Resilience to offending in high-risk groups

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Resilience to offending in

High Risk Groups

1 Objectives

The focus of this scoping paper is to identify factors and issues of importance to understanding how some youth develop and/or maintain resilience to engaging in criminal behaviour in high-risk groups. A specific focus is on resiliency to offending for Aboriginal youth, many of whom are at high-risk for involvement in crime/deviance. The academic literature generally concurs that once youth have begun engaging in crime/deviance, it is difficult to design prevention or intervention programs that will divert them away from this injurious behaviour.

The literature identifies peer group pressure and the influence of role models in the home and community as being significant factors in determining whether or not a youth engages in criminal activity. Core values, such as gender and cultural identity, have also been identified as key components that could influence their behaviour. The negative impact of these factors has in some cases been nullified by the influence of a strong family environment.

This project has three main parts:

1. Literature review on adolescents at risk of offending/re-offending and resilience to offending, especially for Aboriginal youth.

2. Data from a small sample of Aboriginal youth, male and female, about what (i) they can do, (ii) family can do, (iii) school can do, (iv) community can do, (v) and the justice system to prevent alcohol/drug abuse, violence and crime generally. This has substantial potential for crime prevention.

3. Finally, a larger project is envisaged in order to gain a better understanding of the factors that act to progress or impede resilience to offending amongst Aboriginal youth. The researchers have subsequently indicated appropriate methodologies and procedures by which the research design and evaluation
should be carried out. This will include the identification of appropriate subjects, how information should be gathered, the time and cost involved in conducting the research and data analysis. Further to this, any practical or ethical problems have been identified that could arise in carrying out such research, with suggestions as to how these could be overcome or minimised.

2 Literature Review

A review of the literature, both specific journal articles, and in a recent overview of the literature on “adolescents who are at risk for failure” shows that the consuming academic – clinical – social focus has been on the low success rates in “treating” at-risk-youth who already are in trouble. Serna, Sherman and Sheldon (1996: 166-169) look at the past decades of “It’s hard to change at-risk youth in trouble” and the lack of innovative research in this area. To Quote:

In reality, human service professionals and researchers have been attending to the issue of adolescents who are at risk for failure for more than 30 years in a variety of services-delivery systems. For example, investigators have initiated treatment programs within institutions (places of incarceration), in clinical settings (e.g. in individual and group psychotherapy), in community social programs (e.g. employment settings and group homes) and in prevention programs (e.g. community diversion programs). Unfortunately, most of the attempts of these professionals have met with limited success in changing these adolescent behaviours (e.g. Trojanowicz & Morash, 1992).

Also, investigators of the 1970s and 1980s have been criticized for providing little new information concerning the treatment programs and the nature and functioning of the social systems within which behaviour-problem adolescents interact (Graziano & Mooney, 1984). One of the primary social systems for adolescents is the family and yet very little is known about the families of adolescents who are at risk of failure. Few behavioural investigators have explored, experimentally, the issues of family interactions, relationships and social systems. This is of particular pertinence to Aboriginal families who have experienced varying degrees of fragmentation induced by colonisation. This process has contributed to the depletion of vital resources, impaired parenting skills and disrupted psychosocial development of individuals.
Also, many children and youth were not only placed at serious risk, but deprived also of the essential family nourishment and support.

Additionally few investigators have developed or validated experimental treatment programs focusing on familial factors related to the problems of adolescents. Less still has been the development of preventive programs, as government and service provider attention to date has focused primarily on intervention. It seems therefore, that investigators have faltered in two areas regarding the adolescent who is at risk. First, they have often been limited in their attempts to understand and address the behaviour problems of adolescents. Second, they have failed to seek out new and potentially important treatment options concerning the family social system of the adolescent. While this is important to all adolescents, it is of particular importance to Aboriginal youth who are often located in environments that are congruent to the development of antisocial activities.

Anecdotal evidence exists, in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, on the insulating affects that Indigenous cultural-knowledge and practices have on Aboriginal youth leading productive deviance free lives. Little to virtually no discussion of this appears in the academic/journal publications however, on at risk youth avoiding trouble. More typically we see general definitional concerns raised with variables, measurement issues and program evaluation.

However, since 1997 there has been an emergent text and academic journal focus on “Good kids in Bad Places” and on Risk and Resilience to criminal involvement. A small part of this emergent innovative focus has been on Aboriginal youth. A good general, albeit non–Aboriginal focussed text is by Katz (1997), *Playing a Poor Hand Well*. The title of the text is derived from Robert Louis Stevenson: “Life is not always a matter of holding good cards, but sometimes of playing a poor hand well”.

Katz (1997:95) notably looks at Buffers: reducing exposure to adverse conditions. He then (1997:103) looks at important features of intervention models:

- They offer safety. Kids can walk around trouble if there is some place to walk to, and someone to walk with.
- The teenagers feel listened to. The program’s direction fills some real needs.
• These programs offer opportunities. They teach real skills that can be used years down the road.

• The programs provide exposure to the world outside of the neighbourhood.

• The responsibilities that teenagers are required to maintain are real and valued; there are real demands with real deadlines.

• The program rules are clear and there is consistent discipline.

• The program’s focus is on the future and the role that education can play in this regard. Education is valued and is seen as a means to a positive future.

While the individuals who run the successful urban sanctuaries are very different from one another, they share some very similar and important qualities:

• They see potential, not pathology. They believe in the youth they work with and see their potential.

• They view these teenagers as largely ignored and poorly served. They are not trying to remedy or fix them, but rather are trying to guide them through the indifference and shield them from the violence.

• These individuals are strongly focussed on the positive; they focus on raising expectations and providing a setting where one could change attitudes and develop skills necessary for a better life.

• These program leaders design their programs around the needs of the teenagers. This is very different than focussing primarily on the needs of a program. It is easy to miss the real needs. Having a trusted adult that is available on a regular basis and at times that can be counted on, might be critical for a teenager who has no reliable adult in his or her life. If a program’s main concern is its content (e.g. what curriculum to use for the afternoon education centre), its easy to miss the vital, yet unspoken, needs.

• They believe that they are making a difference in the lives of the teenagers that they are serving.
• They desire to give to others what has been given to them – the desire to pass opportunities along.

• These individuals are authentic. Their programs are an expression of their personal talents. Children and teenagers seem to be particularly drawn to programs and program leaders who express and highlight interests and talents that closely match their own (Katz 1997:104).

Katz (1997:106) on mentoring programs states:

• For children confronting multiple adversities, involvement has to begin early and last for a long time. Some programs start with children when they are in the second grade and stay in place for six years.

• In some programs, teenagers who have established mentoring relationships with adults serve as mentors to younger children. These programs are referred to as ‘tripartite’ programs. Teenagers enjoying mentoring relationships with adults learn to pass the benefits they are deriving on to younger children in need.

• Having a task to work on together is often important in helping the initial bond to form. Freedman refers to this as ‘setting up tasks as scaffolding’. Tasks can vary. Sometimes they involve actual job functions, where children learn skills that are important in work settings. Sometimes they are educational based, where certain learning skills are enhanced in the process. In some mentoring programs, the task involves working together on a community project, where the entire neighbourhood benefits in some way.

• Most people relate positively to the idea of mentoring relationships. They are simple to understand, direct, one on one, and valued by our culture. But mentoring relationships don’t always take hold, despite the best intentions. Those trying to establish mentoring relationships may also find themselves tested over and over again. Can they endure? Many drop out. For some children, this confirms their view of adults as untrustworthy.
• Mentors can begin to feel isolated. They need support. In response to this need, some organisations have started self-help support groups for mentors. (Katz 1997:107)

Importantly, he also considers, safety nets: preventing negative chain reactions (Katz 1997:111-122).

In research on families, each parent was asked three simple questions:

1. What’s been helpful?

2. What hasn’t been helpful?

3. If you had a magic wand, and could have anything that you needed, what would you want?

The parent’s replies were strikingly similar. The following is a sampling of the things that parents said they needed the most:

• Respite.

• An advocate, someone to talk to who could provide support and help make decisions about what to do for their child and family, someone who believed in them.

• Information and referral. ‘No one ever explained to me what my child’s diagnosis meant’.

• Help for brothers and sisters.

• Crises services, such as crises beds for cooling off periods, in-home services that are available 24 hours a day, someone who can come over and help families keep calm at any time during the day.

• Big Brother / Big Sister for their child, a community friend, a role model.

• A family centre, that is, central locations for parent support services and services for children.
Concrete assistance, for example, transportation, decent housing, medical care, a telephone (Katz 1997:122).

Two things are of paramount importance to the system of services that might be developed. First, asking parents what they need and second instilling a sense of hope. It is critical that people involved in the system of care believe that good things can happen (Katz 1997:123).

Next we look at promoting a sense of mastery (Katz 1997:135-146).

Having the opportunities to express our strengths, talents, and capabilities in meaningful ways, and to have them recognised and valued by the important people in our lives, helps us to define our identities around the things that we do best. Our lives are likely to be enriched emotionally as a result. These experiences will also help us to develop a sense of mastery. Mastery is the opposite of feeling helpless. It is the feeling of being in control of one’s own destiny (Katz 1997:135).

The road to a sense of mastery is paved with successful experiences, successful experiences that occur over and over again in areas that are meaningful to us and to the people whom we care the most about. These experiences teach us that when we set our sights on a particular goal or a particular course of action, we’ll probably get there, sooner or later. We expect to be successful if we try. If we fail, we try again, this time maybe in a different way (Katz 1997:136).

Mastery can be learned. Highlighting a child’s strengths, talents, and capabilities in ways that allow important people in the child’s life to recognise and value them can help a child learn to define his / her identity around these strengths and develop a sense of mastery (Katz 1997:136).

Goleman (1995) feels that our emotional strengths and talents are often more important than our intellectual strengths and talents in determining our destiny and the quality of our lives. “Academic intelligence offers virtually no preparation for the turmoil – or opportunity – life’s vicissitudes bring”. Our emotional intelligence will determine how well we ultimately use our other skills and talents (Katz 1997:140).
There is mounting evidence that our sense of mastery and the views we maintain of ourselves can be modified by the close personal relationships that we form. Enjoying a strong emotional relationship with someone who cares deeply about our welfare can have enormous impact upon our ability to handle the hardships that we face. This is the case for all of us, regardless of age and the adversities that we confront. And its as much true for children as it is for adults. A close emotional relationship with someone whom we care deeply about transcends any single protective influence (Katz 1997:144).

Intimate relationships can go a long way in bolstering how we view ourselves and the way we are viewed by others. For individuals who have been exposed to traumatising conditions, the nature of their social ties and their social network can be critical to recovery. Social supports can buffer them from impending traumatic events and help them recover from those they have endured. One overcomes trauma when current attachments with safety figures outweigh the terror of the past event (Katz 1997:144).

The number of social contacts may not be a key ingredient. Instead, it might be the quality of the relationships. Individuals who successfully overcame abusive childhood experiences did not utilise a large amount of external support. What they did enjoy, however, was the benefit of a supportive relationship over time (Katz 1997:144).

A sense of mastery is important in all our lives, but is especially important for those who have endured exposure to ongoing traumatic experiences. And that importance is magnified even further in the life of a traumatised child. Learning to feel good about yourself is probably the single most important way that you can overcome trauma. Traumatised children who learn to feel good about themselves, who can recognise their strengths and talents, may be neutralising the otherwise harmful long-term effects of the painful life experiences they endured (Katz 1997:146).

