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Resilience Factors in School Youth: Looking through Gender and Cultural Lenses

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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RESILIENCE FACTORS IN SCHOOL YOUTH:
LOOKING THROUGH GENDER AND CULTURAL LENSES

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program in Education (Counselling Psychology)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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Abstract

This study investigated resiliency in school youth undergoing the transition to high school. Using the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011), gender and cultural differences in resiliency were examined in senior level elementary school students. Gender differences were not found in global and community resilience scores. Cultural differences could not be investigated in this study because of low statistical power. High school concerns revealed three themes: a) academic concerns; b) social concerns; c) violence concerns. Similarly, high school aspirations revealed three themes: a) academic aspirations; b) social aspirations; c) expansion of world experience. Implications for developing appropriate programs and counselling youth undergoing the transition process, will be discussed along with future directions of study.

Keywords

Resiliency, High School, Gender, Culture, Child and Youth Resilience Measure

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite risks such as family conflict and low socioeconomic status, many children develop robustly with positive outcomes (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Resilience, the ability to overcome adversity with minimal negative consequences is a prominent topic within children's mental health literature (Ungar, 2011). Resilience processes allow children to withstand hardship while developing healthy relationships, succeeding academically, and maintaining safety. Research on children's mental health has been approached from a deficit-based approach. To understand the processes that help youth become more resilient, a focus on strengths rather than deficits is needed. Resilience processes have been noted to have unique pathways for genders and cultures (Collin-Vezina, Coleman, Milne, Sell, & Daigneault, 2011; Kirmayer, Dandean, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011). However, the current literature has not thoroughly examined how resiliency has been used by different populations or groups. The present study will explore if significant differences in resiliency scores, can be found in genders and cultures.

1.2 Understanding Resilience

Children with high levels of resilience use protective factors to promote short-term well-being benefits, as well as long term advantages for coping in the future (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). After adverse circumstances, individuals with high resilience report negative feelings of anger, fear, and sadness, while also experiencing positive emotions (i.e., gratitude). Furthermore, these individuals show substantial post-crisis growth, manifested in qualities of optimism, serenity, and subjective well-being (Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004). Research literature in resiliency, has emphasized the overwhelming amount of benefits and positive outcomes of this quality in children and youth. The role of systems and institutions in fostering and developing resilience cannot

be overstated. Schools are crucial environments for nurturing positive emotional development and resiliency through the assistance of educators, mental health practitioners, and care givers (Henderson & Milstein, 2003).

It has been reported that 20% of children require mental health attention, with only one-third of these children receiving any assistance at all (Barrett, Eber, & Weist, 2013). Although mental health awareness has been highly advocated in educational institutions, there has been limited implementation of evidence-based interventions within schools in North America (Evan & Weist, 2004; Fagan & Mihalic, 2003). In light of ineffective practices, the Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) was developed to incorporate the roles of families, schools, and communities in the fostering of children's well-being and positive growth (Barrett, Eber, & Weist, 2013). Similarly, recent resilience models acknowledge the collaborative and diverse nature of resources in encouraging robust development. Most notably, the *Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-28)* is an instrument that measures these resources, which include individual, relational, communal, and cultural factors in bolstering resilience (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011).

The quality of resilience in children's mental health promotion programs is continuously being explored (Weist & Murray, 2007). However, there is still much research needed to understand the complex nature of resilience. Previous research has found cultural and gender differences in resilience factors and conceptualizations (Collin-Vezina et al., 2011; Kirmayer et al., 2011). Female youth in residential care with trauma experiences, reported higher levels of clinical symptoms and lower scores on resilience features (Collin-Vezina et al., 2011). Cultural understandings of resilience must also be considered when developing resilience-building programs. Differing from Western perspectives, Indigenous cultures use distinctive concepts of the self in relation to the natural environment, traditions, and community in their understanding of resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2011).

Students in intermediate grades of elementary schools often experience ambivalent feelings about entering high school. The transition to high school is a critical period in the educational career of students, and is often accompanied by fears, reservations, and

certain expectations (Redd, Brooks, & McGarvey, 2001). Many factors are expected to contribute to a student's ability to cope with these stressors. This study will examine resilience levels in school youth, and will explore how gender and culture influence different resilience factors. Furthermore, questions on high school expectations will be asked to investigate the role of resilience factors in transition processes. If differences due to gender or cultural background are detected, future resiliency programming may include gender and culture as significant variables.

1.3 Defining Resilience

There are select individuals that are stress-resistant even in adverse circumstances. They appear to have active coping styles, high sociability, and a strong perception of their ability to control their future (Herman, 1997). The capacity to remain calm and maintain purpose are attributes that are protective against negative cognitions and beliefs. Vietnam veterans who were found not to have developed post-traumatic stress disorder, had demonstrated strong sociability, active coping strategies, and an internal locus of control during heavy combat (Herman, 1997). These men preserved their sense of judgment and morality, while controlling their rage and fear on the battlefield. The study of resilience examines individuals who have the capacity to overcome hardship while experiencing minimal negative consequences. Resilience research is interested in creating conditions and fostering qualities that allow individuals to effectively withstand adversity.

Resiliency was first coined to describe the strength of natural environments in the physical sciences. If an environment recovers from a natural disaster, it is said to demonstrate resiliency. The term began to appear in the psychological sciences, and was a metaphor for the ability of individuals to recover from exposure to chronic and acute stress (Ungar, 2012). Other prominent definitions of resiliency in current literature include: (a) the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to resources that sustain well-being; (b) the capacity of individuals' physical and social ecologies to provide those resources; (c) the capacity of individuals, their families, and communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways for resources to be shared (Ungar, 2011). These multiple

definitions demonstrate the intricate and detailed framework in which resiliency is understood in current literature.

Resiliency is often perceived to be a special quality that is reserved for select individuals. Masten (2001) argues that resilience is “ordinary magic”, and is fairly normal if human adaptational systems are maintained and protected. Examples of these systems include effective parenting, coping mechanisms, and belonging. If these systems are kept in good working order, development should proceed as normal even in the face of severe adversity. Masten’s research is critical within the understanding of resiliency, because it offers a positive outlook on human development that uses a strengths-based approach. Understanding that resiliency is “ordinary magic”, promotes policy and practice aimed at enhancing the development of children at risk for problems and psychopathology (Masten 2001).

The three stages of resilience processes are recovery, sustainability, and growth (Ungar, 2012). In response to an adverse event, individuals experience distress and other negative emotions. Recovery involves the personal and social adjustments made to alleviate the negative cognitions and behaviours associated with the stressor (Ungar, 2012).

Sustainability requires individuals to maintain a sense of purpose throughout hardship, and to seek support through social relationships (Bonanno, 2004). The stage of growth, similar to post-traumatic growth, highlights the additional gains attained from adversity (Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). These gains include new perspectives, enhanced sense of self, and overall well-being (Papadopoulos, 2007). It is important to note that individuals can be successful in one stage, without succeeding in another (Ungar, 2012). Soldiers that return from war may maintain a strong sense of purpose (growth stage), but can still continue to suffer from post-traumatic stress (recovery stage) (King, King, Keane, & Adams, 1998).

A consensus on the operational definition of resilience has not been reached in the literature. For the purposes of the present study, resiliency will be defined as “the ability to overcome adversity with minimal negative consequences” (Ungar, 2011). A combination of resilience conceptualizations will be also be acknowledged. First, the

socio-ecological context will be recognized as a highly significant factor of resilience. Resilience will be viewed as a feature of schools, community, culture, and spirituality (Ungar, 2011). Second, it is hypothesized that sources of resiliency will vary for different populations. Although resilience has been understood as a universal construct, different cultures, genders, and groups may be inclined to practice one resilience quality over another.

