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DISSERTATION

CLUSTERS OF STRENGTH:
A CASE STUDY OF THE EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE
OF A POST-INSTITUTIONALIZED ADOPTED CHILD
FROM EASTERN EUROPE

Submitted by

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School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2004

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STRENGTH: A CASE STUDY OF THE EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE
OF A POST-INSTITUTIONALIZED ADOPTED CHILD FROM EASTERN EUROPE
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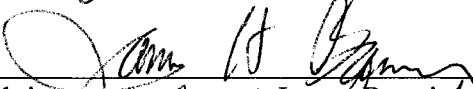
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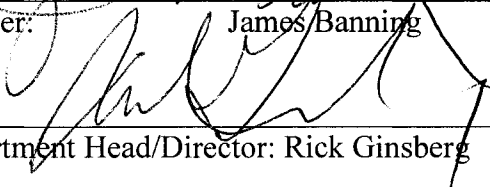
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

CLUSTERS OF STRENGTH:

A CASE STUDY OF THE EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE

OF A POST-INSTITUTIONALIZED ADOPTED CHILD

FROM EASTERN EUROPE

Resilience is the human capacity to face, overcome and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity. Educational resilience is manifested through the school success of at-risk students. The interest in educational resilience is rooted in the huge impact that academic success or failure has on adult life outcomes.

This study was designed to advance the understanding of resilience in general and educational resilience in particular. Post-institutionalized adoptees from Eastern Europe were selected as the target population of the study. There is a general consensus among professionals working with adopted post-institutionalized children from Eastern Europe that this is a high-risk group due to a combination of personal and environmental risk factors. Of these factors, the physical, social and psychological impact of life in an institution seems to be the most significant. Nevertheless, many of the about fifty thousand children, adopted from Eastern European orphanages since 1989, have shown remarkable resilience.

A case study design was selected for the research as the methodology that permitted the use of an ecological-transactional-developmental approach, which a thorough literature review determined to be appropriate in understanding the mechanism of resilience. A 12-year-old post-institutionalized international female adoptee from Russia, who was taking regular education classes and had a cumulative GPA of 2.96 was selected to be subject of the case study. The data were gathered through taped interviews, questionnaires, observations, documents, relevant publications in the local press and student's self-expression.

The work of risk and protection factors that shaped the student's development and had an impact on her educational outcomes is analyzed thoroughly and then presented graphically through the model of the resultant vector. Among theoretical implications, the most important posits that the mere existence of assets, resources and other personal and social capital per se may not guarantee their activation as protective factors. They seem to be triggered and mediated via mindfulness. Practical implications focus on the need for post-adoption services to include a school advocate. At the end, directions for future research comprise a proposal to introduce the theory of mindfulness and the constructs of mindfulness and mindlessness to the resilience discourse.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Resilience

Resilience is at once an enticing and elusive concept (Richman & Fraser, 2001). While it is generally agreed upon that it is a ubiquitous human phenomenon, one of the important survival mechanisms inherent in each of us (Paris, 2000), we cannot help being amazed at and proud of the ability of many fellow humans to beat the odds and successfully overcome the adversity life throws upon them. More so is the case when we consider young children and their struggles. Frail to the point of fragility, they resemble birds, “such birds that fly, dipping and hunting, with their small sad voices,” that “are made too delicately for the sea” (Hemingway, 1952, p. 32). But just as most of the birds survive ocean gales and northern winds and stronger continue their flight to their destination, so do many children. They grow up to be psychosocially functional even through storming weather. They are the resilient children.

The term “resilience” or “resiliency”¹ is used to describe individuals who “achieve positive outcomes in face of risk” (Kirby & Fraser, 1997, p.14). These individuals have “the capacity to rebound from hardships inflicted early in life” (Wolin & Wolin, 1994, p. vii). Although the term “resilient” is used as an attribute to describe the individual, it is accepted that “resilience” is the by-product of the successful interaction of personal traits and attributes manifested in individual behaviors and/or competencies and external (micro-, mezzo-, and macro-) environmental assets (Clarke & Clarke, 2001; Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Fraser & Richman, 2001; Rak & Paterson, 1996; Rutter, 2001; Vance, 2001; Wang, Haertel & Walberg 1996, 1998; Wolin & Wolin, 1994).

Resilience may be defined as the human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity. Resilience is not necessarily based on individual characteristics, it occurs at the nexus of high risk and exceptional resources, whether these resources are personal or environmental in nature or both. It is conceptualized as a variable that may range from low to high. Researchers must make two judgements to identify resilience: (a) There has been a significant threat to the individual. This threat is usually either high-risk status or exposure to severe adversity or trauma, and (b) the quality of adaptation or development is good. That is, the individual is behaving in a competent manner (Grotberg, 2000; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Richman & Bowen, 1997; Richman & Fraser, 2001).

The study of resilience emerged as a by-product of the search for risk factors (Clarke & Clarke, 2001; Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Rak & Paterson, 1996; Wolin & Wolin, 1994).

¹ The term resilience will be used in this dissertation from this point on.

Various studies have shown that usually one third of children exposed to disadvantage experience negative outcomes. The other two thirds beat the odds (Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Rak & Paterson, 1996; Wolin & Wolin, 1994). These facts encouraged the study of disadvantaged children from a salutogenesis perspective rather than following a “damage model” (Clarke & Clarke, 2001; Paris, 2000; Rak & Patterson, 1996; Wolin & Wolin, 1994). Resilient children are not invulnerable children, who are unaffected by risk factors. Resilience is the process of struggling with hardships and building on small successes that occur side by side with failures and disappointments. Wolin and Wolin (1994) define the concept of resilience as a paradox, which encompasses the psychological damage and the enduring strength that can result from struggling with hardship. Three types of resilience have been described: (a) overcoming the odds—the attainment of positive outcomes despite a high-risk status; (b) sustained competence under stress- ability to cope with chronic stress; and (c) successful adaptation despite adversity- recovery from trauma (Fraser & Richman, 2001). The sources of strength are usually referred to as protective factors and protective processes.

The at-risk paradigm of studies is based on the concept of what Perry (2000) calls the “neuroarcheology” of childhood maltreatment: the impacts of the adverse childhood events on the neuro-development are costly and long lasting. Whereas, fundamental to the concept of resilience is the concept of plasticity, the fact that substantial change may occur when a person’s environment changes (Clarke & Clarke, 2001; Davis, 1999; Kagan 1996).

The structure of the resilience construct is based on two pillar concepts: risk and protection, and their interaction. Risk is one or more factors like genetic, biological,

sociocultural, demographic conditions, personal characteristics or attributes that increases the probability of onset, digression to a more serious state, or the maintenance of a problem condition. Risk factors are usually used to predict outcomes in the form of probabilities (Fraser, 1997). The concept of risk includes risk factors, risk processes and risk chains at the individual and environmental levels. Important considerations are given to cumulative effects of risk, sensitivity to risk and steeling effects of adversities (Fraser, 1997; Fraser & Richman, 2001; Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Rutter, 2001).

Protective factors are individual characteristics and/or environmental resources that help children and youth respond and counteract the risks to which they are exposed. The protective factors may delay, suppress or neutralize negative outcomes. Protective factors include the interrelationship of individual, familial, and extrafamilial characteristics and they are considered to be robust predictors of resilience. Protective factors are cumulative in nature. (Brown & Rhodes, 1991; Garnezy, 1985; Fine & Schwebel, 1991; Fraser, 1997; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Rutter, 1987).

Two models of interaction between risk and protection have been described. *The additive model* maintains that the presence of a risk factor directly increases the likelihood of a particular negative outcome and the presence of a protective factor directly increases the likelihood of a particular positive outcome (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). This linear cause-and-effect chain has proven to be too simplified to explain the resilience processes (Rutter, 2001; Paris, 2000). In *the interactive model* protective factors come into play only when they are needed, like the protection provided by immunization. The function of protective factors may be conceptualized in three ways: (a) buffering risk factors and serving as a cushion against the negative effects of risk,

(b) interrupting the risk chain through which risk factors operate, and (c) preventing the initial occurrence of risk factors (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). Interactions between risk and protective factors are complicated in that both risk and protective factors may exist at different levels in the ecology. Distal factors are less influential than proximal factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Rutter, 2001).

Understanding how resilience works has proven to be a challenge and both its anatomy and functioning have not been fully revealed yet (Brown & Rhodes, 1991; Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Paris, 2000; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Rutter 2001; Vance, 2001). Rutter's (2001) is the most recent effort to present a summary of resilience processes described by research findings. He believes that eight resilience processes have been established by research:

1. The pattern of work of both risk and protective factors is *cumulative*. The synergetic interaction of factors is more important than the size of a single factor.
2. Individual differences in *sensitivity to risk* are crucial. These differences reflect genetic make up, temperamental characteristics, cognitive levels, and prior experiences of effectively dealing with challenges or overcoming adversity.
3. *A reduction of negative effects* is a critical protective issue. The individual characteristics are key to it, both in impacting a chain of positive interpersonal processes and distance or proximity to risk.
4. *A reduction of negative chain reactions* in the environmental risk exposure brings about the breaking down of the vicious cycle built by the way people behave and select their experiences. An important element is acting in planful ways.

5. *Increasing positive chain reaction* enables children to have success in other areas, which enhances their self-esteem and self-efficacy. They believe they can handle challenges successfully and do so.
6. *Opening up opportunities* provides new experiences as chances for successful outcomes and, by itself, reduces the involvement in at-risk situations.
7. *Neutralizing experiences* help to counteract or counterbalance the negative effect of an earlier acute event or long term difficulty.
8. The style of *cognitive processing of experiences* and adding meaning to them may make resilience more or less likely.

Educational Resilience

The concept of resilience is generally applied to individuals, but it is also very often extended to families, schools, neighborhoods, nations, organizations, and so forth. In addition, because of the contextual nature of its manifestation, it is also used to refer to strengths exhibited in particular to a context or setting, such as school. This is the case of educational resilience. Educational resilience is the school success of at-risk students. At-risk students include those who are in danger of developing significant learning and behavior problems, which, then, impact their educational outcomes negatively. The chance of graduating from high school for these students may be near zero. The population of at-risk students is incredibly diverse. Types of students who are at risk include but are not confined to students who grow up in poverty, students in single parent homes, students who experience significant losses, students who are abused, students

who abuse substances, students who become pregnant, students who are delinquents and so forth (Smith, Polloway, Patton & Dowdy, 1998). The adopted student is considered as a student at risk due to the difficulties and stresses of coping with the search for self-identity, especially in adolescence. When these stresses are intense and the support and understanding is lacking, tensions may interfere with the academic performance.

(Brodzinsky, 1990; Brodzinsky, 1993; Brodzinsky, Smith, & Brodzinsky 1998; Howe, 1998; National Adoption Information Clearinghouse [NAIC], 2002).

Educational resilience is used to describe those students who perform successfully in school, although they possess risk factors that would normally predict otherwise (Richman & Bowen, 1997; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996, 1998).

Educational resilience has been defined as “the heightened likelihood of educational success despite personal vulnerabilities and adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences” (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1994, p. 46). Furthermore, educational resilience is conceptualized not as the product of a single precipitating event, but of continuous interaction between an individual and characteristic features of the environment (Charlson, Bird & Strong, 1999; Morales, 2000; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1998).

The interest in educational resilience is rooted in the huge impact that academic success or failure has on adult life outcomes. Academic failure has devastating consequences, both, on a personal and societal level. School failure has been associated with poverty and welfare dependency, higher mortality rates, higher incidence of suicide, more frequent admissions to state mental health hospitals, earlier involvement in sexual intercourse, and higher risks of sexually transmitted diseases (Richman & Bowen, 1997).

In addition, research has shown that success in school protects children against delinquency, substance abuse, teen parenting and other societal and health problems (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). On a societal level, school failure translates into a waste of human capital, loss of national income, loss of tax revenues, increased use and demand for social services, more crime, reduced political participation, higher health costs, and so forth (Richman & Bowen, 1997). Chamberlin (1994) notes that school failure of one individual student may lead to school failure for a second generation through a vicious circle of stages that she describes as follows: school dropout, lack of job skills, unemployment, substance abuse, crime /vandalism, adolescent pregnancy, poor prenatal care, low birthright, child abuse and neglect, injuries and hospitalization, developmental lags, lack of school readiness, school failure, school dropout...

Most of the studies of educational resilience have focused on the factors correlated with a dropout's return to high school (Wayman, 2000). Others have investigated the success-promoting personal and environmental factors of students coming from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds like inner city students or student of Hispanic origin or even students with special needs (Charlson, Bird & Strong, 1999; Morales, 2000; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1998). The studies of educational resilience have mostly focused on the identification of individual and environmental protective factors rather than on the mechanisms of educational resilience. Two of the most salient individual factors are recognized to be a high level of engagement and a sense of personal agency in the students (Charlson, Bird & Strong, 1999; Morales, 2000; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1998). School related variables have been identified as climate and organization, philosophy, inclusion and diversity, structure and order, orientation,

community and family involvement. Classroom related variables include but are not limited to inclusion and diversity, size, structure and order, and classroom climate. Important teacher related variables have been recognized to be expectations, attitudes and instructional practices. Curriculum related variables include content, organization and priorities. (Davis, 1999; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996, 1998). The influence of peers is also widely recognized. The nature of relationship, the achievement ideology and diversity have been identified as having an impact on the educational outcomes (Morales, 2000; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996; Wayman, 2000). Socioeconomic context, structure/cohesion, expectations, nature of support, and family involvement in school are the familial environment related variables that have been identified to be important (Benard, 1995; Davis, 1999; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996, 1998; Wayman, 2000). The most researched aspects of community that have proven to generally be predictive of school outcomes are the socio-economic structure, resources, and attitudes (Davis, 1999; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996, 1998).

An impressive body of research has been built around resilience in general and educational resilience in particular. This research has helped built an understanding of the risk and protective factors involved as well as the nature of the interactions. The findings of research are playing an important role in designing evidence based strategies that aim at preventing socially dysfunctional and maladaptive behaviors and promote success (Davis, 1999; Fraser & Richman, 2001; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996, 1998).

This is a proposal to undertake a case study of the educational resilience of a student who is a post-institutionalized international adoptee from Eastern Europe. There is a general consensus among professionals working with adopted post-institutionalized

children that this is a high-risk group due to a combination of personal and environmental risk factors (Chisholm, Carter, Ames, & Morison, 1995; Clarke & Clarke, 2001; Federici, 1998, 1999, 2003; Gindis, 1998; Groza & Ileana, 1996; Johnson, 1997; O'Connor, Rutter, Beckett, Keaveney, Kreppner, & the English and Rumanian Adoptees Study Team, 2000). Of these factors, the physical, social and psychological impact of life in an institution seems to be the most significant. Additionally, adoption has been recognized as a school –related contributor of stress (Brodzinky, 1990, 1993; Brodzinsky, Smith & Brodzinsky, 1998; Grotevant, 1999; Howe, 1998, NAIC, 2002). Adding to these factors the multiple stressors of cross cultural adaptation like acquisition of a new language, living in a very different country and culture, navigating the untested waters of family life, and so on (Gindis 2000), it is highly possible to predict that these cumulative stressors may have a negative impact on the school performance and the educational outcomes. Fortunately, this is not always the case. According to parents' reports, many post-institutionalized adoptees are thriving in American schools both in the curricular and extracurricular activities, while many others are regular mainstream students (Groza & Ileana, 1996; McGuiness & Pallansch, 2000; Schell-Frank, 1999, 2000).

How does the group of successful students beat the odds? The educational resilience of post-institutionalized intercountry adopted children has not been the object of any studies, although they are considered a high risk group and data on their academic success is not lacking (Dalen, 1999; Freundlich & Lieberthal, 2000; Rygvold, 1999; Simon & Alstein, 2000). Most of the authors who have chosen to study post-institutionalized adopted children from Eastern Europe have focused mainly on their medical issues and psychosocial adjustment. Only incidentally, these studies have

revealed that while there is a group of children that have multiple problems as predicted, at the other end of the spectrum there is a group of children (about one third of them) that are having successful psychosocial adaptation in general and good educational outcomes (Groza & Illeana, 1996; Rutter, 2001). One single study to date has had a risk and resilience orientation. McGuinness studied the factors within the adoptive families that account for successful psychosocial adaptational outcomes of children adopted by American parents from Eastern European countries. This is a study of 105 children, with an average age of 7.7 years, who had spent an average of 34.39 months in an institution. The findings were that 24 children (i.e. 22% of all the sample) had very high levels of adjustment and showed remarkable competencies in communication, socialization, academic achievement and daily living skills domains (McGuinness, 1999; McGuinness, McGuinness & Dyer, 2000; McGuinness & Pallansch, 2000).

International Adoptions

The American families show a generally open attitude towards adoption as a way of creating a family or adding to it, although it still remains the second best alternative (March & Miall, 2000; Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2001; Wegar, 2000). According to Selman (1999) there are more adoptions in the U.S.A. both absolutely and in relation to size of population than in any other country in the world. On a crude adoption rate, there are 48.4 adoptions for 100,000 population in the USA. Stated simply, one in every 2000 children living in the USA is adopted. It is also estimated that approximately between 2% and 4% of all American families have adopted (Mosher &

Bachrach, 1996). The study of variables that play an important role in the number of demands for adoption (such as rise of infecundity in married women, the number of singles that have the means to adopt, adoptions by gay and lesbian couples) shows that the trend is upwards (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler & Esau, 2000).

Many of the adoption-seekers (between 10-15%) choose to look for children overseas although at least 117,000 children are available domestically for adoption in the foster care system (NAIC, 2002). Most of the children legally free for adoption are special needs adoptions, i.e. they are considered particularly difficult to place in permanent homes (McKenzie, 1993). Approximately 64 % of children waiting in foster care are of minority background. Additionally, according to estimates, approximately 50% of them have at least one developmental disability (Glidden, 2000).

The infants continue to be mostly in demand while the number of healthy infants awaiting legal adoption is shrinking (Freundlich 1998; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler & Esau, 2000). The current ratio of infant adoption in the USA is estimated to be 5.5 to 6.4 adoption seekers for every actual adoption. The decrease of the number of infants available for adoption has contributed to two factors. First, there is a decline in the rates of nonmarital childbearing in general and those of teenagers in particular due to (a) a rise in social expectations related to marriage and child bearing in the American society and (b) a decrease of the incidence of unintended and unwanted pregnancy due to increased contraception use (Freundlich, 1998). Second, the number of women who place children for adoption is declining. The relinquishment rates are at an all time low of at or under 2% of nonmarital births for all ethnic groups (Freundlich, 1998) and at a low 1% for

teenage mothers (NAIC, 2002). This is mainly due to the reduced stigma of unwed mothers and greater acceptance of single parenthood.

Many incentives have been created to encourage domestic adoptions in general and of children in foster care in particular, such as such as time off for parents, tax breaks, subsidies, state grants, and so forth. (NAIC, 2002). Among some of the deterrents for domestic adoption have been recognized limited public information on the availability of children for adoption domestically, misconceptions of the demographics of children, especially in relation to special needs adoptions, complex and un-uniform legislation, system delays, and a lack of readily accessible post-adoption services, and so forth (Barth & Miller, 2000; Freundlich, 1998; Lebner, 2000; March & Miall, 2000). The most powerful deterrent, however, may be the fact that permanence of adoption is in jeopardy because of the possible claims of birth parents even after the adoption has been legalized (Bartholet, 1993).

According to data from Immigration and Naturalization Service, Demographics Statistics Branch, Statistics Division, between 1971 and 2002, U.S. citizens have adopted 285,776 children from other countries. The number of international adoptions increased in particular after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the children from former socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe and Newly Independent States became available for adoption. In 2002 (the most recent data), about 2.5 times more children were adopted internationally than in 1989. The trend (Fig.1) shows the steady increase.