Katz’s (1997) material is valuable. However, it is important to look at subsequent articles of note. A computerised key-term search of academic articles on at-risk-youth, resilience to offending and related terms was conducted, as was a hard-copy check of the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology. This is a core journal of interest to this project. A literature review completed for a Canadian masters thesis, supervised by Dr. Samuelson, on at-risk-youth and social control was
also informative. Out of a hard-copy overview of about 30 selected pieces of research, six articles appeared to provide relevant information on issues and research methodologies of note for this scoping paper and its objectives. There were no articles that focussed specifically on Aboriginal youth other than Homel (1998).

2.1 Core articles on resilience to offending

2.1.1 Buchanan and Flouri (2001)


There is growing evidence that the number of children with behavioural problems is increasing (e.g. Fombonne, 1995, Rutter & Smith, 1995). This increase is worrying for several reasons. Among these concerns are that children are likely to exhibit a range of problems in school as they grow up (Champion, Goodall & Rutter, 1995; Moffitt, 19990; Offord & Bennett, 1994; Rutter, 1996), and that a high proportion of them continue to have mental health problems such as depression (Eaves et al., 1997) and other difficulties in later life (Farrington, 1995; Harrington, 1992; Harrington, fudge, Rutter, Pickles & Hill, 1990; Patterson, Dishion & Chamberlain, 1993; Stewart-Brown, 1998) (Buchanan &Flouri 2001:899-900).

On the other hand, further evidence that half of the children who have significant behavioural problems ‘recover’, many without formal treatment. This highlights the value of trying to assess why such children recover and identifying the key factors involved (Campbell, 1995). Smith (1995) notes that although there is an impressive body of evidence from longitudinal studies of continuity between antisocial behaviour throughout childhood, results also show a substantial element of discontinuity. Recent work in the UK has shown that much of the experience with troubled children should be about finding compensatory elements to offset risk factors in the child or family (Sheldrick, 1999). Similarly, Webster-Stratton’s (1998) conclusion that environmental factors, perhaps in combination with ‘within person’ factors, account for the heterogeneity of outcomes for children with behaviour problems. This gives the hope that within the broader ‘ecology’ (family, school, neighbourhood) of the environment in which children are brought up (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), it may be
possible to identify protective factors or compensatory experiences for children who do not have them naturally. Rutter (1995) suggests that one of the most important issues on the research agenda is the identification of protective mechanisms for children at risk that help build health developmental pathways into adult life. The aim of this paper is to take a small step in this direction.

Webster-Stratton (1998), in examining both the risk and protective factors associated with externalising disorders, showed that children from families characterised by these factors were at risk of developing behavioural problems. These factors include low income, low educational level, high levels of stress, single-parent status, lack of support, and a history of ongoing depression, criminal activity, substance abuse or psychiatric illness. Webster-Stratton showed that while not all the risk factors for externalising disorders were amenable to intervention, risk factors such as lack of parenting skills, lack of support networks, and lack of school involvement were. In order to reverse risk factors it is essential to build up protective factors that help to buffer some of the adverse effects of poverty and its accompanying stressors.

Focusing more on protective factors, Rutter (1995) suggested that positive outcomes for young people at risk are likely to involve an interaction of factors at the personal, family, school and community level. Indeed, high self-esteem, good coping skills, school achievement, involvement in extra-curriculum activities and positive relationship with parents, peers and adults have all been shown to provide protection against behavioural problems (Compas, 1987; Merikangas & Angst, 1994; Petersen et al., 1993; Sweeting & West, 1995).

Exploring the protective factors within the individual, Loesel and Bliesener (1994) studied resilience in adolescents who had grown up under circumstances that promote the development of externalising disorders and found that the resilients tended to be somewhat more intelligent and more flexible and approach-oriented in temperament. They tended to have a more positive self-concept, to perceive themselves as being less helpless and more achievement-oriented and to tend toward more active and less avoiding coping behaviour (Buchanan & Flouri 2001:902).
2.1.1.1 Discussion

Externalising problems in young people are significant because they are relatively common, tend to persist over time and often develop into more severe disorders later in life (Champion, Goodall & Rutter, 1995). In an attempt to explore the risk and protective factors associated with recovery from such problems, this study showed that the presence of risk factors was negatively related to recovery from externalising problems after age 7. Since the factors included in the risk cluster were more environmentally driven, these findings are in line with the evidence that continuing externalising disorders are strongly likened to adverse environments. Social interventions that reduce the impact of these clusters of risk factors will facilitate ‘recovery’ from behavioural problems; for example, strategies to improve family functioning, to lessen family offending and to maintain more stability.

Caution is needed in interpreting these findings because there are limitations to any longitudinal study, in particular attrition, and the limitations of using data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS), which may be dated. Despite these limitations, this study showed that individual protective factors, such as good reading skills at age 11 and good relationships with parents in adolescence, were significantly associated with recovery in the bivariate analysis. However, their power was not sufficient to overcome the cluster of such factors in the multivariate model. Some risk factors in young people’s lives are not amenable to change. When risk factors cannot be reduced, helping young people develop better relationships with their parents and helping them to improve their reading skills are likely to offset some of the impact of environmentally-driven risk factors. The fact that half of the children with problems at 7 years recover by 11 and similarly half of those with problems at 11 recover by age 16, gives some hope that further research on protective factors, particularly clusters of protective factors associated with recover, will be productive (Buchanan & Flouri 2001:909-910).

NCDS is a continuing longitudinal study of some 17,000 children born between 3 and 9 March 1958 in England, Scotland and Wales. The aim of the study was to collect data on factors affecting human development over the whole life span (Ferri, 1993). To date five follow-ups have been carried out: in 1965 (age 7); in 1969 (age 11); in 1974 (age 16); in 1981 (age 23), and in 1991 (age 33). For the first three sweeps
information was obtained from parents, teachers, and the school health service and at age 16 from the cohort members as well. In 1981 information was obtained from the cohort members and in 1991 from the cohort members, their partners and a sample of their children (Buchanan & Flouri 2001:903).

2.1.2 Markstrom, Marshall and Tryon (2001)


Resiliency is an adaptive, stress-resistant personal quality that allows the individual to thrive despite unfortunate life experiences. Resilient or invulnerable children and adolescents have a greater likelihood of remaining invincible and inoculated. Maladaptive, vulnerable, distressed, and succumbers are labels indicative of those who lack resiliency. Resiliency has been measured according to a variety of constructs, such as self-esteem, academic performance, physical health, coping and adaptation, and the absence of psychopathology or delinquent behaviours. Given the array of variables used to assess resiliency, confusion surrounding its meaning is not surprising. According to Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994), at the very least, resiliency “… is a multidimensional phenomenon that is context-specific and involves developmental processes of both vulnerability and protection that should help explain why and how resiliency is exhibited (Rutter, 1987). These processes may: (a) diminish or enhance the well-being of individuals; (b) diminish or support human strengths; or (c) serve as moderators or mediators that either heighten or reduce the potential of undesirable or negative outcomes in development (Markstrom et al. 2001:693).

In his categorisation of invulnerables, Anthony (1987) identified the “true invulnerables” as individuals who had been exposed to high risk, yet seemed to persist and grow from each subsequent adversity. Summarising the writings of others (e.g. Bornstein et al., 1973), Anthony (1987) stated that some stressful events may “inoculate” against later stressors and enhance resiliency. Two factors that place adolescents at greater risk were considered in this study: gender and/or racial minority status. Gender differences have been observed in reports of resiliency with girls appearing less susceptible and more resilient than boys (Wenner and Smith, 1982;
Rutter, 1985). Rutter (1987) reported males to be more vulnerable to a variety of risks and specifically noted that boys exhibited higher rates of disorders than girls when exposed to family discord. Interestingly, Seiffge-Krenke (1995) found that adolescent females reported more stressors than males and reported the same events to be more stressful than did males (Markstrom et al. 2000:694).

Those of racial minority status are placed at greater risk because of stress associated with experiences of prejudice and discrimination. Winfield (1995) argued that structural factors related to inequality and restricted accesses to resources contribute to the vulnerability of African-Americans. Although no significant racial differences between the resilient children and two comparison groups were found in Werner and Smith’s longitudinal study (1982), there was evidence to support that racial differences did exist in coping skills and social support.

In addition to risk factors, it is necessary to explore protective and vulnerability mechanisms-processes that operate on ends of a continuum and either protect against risk or contribute to acquiescence to a risk (Rutter, 1987). Such processes comprise influences from adolescent temperament, positive family characteristics (e.g. warmth and cohesion), and external sources of social support (e.g. a teacher or church) (Garmezy, 1991). If factors are identified as contributors toward resiliency, then potentially they can be made accessible to all children.

Prior research on resiliency (e.g. Werner and Smith, 1982; Garmezy, 1983) and Seiffge-Krenke (1995) proposed a theoretical model of adaptation to identify that social support and coping strengths might affect how individuals deal with stress. This in turn has further impact on the outcome of resiliency. The presence of social support maximizes the probability that an individual will utilize problem-solving techniques to resolve conflict and demonstrate resiliency (Licitra-Kleckler and Waas, 1993) (Markstrom et al. 2001:694).

The participants in this study were rural, low-income Appalachian adolescents. Rural adolescents are under-investigated, and it is unknown whether the relationships between race and gender, social support, coping and resiliency are similar under conditions of rural-related risk. Rural living poses many barriers because of, among other influences, inadequate delivery of mental health services, changes in economic
structures and economic instability in rural communities, the invisibility or rural poverty, declining close-knit family structures and loneliness due to geographical isolation (Cutrona, Halvorson and Russell, 1996). In respect to low-income status, participants lived in West Virginia, a state located entirely in the Appalachian region (a highland area in the eastern United States commonly characterized as rural and poor). The undesirable outcomes of poverty are well documented in the literature (e.g. Huston, 1991; Routh, 1994; Dadds, 1995; McLoyd, 1998) (Markstrom et al. 2000:695).

Students at 11 different schools in the five target countries were contacted at the end of their 9th grade. Research assistants described the research study to groups of students and requested names, telephone numbers, addresses, and parental background information from interested students. A total of 892 students from the 11 rural schools completed background information forms. Two-thirds of that number was screened out of the study due to incomes above the West Virginia median. The remaining one-third was pursued for potential participation in the study. Of that number, the various reasons for non-participation were: (a) the family did not have a telephone and did not return a mailed questionnaire requesting a home visit; (b) the adolescent was biracial (i.e. both parents were not African-American or White; (c) the family had made a geographical move; (d) the adolescent and/or his or her parents did not want to participate in the study; or (e) the family agreed to be in the study, but later changed their mind.

The final sample consisted of 60 white (42 females and 18 males) and 53 African-American (34 females and 19 males) 10th grade students. For both races, the range of ages were 14 though 17 and the mean age was 15.2 (Markstrom et al. 2000:696).

2.1.2.1 Results

The finding of an interaction between gender and race reveals a more complex relationship than anticipated. In the other measured variables, no other gender differences emerged, and there was only one race difference (Markstrom et al. 2000:699).
The primary focus of this study was the prediction of resiliency according to perceived social support and coping skills. This research was conducted with an understudied population, Appalachian youth. These youth are not only understudied, but also considered at-risk because of their rural residence and low-income status.

Risks posed by gender and race also was considered in the examination of resiliency. According to the Anthony (1987) hypothesis, if females and African-Americans perceive more stress, they are placed at higher risk and may therefore report greater resiliency. This hypothesis was supported for African-American females only. The finding that African-American males and White females scored the lowest in resiliency was contrary to the hypothesis. Perhaps it is the combination of being both African-American and female and associated stressor that activates mechanisms that promote resiliency. What is less easily explained is that White males also scored high on the measure of resiliency. It may be that White males’ higher scores were reflective of what Anthony called “pseudo-resilients” – those who appear resilient, but had not yet been put to the test. These conjectures are highly speculative, however, because assessments of “true resilient”, as opposed to “pseudo-resilients”, have not yet been developed (Markstrom et al. 2000:699).