1.4 Sources of Resilience

The concept of resilience is studied in many disciplines including sociology, genetics, psychiatry, and neuroscience (Herrman et al., 2011). Various factors, pathways, and systems contribute to positive functioning and resilience development. Constructing a theoretical framework for resiliency must include the multiple factors that outline the common assumptions about resilience. The literature suggests that the sources of resiliency include personal, biological, and environmental-systemic factors (Herrman et al., 2011).

1.4.1 Personal Factors

Personal qualities like mastery, cognitive appraisal, competence, self-efficacy, and optimism all contribute to resiliency (Joseph & Linley, 2006; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Self-worth, a correlate of resilience processes, is highly associated with personality dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience (Davey, Eker, & Walters, 2003). Assets, as they are known in resilience literature, are positive factors residing in individuals that develop and maintain resilience levels (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Resilient youth have a greater dependence on assets such as self-regulation (i.e., emotion regulation, executive function) and self-esteem than non-resilient youth (Buckner, Mezzacappa, & Beardslee, 2003). Successful youth who had received at least post-secondary education, attributed their achievements to their sense of competence, goals for the future, and other internal qualities (Hass & Graydon, 2009).

1.4.2 Biological Factors

Findings from neurobiology and epigenetics, support the notion that resilience is the result of interactions between individuals and their social ecologies (Luthar & Brown, 2007; Ungar, 2012). Maltreated children shown significant interactions in patterns of electroencephalogram (EEG) activity between maltreatment status and resilience levels (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2007). Changes in neural networks and pathways from traumatic experiences, can limit the brain's ability to mitigate negative emotions, and hence affect resiliency in individuals (Cicchetti & Curtis, 2006). The environment in which a child is raised can have long-lasting and influential effects on future stress responses and coping behaviour (Weaver et al., 2004). Infant mice that received maternal care behaviour like grooming, showed less stress responses in adulthood (Weaver et al., 2004). Moreover, the hormone oxytocin is believed to increase interpersonal trust by reducing stress and anxiety during social interactions in humans (Carter, 2004).

1.4.3 Environmental-Systemic Factors.

Resiliency involves social, environmental, and community factors on micro and macro systemic levels (Ungar, 2012). Resources are positive factors that help youth overcome risks which are external to the individual (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). They include parental support, adult mentoring, positive peer relationships, and participation in community organizations (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Successful foster youth that have completed at least post-secondary education attribute their achievements to social support and involvement in community service activities (Hass & Graydon, 2009). The utilization of resources emphasizes the social environmental influences on development, and place resilience theory in an ecological context (Ungar, 2012). The significance of the social environment in providing protective and supportive factors is a fundamental principle in resilience research.

Secombe (2002) argues for an understanding of resilience as a “quality of the environment as much as the individual”. Likeminded researchers such as Ungar (2011) focus on how children can use individual, community, and family resources to buffer

adversity. A child that successfully develops in hardship may use school, family or culture to sustain their well-being (Ungar, 2012). Acknowledging the role of the community, offers a holistic approach to resilience building interventions on a systemic level. Additionally, it is important to note cultural conceptualizations and perspectives of resilience. Non-western cultures see the self in relation to the family, community, and environment (Summerfield, 1996). Among groups that value interdependence rather than autonomy, a focus on community resilience may be most important (Ungar, 2012).

1.5 Human Functioning

Resiliency cannot be explored without understanding the basic components of human functioning. Human predispositions and behaviour shape how we respond to suffering and what we do to recover from trauma. Although there is much heterogeneity in reactions to challenges, the prominent elements of human functioning will be examined. Herman (1997) argues that the individual can only recover in the context of relationships, community, and renewed connections with people. Trauma disrupts the conceptualization of the self in the relation to others, and shatters one's faith in systems and groups. This disconnection severely disables human functioning, and can only be repaired by meaningful connections with others (Herman, 1997). Resilience researchers emphasize the crucial significance of community, social support, and relationships in overcoming adversity.

Social support has the ability to mitigate the impact of a traumatic event and provide safety and protection (Flannery, 1990). On the other hand, negative responses like stigmatization can aggravate traumatic syndromes and cause further psychological damage (Flannery, 1990). Groups can recreate a sense of belonging and unity to an individual that experiences feelings of isolation, shame, and degradation from trauma. Similar to Indigenous perspectives, Herman (1997) promotes an understanding of resilience that is outside the individual and is a feature of a community (Herman, 1997; Kirmayer et al., 2011). The emphasis of interdependence over independence is common among certain cultures and communities. These cultures emphasize that commonality and

shared purpose are key elements of human functioning and recovery. Ultimately, the group fosters a sense of empowerment and engagement within the individual.

The socio-ecological context must be acknowledged when referring to human development and functioning (Harney, 2007). Interpersonal relationships, community, and group dynamics are aspects of an individual's socio-ecological context that shape development. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory identifies the environmental levels in which an individual is embedded. The microsystem refers to groups that directly and immediately impact an individual (i.e. family, peers, school) whereas the macrosystem describes the norms and ideologies of the culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The person-process context model illustrates that among interpersonal relationships, there are larger structures and entities that influence human growth (Harney, 2007).

Relational-cultural therapy (RCT) is a psychotherapeutic framework that is rooted in feminist theory and acknowledges the social context (Frey, 2013). RCT is a culturally competent approach, as it addresses the variation in beliefs and viewpoints across culture. RCT and the person-process-context emphasize the interaction between the individual and the environment. Relationships are the primary concern within RCT, and are believed to be the healing factor for client change (Frey, 2013). RCT is conducted within an anti-oppression framework while accounting for psychosocial stressors and structural barriers (Frey, 2013). This contemporary approach of psychotherapy may be beneficial to clients who are marginalized or experience structural hardships (e.g., discrimination). An ecological perspective to the study of resilience provides a framework for examining larger social contexts and human functioning.

Traumatic childhood experiences have long-term emotional and behavioural consequences. Adverse circumstances are not isolated events, but in fact contribute to further maladaptive behaviour for at-risk youth. Cumulative experiences of child maltreatment increase the risk of violent delinquency in adolescence (Crooks, Scott, Ellis, & Wolfe, 2011). Male students that experienced child maltreatment, acted violently in grade nine, and attended a school with lower perceived sense of safety, demonstrated

violent delinquency in grade eleven (Crooks, Scott, Ellis, & Wolfe, 2011). Although these findings are bleak, this study also demonstrated that school-based violence prevention programs show positive impact. Schools with violence prevention programs lowered the likelihood of maltreated youth engaging in violent delinquency (Crooks, Scott, Ellis, & Wolfe, 2011). Intervening at the school level provided protective factors and buffered maltreatment. Children and youth that do not engage in resilience processes, are not simply free from their past trauma. The consequences can be long-term and highly detrimental, if intervention is not provided. Resilience processes or interventions that occur during or soon after the trauma, may show the most positive outcomes for children and youth.

