate school system. At first, they refused to help her because she attended a public school but Zabura persisted until they accepted her into the group (transcript # 5). Her diligence paid off. When I took the summary of the interviews for her to check, she sat beside me and read along, correcting me if I made a mistake (field notes, April 30, 2007).

Apart from academics, Hamid, Saif and Zabura immersed themselves into nearly all school activities. They played all sports. Zabura sang in the choir. All three children joined a dance troupe established by their teacher and regularly performed for other schools and agencies. They danced for the premier of the province and were invited to take part in many cultural events.

To sum up, Hamid, Saif and Zabura demonstrated great resilience in school. They all felt that their success was due to their own efforts. When things became difficult, they found someone to help. They established close relationships with staff in the school and trusted that even though they might be afraid to ask for assistance, once they did help would be forthcoming. They made connections with other children who assisted them and whom they helped on occasion. Unlike some refugee children, particularly girls, Hamid, Saif and Zabura all attended school before coming to Canada. Although they did not relate the experiences in a very positive light, they understood the culture of attending school. This understanding allowed them to navigate the difficulties posed by an unfamiliar Canadian school

system and the English language in a more effective fashion. All three children valued school and recognized that doing well was important for future success. Unlike some of their Canadian peers, Hamid, Saif and Zabura attended school regularly. They did their homework promptly and, because their parents were unable to help them with their work, they got help elsewhere if they need it.

The Mosque and Open Door Society. For the most part, according to the children, these agencies appeared only distally to affect the children. About a year and a half after arriving in Canada, Hamid and Saif went to the mosque with their family. Saif did not like it because he did not "know how to pray and ...was scared" (transcript # 3). Hamid attended intermittently but went with a friend of his father's. If he had homework or sports, he did those instead. Hamid enjoyed going to the mosque because he felt he could learn different things there. He learned Arabic, how to pray, and he learned about the Koran (field notes April 20, 2007). Zabura's family also joined the mosque but they also stopped attending. Zabura studied Arabic on Sundays at the Mosque but she had trouble learning another language and stopped going (transcript # 5).

Both families became involved with the Open Door Society when they came to Canada. The mandate of the Open Door Society is to "welcome, assist and support refugees and immigrants in their transition to an independent and self-sufficient life in Canada" (Open Door Society, 2007, p. 1). When the three children moved to Canada, they went to Open Door where they learned some basic English. They also took lessons in Farsi but were finding it difficult to learn so many languages at one time. For their first two summers in the city, the children took part in summer programs offered by Open Door. They went on field trips, went to the library and made friends (transcript # 5). However, none of them planned to go back for a third summer. Hamid and Saif's parents still went to Open Door for English lessons at the time of this study, but Zabura's family's involvement was minimal. Hamid related that the settlement workers from Open Door worked with his parents but were not involved directly with the children (field notes, April 30, 2007).

School and Community Involvement. Hamid, Saif and Zabura took part in many school and community programs. At first they took part in all available activities but as their interests became more defined, they participated in those events that interested them the most. Zabura sang in the choir and acted in the school musicals and concerts. Saif played hockey in the winter, Zabura opted to play basketball and Hamid used the time to play more soccer. All three children attended community events at school in the evenings, sometimes with their parents, sometimes without them. They all took part in FAST and the families continued to meet with other families in their group on a monthly basis. In short, the children and their families became an integral part of the community in which they lived.

Involvement in Sports. Zabura found that what helped her settle the most in Canada was quickly joining sports. Her motivation was to make friends and she found this to be a successful way to enter into the social milieu (transcript #5, #6). Hamid's motivations for playing sport also revolved around making friends. He liked to play sports because they "make me run fast. And sometimes when I'm tired they make me in shape" (transcript # 2). Saif had a deep love of being active and would play sports all day if he could. He too found sport a way to become involved with other children in the school (transcript # 3).

The school community coordinator noted that Hamid, Saif, Zabura and their siblings were always among the first children to obtain permission forms for activities organized through the school and they always returned them the next day. Since moving to Canada, the children have played on the school basketball, soccer, baseball, lacrosse and hockey teams. Hamid and Zabura took swimming lessons with their class and the theme of swimming being a favourite activity was recurrent through their interviews.

The community coordinator facilitated sport teams in the school. She found coaches, arranged for transportation and equipment, and coordinated 'learn to' programs offered by agencies outside the school. The programs were free for the children in the school. The accessibility to sports would be very difficult for refugee children attending schools without these programs in place. Hamid felt that one of

the first things children should be taught when coming to a new country is how to play the games and sports that other children play. He learned how to play new games by watching them on television and then trying them over and over again until he got them right (transcript # 2). Saif and Zabura learned new games from their friends, coaches and teachers.

4.5.3 Children's Advice to Newcomers.

When asked to give advice to other refugee children Saif said they should "just go on in and learn. They should play outside so they are not scared and learn English so they can make friends" (transcript # 3, # 4). Zabura would tell the children that "some stuff is hard but that they should ask for help". She noted that many children coming to Canada do not know English, do not know how to read or write and may not have been to school. She thought it was important for teachers and parents to help children with these skills. Zabura pointed out that some new families are poor and may not understand much about Canada. They may need to learn what to do in a house and would need new clothes (transcript # 6). Hamid would tell new children that school is different here. He would want someone to show the children around so they would not be nervous or get lost. Finally he would tell the new families that the "kids they are the same people, like they are just people" (transcript # 2).

4.6 Summary

This study examined the processes that contributed to the positive adjustment of three refugee children as the children perceived them. The children in this study lived in an inner city community and were described as resilient by their teachers. I was their ESL teacher when they first came to Canada and had a close, trusting relationship with Hamid, Saif and Zabura. During the course of the study, I had to be aware that I was looking for the children's perceptions, not mine. By rephrasing questions and paraphrasing answers, I felt that Hamid, Saif, Zabura and I were able to arrive at an accurate portrayal of the factors that they perceived to have

contributed to their resilience.

Chapter Five

DISCUSSION

This chapter includes an overview of the study and a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions as they emerged during the course of the study. In addition, implications for future practice, and the limitations of the study, and are presented along with recommendations for future research.

This study emerged out of my work as an ESL/resource teacher in a community school. Because I taught small groups of children for extended periods of time, I was able to develop relationships with my students that were deeper and richer than those I developed with my students when I was a regular classroom teacher. I chose to look at resilience from the perspectives of some of my former students as a way of increasing the understanding of why some children are able to thrive after enduring seemingly overwhelming adversity. The children in this study did not succumb to the traumatic events they had experienced and I felt it important to determine why they thought this was so.