As many as 50, 864 children (i.e., 30% of the total population of international adoptees in the period 1989-2002) have been adopted from what is usually referred to as Eastern Europe. This large area includes Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia/Herzegovina,

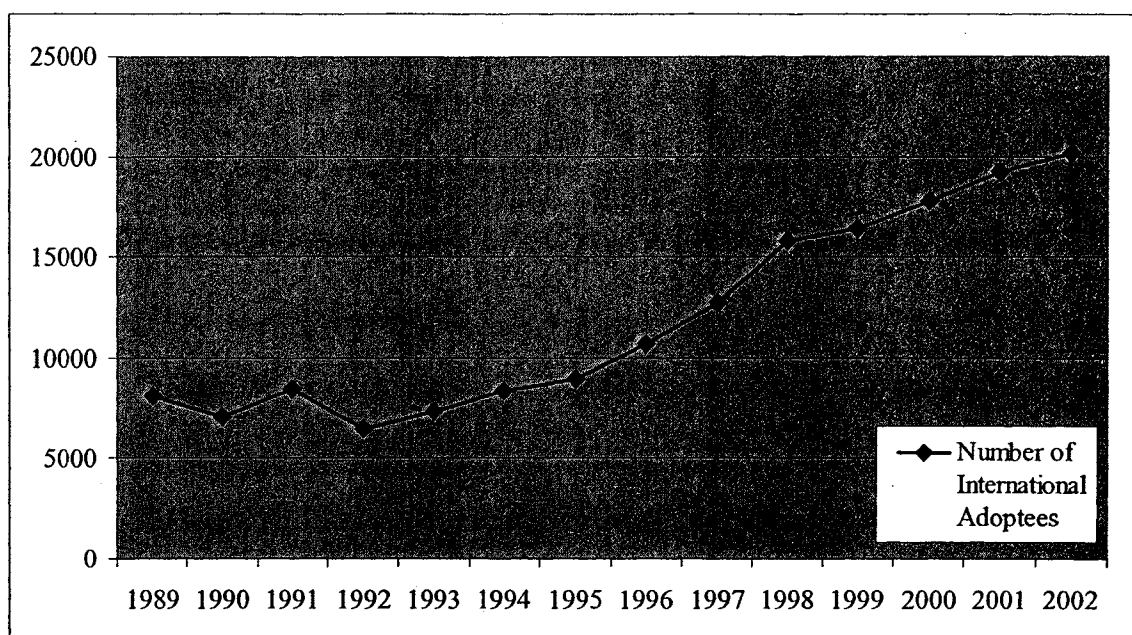


Figure 1. Trend of intercountry adoptions in the USA after 1989.

Note. *Source of data:* Immigration and Naturalization Service, Demographics Statistics Branch, Statistics Division (retrieved, January 26, 2004 from http://travel.state.gov/orphan_numbers.html)

Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Rumania, Russia, Serbia/Montenegro, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

The number has increased by 368 times from the FY 1989, which was the first year when adoptions from Eastern Europe started.

Most of the children have come from Russia (33,092 adoptees), followed by Rumania (7,794 adoptees). Taken together, the countries of former Soviet Union have contributed 79% of all adoptees from this group (40,112 children). Table 1 provides more detailed data in this regard. From the data of Table 1 it is clear to notice the trend of intercountry adoptions from Eastern Europe and former URSS: the number has increased steadily since 1993. Figure 2, prepared with data from Table 2 illustrates this trend.

Table 1

Immigrant Visas Issued to Orphans Coming to the U.S.A. from Eastern Europe

Country	'89	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	Total
Belarus													129	169	298
Bulgaria				91	133	97	110	163	148	151	221	214	297	260	1885
Georgia							51	77							128
Hungary								51	72						123
Kazakhsta												399	672	819	1890
Latvia							59	82	108	76					325
Lithuania						95	98	78	78						349
Moldavia												79			79
Poland		66	92	109	70	94		94	78	77		83	86	101	950
Rumania	138	121	2594	121	97	199	275	255	621	406	895	1,122	782	168	7794
Russia				324	746	1530	1896	2454	3816	4491	4348	4269	4279	4939	33092
Ukraine					273	164				180	323	659	1246	1106	3,951
Total	138	187	2686	645	1319	2179	2489	3254	4921	5381	5787	6825	7491	7562	50864

Note. *Source of data:* Immigration and Naturalization Service, Demographics Statistics Branch, Statistics Division (retrieved January 26, 2004 from: http://travel.state.gov/orphan_numbers.html)

The discourse of international adoptions is emotionally and politically charged (Bartholet, 1993; Freundlich, 1998; Gailey, 1999; Simon & Alstein, 2000; Triseliotis, 1999). American parents look for children overseas for a variety of reasons. Freundlich (1998) argues that they are driven by the shortage of white, healthy infants available for adoption domestically and their availability internationally. Another perspective is that of the “kindness of strangers” (Triseliotis, 1999). The prospective parents are reaching out to children in need, which otherwise are doomed to a life of deprivation (Bartholet, 1993; Freundlich, 1998, Simon & Alstein, 2000; Triseliotis, 1999). Other factors that drive

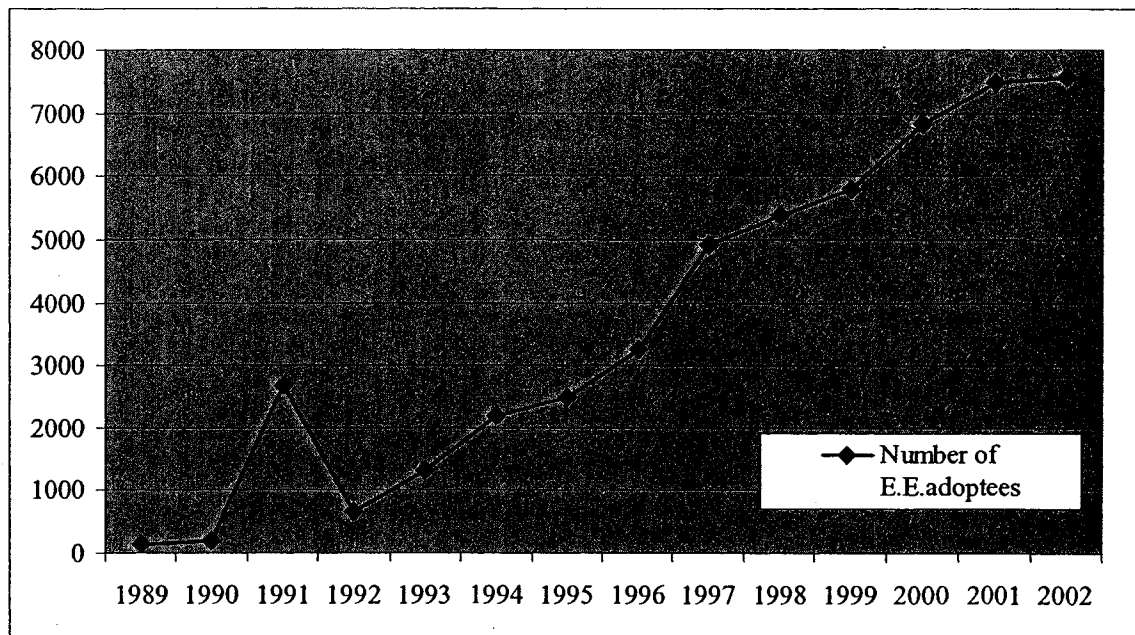


Figure 2. Trend of Adoptions from Eastern Europe

Note. *Source of data:* Immigration and Naturalization Service, Demographics Statistics Branch, Statistics Division (retrieved January 26, 2004 from: http://travel.state.gov/orphan_numbers.html)

the process of international adoptions that have been recognized in literature are:

(a) minimization of claims by birth parents, (b) more relaxed requirements for parents in terms of age, marital status, health problems or family history, (c) availability of children with certain characteristics, (d) the existence of a population of parents who have the education and the financial means to navigate the complex system of intercountry adoption, (e) good outcomes of adoption, (f) support of the government , (g) the involvement of effective for-profit adoption agencies, and certainly last but not least (h) the availability of children in those countries (Bartholet, 1993; Freundlich, 1998; Gailey, 1999; Goldberg, 1997; Lebner, 2000; Simon & Alstein, 2000; Triseliotis, 1999).

Some of the reasons are grounded in the popular belief of what works best in adoptions. Many adoptive parents are reported to think that severing ties with the children's birth parents might promote attachment between adopted children and parents and reduce confusion in the child (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000). Children with certain characteristics that are look-alikes (mostly Caucasian) are a perfect match as they are able to pass as a biologically related member of the adoptive family (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler & Esau, 2000). To the extent that adoption will continue to be viewed as an imitation of the real biological family, the fact that primary emphasis in adoptions is and will be on infants and very young children should not come as a surprise. In addition, age at adoption has been recognized as an important indicator of success of the bonding process: the younger the child at adoption, the better the chances of preventing attachment disorders (Freundlich, 1998; Goldberg, 1997).

Although the government and corporate incentives for international adoptions are not like the ones for domestic adoptions, they are not lacking. All states permit the adoption of foreign-born children. Many states have, by statute, created special procedures for adopting foreign-born children or for recognizing adoptions finalized overseas. On a federal level, many recent initiatives have occurred in this regard such as the signing into law of the Intercountry Adoption Act (P.L. 106-269), of The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 and P.L. 106-139 that allows children ages 16 or 17 to qualify as an immediate relative for purposes of adoption, if the US adoptive parents have adopted the child's sibling(s) who are under 16. Other incentives include federal adoption tax credits extended over international adoptions.

Another factor that has contributed to the increase of international adoptions is the involvement of many private agencies. These agencies have been very successful in providing adoption services within shorter periods of time that is customary for domestic adoption (McKelvey & Stevens, 1994; Goldberg, 1997).

Among factors that may affect international adoptions as deterrents are: (a) public sentiment, mainly from the sending countries, that sees international adoption as a form of exploitation of the poor by the rich, (b) negative outcomes of adoption, especially for parents that are totally unprepared to deal with a child that has spent most of his life in an orphanage, (c) costs that range between \$7, 000 and \$30,000, and (d) bureaucratic red tape to meet legal requirements in two countries (Andersen, 1999; Bartholet, 1993; Freundlich, 1998; Gailey, 1999; Hayes, 1999; McKelvey & Stevens, 1994; Pertman, 2000). As the high number of international adoptees in 2002 shows (20,099 children) these deterring factors have not had a profound impact on the trend of adoption. Two important demographics of parents that adopt from Eastern Europe-highly educated and upper middle class (Goldberg, 1997; Groza & Illeana, 1996; McGuinness, 1999) may be the reason.

Future availability of children for adoption from Eastern Europe will also be affected by local adoptions. Although local legislation in those countries gives priority to indigenous adoption of children by local parents, the number of children adopted locally is insignificant in face of large numbers of children in institutions. The major deterrent for indigenous adoptions is the economic hardships the majority of the population are encountering. Carter (2000) reports that 40 % of the population in the region lives in poverty. The extent of the fall of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Eastern

and Central Europe and Former Soviet Union - excluding Poland, Check Republic and Hungary- is an unprecedented 31 %, which is 3 % higher than the fall of GDP per capita of U.S.A. in the Great Depression of early 1930s. Another deterrent is the mindset about “abandoned children” who are viewed as second class citizens (Andersen, 1999; Human Rights Watch, 1999).

The prevalent myths of international adoption reinforced by speculative media stories have given rise to anti-intercountry adoption sentiments in the population of sending countries of Eastern Europe. Concerns over legitimacy of international adoptions, coupled with concerns over risks of abuse and exploitation of the orphans such as allegations of child kidnapping, baby buying (Gailey 1999; Triseliotis, 1999), organ trafficking, enforced pregnancies (Gailey, 1999), or enforced prostitution of young girls (Simon & Alstein, 1999) and so forth have forced the local politicians to draft and approve adoption laws that create many hurdles for international adoptive parents. Although fully aware that the government does not have the resources to take good care of the children in institutions, guided by the “saving face” mindset (Bartholet, 1993), their reaction to intercountry adoptions is not embracing. Without doubt, such an attitude may have a major impact on international adoptions in the future.

Institutionalization

There is reason to believe that the overwhelming majority of children adopted from these countries have spent time in institutional settings. Child welfare systems in most emerging countries are institutional or group care-based systems, unlike the United States

that is a foster-family based system (Groza & Illeana, 1999). Many of the children are placed there in infancy or thereafter and they live there until they are 18 years old. Most of the children are not orphaned in the traditional sense, they have birth parents that are alive, but are unwilling or unable to care for them (Carter, 2000; Freundlich, 1998; Gailey, 1999; Simon & Alstein, 2000).

Children are usually placed in two kinds of institutions: orphanages or children's homes- for children whose parents have relinquished parental rights, and rehabilitation homes-for children with physical and/or mental special needs. A recent UNICEF report finds that in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States alone, 1.5 million children are in out-of-home care, a 150,000 increase in the last decade (UNICEF, 2001). Russia and Rumania are the leading countries of the children in institutions per population, there are about 200,000 children in institutions in Russia, that is one third of children under the custody of the state (Human Rights Watch, 1999) and at least 100,000 children in institutions in Rumania (Simon & Alstein, 2000).

Authors mention different reasons for this large number of institutionalized children. Carter (2000) argues that while the underlying factor is the presence of poverty, the precipitating factors are social problems associated with vulnerable families, which in some countries of the region are more conspicuous than in the others. For children with special needs, the precipitating factor that leads to their abandonment is the attitude that they are uneducable, and hence unproductive members of society. As such, they are considered a burden to their family (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

There are grounds for speculation that the number of children in institutions will continue to be largely constant in the near future, or even increase. The bumpy road of

transition economy does not promise radical changes in the economic level of the society at large, which means that poverty as the underlying factor for putting children in an orphanage will continue to be active (Carter, 2000). In addition, the development of an alternative foster care system will take time because of the current lack of professional, material and financial resources in those countries. According to Tobis (2000), in 10 of the 14 countries of Eastern Europe surveyed by UNICEF, the numbers of infants and toddlers living in residential care and the number of children abandoned in maternity wards have increased in the last four years.

The children in institutions are dependents of the state. All the Eastern European countries have legislation that regulates the life and care of children in residential placements as well as proper governmental authorities that are responsible to supervise the implementation of these regulations in the Ministries of Social Protection, Health and Education. However, because of economic difficulties, lack of trained personnel and a popular mindset that sees these children as second-class citizens, differing qualities of care have been reported for children in institutions, with the situation reported as being generally deplorable and heart wrenching. The evidence from institutions shows that several systematic disadvantages are imposed on young children who are more often than not subjected to indescribable abuse and neglect (Bartholet, 1993; Groza & Illeana, 1996; Hollinger, 1993; Human Rights Watch; Simon & Alstein, 2000).

Children who have spent time in institutions in Eastern European countries have all been subjected to severe early global privation and dreadful circumstances of rearing which include among others social isolation in ruined physical settings, malnutrition, no personalized caregiving, lack of aural, oral, and tactile stimuli. Studies in Great Britain,

Canada and in the U.S.A. note the following areas of problems that many institutionalized children manifest: (1) general health, (2) developmental delays, and/or psychological problems -sensory integration, institutional autism (3) delays in language development -a predominance of the subtractive model in second language acquisition which does not help with learning (4) behavioral and emotional issues like attachment disorders (Haugaard, Wojslawowicz, & Palmer, 2000). To this list, one should add the disabilities resulting from exposure to alcohol in uterus, such as FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), FAE (Fetal Alcohol Effects), ARBD (Alcohol Related Birth Defects) and ARND (Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders) (McGuiness & Pallansch, 2001).

Post-Institutionalized Students

Students' academic success at earlier and later stages depends by and large on their readiness for the school experience, which is a reflection of multiple aspects of their development. These aspects have been determined to be: (a) cognitive skills and knowledge (language/literacy; reasoning i.e. mathematical knowledge and skills; children's conceptions and understanding of the world around them); (b) social skills (interpersonal skills and behavioral patterns); (c) physical health and well being (a disease free-state and age-appropriate gross and fine motor skills); (d) approaches to learning (persistence at a task and creativity); and (e) nature and frequency of family interactions (West, Denton & Germino-Hausken, 2000). All these aspects of school readiness are negatively impacted by the effects of institutionalization in children

(Federici, 2003) as well as transient issues related to multilevel cross-cultural adaptation.

As predicted, many of the children adopted from Eastern European countries are having school related problems and issues. These concerns are different from those for the general population of American students, including those with special needs and the non-institutionalized inter-country adoptees. Although efforts to meet the particular needs of this group of students are being made, according to reports by parents and professionals in the field, the American school system has not come up yet with adequate educational supports to secure their educational success (Gindis, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000; Federici, 1998, 1999; 2003, Schell-Frank, 1999, 2000).

However, the cases of educational resilience are not lacking. Groza & Illeana (1996) reported the findings of their study of 447 children adopted from Rumania, 47% of whom had lived in only in an institution before being adopted-from a few months to nine years. Of the children who were school age, 76% attended regular classes and one third of them had good results.

One of the recognized methodological issues of resilience studies is lack of agreement on the threshold for defining success. Studies of educational resilience have defined academic achievement of resilient students on a continuum from being the average student who does not fail any classes to those being highly successful, scoring half or even one standard deviation above the mean (Fraser & Richman, 2001). However, most authors agree with Masten & Coatsworth (1998) who write that resilience “refers to good adaptation and not necessarily to superb achievement” (p. 206) (see also Richman & Bowen, 1997; Rutter, 2001; Wolin & Wolin, 1994; Wayman, 2000). In this framework, considering the intensity of the adversities they are exposed to before adoption and the

complexities of the multilevel cross-cultural adaptation, I believe that a post-institutionalized child adopted from Eastern Europe may be legitimately considered educationally resilient if he/she attends regular education classes and does not fail in any of them.

Conceptual Framework

Different approaches have been used to study resilience. This study will investigate resilience mechanisms with *an ecological-interactional-developmental* approach (Richman & Bowen, 1997). This means that resilience will be seen as part of the process of developing age appropriate competencies in face of adversities through transactional processes with the multisystem environment that will include school, peers, family and community. The main tenet of the approach is: environments do not affect the person independently of the latter's characteristics; depending upon the individual characteristics of the person, particular environmental conditions produce different developmental outcomes. In the same way, characteristics of the person do not produce developmental outcomes independently of the environment. Additionally, development will be seen as a life course process rather than a stage- by-stage succession.

The Strengths Perspective will guide the whole process of research. According to the strengths' perspective, individuals, groups, families, communities have vast reservoirs of physical, emotional, cognitive, interpersonal, social and spiritual energies, resources and competencies. The strengths perspective encourages assessment and intervention based on the strengths rather than problems and deficits (Saleebey, 1999). The salutogenesis

position of resilience studies is grounded in the Strengths Perspective (Fraser & Galinski, 1997).

General System Theory (GST)-that emphasizes the interactions and connectedness of the different components of a system- will be the enveloping theory. Major GST concepts that will be of use include: (a) *transaction*-as the continuous exchanges between person and environment in which each influences the other over time, as an interaction of open systems with other systems outside of themselves (input, throughput, output), (b) *multifinality*- similar initial states may lead to different end states because of different inner and outer influences along the way and different degrees of freedom from either or both influences, (c) *a wholes approach* –the whole is more than the sum of its components, because it includes the mutual interactions of the component systems (*synergism*), (d) hierarchy- arrangement of living systems in which each is a subsystem of the next larger system. The ecological framework is related to this GST through its use of the transaction concept (Germain, 1994).

Statement of the Research Problem

Given the build-up of stressors of life for inter-country adopted post-institutionalized children and the areas of problems they manifest in general in the context of a school system that, at best, is unprepared to deal with them, it is highly possible to predict unsuccessful educational outcomes for many of them. It goes without saying that since the impact of successful educational experiences on one's life from a long-term perspective is paramount, it is vital to give to these children the supports that they need to

succeed. In addition, research has shown that the educational experience per se may have an enhancing effect on both achievement and psychosocial achievement of children with a background of severe deprivation and/or at stressful home situations (Clarke & Clarke, 2001; Morales, 2000; Charlson, Bird & Strong, 1999; Rutter, 2001).

Many professionals from health, mental health and education are involved in dealing with the daily problems of post- institutionalized adoptees. From a professional point of view, I believe that in order to encourage, support and promote successful educational experience for these students we need to understand this very process of educational success. A thorough examination of studies of adopted intercountry post-institutionalized children indicated that no other study had been undertaken to do that.

Purpose Statement

The research study was explanatory in nature (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). It attempted to give an answer to this major question: What made a highly at-risk student thrive academically when many from the same population were much less successful? What intersectional individual and proximal environmental risk and protective factors and process accounted for his/her educational resilience? The goal was to expand the knowledge about the nature of the process of educational resilience in children with a background of global and severe early deprivation by throwing light on the intricacy of transactions that shape it.

The main objective of the research was to identify educational clusters of strengths (i.e. resilience competencies) as an actual interaction of particular personal characteristics

of the post-institutionalized, intercountry adopted student with educationally related, particular environmental aspects of their lives. A case study approach allowed the examination of a multitude of factors and processes in two interrelated domains-school and family-from a transactional perspective.

Research Questions

1. Which personal and extra-personal risk factors, events and processes may affect the academic outcomes of a post-institutionalized adopted student?
2. Which personal and extra-personal protective factors, events and processes may have an effect on the academic outcomes of a post-institutionalized adopted student?
3. What specific clusters of strength may help the student overcome difficulties?

Definition of Terms

Institution Any organization that provides residential care to children whose families are unable to provide care for or are considered unfit to do so. An orphanage is an example of the institution.

Post-institutionalized Having spent time in an institution but no longer living there.

Eastern Europe This term is used to refer to former Communist Countries of Eastern and Central Europe and former Soviet Union. This large area includes Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Rumania, Russia, Serbia/Montenegro, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Resilience is the human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity. Resilience is not necessarily based on individual characteristics, it occurs at the nexus of high risk and exceptional resources, whether these resources are personal or environmental in nature. It is conceptualized as a variable that may range from low to high. Researchers must make two judgements to identify resilience: (a) There has been a significant threat to the individual. This threat is usually either high-risk status or exposure

to severe adversity or trauma. (b) The quality of adaptation or development is good. That is, the individual is behaving in a competent manner. Resilience is a by-product of development. (Grotberg, 2000; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Richman & Bowen, 1997; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Rutter, 1991).