1.6 Gender and Cultural Perspectives

Resilience processes may involve different pathways and resources between genders. A study by Collin-Vezina et al. (2011) looked at the interactions between trauma experiences, trauma-related symptoms, and resilience factors in residential youth. Multiple forms of trauma were related to higher clinical levels of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and lower individual, community, and relational resilience features. Moreover, gender differences were found with females having higher levels of clinical symptoms and lower scores on resilience features (Collin-Vezina et al., 2011). Furthermore, gender differences have also been observed in EEG studies that examine neural activity and pathways in maltreated and non-maltreated children. Non-maltreated resilient girls showed greater relative left frontal activity than other groups (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2007). In one study, differences in cognitive appraisal styles were found between male and female Holocaust survivors (Morano, 2010). When experiencing adversity, “individuals who perceive or appraise their situation as manageable, will ultimately fare better than those who appraise their situation as unmanageable” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Acknowledging a constant state of fear, male Holocaust survivors believed they had the ability to meet the challenge (Morano, 2010). Female Holocaust survivors did not have the same sense of confidence, but attributed their survival to parents, family, and friends (Morano, 2010). A study on high school dropout rates revealed that males were more likely than females to be dropouts (Kelly, 1993). This gender difference is important to

note when investigating high school expectations in intermediate level students undergoing the transition process.

Systemic rethinking is needed with resilience research to address cultural viewpoints of resilience processes (Holton, Brass, & Kirmayer, 2009). Indigenous cultures emphasize interdependency, and receive personal strength from drawing on collective history, sacred teachings, and shared identity (Chamberlin, 2003). The sharing of narratives strengthens cultural power and identity, while allowing Indigenous communities to articulate their traditions and values artistically and creatively (Kirmayer et al., 2011). The Métis understand resilience as resourcefulness and the willingness to persevere in the face of challenges. Most importantly, it is the ability to use resourcefulness from all areas (i.e. physical, ecological, psychological) for the betterment of the community (Kirmayer et al., 2011). The Inuit have been recognized for their endurance, strength, and bravery for living in the adverse Arctic environment. For this Indigenous community, resilience is strongly associated with the concept of hope (Kirmayer et al., 2011). The Inuit recognize the presence of greater forces that are far beyond man's control, while appreciating the influence of physical, social, and cosmological factors (Kirmayer, Fletcher, & Watt, 2008). Establishing resilience as a construct that is universal, requires the acknowledgment of systemic, collective, and communal dimensions (Kirmayer, Sedhev, Whitley, Dandeneau, & Issac, 2009).

Past psychological research has viewed human nature from a Western perspective. The individual has been defined as independent, self-sufficient, and self-made (Geertz, 1975). Recent literature has acknowledged that many cultures have varying views on the construct of the self and others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Asian cultures are highly interdependent, and value harmony, cohesiveness, and unity. On the other hand, American culture emphasizes the importance of asserting the self and appreciating one's uniqueness. These striking differences shape cognition, behaviour, and the individual experience. Cultural differences can influence the use of different resilience features by various groups. Individuals from collectivist cultures may be more likely to use systemic factors on the micro and macro level. After experiencing adversity, these individuals may seek strength from interpersonal relationships and community. Community resilience is

the sharing of human and physical resources in social groups, to “recover from drastic change, sustain adaptability, and support new growth” (Ungar, 2011). People from individualistic societies may prefer to use individual resilience factors such as self-regulation, mastery, and optimism. Examining the cultural perspectives of resilience processes provides an in-depth and comprehensive approach to how individuals and groups overcome barriers and challenges.

1.7 Transition to High School

The transition to high school is a critical period in the educational career of students, and is often accompanied by fears, reservations, and certain expectations (Redd, Brooks, & McGarvey, 2001). Students are vulnerable to personal and academic difficulty during these transitions (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991). In the first year of high school, students report increases in homework difficulty, study time, note taking, and length of assignments (Newman et al., 2000). Expectations for high school can have significant implications for a student’s current and future educational achievement (Redd, Brooks, & McGarvey, 2001). These expectations are shaped by a student’s perception of their academic competence and engagement in school (Murdock, Anderman, & Hodge, 2000). School relationship components like frequent teacher-student interactions and school extracurricular participation, can have positive effects on student’s educational expectations (Wimberly, 2002).

Other variables such as socioeconomic status and poverty affect high school aspirations. Higher levels of parental education were associated with higher student high school expectations in an ethnically diverse sample (Redd, Brooks, McGarvey, 2001). Furthermore, students who were severely marginalized and demonstrated low engagement in participation of extracurricular activities, had low expectations for high school success (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991). Additionally, a student’s feelings of self-control can influence educational aspirations (Berends, 1995). Students transitioning to high school looked forward to making new friends and having more choices. Common self-reported fears included being picked on by other students, completing difficult homework and assignments, receiving lower grades, and being in an unfamiliar setting (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991).

During the first year of high school, students reported difficulty in adjusting to the demands of school, and sense a lack of belonging with their peers. Ninth grade students reported challenges in meeting new people, being influenced by peers, and developing new relationships (Newman et al., 2000). Peer acceptance can act as a stressor, a support mechanism, or an indicator of adjustment during the transition to high school (Newman et al., 2000). Participation in extracurricular activities may strengthen the student-school connection, and enhance one's sense of solidarity with peers and teachers (Wimberly, 2002). For many students the transition process runs smoothly and does not provide much difficulty. For these students, entering high school is viewed as an opportunity to create a new identity and build self-confidence (Kinney, 1993). These students had positive educational expectations and stronger forms of social support (Kinney, 1993). Identifying the sources of resiliency for youth that experience smooth transition processes, may lead to a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms of resiliency.

Overwhelming amounts of literature highlight the importance of engagement, relationships, community, and extracurricular participation for a student's well-being and academic success. Environmental and systemic factors may be relevant sources of resiliency for intermediate students. They include positive peer relationships, adult mentoring, and participation in community organizations (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Other contextual scales that may be significant are religiosity, spirituality, and culture (Ungar, 2011). As the socio-ecological context is fundamental to resilience theory, community and school level resources may be the most appropriate sources of resiliency for students undergoing the transition process (Ungar, 2011).

1.8 The Current Study

The current study examined resilience scores of genders and cultures through the *Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-28)* (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). Student concerns and aspirations about the transition to high school were also investigated.

Chapter 2

2 Methodology

Prior to conducting the study, ethics approval was received from the university research ethics board, and the two school boards through which participants were recruited (Appendix A).

2.1 Participants

The participants of this study were senior level elementary students from five schools, in one Catholic school board and one public school board in urban areas. All senior level students within these schools ($N= 402$) received letters of information distributed by the researcher (see Appendix B for a transcript of the letters of information sent to potential participants). Of those contacted, 30 students with signed permission (17 male, 13 female) responded.

2.2 Materials

In order to evaluate resiliency, subjects were administered the *Child and Youth Resilience Measure* (CYRM-28; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011; Appendix C). Researchers added questions concerning the high school transition process (Appendix D)

2.2.1 Child and Youth Resilience Measure

The CYRM-28 explores resources of resiliency in youth aged 12 to 23 years (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). It is a self-report measure comprised of 28 items, with responses rated on a three point Likert-type scale (1= No; 2= Sometimes; 3= Yes). The CYRM-28 is designed to calculate a global resilience score using three resilience subscales: (a) individual, (b) caregiver, and (c) context. The individual subscale contains 11 items, and examines personal skills, peer support, and social skills. The care-giving subscale includes 7 items, and looks at physical and psychological care giving. The context subscale contains 10 items, and identifies spiritual, educational, and cultural sources of

resiliency. As a result, the CYRM-28 produces four separate scores: one full-scale score, and three subscale scores consisting of an individual, caregiver, and context subscales. The possible ranges of CYRM-28 scores are as follows: CYRM-28 full scale, 0-84; CYRM-28 individual, 0-33; CYRM-28 caregiver, 0-21; CYRM-28 context, 0-30. Higher scores indicate greater resiliency, with the full score indicating global resilience. For the purposes of this study, researchers included two questions concerning the high school transition process.