When I talked to Hamid, Saif and Zabura I was able to draw on the history of our relationships to enrich the depth of our conversations. The data I gleaned from them was most likely different from what I would have obtained had I interviewed children I did not know. When I taught the children in this study, they often came to me with questions about school and life in Canada that they felt uncomfortable asking others. They shared information, some of it painful, about their past experiences and told me of things that puzzled them as they adapted to life in Canada. I shared with them my background as a traveller and they told me that knowing this information made it easier to talk of their experiences.

As our interviews progressed I was excited to find that what Hamid, Saif and Zabura made known to me was generally consistent with and supported the fundamental concepts of risk and resilience. The role of sports in the lives of these

children was the most compelling aspect of the study, though, and one not fully addressed in the literature to date with respect to resilience in this population. Dovetailing with the role of sports in resilience, was the need for someone to coordinate it for refugee children. I began to wonder if the resources available in a community school compensated for, or even negated, some of the vulnerability factors inherent in living in an inner city community. It began to appear to me that this situation was indeed so for these particular children.

As my research progressed, it became clear to me that my initial questions generally encapsulated the information I was hoping to obtain. I did add friends, school and community events, and involvement in sports to question # 2 as the importance of their roles to the children in this study became evident. In particular, this research focused on:

1. How do children understand what their parents are doing to help them adjust to a new culture?

2. What factors in the new social milieu (e.g. friends, school, the mosque or church, community agencies supporting refugees, school and community events, involvement in sport) do children identify that promote resilience?

5.1 Findings

5.1.1 Research Question # 1: How do children understand what their parents are doing to help them adjust to a new culture?

Luthar (2006) noted that the family is the most enduring factor in a child's development and Werner (2000) found that resilience is fostered when children receive good nurturing and develop a sense of trust in their caregivers. I was not surprised that when I asked what was most important to them, Hamid, Saif and Zabura each named his or her parents first. Each of the children in this study had a close relationship with one or both of his or her parents. The parents, in turn, ensured that their children felt special in their relationship by arranging for one-on-one time with them, by seeing them through difficult situations such as the first day

of school, and by assisting their children as they navigated a new culture and language. Maternal competence is one of the most powerful protective factors in a child's environment (Werner, 2000) and these children had very able mothers. Hamid and Saif's mother progressed as she learned English and attended school for the first time. The boys were proud of her and enjoyed helping her with her homework. Hamid and Saif were well dressed in clothing similar to that of their Canadian classmates and were always clean and well fed.

Zabura's mother's skills in English had allowed her to work at several jobs and become an interpreter for other newcomers. Like Hamid and Saif, Zabura was also clean and well fed. Her clothing enabled her to access the social codes necessary for cultural integration. Her intricately braided hair was a source of entrance into the community of girls in her classroom as most were fascinated by the ever changing styles Zabura wore. She was also developing some ability at braiding and would occasionally braid her classmates' hair.

Masten and Coatsworth (1998) noted that authoritative parents who were protective factors for their children were warm, built structure into their children's environments and had high expectations for their children. Hamid, Saif and Zabura each spoke of their parents with love and pride. Parental relationships with their children, particularly loving relationships, is predictive of positive adjustment (Punamaki, et al, 2001). That these children appreciated characteristics of respect in others led me to believe that these qualities were valued at home. The children in this study had jobs in their homes and had a great sense of accomplishment when they felt they could help their parents. In her longitudinal Kauai study, Werner (2000) found that for boys structure and rules in the household became protective factors. Hamid and Saif were closely monitored by their parents and were checked on by their mother when playing outside. Zabura, on the other hand, had more freedom to go to friends' homes and also babysat her younger brothers. She had a close relationship with her mother and enjoyed spending time talking and singing with her. This relationship is in keeping with Werner's (2000) finding that protective parents for girls emphasize autonomy but provide emotional support.

Parents of resilient children living in the inner city can serve as buffers to the

risk factors inherent in these communities by monitoring their children's behaviour closely. These parents are aware of whom their children's friends are and where the children are when they are not home. They set limits on where the children can go and when (Luthar, 2006). Hamid, Saif and Zabura lived in a community characterized by poverty and violence, characteristics which are widely recognized as risk factors in child development. Sustained community violence, which the children were exposed to before coming to Canada, and continued to be exposed to in their new community, further created conditions of risk (Luthar, 2006). The children in this study recognized that the neighbourhood in which they lived was not safe. Their parents established strict rules about where they could play, when they could play there and with whom they could play. Hamid called these decisions 'good safety rules' and none of the children expressed unhappiness with them.

Luthar (2006) found that an authoritative style of parenting serves as protection against externalizing disorders and enhances self-regulatory behaviours in children. Children of these parents are able to persist at difficult tasks and show a higher positive affect. Hamid, Saif and Zabura certainly responded well to this style of parenting. Saif and Zabura described themselves as happy and Hamid called himself a 'medium' sort of person. All three children persevered through difficult tasks and trusted that they would eventually be successful. The children in this study demonstrated an internal locus of control and belief that by working hard they could effect change in their environments. The ability to self-regulate helps resilient children develop coping patterns in early childhood that allow them to combine a sense of autonomy with the ability to find assistance when needed (Werner, 1995). Hamid, Saif and Zabura all spoke of the need to attempt difficult tasks on their own, but also to ask for help when they needed it. Furthermore, they were able to recognize that some individuals would be more helpful in some situations than others would and then access the best person for their needs. They understood that some teachers and educational assistants were more sensitive to their needs and would search these people out for help first. They also knew that some friends would be more likely to help them with school work and asked to sit with them rather than children who could not help as much.

Alvord and Grados (2005) noted that connections and attachments to family are protective factors that serve as buffers to risk. Although Hamid, Saif and Zabura appeared to have strong connections to their families at the time of the interviews, these connections may become difficult in the future for Hamid and Saif. Hamid and Saif communicated with their parents in Arabic but as Saif noted, he was having trouble remembering some of the words. His parents were learning English but it was a slow process. Hamid and Saif's parents were the only people with whom the boys communicated in Arabic on a daily basis. When playing with their brothers or friends they spoke English. Hamid and Saif, because of their exposure to Canadian culture, their developing proficiency in English, and their gap in Arabic, were at a different level of acculturation than their parents. This situation may produce conflict and strained family functioning in the future (Garcia Coll, & Magnuson, 2000, McBrien, 2005).