Educational resilience is defined as the heightened likelihood of educational success despite personal vulnerabilities and adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences (Wang, Haertel & Walberg 1996).

An educationally resilient student is operationally defined as a post-institutionalized adopted student who is in regular education classes without any special needs modifications or supports².

Risk is one or more factors like genetic, biological, sociocultural, demographic conditions, personal characteristics or attributes that increases the probability of onset, digression to a more serious state, or the maintenance of a problem condition. Risk factors are usually used to predict outcomes in the form of

² This is an operational definition within the confines of this dissertation. As a matter of fact, educational resilience is a widespread characteristic of students in special education, as well.

probabilities (Fraser, 1997). In the educational context risks are “variables that decrease the probability that a student will possess the ability, willingness, or opportunities for academic engagement and intellectual development” (Montgomery & Rossi, p.46).

Contextual effects are environmental conditions that have both direct and indirect effects on overall risk (Kirby & Fraser, 1997).

A risk trait refers to an individual predisposition toward developing a specific problem condition. Risk traits are often used to describe a wide range of risk conditions. These risk conditions are both personal and situational (risk attributes).

Risk processes refer to mechanisms whereby a risk factor contributes over time to heightened vulnerability. No single event produces a negative outcome. Rather interactional processes shape behaviors and problems over time (Kirby & Fraser, 1997).

Risk chains “represent linkages of conceptually distinct risk factors or processes” (Kirby & Fraser, 1997, p.13).

Sensitivity to risk means “the degree to which a child reacts to a particular risk factor” (Fraser & Richman, 2001, p. 192). It is influenced by neurological, developmental, cultural and psychological factors.

Protective factors are individual characteristics and/or environmental resources that help children and youth respond and counteract the risks they are exposed to. The protective factors may delay, suppress or neutralize negative outcomes. Protective factors include the interrelationship of individual, familial, and extrafamilial characteristics and they are considered to be robust predictors of resilience (Brown and Rhodes, 1991; Fine & Schwebel, 1991; Garnezy, 1985; Fraser, 1997; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Rutter, 1987). In the educational context, protective factors are “variables that increase the probability that a student will possess the ability, willingness, or opportunities for engagement and intellectual growth”(Montgomery & Rossi, p. 46).

Individual protective factors are those inherent or attribute characteristics of the individual that help children and youth overcome adversities. The individual protective factors work in concert with environmental protective factors. In this work, personal variables have been divided into five groupings (a) personal characteristics, (b) social and relational competence, (c) cognitive competence, (d) emotional competence and (e) moral competence: the ability and opportunity to contribute.

Environmental protective factors include relationships, experiences, circumstances and events on the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-level that have a positive impact on child's or youth's outcomes. They act within the realms of family, school,

community, culture, society, and so forth (Richman & Bowen, 1997). Nested within each other, each environment is in continuous transactions with others being directly or indirectly influenced by this interaction. The influences of environmental protective factors can work in concert or individually to promote resilience mediated by individual characteristics (Kirby & Fraser, 1997).

Clusters of strengths have been be operationally defined as the intersection point of risk and a variety of protective factors and processes which function to shield the student from the effects of adversity or help him/her cope successfully once exposed to it.

Study Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

The most important limitation of the study was the time framework: The study was conducted in a four-month period, January–April 2003. Most of the school and class observations occurred in March 2003.

Delimitations

Main delimitations came from the choice of methodology and sampling. The case study methodology, while it allowed for an in-depth study of the case (n=1), which

revealed the intricacy of relationships between the individual and the environment, did not provide enough ground for generalization of results. As Bassey (1999) has rightfully observed, in the best cases, it allowed for fuzzy generalizations, which carried the idea of a possibility but not certainty.

The second delimitation concerned sampling, which although purposive, was not random. The subject was selected out of six candidates as the only one that met both the operational definition of the educationally resilient student in the framework of this dissertation and all the requirements of the Human Subject Review Committee.

Need

The need for this study emerged from my contacts with American parents who have adopted post-institutionalized children from Eastern Europe as well as from an extensive review of literature that I undertook motivated by the parents' demand for help. The need for this study was twofold: theoretical and practical. It has been noted by many authors (Brown & Rhodes, 1991; Fraser & Richman, 2001; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Paris, 2000; Vance, 2001) that more studies are needed to expand the knowledge about the mechanism of resilience in children who have experienced high adversity early in life. Focusing the investigation on a sample of one made possible the exploration of the nature of multiple transactions between the individual student and her proximal environment, such transactions that helped develop competencies alongside a normal developmental pattern notwithstanding earlier significant psychosocial insults of long lasting effects. Hopefully, the results provide an insight in the nature of the academic challenges of this

group of children and the successful strategies and supports they employ to overcome them.

The practical point of view was related to the need for evidence-based interventions for students who are intercountry post-institutionalized adoptees from Eastern Europe. There are no official data on the total number of post-institutionalized intercountry adopted students currently enrolled in US schools. But if we estimate that about 60% of them are of school age, this number would be about 30,500 students. This is a very small number when considered against the population of three millions students who speak little or no English (Manning, 2000) of a student population of about 46.7 million (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004). Because of the small percentage (about 0.07%) of the post-institutionalized intercountry adoptees from Eastern Europe in the total student body, it is no wonder that, most often than not, the teachers and the support staff are unprepared to provide adequate assistance for a group of students with a prior history that is very different from that of the other groups of students they have experience serving. A study focused on understanding and explaining the educational resilience of this group of students was needed to help parents, teachers and support staff to better respond to them. The findings may be of use in the United States and other Western countries where parents have adopted a large number of children from Eastern Europe as Canada, Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands and others. The results may also be of interest to educational professionals who work with institutionalized children in Eastern European countries.

The e-mail I received from a parent (printed with her permission) illustrates some of the points presented earlier. The following are some relevant excerpts:

Wednesday, December 20, 2000

3:12 PM

Dear Marita,

My son is much too old to participate in your study regarding international adoptees and education... I thought you might enjoy knowing that our son, now 28 years old, was in three different orphanages of Mother Teresa's in India. He was five years old when we adopted him in 1978. Today, he is an Electrical Engineer working for a fine U.S. company. He is not without "wounds" and "issues" (predominantly racial identity development issues as he has run into difficulties in his young adult life in being "accepted" by the general Indian population in the U.S.) but he is a very fine young man and very productive young person in many areas of his life. The only thing that we insisted on and fought for in the schools was for him to have help in speech and language development. That was done for only one year...in kindergarten. We sensed that he needed it but his teachers never agreed. We raised him at a time when no one paid much attention to learning disabilities, etc. It was routine that every teacher he ever had said he was performing "below his abilities". As his parents, we knew this, but he still managed to somehow always get mostly B's and some C's with occasional A's in classes that he particularly enjoyed. So, we did not do much complaining as he was never really "failing". Our feelings were that he had so many other issues pre-occupying his thoughts that it was often difficult for him to consistently concentrate. The issues, of course, were surrounding his adoption, not having any info on his birth family, trying to figure out exactly where he "fit" and "belonged" in a predominantly white town where we raised him, attachment issues, and etc. He graduated from high school on time and graduated from college in electrical engineering in five years. He consistently had to deal with the "model minority myth" in college. He graduated not with a 4.0 but rather about a 3.0. Not too bad, we feel !

I'm not really sure why I emailed you. Perhaps, just to let you know that there are adult international adoptees out there that are doing fine, especially when one considers all the "hurdles" they have to get over. I'm sure our son would have been considered a "high risk" adoption by today's standards.

Certainly, there are many things we would have done differently, as his parents, and we surely made many mistakes along the way, but there just was not as much info out there many years ago that there is now. I think it's wonderful that you are working on such a study. I think it's important and adoptive parents will find it very useful and, ultimately, that means that our children will benefit. When your research is done, I would very much enjoy reading and studying it.

Sincerely,
Kathy Spedding

Researcher's Perspective

Relevant Personal Information

I come from Albania. My education includes degrees in teaching as well as social work, and I have worked both as a teacher and as a social worker. I came into direct contact with the children in institutions in 1989 after I made the very painful decision of placing my son with severe disabilities in one of them temporarily. The experience proved devastating for him in terms of health, weight, and general development, and heart wrenching for me. I do not have words to describe the horror of abuse and neglect that I witnessed in those very long six years. Fortunately, he has recovered from many of the institutional effects and his progress has been noteworthy in all areas. He has made a very remarkable journey. With a charming smile and remarkable determination he has enjoyed the benefit of resources and the all-round support of his family, his teachers and many other people involved in his life. He is an example of resilience.

Personal Biases

The following are some of my personal beliefs that might have played an important role in this study:

1. All human beings are capable of development and personal progress.
2. Setbacks are part of the normal course of progress.
3. The development of competencies is a result of the synergy of transactions of the

individual with the ecological environment. There is no such thing as a single cause-effect relationship when it comes to explaining human development phenomena.

Assumptions

1. Post-institutionalized intercountry adopted children from Eastern Europe are students at risk because of (a) the presumed damage caused by the all-round deprivation due to prolonged adverse institutional exposure, (b) the heightened stress caused by adjustment efforts in the context of a precipitous multifaceted process of cultural transplantation, and (c) the status of being adopted versus living with the biological family.

2. Resiliencies may be considered as clusters of strength that are mobilized in the struggle with hardship.

3. Resilience develops in phases, taking different forms as children develop.

4. Protective factors of educationally resilient students that succeed despite the odds are the interrelationship of three primary factors: personal characteristics, family experiences, and environmental circumstances. Resilience is best understood through a synergistic perspective, assessing multiple dimensions of adaptation and multiple attributes.

5. Environments do not affect the person independently of the latter's characteristics; depending on the individual characteristics of the person, particular environmental conditions produce different developmental outcomes. The relationship of the person with the environment is characterized by mutual impact.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review provides an overview of the literature that covers the multiple aspects involved in understanding the educational resilience of post-institutionalized adopted students coming from Eastern Europe as well as relevant research studies. It also builds the case for the criteria that were used to select the subject and the methodology of the research. The literature review consists of three parts. Part One focuses on resilience. Part Two deals with the literature on institutionalization in general and institutionalization in Eastern Europe in particular. Part Three focuses on adoption. Part One and Part Three contain a section that relates to education.

Part One: Resilience

Defining Resilience

The dictionary (The American Heritage Illustrated Encyclopedic Dictionary, 1987) explains that the noun *resilience* or *resiliency* is used in reference to both animate and inanimate objects. When used to refer to people it is “the ability to recover quickly from illness, change or misfortune, buoyancy”. The word has a similar meaning when it is used

to refer to materials: “It is the property of a material that enables it to resume its original shape or position after being bent, stretched or compressed; elasticity.” Tracking back the origin of the word, we learn that the root word is “resile”, an intransitive verb which essentially means “to recoil”, “to spring back”, which comes from Latin *re-*: back and + *salire*: to leap.

The dictionary usually gives the most widely accepted popular definition of a word. Studying this definition one cannot fail to notice two important constitutive elements of the popular perception of resilience: First, resilience is ability, i.e. a specific *quality or skill* that is *inherent and/or acquired*. Second, this ability enables the individual *to return to the previous status of homeostasis, after a stressful situation, without damage*. So, in other words the general perception is that a resilient individual possesses this particular quality that empowers him/her to confront an adversity and win over it cheerfully and unblemished. In this sense, resilience becomes a synonym for invulnerability and invincibility. Linzer-Schwartz (1991) seems to resonate this popular belief when she defines resilience as “the ability to ‘bounce back,’ to recover from negative events with a degree of aplomb and possibly even a new and better plan” (p. 159). Dr. Michael Rutter, one of the pioneers of resilience research, notes that this popular perception of the term may be deceptive:

No one has absolute resistance; rather it is more appropriate to consider susceptibility to stress as a graded phenomenon. Some individuals are more resistant than others, but every one has their limit. Secondly, the term suggests that the characteristic applies to all risk circumstances. Obviously, that is a biologically implausible suggestion. There is a range of mechanism by which risk factors operate and it must be anticipated that the features that constitute resilience will vary according to risk mechanism. Thirdly, the concept seems to imply that the characteristic is an intrinsic feature of the individual. That is misleading because research findings indicate that resilience may reside in the social context as much as in the individual as such. Fourthly, the term suggests

that it deals with an unchanging characteristic. That, too, is wrong because there is every reason to suppose that developmental changes will influence resilience just as they influence any other characteristic. (1991, pp.1-2)

Although many definitions of resilience have come up in recent years, Davis (1999) notes in her thorough review of resilience literature that there is lack of consensus about the global definition of resilience and that “definitional ambiguity is the rule rather than the exception in definitions of resilience” (p.1). Davis attributes this lack of consensus to differing conceptualizations of the phenomenon when studied from different fields of social, behavioral and mental health sciences. In critiquing the resilience literature, Lavee, as quoted by Richman & Bowen (1997), wonders whether resilience is understood to imply “being,” “doing,” or “having.” There is a fourth dimension that must be added in this line of thought, that of “becoming”. What has made the definition of resilience so complex is its inherent polyhedricity as well as the dynamical interactivity of its components. Resilience is generally seen as a long-lasting product of the winning battle of protective factors (individual, familial, and extrafamilial) with risks and adversities. Resilience is made up of predictors, indicators, mechanisms, processes and outcomes, all entangled in the multi-directional transactions of the developing personal characteristics (personality, temperament, physical and mental health) biology and personal experiences in the multisystem environment. In addition, resilience is a social construct, and as such it is sensitive to different cultural interpretations (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). The following are examples of some definitions. The definitions have been ordered chronologically.

Resilience is the capacity to cope effectively with internal stress of vulnerabilities (such as labile patterns of autonomic activity, developmental imbalances, unusual sensitivities) and external stresses (such as illness, major losses and dissolution of the family) (Werner & Smith, 1982, p. 4).

Resilience in children and adolescents is associated with a heightened probability of present or future maladaptive outcomes but which are not actualized in some children whose behavior instead is marked by patterns of behavioral adaptation and manifest competence (Garmezy & Rutter , 1983, p. 73).

Resilient children are those who, because of stressful events are at risk of developing later psychological dysfunctions, but do not (Rhodes & Brown, 1991, p. 1).

The concept of resilience is a paradox, which encompasses the psychological damage and the enduring strength that can result from struggling with hardship. The process progresses by accumulating small successes that occur side by side with failures, setbacks and disappointments... Attempts to describe the qualities of resilient individuals include specific skills, behaviors, or competencies that are internal to them as well as factors such as caring adults, high expectations, and opportunities that are external. Resilience develops as both the internal and external interact. Resilience is the capacity to rebound from hardship inflicted early in life... We have used the word "resiliencies" to describe clusters of strength that are mobilized in the struggle with hardship (Wolin & Wolin, 1994, p.7).

Resiliency refers to positive outcomes in at-risk children (Rak & Patterson, 1996, p. 368).

Resilience is defined as a general frame of reference or belief system through which individuals appraise events and situations in the environment. It allows them to define situations from the environment as a challenge and an opportunity and to act with understanding, confidences, and persistence in overcoming or rebounding from the consequences of associated adversities, through environmental mastery and individual adaptation. It is conceptualized as a variable that may range from low to high...it is derived more from accumulated experiences than from conformity to external authority, and it is subject to influence from new experiences, reinterpretation of earlier events, and knowledge of the experience of others...Sense of coherence, self-efficacy, hardiness and locus of control may be conceptualized as manifest indicators of resilience. (Richman & Bowen, 1997, p. 101)

Resilience is manifested competence in the context of significant challenges to adaptation or development. Researchers must make two judgements to identify resilience: (a) There has been a significant threat to the individual. This threat is usually either high-risk status or exposure to severe adversity or trauma. (b) The quality of adaptation or development is good. That is, the child is behaving in a competent manner. (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998, p. 206)

We might think of resilience as a defense system against psychological injury. Just as immunological mechanisms protect us against the physical attack of micro-organisms, resilience mechanisms protect us against the emotional effects of adverse events. Resilience is therefore not just a matter of luck. It also depends on the capacities intrinsic to the individual. (Paris, 2000, p.37)

Resilience is the human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity (Grotberg, 2000, p.1).

Most scholars agree that resilience is characterized by a successful response to adversity. However, while it is viewed as an individual's response, it is generally not considered to be a function solely of a trait possessed by the individual. Rather, resilience is thought to emerge in the dynamic interaction between individual characteristics and environmental resources. A child who maximally exploits resources-or simply benefits from them without considering strategy-and in so doing produces a successful outcome in the face of significant threat can be called resilient...Resilience is not necessarily based on individual characteristics, it occurs at the nexus of high risk and exceptional resources, whether these resources are personal or environmental in nature. (Richman & Fraser, 2001, p.5-6)

These definitions throw light on the phenomenon of resilience by and large, as well as particular aspects of it. They all seem to agree on the following points: (a) resilience emerges from the interaction of risk and protection, (b) resilience is measured in terms of developmental stage appropriate psychosocial functioning and/or competencies, (c) reciprocal interaction of the individual assets with the environmental resources is at the core of the development of resilience. What these definitions do not do is define a threshold for "success over adversities" in terms of measurement. This is an important methodological issue that is yet to be resolved (Fraser & Richman, 2001).

The following composite definition will be used to describe resilience in this proposal:

Resilience is the human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity (Grotberg, 2000). Resilience is not necessarily based on individual characteristics, it occurs at the nexus of high risk and

exceptional resources, whether these resources are personal or environmental in nature (Fraser & Richman, 2001). It is conceptualized as a variable that may range from low to high (Richman & Bowen, 1997). Researchers must make two judgements to identify resilience: (a) There has been a significant threat to the individual. This threat is usually either high-risk status or exposure to severe adversity or trauma. (b) The quality of adaptation or development is good. That is, the individual is behaving in a competent manner (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Resilience is a by-product of development (Rutter, 1991).

A Framework for Understanding, Explaining and Studying Resilience

Introduction

The field of the study of resilience developed as a by-product of the search for risk factors and the lasting damage that comes from harmful early experiences in life (Coleman & Ganong, 1991; Davis, 1999; Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Rak & Paterson, 1996; Paris, 2000; Richman & Bowen, 1997; Wolin & Wolin, 1994). Wolin & Wolin (1994) call this perspective “the damage model of human psychology”, and Rak & Paterson (1997) call it an “illness model of psychology.” The development of the concept of resilience came from life examples and the results of research in a many fields, that showed that at least one third of people exposed to adversity overcome it and grow stronger because of it (Wolin & Wolin, 1994). Paris (2000), reflecting on these results, does not find them out of the ordinary, because according to him, “Resilience is the rule, and not the exception” (p. 37). He bases his observation in the context of evolutionary psychology. Natural selection favors the development of innate protective mechanisms against stressful events. After all, adversity is part of life, and people who are able to bounce back have more chances of surviving and bearing children of their own. So, in a way, the development of protective mechanisms is a by-product of evolution. Indeed, the

international study of resilience in 22 countries found that, although not all languages have a word to describe resilience, the concept itself is promoted in all cultures as part of the child rearing practices, not necessarily because of adversity in hand, but in anticipation of inevitable adversities (Grotberg, 2000).

Resilience, as a concept, is wider than coping and adaptation (Foster, 1997). Frydenberg, (1997) writes that coping involves cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands (and conflicts between them) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person. Coping is a multifaceted construct and the analysis of coping generally includes three components: behaviors, motivations and attitudes. So, in a sense, coping is often defensive in character and it is context –bound. Foster (1997) explains that adaptation is somewhat wider than coping, as it moves beyond defensive or protective responses to “ the ones that deal with improving or maximizing environmental fit” (p. 190). The concept of resilience includes both coping and adaptation, but it goes further than these two concepts in terms of describing competencies that remain beyond successful coping with stressful events and significant challenges and appropriate adaptation to the environment (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Three different aspects of resilience have been described: (a) overcoming the odds, which implies attaining positive outcomes despite high risk status (b) sustained competence under stress: adapting successfully to high risk and (c) recovery from trauma: functioning well after an intensely stressful event (Kirby and Fraser, 1997; Fraser & Richman, 2001).

Main Approaches

Resilience has been studied from a number of approaches/perspectives grounded in theories of human development, psychology, mental health and social work. I have given names to these approaches in an effort to distinguish them from one another. However, I must mention that, with a few exceptions, what distinguishes one approach from the others is the focus on what it considers to be the primary factor rather than the general conceptualization of the phenomenon.

The psychological perspective focuses mostly on temperament as the major component of resilience and as the foundation of personality traits that account for the successful manipulation of the environment. Paris (2000) argues that the genetically predisposed temperamental characteristics are the strongest in influencing the beneficial nature of relationships. In addition, Paris argues that the effects of the events and the response to them depend on how they are processed. Personality traits account for these differences in the processing of experience. Paris uses the results of research on post-institutionalized adoptees to prove his point that children of the same cohort, who have been subjected to the same adversities, have different outcomes mainly thanks to their genetic predisposition. A variation of this perspective is what Richman & Bowen (1997) call the “human factors” approach. This approach includes other features of the individual as well. These features are needs, values, expectations, beliefs, motives, feelings, abilities and attitudes. This approach may be summed up with this axiom: variations in the individual characteristics account for variations in outcomes.