Further, this study employed a measure of resiliency rather than a proxy for resilience. In contrast, some other studies have assessed resiliency according to a variety of constructs such as self-esteem, academic performance, physical health, coping and adaptation, and the absence of psychopathology or delinquent behaviours. However, a limitation of this study is evidenced in the use of purposeful sampling, a strategy common to many other studies on this topic. The levels of social support, coping and resiliency that operated among those who did not engage in the study are unknown. The fact that potential participants with telephones were more likely to be scheduled for home-visits also may have targeted a certain portion of the population. Purposeful sampling of rural African-American adolescents dictated where school and home visits were to occur. These factors decreased the generalisability of the findings, and the results may not describe all adolescents living in low-income families in rural West Virginia or Appalachia. Certainly, continued studies on the topic or resiliency, using various sampling strategies, are needed for rural adolescents.
The study was not longitudinal or developmental, posing another limitation related to generalisability. It can only be suggested that social support and coping contributed to resiliency for adolescents at a particular time in their lives. Rutter (1988) identified several advantages of longitudinal research that apply to the study or resiliency, for instance: (a) to delineate more carefully the hypothesized risk factors (in prospective as opposed to retrospective research designs); (b) to understand how some individuals “escape” the risk factors; (c) to specify the ages of onset in respect to the correlates of disorders; (d) to examine intra-individual change; and (e) to examine the ascendance and descendens of the possible explanation of the findings emerging in the present investigation. Extant research findings suggest a number of relationships between resilience and various constructs, but the role of resilience as a cause or effect is unclear. For instance, a pertinent question for this and related investigations is whether social support and coping promote the outcome of resiliency or whether the presence of resiliency creates more positive coping styles and the ability to draw on social support? (Markstrom et al. 2000:701).

2.1.3 Rouse (2001)


Past and contemporary studies of resilience in adolescence highlight a number of personal (biological and psychological) factors associated with resilience (Murphy and Moriarty, 1976; Werner and Smith, 1982; Garmezy and Rutter, 1983; Luthar, 1991; Winfield, 1991). The resilient adolescents are more socially responsible and they are also more androgynous than their counterparts (Garmezy and Rutter, 1993; Werner, 1993). That is, the females are more adventurous and assertive, while the males are more socially perceptive, sensitive, and emotionally responsive (Murphy and Moriarty, 1976; Werner, 1993). The resilient students are reported to be friendly, with excellent social skills, and an internal locus of control (Luthar, 1991). Additionally, the resilient students are described as cognitively and academically superior to their counterparts (Garmezy and Rutter, 1983; Winfield, 1991) and independent (Werner, 1990) (Gordon Rouse 2001:461).

Gordon (1995, 1996) examined academic resilience in African-American and Hispanic populations. Gordon (1995, 1996) found that some of the motivators were
the same for those ethnic groups, but some of them were different. The resilient African-American students were more motivated by cognitive activities, extracurricular activities, and material gain than their non-resilient African American counterparts. The resilient Hispanic adolescents were more motivated by cognitive activities than their non-resilient counterparts, but less motivated by belongingness (Gordon, 1996) (Gordon Rouse 2001:462)

2.1.3.1 Participants

This study was conducted using a pool of 170 urban Caucasian high school sophomores from the Southwest recruited through their home room classes. Seventeen of the 170 sophomores proved to be resilient, while 19 of them were not resilient. The resilient students came from an economically deprived, stressful environment but were able to achieve a grade point average (GPA) of 2.75 or better on a 4.0 scale. Approximately one-third of the disadvantaged and total population obtained this GPA. The non-resilient students came from the same background of economic deprivation and stress, yet were not able to achieve academically. In other words, the resilient and non-resilient students from the sample came from the same background but were separated by a measure of academic achievement, a grade point average of 2.75 or better. There were four resilient males and 13 resilient females, while there were nine non-resilient males and 10 non-resilient females. They did not significantly differ on any other background variables. The advantaged achievers, 19 in all, came from a high SES, low-stress environment and achieved the requisite GPA. The advanced low achievers, nine in all, came from the same environment as the advantaged achievers, but did not receive the requisite GPA. There are 12 advantaged achiever males and 7 advantaged achiever females, while there are 8 advantaged low achiever males and 1 advantaged low achiever female. Therefore, the total number of students in this study is 64. Students that did not come from a clearly delineated disadvantaged or advantaged environment were not included in the study. Some of them were stressed and economically disadvantaged, while others had low socio-economic status but were not stressed. The students in the study are either at-risk or advantaged because of their background of economic deprivation and stress. Approximately 30 per cent of all students are disadvantaged in terms of economics, not including stress (Gordon Rouse 2001:464)
2.1.3.2 Control

The resilient students believe very much in their own ability to have control over their high school life. They believe in this ability even in the face of some non-supportive environmental situations. This belief in an internal locus of control probably helps keep them resilient (Luthar, 1991; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). However, it seems that their schooling environment could facilitate this process a little more.

2.1.3.3 Resilience and protective factors

Masten et al. (1988) has differentiated between compensatory and protective factors in the resilience process. Protective factors are those that are especially helpful to adolescents under stress. They seem to add to the achievement and competence of those under stress, but not necessarily add to the achievement and competence of those not under stress. Protective factors are related to resilience. Compensatory factors, on the other hand, are directly related to achievement and competence. They are related to achievement and competence in stressful and non-stressful conditions. In this study it was determined whether or not a factor was compensatory or protective, although not all resilience studies make that distinction. This was achieved by creating graphs in accordance with Masten et al. (1998) that examined the amount of a factor exhibited by academic low and high achievers in stressful and non-stressful conditions. If performance increases under stressful conditions, the factor is protective. If performance is better in both high and low stress conditions, the factor is compensatory.

In this study three of the factors are protective factors. Six of the factors are compensatory. Beginning with the context specific goals of the AASCM, cognitive-ability, cognitive-environment, cognitive-control, social-ability, social-control, and personal trust-ability are compensatory factors. These factors result in improvement in stressful and non-stressful conditions. Social-environmental responsiveness and social-control and general extracurricular environment are protective factors. These factors interact with stress to enhance curricular environment are protective factors. This suggests that having an environment that supports one’s social ability; believing in one’s social control, and having an environment that supports general
extracurricular activities, enhance resilience. This is in keeping with Luthar’s (1991) study, but not with Gordon’s studies from other ethnic groups (1995, 1996).

Schooling environments need to include protective factors in their ethos. Support of social ability helps with resilience (Taylor, 1991). Some students have managed to be resilient without social support, but their motivational pattern and resilience status could be further enhanced with environmental support. Schooling environments that support general extra-curricular activities are also important. These activities foster resilience (1993) and also play a bonding function that helps students to learn important social skills.

2.1.4 Bru, Murberg and Stephens (2001)


2.1.4.1 Introduction

Over the past 50 years there has been a dramatic increase in Western countries of psychosocial problems, including antisocial behaviour (Cooper, 1999). Crime rates have also gone up steadily during this period. In Norway, crime increased by a factor of 13 from 1950 to 1990 (Rutter et al., 1998). While there is no hard evidence (Sorlie, 2000), it is generally thought that pupil misbehaviour in Norwegian schools has escalated during recent decades. A similar trend is believed to have occurred in other Western countries (Chazan et al., 1994; Winkley, 1996). In Norway today, there are increased efforts both to prevent and reduce pupil misbehaviour. It is therefore important to explore risk factors that might predict the problem. The present study explores relationships of negative life events, and support from parents, teachers and peers with school-based misbehaviour among young adolescent pupils aged 14 to 15 years from a nationally representative sample of Norwegian junior high schools.

Throughout life, individuals encounter a range of positive and negative experiences that vary in magnitude, duration, and personal significance. These events may promote human development, facilitating growth and adaptation. However, negative events that confound adaptive resources can lead to maladjustment and disturbances
by accentuating existing negative psychological dispositions or by adversely altering personal characteristics (Caspi and Moffitt, 1993). Negative life events occurring during childhood or adolescence may be particularly critical for an individual’s development and social adjustment (Compas, 1987). Cross-sectional studies have consistently shown significant associations between reports of negative life events and psychological symptoms, including behavioural problems.

2.1.4.2 Methods

Subject sample

The sample comprises 1071 pupils in year (grade) 8, from a total of 55 classes in 24 schools randomly selected from 24 Norwegian municipalities. The sample of districts and schools were representative nationwide based on the Norwegian Central Bureau of Statistics’ standard of municipality classification (Statistics Norway, 1994). One junior high (lower secondary) school from every district was asked to participate, except in the largest cities of Oslo and Bergen, where three and two schools were asked respectively. The ages of pupils in the schools ranged from 14 to 15 years. If a district had more than one junior high school, the school to be included in the sample was randomly selected.

A total of 30 schools were asked to participate. Six chose not to. Three of the schools that chose not to take part were either in Oslo or Bergen. A maximum of four classes in each school were asked to participate and, of these, three chose not to. The average response rate for 55 classes that did take part was 85 per cent. Forty-eight per cent of the pupils were girls and 50 per cent were boys. Eighteen (2%) of the pupils did not indicate their sex, and they were excluded from the study. This left 1053 pupils who were in the present study (Bru et al. 2001:717).

2.1.4.3 Measures

Negative life events. Negative life events were assessed using a scale derived from Ystgaard (1997). The scale included seven items illustrative of life events such as parents divorcing or remarrying, parents becoming unemployed or disabled, self-becoming seriously ill or injured, serious illness or injury among close relatives or
friends and being harassed. Responses to items were given in two sections. In the first section, pupils were asked to indicate if they had experienced such an event on a dichotomous scale (Yes/No). In the second section, pupils were asked to appraise the events using a five-step scoring format ranging from “very negative” to “very positive”. For present purposes, events appraised as “negative” or “very negative” were counted as negative life events.

**Social Support.** Parental support was assessed by using the car sub-scale of the Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker et al., 1979). Items on family support had a four-step scoring format with these responses: “very like”, “moderately like”, moderately unlike”, “very unlike”. Examples of items are, “My parents appear to understand my problems and worries”, and “My parents have been affectionate to me”. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale on parental support was 0.77. Teacher support was assessed by combining scales for academic and emotional support presented by Bru et al. (1998). This scale, combining the academic and emotional dimensions of teacher support, included eight items and had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.80. Examples of items are, “I feel that the teachers care about me”, and “When we work on our own teachers explain things well”. Items included in the scale assessing teacher support had a four-step scoring format as follows: “disagree strongly”, “disagree a little”, “agree a little”, and “agree very much”. Support from friend was assessed by a scale including seven items derived from Ystgaard (1997). Items covered “perception of attachment”, “mutual care” and “availability of support”. These items had a five-step scoring format as follows: “disagree strongly”, “disagree a little”, “not sure”, “agree a little”, and “agree very much”. In order to compare scores for parental support with scores for teacher support, scores for support were multiplied by four and divided by five. The scale on support from friends and a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.74. After corrections of scores for support from friends, all mean scores from scales on social support had a scoring range from 0 through 3.

**Pupil misbehaviour.** Pupil misbehaviour was assessed by self-report using a scale constructed for this particular study. To our knowledge, there are no commonly used existing scales for defining and measuring pupil misbehaviour. Our scale included 10 items covering “bullying others”, “quarrels and fighting”, “disruptive behaviour” and
“truancy”. More information concerning this scale is presented in Table 1 in the result section below.