I have adult friends whose parents do not speak English. They speak of the difficulties in their relationships with their parents when their parents' language is hard for them. They all talk of feeling embarrassed by what they perceived as their parents' unwillingness to embrace Canadian customs and they all experienced a sharp rise in these feelings of frustration as they entered adolescence. Given the highly protective factors that parents can be in refugee communities, differing levels of acculturation and an inability to communicate freely in a shared language have the potential to become a risk factor for Hamid and Saif. In this context, timelines of when parents of refugee children might move from being protective factors to becoming vulnerability factors is worthy of more in depth understanding.

Zabura's family members, on the other hand, all appeared to be acculturating at a similar rate. Both parents and children were able to communicate efficiently in English. They spoke English and Arabic at home. Both parents worked at jobs outside the home and were thus exposed to Canadian culture with a frequency similar to that of their children. The tension between maintaining competence in their mother tongue and becoming fluent in English was less apparent for Zabura

than it was for Hamid and Saif. If Zabura faces difficulties being a young Muslim woman in a predominantly non-Muslim society, her relationship with her parents may be helped by their ability to communicate fluently in a common language.

To summarize, each of the children in this study had a good relationship with his or her parents. The parents served as protective factors with their authoritative parenting styles and their development of close relationships with their children. Hamid, Saif and Zabura had responsibilities at home and rules to follow. They recognized that their parents helped them when needed and did not chafe at the strictures placed upon them. The possible future inability to communicate freely within the family in a shared language has the potential to move Hamid and Saif's parents from being protective factors to vulnerability factors for their family. Similar rates of acculturation may continue to help the parents remain as protective factors for Zabura's family.

5.2.2 Research Question # 2: What factors in the new social milieu (e.g. friends, school the mosque or church, community agencies supporting refugees, community and school events, involvement in sport) do children identify that promote their resilience?

Friends. Alvord and Grados (2005) noted that positive connections with peers and good support networks could serve as protective factors. Hamid, Saif and Zabura each listed friends as important factors in their lives. The children in this study actively accessed peers who were both refugees and Canadian. Hamid, Saif and Zabura all spoke of friends who helped them with schoolwork, taught them how to play Canadian games and sports and helped them with their English. They formed genuine bonds with their friends and enjoyed playing with them during unstructured times at recess and after school. Resilient children usually have a special talent or skill of which they are proud and which others recognize (Werner, 1995). Hamid's friends asked him to draw for them. Zabura danced and sang with her friends. She enjoyed writing and acting in plays for other children at an after school program. Saif was sought out by his friends to play sports. Each of the children in this study recognized that they had these talents, which allowed them to

contribute to their relationships.

Masten and Coatsworth (1998) described children able to regulate their behaviour and to demonstrate prosocial behaviour as resilient. Hamid, Saif and Zabura, under the watch of older refugee children and their parents, avoided association with children involved in deviant activities. They sought out children involved in sport and other school sanctioned activities. Zabura described respect as an important quality to have. As evinced by their enjoyment in being able to help their families and friends, all three children in this study were nurturing and empathetic, traits which Werner (1995) noted generally carry through into adulthood and have a positive impact on their ability to form close, nurturing relationships with others.

School. Werner (2000) proposed that schools could effectively promote resilience in at-risk youth. Hamid, Saif and Zabura named teachers as important in their lives. These assertions were in accordance with Werner's (2000) findings that teachers are often positive role models and serve as protective buffers for children. Resilient children have the ability to combine their sense of autonomy with the ability to ask for help when needed (Werner, 1995). When their parents are not able to help, children who are resilient are able to find others to provide the help they need to develop into competent individuals (Werner, 2000). Each of the children in this study accessed their classroom teachers, their ESL teachers and other school staff for assistance when necessary. The children developed bonds with their teachers and described them as kind, respectful, nice and even 'perfect'. They recognized that their teachers taught them concepts they needed to know to be successful. The teachers paired the children with other children in their classrooms for support and Hamid, Saif and Zabura saw this strategy as one that was useful for them in the educational process.

Hamid, Saif and Zabura were surprised when they realized that Canadian children spoke a language other than Arabic. They spoke repeatedly about the importance of being able to attend ESL classes in order to improve their English and thus do better in school. McBrien (2005) noted that the aim of most ESL programs

is to have students learn English quickly and then leave the programs. Hamid recognized that ESL is essential for success in school and felt that, initially, full time attendance in the program would be beneficial. In contrast, Zabura understood that while time in the ESL program was necessary, integration into the classroom was also essential. In her pragmatic manner, she recognized that moving forward with her life would be best served by becoming acculturated as quickly as possible. This sentiment seems to be reflected by her family and they appear to have adopted Canadian culture quickly and openly.

Resilient refugee children have high academic aspirations that are supported by high expectations on the parts of both their school and parents (Gordon, 1996). Other protective factors such as personality traits of persistence, positive work habits and a strong belief in one's ability also act as protective factors for resilient children (Gordon, 1996). Hamid told me he wants to be a doctor and believed that by studying hard he could do better at school. Saif told me that he wanted to be a pilot. Both boys indicated that completing homework was essential and they would miss sports and other activities if schoolwork was not done. Zabura persisted in finding help when she was not able to understand her schoolwork even though she was sometimes afraid to do so. All three children recognized the need to develop strategies for obtaining assistance and all three felt they were successful in this endeavour. Hamid and Saif felt that they were doing well academically. Although Zabura reported that she struggled with academic subjects in school, she was making progress as was evinced in her ability to read along with me as I reviewed her interview summary and to correct mistakes I made in the transcripts.

The children in this study recognized the importance of good facilities in promoting educational resilience. When describing their schools in their countries of origin, Hamid and Saif described them as small and having no libraries. Hamid noted that a perfect school would have enough classrooms and would have a big library. Saif thought that his Canadian school was perfect. Zabura remembered her school in Lebanon as a frightening place. In keeping with their remembrances of poor educational facilities, the children in this study also recalled the way they were educated in their countries of origin. They each had memories of their teachers

hitting them and of being afraid that Canadian teachers would treat them in a similar fashion. Hamid noted that at his Syrian school, children would climb the wall and run away from school because they did not like it. All three children felt they benefited from the way teachers teach in Canada. They enjoyed attending school and were rarely absent.

Resilient students take part in extracurricular activities that allow them to be a part of prosocial groups and receive recognition for their efforts (Alvord & Grados, 2005). Hamid, Saif and Zabura initially immersed themselves in all school activities. They each saw the activities as ways of making friends and having fun. Resilient children make strong friendships with children who can provide emotional support (Werner, 2000) and Hamid, Saif and Zabura all took advantage of the many opportunities available in the school to connect with other children in a positive fashion. They each understood the importance of their friends as they navigated a new culture. Like resilient children in all cultures, Hamid, Saif and Zabura had strong desires to be part of a social group. They identified children with whom they wanted to connect and then found ways to do so.