The environmental influences approach focuses primarily on the effects of the early and later childhood experiences on the adult outcomes. This perspective contains a pair of opposed themata³ that branch out in two diametrically opposed positions as to the malleability to change and reversibility/irreversibility of the effects of early experiences.

The epigenetic⁴ perspective posits that childhood adversities such as poor parenting, traumatic experiences, abuse, parental death, separation and divorcee, poverty and so forth are strong predictors of adult outcomes (Paris, 2000). The neuroarcheology of brain development (Perry, 2000) explains it with the hierarchical nature of brain development and organization. Disruptions of normal development processes early in life (in the area of brainstem and diencephalons) alter the development of later developing areas (the limbic and cortical areas). The interruption of development in a particular neural system causes the malorganization and decreased functional capabilities of that system. In brief, if the child has adverse experiences during childhood, these adverse events can affect the organization of the developing neural systems and alter them for life. In regard to children reared in institutions, Bowlby (1951, 1969), and Goldfarb (1943, 1945, 1947) maintain that children suffering from severe early deprivation in general and maternal care deprivation in

³ Clarke & Clarke (1976) explain that “themata are a set of opposed assumptions that typically form the axiom of the discipline” (p. 71).

⁴ Paris (2000) explains that, “epigenesis is the principle that what happens at any point in psychological development normally proceeds in predicable stages” (p.64).

particular are probably permanently damaged intellectually (low IQ) and emotionally (a cohort rife with attachment disorder) and hence are doomed to a bleak future. The epigenetic position leaves little room for resilience.

The opposed position that is upheld by a number authors (Clarke & Clarke, 1976, 2001; Dennis, 1976; Flint, 1978; Kadushin, 1976; Kagan, 1976; Koluchova 1976a, 1976b; Tizard & Rees, 1974; Werner & Smith, 1992; Wolin & Wolin, 1994-to mention a few) is that the effects of early experiences are reversible under proper environmental conditions. Fundamental to this concept is that of neural plasticity (Kagan, 1976).

“Neural plasticity is the technical term for the ability of the brain to change and repair itself” (Stein, Brailowsky & Will, 1995, p. 138). Stein, Brailowsky & Will (1995) put together a volume with highly reputable international research studies that point out that, “The theory that the human nerve cell is so highly specialized that it is unable to repair itself is wrong. The research data point out that the brain is capable of new growth in an enriched environment that produces recovery of function”(p.139). Most of the research examples used by the proponents of this perspective are taken from the study of children who have been adopted after a period of institutionalization, like the study of children adopted from the Creche in Lebanon by Dennis (1976), the study of children adopted from a group of British residential nurseries by Tizard & Rees (1974), or the study of older adoptees by Kadushin (1976). This approach is a very strong proponent of resilience as a ubiquitous phenomenon. The bases for resilience according to this perspective are what Werner & Smith (1992) call self-righting capacities—that is, the inherent strengths (sometimes called assets) that people, families, schools and

communities call upon to promote health and healing (Benard, 1995; Davis, 1999). Studies on the role of environmental influences on the development of intelligence have given enough proof to posit the thesis that even variability in intelligence competence and its enhancement is both directly and indirectly related to environmental influences (Borkowski & Dukewich, 1996; Keating 1996; Pianta & O'Connor, 1996; Ramey & Blair, 1996, Wachs, 1996). This perspective, also called the “ situational approach” upholds that the individual differences in outcomes are explained in the context of biographical, social, political, economic and historical forces that form their individual orientation and behavioral choices (Richman & Bowen, 1997). Most interventions to foster resilience, in general, and educational resilience, in particular, are based on this approach that requires the manipulation (change) of the environment to secure positive outcomes for at-risk populations (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996).

The interactional perspective considers the development of resilience primarily as an outcome of the particular interaction of personal characteristics with the elements of environment. Rutter (2001), Wolin & Wolin (1994) Rhodes & Brown (1991) seem to come from this point of view. This perspective seems to underlie the importance of goodness of fit between the personal characteristics, and the characteristics of the environment. In a study of 20 young women in their twenties, who had been adopted from India by Norwegian families, Dalen (1999) found that the well-adjusted individuals had a goodness of fit with the adoptive families. There was of a high degree of similarity with their parents and a high level of acceptance of each other. Richman & Bowen (1997) write that there are at least two levels of fit: (a) needs-supply and (b) demands-competencies. The needs-supply fit assumes that a child has a better chance of

developing resilience in environments where their basic needs are met. A child brought up in an institution has less chances of developing resilience because he/she lives in an environment that is not a good fit for his basic emotional needs (Groza & Illeana, 1996). The second type of fit is achieved when children are faced with demands from their environment that are appropriate to their abilities. Marfo (1991), explaining the nature of mediated learning experiences (MLE) and Vygotsky's notion of proximal development, explains that appropriate adult-child interaction that is based on the abilities of the child may forge competence in developmentally delayed children. The nature of the person-environment fit is dynamic as children grow up and develop new coping strategies to deal with ever-complex situations.

Another important element of the interactional approach is the aspect of reciprocated causation, which means that "human beings are not only the partial products, but also the partial producers of their environments" (Bronfenbrenner 1993, p. 6). Reviewing the results of many resilience studies, Rutter (2001) concludes that children's interaction with other people helps determine how other people behave towards them which then impacts the children's behavior bringing about the reduction of the effect of the adversity.

The multisystems ecological perspective (Fraser, 1997) of the development of resilience, is largely based on Bronfenbrenner's conceptualization of the ecology of human development ⁵ which recognizes that human behavior is based on the interplay

⁵ The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 21).

among the genetic predisposition, physiological influences (neurochemical imbalances and exposure to disease, for example) and the forces in the multisystem social environment which are frequently conflicting. Human behavior is transactional and subject to the dynamics of social exchange. Children develop and adapt through interaction with a variety of people in a variety of milieus in the context of their biological predispositions (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). According to Bronfenbrenner, the developmental environment is a system of nested, interdependent, dynamic structures ranging from the proximal, consisting of face-to-face setting, to the most distal, comprising broader social contexts such as classes and cultures. In his view, the ecology of development is complex. It comprises home, neighborhood, school, parental work place and the halls of the government where public policy is made, to mention a few. In addition, one should not ignore the many connections at all levels among these various contexts and the cultural and historical framework within which they exist.

Bronfenbrenner distinguishes four levels of systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. The following are his definitions for the four levels of systems:

A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 15).

A mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person. A mesosystem involves two or more settings frequented by the same person; for example home and day care, day care and school, family and peer group, etc. (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 22).

The exosystem comprises the linkages and process taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within their immediate setting in which the developing person lives. (an example is the link between home and the parent's workplace) (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 24).

The macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern of micro-meso-and exosystem characteristics of a given culture, subculture, or other extended social structure, with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, sources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in such overarching systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 25).

Fraser (1997) proposes a simpler "multisystems' perspective, on the grounds that " at some level above the family, it becomes quite difficult to identify higher –and-lower order systems" (p.5). The multisystem ecological perspective accounts for resilience as a byproduct of the transactional development of the child shaped by proximal and distal forces. This perspective posits that the mechanism of resilience is complex, and in view of this complexity, the identification of causal order in the traditional linear sense may be next to impossible. Instead, the multisystems ecological perspective upholds the notion of reciprocated causation.

This approach makes room for the understanding and interpretation of the impact of culture on resilience. In an international study (22 countries, all continents) of how families promote and foster resilience in children and the role of culture/ethnicity in determining what resilience factors are used as well as their dynamics; the investigators found both cultural/ethnic similarities and differences in the promotion of resilience in children. While similarities were in the concerns about children being able to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity, the differences included degrees in encouragement of a sense of autonomy, the degree to which punishment was

considered effective in strengthening children, the availability of resources to draw on, the presence of hope and faith in outcomes, skills in communication, and problem solving as well as age appropriate expectations (Grotberg 2000).

The developmental perspective draws attention to the importance of time i.e. the point in time and the duration, in regard to both adversities and protective mechanisms (Grotberg, 2000; Richman & Bowen, 1991). The developmental approach, which is also called the life-span approach, upholds that resilience is promoted as part of the developmental process of a child over time (Grotberg, 2000). Masten & Coatsworth (1998) relate resilience to developmental tasks in regard to the developmental stage appropriate competencies.

In the context of a transactional model of development, the continuous interaction between the individual and the environment over time provides the context as well as experiences for the development of resilience. Bronfenbrenner (1993) represents this process in the following equation, which he calls “the transformed *Lewinian Equation*”. This equation elucidates the impact of the risk and protective processes.

$$D_{ct} = f_{(t-p)}(PE)_{(t-p)}$$

Where:

D_c refers to outcome of cognitive development at a particular point in time

t refers to the time at which a developmental outcome is observed

f refers to function

$t-p$ refers to the prior period , or periods, during which the joint forces , emanating both from the person and the environment, were operating over time to produce the outcome existing at the time of observation.

P refers to person

E refers to environment

Wolin & Wolin (1994) have created a model (The Resilience Mandala) that describes three developmental phases for each of the seven resiliences they have identified in their work with children, adolescents, and adults: insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor and morality. According to the authors, in children, resiliences appear as unformed, non-goal oriented, intuitively motivated behavior. In adolescents, these behaviors sharpen and become deliberate. In adults, they broaden and deepen, becoming an enduring part of the self. For instance, insight begins with *sensing* in childhood, becomes *knowing* in adolescence, and matures into *understanding* in adulthood.

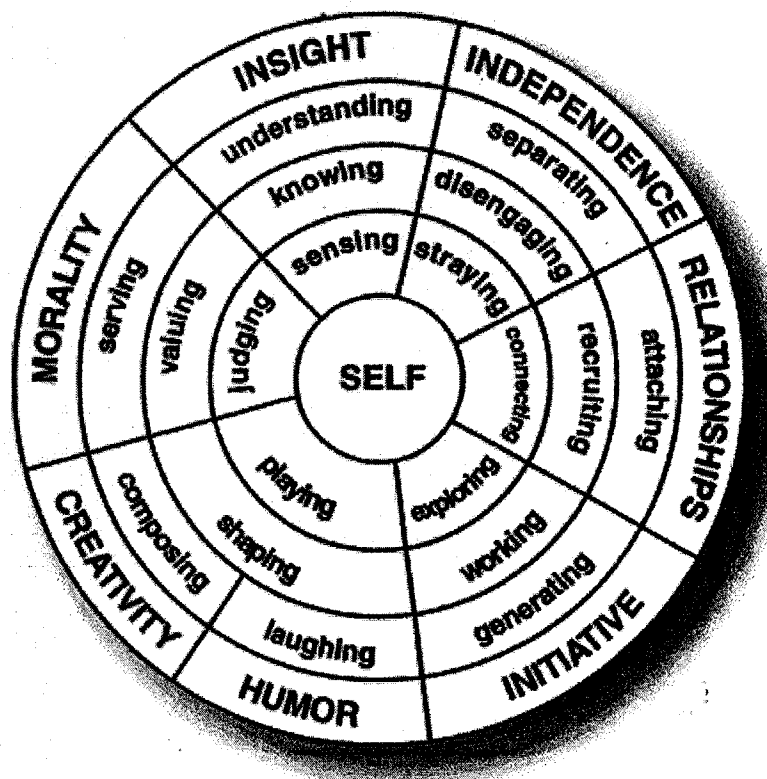


Figure 3. The Resilience Mandala. Source: Wolin & Wolin, 1994, p. 208.

The ecological–interactional–developmental perspective (name proposed by Richman & Bowen, 1997) is a comprehensive approach. Richman & Bowen (1997) suggest that this approach recognizes the primary non-hierarchical organizational nature of all pivotal elements of the psychological, ecological, interactional and developmental approaches/perspectives. The ecological aspect captures the process of mutual adaptations and accommodations that occur between the individual and their multisystem environments. The interactional aspect focuses on goodness of fit on two levels: needs-supplies and demand-competencies. The developmental aspect captures the dynamic interplay over time between individual and environmental forces over the course of a child's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development.

The ecological-interactional-developmental perspective provides a broad conceptual lens from which to view resilience as a dynamic construct. It also offers some clues about the types of experiences that may promote the development of resilience in childhood, which is directly associated with school success and is a buffer between individual and situational risk factors and school success. (Richman & Bowen, 1997, p. 105)

The Structure of the Resilience Construct

Despite lack of consensus on how to define resilience, there is the understanding that, after all, resilience involves two main constitutive concepts, that of risk and protection (Davis, 1999; Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Vance, 2001). Both risk and protective factors are usually located in the individual and in the proximal and distal environment, i.e. family, school, peers, community and so forth.

The Concept of Risk

Risk is one or more factors like genetic, biological, sociocultural, demographic conditions, personal characteristics or attributes that increases the probability of onset, digression to a more serious state, or the maintenance of a problem condition. Risk factors are usually used to predict outcomes in the form of probabilities (Fraser, 1997). Risk factors include (a) risk traits, both individual and contextual, (b) contextual effects, (c) stressful/critical life events, (e) risk processes, and (f) risk chains (Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Richman & Fraser, 2001).

A risk trait refers to an individual predisposition toward developing a specific problem condition. Risk traits are often used to describe a wide range of risk conditions. These risk conditions are both personal and situational (risk attributes). Personal risk traits include genetic markers, IQ, the presence of a specific disorder, poor physical health, poor mental health and so forth. Attribute risk traits are those unfavorable contextual variables that cause, aggravate or maintain a personal risk factor. For example, studies of children adopted from Eastern European orphanages have revealed the following personal risk traits for the majority of children upon arrival: significant physical and medical problems, significant cognitive developmental delays, reactive attachment disorders, FAS, sensory integration disorders, and so forth (Hauggard, Wojslawowicz & Palmer, 2000).

Contextual effects are environmental conditions that have both direct and indirect effects on overall risk (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). A multisystems/ecological approach recognizes risk factors at micro-, meso-, exo- and macro- systems. Many contextual risk factors of life in an institution have been researched. Some examples are the following:

inconsistency of caregiving staff and lack of a maternal figure have been recognized to be the main cause of attachment disorder and emotional and behavioral issues in adulthood (Bowlby, 1951, 1969; Chisholm, Carter, Ames & Morison 1995; Goldfarb, 1943, 1945, 1947; Flint 1978). *Understaffing* has been recognized as the underlying cause of neglect which brings about lack of sensory and language stimulation, language delay, developmental delays, & cognitive issues (Ames, Carter, Chisholm, Fisher, Gilman, Mainemer, McMullan, & Savoie 1992; Castle, Groothues, Bredenkamp, Beckett, O'Connor, Rutter, and the ERA Study Team, 1999; Federici, 1998; Flint, 1978). *The underfurnished environment and lack of toys* is the underlying cause of lack of sensory stimulation which effects fine and gross motor skills, and causes developmental delays and cognitive issues (Morison, Ames, & Chisholm, 1995). Many of these micro-and meso-system issues in the Eastern European orphanages are the direct effect of the larger picture, the impact of the macroenvironment that involves the deplorable economic conditions in the region, and the generally negative popular attitudes about children in orphanages (Carter, 2000; Tobis, 2000).

Adoption is also considered by many authors as a contextual risk factor that impacts the psychosocial wellbeing of adopted children and puts them at increased risk for academic problems. Basing his observation on research with clinical and non-clinical populations, Brodzinsky (1990) argues that adopted children have a somewhat greater psychological vulnerability as compared to non adopted children. He cites as source of stress the awareness of a sense of family loss and search for identity. Some risk factors that have an impact on outcomes of adoption are the cultural factor (i.e., the attitude of society towards adoption as second best), lack of preparation of adoptive parents to deal

with the issues of their child, non acknowledgement of being a different kind of family and dealing with that, and so forth.

The list of factors that have been identified as constituting risk to the psychosocial well-being of children and their future is very long and they include every stressful event in one's life which may be short but traumatic and/or non-thriving conditions with a duration factor. Such events and/or conditions are: chronic poverty; mother with little education; moderate to severe perinatal complications; developmental delays or irregularities; genetic abnormalities; parental psychopathology; prolonged separation from primary caregiver during first year; birth of younger siblings within two years after child's birth; serious or repeated childhood illnesses; chronic parental illness; parental mental illness; sibling with handicap, learning or behavior problem; chronic family discord; father absent; loss of job or sporadic unemployment of parents; change of residence; change of school; divorce of parents; remarriage and entry of step-parent into household; departure or death of older sibling or close friend; foster home placement; nuclear disasters; forest fires; institutionalization; low socioeconomic status, and so forth (Davis, 1999).

Risk processes and risk chains. "Risk processes refer to mechanisms whereby a risk factor contributes over time to heightened vulnerability. No single events produce a negative outcome. Rather interactional processes shape behaviors and problems over time" (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). Whereas "*risk chains* represent linkages of conceptually distinct risk factors or processes" (Kirby & Fraser, 1997, p.13). Both these two risk

concepts are very important in understanding the effects of risks on institutionalized children.

Cumulative effects of risk. Some risk factors are conceptualized as being specific, which means that a linear cause –effect relationship can be established with the negative outcome. Inadequate health care for children in institutions leads to misdiagnosis which lead to untreated diseases, which are a source of poor physical health (Johnson et al. 1992). But more often than not, risk factors are non-specific; they are related to a variety of negative outcomes and conditions. In addition, risk factors do not work in isolation. Following Bowlby's and Goldfarb's pioneer work in determining lack of consistency in a caregiving figure as the main contributor to attachment disorders leading to the institutional syndrome, psycho- and socio-pathologies and cognitive impairments for children reared in institutions (Bowlby 1951, 1969; Goldfarb 1943, 1945, 1947), newer research results have shown that the situation is not so clear cut. Frank, Klass, Earls & Eisenberg (1996), have identified five highly interrelated areas of potential biologic and social risks to infants and children younger than six years in orphanage care. These areas are: high infectious morbidity, inadequate nutrition, slower cognitive development, malfunctioning socioaffective development, physical and sexual abuse. The effect of these risks is cumulative.

Sensitivity to risk. Sensitivity to risk (sometimes referred to as vulnerability) means the degree to which a child reacts to a particular risk factor (Fraser & Richman, 2001). The concept of sensitivity to risk is emerging as a major aspect of understanding and

explaining resilience or the large variance of outcomes in children who have been exposed to the same adversity (Rutter, 2001; Vance, 2001). A child's response to risk appears to be based on a multitude of neurological, developmental, cultural and psychological factors (Fraser & Richman, 2001). Vance (2001) argues that these factors are in continuous interaction as the child grows up:

The concept of psychosocial resilience is strengthened by the acknowledgment that it is a relative phenomenon and it arises through the ongoing developmental interaction of a variety of protective factors with the neurobiological system of an individual. Likewise, as with any neurobiological feature of an individual, we may discover that certain individuals are congenitally or genetically endowed with exceptional functioning in specific neurobiological systems, which in turn contribute to an easier acquisition of relative psychosocial resiliency through the course of development. (p.68)

Sensitivity to risk may explain the wide variation that exists in the development and behavior of children who are raised in an institution from birth. The genetic predisposition and good health/resistance to disease helps some children cope better with adversities than the others. In addition, a pleasant personality and attractive physical features draw the attention of caregivers and secure have more interaction and stimulation (Haradon, 1999).

Steeling effects of adversities. The long standing popular belief that “What doesn't break you, makes you stronger” has been embraced by some authors as they account for resilience (Brown & Rhodes, 1991; Fraser & Richman, 2001; Rutter, 2001; Wolin & Wolin, 1994). Recognizing that there is only a small number of studies that have pointed to the strengthening of resistance by having experienced adversities, Rutter (2001) argues that this notion has plausibility and a parallel may be drawn with the way we build resistance to infection: immunity comes through the experience of overcoming mild

infections. Wolin & Wolin (1994) and Brown & Rhodes (1991) have included the steeling effects of adversities in their models of how resilience builds up.

The Concept of Protection

Protective factors are individual characteristics and/or environmental resources that help children and youth respond and counteract the risks they are exposed to. The protective factors may delay, suppress or neutralize negative outcomes. Protective factors include the interrelationship of individual, familial, and extrafamilial characteristics and they are robust predictors of resilience (Brown and Rhodes, 1991; Fine & Schwebel, 1991; Fraser, 1997; Garmezy, 1985; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Rutter, 1987).