The CYRM-28 has shown to be valid and reliable (Daigneault, Hebert, & Collin-Vezina, 2013). The measure was designed as part of the International Resilience Project (IRP), of the Resilience Research Centre, in collaboration with 14 communities in 11 countries around the world (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). Although the CYRM-28 was originally designed to screen for resiliency in children of various countries, it can now be used to assess resilience in youth from different ethno-cultural backgrounds in Canada (Davey & Walters, 2003).

2.2.2 Transition to High school

Two open-ended questions were created by the researcher to explore the transition process of students leaving elementary school and entering high school. The questions are as follows: (a) “Thinking about going to high school in one or two years, what are you worried or concerned about?” (b) “Thinking about going to high school in one or two years, what are you looking forward to?”

2.2.3 Demographic Information

This section requested information about age, gender, race, ethnicity, and family. For the purposes of this study, the two principal questions studied were “What is your sex?” and “To which ethnic or cultural group(s) do you see yourself belonging?” (Appendix E).

2.3 Procedure

Packages were assembled with letters of information, consent forms, and assent forms, and delivered to the selected schools. Principals gave permission for the study to be conducted, and senior level teachers distributed the packages to their students. Each school had a specific date and time for the study to be conducted, and packages were delivered two weeks in advance of this date. Signed consent forms were mailed back to the researcher, using the self-addressed pre-stamped envelopes included in the delivered packages. Students who had received parental consent and informed assent were then assembled in a classroom designated by the school principal, to meet with the researcher and complete the surveys. The researcher explained the study to the students, and was present during data collection to provide guidance and support. The total time of survey completion was 30 minutes.

2.4 Ethical considerations

This study was approved by a university research ethics board, one Catholic school board, and one public school board. Parental consent and informed assent were obtained from all participants. Data was analyzed digitally, and kept in encrypted files to ensure only researchers with permission had access. The researcher who is also a trained counsellor, was present during data collection to assist participants who experienced psychological harm or negativity from the resiliency measure. If a student disclosed information that may endanger them (e.g., does not feel safe at home), the researcher would contact the principal and appropriate authorities. Participants were also informed that they were able to end participation in the study at any time.

2.5 Research questions

The study aims to answer a number of questions:

- 1) Are there gender differences in resiliency?
- 2) Are there cultural differences in resiliency?
- 3) Are there gender differences in community resiliency?

- 4) What are the concerns and aspirations of students, regarding the transition to high school?

Chapter 3

3 Results

3.1 Analyses

In order to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the *Child and Youth Resilience Measure*, Cronbach's alpha scores were calculated. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to detect any gender and cultural differences in resiliency. To examine gender differences in community resiliency, independent samples t-tests were conducted on selected items on the CYRM-28. To explore gender differences in concerns and aspirations regarding the transition to high school, a thematic analysis was undertaken using Creswell's 6 steps (Creswell, 2007).

3.2 Demographics

This section requested information on standard demographic information (i.e. age, gender), with additional questions on home and family life. The results of these questions can be found in Table 1.

In the past five years, participants reported to have changed their living residences 0-6 times. When participants were asked "Who do you live with?" they included nuclear and extended family members in their responses. The number of individuals included in their answers ranged from 1-4 members. When asked "Who do you consider family?" 13 participants exclusively listed nuclear family members. Responses included "biological parents and siblings" and "mom, dad, sister". The number of family members listed for these 13 participants were one or more members. Extended family members and close individuals were included in the responses of 17 participants. Examples of their answers were "mom, dad, hockey team", "parents, dog, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends", and "brother, dad, mom, grandma." Many of these responses included close

friends, grandparents, and pets. The number of members listed for these 17 participants were two or more members. No differences in the number and type of listed family members were noted between culturally dominant and non-dominant participants. Subjects reported belonging to 4 racial groups, and 21 cultural groups (see Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Information of Participants

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>F(%)</i>
Participant Age	12.6	.5	
Participant Gender			
M			13(40%)
F			17(60%)
Who do you live with?			N.F. = 29 (97%) E.F. = 1 (3%)
How long have you lived with these people (years)?			
	N.F. = 11.52 E.F. = 13	N.F.= 3.22	
How many times have you moved in the past five years?	.83	1.42	
Racial groups:			
White/European			27 (90%)
Latin American			1 (3%)
Filipino			1 (3%)
Mixed			1 (3%)

Cultural groups (list):
English, German, Polish,
British, Canadian, Colombian,
Iroquois, Dutch, Irish,
Lebanese, Filipino, Italian,
Scottish, Maltese, French,
Chinese, Spanish, American,
Czech, Brazilian, Russian

Notes: *F(%)*= frequency (percentage); F = female; M = male; N.F.= nuclear family; E.F.= extended family.

3.3 Scales

3.3.1 Child and Youth Resilience Measure

The CYRM-28 full scale (28 items; $\alpha = .796$) showed good internal reliability. The individual subscale (11 items; $\alpha = .510$), caregiver subscale (7 items; $\alpha = .579$), and context subscale (10 items; $\alpha = .601$) showed poor internal reliability, which may have been an artefact of the small sample size. As stated previously, the ranges of scores are: CYRM-28 full scale, 0-84; CYRM-28 individual, 0-33; CYRM-28 caregiver, 0-21; CYRM-28 context, 0-30.

The means, standard deviations, ranges, and alphas for all scales can be found in Table 2.

Table 2
Cronbach's Alpha Scores and Descriptives of Scales

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	Range	α
CYRM-28 (Full scale)	74.17	5.72	62-83	.8
CYRM-28 (Individual)	29.37	2.25	25-33	.51
CYRM-28 (Caregiver)	19.13	1.81	16-21	.58
CYRM-28 (Context)	25.67	2.66	21-30	.6

3.4 Race & Culture

The CYRM-28 included demographic items that inquired about one's racial and cultural group. For this analysis the variable racial group was used as a proxy for cultural group. Racial categorization is based on physical or visible aspects of a person such as skin colour (Helms, 1994). Research does not suggest a genetic basis for race, rendering it a cultural term rather than a biological one (Johnson, 1990). Culture is a synonym for "social race" in psychological writing, and refers to "knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are learned and passed on from one generation to the next" (Johnson 1990; Segall 1979). Culture contributes to individual behaviour through social experience, and operates subjectively on values and attitudes (Triandis, 1976). Race is given meaning by others based on physical characteristics, whereas culture is understood as a personal representation of one's self (Pope-Davis & Liu, 1998). Culture has the capacity to give

meaning to race, and “in large measure, define the contexts that contribute to the social meaning of race” (Johnson, 1990).

Although resilience theory is more concerned with one’s connection to cultural groups rather than race, the numerous cultural groups listed by participants posed difficulty in the analyses. To simplify analyses, the variable racial group was used as a proxy for cultural group, and then categorized into the three following groups: (a) independent culture(s); (b) interdependent culture(s); (c) mixed culture(s). According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), independent and interdependent cultures have different perceptions of the self and others, which influence the nature of individual experiences. In relation to resilience theory, it is noted that interdependent cultures stress the significance of collective narratives and harmonious connections in the healing process (Kirmayer et al., 2011). On the other hand, those in independent cultures attend to the self and value personal differences (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The three categorizations of cultural type, allow for an exploration of culture’s influence on the use of resiliency.