My children had similar experiences as they started their transitions into a new culture. They each found children they thought they would like and then found ways to play with them. Language did not seem to be an issue but social behaviour did. By the end of the first month of school, they each brought home friends after school and played in a language they called 'Swinglish''. It seemed that as long as they could play together in ways that were socially acceptable to all concerned, friendships were free to form. Through these new friendships, my children, like Hamid, Saif and Zabura, gained an entrance into the school culture that might not have occurred otherwise.

The Mosque and Open Door Society. I chose to group the mosque and involvement in Open Door Society together because these agencies appeared distally to affect the children in this study. The presence of strong religious orientations can serve as a protective factor for some resilient children (Werner,

2000). Of the three children in this study, only Hamid had any connection to the mosque. Saif stopped attending because he was frightened that he did not know how to pray. Zabura attended language lessons at the mosque a few times but stopped going because she found them too difficult. Hamid attended occasionally with a family friend but would miss if he had homework or sports. None of the parents appeared to have a strong connection to the mosque. All three children followed the dietary codes of their religion and observed Muslim traditional holidays and religious days. However, they also took part in activities at school based in Christianity. They participated in Christmas concerts, learned Christmas songs, and painted Easter eggs. During their first Christmas in Canada, they received Christmas presents from community organizations and their parents continued to give them presents at Christmas in subsequent years. Hamid, Saif and Zabura also observed Muslim religious traditions. Their parents helped them think of ways to explain their traditions to their non-Muslim friends and the children each reported enjoying being able to do so.

Both families were involved with the Open Door Society when they arrived in Canada. Hamid and Saif's parents continued to attend English classes but after a year, the children stopped any involvement with the organization. Hamid felt that the Open Door Society helped his parents but not him. Zabura's family was also involved with the organization when they first arrived in Canada. Zabura was not aware of any further involvement with the organization by her parents and, although she had participated in initial summer activities, had no plans of taking part in the future.

I can understand the disengagement of the families in this study from the Open Door Society. I too became involved with an immigrant and refugee association for a short time when I lived in Scandinavia. I found that the conversations often turned toward dissatisfaction with our new country. Remembrances of countries of origin became more agreeable with each day for many of the group members. This was the case even for families fleeing very difficult circumstances. Rather than becoming involved with other adults who were

leading healthy lives, the adults in the group continued to dwell on past experiences and our meetings and language classes were fairly depressing. I chose to stop attending, as did several others with whom I was acquainted. My children refused to become involved with the group since they were making their own social connections at school and with their sporting teams.

School and Community Involvement. I was encouraged by the ability of the community coordinators and other school staff to involve the children and their families in school events. This involvement included accessibility to sports that the children identified as so important and the myriad numbers of other activities that typically occur in the life of a school. Effective schools provide a link to the community for refugee children and their parents (Fazel & Stein, 2002) and it was exciting to discover that the children in this study also recognized the impact of the school on their adjustment. Promotion of parental involvement increases the success of students in school (Henderson & Milstein, 2003) and community supports can play an important role in ameliorating the effects of adversity for high-risk children (Luthar, 2006). Resilient children will use community resources that are available to them (Werner, 1995) and the community coordinator at Riverbend Community School noted that Hamid, Saif and Zabura were the first to take home permission slips to play and always returned them the next day. The children and their families took part in the FAST programs offered by the school and the children commented several times during the interviews about how much they enjoyed them. A year after completion of the eight-week program, Hamid and Saif's parents continued to maintain contact with their group. This finding is particularly indicative of the success of the group considering their family was the only refugee family in the group and that Hamid and Saif's parents were not fluent in English at the time of their participation in the program.

In community schools programs are free for children who take part in them. Accessibility to the community is much more difficult for refugee families living in neighbourhoods with schools that did not have these programs in place or a community coordinator to facilitate participation for the children. In my experience

as an ESL teacher for children living in communities of all SES brackets, participation in teams and clubs was almost non-existent if it was not coordinated for the children. The parents, being unable to read most information coming home from school, were unaware of many of the activities available to their children. For many refugee families, the concept of playing on a sport team was new. For some families, cost was also an issue. Fees to join teams and money to buy the necessary equipment were often not available. Most schools in suburban areas have sports teams for the children in the senior grades, but not the primary grades. Given the repeated references to the importance of sport by Hamid, Saif and Zabura, it began to appear to me that inner city schools provide some protective factors that are absent in more affluent neighbourhoods.

Involvement in Sports. Hamid, Saif and Zabura repeatedly iterated the importance of sport in their positive adaptation. The strength of their feelings was surprising to me at first and this finding became even more compelling as the study continued. As I began to question Hamid, Saif and Zabura more deeply I was reminded of Padilla and Perez' (2003) finding that some refugees would develop social competence when they learned to function in ways consistent with the mannerisms and language of the host culture. Each of the children in this study used participation in sport as a successful way to enter the new social milieu. Their initial motivations for playing sports revolved around having fun and making friends.

Conversations with my own children echoed the sentiments of Hamid, Saif and Zabura. Both of my children told me that playing sports was the only place they did not feel self-conscious about their inability to communicate in the language of the communities in which we lived. My son found that this was where he could "just be a kid, not that kid nobody could talk to". Interestingly, he also noted that it was while playing hockey and soccer with his team-mates that he learned most of the local vernacular. My daughter, who was more interested in the social aspect of the games, as was Zabura, was able to form friendships that carried over into school and continued twelve years later.

The importance of sport for refugee children, particularly children at the age of the children in this study, is not an area that has been researched in depth. Hamid felt strongly that children should be taught how to play the games and sports that other children play when they first start ESL classes. He thought that by understanding how to play local games children would be able to make friends more easily and would be able to make healthier lifestyle choices. It would be useful to come to a deeper understanding of the ways sport can be promoted for other refugee children in similar circumstances. It would also be of interest to determine, possibly in conjunction with the College of Kinesiology, how involvement in sport operates as a protective factor and how it can be facilitated effectively for other refugee children in similar circumstances.