Individual characteristics. Individual characteristics include both innate and acquired abilities and circumstances (Brown and Rhodes, 1991). Proceeding from an interactional perspective, Bronfenbrenner (1993) writes that the attributes of the person most likely to shape the course of development are those that *induce or inhibit* dynamic dispositions toward the immediate environment. The author terms these personal qualities as *developmentally instigative characteristics*. These are: (a) personal qualities that invite or discourage reactions from the environment of a kind that fosters or disrupts processes of psychological growth; (b) selective responsivity- it involves individual differences in reaction to, attraction by, and exploration of particular aspects of the physical and social environment; (c) structuring proclivities; the tendency to engage and persist in progressively more complex activities, for example to elaborate, restructure and even to

create new features in one's environment, not only physical and social, but also symbolic; and (d) directive beliefs: this expresses the relation of the self to the environment. In line with his transactional understanding of human development, Bronfenbrenner warns that developmentally instigative characteristics do not determine the course of development, rather they may be thought of as "putting a spin" on a body in motion. The effect of that spin depends on other forces and resources in the total ecological system.

Studies with resilient children and youth with various 'at risk' labels like attention deficit disorders (Hechtman, 1991), teenagers who avoid pregnancy (Stevenson & Rhodes, 1991), children of divorce (Robson, 1991), black children from single-parent families (Fine & Schwebel, 1991), stepchildren (Coleman & Ganong, 1991), children in foster family care (Fein & Maluccio, 1991), children who lose a sibling (Rosen, 1991) runaway children (Jenkins, 1991a), delinquent children (Jenkins, 1991b) children and youth who resist the powers of religious cults (Linzer-Schwartz, 1991), to mention a few, have all shown the paramount importance of what Bronfenbrenner (1993) calls developmentally instigative characteristics.

Other authors use more traditional psychological terms. Most follow in the footsteps of one of the pioneers of resilience research, Garmezy (1985) who speaks of "dispositional attributes" which he divides into (a) temperamental factors, (b) social orientation and responsiveness to change, (c) cognitive abilities and (d) coping skills. Paris (2001) believes that the most important element of all is temperament which he calls "the genetic matrix on which (personality) traits develop" p. 123. Benard (1995) groups the personal characteristics into five themes: (a) *social competence* -which includes responsiveness, flexibility, empathy, communication skills and a sense of

humor; (b) *problem solving skills*- the ability to plan, being resourceful in seeking help from others, ability to think critically, creatively and reflectively; (c) *critical consciousness*- a reflective awareness of the structures of oppression; (d) *autonomy*- a sense of one's identity, ability to act independently, ability to exert some control over one's environment, task mastery, internal locus of control and self-efficacy; and (e) *a sense of purpose*- belief in a bright future, goal direction, educational aspirations, achievement motivation, persistence, hopefulness, optimism, and spiritual connectedness. Richman & Bowen (1997) write that (a) *sense of coherence*, (b) *self-efficacy*, (c) *hardiness*, and (d) *locus of control* may be conceptualized as manifest indicators of resilience.

Wolin & Wolin (1994) have identified seven characteristics of resilient people: (a) insight, (b) independence, (c) ability to build constructive relationships, (d) initiative, (e) creativity, (f) humor and (g) morality. These characteristics cluster by personality type and they have age appropriate manifestations. Masten & Coatsworth, (1998) list the following individual characteristics of resilient children and adolescents: (a) good intellectual functioning, (b) appealing, sociable, easy going disposition, (c) self-efficacy, self-confidence, high self esteem, (d) talents, (e) faith.

Davis (1999) has chosen a more comprehensive typology, which I decided to use as a framework for the study of the characteristics of the student in this study. She divides personal variables that have been identified by research to play a protective part into six groupings: (a) *personal characteristics*: good health, temperament; (b) *social and relational competence*: secure attachment and basic trust, ability and opportunity to recruit actively people who can help, positive peer relationships, interpersonal awareness,

empathy, (c) *cognitive competence*: IQ and EQ, language acquisition and reading, capacity to plan, problem solving abilities, initiative, positive future expectations, internal locus of control, self-efficacy, self-understanding and adequate cognitive appraisal, (d) *emotional competence*: ability to regulate one's emotions, ability to delay gratification, realistically high self-esteem, a sense of autonomy, creativity and a sense of humor, (e) *moral competence*: the ability and opportunity to contribute, (f) *spiritual competence*: seeing meaning in one's life.

Environmental protective factors. These include relationships, experiences, circumstances and events on the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro- level that have a positive impact on child's or youth's outcomes. They act within the realms of family, school, community, culture, society and so forth. Nested within other, each environment is in continuous transactions with others being directly or indirectly influenced by this interaction. The influences of environmental protective factors can work in concert or individually to promote resilience as they are mediated by individual characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Kirby & Fraser, 1997).

Familial protective factors. Familial protective factors have been identified as the second most important broad category of variables that promote resilience after individual characteristics (Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998, Rutter, 2001). Garnezy (1985) mentions: (a) a positive relationship with at least one parent or a parental figure, (b) cohesion, (c) warmth, (d) harmony, and (e) absence of neglect. Masten & Coatsworth (1998) list similar variables: (a) close relationship to caring parent

figure, (b) authoritative parenting: warmth, structure, high expectations (c) socioeconomic advantages, (d) connections to extended supportive family networks. Hechtman (1991) gives these categories: (a) factors pertaining to the family's socioeconomic status: higher social status gives children access to physical, social, and educational advantages as well as a variety of services (medical and educational) not readily available to others; (b) emotional–psychological factors in the family: presence of warm, affectionate, cohesive, supportive family environment, supportive networks of a father, grandparents, and/or older siblings, nonconflictual relationships; (c) family composition and structure: two parent families, fewer children, with greater spacing between children, stability, households tending to have more structure, regularity, more clearly defined rules and roles, and generally more supervision, as well as clear-cut, realistic expectations of the child and his/her responsibilities.

The paramount importance of family as a provider of a cluster of protective factors is shown in the adoption studies (Clarke & Clarke, 2001). Good outcomes in adoption have been correlated with the emotional–psychological factors like family cohesion, warmth and nonconflictual relationships (McGuinness, 2000, Simon & Alstein, 2000).

Extrafamilial contexts. Extrafamilial protective factors are usually perceived as “the availability of external resources, opportunities, extended social supports as well as the individual's use of those resources (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). Masten & Coatsworth (1998) list the following variables: (a) bonds to prosocial adults outside the family, connections to prosocial organizations and (c) attending effective schools. Among the extrafamilial contexts, two have received more attention: schools and communities. Research has

shown that in the presence of familial risk factors, extrafamilial contexts such as school, peers or communities play a major role in assisting the development of resilience in the individual (Charlson, Bird, & Strong, 1999; Morales, 2000; Rutter, 2001). More will be written on school-related protective factors in the section on educational resilience.

A note of caution. Davis (1999); Masten & Coatsworth (1998); Paris (2000) and Rutter (2001) warn that the research has only established that the protective factors (described above) are simply known to correlate with resilience; they may not necessarily be the cause of it. In addition, the existence of a protective factor per se does not guarantee the development of resilience. It is the processes by which these variables interact with each other, which make possible the successful outcomes. These processes, sometimes referred to as *resilience mechanisms*, will be described in the next section.

Interaction Between Risk and Protective Factors

Two types of interaction of risk and protection have been described: the additive model and the interactive model. *The additive model* maintains that the presence of a risk factor directly increases the likelihood of a particular negative outcome and the presence of a protective factor directly increases the likelihood of a particular positive outcome (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). This linear cause-and-effect chain has proven to be too simplified to explain the resilience processes (Paris, 2000; Rutter, 2001). In *the interactive model*, protective factors come into play only when they are needed, like the

protection provided by immunization. Kirby & Fraser (1997) maintain that the function of protective factors may be conceptualized in three ways: (a) buffering risk factors and serving as a cushion against the negative effects of risk (b) interrupting the risk chain through which risk factors operate, and (c) preventing the initial occurrence of risk factors. Interactions between risk and protective factors are complicated in that both risk and protective factors may exist at different levels in the ecology. Distal factors are less influential than proximal factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Rutter, 2001).

Resilience Mechanisms

Understanding how resilience works has proven to be a challenge (Brown and Rhodes, 1991; Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Paris, 2000; Richman & Fraser, 2001). Different models have been proposed (see Brown and Rhodes, 1991 and Wollin & Wollin, 1994). These models have tried to generalize on the findings with diverse groups. Wollin and Wollin's Challenge Model (1994) focuses on the role of the adverse experiences in strengthening the individual. Adversities and risks are seen as a danger to children and also as an opportunity. Children are affected by hostile influence of hardship, but they are also challenged to rebound from harm by developing their own resources which over time develop into lasting protective factors. The road to developing resilience is bumpy; it goes through legitimate periods of dysfunction. Rhodes & Brown's model (1991) of "The Process of Integrating and Adapting to Factors that Promote Resiliency" provides the same period of dysfunction while the individual is responding to stress as legitimate.

Rutter's (2001) is the most recent effort to present a summary of resilience processes described by research findings. He believes that eight resilience processes have been established by research:

1. The pattern of work of both risk and protective factors is *cumulative*. The synergetic interaction of factors is more important than the size of a single factor.
2. Individual differences in *sensitivity to risk* are crucial. These differences reflect genetic make up, temperamental characteristics, cognitive levels, and prior experiences of effectively dealing with challenges or overcoming adversity.
3. *A reduction of negative effects* is a critical protective issue. The individual characteristics are key to it, both in impacting a chain of positive interpersonal processes and distance or proximity to risk.
4. *A reduction of negative chain reactions* in the environmental risk exposure brings about the breaking down of the vicious cycle built by the way people behave and select their experiences. An important element is acting in planful ways.
5. *Increasing positive chain reaction* enables children to have success in other areas, which enhances their self-esteem and self-efficacy. They believe they can handle challenges successfully, and do so.
6. *Opening up opportunities* provides new experiences as chances for successful outcomes and by itself reduces the involvement in at risk situations.
7. *Neutralizing experiences* help to counteract or counterbalance the negative effect of an earlier acute event or long term difficulty.
8. The style of *cognitive processing of experiences* and adding meaning to them may make resilience more or less likely.

Educational Resilience

Introduction

Educational resilience is defined as “the heightened likelihood of educational success despite personal vulnerabilities and adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences” (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994, p. 46). Educational resilience is essentially a cluster of psychosocial and environmental strengths and competencies that are displayed in the school context by at-risk students (Richman & Bowen 1997; Richman & Fraser, 2001).

At-risk students are those students with a predisposition to fail or voluntarily drop out of school. Even if they graduate, they may lack the necessary knowledge and skills for successful employment, participation in democracy or to have meaningful interpersonal relationships (Agada, 2001). These students have difficulty learning basic skills; they have unacceptable social behaviors and lag behind their peers academically (Smith et al., 1998). They attend school but they are often disengaged emotionally both from academics and school activities (Richman & Bowen, 1997).

The most common description of students at risk includes students who come from low socio-economic background, are a result of broken homes, have experienced significant loss, have been physically or sexually abused, have unrecognized disabilities, have language difficulties, move frequently, are verbally and concrete minded, have attention issues, and so forth (Finn, 1998; Richman & Bowen, 1997; Smith et al., 1998). This perspective focuses on what the individual student brings to his/her educational

process. Many authors, though, have recognized that this description is simplistic and does not reflect the true phenomenon (Montgomery & Rossi, 1994; Agada, 2001). A transactional perspective for understanding student performance involves a good fit between the students and his/her needs and the education the school provides. In addition, an ecological framework presupposes that a student's personal, home, community and school characteristics are strongly interactive. Finally, a developmental background recognizes that past educational experiences are important, as they have a cumulative impact on student's abilities and motivation to do well academically. Montgomery & Rossi (1994) put it succinctly:

Drawing upon the literature on students at risk, we argue that academic progress is an on-going function of (1) the quality of students' environmental and school based – resources and (2) the incentives and pressures perceived by students to invest these resources in academic achievement. Past returns on educational investments cumulatively impact the likelihood of academic success. (p. 6)

Research on educational resilience has received tremendous attention in the last ten years. Although many authors recognize the ecological, interactional and developmental nature of educational resilience, the research has mostly focused on the identification of the individual, family, school, peers and community risk and protective factors. On the basis of that research, many new programs have been developed to promote the development of educational resilience.

Individual Factors

Students' academic success at earlier and later stages depends by and large on their readiness for the school experience, which is a reflection of multiple aspects of their development (Montgomery & Rossi, 1994). These aspects have been determined to be:

(a) cognitive skills and knowledge (language/literacy; reasoning i.e. mathematical knowledge and skills; children's conceptions and understanding of the world around them); (b) social skills (interpersonal skills and behavioral patterns); (c) physical health and well being (a disease free-state and age –appropriate gross and fine motor skills); (d) approaches to learning (persistence at a task and creativity); (e) nature and frequency of family interactions (West, Denton & Germino-Hausken, 2000). At later stages, school success is related to the development of such psychosocial factors as motivation, mastery, self-efficacy and self-concept (Obiakor, 1999). A student is often considered to be at-risk if one of the areas mentioned above is considered to be impaired. Appropriate age development of these areas may be related to socioeconomic factors. Additionally, problems of self-regulation related to poor attention and impulsive behavior as well as antisocial behavior have been recognized as individual risk factors (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

However, at-risk resilient students have individual characteristics that help them overcome difficulties. Two of the most salient characteristics are their *high level of engagement and sense of personal agency* (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1996). Charlson, Bird & Strong (1999) describe the educational journey of a severely hearing impaired but resilient student who had lived in an orphanage for three years before being adopted by a hearing couple. At the time of adoption, Larry was suffering from malnutrition and had never worn hearing aids. Although his life improved after adoption, Larry felt that he was not treated the same as his hearing siblings. In addition, his parents moved a lot and he never received appropriate education due to his hearing difficulties that were never fully understood by his parents. However, he loved going to school and participated in all

activities. As time passed by, his academic situation improved thanks to his persistence to make his own decision. He graduated high school and he was accepted into the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

Wang, Haertel & Walberg (1996) give the following list of abilities and adaptive characteristics that typify resilient students: verbal fluency, a sense of competence, good problem –solving skills, high self-esteem, self-control, malleability, even temper and openness to new experiences. They benefit from a well-defined autonomy, interpersonal skills and the ability to distance themselves from conditions that are potentially negative. They are resourceful and flexible, they can plan and change their environment. In addition, they have a clear sense of purpose and a sense of humor. They are able to solicit a positive interaction, which helps reinforce all these characteristics. Other characteristics of resilient students include persistence, optimism, and good work habits, as well as educational aspirations and attitude (Wayman, 2000).

Case studies of resilient students have shown that a student at risk does not need to have all the above mentioned characteristics to be successful in school and depending on the contextual situation one factor may be more important than another. In addition, isolating individual protective factors is not easy as they work in concert and their impact is cumulative (Charlson, Bird, & Strong, 1999; Morales, 2000).

Extra-Personal Factors

Extra-personal factors have received predominance in the sociological discourse of at-risk students. The impact of the socioeconomic background on school readiness, as well the resources available for students have been widely recognized (see: Montgomery &

Rossi, 1994). So has the notion of the incongruence of the cultural capital of students at-risk coming from different ethnicity and lower socioeconomic backgrounds with the dominant values of the American school system (white, middle class) (Agada, 2001). In this framework, risk factors, as variables that decrease the probability of academic success are often conceptualized as “aspects of societal, home or school dysfunction rather than a qualities inherent in children” (Montgomery & Rossi, 1994, p. 6).

Usually, both risk and protection relative to educational resilience is categorized in four contexts: family, peer groups, school and community (Finn, 1998; Legters, McDill & Partland, 1994; Richman & Bowen, 1997; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1998, Wayman, 2000). These systems often overlap in influencing the school success of children. In a metastudy of the protective factors that are involved in the process of educational resilience in the inner city students, Wang, Haertel & Walberg (1996) found that the influences were depicted along a continuum of proximity to the learner, with those influences and contexts that are more proximal exerting more influence than those that are more distal.

Familial environment. Research has shown that home environment and parent support are the second most influential category on the educational outcomes of students (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996). The risk factors occurring in the family context may originate from the socioeconomic conditions like poverty, unemployment, limited education, frequent relocation, malnutrition, limited transportation, inadequate health care. Negative family environment, divorce, substance abuse, chronic illness, maltreatment, abuse and neglect are other risk factors (Davis, 1999; Montgomery & Rossi, 1994).

The family protective factors have been described as: being caring and creating a structured and supportive family life, holding high academic, moral and social expectations for the child's behavior and encouraging participation in the life of the family (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996). These family protective factors work in concert to help bring about the school engaging behaviors that help children succeed in life in general and in school in particular. A family protective factor that is particular to educational resilience is family's involvement in children's education and academic expectations. (Benard, 1995; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996, 1998; Wayman, 2000). The relationship of families with schools is an important exosystem, whose quality has a great impact on educational resilience. The congruence of values between family and school has been recognized to have a positive impact on the academic achievement of the student (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996, Wayman, 2000).

Studies of post-institutionalized adopted children show that adoptive families possess some traits that may function as major protective factors. One of the larger studies conducted with 1,247 families that have adopted children from Eastern European countries (Cradle of Hope, 2000) revealed that the typical family responding to the survey was a well-educated, married (91%) couple in their late thirties or early forties. Most mothers had completed college (80%) and, of these, over half held graduate degrees. Fathers were predominantly college graduates (82%) and working full time (96%). School related studies have shown that the parents are very involved in the education of their children (Schell-Frank, 2000). No studies have been done on

the role of families in the educational outcomes of post-institutionalized adopted children from Eastern Europe.

Peer groups. The role of peer groups on student achievement has been recognized by many authors (Clark 1991; Hanushek, 1986; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Montgomery & Rossi, 1994; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996, 1998; Wayne, 2000). The variables of peer influence have been described as (a) support, and acceptance (b) impact on student's self-perceived academic competence and (c) attitude towards school (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1996, Masten & Coatsworth, 1998, Wayne, 2000). Negative peer influences promote disengagement and underachievement, whereas positive peer pressures encourage academic effort. In addition, peers provide emotional support and buffer stress (Legters, McDill & McPartland, 1994; Montgomery & Rossi, 1994).

Community. Communities impact students with their adversities and their assets. Most of the adversities in the community are of a socioeconomic nature like (a) few or fragmented community services, (b) service barriers, (c) little attention to learning and human development, (d) high crime rate, (e) high unemployment rate, (f) substance abuse, and so forth. The following community protective factors in regard to educational resilience have been recognized: (a) existence of organizations and institutions that promote resilience, (b) expression of a consistent social and cultural norms among community members, (c) acceptance, (d) high expectations and

reinforcement of positive social values (e) opportunities to participate in civic activities in meaningful ways (Montgomery & Rossi, 1994; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996).

Post-institutionalized adopted children have been generally adopted into families of educated middle class parents who generally live in the wealthy suburbia and have many resources of a socioeconomic nature. An important element in regard to children adopted from institutions is the attitude of people toward intercountry adoptions. Such an attitude impacts their social status. Montgomery & Rossi (1994) recognize social status as an important element that may lead to negative stereotyping in schools. No studies have been undertaken to investigate the social status of children adopted from Eastern European orphanages. However, there are data on public attitudes and opinions that may indirectly throw light on it. The Benchmark Adoption Survey (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2001) with a representative sample of 1,554 adults 18 and older, found out that many mainstream Americans are skeptical about the prospects for children adopted overseas, as they feel these children are more prone to physical illness and emotional problems than children adopted in the United States. Nevertheless, they believe in the academic promise of children adopted internationally.

School. Both risk and protective factors have been identified in regard to school's impact on educational resilience. Recognized school adversities are: inadequate resources, limited instructional time, violence in school, teacher burnout, lack of a vision for education reform, stigmatizing labels for students, little parent/ community involvement, low learning expectations, watered-down curriculum, many disadvantaged students, non-inclusive programs, poorly prepared teachers, ineffective school leaders

and limited professional development (See: Davis, 1999; Montgomery & Rossi, 1994; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996,1998). While the protective factors are described as: low number of students, inclusion, nurture, engagement with families and communities, structure and order, a sense of belonging for both students and teachers (Finn, 1998; Davis, 1997; Richman & Bowen, 1997; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996).

The aspects of classrooms that have been recognized to foster resilience are: (a) teacher attitudes and expectations, (b) instructional practices (c) class size (d) classroom climate and organization, and (d) curriculum (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996). The relationship with the teacher has been identified over and over again as a very important protective factor for resilient children in general and educational resilience in particular (Benard, 1995; Charlson et al, 1999; Fraser, 1997; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Morales, 2000; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Rutter, 1987, 2001; Wayman, 2000; Wolin & Wolin, 1994). One of the major protective factors has been acknowledged to be the teachers' caring attitude, which is shown directly through their academic interaction with students and indirectly through their classroom structure, curriculum and instructional practices (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1996), and (b) high expectations (Benard, 1995, Wayman, 2000). Compassion fatigue may play a neutralizing role in this regard (Kees & Lashwood, 1996).

Effective instructional practices have been recognized to be: (a) facilitating students' learning, which helps students learn to direct their own learning, (b) responding to student diversity by choosing the appropriate curricula and employing effective teaching strategies that are appropriate for students' background and their learning style,

(c) teaching students strategies for learning and help-seeking behavior (See: Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996; Legters, McDill & McPartland, 1994).