3.5 Question 1- Are there gender differences in resiliency?

3.5.1 Overview

In order to answer question one, a one-way analysis of variance was run to determine if there were any significant differences in resiliency scores between genders.

3.5.2 Results

A one-way analysis of variance revealed no significant differences in global resilience scores ($F(1,28) = .000, p > .05$) between genders. The three subscale scores were not included in the analyses because of the insufficient sample size and the low internal consistency reliability scores, and acknowledging low statistical power.

3.6 Question 2- Are there cultural differences in resiliency?

3.6.1 Overview

To answer question two, a one-way analysis of variance was undertaken to determine if there were any significant differences in resiliency scores between cultures. As mentioned previously, this analysis used the variable “racial group” as a proxy for “cultural group”. Racial groups were listed in the demographic section of the CYRM-28, and participants were asked to select the racial groups to which they belonged. The responses to said question were categorized into three groups: (a) independent cultures (White or European); (b) interdependent cultures (Aboriginal or Native, South Asian, South East Asian, West Asian to Middle Eastern, Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American); (c) mixed cultures (Mixed Race).

3.6.2 Results

For this analysis, racial group was used as a proxy for cultural group. A one-way analysis of variance revealed no significant differences in global resilience scores ($F(2,27)=.072$, $p > .05$) between cultures. The assumption of equal groups was violated when this ANOVA was conducted, rendering the results invalid.

3.7 Question 3- Are there gender differences in community resiliency?

3.7.1 Overview

To examine the intersection of gender and community in resilience, individual items concerning community resilience in the CYRM-28 were selected and analyzed. Independent samples t-tests were run on items 9, 23, and 27 of the CYRM-28, to see if gender differences could be found in community resilience.

3.7.2 Results

“Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me.” There were no statistically significant differences in scores for males ($M= 1.94, S.D. = .66$) and females ($M=2, S.D. = .82$); $t(28) = .22, p>.05$).

“I think it is important to serve my community.” There were no statistically significant differences in scores for males ($M= 2.71, S.D. = .47$) and females ($M= 2.54, S.D. = .66$); $t(28) = .81, p>.05$).

“I enjoy my community’s traditions.” There were no statistically significant differences in scores for males ($M= 2.82, S.D. = .53$) and females ($M=2.62, S.D. = .65$); $t(28) = .97, p>.05$).

3.8 Question 4-What are the concerns and aspirations of students, regarding the transition to high school?

3.8.1 Overview

Participants were asked the two following questions: (1) “Thinking about going to high school in one or two years, what are you worried or concerned about?”; (2) “Thinking about going to high school in one or two years, what are you looking forward to?”

Thematic analysis was undertaken, using Creswell’s 6 steps (Creswell, 2007).

Transcribed material were segmented into meaning units and then grouped into categories (Creswell, 2007). In this process, significant statements were listed in various themed categories known as clusters of meanings (Creswell, 2007). Themes were organized under the high school transition questions, and then developed in a process called selective coding (Creswell, 2007). This resulted in systematic organization of the information, displaying themes about the concerns and aspirations of the high school transition process (Creswell, 2007).

The responses to question one were categorized into three themes: (a) academic concerns; (b) social concerns; (c) violence concerns. Answers to question two were likewise

categorized into three themes: (a) academic aspirations; (b) social aspirations; (c) expansion of world experience. Since multiple concerns and aspirations were reported by each participant, all answers will be interpreted in the analysis.

3.8.2 Results

Of the 30 students that participated in this study, 27 students (16 males, 11 females) provided responses for question 1 regarding high school concerns. For question 2, all 30 participants provided responses.

1. “Thinking about going to high school in one or two years, what are you worried or concerned about?”

3.8.2.1 Academic concerns

This theme concerns the fears, reservations, and beliefs about student academic success. The academic concerns reported included “I’m concerned about getting bad grades”, “I’m worried about if I fail any classes (French, math, etc.)”, and “school work”. Many of the responses suggested that students were worried about failure, work load, and meeting personal expectations.

3.8.2.2 Social concerns

Social concerns of students undergoing the transition to high school involved peer and self-acceptance. Regarding social concerns, responses included, “being accepted for my religion & interests”, “I’m worried about my friends offering me drugs”, and “I’m worried about meeting new people”. These responses suggested that students desired to connect with their peers, feared rejection and isolation, and worried about perceptions of others.

3.8.2.3 Violence concerns

Violence concerns were associated with social concerns, as they involved negative peer relationships. The two reported violence concerns were “being bullied”, and “the older

kids bullying my friends and I.” Reported violence concerns revealed fears regarding peer victimization, and suggested an absence of safety and security for students.

2. “Thinking about going to high school in one or two years, what are you looking forward to?”

3.8.2.4 Academic Aspirations

The theme of academic aspirations concerned expectations of classes, coursework and academic success. Responses from participants included “getting to choose my classes”, “I’m looking forward to starting rotary”, “getting good marks”, and “different classes and rotary”. These responses indicated desire to perform well academically, and specific interest in subjects and class material.

3.8.2.5 Social Aspirations

Social aspirations addressed expectations about peer relations. Responses were similar for males and females, and included “meeting new people” and “making friends”. Students expected positive relationships with peers, and connecting to others in meaningful ways.

3.8.2.6 Expansion of World Experience

This theme explored student interest in learning new perspectives, and engaging in novel opportunities. Some world experience aspirations were “making a difference”, “far away trips”, “I am looking forward to being more mature”, “I look forward to being in a new environment”, and “more freedom and being treated like an adult”. Student responses indicated interest in self-growth and novel experience during high school years.

Chapter 4

4 Discussion

In this examination of resiliency amongst senior level elementary school students undergoing the transition to high school, 30 students completed a resiliency measure and

an examination of scores was undertaken to detect any differences in responses between genders and cultures. Results indicated no significant differences between genders and cultures in global resilience scores using the CYRM-28. Additionally, participants were asked to report their concerns and aspirations regarding the high school transition process. Student responses regarding high school transition concerns indicated academic, social, and violence themes. Responses concerning hopes for high school revealed academic, social, and expanding world experience themes. These results will be discussed in terms of previous research, and within the context of implications for educational institutions, counselling, and future research. Although the majority of this section will be dedicated to the review and discussion of the study's findings, it begins with a brief summary of the purpose and methodology of the study.

4.1 Study Overview

The study of resilience examines individuals who have the capacity to overcome hardship while experiencing minimal negative consequences (Ungar, 2011). Resilience processes allow children to withstand hardship while developing healthy relationships, succeeding academically, and maintaining safety (Ungar, 2011). Previous research has found gender differences in resilience factors and conceptualizations (Collin-Vezina et al., 2011; Kirmayer et al., 2011). Additionally, cultural understandings of resilience must be acknowledged when investigating this quality. Differing from Western perspectives, non-dominant cultures use distinctive concepts of the self in relation to the natural environment, traditions, and community in their understanding of resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2011).

Students in intermediate grades of elementary schools often experience ambivalent feelings about entering high school. The transition to high school is a critical period in the educational career of students, and is often accompanied by fears, reservations, and certain expectations (Redd, Brooks, & McGarvey, 2001). Understanding these concerns and aspirations will help educators and researchers to foster positive environments where resiliency can be nurtured. The purpose of this study was to explore if gender and cultural differences existed in resiliency, for youth transitioning to high school. Additionally,

student concerns and aspirations of the high school transition process will be investigated. This study had four questions:

- 1) Are there gender differences in resiliency?
- 2) Are there cultural differences in resiliency?
- 3) Are there gender differences in community resiliency?
- 4) What are the concerns and aspirations of students, regarding the transition to high school?