Summary. Hamid, Saif and Zabura demonstrated resilience on many levels. Furthermore, they were cognizant of those factors that contributed to their resilience. They each recognized that their relationships with their parents were key in their abilities to do well. They saw their parents as supportive individuals who provided boundaries to their behaviour. They understood that their parents wanted them to do well and the children wanted to meet their parents' expectations. The children in this study desired positive relationships with peers who were not deviant. They aligned themselves with children who could help them through the acculturation process and with whom they could enjoy themselves in healthy ways. Hamid, Saif and Zabura recognized participation in sport and other community sponsored activities as good places to meet friends and become immersed in their new lives. They understood that school and their teachers were highly instrumental in their positive development. They were aware of some of the strategies their teachers used to help them and they were aware of the strategies they employed themselves to get help when they needed it. While involvement in the mosque was minimal for the children in this study and their families, they did maintain many of their religious practices while adopting some of the new traditions that were acceptable to them. The children had been involved with the Open Door Society

initially, but that involvement declined as they became more fluent in English and more immersed in Canadian society. The children in this study were able to access extracurricular activities that they identified as important through the community coordinator at the school they attended.

5.2 Implications for Future Practice

The small number of children interviewed for this study is not representative of all refugee children and the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the larger population of refugee children. Even so, a backward look at what they revealed and from my practice as a teacher and as a researcher has allowed me to consider what may contribute to the resilience of other refugee children in similar situations. As Rutter (1979) noted we are almost never in a position to provide everything we wish for children, be it a loving family or life in a stable, healthy world. What we can do is alleviate a little or modify a little. By increasing our understandings of why some children are not damaged by adversity, the potential for putting protective factors in place becomes greater. While work on both a broader and deeper scale need to be done, from my conversations with the children in this study and from what they would tell other families in similar situations, I saw themes emerge with implications for good practice when working with children in similar circumstances.

When refugee children first arrive in a new country, it would be useful for the community to establish a supportive network as quickly as possible. Community agencies that support refugees are generally the first groups that are involved with families. While they often provide distal support to the children, their assistance to the parents often affects the children. Inviting, effective schools may be useful in softening the transition to Canadian culture. The children in this study recognized teachers who were encouraging, kind and respectful of their students' needs as important to their positive adjustment. Strong ESL programs in the children's schools and good relationships with support staff may further aid in the positive development of refugee children. Teachers may find it useful to foster relationships

for refugee children with children who are good role models because these children often have a strong influence on the development of language skills, the growth of academic skills and the introduction to culture-deviant or otherwise.

The children in this study repeatedly referred to participation in sport and other community-based activities as key to their adjustment. It appears that refugee children living in communities without someone to facilitate their participation would benefit from a staff member at their school or community organization to help them take part in these activities. Many organizations make equipment and money for fees available to children whose families cannot afford it. However, some refugee families are not aware of these organizations or do not have the language to access them. An individual, or individuals, to coordinate these services would make entrance into these activities easier for children who wish to take part.

Advice from Hamid, Saif and Zabura. At the end of each interview, I asked the children in this study what advice they would give to new refugee children, their parents and their teachers to help them settle into their new lives. Hamid, Saif and Zabura each said they would tell the children not to be afraid. They all thought the best thing for the children to do was just step into their new lives and get started with making friends and going to school. They noted that some things were difficult but that help was there for those who asked.

Hamid, Saif and Zabura thought it necessary for teachers to teach not only academics but also help children understand the social rules at school. They thought this end could be accomplished by teaching games and sports that other children played on the playground. All three children identified ESL classes and teachers as important factors in their adaptation to school and thought new students would benefit from more time in the classes. Zabura did note, though, that time in the regular classroom was also important.

Zabura reminded me that some children would not know much about Canada and that teachers and other adults involved with the families need to remember that. She recognized that some families were very poor and may have not have had experience living in homes like those in Canada. Help for these families

needs to start with basic survival skills they need in a new country that is very different from their country of origin.

Zabura's last words of advice would be to tell everyone to keep moving forward, that they can't stay in one place for ever. Saif would tell new children that even though it seems scary, the best thing to do is just get started. Hamid's final bit of advice applies equally to new families and to those working with them. He would tell the new families to remember that children here are the same as children everywhere, that we are all just people.

5.3 Limitations

The theoretical development of the risk and resilience paradigm is relatively new. This study focused on understanding the perceptions of three nine and ten year old, purposefully chosen refugee children to develop an understanding of what contributed to their resilience. As such, the ages of the children and the small sample size limits the transferability of these interpretations to children of other age groups and to children who are not resilient. Even so, this study within this framework does contribute to the understanding of factors that some refugee children perceive as beneficial in their adaptive development.

The children in this study were asked to remember incidents from the time of their arrival in Canada. With the passing of two years, it is possible that their memories were distorted, or they had forgotten important incidents. I considered interviewing children who were newer to Canada and using an interpreter to help with the interviews. I decided not to go this route after conversations with other refugee children who told me they were reluctant to talk in the presence of adults from their community. They were afraid things said in confidence would be repeated and I felt I would not be able to be as confident of the completeness of my participants' replies if I used interpreters in the interviews.

Although the children were fluent in everyday English, they still used many gestures and nonverbal responses when communicating. These responses were not

always evident in the audiotapes of the children but comprised a large part of their communications. Videotaping, as well as audiotaping the interviews may have added to the richness of the interviews but may also have further inhibited Saif in the study.

The children in this study had been in Canada for less than three years and their expressive vocabularies did not match their receptive vocabularies. Their responses to the interview questions were short in many instances. I rephrased most questions and paraphrased most answers several times to ensure that I reached an accurate understanding of the children's responses to the interview questions. Even so, some of the subtle nuances in our conversations were lost simply due to language barriers.

5.4 Future Research

This study provides the perceptions of three refugee children who have been in Canada for two years. It would be interesting to do follow up studies with Hamid, Saif and Zabura at regular intervals until they reach adulthood to see if their patterns of resilience are maintained or if they change. The teenage years can be difficult times for many children and refugee children face the added complication of trying to navigate between cultures. Nerifa, the young woman I wrote about at the beginning of this study, had described herself as doing well when I taught her in elementary school. When she entered high school, her relationship with her father deteriorated. As I completed this study, I discovered she was living in foster care. Her father wanted no contact with her and it was difficult for her mother and brothers to see her. As Hamid, Saif and Zabura continue their journey into adulthood, it would be of use to determine if the protective factors in play for them as older children continue to work for them as adolescents or if new factors need to be determined to support them in their positive development.

This study focused on the perceptions of three children regarding what they felt contributed to their resilience. A follow up study including interviews with their parents, teachers and friends and the study of documents such as report cards, and

ESL notes would add to the richness of the understandings of Hamid, Saif and Zabura.