Class size has been determined to have an impact on academic performance of the student by either promoting or not the student engagement. Finn (1998) argues that smaller size classes allow both for more frequent and longer interaction between teachers and students. This increased interaction draws into participation students who have inattentive withdrawn behaviors (which is more common for at-risk students). In addition, smaller classes allow teachers to better monitor students' understanding of class material, which then leads to individualized attention.

Four protective factors have been affirmed in regard to classroom climate and organization: (a) maximization of learning time (b) clearly understood rules and procedures, (c) involvement in cooperative learning, small group work, peer tutoring, mixed-ability groups (d) flexibility in the arrangement of the classroom (Legters, McDill & McPartland, 1994; Smith et al, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1996).

Three protective factors have been recognized in regard to curriculum: (a) richness (b) rigor and (c) learner centeredness. The rich content provides many opportunities for students to learn according to their interests and apply their knowledge in diverse settings (Legters, McDill & McPartland, 1994; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1996).

Student Engagement and Interaction of Risks and Resources

Theories on student engagement that are used to account for educational outcomes are generally based on a conceptual framework of the interaction of risk and protection against an ecological background. Montgomery & Rossi (1994) explain that the process

of student disengagement may begin as early as the child's entry into the school. The students who do not identify, participate and succeed in school activities are at risk of academic failure and drop out. The process of disengagement may be the result of lack of school readiness or that the school climate does not foster investment behavior. School's encouragement of student's involvement in academic and extracurricular activities, efforts to stimulate students interests and increase their personal resources as well as adequate rewards of their efforts may have a huge impact on the students. In this conceptualization *risk factors* are "variables that **decrease** the probability that a student will possess the ability, willingness, or opportunities for academic engagement and intellectual development" (Montgomery & Rossi, p.46). Whereas *resources*, i.e. protective factors, are "variables that **increase** the probability that a student will possess the ability, willingness, or opportunities for engagement and intellectual growth" (Montgomery & Rossi, p. 46). High academic achievement is possible when schools, homes, and communities, all contribute to student's abilities, willingness or opportunities to invest in education.

Part Two: Institutionalization

Introduction

In Eastern Europe, residential institutions are a central part of social policy, which serves a dual role of social protection and social regulation (Tobis, 2000). Children are placed in institutions for two main reasons: (a) need for habilitation/rehabilitation for

children that have severe physical and/or mental handicaps, and (b) need for shelter and education for children whose parents are destitute or neglectful and abusive. Only about 3%-5% of children are parentless orphans (Groza & Illeana, 1999; Sloutsky, 1997).

The choice of institutionalization as the main form of taking care of vulnerable children, who are wardens of the state, is unfortunate. Over and over again research has shown that institutional care is a source of risk factors and processes with severe consequences for the psychosocial and cognitive development of children who are already vulnerable due to their pre-institutionalization history and experiences.

Pre-Institutionalization Risk Factors

Physical, social and cognitive development of a child depends on a host of factors such as the child's genetic potential: constitution (build, physique, health, nature, vitality), temperament, and early experiences in (Castle, Groothues, Bredenkamp, Beckett, O'Connor, Rutter, and the English and Romanian Adoptees Study Team, 1999). It is almost impossible to separate the effect of what is inherited by what is acquired in the early years because, as neurobiology argues, the interaction is mutual, complex and multidirectional (Paris, 2000; Vance 2001). There is not a lot of child-specific information on the birth parents of post-institutionalized adopted children that might account for the inherited strengths and risks of the latter (Albers, Johnson, Hostetter, Iverson & Miller, 1997; Chisholm et al., 1995). However, one can get a

general picture by bringing together facts in regards to the population group they come from: The parents of the institutionalized children come from disadvantaged segments of populations from countries plagued with severe economic crises. According to estimates, the number of people living in poverty in the area is over 160 million, or about 40% of the population. Some of the consequences of this poverty are increased morbidity, poor living conditions, inadequate health care and so forth (Carter, 2000).

Deficient nourishment and inadequate pre and perinatal health care of pregnant mothers are recognized prenatal risk factors of multiple consequences. Neuroscience has long established that many of the prenatal, perinatal and post-natal insults have irreversible effects of on the development of the brain (Pearl, 1998; Perry, 2000). They have been correlated to many developmental delays and mental health issues of progenies (Brown & Susser, 1998). The gravity of the situation is portrayed by Tkachenko, Russian Federal Minister of Education. He reports that only 10% of Russia's children are judged to be healthy, while more than 40 % have chronic diseases. One out of every three children (N=7.5 million) have mental and nervous disorders (Tkachenko, 1996).

Another established risk factor is *alcoholic exposure during pregnancy*. It has been recognized to cause a range of developmental outcomes depending on the timing and intensity of fetal exposure. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAE) have a wider incidence in Russia than in other parts of the world as drinking is more widespread among young women there (Aronson, 1999). McGuinees (2000) found a very high incidence of probable fetal alcohol exposure in the group of children adopted

from Russia that she studied. She recorded a history of alcohol abuse in 43 out of the 47 cases, that had available information on birth mothers.

Perry (2000) writes that *child maltreatment and abuse* have a profound effect on the emotional, behavioral, cognitive, social and physical functioning of the child. His neuroarcheological perspective posits that maltreatment experiences “leave a record within the matrix of the brain”(p.2 of 28). As a result, children who have experienced neglect and abuse and/or other traumatic experiences have developmental problems in the areas of language, fine and large motor skills, impulsivity, disorganized attachment, dysphoria, hyperactivity and so forth. McGuiness (2000) found that 40 children of the group she studied adopted from Russian orphanages (44% of all children) had documented histories of abandonment, neglect and physical abuse and had witnessed domestic abuse prior to institutionalization. She found that this was a significant variable in relation to future academic outcomes and behavior adjustment.

The effects of parental risk factors are difficult to isolate. In all, they create a very adverse background for the further psychosocial and cognitive development of children that coupled with institutionalization risk factors and processes create cumulative adversities.

Risk Factors of Institutionalization

A plentitude of well-recognized studies have revealed that institutional care is detrimental to the developmental of children. It has now been proved beyond reasonable doubt that institutionalization has profound effects on the physical, intellectual, cognitive,

social and emotional development of children. Studies by Bowlby, (1951, 1952, 1969); Goldfarb, (1943, 1945, 1947); Dennis, (1976); Tizard & Rees, (1976); Provence & Lipton, (1966); Vorria, Rutter, Pickles, Wolkind, & Hosbaum (1998 a, b) have been conducted in different countries of the world and have used different methodologies. However, their findings are essentially the same: children raised in institutions have a developmental chart that is different from that of their peer counterparts raised in families. In addition, the institutionalized children demonstrate a collection of developmental issues. The scholars differ, though, on the reversibility or irreversibility of these effects, with the most recent research findings leaning towards the latter.

Bowlby, in his attachment theory (1951, 1969) maintained that the consequence *of the absence of a normally selective relationship* that is non-interchangeable with a single adult, which is more often than not the case in institutions, is attachment disorder, which leads to sociopathological behaviors. Goldfarb (1943, 1945, 1947), who followed many post-institutionalized children over the years, concluded that they all manifested symptoms of the institutional syndrome. He characterized the institutional syndrome as a cluster of five symptoms persisting into adolescence: (a) hyperactivity and disorganization, (b) indiscriminate demands for affection and attention, (c) superficiality of relationships, (d) absence of normal anxiety in reaction to failure or rebuke, (e) social regression (1945).

Provence & Lipton (1966) added the negative impact of *a dearth of sensorimotor stimuli* to the element of lack of early bonding experience as main risks of institutionalization. Provence & Lipton conducted a comparative study of infants raised in institutions and those raised at home. They noticed that there were noticeable

differences between two groups in regard to motor behavior, reactions to people, feelings and emotional expressiveness, language development, and discovery of the body and a sense of self. Other problems areas were impulse control and the capacity to defer gratification, difficulty in making transitions, impairment of thinking- such as problems in thinking through and anticipation, problems in generalizing, difficulty in overcoming obstacles, excessive concreteness of thought. The authors pointed out that none of the differences came as a result of lack of physical care as “infants in this study were meticulously cared for physically” (p. 165). The main issue was inadequate stimulation. Later research has shown that the processing of and coordination of sensorimotor stimulation are vital in the child’s cognitive, emotional and social development (Eldridge, 1996).

Fortunately, there is a good body of evidence that proves that even after early childhood deprivations, protective processes such as targeted intervention and functional family life **may** be effective (Clarke & Clarke, 1976, 2001). Flint (1978) conducted a long term study (over 17 years) of the effect of rehabilitation on security, social maturity and intellectual functioning on 25 children who spent the first five years of their life in an orphanage. These children received targeted intervention while in the orphanage and later on. The results of the study showed that the intellectual functioning of the children in the study was not irreparably affected by their early experience of deprivation. When measured a couple years after they had left the institution, the scatter of IQs for the group was found to fall generally within the average range of intelligence, with an approximation to the normal curve of distribution. Events that took place after placement in homes were more powerful factors in the final outcome than were their earlier

experiences. Healthy development had taken place even in children who spent their first five years in an institution. Flint made a very interesting observation on the conceptual organization children had. She found that children, who seemed to be developing normally at the age of six years, showed problems at the age of nine years. Children had difficulty in selecting and directing thought; they demonstrated lack of consistency in thought and rigidity in thinking. Flint hypothesizes that the most obvious factor to affect later conceptual development was the *lack of experience in infancy with the objective world* as well as the *lack of opportunity to develop language skills*. After an intervention that consisted in de-escalation of environmental stimuli, children demonstrated remarkable improvement at the age of 12.

Dennis (1976) conducted a longitudinal study of children of the Creche, an orphanage in Lebanon. He compared the development of three groups of children who had been placed immediately after birth. The first group was adopted under two years of age, the other group was adopted above two years and the third group was made up of children who remained in the orphanage. One of main findings was that time spent in an institution was a significant variable. Children adopted within the first two years of life overcame their initial retardation and soon reached a mean IQ of approximately 100, which was maintained. Children adopted after the age of two years developed intellectually at a normal rate, that is typically, in one chronological year they gained one year of mental age. But they had residual retardation, which left them behind. For example, a sixteen-year-old boy who was adopted at six was found to function at the IQ level of a thirteen year old. Both groups, however, had much higher IQ than the children who never left the orphanage. The author argues that, “the difference between the means

in IQ of children who never left the institution and the ones that were adopted within the first two years was due to the deprivation of *cognitive experiences* in the institutional environments” (p.126)

Tizard & Rees (1976) studied a group of British residential nurseries run by three voluntary societies. They followed the development of children that left the orphanages as well as children who remained there. They found no evidence of cognitive retardation, verbal or otherwise, in a group of four-year-old children, institutionalized since early infancy. Even the children who at the age of two were found to be somewhat retarded in language development, by four and a half years, whether institutionalized or not, this retardation had disappeared. The authors attributed the good results of children to a good staff-child ratio, together with a generous provision of toys, books and outings. The authors believed that the latter promoted an average level of cognitive development. However, they noticed the effect of deinstitutionalization: the adopted children were not only intellectually more advanced but also friendlier, more talkative, and more cooperative than the institutional children. Hodges & Tizard (1989) followed this group at 16 years of age. They were interested to see whether the personality disorders they had noticed previously had disappeared. They combined the results for five variables (*being more adult oriented than peer oriented, had difficulty with peers, not having close friends, being unlikely to turn to peers for emotional support, and being indiscriminate in choosing friends*) and found that ex-institutionalized children were twelve times more likely to have several of these features than the control group (50% versus 4%). Long-term effects persisted in all children who had lived in institutions, but the children who were adopted were doing better than children who remained in institutions or children

who had returned to their impoverished and dysfunctional biological families. This last finding was particularly of interest, as it proved that the quality of care has a stronger effect on a child's development than the existence of a maternal figure per se.

Vorria et al (1998, a, b) conducted a comparative study of Greek children in long term-residential group care and those in two-parent families. They investigated the social, emotional, and behavioral differences between the two groups and the mediating factors that accounted for these differences. The sample consisted of 41 children (20 girls, 21 boys) ages 9 and 11, who were living in six residential institutions in three different cities. They were compared to 41 children (matched on age and gender) who went to the same state schools, fourth and fifth grade. The children in group-care were healthy, not mentally retarded and they had been in institutions for a minimum of two and a half years. The family-care children had two parent families and they attended the same school for at least one year. Data collection procedures included multiple method assessment strategies to assess the children's behavior like naturalistic observations of children's behaviors in school and institutions, interviews with mothers, caregivers and teachers, as well as interviews with children. Information for the social background of children in group care was also obtained. The results showed that children who lived in group care showed substantially and significantly, higher levels of emotional or behavioral difficulties on all types of measurement. They also had lower academic achievement. The behavioral patterns were different for boys and girls. Although girls did not show a raised level of conduct problems or hyperactivity, they did show a substantially higher level of emotional disturbance as reported by parents, teachers and the children themselves. The authors of the study identified the following risk factors that

served as mediating mechanisms to predict measures on the scale of vulnerability of children in residential care: (a) parental mental disorder/ criminality, (b) age of admission to residential care, (c) reason for admission, (d) contact with parents during residential care, (e) contact with siblings, (f) moves between institutions, and (g) care before admission to current institution.

Children Coming from Orphanages of Eastern European Countries

The research described in the previous section pointed to the effects of the risks of institutional care such as lack of consistency in the caregiving figure, deprivation of sensory stimulation, deprivation of cognitive experiences, isolation from real world experiences, lack of opportunity to develop language skills, moves between institutions, lack of contact with family and siblings and so forth. Unfortunately, children coming from Eastern European orphanages have also been exposed to additional harm such as living in abominable conditions, having deficient nourishment, being of very low social status, having untrained caregiving personnel, lack of adequate health care, and being shuffled around to different locations (Carter, 2000; Groza & Illeana, 1996; Human Rights Watch, 1999; Johnson, et al., 1992; Rutter et al., 1998; Tobis, 2000).

It has been argued that the situation originates in the poverty in the area coupled with the very low social status of institutionalized children. They are victims of long-held prejudices that they are either “defective”, or born to “bad mothers who abandon their children” (Torhild, 2000), or coming from families with chronic social, financial and health problems including alcoholism (Human Right Watch, 1999). This prejudice

is reflected in the misdiagnosis of children (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Diagnoses of oligophrenia and those of imbecile and/or idiot that deem institutionalized children as uneducable are very common. Human Rights Watch (1999) reports that a study conducted by Christian Solidarity International of a group of fifty children believed to be with severe mental disabilities determined that two thirds of the so called oligophrenic children showed evidence of average or better ability. This conclusion is corroborated by the findings of medical teams in the U.S.A. A study in the U.S.A. of 56 adoptees from Eastern Europe including Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, Albania, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Poland and Bulgaria, showed that although most of the children had delays of function in one or more areas, there was a discrepancy between the preadoptive evaluations and the evaluations in the clinic (Albers, et al., 1997).

Although there have been drastic improvements in the last five years in the infrastructure and programming, mostly as a result of the relief efforts by international community, Tobis' study of institutions in Eastern and Central Europe in 2000 proves that the situation in institutions continues to be problematic and the related adversities will continue to be powerful determinants in children's welfare.

Research on Effects of Institutionalization on Eastern European Adoptees

Several studies have been conducted on the effects of institutionalization on children in Eastern Europe. They have covered physical and mental health, as well as such aspects of development as fine and gross motor skills, language skills, cognitive competence and social and emotional skills. Many of the studies reported in literature

between 1992 and 2001 are follow-up studies, as the interest has been in both short-term and longer-term effects of institutionalization as well as mitigation or protective factors coming from adoption. The main findings reiterated in various studies are:

1. Children from institutions have a much higher incidence than control non-institutionalized children of growth lag, developmental delays in the areas of adaptive, personal-social and language development, lower than norm weight, attachment disturbances and behavior issues, as well as untreated diseases.
2. Duration of institutional stay has a positive correlation with the degree of delays and intensity of behavior disorders and a negative correlation with catch-up after adoption.
3. Significant catch-up is possible even after prolonged exposure. All children have benefited from adoption, though at differing degrees.
4. Age at adoption has a positive correlation with the degree of catch-up.
5. Quality of institutional care in terms of sensory stimulation and social exposure is a significant variable for children with prolonged institutional care.

What follows is a summary of the main studies conducted in the United States, Great Britain and Canada that illustrate the main findings presented above.

U.S. studies. Johnson et al. (1992) conducted a study of 65 Rumanian adoptees, who were brought to the United States during a 12-month period: 1999-1991. Only 15 % of the children were determined to be physically healthy and developmentally normal. Children had high incidence of hepatitis B, intestinal parasites, tuberculosis, syphilis, human immunodeficiency virus type 1. The infants' length, weight, head

circumference and weight-for-height were severely affected. Only 10% of the children older than 12 months were considered to have normal development. In another study of 56 children adopted from 8 countries in the period 1991-1995, conducted by the members of the same team (Albers et al, 1997), developmental assessments showed that 70% of children had delayed gross motor skills, 82% had delays in fine motor skills, 53% had delays in social and emotional skills, and 59 % had delays in language skills. Other issues were underweight, shorter heights and smaller head circumference than their peers. It was determined that “linear growth lag correlated with the duration of orphanage confinement, with one month of growth lag for each 5 months in an orphanage” (p. 923).

A cross-sectional study was conducted by Groza & Illeana (1996) of 475 (mostly post-institutionalized) Rumanian children in adoptive families. According to the authors, their sample represented about 16 % of all adoptions from Rumania in four years in the U.S.A. Families reported that 60% of the children were below normal weight and 49% were below normal height when they were adopted. One fifth of the children had medical problems such as hepatitis and or tuberculosis. Additionally, 52% of families reported that their children had behavioral problems such as wetting the bed and hyperactivity. The authors found a statistically significant relationship of developmental problems or handicaps to prior-to-placement history. In addition, the length of preadoptive institutional care explained 16% of the variance in delay of social skills and 9% of the variance in the months of delay in language skills.

Sloutsky (1997) conducted a study of the developmental outcomes of 6-and 7-year-old institutionalized children in Russia from a contextualist perspective. He compared

two groups of 6-and 7-year old children who went to the same kindergarten, one from an orphanage and another that lived with their families. He found that the two groups had statistically different scores in the quantities of identified emotions. He also found a negative relationship between the age children were placed in the orphanage and/or duration of their stay there and the quantity of identified emotions. Another important finding was the relationship between the identification of the emotions by orphanage children and the measure of their cognitive development. The reason for placement in an institution was found to have no relationship to measures of cognitive development. The author explained the differences in the groups with the context of the institution. He maintained that the problem with the institution was not only because it deprived children of a maternal figure or did not provide adequate stimulation. According to him, the biggest issue was the culture of the institution. The major contextual characteristic of an institution that makes it different from a home is that the institution is both a home for the child and a place of work for the staff. The institution is a place that has established barriers to social intercourse with the outside world. The family, on the other hand, is an open setting, where each member participates in some other setting. Thus, children raised in a family witness multiple roles played by different family members, whereas children in an institution are exposed to strictly regimented and standardized behavior of the staff. In addition, orphanage children do not witness a display of a full array of human emotions. Such a thing inhibits the emotional development of the child, which in turn has a negative effect on the cognitive development.

Canadian studies. Morison, Ames & Chisholm (1995) have reported on their study of the development and medical problems of 44 children adopted in Canada from Rumanian orphanages. These children had stayed in an orphanage for at least 8 months, they came from 21 different orphanages that varied in standards of care and cleanliness and in caregiver-to-child ratio. Adoptive parents were interviewed at home and they were asked questions from the Revised Denver Prescreening Developmental Questionnaire to describe their child when they first met him or her in an orphanage. The parents reported that 84% of children had been delayed in fine-motor and adaptive skills, 91% of the children in gross motor skills, 96% of the children in personal-social skills and 100% of the children had language delays. This group of children was compared to 24 matched- Rumanian- born children who had not spent time in institutions. There were significant differences between the two groups in all areas mentioned above. The examination of variables pertaining to child's institutionalization showed that *length of institutional stay* was positively related with the delays in the areas of adaptive, personal-social, and language development. The indication was that the longer the child was in an orphanage, the lower the developmental quotient. *Presence of toys* had a significant relationship with all areas of development. *Favoritism in the orphanage* influenced four of the five areas of development (the relation with language development was statistically insignificant). *Dirtiness in the orphanage* was related to four areas of development, whereas *weight percentile* was not related to any of the areas of delays.

After ten months in the adoptive homes the majority of the children had made a remarkable progress. Of the 95% of children, who were delayed in three or four areas

when parents adopted them, only 46% remained delayed in those areas. Children enrolled in rehabilitation programs were progressing at very high rates every month. *No relationship was found between the time spent in an institution and number of delays.* Exposure to toys greatly influenced the development of orphanage-reared children and so did adult stimulation. Poor nutrition did not seem to play a large role in the post adoption development. Demographic characteristics of adoptive families were not related to the development of children. *Age at adoption* was an important variable, most of the children adopted at an older age had more areas of delays than those adopted at a younger age.