2.1.4.4 Procedures

Pupils were asked to complete a questionnaire during an ordinary 45-minute classroom lesson with a teacher present. As a means of ensuring optimal completion of the questionnaire (including by dyslexic pupils), teachers read each question out aloud. To minimize the risk of pupils influencing each other’s responses, the questionnaires were administered, as far as possible, at the same time for each class in every school (Bru et al. 2001:718).

2.1.4.5 Discussion

Several methodological limitations to this research must recognised. The data are based on self-reports that may be subject to reporting bias. For example, individuals who display “acting-out” misbehaviours show an exaggerated tendency to blame others for their problems (Akhtar and Bradley, 1991; Kendall, 1993). Such individuals may give “distorted reports” of social support. Another limitation of the present study is that it is cross sectional rather than longitudinal, which means that caution must be exercised in drawing casual statements. Owing to the correlation nature of the research, studies with experimental or longitudinal design that might be able to identity casual direction are warranted. Studies that employ observational and qualitative approaches would also be helpful. Such research could provide more detailed ‘textual’ knowledge about the links between negative life events, social support and pupil misbehaviour, and could also throw light on strategies that might route social support along pathways that promote prosocial, norm-compliant pupil behaviour (Bru et al. 2001:725).

2.1.5 Dukes and Stein (2001)

2.1.5.1 Introduction

Studies of youth have examined the impact of various assets and deficits on problem behaviour. Protective factors (assets) include positive personal characteristics such as high self esteem and a positive outlook, supportive social relations (e.g. family and friends), social skills (e.g. academic performance or achievement), participation in conventional activities (e.g. extracurricular activities, sports, and clubs, and positive responses to authority (e.g. getting along with parents and teachers). Risk factors (deficits) represent problems in social relations (e.g. family, friends or school), exposure to risky behaviours (e.g. parental use of alcohol), and stressful events. Outcomes of a dearth of assets and a preponderance of deficits have ranged from disruptive behaviour disorder (Grizenko & Pawliuk, 1994; Rae-Grant, Thomas, Offord, & Boyle, 1989) and behaviour problems associated with family alcoholism (Rhodes, Gingiss, & Smith, 1994; Roosa, Beals, Sandler, & Pillow, 1990; Schteingart, Molnar, Klein, & Lowe, 1995) to adjudicated offending (Hoge, Andrews, & Leschied, 1996). Results from these studies and others (below) have connected protective and risk factors to problem behaviour (Dukes & Stein 2001:337).

Benson’s (1993) study illustrated the link between deficits and the increase in risky behaviours, and it demonstrated that the fewer the number of developmental assets, and the greater the number of deficits, the greater the at-risk behaviour. Youth who reported having 10 or fewer assets were the most vulnerable to at-risk behaviour. Youth who reported having more than 20 assets were the least vulnerable (Dukes & Stein 2001:338).

Overall, results from both cross-sectional and panel studies have shown that risk and protective factors are consistently correlated with at-risk behaviour and that they may interact statically. Panel studies have shown what assets and deficits are prior to risky behaviour. In this article, we used structural equation modelling with latent variables to examine these relations further. We expect higher levels of assets and lower levels of deficits to provide effective controls of risky behaviours. Conversely, lower levels of assets and higher levels of deficits are predicted to promote such behaviours. Furthermore, we expect assets and deficits to emerge as second-order factors that subsume smaller, less general factors, and we expect assets and deficits to interact statistically (Dukes & Stein 2001:338).
2.1.5.2 Participants

A cross-sectional survey of youth in middle school and high school was used to gather data for this research. Respondents were the population of 17,173 students from grades 6 to 12 in participating school districts in the Pikes Peak region of Colorado. The region contains 19 districts, and 15 districts participated in the survey. Data were collected in 1996. Passive parental consent was used by the school districts. Each school selected a day and time for survey administration, and the students in attendance that day completed the instruments. The response rate was 69%. Nonresponses could have resulted from absence from school on the day of the survey, absence from the testing session due to special projects such as work/study, dropping out of school by students, failure of teachers to administer and return the surveys, loss of survey instruments in shipping, and refusals to complete the survey.

The ethnic composition of the respondents is 62.1% White, 7.1% African American, 18.9% Hispanic, 3.6% Asian or Pacific Islander, 3.2% Native American, and 5.1% of mixed parentage. These percentages are closely aligned to the other demographic characteristics for the region (see Dukes, Stein, & Ullman, 1997). Therefore, we do not have reason to believe that nonrespondents were different from respondents (Dukes & Stein 2001: 339).

For the current study, we deleted respondents who reported out of range responses (or had missing values) for their grade in school, their gender, ethnicity, GPA, drug use, and the self-esteem items. This elimination process left 13,207 respondents who completed the survey. Due to the great size of the sample, it was partitioned further into four sets by gender and school setting so that we could assess both gender differences and developmental difference. Grades 6, 7, and 8 comprised the middle school sample, and grades 9 through 12 comprised the high school sample. The resulting four data sets remained extremely large and unequal in size, so case numbers were used to divide each sub sample into thirds for the middle school students and into quarters for the high school students. The smaller sample sizes still handled adequately the number of variables used in the structural equation models described below. This procedure also allowed sample size to be similar across groups so comparisons among the groups could be more meaningful. This procedure also afforded extra validation samples on which to test the final models. The use of
additional validation samples allowed the analysis to avoid capitalizing on chance relationships in the data (MacCallum, Roznowski, & Necowitz, 1992). The sample sizes of the final data set are as follows: middle school girls (916), middle school boys (809), high school girls (1,039), and high school boys (947).

2.1.5.3 Discussion

The results of subgroup analyses by grade on the dependent variables showed a familiar process of adolescent development in which older students have more freedom and mobility, and their behaviour is monitored less by parents. They use more alcohol and marijuana. High school students reported that they are less often abused at home. This finding represents greater power in interpersonal relations that is a result of greater physical size and greater ability to manage interpersonal relations. In addition, their greater independence may allow older adolescents to avoid abuse by staying away from home more (Dukes & Stein 2001: 344).

Furthermore, variation across genders was observed and these results can be explained by gender roles that undermine self-concepts of women and encourage them to be more involved in school and social activities. Young women in our study reported lower self-esteem, higher positive school attitudes, and more prosocial activities. Traditional gender roles also prescribe that women fight less and that they should be protected by men. Along these lines, young women expressed less fear of being harmed and a lower frequency of victimization. For young men, traditional gender roles prescribe that they experiment more with deviant activities. The data shows that young men peak earlier in drug use and delinquency, and then they moderate these activities during high school. On the other hand, young women tend to peak in these activities during high school, perhaps due to greater independence and freedom as they mature. However, across the age groups, deviant behaviour is higher for young men than for young women. These findings are not surprising, and the analysis of the effects set the stage for the creation and testing of the structural equation model that aimed to explain deviant behaviour of both age and gender groups (Dukes & Stein 2001: 344).

The demonstrated effects of first-order factors of assets supported the efficacy of an assets/protective factors and deficits/risk factors model in the prediction of deviance
among youth. The assets were high self-esteem, positive school attitudes, prosocial activities, purpose in life and prosocial bonds. The deficits were fear of harm, victimization, and abuse in the home. The concept of deviancy was not limited to one or two types of risky behaviour. Instead, it was broadly defined to include drug use, delinquency, school truancy, and the possession of weapons. Finally, risk factors were clearly conceptualised as deficits. Definition went beyond the circular notion that a deficit is the absence of an asset (for example, lack of self-esteem often has been considered a risk factor) (Dukes & Stein 2001:344-5).

Future investigations should pay special attention to the definitions of assets/protective factors and deficits/risk factors to insure that they are as separate as possible. Furthermore, recent evidence has shown an interaction between assets/deficits and levels of competence of the student (a control variable that was not considered) as well as a non-linear relation between assets and dropping out of school (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). Among more competent students, extracurricular activities were less important predictors of dropping out of school than they were among less competent ones. Certainly, these unresolved issues do not detract from the overall appeal of the theory and of the emerging synthesis of strands of assets/deficits and risks/protective factors. These results suggest that modest gains in assets and modest reductions in deficits can reduce deviant behaviour to a substantively significant level.

Findings emphasize the utility of positive and negative controls. Currently, assets and deficits are being conceptualised as properties of communities, and partnerships of institutions such as family, school, local government, church, and business are being formed to make these communities more conducive to personal growth among youth (Blyth & Leffert, 1995). The Search Institute (2000) estimates that 250 communities in 31 states currently are building assets. In fact, the entire New England Region is involved. In addition, the region has institutionalised technical assistance and training for building assets in 35 communities via a program called TOGETHER! (Harachi, Ayers, Hawkins, Catalano, & Cushing, 1996).

Several important issues limit the findings. First, the data are not longitudinal so it cannot show that assets and deficits precede deviance. Nevertheless, other research, including most recently, Jessor et al. (1995) and Schulenberg et al. (1996), show
clearly this temporal precedence. Second, the findings represent only one region of the country. Fortunately, within this region, the data have been gathered in many school districts. Thus, the data represents a diversity of socio-economic status, ethnicity, and urban, suburban, and rural locations. Third, although a broad range of items was used, it is still considered only a portion of possible assets, deficits, and measures of at-risk behaviour.

2.1.6 Homel, Lincoln and Herd (1999)


2.1.6.1 Introduction

A basic tenet of development theory is that acts of crime stem both from the characteristics of people (perhaps impulsivity or poor social skills) and from the social context (such as the availability of support to encourage a child/adolescent to take an alternate path). The social context is multi-layered, incorporating not just the immediate family – vital as this is – but also the informal supports available for the family (kin, neighbours, friends); the local community; the developmentally relevant institutions in the area (such as preschools, playgroups, churches, and child care centres); and elements of the larger society that affect what happens to children and families (Homel et al. 1999: 183).

The question addressed in this paper, is how does the specific features of Aboriginal history; culture and position in the social structure, help to shape the social environments of Indigenous people and influence their relationships, interactions and developmental pathways (Homel et al. 1999: 183).

However, current thinking in this area is somewhat restricted by almost exclusive reliance on two streams of quantitative enquiry: longitudinal studies that involve repeated measurements on large samples over extended periods of time; and intervention studies, often randomised controlled trials, that assess the impact on small samples with specific characteristics of ‘early interventions’ such as home visiting by nurses, enriched preschool education, or parent training. These approaches
have been enormously valuable in extending our understanding of the developmental processes involved in crime and related behaviours, and of what works in prevention, but they do have several limitations.

One immediate limitation is that almost none of the research is Australian, although a few relevant longitudinal studies are in progress (e.g., the Mater University of Queensland Study of Pregnancy and its Outcomes: Najman, Behrens, Anderson, Bor, et al., 1997; the Queensland Sibling Study: Lincoln, Lynch-Bloss, O’Connor & Ogilvie, 1998). Fortunately, a few high quality longitudinal studies have also been conducted in New Zealand (e.g., Fergusson 1993; Silva & Stanton 1996), but on the whole researchers are compelled to rely (particularly for knowledge about successful interventions) on conclusions from samples in the United States that may or may not generalise to other populations.

Even within the overseas literature, most studies pay little attention to individual or group differences in pathways or to how relevant risk and protective factors may vary from group to group and across life phases. This oversight is a matter of particular concern for at least two groups: females, for whom the developmental course of behaviours such as aggression appears to be different from males; and Indigenous or minority ethnic groups, for whom the nature, meaning and impact over the life course of risk and protective factors may be quite different from the mainstream (Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium 1999b).