The children in this study were the same age, lived in the same neighbourhood, and attended the same school. It would be interesting to study how refugee children of different ages living in communities of different socio-economic status fare. The children in this study were able to access many opportunities through the community coordinator at their school. It would be exciting to determine how and to what degree the availability of community services compensates for conditions of poverty and violence.

Hamid, Saif and Zabura had been identified by their teachers as doing well. There are, unfortunately, refugee children who do not exhibit resilience. The perceptions of these children about their adaptations would provide further insight of protective and vulnerability factors in high-risk situations for refugee children.

It would be interesting to explore the role metacognition plays in children developing resilience. The children in this study understood the factors contributing to their positive adjustment and may have become more aware of those factors as the interviews progressed. A study focused on children's resilience as they become aware of protective and vulnerability factors in their lives would hopefully expand the understandings of resilience for other children.

Finally, all three children in this study spoke of the importance of sport in their lives. A study in conjunction with the College of Kinesiology would provide insight into the protective factor of sport for refugee children especially as they enter high school. It would be exciting and, given the findings of this study, of great benefit to discover ways of making sports available to refugee children who would otherwise be unable to access them.

5.5 Conclusion

I designed this study to investigate the perceptions of three resilient children about what they felt contributed to their positive adaptation after facing adversity. Through a series of interviews, I found that like all children who have faced trauma

and do well, the refugee children in this study had many layers to their adaptations. Hamid, Saif and Zabura were each illustrative, in their own ways, of Alvord and Grados' (2005) contention that children who are resilient possess many skills and resources, at different times and to varying degrees. The children in this study demonstrated competency across the domains of academic success, peer social success and in terms of their conduct. Even though they lived in a community characterized by poverty and a degree of violence, they actively accessed people who could help them in their adjustment. Hamid, Saif and Zabura looked for solutions to their problems and felt they could change their situations. They discovered ways to access their community through school, sport and friends. Their teachers identified them as doing well and the children agreed with that assessment. At the end of my interviews with Hamid, Saif and Zabura, I was left with a much deeper understanding of what they felt contributed to their resilience. As the study concluded, I found some questions were answered, and I found myself asking others about risk and resilience in refugee children. I could not help but wonder about the contribution of the mosque to their resilience if Hamid, Saif and Zabura's families had been more strongly connected to it. It is conceivable that being more actively involved in their religious community would increase resilience by affording the children in this study the opportunity to interact with other children with similar values and experiences. Hamid, Saif and Zabura were in the process of forming strong connections to their school and children from their community. It would be interesting to discover if other refugee children who were strongly connected to their mosque displayed the same kinds of resilience that the children in this study did.

The most provoking question for me, however, was how involvement in sport by refugee children could serve as a protective factor or a buffer against the vulnerabilities of being refugees in a new country. I wondered if sport would continue to be a factor as the children got older and if it could be a factor for younger children. Closely connected to involvement in sport was accessibility to it. The children in this study attended a community school that employed a community coordinator who facilitated participation in a number of community events for

children both in this study and in the school as a whole. I was not sure that refugee children living in more affluent neighbourhoods without these services would be deemed as resilient by themselves or others.

I was fascinated to discover how Hamid, Saif and Zabura's perceptions of the variables that affected their competence fit the understandings of risk and resilience that have developed over the last three decades. This framework, with its definitions of risk, resilience, competence, protective and vulnerability factors allowed me to develop a much deeper appreciation of the processes involved in the positive adaptations of children following conditions of adversity. Many different children, in many different circumstances also demonstrate resilience in their lives. The remarkable children in this study did what these other children have done, and continue to do following adversity: they performed 'ordinary magic' (Masten, 2001).

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Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB)

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROTOCOL

1. Name of research supervisor
Teresa Paslawski, PhD, Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology and Special Education College of Education, University of Saskatchewan
1. a. Name of student
 Ellen McEwen, B.A., B.Ed.
 Program of study: M.Ed., Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan
1. b.Anticipated start and completion:
Anticipated Start date: April 1, 2007
Expected Completion date: June 30, 2007

2. Title of Study: Risk and Resilience in Refugee Children

3. Abstract
        The purpose of this study is to examine the processes that contribute to the positive adjustment of refugee children following conditions of adversity. By interviewing children who have not succumbed to negative outcomes in their developmental process, it is hoped a greater understanding will be reached regarding how particular variables affected their competence. This study will focus on the mediating effects of parents, and the new social milieu (e.g. school, religious involvement and community agencies which support refugees) as perceived by no more than three refugee children. In particular, this research will focus on:
1. How do children understand what their parents are doing to help them adjust to a new culture?
2. What factors in the new social milieu (e.g. school, the mosque or church, community agencies supporting refugees) do children identify that promote their resilience?

4. Funding: NA

5. Expertise
        The researcher has a Bachelor of Education and has been a teacher with the Saskatoon Public School Division since 1988. She taught English as a second language for four years. She also taught children with special needs.

6. Conflict of Interest
        There is a potential conflict of interest in that the researcher was employed at the potential participants' school as a teacher; however, they are no longer students of the researcher as the researcher is engaged in full time studies graduate studies at the University of Saskatchewan. The researcher will not be returning to the

participants' school in the capacity of teacher.

7. Participants

A maximum of three participants will be selected from a group of refugee children in the Saskatoon Public School Division.

Students will be purposefully selected based on their proficiency in English, their academic progress, and good behavioural control as reported by their current classroom teachers. All children in the study will have come to Canada as refugees and will have resided in Canada for between two and three years. The participants will be between the ages of nine and twelve at the time of the study.

Prior to the start of the study, a Letter of Information (see Appendix A) and a Parent Consent and Student Assent form (see Appendix B) about the study will be sent by the school to the parents of the students identified as potential participants in the study. If necessary, an interpreter will be obtained through the Saskatoon Open Door Society to explain the study to the parents.

8. Consent
a. Alternative consent protocols

Not applicable.

b. Recruitment from organizations

Following approval by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board, a copy of the certificate of approval will be submitted to the Saskatoon Public School Board along with the completed Request to Conduct Research for approval.

c. Children under 18 years of age

In all cases, written consent of the parent(s), guardian(s) or caregiver(s) will be obtained prior to proceeding with the interview. The child's assent will also be obtained (see Appendix B).

d. Participants are in a dependent relationship to the researcher

The potential research participants were students of the researcher when she was employed as a full-time teacher with the Saskatoon Public School Division. They are no longer students of the researcher as the researcher is engaged in full-time graduate studies at the University of Saskatchewan. Further, when the researcher returns to her employment with the Saskatoon Public School Division, she will not return to the same school in the capacity of teacher. It will be clearly stated in the Letter of Information (see Appendix A) that no child will be refused participation in the activities of the school if they choose not to participate in the study, and no data will be recorded about them for the purpose of this study. The data of students who withdraw from the study prior to its completion will be destroyed at the point at which they withdraw and no further data will be collected from them.