The same group of children was studied for behavioral issues and attachment security and indiscriminately friendly behavior almost a year after they had been with their adoptive families. This group was compared against a group of Rumanian children with no orphanage experience and a matched group of Canadian born children (Ames, Carter, Chisholm, Fisher, Gilman, Mainemer, McMullan, & Savoie, 1992, Chisholm, Carter, Ames & Morison, 1995). Behavioral issues were identified through at-length interviews with parents by Achenbach's Child Behavior Checklist. The problems of concern to parents, when they first received the children, were rocking, watching their hands, eating problems, inability to let their needs be known and thumb sucking. However, none of the children adopted from orphanages scored above the normal range for behavior problems, which was evidence that none of the problems were pathological or in need of clinical intervention. In addition, one year after adoption, most of the behaviors that were of concern to parents had shown signs of improvement. Both attachment security and indiscriminately friendly behavior were

assessed using parent report questionnaires. The children adopted from orphanages scored significantly lower on security of attachment than either one of the other groups. This group of children also displayed more indiscriminately friendly behavior, but such behaviors were not correlated with the security of attachment.

British studies. The studies conducted with children adopted by British parents from Rumanian orphanages in the early nineties, funded by the Medical Research Council of the U.K. and the U.K. Department of Health, included 324 children adopted between February 1990 and September 1992. Most of the children had spent their whole life in institutional care; they came from at least 67 different places. A comparison group was also formed with 52 adoptees from the U.K. that were assessed at the age of 6 years. Longitudinal data (at 4 and 6 years) were available for 111 Rumanian adoptees placed in U.K homes before 24 months of age and on all U.K. adoptees. All the Rumanian children adopted from the institutions showed signs of severe deprivation upon entry to the U.K., half had a weight that was below the third percentile, almost half demonstrated development in the retarded range and many had gastrointestinal, respiratory and skin disorders. The study found that by the age of four all children had a remarkable improvement: in the group as a whole the developmental quotient on the Denver Scales rose from a mean of 63 to a mean of 107. For children admitted to the U.K. after the age of six months, the mean rose from 45 to 90. This dramatic catch-up shows that the early developmental retardation was caused by the depriving situations in the institutions. Another indication that reinforced this conclusion was the fact that there was no measurable deficit in children adopted prior

to six months of age. On the other hand, the group who went to U.K. after six months had a deficit of about one standard deviation from the control group. This shows that some degree of persisting deficit might remain. The authors ruled out possible mediating variables that might explain this difference and concluded that the only explanation was the prolonged exposure at a situation of deprivation (Rutter et al, 1998).

In a related study of the effects of institutional care on cognitive attainment, 129 children from the group described above were studied at age four and at age six (Castle et al, 1999). The children's adoptive mothers completed a comprehensive, semi-structured interview, a section of which focused on their impression of the standard of care that existed in the institution at four aspects of care: *quality of food, range of physical experiences, access to toys and playthings* and *availability of individualized care*. More than half of the parents based their ratings on their observations of their child in an apparently free setting on at least three occasions. Parents rated the quality of food closer to "minimum dietary requirements only"; the variation of food quality was significantly related to the children's weight at the time of entry into the U.K. *Range of physical experiences, access to toys and playthings* and availability of individualized care received very low ratings, indicating that the mean was very near 'very poor'. Children's cognitive level was assessed on the McCarthy General Cognitive Index and children's weights were derived from records of physical examination. The duration of institutionalization was based on parents' report. Analyses of the data of children in two points of time, at four and six years of age, showed that cognitive outcomes were strongly affected by the duration of time spent in

poor-quality institutional care. The quality of institutional care was significant in respect to the range of physical experiences, access to toys/playthings and the psychological composite. The availability of individualized care was found as a significant variable for children who had spent more than two years in an institution. The quality of food was not found to be significant, in so far as poor quality did not result in malnutrition.

The same team investigated the effects of global severe privation on cognitive competence (O'Connor, Rutter, Beckett, Keaveney, Kreppner, & the English and Rumanian Adoptees Study Team, 2000). They studied a sample of 111 children that came from their original sample of 324 children. These 111 children were assessed at 4 and 6 years of age, while 48 children were assessed at six years only. The control group was made up of 52 U.K. inter-country adoptees, who were assessed twice. The technique used was stratified random sampling that took into account the age at placement. The gender and family-related variables were found to be of insignificant impact. The Rumanian children at the time of entry into the UK were severely malnourished and demonstrated gross developmental delay. The findings showed that recovery was remarkable at age four (most children were within the average range on a number of adjustment measures) and the early adopted children (0-6 months) did not differ from the U.K. adoptees in general cognitive ability. This recovery was maintained at age six. This group scored significantly higher than the late entering (7-24 months) Rumanian adoptees. The set of findings showed that significant catch up is possible even after prolonged exposure to deprivation. Although the move into the adoptive home was clearly the most important factor in cognitive gain, duration of privation (that is time

spent in an institution) was a more important predictor of individual differences in outcomes of children that had spent more than two years in adoptive homes. Another interesting finding was that the first two years of adoption were extremely important: There was little evidence that, once deprived, children continue to gain in cognitive level with a longer period in an adoptive home-past a period of approximately 2 years. The study was unable to control for antenatal care and genetic influences that might have played an important role in individual differences. In addition, no attempts were made to identify the particular protective factors that might account for the difference.

O'Connor, Rutter and the English and Rumanian Adoptees Study Team (2000) also conducted a study that intended to link attachment disorder behavior (characterized by both disinhibited and inhibited behavior) to duration of privation. The research group analyzed and compared data from 165 children adopted from Rumania (87% of them had spent time in an institution) and 52 adoptees from the U.K. who were assessed at the age of 6 years. Longitudinal data (at 4 and 6 years) were available for 111 Rumanian adoptees placed in U.K homes before 24 months of age and on all U.K. adoptees. Information on attachment disorder was obtained from semi-structured interviews with parents. In addition, the group assessed children's cognitive and social development. The study found an overall association between duration of deprivation and attachment disturbance. Attachment disturbance was evident even when deprivation was limited to the early months of life. However, approximately 70% of children exposed to profound deprivation of more than two years did not exhibit marked/severe attachment disorder. Nutritional deprivation did not have a main effect on attachment. The behaviors of attachment disorder had not been decreased during the two years that the child had been

in an adoptive home (from age four to age six). In order to throw light on the etiology of attachment disorders another study was conducted (O'Connor, Bredenkamp & Rutter, 1999). The sample was the same; 13 boys and girls were selected with a stratified random sampling technique, to obtain children who had differing durations of neglect. Among the noteworthy findings were that all of the children who exhibited attachment disorder behaviors at age 4 had demonstrated it immediately upon adoption. On the other hand, many who had shown attachment disturbance at the beginning, displayed no such signs at the age of four. Thus, the authors concluded, "it appears that attachment disorder behaviors commonly results from very deprived rearing conditions, but they do not persist in a substantial number of children" (p.23). The study showed that the relationship between duration of deprivation and the likelihood of mild or severe attachment disorder was relatively linear. In addition, it proved that attachment disorders are not correlated with nutritional deprivation. An interesting finding was the one that stated that cognitive impairment was unrelated to attachment disorders.

Institutional autism has been identified as another effect of life deprivation in institutions. Rutter, et al. (1999) studied the quasi-autistic patterns following severe early global privation. They focused on 11 children who were picked out by professionals and/or parents because of possible autistic features in their behaviors. In a sample of 165 children this was about 6% of all. These children showed varying behaviors but preoccupations with sensations and intense circumscribed interests constituted the main feature. The authors noted that the number of cases was far too high to be dismissed as coincidence. The researchers tried to determine whether this high incidence of autism was related to the very adverse rearing conditions or some form of organic brain

dysfunction. A careful study of facts revealed that for these children the period of institutional care was prolonged and the care was exceptionally poor. The authors speculated that severe sensory deprivation in early life could impede normal brain development and social deprivation might also impair the development of appropriate social skills.

Institutionalization and Resilience

Very few studies of children with a history of institutionalization have focused on the process of the development of resilience and the identification of protective factors. Rutter & Quinton (1984) did a follow-up study of 89 women who had been raised in residential Children's Homes in Britain and compared this group to that of 41 women who were sampled from the same area and had very similar demographics. Data for both groups were obtained at three points in their lives: at 2 or 2 and a half years, middle school years (7-12) and adulthood. In general, the post-institutionalized females had lower outcomes than non-institutionalized ones, although many of the former were leading functional lives. The authors identified as risk factors in respect to personality disorders *a combination of genetic and experiential adversities*, whereas poor social functioning was accounted for on the basis of *environmental experiences*. The authors found that changes in behavior for the females who had positive outcomes in life represented continuity in the developmental process. *Positive school experiences* predisposed the girls to adopt a more planning approach to their lives. As a result they had more successful marriages. Studying the protective factors the authors concluded that

positive experiences exerted a most important protective factor. Good experiences encouraged women to cope adaptively with major life decisions.

Flint (1978) provides three case studies at the end of her book. They were the life stories of three people (George, Mindy and Tom) who were institutionalized in early infancy. They had very similar beginnings but different outcomes. At 22, George had majored in psychology and planned to return for post-graduate work; he lived a healthy young adults' life. At 18, Mindy had left school and home and she was having liaisons with numerous men; she was caught stealing, cheating and lying and she was only capable of superficial relationships with people. At 22, Tom was in his second year of computer science courses; he spent his free time with members of his last foster family and had made friends with some of his university instructors. The three individuals were placed in the same institution as healthy and normally developing infants between four and seven months of age. By the age of three, when they became participants in a rehabilitation program, the three of them were demonstrating behavioral and emotional issues and cognitive deficiencies. What accounts for their later different outcomes?

George was the most successful of the three. Flint used the word "assets" to describe the protective factors and she listed both personal and environmental ones. Among George's personal factors, Flint mentioned the intellectual capacity to overcome the institutional deficits, emotional resilience to overcome his initial fears, a capacity to respond to an emotional level to efforts of support from people in his environment, enjoyment of effort, high motivation and efforts to achieve in his self-appointed goals. Among the environment supports, she mentioned a normal delivery, two months spent with his mother as an infant, a very structured rehabilitation program that started at age

three, a successful program of adoption preplacement, successful adoption assisted at every stage by the intervention of the family worker, structured management of his home environment, development of trust relationships with both of his adoptive parents and last but not least, an understanding teacher at school. Flint pointed out as the two most important factors George's capacity for relationships with grown-ups and the ability of the worker to capitalize on his strengths while offering constant support to his parents. Comparing George's story to that of the other two individuals one cannot fail to see that *stability and permanency provided by adoption* granted the background of consistency without which George's efforts might have proved to be less successful.

Mindy's intervention proved to be unsuccessful in terms of the rehabilitation program outcomes, although she was catching up both cognitively and emotionally especially between 12 and 15 years of age. Flint described as hampering risk factors both some of Mindy's personality factors and her life circumstances. Among Mindy's personality factors as a child Flint mentioned the fact that she never asked for help from an adult, was conforming and cooperative in all routines and she was indiscriminate with all grown ups. At 6 years, she was unable to initiate activities and put forth much effort in them. By age 9, she did not ask for help and gave up easily on things when difficult. By 12, she was stealing. Her attitude to others was that of fear and uncertainty. She did well between 12 and 15 and then she regressed again. As environmental risk factors, Flint mentions the instability of her mother, unsatisfactory living conditions for four months prior to institutionalization, the insecure status of being a foster child and never adopted, lack of individualized care at home, lack of support by foster parents during her pre-teen years, lack of structured classroom environment and *absence of a teacher* with whom she could

identify. Flint blamed Mindy's poor outcomes on her limited range of competencies, which precluded her growing up according to the expectations of the foster parents. Flint believed that such a thing might have been elevated by continuing immature dependency support beyond the age of 15 years. In my opinion, the protective factors such as the rehabilitation program, the consistency of the worker, permanence in placement with one foster family were not very effective because there never was a good fit between Mindy's needs as perceived by her and the response of the intervention.

Tom's story was full of ups and downs and demonstrated that resilience builds up oscillatingly and draws on various resources of strengths. He emerged from a deprived infancy and early childhood, he survived three traumatic attempts to become part of a family, he overcame his initial cognitive difficulties and became academically successful. Flint believed that Tom demonstrated inexplicable resilience. The personal protective factors she described were ability to muster people to his aid, charm and warmth, intellectual curiosity since a very young age, fantasy and puckish humor. Environmental protective factors were the rehabilitation program he started in the institution, the consistency of a very committed child worker and a host of very sympathetic and supportive teachers. Not having permanence was an important risk factor, but it was somewhat overcome by the two-decade dedication above and beyond the call of duty of the child worker.

McGuinness, McGuinness & Dyer (2000) have conducted the only study from a resilience conceptual framework with children adopted from Eastern European orphanages. They studied 105 children (55 girls) that were adopted from Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Belarus, Lithuania, Georgia and the Central Asian Republics. Adoptive mothers

were the informants in 91% of the cases. Teachers provided responses for 89 children. The majority of the children (54%) had entered the orphanage after one month old (ranging from 1 to 73 months), the rest had been placed immediately after birth. The length of stay in the orphanage was from 8 to 78 months. The children had an age average of 7.7 years when they were studied and they had been in their adoptive homes for a mean of 45 months. Most of the children had medical problems upon entering in the United States that were adequately treated. In addition, many of the children had received multiple services. Data from adoptive families showed that both mothers and fathers were middle aged (mean age of adoptive mothers was 44 years, for fathers 46), and their marriage was stable. The mean annual income was \$70, 000 and both parents had at least a bachelor's degree. The authors operationalized children's competence as socialization score, school score and externalizing score. On an average, the children scored in the lower normal ranges in social competence, in the midnormal range in the school competence and the externalizing score (that measured behavior problems) was below the clinical range. One fourth of the children (i.e. 25%) scored above average on social competence, 24% of children were age appropriate for their grade, 85% of the children scored in the nonclinical range on conduct competence scores.

The authors also studied the effect of family environment on risk factors. The latent risk factors were identified as *birth weight*, *age at entry in the institution* and *duration of institutionalization*. The latent protective factors were identified as family environment and were operationalized as *family expressiveness score* and *family cohesion score*. They examined the relation with a confirmatory factor analysis. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) demonstrated that the **relationship between risk and competence was mediated**

by family environment. The families in the study had generally very positive family environments with *higher than average levels of cohesion and expressiveness, lower than average levels of conflict and high achievement orientation*. These were identified as protective factors. An additional finding was that *parents in the study did not have excessive expectations for the child* after the adoption and that worked to the benefit of the child (McGuinness & Pallansch, 2000). Authors argue that other characteristics of the adoptive families such as *the high level of education and affluence* may also have been influential in the outcomes (although they were not found to be statistically significant) as parents sought and received professional help that they could afford for their adoptive children. A very interesting finding of this study was the fact that 24 children (23%) had above average scores. McGuinness (1999) identified as individual protective factors for this group of children *higher than average birth weight, later institutionalization and shorter duration of institutionalization*.

Part Three: Adoption

Introduction

In literature, adoption is viewed both as a major risk and as a major protective factor. The evaluation of outcomes of adoption depends very much on the group the adopted children are compared to. Hoksbergen (1999) has identified six possible comparison groups. They are: (a) the general population of nonadoptees, (b) the general population of nonadoptees but with parents of similar socioeconomic backgrounds to those of adoptive

parents, i.e. usually the higher socio-economic groups; (c) children with similar economic and psychosocial background as the adopted children's birthparents, usually the lower socioeconomic groups, (d) children in institutions, (e) children in foster care. In addition, (f) there is the comparison between domestic and international adoptions.

Reviewing the adoption literature, Brodzinsky (1993) states that the comparison of adopted children with the nonadopted population has revealed a somewhat greater psychological vulnerability for adopted children who are usually overrepresented in clinical population. He goes on to explicate that different theoretical explanations have tried to account for this vulnerability in different ways. The *psychodynamic theory* explains it with coping with object loss and the development of ego-identity. The *social theory of adoption adjustment* relates the issues faced by the adoptees to the failure of adoptive parents to recognize the differences they have with mainstream families and act upon these differences effectively. *Cognitive-developmental factors approach* accounts for the difficulties in the adjustment process with the child's growing awareness of the meaning of adoption. *The ethological theory* has focused on the importance of attachment-separation-loss process as the source of vulnerabilities. There is also the suggestion that many complications of adoptees originate in their genetic heritage and prenatal or reproductive complications. Brodzinsky (1993) concludes that what unites these approaches is the fact that they all see adoption as a stressful experience. The source of stress is the perception of loss both by the adopted child (loss of birthparents, loss of status of being wanted, loss of identity) and the adoptive parents (loss of dreams to have their own offspring). This sense of loss is reinforced by cultural attitudes and beliefs that consider adoption as second best. This interpretation sees adoption as a chain

of risk factors. However, based on the outcomes of research on the adjustment of adoptees Brodzinsky agrees that many adoptees and adoptive families develop successful coping strategies that rest on the appraisal of adoption related losses.

Reviewing the outcomes of adoption in literature, Hoksbergen (1999) concludes that although the developmental challenge of identity formation is a recognized main issue of adoptees, the experience of adoption is generally positive. This is thanks to the adoptive family environment, which has many protective values. Hoksbergen recognizes the following protective factors: (a) on an average, adoptive families are of a higher socioeconomic status, (b) adoptive couples have a strong wish for children that helps them overcome many obstacles, and (c) they have a lower divorce rate.

In brief, being adopted is a stressful experience when oneself is perceived as a reject. This may serve as a risk factor especially in adolescence. However, the adoptive family environment that provides a permanent warm and loving relationship opens up new opportunities for children to see themselves as wanted and loveable. These feelings help boost their feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy. In this framework, resilience is formed as the child and youth struggle for understanding their place in the world. Competence is witnessed in the positive outcomes of psychosocial development and educational and profession attainment (Howe, 1998). Clarke & Clarke (2000) write this strong statement: "Resilience is built into the human system, but requires a positive social context for its full expression. Adoption is the strongest form of intervention and its usually good outcome challenges other forms of care" (p. 24). However, Howe (1998) points out that adoption studies have not yet embraced the study of resilience, although

they “remain peculiarly well placed to illuminate matters of risk, resilience and recovery in human growth and development” (p. 133).

The results of many studies are a testament to protective factors of adoption. The longitudinal Swedish study (Bohman & Sigvardsson, 1999) with three groups of children (one adopted, the other returned to biological mothers and the third in foster care) controlled for biological background, perinatal conditions and hospital or institutional care before placement. This study indicated that while the adopted group had lower adjustment scores at 11 years of age, they had the best outcomes of the three groups in the long run. The group of the adopted children was also compared against the general population in the results of Military Enlisting. The adopted boys showed much of the same achievements, as did their age-match controls. The authors concluded that the results of this study indicated that long-term prognosis for adopted children was in no way worse than for children of the general population. In addition, adoption serves as a protective factor by largely reducing the risk of social incompetence and maladjustment.

Simon & Alstein (2000) reviewed the results of long-term empirical investigation of the quality of life, self-concept, racial/ethnic identity and familial interaction in studies of Korean children adopted by American parents. The data showed that adopted Korean children were progressing well and they did not indicate any problems in their overall long-term adjustment. The protective factors identified in these studies were *a warm and supportive family environment, awareness of personal heritage and instillation of a positive ethnic identity*.

Dalen (1999) conducted a qualitative study of 20 young women in their twenties who were born in India and adopted in Norway as young children. When they were

interviewed, they had all completed upper secondary school (which is three years more than compulsory education) and were well adjusted. Many of the girls felt that they had not had a perfect fit with their family in terms of ethnicity look-alikeness and compatibility of temperament and interests. The author noted two protective factors for the resilient women. One came from within the women: the disassociation with the feeling of guilt for being different. The other two related to parents: the degree of perceived similarity not only at the time of adoption but throughout the child's upbringing and the parents' ability to be accepting of and accommodating to differences.

The comparison of outcomes of children adopted from institutions to those still living there, clearly demonstrate the advantages of the first group over the second. Triseliotis & Hill (1999) report on the results of a British study made with three groups of children: a group adopted after 10 years of age, a group that was in foster care and a group that remained in the institution. The goal of the study was to contrast issues of identity, current adjustment and quality of life for people in the three groups. The results showed that adopted children were doing much better than the other two groups. Many of the children that were adopted were "high risk" at the age of adoption with a plentitude of emotional or behavioral difficulties. The adoption experience proved to be very beneficial to all of them and helped reverse the effects of early psychological trauma. The authors identified the protective factors related to adoption that contributed to a sense of security in individuals. These three factors were *quality of care experienced, knowledge about the origins and the past* and *being part of a wider community with no stigma attached*.