For Indigenous young people, specific risk factors may include racism, group powerlessness and the conflicting demands of different cultures. However, the exploration of these factors, as well as of features unique to Indigenous culture/s that may promote resilience in the face of overwhelming adversity, requires that investigators go beyond traditional longitudinal or intervention studies and draw on ethnographic and other qualitative research that explores the major differences in history, local conditions, social structures and culture between Indigenous communities and the rest of the Australian population (Langton 1991) (Homel et al. 1999: 183-4).

The aim in this paper is to construct a culturally specific set of risk and protective factors that can be added to the standard lists (Developmental Crime Prevention...
Consortium 1999a), or that can, perhaps better, provide a ‘lens’ through which the standard lists can be viewed and reinterpreted. There is wish to deny the importance of any of the traditional risk factors (such as prematurity, prenatal brain damage, substance abuse, family violence and long-term unemployment) or protective factors (such as social competence, supportive caring parents and a positive school climate). However, it is difficult to understand what these kinds of factors actually ‘mean’. It is also difficult to understand the relevant developmental pathways in Indigenous communities unless there is an appreciation of the impact on Indigenous people of experiences such as forced removals and institutionalised racism, as well as the ongoing protection provided by such features as strong social bonds to family.

A basic assumption underlying the review is that Aboriginal law breaking is not exclusively an Aboriginal ‘problem’ but the product of circumstances created by history, social policies and structures, local conditions, and criminal justice practices (Lincoln & Wilson 1994).

Even when focusing on risk and protective factors it is the cumulative total and the timing of adverse factors, their interactions (over time) with each other and with positive features of the environment, and the life phases involved that are more important than the compilation of lists.

Nevertheless, the enumeration of factors that reflect relevant features of Indigenous culture and social environment may provide important insights into underlying processes. For example, alcohol abuse is a major problem in Aboriginal communities, but cannot be understood or even given a meaning except in relation to the dependent situation of Aboriginal people within the Australian state. Dependence can therefore be viewed as a ‘meta’ risk factor that both produces and gives meaning to specific risk factors like alcohol abuse or family violence.

The researchers have also attempted to keep in mind the enormous variations in Aboriginal ways of life across Australia. Urban communities are reasonably similar. In key remote communities, on the other hand, they vary considerably. In contrast to urban groups, they have attracted the attention of many researchers over the years. While there are similarities, each community responded differently to the apparatus of the Australian state, and is affected differently by crime and violence (Bimrose &
Admans 1995). The differences were acknowledged, but it is also argued that there are many similarities, which make a generalised discussion of Aboriginal crime and violence quite possible. This is important, not just as a cautionary note, but because crime prevention programs should be developed at the local level (Bright, 1997). Also, local factors are critical in the balance between risk and protective factors in Aboriginal communities (Cowlishaw 1994).

The next section is an overview of risk factors (categorised as forced removals, dependence, institutionalised racism, cultural features and substance use) and protective factors (in a typology of cultural resilience, personal controls and family control measures). The discussion draws on the extant literature, presents data from the Sibling Study, and utilises material from a small number of interviews with key informants in Brisbane (to help redress the imbalance between research on urban and rural communities). While some of this material is subjective or preliminary, it supports and extends the published literature. The discussion concludes with some brief reflections on how an understanding of these risk and protective factors can assist in planning crime prevention research in Aboriginal communities (Homel, Herd, Gross & Burrows, in preparation) (Homel et al. 1999: 184-5).

2.2 Other relevant literature

The literature reviewed so far tends to focus on the deviant behaviour of individuals. The researchers felt that a broader perspective on those individuals’ environment might provide a better understanding of some possible causal factors to their behaviour. For this reason an overview is provided of an individual’s family, culture, education, justice and social capital as they relate to their behaviour.

2.2.1 Family

The family is consistently identified as a core element to the positive development of the child. The basic Indigenous social unit was the extended family, which managed day-to-day relationships through a set of complex social laws, customs and beliefs. This provided meaning and structure to life. In traditional Aboriginal communities, men and women as distinct groups were both independent and interconnected. Men and women as separate groups, and each member of the family unit, had specific
responsibilities, Laws based on gender and age governed social activity and communication between peoples and groups (Robertson 2000 p.268).

Guided by these values and the teaching of the Elders and the lore, men, women, family units and extended kin groups provided a support basis for one another and socialised the children into their place in the family and community. They received a holistic education for life, health, child rearing, maturational processes and responsible interactions with others. Children were socialised into lore and correct behaviour in the normal interactions of living and relating. They learned by observation what was permissible and what was not proper behaviour. Children were cherished and adults had gender-specific responsibilities to nurture, protect and teach them. Adults taught children through example, while allowing them autonomy to grow and learn naturally (Robertson 2000 p.268).

The presence of a functional family environment could therefore be seen to be vital to the positive development of children and youth. The fragmented family structure that has emerged from the colonial process impedes this development. For example, when a child feels hurt, they must have someone who they can turn to. If no one is there for them, it has a serious negative impact on their psychosocial development. This is particularly if the young person is unable to express themselves, has no one to express themselves to and has no one to validate their experiences, thoughts, or perceptions of self or the world around them (Robertson 2000). In all cultures, regardless of their stage of industrialisation or circumstances, a strong family unit is the foundation of human well-being.

2.2.2 Culture

The most profound form of violence violates the spirit and soul, tearing away at individual and collective identity. Colonial and postcolonial interactions have made many Indigenous people feel disempowered and dispirited as they face an isolating and brutalising life. The attempted genocide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through colonisation has subjected Indigenous people to a continuing process of destruction, which is evidenced in the confusion, desolation and despair in the minds of the young and in the eyes of the Elders (Robertson 2000 p. 73).
2.2.3 Education

Education is a powerful tool for social change. It is essential for personal, professional and community growth. It is a liberating force as people move beyond child and adult disempowerment that induce antisocial behaviour. Education is for life and provides opportunities at many developmental stages for primary prevention and intervention programs. Education is therefore seen as critical to addressing violent attitudes and behaviours (Robertson 2000 p.147).

2.2.4 Justice

They live in a tranquillity that is not disturbed by inequality of condition. (Lieutenant James Cook 1770) (Dodson 1993).

Dodson noted that in 1770 it was observed that Indigenous Australians enjoyed a high quality of life in the context of their own culture and environmental circumstances. Justice was not compromised, for there existed an established system of family, community, governance and caring that nurtured each and every individual through their childhood into adulthood. Every Indigenous adult knew and understood their rights and responsibilities. They had their own system of health care; provision of shelter; education; participation in economic life; equality before the law; and all were treated with dignity and respect.

The Indigenous condition of tranquillity was shattered the moment Cook set foot on their land. From that moment on, their only life experience was a condition of injustice. The British justice system could only see the world through its own eyes. It was a justice system designed to serve the wants and needs of a people who could not and would not accept the legitimate wants and needs of those who they colonised. The colonisers were indifferent to the traumatic impact of their actions. They were of the mind that they had a God-given right to impose whatever justice they wanted on those who fell before them. To a large extent, that attitude continues today in the administration of the criminal justice system, where the wants and needs of Indigenous people continue to be treated with indifference.

The injustices imposed by the justice system were identified as being the greatest source of trauma for Indigenous people. There was concern over the high arrest rates,
discriminatory and biased judicial procedures and outcomes and the high incarceration rates for Indigenous adults and juveniles. The Elders and local justice groups were witness to injustice in that the Police failed to assist victims of crime, they willingly engaged in conflict with Indigenous youths and they neglected to follow up reported cases of rape and sexual assault against women and children. With the escalation of crime and incarceration of Indigenous people, many Elders and community members believe that the relationship between them and representatives of the criminal justice system is declining further and that justice is becoming more difficult to secure (Robertson 2000 p. 216).

2.2.5 Social capital

Emotional and mental well-being depends on the fulfilment of social, physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Everyone, even the most isolated people, should be able to feel positive and constructive about their lives. They need to have a sense of inner and external peace, a feeling of safety and confidence that they can meet family and social responsibilities (Robertson 2000 p. 177).

The depletion of social capital should not be measured only in terms of family income or visible and quantifiable data. Social capital is based on human emotions, feelings and values. It resides in the informal networks that provide important information. It resides in the currents of power that flow through a community. It is embedded in the fact that humans are social beings who require social networks to satisfy many of their basic needs. It is closely tied to family structures and values. It is not a physical object that can be photographed, weighed, or measured. Social capital is evident when we have mastery over our lives, and it is depleted when we have a feeling of helplessness. When we feel helpless the risk of offending increases. Social capital is different to other forms of capital as explained below. The depletion of social capital can induce high risk environments where children can be exposed to insecurities, abuse and trauma.
Theories of capital
(Source: Lin et al. 2001, p. 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The classical theory (Marx)</td>
<td>Social relations</td>
<td>Part of surplus value between the use value (in consumption market) and the exchange value (in production-labour market) of the commodity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exploitation by the capitalists of the proletariat</td>
<td>Investment in the production and circulation of commodities</td>
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The Neocapital theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human capital</td>
<td>Accumulation of surplus value by labourer</td>
<td>Investment in technical skills and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural capital</td>
<td>Reproduction of dominant symbols and meanings (values)</td>
<td>Internalisation or misrecognition of dominant values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital</td>
<td>Social relations</td>
<td>Investment in social networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to and use of resources embedded in social networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solidarity and reproduction of group</td>
<td>Investment in mutual recognition and acknowledgment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The underlying premise of social capital is the investment in social relations with expected returns. Individuals engage in interactions and networking in order to produce profits. Social capital usually has four dimensions:

- The flow of *information* - social ties in certain strategic locations can provide an individual with useful information about opportunities and choices otherwise not available.

- *Influence* - social ties enable an individual to influence those agents who play a critical role in decisions that affect their lives or work.

- *Social credentials* - social tie resources, and their acknowledged relationships to the individual, may be conceived by others as certifications of the individual's standing in society.

- *Reinforcement* - being assured of one's worthiness as an individual and a member of a social group not only provides emotional support but also a public acknowledgment of one's claims to certain resources.

These four elements may explain why social capital works in instrumental and expressive actions not accounted for by forms of personal capital such as economic
capital or human capital (Lin et al. 2001 pp. 6-7). The presence of social capital usually underpins the capacity of individuals to resist offending behaviour.

2.3 Themes from the literature

The history of sequential violations imposed upon the Aboriginal family unit has acted to create a situation where high risk factors have been pathologised and in many cases allowed to manifest. While remnants of traditional gender and familial roles and responsibilities have been retained, the prolonged imposition of oppression and government control has acted to fragment a percentage of Aboriginal families, depriving generations of children of much needed nurturing, protection and support. This in turn has heightened the vulnerability of Aboriginal children and youth, exposing them to deviate elements in society and placing them in an environment where high risk factors, abuse, violence and crime are frequently present.

This situation has been exacerbated by the history of institutionalisation, which has subsequently acted to deprive families of primary care givers and key resources, and contributed to a significant depletion of much needed social capital.