As added insurance, data will be recorded in a data file and identified only

by a pseudonym. Pseudonyms will be used to identify the students, families and the school. At no time will the real names of the participants be recorded with the data. The master list associating the pseudonyms with the interviews will be kept separate from the interviews, developed by and accessible only to the researcher's supervisor, Dr. T. Paslawski who is not involved with the delivery of services in the Saskatoon Public School Division.

f. Participant-Observation research
      Not applicable

g. Research involving small groups
      Not applicable

9. Methods and Procedures
      Upon approval from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board and the Saskatoon Public School Board, a Letter of Information (see Appendix A) and Parent Consent and Student Assent Form (see Appendix B) will be sent to all guardians of children identified as potential participants in the study. The reading level of the Letter of Information is grade 7.6 and the Parent Consent and Student Assent Form is Grade 8.3 according to the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Scale (Microsoft Office Word 2003). Upon receipt of signed consent forms, each file will be assigned a separate pseudonym to identify it. This pseudonym will be used for all data associated with the individual participants and will be kept in a secured location in the College of Education separate from the data collected for the study. Any information obtained from or about individual participants that has identifying information (e.g. if a student names a parent or teacher in the interview) will be transcribed and the identifying information replaced with pseudonyms. Names and/or ID numbers routinely used by the school will not be used as pseudonyms.
      Children will be invited to participate in this study based on their ability to converse easily in English, a two to three year length of residence in Canada, good behavioural and academic competence as reported by their classroom teachers and their prior relationship to the researcher.
      The participants will be interviewed individually twice at their school. The first interview will last approximately one hour. The second interview will last approximately two hours. There is the possibility a third interview will take place to clarify any questions the researcher may have that arise from the contents of the first two interviews. The first two interviews will be based on an interview guide (see Appendix C). The interviews will take place over the course of six weeks.

Measures that will be used during the course of this study include:
•Interview guide (see Appendix C)

10. Storage of Data
      All interviews will be audiotaped and then transcribed. All research data will be stored by Dr. Teresa Paslawski in a secured location accessible only to Dr.

Teresa Paslawski in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. In addition, to ensure further confidentiality, all data will be identified by pseudonyms only. The master list for the pseudonyms will be kept in a separate, secured location accessible only to Dr. Teresa Paslawski in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Materials will be stored for a period of five years after the completion of the study and then destroyed.

11. Dissemination of Results

This data is to be used for the researcher's M.Ed. Thesis. Results from this study may be used for scholarly publications, and presentations to professionals, parents and educators. Data will be presented in aggregate form to minimize the risk of loss of confidentiality. At no point will individuals be identified in the presentation or publication of the results of this study.

12. Risk, Benefits, and Deception

a) Are you planning to study a vulnerable population?

This population is a vulnerable population of refugee children who have experienced trauma. All efforts will be taken to ensure that there is a minimal level of discomfort for the children. Should any child experience discomfort because of the interview, he or she will be referred to the school counsellor who will be informed of the study prior to its initiation. The children will be reminded that they can withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

b) Are you planning to study a captive or dependent population, such as children or prisoners?

The children in this study are former students of the researcher. They are no longer students of the researcher as the researcher is engaged in full-time graduate studies at the University of Saskatchewan. Further, when the researcher returns to her employment with the Saskatoon Public School Division, she will not return to the same school in the capacity of teacher and will not teach the research participants.

c) Is there an institutional/power relationship between researcher and participant (e.g., employer/employee, teacher/student, counsellor/client)?

There is not an institutional/power relationship between researcher and participants.

d) Will it be possible to associate specific information in your data file with specific participants?

The use of pseudonyms in the data will minimize the likelihood of specific information in the data being associated with specific participants after the completion of the study. Data will be presented in aggregate form to minimize the

risk of loss of confidentiality. At no point will individuals be identified in the presentation or publication of the results of this study.

 e) Is there a possibility that third parties may be exposed to loss of confidentiality/anonymity?

The use of pseudonyms will minimize the likelihood of specific information in the data being associated with specific third parties after the completion of the study. Data will be presented in aggregate form to minimize the risk of loss of confidentiality. At no point will individuals be identified in the presentation or publication of the results of this study.

f) Are you using audio or videotaping?

Audio-recording will be used during the interviews. All data will be identified by pseudonyms and stored in a secured location accessible only to Dr. Teresa Paslawski on the University of Saskatchewan campus, separate from the master list. Data obtained from the audiotapes will utilize the pseudonyms for purposes of identification. Any references to specific participants will be replaced by a pseudonym during data entry.

g) Will participants be actively deceived or misled?

The participants will not be actively deceived or misled.

h) Are the research procedures likely to cause any degree of discomfort, fatigue, or stress?

The children will have the option to stop at any time or not answer questions with which they feel uncomfortable. Should the children require breaks, they will be taken.

i) Do you plan to ask participants questions that are personal or sensitive? Are there questions that might be upsetting to the responder?

The questions to be asked are personal but should not cause the children any stress or discomfort. None of the questions should be upsetting to the children. If the children appear to experience negative responses to the interview, they will be referred to the school counsellor who will be informed of the study prior to its initiation.

j) Are the procedures likely to induce embarrassment, humiliation, lowered self-esteem, guilt, conflict, anger, distress, or any other negative emotional state?

Because the focus of the study is on positive adaptation, the children should not feel negative emotions because of the interview. Prior to the beginning of the study, and before each interview, they will be instructed that they can choose not to respond to any questions and that they can withdraw from the study at any time,

with no penalty. If the children appear to experience negative emotions because of the interview, they will be referred to the school counsellor who will be informed of the study prior to its initiation.

k) Is there any social risk (e.g., possible loss of status, privacy, or reputation)?

There will be no social risk involved in participation in this study.

l) Will the research infringe on the rights of participants by, for example, withholding beneficial treatment in control groups, restricting access to education or treatment?

There will be no infringement on the rights of the participants for participating in this research.

m) Will the participants receive compensation of any type? Is the degree of compensation sufficient to act as a coercion to participate?

The participants will receive no compensation for taking part in the study.

n) Can you think of any other possible harm that participants might experience as a result of participating in this study?