In order to answer these questions, the *Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-28)*, developed by Ungar and Lieberberg (2011) was used. The CYRM-28 is an instrument that measures individual, relational, communal, and cultural factors in bolstering resilience (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). Additional question on the concerns and aspirations of the high school transition process, were added to the CYRM-28. The participants were senior level elementary school students in a large urban centre in Ontario, who were preparing for the transition to high school (moving from grade 7 or 8, to grade 9). Quantitative data was analyzed using one-way analysis of variance, independent samples t-test, while qualitative data was examined using Creswell's six steps for a thematic analysis.

It is important to analyze the variables of gender and culture, as they may contribute to different conceptualizations and expressions of resilience. Analysis of these variables, and the concerns and aspirations of the high school transition process, will allow researchers and educators to implement programs and environments where resiliency can be fostered in school youth.

In general, it must be noted here that some planned analyses were not carried out due to an unexpectedly small sample size of 30 participants (that is, low statistical power), while the same small sample size is suspected as the reason for low internal consistency reliability scores.

4.2 Question 1- Are there gender differences in resiliency?

This question investigated whether gender differences exist in resiliency. Previous research has suggested that females and males have different resiliency pathways and resources (Collin-Vezina et al., 2011). It is believed that this is the first study to investigate gender differences in resiliency in youth, undergoing the transition to high school.

The three subscales of the CYRM-28 were not included in the analyses because of the insufficient sample size and the low reliability scores. A one-way analysis of variance revealed no significant differences in global resilience scores between genders. Past literature has highlighted the gender differences in cognitive appraisal styles and use of resources. When experiencing adversity, “individuals who perceive or appraise their situation as manageable, will ultimately fare better than those who appraise their situation as unmanageable” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Acknowledging a constant state of fear, male Holocaust survivors still believed they had the ability to meet the challenge (Morano, 2010). Although female Holocaust survivors did not have the same sense of confidence, they attributed their survival to others, including their parents, family, and friends (Morano, 2010). Other findings indicated the significance of community for females, as female students reported “more positive connections with parents, teachers, and adults in the community, and peer in school and outside of school” (Sun, 2007).

These past findings suggest differences in resilience mechanisms and resources used by genders. Females may score higher on caregiving and contextual subscales, as the presence of others is significant in mitigating stress (Morano, 2010; Sun, 2007). Although no gender differences were found in this study, future research should examine specific strategies, resources, and mechanisms used by genders, to gain further insight on the process of resiliency.

4.3 Question 2 - Are there cultural differences in resiliency?

Establishing resilience as a construct that is universal requires the acknowledgment of systemic, collective, and communal dimensions (Kirmayer, Sedhev, Whitley, Dandeneau, & Issac, 2009). According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), independent and interdependent cultures have different perceptions of the self and others, which influence the nature of individual experiences. Examining the cultural perspectives of resilience processes provides a comprehensive approach to how individuals and groups overcome barriers and challenges.

This study used the variable “racial group” as a proxy for “cultural group”. The racial makeup of participants was largely homogenous, which hampered further analyses. The assumption of equal groups was violated for a one-way analysis of variance on collected data, in that the vast majority of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian.

The present literature stresses a “systemic rethinking” of resilience to acknowledge cultural frameworks (Holton, Brass, & Kirmayer, 2009). Particular cultures may value qualities found within a certain subscale of resilience. For example, the collectivist and harmonious qualities of Asian cultures are measured in the contextual subscale of the CYRM-28. The individualistic mindset and celebration of independence of Western society, describes the individual subscale. However, one must be cautious of assuming that students’ resilience can be mapped onto their ethnic background. Assimilation and acculturation are critical forces that affect immigrants and first generation Canadians. Assimilation is the process by which “individuals adopt the cultural norms of a dominant or host culture” (Berry, 1997). Acculturation explains the process of “cultural and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures” (Berry, 1997). Both these processes should be acknowledged, as culturally non-dominant students can hold a mix of their parent’s cultural values and Western norms.

4.4 Question 3 - Are there gender differences in community resiliency?

Community resilience is the sharing of human and physical resources in social groups, to “recover from drastic change, sustain adaptability, and support new growth” (Ungar, 2011). Social support has the ability to mitigate the impact of a traumatic event and provide safety and protection (Flannery, 1990). Three items which measure collective resiliency in the CYRM-28 were selected and analyzed.

Independent samples t-test revealed no significant gender differences in community resiliency. The three selected CYRM-28 items may have been insufficient expressions of community resiliency, as these results are inconsistent with previous research. Past studies have suggested that females strongly value community and social relationships as protective factors (Sun, 2007). Female students report “more positive connections with parents, teachers, and adults in the community, and peers in school and outside of school” (Sun, 2007). As mentioned previously, female Holocaust survivors attributed their survival to parents, family, and friends, unlike males who used individual cognitive appraisal strategies (Morano, 2010).

Seccombe (2002) argues for an understanding of resilience as a “quality of the environment as much as the individual”. Acknowledging the influence of community resilience, offers a holistic approach to resilience-building interventions on a systemic level. Additionally, it is important to note cultural conceptualizations and perspectives of resilience. Among groups that value interdependence rather than autonomy, a focus on community resilience may be most important (Ungar, 2012).

4.5 Question 4 - What are the concerns and aspirations of students, regarding the transition to high school?

Question four investigated the self-reported concerns and aspirations of students regarding the transition to high school. The transition to high school is a critical period in

the educational career of students, and is often accompanied by fears, reservations, and certain expectations (Redd, Brooks, & McGarvey, 2001). As the socio-ecological context is fundamental to resilience theory, community and school level resources may be the most appropriate sources of resiliency for students undergoing the transition process (Ungar, 2011). The researcher included two questions in the CYRM-28, which inquired about high school concerns and aspirations. Thematic analysis was undertaken using Creswell's 6 steps, to analyse the responses to the high school transition questions.

Responses to the question regarding *concerns* were categorized into three themes: (a) academic concerns; (b) social concerns; (c) violence concerns, while responses to the question about *aspirations* were categorized in a similar manner: (a) academic aspirations; (b) social aspirations; (c) expansion of world experience.

The academic concerns suggested worries regarding failure and not meeting expectations. This is consistent with previous literature, as it has been found that students are vulnerable to academic difficulty during these transitions (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991). The academic aspirations revealed that students desired autonomy in the selection of courses, and hoped to be successful in school assessments. The reported academic concerns and aspirations suggested that youth had a strong desire to learn and perform well. Students may benefit from teachers who foster positive environments, where academic failure can be discussed and reframed.

The reported social concerns and aspirations are consistent with previous literature, and suggest that peer acceptance can act as a stressor or a support mechanism. In a previous study, ninth grade students report challenges in meeting new people, being influenced by peers, and developing new relationships (Newman et al., 2000). Previous literature has noted that students have a "desire to fit in, and have friends whom you can turn to" (Talmi, 2000). Participation in extracurricular activities and social programming in schools can enhance one's sense of solidarity with peers (Wimberly, 2002).

The reported violence concerns by students supported previous research. Students have a fear of "being jumped or being bullied" (Talmi, 2000). The violence concerns found in this study and previous research should encourage care givers, teachers, and researchers

to address peer-victimization and the witnessing of bullying. Violence prevention programs, peer support groups, and workshops may be effective strategies to address violence during and after the high school transition period.