Despite this, however, there are important cultural continuities that exist for some Aboriginal families with “continuing significance of kinship ties and the prominent ethic of demand sharing, common socialisation practices, the continuing use by some of Aboriginal languages and by others of distinctive forms of Aboriginal English, and by patterns of mobility within extended social networks, … land-based identity grounded within a religious framework and common residential histories” (Daly & Smith 1996, p. 357). Despite the fact that Aboriginal family life has seen pathologies, State interventions (such as the removal of children) have in some cases served to reinforce the “extended system of kin” (Daly & Smith 1996, p.359). This in turn provides the attachment and parental controls that protect against violence. In addition, extended Indigenous family networks tend to have greater invisible resources at their disposal even when under stress (due to such trauma as relocation or unemployment) than do non-Aboriginal families. These resources include the sharing of goods and of services like child minding, house cleaning and sources for cash.
Affective indicators of intra-familial protective factors were examined in the Sibling Study (Lincoln et al., 1998). There was persuasive evidence that percussors to offending are quite different for Indigenous young people compared to the other two groups. In terms of the quality of interactions with their parents or primary caregivers, Aboriginal youth believed that their parents took an interest in what they did (85%), that they received moderate to high emotional support from their parents (79%), and they generally agreed that young people should look up to their parents (62%). These figures are not as high as for the school cohort but they are generally significantly higher than for the disadvantaged group. However, a key intra-familial affective factor is the response to questions about parental support if in trouble with the law. Here the Indigenous cohort demonstrated the highest degree of confidence in parent support (60%), believing that their parents would always stick by them if they were caught doing something against the law.

2.4 Conclusion

The high risk social indicators that have been widely recognized in Aboriginal families for many years by governments and service providers, has done little to ignite an interest in the development of programs that would prevent or hinder criminal activity amongst Aboriginal youth. This has been a serious impediment to Aboriginal development, as many of the youth who participated in criminal activity at an early age, entered into a process that contributed to the erosion or depletion of vital social capital in a significant percentage of Aboriginal family and extended family units. Whether Aboriginal youth enter into criminal activity by design or default, the end result has been the same. Without much needed support and social resources available, many families, finding it difficult to cope have been unable to provide the type of nurturing required by the youth in terms of resources and support. The impact of this on Aboriginal adolescents is of serious consequence in terms of their spiritual, social, economic and cultural survival and strength. However despite the prevalence of oppressive and depressive conditions in many Aboriginal lives, there is an inner strength in a percentage of youth that acts to impede their entry into negative pathways, considered by many to be inevitable.
The nature of crime and violence within Aboriginal communities, and the developmental pathways involved cannot be understood apart from the inglorious history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations in this country, and the way European domination has affected Aboriginal culture, social structures and local communities. No doubt the generally accepted risk and protective factors related to such things as child health, family processes and school performance are as important in Aboriginal as in non-Aboriginal populations. However, the reasons why Indigenous people, particularly children and youth, are so vulnerable to a multitude of such problems and how they manage to protect their young people from harm against often overwhelming odds requires a broader analysis than has been attempted thus far.

The kind of analysis envisaged goes beyond the enumeration of the meta-risk and protective factors described in this paper – essential as this first step is. What is required now is a program of detailed empirical research that makes explicit the many connections between such phenomena as forced removals or institutionalised racism on the one hand, and specific community characteristics, family processes or oppositional behaviours on the other (Homel et al. 1999: 192).

Protective factors in particular need to be better understood, as they do across the whole field of developmental prevention (Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium 1999b). This research can best be done by the growing cadre of highly qualified Aboriginal researchers, and it should be done in the context of specific prevention programs that are designed and controlled by local Indigenous people, with input (where requested) from the scientific community (Homel et al. 1999: 192).

As Dodson (1996) noted, these initiatives should logically be adapted to urban environments, where the need is at least as great. Thus prevention programs cannot be developed in isolation from their community context. Consultation should be bottom-up rather than top-down, trust should be established, and extensive timeframes allocated.

It is clear that a more comprehensive understanding is needed if realistic progress is to be made in the understanding of Indigenous youth in Australia. This is particularly important in the prevention of crime, and in identifying key factors that contribute to the resilience to offending among Indigenous youth. To gain a better understanding of
resilience to crime amongst Aboriginal youth, the current research involved a group of Indigenous students at Griffith University who participated in a pilot survey to gain a deeper understanding of these issues from their perspective.

3 Ethical approval

Griffith University Office of Research Services approved the questionnaire and the consent forms as they appear at the end of this report. As these youth were over 18, no parental consent was necessary.

4 Qualitative Data on Resilience to Offending

A brief questionnaire was designed to ask a sample of young adults, 18 years to early 20's, who are Aboriginal Griffith University students, about how some youth develop and/or maintain resilience to engaging in criminal behaviour. These youth came from various Australian communities and many had likely seen Aboriginal youth in trouble, yet they themselves had made the often difficult journey from troubled communities to university life.

The students were contacted by telephone from the student list for Aboriginal students by staff at the GUMURRRII Centre. The study was briefly explained to them and they were told that participation was voluntary. If they agreed to come to the GUMURRRII Centre to complete the questionnaire they received $15.00 for participating. The sample was balanced with approximately 10 males and 10 females. A female GUMURRRII staff member interviewed the females, and a male staff member interviewed the males. Each questionnaire took about 20 minutes to complete. The following are core excerpts from the sample of young Aboriginal students on risk and resilience to offending.

4.1 Qualitative Pilot Data

4.1.1 Question 1

How do kids avoid excessive alcohol, drugs, violence and crime generally, both to others and/or themselves?
R1: Prevention starts at home, getting involved in sports and recreational activities &
eduction, positive role models.

R2: Making other things of interest to do possible. Avoiding groups that participate in
these activities

R3: Do not hang around the wrong crowds; don't think you’re worth nothing; if things
go wrong, move on and don’t stress

R4: A need to know the affects – short and long term; How your life is affected

R5: Dependant on who you surround yourself with; If friends and family do not drink
it becomes less of an issue; Alternative tasks / activities to keep you occupied

R6: Have discipline and stable family / home life

R7: Its hard to avoid them these days, people I associate with do all of these things

R8: Be around friends not interested in it; Have parents that don’t approve; Set
standards / morals that they will follow

R9: Having parents that support and help with life; not let their kids get to that point

R10:

R11: Personal choice – choosing not to associate with people associated with such
behaviours – is the only way to avoid these circumstances

R12: Avoid all things that relate to them – people and peer groups that may use peer
pressure them to take substances

R13: Play sports – maintain an interest in school and work; anything that decreases
time available to associate with the wrong elements

R14: Stay away from those who do it; Undertake sport, hobbies & other activities;
Positive minds Educate about the negative effects; Be aware that to say NO is strong
and admirable; Set goals and objectives in life

R15: They decide what effects it can have and then choose not to.
R16: Making own decisions – not being pressured into circumstance

R17: Association and environment – not associating with environments and people involved in these things

R18: Not associating with people who participate in them – otherwise can not be avoided

R19: Being involved in social or extra curricular activities and keeping busy ensures that the focus on habits such as these is decreased. These habits usually stem from boredom.

R20: By staying away from places they know it exists

4.1.2 Question 2

What are the 3 most important things that you can do to help prevent alcohol and drug abuse, violence and crime generally?

R1: Positive role model; Further eduction (university) showing others it can be done; It's up to the individual to stop association with alcohol, drugs & violence

R2: Avoid participating in such groups; Have other interests and activities to do; Share experiences (if any) that have affected use of these things

R3: Talk to people about these issues; Distribute brochures on how to get help; Always be there

R4: Information sessions; Help groups; Stay away from people involved in them

R5: Serve as a positive role model – stand by convictions; Educate others about the dangers of drug abuse; Help others to help themselves

R6: Study away from it; Encourage others to stay away from it; Highlight what may happen if involved

R7: Don’t go out (sever circumstances); Just say no; Hang around better people

R8: Practice what I preach; Encourage others against it; Be a support friend / relative
R9: Tell them what they're doing wrong and give support; Rehabilitate them yourself; If all fails, take them in

R10: Violence, drugs & alcohol occur at parties – have dance parties with drug free environment; Increase age limits on alcohol

R11: Make people aware of the consequences; Set a good example by not participating

R12: Know the facts about ramifications of doing / taking drugs and crime; Legally, Mentally, Physically

R13: Be busy; Understand the consequences; Accept responsibility

R14: Verbally make my family aware of the negative impacts; Live by what I say; Show and demonstrate that there’s more other ways – pray

R15: Don’t get involved in the first place; Don’t associate with people who do these things; Don’t be afraid to say no to friends

R16: Encourage those who are undergoing depression to gain self-esteem; Talk to people about the consequences; Reach out to those suffering

R17: Don’t get involved and therefore setting an example to others; Discourage others from being involved; Report to someone about being exposed to these things; Limits to help them avoid them

R18: Not engage in them excessively or at all; Don’t encourage them; Punishment

R19: Reducing the availability to alcohol will reduce the level of violence; Drugs cannot be prevented; however knowledge about drugs and their effect should reduce consumption

R20: Stay away from them
4.1.3 Question 3

What are the 3 most important things that can families do to help prevent alcohol and drug abuse and violence, and crime generally?

R1: Practice what they preach; Install family / cultural pride

R2: More involvement with children; Interact with them regularly; Make sure children are adapting to school and social environments; Environments free of alcohol, drugs and violence

R3: Talk to their children; Always be there; Make them feel wanted

R4: Teach children from an early age; Always be supportive of family; If they have experiences - share these with children

R5: Do not make it accessible – keep control of kids; Serve as a positive role model; Provide a loving environment

R6: Have strict discipline within the house; Sport is a good conductor in keeping away from drugs & alcohol.

R7: Tell each other of the dangers; The problems that can occur should be talked about; Support each other

R8: Practice what they preach; Encourage family members to aim high e.g. sports, studies and friends; Be supportive

R9: Be a role model; Punish them; don’t let them out of your sight

R10: Families having impact on children and influence them the right way – no alcohol, drugs & abuse around them

R11: Make kids aware of consequences; Make them aware not to participate in this behaviour, particularly in front of younger members in the family

R12: Teach the children about these issues; Encourage all members of the family to set a good example
R13: Be supportive; Provide guidelines; Be open to children’s concern

R14: Support those in trouble not reject; Show love and help them get back on track; Discipline!

R15: Give good reasons why they shouldn’t do it; Tell them what it can do; Always be there in times of crisis

R16: Talk and try to rehabilitate those who are suffering; Outline to them what they’re doing to themselves and family; Offer support

R17: Don’t expose children to it; Live by example by not using or abusing yourself; Scare children about the consequences.

R18: Not engage in the excessively or at all; Don’t encourage them; Punishment

R19: Remove alcohol from the house or demonstrate a socially acceptable way of consuming it; Be strict on drug use, violence and crime; Be supportive and balanced

R20: Educate children

4.1.4 Question 4

What are the 3 most important things that your school can do to help prevent alcohol and drug abuse, violence and crime generally?

R1: Promote dangers associated with drugs, alcohol & violence; Involving students in sports – health & fitness programs; Learning / Study Programs; “Peer Pressure” – Don’t Give in to it – Drug Free functions – Rock Eisteddfods / Dances

R2: Teach outcomes & consequences of alcohol, drugs and violence; Information readily available; Past community members with history of these things should be available to talk to students

R3: Speakers to come out and talk about experiences and how they overcome them

R4: Speakers to come out; Have a guidance counsellor or nurse available to students; Posters up – hand out leaflets
R5: Get children involved in sports and other activities; Educate on the dangers; Restrict the access to alcohol

R6: Classes that go into detail of the effects of drugs, alcohol and violence on the population.

R7: Talks on dangers; Books on dangers; People who have experienced these things to talk to others

R8: Inform students of risks etc; Be supportive; Encourage students to aim high in their academic / moral / sporting standards

R9: Programs; Be harsher on students; Programs and courses do not help

R10: By enforcing “No drugs, alcohol & abuse” rules

R11: Better education of the consequences; Do not just tell them, have people involved in the behaviour tell them what it's really like – i.e. prisoners – especially younger prisoners who can relate better.