There will be no harm experienced by the children by participating in this study.

13. Confidentiality

All data associated with this study will be stored by Dr. Teresa Paslawski in a secured location accessible only to Dr. Teresa Paslawski in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan for a period of five years after which time all data associated with the study will be destroyed. In addition, to assure further confidentiality, all data will be identified by pseudonyms only. The master list for the pseudonyms will be stored in a separate, secured location in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, for a period of five years after the completion of the study after which time it will be destroyed.

14. Data/Transcript Release

In the Letter of Information (see Appendix A), participants and their parents/guardians will be informed that they may contact the researcher for information on the results of this study if they are interested.

15. Debriefing and feedback

Participants will be provided with information on how the researchers can be contacted if they have questions or concerns in the Letter of Information (see Appendix A) describing the study. Participants will be informed that they may

contact the researchers for information on the results of this study if they are interested.

16. Required Signatures

_____
Ellen McEwen
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Ph. 244-3661
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_____
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17. Required Contact Information

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Appendix B

Letter of Information

Dear Parents and Student(s),

      This year I am a student at the University of Saskatchewan. My supervisor is Dr. Teresa Paslawski. I would like your and your child's permission for your child to take part in my study called *Risk and Resilience in Refugee Children.* I am doing this study so that we can better understand what helps children when they move to a new country. I hope that by learning what has helped your child, other children who are new to Canada can also be helped. These are some things I would do if you give me permission to interview your child.

1. Your child will be interviewed by me at his/her home school between the dates of April 4, 2007 and May 15, 2007. I will interview your child twice and then may interview him/her a third time if there are more questions I would like to ask. The interviews will last for between one and two hours. I will tape the interviews.

2. The school will contact you one week before the interviews take place.

3. Your child may decide to stop the interview for any reason, at any time. He/she will not be in trouble if he or she wants to stop. I will destroy anything from the interview if your child decides to stop. There will be no problems at the school if your child does not want to go on. Counseling will be provided to your child if he/she has a strong emotional response to taking part in the study.

4. The University of Saskatchewan rules are that my supervisor must store all the notes I take for five years in a safe place. No one else will see them. When I write the study, I will not use any names. Once I have written down what was said on the tapes, I will destroy the tapes.

5. I will use this study to finish my Master's degree.

6. This research has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on March 13, 2007.

      If you would like to know more about this study, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr. Paslawski at 966-5262 or me, Ellen McEwen, at 244-3661 or the Ethics Office at the University at 966-2084.

      If you agree to have your child take part in the study please sign and send back the permission slip by Friday march 30, 2007. Your child must also sign a permission slip to show he/she wants to take part in the study and understands what

he/she will do with me.

Thank you very much in advance for your cooperation.
Yours truly,

Ellen McEwen

Appendix C

Parent Consent and Student Assent Form

Parent Consent

I _____the parent/guardian of _____ who attends _____ School, have been given a copy of the Letter of Information. I have read and understood what the study is about, and by signing the form show that I agree my child may take part in this study. If I do not want my child to take part in this study, I will return the consent form without signing it.

I understand that counselling will be provided to my child if he/she experiences a strong emotional response to taking part in the study.

I **would/would not** like to be given a summary of the study.
I can keep a copy of the Letter of Information and a copy of the Parent Consent and Student Assent Form for my files.

_____   _____
Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

Student Assent

I, _____ a student at
_____School (please check one):
a) would **agree** to participate in this study._____
         OR
b) would **not agree** to take part in this study._____

_____   _____
Student's Signature   Date

Interview Guide

Introduction

   The purpose of this study is to learn more about children who move to Canada from other countries. I am especially interested in how you felt when you first moved here, what things helped you and what things were not so helpful.

   I will keep what ever you tell me confidential. That means I will not tell anyone else what you said to me. If you do not want to answer any questions, you do not have to. If you want to stop at any time, we will and you will not be in any trouble because of it. If you want, I will throw out anything you do not want me to use. I will be talking to a few children and when I write this up into a report, I will combine all your answers so it sounds like one person talking.

   I would like to tape this interview so that I don't forget anything you say. When we are done, the tape will be stored at the university with no names on it. No one else, except for my teacher, will ever hear it. Sometimes I might write some things down too. You can look at them after we are done if you want to.

   Do you understand all of this? Do you have any questions? Do you still want to be interviewed?

The Interview

   Let's get started. First, let's test the equipment to make sure it is working.

Background (Tentative Interview One)
1. To start out, I would like you to think about what you remember best about moving to Canada. What was really special?

2. Do you feel settled in Canada now? What things are important to you?

3. I would like to know who the important people in your life are right now. Are your friends from school? Open Door? Your neighbourhood? Your church/mosque?

Past Experiences
1. Remember at the beginning of our interview, I said that I was interested in what helps kids when they first move to a new country. When you think about starting school for the first time here, what comes to mind? Is there any special memory you have?

2. Think about your parents. When you first moved here what did you parents say or do to make things easier for you?

3. Tell me about Open Door. What did they do with your family when you first moved here?

4. Did your family join a religious or spiritual group when you came to Canada? Did you know other people there? Was there anyone from your country there? What happened there that made you happy?

Present Experiences (Tentative Interview Two)

Questions about self.
1. Now I would like you to think about the present. If you had to describe yourself to someone else, what would you say?

2. Tell me about your friends. Are they from school, Open Door, your mosque/church, other? What do you like to do with them? Do your parents like them? When do you see your friends?

3. Tell me how you help out at home.

4. How are your parents doing? Are they learning English? Do you help them? How do they help you?

5. Tell me about the different places you go.

6. What do you like to do in your free time?

7. Tell me about all the things you did this week. What was good/fun? What was hard?   What made the good stuff good? What would have helped with the hard stuff?

Questions about school.
1. Tell me abut school.   What really helps you? What is hard for you? What would make your studies easier? Is there anything that made school harder for you?

2. Do you take part in any other activities besides school?

3. If your school were perfect, what would it be like? What are your favourite subjects?   What would the perfect teacher be like?

Closing Questions

1. If you could live anywhere, where would you live? What would make that place special?

2. If you knew another family was moving to Saskatoon from your home country, what would you tell the kids to make life easier? The parents? What would you want the school to do for them? Open Door? The church/mosque?

Wrapping up

1. We are almost done now. *Summarize the interview here.* You have told me a lot about your experiences moving to Saskatoon. Is there anything else you can think of?

2. We are at the end of our interview. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Thank you so much for letting me interview you.