The desires to expand world experience suggest that students are interested in pursuing non-academic goals that concern learning. This included experiential learning (e.g., school trips) and attaining specific qualities (e.g., maturity, freedom). Educational curriculums can combine these components with academic planning (e.g., trips to museums) to meet the needs of students. Moreover, programming for world experience expansion should be implemented in grade seven and eight, to prepare students for opportunities in high school.

4.6 Next steps and suggestions

Considering that the investigation of gender and community resiliency is largely not discussed in literature, future investigations should continue to explore the intersection of these two variables. Future studies should examine specific elements of community resiliency such as narratives, traditions, and values. Open-ended questions that inquire about significant teachings and practices of one's cultures should be included. As mentioned previously, the processes of acculturation and assimilation that affect first generation and immigrant youth should be acknowledged in future research.

Ideally, future investigations should have participants that are heterogeneous in cultural makeup. If sample sizes are sufficient, specific analyses comparing cultural groups should be examined for resiliency subscale scores. This study used racial group as a proxy for cultural group, and further categorized culture into independent, interdependent, and mixed cultures. Analyzing particular cultural groups will allow researchers and educators to understand the influence of cultural beliefs on resiliency process. Additionally, the coping skills of newcomer youth should be explored to examine effective and relevant resilience strategies. Furthermore, future studies on resiliency and culture should incorporate measures on Berry's (1997) four-fold of acculturation strategies (assimilation, separation, integration, marginalization). The

variables in the acculturation process for immigrants and refugees, such as country of origin, religion, refugee or immigration status, discrimination history, length of residence, and traumas, torture, and war experiences would provide further insight on the intersection of resiliency and culture (Kira, Lewandowski, Somers, Yoon, & Chiodo, 2012).

This is one of very few research studies, which analyzed self-reported data from students undergoing the transition to high school. This valuable data should be incorporated into classrooms and schools in meaningful ways. Understanding personal concerns, should allow teachers, guidance counsellors, and other helpers to engage in important discourse with students. Past research has indicated that academic expectations are shaped by student's perceptions of competence and engagement in school. School relationship components like frequent teacher-student interactions and school extracurricular participation, can have positive effects on student's educational expectations (Wimberly, 2002). Future investigations should measure these factors, and connect them to high school expectations. As the socio-ecological context is fundamental to resilience theory, community and school level resources may be the most appropriate sources of resiliency for students undergoing the transition process (Ungar, 2011).

4.7 Implications

4.7.1 Educational Implications

The concerns and aspirations reported by participants undergoing the transition to high school provide critical insight for improvements within educational systems. Reported academic concerns and aspirations suggest that students should be better prepared for academic challenges. Teachers and classrooms should foster environments where academic skills and confidence are strengthened. This study revealed student fears of rejection and disconnection, and desires to develop positive relationships with peers. Preventing peer-victimization, supporting those who have experienced bullying, and creating safety should be key priorities within schools. Students also have strong desires to expand their worldview and partake in learning experiences. Programming for the

expansion of world experience should be implemented in grade seven and eight, to prepare students for opportunities in high school.

4.7.2 Counselling Implications

As resiliency buffers the negative consequences of adversity, it is of great importance in psychotherapeutic settings (Ungar, 2011). School counsellors or therapists that practice with youth may benefit from examining the resilience strategies of their clients. When presenting concerns are understood in the context of a client's resilience style, counsellors can select appropriate and meaningful psychotherapeutic tools. For example, Relational-cultural therapy (RCT) may be beneficial to newcomer youth who are marginalized or experience structural hardships, and have used community as a resource in their native country. Additionally, the responses to the high school transition question in this study, allow counsellors to be aware of the common fears and hopes of school youth.

4.8 Limitations and Strengths

4.8.1 Limitations

Despite initially contacting over 400 people to participate in this study, only 30 participated. The participating schools were extremely busy during the data collection period, which prolonged and delayed response time. The relatively small sample size limits statistical power, and thereby the number of conclusions that can be drawn from the data collected. Furthermore, the small sample size calls into question the representativeness of the study. The racial groups of the participants were largely homogenous, which further limited our analyses.

The CYRM-28 does not account for socio-economic status and class of participants, which is known to affect to resiliency (Redd, Brooks, McGarvey, 2001). The demographic section of the CYRM-28 asks participants to select their cultural groups from a list, and includes "Black" as a cultural group. The generalization of the group "Black" does not highlight the multiple variances within sub-groups (i.e. Trinidadian,

South African, Haitian) that may contribute to different resilience pathways. The CYRM-28 does not inquire about place of birth, generational status, and length of stay in Canada. Participants from non-dominant cultural groups, may not adopt values of their culture and ancestry. The processes of assimilation and acculturation, influence how non-dominant cultural youth relate to their own cultural values and Canadian values. The factors of immigration, generational status, and connection to their culture contribute to the type of values participants adopt. The variables of race and cultural group may have been insufficient, in evaluating the intersection of resiliency, interdependence, and independence. Inquiring about these previously mentioned factors in focus groups and interviews, may be beneficial for future research.

4.8.2 Strengths

Although a number of studies have examined resiliency, this is believed to be the first study investigating the variables of gender and culture in youth undergoing the transition to high school. Furthermore, this is one of few studies that examined resiliency in a Canadian community population. The high school concerns and aspirations were voiced by students, which provides valuable data for researchers and educators. This finding needs to be explored further with a larger sample and other measures of resilience, to help clarify whether there need to be differing programs for gender and culture

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Appendix A

Ethical approval from the University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board



**Western
Research**

Research Ethics

Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board NMREB Full Board Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Susan Rodger

Department & Institution: Education\Faculty of Education, Western University

NMREB File Number: 105147

Study Title: Resilience Factors in School Youth: Looking through Gender and Cultural Lenses

Sponsor:

NMREB Initial Approval Date: May 20, 2014

NMREB Expiry Date: April 30, 2015

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Instruments	Measure (rev, clean)	2014/04/16
Letter of Information & Consent	Parent LOI and Consent form	2014/05/07
Assent	Youth LOI and Assent	2014/05/07
Western University Protocol	updated protocol, with changes to section 4.3 as outlined in email on May 7, 2014. Clean copy.	2014/05/12

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the HSREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of HSREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

[Redacted Signature]
Ethics Officer, on behalf of Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

[Redacted Contact Information]

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

[Redacted Signature]

Appendix B

Letter of information sent to participants and guardians.



*Resilience Factors in School Youth:
Looking through Gender and Cultural Lenses*

Letter of Information for Youth

Introduction

My name is Diana Saverimuthu and I am a Master of Education Candidate at the Faculty of Education at Western University. I am doing research on youth strengths and their feelings about going to high school and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this study is to understand resilience, or strength, for young men and women your age and for people from different cultures, and how these strengths are related to your feelings about starting high school.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to join a group of other Grade 7 and 8 students from your school and fill out a survey that asks questions about your strengths. The research will take place in your school (in a room different from your classroom) on (date). You will be asked to fill out a survey, a paper-and-pencil questionnaire that will take about 30 minutes to complete. You don't need to do anything ahead of time to prepare.

Confidentiality

Everything you tell us on the survey will be kept confidential (we won't tell people what any one person said), within the limits set by law. The information from your survey will be used for research purposes only, and your name or any information that could be used to identify you will not be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study including audio recordings and notes will be stored securely in the Centre for School-Based Mental Health for a period of no more than five years.