R12: Keep close watch on school grounds; Educate on these issues; Locker checks

R13: Educational programs; Counsellors; Increase extra-curricular programs

R14: Identify those involved - 1st warning – then expel; Counselling sessions; Police environment

R15: Hold classes or information sessions that are compulsory; Tough penalties; Someone available for students to talk to

R16: Have people who can detect these problems; Have programs to support and help these people before they get in to deep

R17: More education – less b-rated education with “alcohol is bad” style videos; Not allow these things on the grounds

R18: Educate people; Don’t encourage them; Punishment
R19: Increase the awareness and knowledge of drug and alcohol abuse and the implications that they have on personal behaviour

R20: Bring in specialists

4.1.5 Question 5

What are the 3 most important things that your community can do to help prevent alcohol and drug abuse, violence and crime generally?

R1: Programs promoting “anti drugs / abuse etc”; Canteens in communities regulated – alcohol brings violence into communities; Introduce “Dry zones” as in NT; Make people aware – violence solves nothing

R2: Prevent underage drinking; Strict restrictions on use; Activities in the community; Community awareness programs

R3: Free counselling; Centre where children can come and talk to someone about problems

R4: Help police – Dob in users; Crack down on liquor shops selling to underage people; Be cooperative with police

R5: As a whole, make an effort to understand and address the problem of substance abuse; Provide shelters; help groups and other activities to keep children off the streets

R6: Community awareness groups

R7: Awareness that it is around instead of sweeping under the carpet; Police could catch the real criminals (Ipswich police don’t); Centres for rehabilitation and counselling

R8: Encourage events of an alcohol & drug free nature; Have events that can keep people occupied; Inform the whole community of risk etc.; Have support groups

R9: They can make it feel uncomfortable for people
R11: Inform young people there is an alternative; Make an example our of the people who participate in such behaviour

R12: Education on these issues; Neighbourhood watches; Community rehabilitation centres

R13: Support networks; Educational programs; Re-education programs

R14: Police involvement; Support groups; Seek funding for establishing youth centres; Sports facilities etc

R15: More accepting of people; Provide counselling services; Increase penalties

R16: Offer free confidential rehabilitation programs; Offer a lot more help to homeless Indigenous people rather than treating them like outcasts

R17: Get a relating drug / alcohol free environment; Community activities to result a ‘sense of community help’ to provide support

R18: Support networks to be established

R19: Reduce the availability of alcohol; Establish extra curricular and social activities; Educate

R20: Drug awareness programs

4.1.6 Question 6

What are the 3 most important things that the Justice System can do to help prevent alcohol and drug abuse and violence, and crime generally?

R1: Prevention programs; Community based projects – Youth programs; Use qualified Indigenous & ethnic workers (social) within communities to educate people.

R2: Firm punishments for underage drinking and substance abuse; Rehabilitation centres for repeat offenders; more security-patrolled areas in communities

R3: Be understanding and seek help for them; Look at family background and see if help is necessary
R4: Penalties to be higher – no “this is first time – off the hook” or “You are a minor”; Harsher punishments

R5: Harsher penalties; Restrict access

R6: Work on rehabilitation more so then incarceration

R7: Look for rehabilitation rather than jail; Violence and crime should have harsher penalties; First time offenders – scare tactics – if continue jail sentence.

R8: Harsher punishments; Alternative punishments

R9: Don’t give out too many warnings; Need help instead of destroy

R10: Harsher penalties on younger / underage people

R11: Make an example of those who commit crimes / abuse; Help reform them better

R12: Harsher laws; Give cops more leeway to stomp out these problems; Make examples of those who break the law

R13: Be sympathetic; Aim for re-education – not punishment; Look after high-risk categories

R14: Get harder – even if they are 14 – 15 – 16; little tolerance

R15: Create tougher penalties; Don’t allow small things to slip because of paperwork; Work towards finding the source of the problems

R16: Rather than charging them – consider their circumstances; Offer support programs

R17: Education about consequences of involvement; More flexible sentencing / punishment to better address problems – rehabilitation; Stricter penalties

R18: Stricter laws – but reasonable; Punishments; Offer rehabilitation

R19: Introduce tougher legislation on offenders this includes younger adults

R20: Higher penalties
4.1.7 Question 7

Is there anything else you would like to add?

R2: People, especially the Aboriginal & Torres Strait community are reluctant in most cases to seek help or advise for reasons that they would be publicly humiliated and scrutinised under the eye of the government and its application of the law. This in turn discourages them.

R3: Most of the time people turn to alcohol and drugs as a friend or comfort, but if parents and friends are always ready to listen or help there would be less alcohol and drug abuse in communities.

R4: I may sound nasty, but I know what happens and there needs to be more push about drugs, alcohol, violence and crime. People have got to learn that it is NOT all right.

R5: I think parents have a great responsibility in making sure their kids are safe.

R6: Drugs, violence and crime are a result of bad parenting.

R7: These days it’s hard to avoid any of these. There is ample help but people don’t want it. Alcohol and drugs should be stopped or addressed first because I think (my personal experience) they cause crime and violence. It’s hard these days to walk down the street without being hassled by some drunk or high person.

R10: To prevent children or youth is up to families to create an atmosphere to their children to be a good influence in what they do day in, day out.

R11: The most important people are yourself and family when it comes to these situations. If you’re aware of the consequences you’ll think twice.

R12: The focus for law enforcement should be on preventing the cycle from happening/continuing. Therefore the emphasis should be on family values, community norms and scholastic education.

R14: I think this kind of abuse stems from the acceptance or lack of from the people, which associate with the person in questions, particularly during childhood. More of an effort has to be made to prevent this from starting in the first place.
R16: That the way the government treats homeless Aboriginal “Parkees” is appalling. THEY NEED HELP, so help them.

R19: Bring back tribal law!

R20: I do not believe drug addiction that some started themselves have anyone else to blame but themselves, no matter where you live.

### 4.1.8 Question 8

Some kids get into trouble with the law – what can be done to help them not get into any more serious trouble and what are the most important things that would help facilitate this?

R1: Juveniles know they will get off with a warning – community comes into play to show what they have caused to victims; More Youth Programs need implementation; Keep them busy during school and vacation periods

R2: Ensure that children know their rights and the consequences if they continue; Advise on possible solutions to overcome their dependence on their behaviour

R3: Give community services that they wouldn’t want to do – make them think twice about it

R4: Accept what they have done is wrong; Give them counselling and support (they just want attention); Show them they are important; Provide one on one-guidance sessions; May need safe houses; Teach them why they broke the law etc.

R5: Legal services to be addressed – for children who view detention centres as a safe place; Secure the streets; Social structures and attitudes need to change; Resources spent on preventing this situation

R6: Get the family involved from the start; Make the community aware of what the children has gotten into trouble for

R7: Tell and show contrasting lifestyles – people who’ve made it – lawyers, doctors, and then show people who haven’t (addicts); Make show the bad cases are shown
R8: Help find them something they enjoy and can achieve at keeping kids in school; Work experience, sport activities that may interest them

R9: First time in trouble makes a scary time.

R10: Programs to focus on youths; Parents to pay more attention to their kids

R11: Show alternatives; Help to do something they like; If they are dropping out of school and doing drugs, help them get a job or alternatives to crime.

R12: Parents to keep close watch on their children; Education on the circumstances that might occur if further law is broken

R13: Introduce positive role models from the same situation that has transcended obstacles; Re – educate them to understand positive outcome is not impossible

R14: Jail walks – take to prison to meet and greet; Keep them busy – involved in activities etc.; Tell them about the percentages or population of Aboriginal people then take 10% of them in jail; Don’t be a statistic – make your people proud – do something with your life; Give hope – set up programs to help facilitate this

R15: Learn to recognise the signs that someone is in trouble and care enough to do something about it; Knowledge on accessing facilities to help is a problem to be addressed

R16: Help them gain confidence – i.e. feel like they can get somewhere and be someone; Help them realise that they don’t have to rely on drugs & alcohol to feel better or resort to crime; Counselling

R17: Attention to their situation and better education; Understanding and scaring about consequences of more serious activities; More work with families / communities

R18: If they are in a bad environment temporarily remove them; Stricter punishment; Offer community / family support

R19: Community awareness and activities; if kids are able to convert their boredom to more productive things then the level of violence and crime should reduce
R20: Nothing can be done about small crime, it's done for themselves and not considered to them as illegal.
5 Qualitative Data Summary

There was a total of 334 responses from the 20 Indigenous students on how they would address the problem of resilience to offending. The student’s responses have been categorised into factors that relate to family, culture, education, justice and social capital. Their responses are presented as follows:

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>% of total responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>171</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social capital</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>334</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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5.1 Education

The responses support the argument of Robertson (2000) that education is a powerful tool for social change. Resilience to offending, or antisocial behaviour in general, should be approached primarily from an educational perspective. There was not sufficient detail in the responses to form a view as to whether the education should be a formal, school-based activity or if it should incorporate a more traditional family or community based activity. However, a significant number of responses identified the need for youth at risk to be able to access more life skill programs and job skills training. Access to programs that addressed substance abuse and alcohol prevention; stress; parenting; healthy living; positive sexual relations and the development of self-confidence and marketable skills, were all deemed to be of vital importance to the prevention of crime amongst Indigenous youth.

5.2 Social capital

The respondents clearly viewed the fulfilment of an individuals social, physical and spiritual needs as being necessary for their emotional well-being. Having a strong
sense of emotional and physical well-being was deemed to be important for an individual to feel positive and constructive about their lives. It was also assessed as important to an individual’s sense of inner peace and external social and community productivity.

5.3 Justice

Dodson (1995) argues that social justice is an all-embracing phenomenon that includes health, housing, education, economic activity, equality before the law, and for individuals to be treated with dignity and respect. The respondents’ assessment of justice as it pertains to the resilience to offending appeared to be viewed in the context of these principals. Justice was seen to be an important aspect in having balance between all of the issues that affect one’s life.

The injustices imposed by the justice system were identified as being the greatest source of trauma for Indigenous people (Robertson 2000). While this was not the strongest theme reflected by the respondents, it was identified as a significant issue in their lives. When reference was made to the issue of justice, respondents related primarily to the history of injustices that were imposed on families and communities, which were seen to contribute to the current breakdown of parental and community support and the absence of key role models in young lives. Further to this, a number of respondents emphasised the need for harsher penalties for young offenders as a means of preventing and deterring further crime by young offenders in Indigenous communities. However it should be noted that this was a very arbitrary suggestion as no consideration was given to the type of offence that was committed.

5.4 Family/Parent/Community Engagement

While a number of respondents did not specifically articulate the need to strengthen family values, there was a considerable number who felt the need for increased parental involvement in providing leadership and direction for the young. A significant number of respondents viewed parental support as being central to the well-being of individuals and impeding offending behavior amongst Indigenous youth. This supports issues raised by (Homel 1999) where positive parenting was seen to be an important factor in preventing or impeding anti-social behavior amongst
youth at risk. While the contribution of the family was identified by respondents to be an important aspect in resiling against crime, it was more in the context of building the self esteem of individuals, as opposed to guiding individuals away from the cycle of anti social behavior or crime. However, if reference to parental contribution was to indicate a high perception of familial support as important to resilience against crime, then the family was rated highly by respondents as a vital aspect in curbing offending behavior amongst youth.

A number of responses referred to parent, family and community interchangeably, where all three were considered to be essential to the development of the individual and a positive social consciousness amongst youth. This was particularly in terms of the positive psychosocial and emotional development of children and youth, which was rated highly as a deterrent to crime and offending behavior.

There was also an identified need for communities and families to be more engaged in preventive and social education programs. The following exerts highlight some of the comments made with regard to parents:

Teach children from an early age

Encourage family members to aim high in sports, studies and friends. Support each other.

Families must have an impact on children and influence them the right way - no alcohol, drugs and abuse around them

Encourage all members of the family to set a good example

Support those in trouble, do not reject them, show them love and help them get back on track

Parents have a great responsibility in making sure their kids are safe

To prevent children or youth from getting into trouble, it is up to their families to create an atmosphere for their children that is a good influence in what they do

The emphasis should be on family values

Get the family involved right from the start

Have disciplined and supportive home environment
It is important to have parents that do not approve of substance abuse and grog.

It is important for families/parents to show strict discipline in the home.

The inclusion of family and community was also seen to be of great importance to the helping and healing process of youth at risk.

Prevention starts at home, getting involved in sports and recreational activities and education, positive role models.

Communities must develop programs to get kids involved in sports, help them to maintain an interest in school and implement strategies that decreases time available to associate with the wrong element.

It is important that kids at risk have positive role models even in the community, it is important to show them what good can be done in their lives and that they do not have to be swayed by bad vices such as drugs and alcohol.

It is important for youth to be involved in extra curricula activities to keep them busy and to ensure that they do not focus on habits that often stem from boredom.

It is important that communities and family develop role models in the lives of their children; stand by their convictions and to help educate the youth about the dangers of taking risks with drugs. They need to be taught how to help themselves by steering clear of the stuff.

It is important for community leaders to put on drug and alcohol free functions so that the youth can see that you do not need these to enjoy yourself.

Family and community leaders need to practice what they preach; they need to show the young how to live with cultural pride both in the family and in the community.

Teach the children about the issues; encourage all members of the family and community to set a good example.

Show love and respect for children and youth; help them get back on track if they fall, but try to help them not get on the track in the first place.

Remove alcohol from the home and community or demonstrate a socially acceptable way of consuming it.

The above responses provide a clear indication that many of the respondents considered alcohol, drugs and emotional ill being, to be major influences to an
offending pathway. They also considered parental, familial and community support to be significant factors that encourage youth away from the influence of such factors.

Overall, many of the respondents indicated that rather than rely on external agents for individual education and positive upbringing, it was clear that a significantly higher number considered parents, families and community to be primarily responsible for this developmental process.

The principles of family and community engagement for an individual’s education are not new. State Education Departments have been relying on this process for a considerable period of time. This has resulted in parents being closely involved in the decision-making processes of school based programs and initiatives. However, this process has primarily involved non-Indigenous parents and communities. Indigenous parents and communities still often feel marginalised and intimidated by participating in the school system and the decision-making processes of non-Indigenous organisations and structures.

Through programs such as the Aboriginal School Student Participation Association (ASSPA), this anomaly is slowly being addressed. An increasing number of Indigenous parents are trying to engage meaningfully in the education system. This in itself was considered to be a positive influence on the lives of young children who frequently "go off the track”.

A number of respondents, as indicated in the following excerpts, identified the need for the school sector, government agencies, families and communities to be vital collaborators in protecting the social, emotional and physical well being of youth.

Schools, families and communities need to promote the dangers of drugs, alcohol and violence and involved the young in sports and fitness programs. They need to develop learning study programs

Peer pressures and don't give up programs, they need to implement drug free functions and develop rock eisteddfods

Everyone needs to help a kid who has gotten into drugs, as they do not often know how to get back on track. They are suffering and someone needs to offer them support. It can be very isolating and lonely if you think you are by yourself
If the only one who will give help is the one who introduced them to drugs in the first place, they will eventually introduce them to more. Families, communities and organizations need to stand together to give them holistic support.

Encourage those with depression so that they can gain self-confidence and esteem. Being young can be so isolating, it is important that services, families and communities work together to provide a safety net for those most at risk and to provide a helping hand to those who aren’t.

Addressing the issue of community engagement has become increasingly important as the dynamics of social institutions, families and communities experience change. This is more obvious when dealing with issues of offending in Indigenous communities and addressing the needs of youth at risk.

Media reports over the past decade have highlighted some flaws in age-old institutions such as the Church and other community organisations. The degree of mistrust amongst the youth toward political, social, spiritual and community leaders has become increasingly evident, with many now looking cautiously to other forums for leadership, spiritual sustenance and support.

While the debate about this may be varied and broad, there is an increasing demand for all systems to be more inclusive of families and communities and to take on more of a leadership role. This will require many institutions and communities to reevaluate the way in which they identify and address the needs of youth and in the type of programs and initiatives they develop.

There is increasing recognition of the value of families and communities in any process designed to facilitate change for youth at risk. The youth, as a consequence, must have confidence in the systems in which they are to interact. The vital role of family and community engagement, therefore, through collaborative and strategic partnerships with government, cannot be underestimated.

When addressing the issue of resiliency to crime amongst Indigenous youth, a number of respondents identified the need for agencies and communities to employ socially sensitive and meaningful strategies to influence the capacity building and social development options that are available. This was seen to be vital in the maturational and emotional development of children and youth and in developing characteristics...
that would help them refrain from any consideration of antisocial or criminal activity. The effective inter-sectorial collaboration between families, communities, governments and service providers was assessed as fundamental to the facilitation of a more proactive sense of well-being and development of youth and their decision to lead crime-free, proactive and productive lives.

5.5 Culture

Culture for Indigenous people is central to their sense of emotional and spiritual well-being (Robertson 2000). Interestingly, at a time when cultural survival and rejuvenation is being actively pursued, there was only one respondent that expressed cultural pride as being relevant to the issue of resilience against crime.

While it is difficult to speculate as to why the response to this variable was so limited, there are a number of possibilities that could be considered. It might be that the small group of students (20) was not drawn from that part of the Indigenous population that has experienced cultural fragmentation, which can be reflected by a sense of confusion and nonchalance in the minds of many young people. Communicating about culture in such an instance can be painful and often avoided at any cost.

Another consideration could be the sense of acculturation that is often raised as a concern by Elders when their young leave to enroll in tertiary education. Indigenous Elders have expressed concern that the acquisition of a Western tertiary education by their young is often at the expense of their Indigenous culture and identity. The opposing forces between tertiary education and traditional culture creates a dilemma for the Elders, who want the future generations to be successful in their life, but they also want them to maintain their Indigenous culture.

Both of these assessments may or may not be at the bases of the limited inclusion of culture by respondents. This is an issue that should be explored at greater length in future research on the topic of resilience, as it has an immense impact on the type of programs and initiatives that may be considered.
5.6 Discussion

When asked, “How do kids avoid excessive alcohol, drugs, violence and crime generally, both to others and/or to themselves?” and “What can you do to help prevent alcohol and drug abuse and crime generally?” the responses given were similar. While variations around the issue existed, the core response focused on avoiding people who engage in crime, violence, drugs/alcohol and have support – give support from/to family-friends. Also noted was the need to have alternative positive activities and keep a pro-mind set with positive goals.

In terms of what family can do for prevention in this area, there was a focus on education about the problems that can occur for youth from the family, to support and not reject those in trouble but also to use discipline when necessary and to, “live by example by not using or abusing yourself”. When identifying what schools can do in this area, the emphasis was on generally “promote dangers associated with drugs, alcohol, and violence”. There was also an emphasis on in-depth avoidance information from specialists and/or classes that go into detail in this area. Maybe with “tell them what it’s really like – i.e. prisoners – especially younger prisoners who can relate better.” Possibly also better checks, such as locker checks and tough penalties, but also to “have programs to support and help these people before they get in to deep.”

In terms of what community can do, the emphasis was on programs promoting “anti-drugs/abuse, etc.”, and on “canteens in communities regulated – alcohol brings violence into communities”, Maybe with cooperation from/with police. One respondent summed up the views: “Encourage events of alcohol and drug-free nature; have events that can keep people occupied; inform the whole community of risk, etc.; have support groups.” Other views meshed here, with “Free counselling” and “Centre where children can come and talk to someone about problems”. For the justice system, one respondent hit the centre of responses here: “Education about consequences of involvement, more flexible sentencing, punishment to better address problems – rehabilitation, stricter penalties.” The need to move outside the justice system only approach to, “Look at family background and see if help is necessary”, was also identified, as another respondent stated, especially to “Look after high-risk categories”.

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The sample was also asked, “Some kids get into trouble with law – what can be done to help them not get into any more serious trouble and what are the most important things that would help facilitate this? Responses here focused on; “accept what they have done is wrong”, but also to show them they are important”. For example, “Help them find something they enjoy and can achieve at keeping kids in school”.

The need for “resources to be spent on preventing this situation” was also raised. The respondent noted that, children may view detention centres as a safe place. Another respondent stated, “How to do this: provide one-on-one guidance sessions, may need safe houses. Teach them why they broke the law, etc.” The provision of role models by parents, community representatives and other respected people was also identified as critical, “Tell and show contrasting life-styles – people who made it – lawyers, doctors, and then show people who haven’t (addicts).”

In summary, while there were many factors that could have been raised by respondents as vital factors in the resilience amongst Indigenous youth to crime, access to community and familial support and parental love and discipline were seen to be the most significant. This was mirrored only by the need for youth to have access to educational, recreational and life skills programs as a significant deterrent to the possibility of offending activity. Though access to job training programs was seen as essential to youth at risk, surprisingly economic considerations and the acquisition of materialism was not considered to be of any significant influence. This could provide an important message when considering future research and in the development of further action to curtail the level of offending of youth in Indigenous communities.

**Future research**

When envisioning a larger project on resilience to offending in high-risk groups for Aboriginal youth in Australia, it is important to critically reflect on the literature review and qualitative pilot project data. Overall, Katz (1997) provided a good analysis of general resiliency issues and much needed programs and systems of support. The first five of six core articles, albeit non-Australian, provide good measurement, procedures and methodological information. Of particular interest to this project is the research on Australian Aboriginal youth by Homel et al. (1999).
While Homel’s (et al.) conclusions are informative, they do have their limitations. Further empirical research is needed to gain a better understanding of the complex interactions between cultures, generations, race, justice and societies, as they exist in the minds of Indigenous youths.

Overall the responses from the sample of young adult Aboriginal University students, who obviously show some resilience, match fairly well with the general analysis by Katz (1997). This may be notable, for it could contribute to the belief that many young Aboriginal adults who are “making it”, do have critical insights into how many people in Aboriginal communities have had to “play a poor hand well”, as referenced by Katz (1997). Completing a larger research project on resilience to offending in high risk groups, in this case for Aboriginal youth, would be an important step toward the very daunting task of identifying multi-faceted programs for individual, familial, and community resilience to destructive developmental pathways, across the variety of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Some good critical reflections from Homel et al (1999) has helped to guide this necessary research and resiliency development:

Protective factors in particular need to be better understood, as they do across the whole field of developmental prevention (Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium, 1999b).

The growing cadre of highly qualified Aboriginal researchers can best do this research, and it should be done in the context of specific prevention programs that are designed and controlled by local Indigenous people with input (where requested) from the scientific community. Thus prevention programs cannot be developed in isolation from their community context. Consultation should be bottom-up rather than top-down, trust should be established, and extensive timeframes allocated. This is entirely consistently with the major recommendation (No. 16) of the Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium (1999b). This recommendation, which was for a demonstration project in selected communities over a period of at least four years, built on the definition of developmental prevention presented at the beginning of this paper. A whole-of-community approach was proposed, with local involvement and ownership, incorporating a range of interventions rather than a single program, and aiming to create an inclusive, child-friendly or family supportive environment that promotes the prosocial development of children.
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7 Additional Material of Possible Relevance


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