Risk and Benefits

There is a small chance that you might have some feelings of anxiety or sadness while filling out the survey, even though we are asking about strengths, not problems. If you have any feelings like that, just let us know and we will be able to provide support.

Voluntary Participation

You don't have to participate in the survey, even if you parents gave permission. You can also stop participating at any time, or refuse to answer certain questions, and nothing bad will happen.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study or your rights as a person taking part in it, you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. If you require any further information about this research project you may contact:

Diana Saverimuthu (M.A. Counselling Psychology candidate): [REDACTED]

Dr. Susan Rodger (Ph.D, C. Psych): [REDACTED]

This letter is yours to keep for future reference



*Resilience Factors in School Youth:
Looking through Gender and Cultural Lenses*

Letter of Information for Parents

Introduction

My name is Diana Saverimuthu and I am a graduate student studying Counselling Psychology at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research on the nature of resilience factors in school youth, and would like to invite your child to participate in this study. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding your child's participation in this research.

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this study is to examine gender and cultural differences of resilience factors in school youth. Additionally, the obstacles of transitioning from elementary school to high school will be explored. The results obtained from this study will aid researchers and practitioners in implementing resilience-building interventions and programs for youth.

If you agree to participate

School youth in intermediate grades will complete the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-28). This instrument measures the resources available to children and youth that bolster their resilience. It entails questions regarding family, community, cultural, and individual factors. This study will also include questions concerning the transition process to secondary school (date). It is anticipated that the entire task will take 30 minutes and will be completed in one session on. The questionnaire will be completed in your child's classroom in the presence of the study's facilitators.

Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. The data collected will be used for research purposes only, and any information that could identify you or your child will not be used in any presentation or publication of results. All information will be kept in a secure filing cabinet and digital information will be encrypted.

Risk and Benefits

Participants may find questions regarding resilience factors distressing. The facilitators of this study are trained in identifying distress and will address any concerns that arise. The facilitators will set up office hours at your child's school to provide counsel and support if necessary.

Benefits include an appreciation of research in counselling psychology, and a deeper understanding of the nature of resilience factors in youth.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not give written permission, your child will not participate. If you do give permission, your child may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time. Once your permission is given, participation by your child is voluntary.

Your child may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on their academic status.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University at [REDACTED]. If you require any further information about this research project or your child's participation in the study you may contact:

Diana Saverimuthu (M.A. Counselling Psychology candidate): [REDACTED]

Dr. Susan Rodger (Ph.D, C. Psych): [REDACTED]

This letter is yours to keep for future reference

Appendix C

Child and Youth Resilience Measure.

To what extent do the sentences below describe you? Circle one answer for each statement.

	No	Sometimes	Yes
1. I have people I want to be like	No	Sometimes	Yes
2. I share/cooperate with people around me	No	Sometimes	Yes
3. Getting an education is important to me	No	Sometimes	Yes
4. I know how to behave/act in different situations (such as school, home and church)	No	Sometimes	Yes
5. My parent(s)/caregiver(s) watch me closely, they know where I am and what I am doing most of the time	No	Sometimes	Yes
6. I feel that my parent(s)/caregiver(s) know a lot about me (for example, who my friends are, what I like to do)	No	Sometimes	Yes
7. There is enough to eat at home when I am hungry	No	Sometimes	Yes
8. I try to finish activities that I start	No	Sometimes	Yes
9. Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me (for example, believing in a God or Allah)	No	Sometimes	Yes
10. I am proud of my ethnic background (for example, I know where my family comes from or know about my family's history)	No	Sometimes	Yes
11. People think I am fun to be with	No	Sometimes	Yes
12. I talk to my family about how I feel (for example when I am hurt or sad)	No	Sometimes	Yes
13. When things don't go my way, I can fix it without hurting myself or other people (for example hitting others or saying nasty things)	No	Sometimes	Yes
14. I feel supported by my friends	No	Sometimes	Yes
15. I know where to go to get help	No	Sometimes	Yes
16. I feel I belong at my school	No	Sometimes	Yes
17. I think my family cares about me when times are hard (for example if I am sick or have done something wrong)	No	Sometimes	Yes
18. I think my friends care about me when times are hard (for example if I am sick or have done something wrong)	No	Sometimes	Yes
19. I am treated fairly	No	Sometimes	Yes
20. I have chances to show others that I am growing up and can do things by myself	No	Sometimes	Yes
21. I know what I am good at	No	Sometimes	Yes
22. I participate in religious activities (such as church, mosque)	No	Sometimes	Yes
23. I think it is important to help out in my community	No	Sometimes	Yes
24. I feel safe when I am with my family	No	Sometimes	Yes
25. I have chances to learn things that will be useful when I am older (like cooking, working, and helping others)	No	Sometimes	Yes
26. I like the way my family celebrates things (like holidays or learning about my culture)	No	Sometimes	Yes
27. I like the way my community celebrates things (like holidays, festivals)	No	Sometimes	Yes
28. I am proud to be a citizen of _____ (insert country)	No	Sometimes	Yes

Appendix D

High school transition questions added by the researchers

1. Thinking about going to high school in one or two years, what are you worried or concerned about?
2. Thinking about going to high school in one or two years, what are you looking forward to?

Appendix E

Demographic questionnaire

Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM)

Directions

Listed below are a number of questions about you, your family, your community, and your relationships with people. These questions are designed to help us better understand how you cope with daily life and what role the people around you play in how you deal with daily challenges.

There are no right or wrong answers.

SECTION A

Please complete the questions below.

1. What is your date of birth? _____
2. What is your sex? _____
3. Who do you live with? _____
4. How long have you lived with these people? _____
5. How many times have you moved homes in the past 5 years? _____
6. Please describe who you consider to be your family (for example, 1 or 2 biological parents, siblings, friends on the street, a foster family, an adopted family, etc.).

7. People are often described as belonging to a particular racial group. To which of the following group(s) do you belong? (Mark or check the one(s) that best describe(s) you.)

- Aboriginal or Native
- South Asian (*e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan*)
- South-East Asian (*e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese*)
- West Asian to Middle Eastern (*e.g., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese*)
- Asian (*e.g., Korean, Chinese, Japanese*)
- Black (*e.g., African or Caribbean descent*)
- White or European
- Filipino
- Latin American (*e.g., Mexican, South American, Central American*)
- Other (please specify): _____
- Mixed Race (please list all groups that apply): _____

8. People are often described as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group(s). (For example, Chinese, Jamaican, German, Italian, Irish, English, Ukrainian, Inuit, East Indian, Jewish, Scottish, Portuguese, French, Polish, Vietnamese, Lebanese, etc.) To which ethnic or cultural group(s) do you see yourself belonging? Please list as many groups as you want.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Diana Saverimuthu

Post-secondary Education: McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
2009-2013 B.Sc.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2013-2015 M.A. (candidate)

Related Experience: Crisis Line Volunteer
The Salvation Army
2013-2015

Graduate Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2014-2015

Clinical Intern, Psychological Services
The University of Western Ontario
2014-2015

Co-facilitator, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Group
Merrymount: Family Support and Crisis Centre
2014-2015

Co-facilitator, Mindfulness Meditation Group Therapy
Student Development Centre
The University of Western Ontario
2015

Co-facilitator, Emotion Regulation Group Therapy
Student Development Centre
The University of Western Ontario
2015

Memberships: Student Member
Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association
2014-2015