Adoption and Schools

Adoption may impact children at school in two ways: educationally and socially. (NAIC, 2002). Adopted children are diagnosed with learning disabilities at a higher rate than non-adopted children. Twenty nine per cent of the psychologists that participated in a mail questionnaire research in 1986 reported observations of over-representation of non-relative adoptees in special education settings (Caruso, 1987). The issues some adopted children manifest may be a consequence of their genetic heritage as they come from a generally less advantageous gene pool (Kadushin, 1976). However, the stress-and-coping-model of adoption adjustment associates the school related difficulties with the particular trajectory of developmental changes in adoptees (Brodzinsky, 1990). The increasing awareness of their loss of family of origin is accompanied by many behavioral, emotional and attitudinal changes as they strive to create their identity. As a result, there are more problems in the years of junior high and high school as this is the peak time for creation of self identity (NAIC, 2002).

Long-term studies show that the adopted students may overcome these issues. The results of the 180 adoptees from the National Child Development Study of more than 17, 000 children born in Britain in one week in March 1958 were very positive. The findings of adopted individuals were compared with a sample of children reared by their birth mothers and with general population norms on educational and vocational achievement. The study revealed that the adoptees' attainment in education and career were broadly comparable within the general population norms and they were significantly higher than those of their birth peers (Maughan, Collishaw & Pickles, 1998).

Rutter (2001) and Howe (1998) argue that accomplishments at school are important for children who feel vulnerable. They translate into positive feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem, which then gives the students more confidence to deal with other demands and challenges in life. However, Howe (1998) notes that no adoption studies have explored the mechanism of how protective factors at school help adopted students overcome their vulnerabilities.

Very little research has been done on the educational achievement of children adopted from other countries (Dalen, 1999). Studies have yielded contradictory results, some stating that adopted children cope well in school after a poor start, and others stating that difficulties and issues start after an initial honeymoon period. Dalen (1999) has identified the following conditions that affect the learning of children adopted internationally negatively: (a) early lack of emotional contact and attachment, which according to the psychodynamic theory of learning affects the curiosity and receptiveness to new experiences for learning; (b) early physical injury and brain injury in particular may be the source of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) which is known to affect both learning and social functioning, and (c) change of language, especially using a newly acquired language for higher language cognitive levels. However, the author recognizes the positive influence of the adopted family on the enhancement of the intellectual abilities of the child.

A study of 193 children (ages 11-16) adopted from Korea and Columbia in Norway compared their academic language, social and behavioral skills to a matched group of 193 Norwegian born students (Rygvoid, 1999). The majority of the children (86%) were adopted prior to two years of age, the rest afterwards. No significant differences were

found on everyday language, as well as in reading and writing achievement. The analysis of the achievement score presented the same picture. When the data were divided between countries of origin, the study found that the Korean born students had higher scores than the Norwegian born group in all areas, while 20-40% of the Colombian group exhibited language impairment and 32% were assessed as low achievers by their teachers. The authors did not account for these differences, although they ruled out age at adoption and stated that the results of Korean adoptees were “atypical”.

A recent study of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute of adult Korean adoptees reported the following impressive figures for the 167 respondents to their survey: 24% had graduate degrees, 42 % had a college degree, 15% were currently studying at the undergraduate or graduate level and 22% had some college; only 7% had a high school diploma. The respondents were adopted during the time period 1956-1985. As a group, 62% of them had lived in an orphanage before being adopted. The majority of adoptees coming from orphanages (60%) had spent more than 3 years in an institution (Freundlich & Lieberthal, 2000). It must be noted, as a word of caution, that the sampling of this study was non-random. It was made up of people who were interested in attending a reunion.

A study of 182 children adopted from India and Vietnam in Norway (Saetersdal & Dalen, 1991) revealed that while the children adopted from India had no school related issues at all and were doing better academically than their Norwegian-born peers, the children adopted from Vietnam had a host of school-related problems, most of which originated in their inability for a deeper understanding of language. The children did not receive any assistance in the early stages as their issues were identified at their teenage

years when a greater degree of abstract thinking was demanded. By then, a large number of children had already qualified for special education designed with the typical Norwegian student in mind. The authors identified as risk factors that aggravated the situation the lack of awareness by school staff of the particular language related issues faced by intercountry adopted children. The study did not account for the success of Indian-born students.

Children adopted from Eastern European orphanages are having varying educational outcomes. Schell-Frank (1999, 2000) conducted a non-random survey with families that had adopted children from Eastern European orphanages (n=150). The average number of months of institutionalization experience was 36.6 with a range from 2 months to 10 years. She found that 75% of children had been referred for special education services and they were found eligible. Forty percent of the parents of this group of children believed that their child's history of institutionalization was not given special consideration. The author also found that families reported that many children were doing very well in school. Finding what accounted for the educational success of the latter group was beyond the scope of the survey. However, a careful study of the quotes she has included in the reports of her findings that come from families of successful students reveal the following protective factors: good collaboration between parents and school staff and focus on the unique strengths of the child rather than generally recognized issues of the post-institutionalized children.

Von der Lieth (1999) reports the results of a psycho-social study of 8 children adopted in Denmark from Eastern European Orphanages. These children were adopted between 22 months and 4 years of age. All the eight children were referred for services

because they were having difficulties with Danish language, math and concentration in class. In addition, they were having intense behavior problems. All these issues were attributed to mild brain damage, brain damage or mental retardation. Children were tested and observed intensively individually and as a group. The scores showed that children's intellectual abilities were within normal range, but there were big differences between the different subsets of arithmetic, vocabulary, memory span, and so forth. According to the author, these fluctuation of abilities within a day or even within one single class, which made the children insecure of his/her ability, were the main source of anxiety which triggered the social-emotional problem behaviors which then caused poor academic outcomes. The author related this uneven development of various subsets of intellectual ability to aspects of life in the orphanage that did not stimulate the development of certain cognitive domains rather than low IQ per se. The fact that teachers and school professionals failed to properly diagnose these students and deliver proper assistance aggravated the situation.

Gindis, (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000), an educational psychologist of Russian origin and founder of a center that provides cognitive, developmental, behavioral evaluation and remediation for children adopted from Eastern Europe, recognizes that the group of children with a background of institutionalization are particularly vulnerable to school-related stress and pressure as they deal concurrently with difficulties of acculturation, language acquisition and health and neurological problems. Based on his observations, he identifies the following school related issues for post-institutionalized adoptees:

(a) slower than expected academic progress, (b) problems with second language acquisition, and (c) behavior and emotional issues. Gindis recognizes that there are many

supports and resources in place for these children that may largely impact their academic outcomes: (a) middle-class, well-educated, strongly motivated, involved parents; (b) existence of a system of special remedial and supportive services in school; and (c) existence of a system that teaches English as a Second Language in schools. However, for these resources and supports to be effective, a better understanding of the complexity of the education of post-institutionalized children is required. Although Gindis focuses on the **issues** of the post- institutionalized students from Eastern Europe, he does not rule out the fact that many internationally adopted post-institutionalized students **may be and are in fact academically successful**: “The last thing I want ...is to create an impression (a stereotype) of a post-institutionalized child, who is “handicapped” by virtue of the fact of being from an orphanage” (1998, p. 23).

Conclusion Notes

This literature review pointed out two major facts: children adopted from Eastern European orphanages are a high-risk group primarily due to early childhood deprivations caused by poor institutional care and the issues of self-identity related to their status of being adopted. However, the interruption of the institutionalization and opening up of new opportunities that comes with adoption by middle class, educated parents is beneficiary for all. Differing degrees of success in psychosocial and educational outcomes after the adoption may be attributed to different causes related to preadoption and postadoption although a linear cause-effect relationship is difficult to establish due to the complex interaction of multiple individual, familial and extrafamilial variables (see

Fig. 4). The most researched aspect in the lives of these children are the adversarial effects of institutionalization. Very little has been researched in regard to the complexity of variables connected with life in the adoptive country. The few school-related studies have focused on the variety of special needs rather than the success stories, although there is evidence that they do not lack. A resilience study to understand the mechanism of the educational success of a high risk group with a triple valence (institutionalization + adoption + new culture/language) requires the assessment of both risk and protective factors in a transactional-ecological –developmental approach. The studies in educational resilience have shown that a variety of protective factors at the individual, familial, community and school level are at play transactionally and synergistically to account for the academic success of the student. No studies have focused on exploring these clusters of strengths.

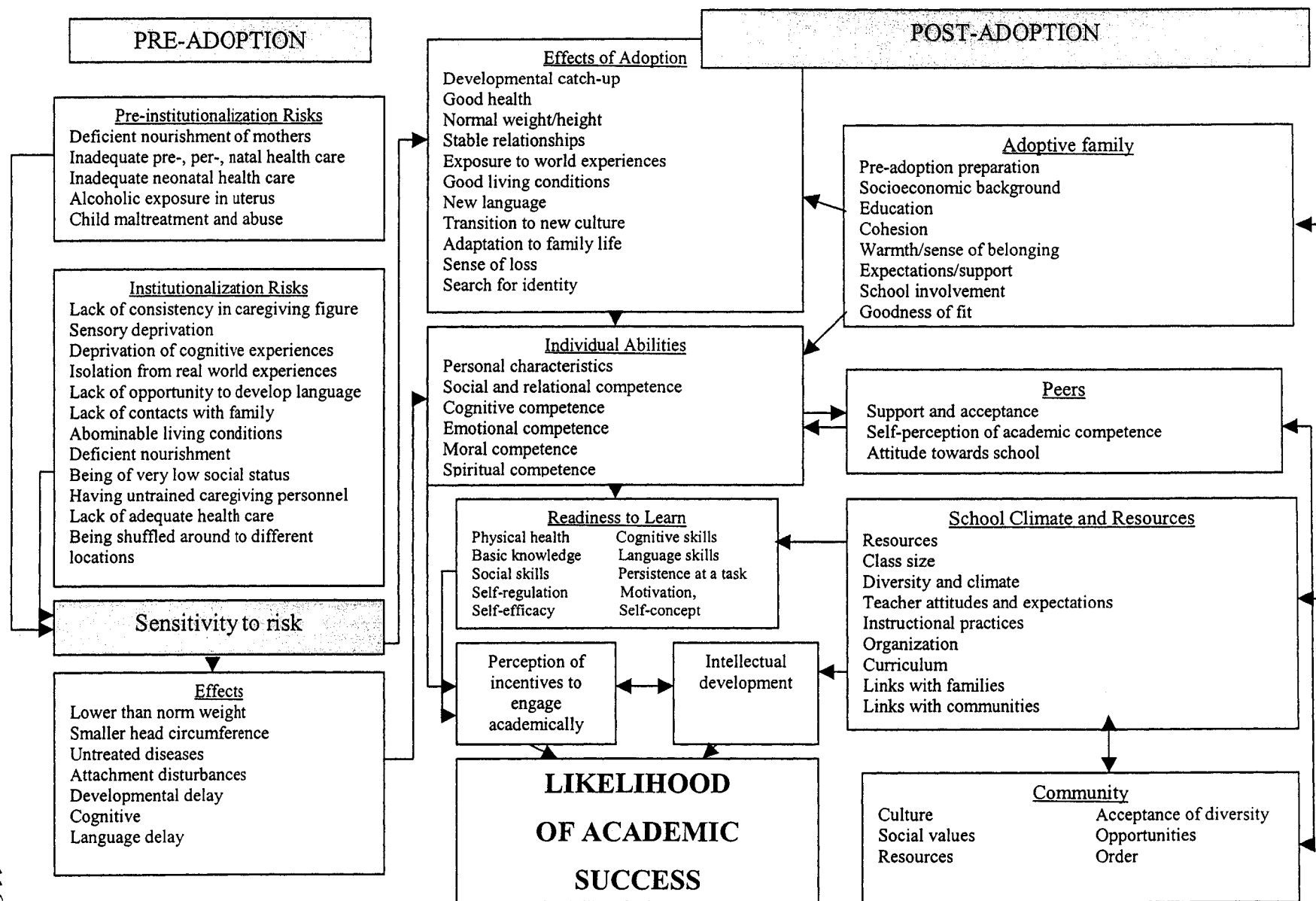


Figure 4. Some of the factors that affect the likelihood of the academic success of a postinstitutionalized student adopted from Eastern Europe.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative research design was used to identify the clusters of strength of the educational resilience of a post-institutionalized adopted student from Eastern Europe. Being guided by the fact that “resilience involves many processes that bring together quite diverse mechanisms operating before, during, and after the encounter with stress experience or adversity that is being considered” (Rutter, 2001, p. 34) a case study approach was used to understand the workings of these “diverse mechanisms”. A case study (or case history) is one of many kinds of qualitative inquiry, which consists of an intensive, detailed description and analysis of a particular individual, group, or event. Information is obtained by means of careful observation, interviews, psychological tests, and/or records (Hakim, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

The case study approach was selected because it fit the ecological-transactional–developmental perspective conceptual framework that is highly recommended to study resilience (Greene & Conrad, 2002). In addition, this approach had the capability of supporting that type of inquiry that could reveal the synergetic transactions between the individual student and school-related proximal developmental environments that included community, school, family and peers. The main limitation of the case study approach was

poor representativeness, which only allowed for fuzzy generalizations. Bassey (1999) explains that fuzzy generalizations is a kind of prediction that arises from empirical inquiry, that says that something may happen, but without any measure of its probability.

The focus of the study was a fifth grade student, a post-institutionalized international adoptee from Russia, who met the criteria of the operational definition of a resilient student, as well as her multi-system environment of interest: community, school and family. The study was conducted in January-April 2003. It involved interviews and interactions with the student herself, her parents, her sister, peers, teachers, a school counselor and the school principal. It included observations in school, in various classes, in the family home and in community sites. Pertinent documents relating to the student's pre-adoption history as well as school documents, records and community data were obtained and studied.

To prepare for the study, I attended meetings of the local Adoptive Parents Support Group and I was a member of an Internet mailing list support group of parents who have adopted children from Russian orphanages. Additionally, I had conversations, e-mail exchanges and phone calls with other parents who have adopted children from Eastern European orphanages as well as adoption workers from agencies that have worked in Russia. I had many one-on-one interactions with two other children adopted from Eastern European orphanages and I read on-line stories of many other children adopted from Eastern European orphanages.

Participants and Sites

The selection of participants and sites was a two-stage process. First, the subject of the case study was selected. The selection criteria accounted for (a) the operational definition of an educationally resilient student, which was based on the review of literature, (b) the appropriate sampling criteria as required by the case study qualitative research, (c) delimitation considerations set by the researcher and (d) delimitation criteria set by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

An educationally resilient student was operationally defined as a post-institutionalized adopted student who attends regular education classes without any special needs modifications or supports. The selected typology of sampling was intensity sampling, i.e., the selected student needed to be was an information-rich case that manifested the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely (Patton, 1994).

Put together, the selected student met all these criteria:

1. At least a one year experience in an Eastern European orphanage prior to being adopted in the United States
2. Having a publicly known international adoptee status
3. Living with a two-parent family
4. Having no known cognitive impairments
5. Attending regular education classes
6. No failing grades in school
7. Over 12 years of age

In order to select the subject of the case study, 41 Colorado Adoption agencies were contacted by phone in October 2002. Four (4) agencies that had facilitated adoptions from Eastern Europe agreed to participate by sending out an invitation to participate in the research study to families whose children met the criteria. Forty (40) copies of invitation letters together with self-addressed envelopes were sent to the 4 agencies. One of the facilitators of a local adoption support group was also contacted by phone and her assistance was asked to help spread the word about the research project. Through this process, six school age children that had been adopted from Eastern Europe and who lived in the area were identified. Only one of them met all the seven criteria. She was selected to be the subject of the case study.

Natasha (not her real name) was born in September 1990 in Perm, Russia, to an unwed mother. She had a very traumatic childhood before being removed from her home due to abuse and neglect at age five and being placed in an institution for two years. During her two years in the institution Natasha was, among other things, subject to malnutrition, lack of medical care and total neglect of her education, which had a harmful impact on her school readiness. In February 1998, she was adopted from this institution, together with one of her siblings, by a two-parent family who resided in Northern Colorado. Four years after her adoption, she attended regular classes in the fifth grade in one of the elementary schools of a Northern Colorado school district. During the first part of the 2002-2003 school year, her GPA for the first quarter was 3.29 and that of the second quarter was 3.11. Her family and the story of her and her sister's adoption were featured with pictures in the local newspaper in November 2003.

In addition to Natasha, there were 10 other participants in the research project: her mother and father, her younger biological sister, her closest friend, 4 teachers, the school counselor and the school principal. Each of them provided relevant information through interviews or by completing questionnaires. The selection of the closest friend, and of the school staff was determined by the nature of information needed for the study.

The Research Sites were used for observations and interviewing in a natural setting. The research sites included the family home, the elementary school that Natasha attended, and relevant community locations. In the family home, interviews and interactions and observations occurred in the family room and the living room. At school, the research sites were the main classroom as well as the art and music room, the school gym, the media center, one of the computer labs and the school cafeteria. The community locations included the main branch of the local library as well as a Video Store. Observations were also conducted in the neighborhood of the family home and that of the school site.

The timing of the interviews was determined by the availability of the participants. Most of the interviews with the parents, the student and her sibling took place on late afternoons during the weekend. The interview with the closest friend occurred at her home in an early evening. Many phone conversations with parents, mostly initiated by the family, occurred in the evenings, between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m. Observations in the school and classes were spread at different times of the day over a period of three weeks. The times covered all regular hours of elementary school.

The process of getting approval and the necessary informed consent for the study was lengthy; it spread over a period of 8 months. Initially, the approval of the school district

was asked for and received through the Research and Development Center for the Advancement of Student Learning. The project was, then, submitted to the Colorado State University Office of Regulatory Compliance and its approval was obtained. After the parents and the student signed the informed consent, permission to use the elementary school as a research site was asked for and granted orally by the school principal. The homeroom teacher signed an informed consent to allow observations in her classes and oral consent was received from all the other teachers whose classes were observed prior to attending their class. All the teachers and the school staff were very cooperative and helpful.

The most important piece of the process was the decision of the parents to participate in the project and give permission for their daughter to become the subject of the case study. First, I explained the whole project to the parents in detail (they both have master's degrees, father in psychology and mother in English literature and arts). Then, I mailed to them a packet that contained all questionnaires, interview questions and observation forms that I had planned to use together with a brief summary of the research proposal. They gave it a lengthy consideration before they decided to participate. Mother explained the reasons for participation:

I don't know how much this is going to help Natasha in the long run, but one of the reasons we are agreeing to it is that I feel like there is more and more kids that are being adopted from other countries and they (meaning schools) need to know...what some of their problems are.

The parents also explained the project to their eldest daughter who met the requirements for the study and received her opinion before indicating their predisposition to participate to me. After receiving the parent's consent, I met with the Natasha and explained the project to her in detail in simple language. The project involved two other minors,

Natasha's youngest sister, Katya, and Natasha's best friend, Daisy. In both cases, permission was first asked for from their parents and then the informed consent was received from the minors after the project was explained to them.

Data Collection

A two-stage data collection procedure was followed. During the first stage, preliminary data were collected that included an initial interview with the father, completion of a questionnaire by the father, an initial interview with the student and her sibling, an interview with the school counselor and six hours of school and classroom observations. After the preliminary analysis of collected data, some of the preliminary findings were discussed with the parents, the student and the classroom teacher for verification and validation. As a result, the focus of family and school observations was finessed and observations and interactions in the community were added. Additionally, participation in the Adoptive Families Support Group, the discussions in the Russian Adoption Parents Support Group, informal conversations with other parents who have adopted children from Eastern European orphanages were used as a sound-board to confirm/disconfirm some of the preliminary hypotheses.

Five forms of formal data collection were used for over 50 variables and the respective subvariables. These forms were: (a) observations, (b) interviews, (c) written questionnaires, (d) relevant documents and records (e) student's self-expression: artwork and journal. It was made sure that the information for each variable came from at last two sources. Table 2 summarizes the data collection process.

Table 2

Data Collection Process

#	Data topic	Data source					Setting		Informant					
		Self-express.	Records	Documents	Observations	Interview	School	Home	Student	Parent/sibling	Peer	Teachers	School	Researcher
1.	What is the pre-adoptive history?													
a)	Pre-institutionalization risk and protection	+				+		+	+	+				
b)	Institutionalization risk and protection	+				+		+	+	+				
c)	School readiness			+		+			+	+				
2.	What is the school experience in the USA?													
a)	Academics													
	Achievements		+		+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+
	Challenges		+		+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+
b)	School climate and organization													
	Physical setting and resources			+	+	+	+					+	+	+
	Philosophy													
	Inclusion and diversity			+	+	+	+	+				+	+	+
	Structure and order			+	+	+	+					+	+	+
	Community/family involvement			+		+	+	+		+		+	+	
	Orientation			+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+	+
c)	Classroom climate and organization													
	Inclusion and diversity			+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
	Size			+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
	Structure and order				+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
	Classroom climate				+	+	+		+		+	+		+
d)	Teachers													
	Expectations				+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
	Attitudes				+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
	Instructional practices				+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+

e)	Curriculum														
	Content			+		+							+	+	
	Organization			+		+							+	+	
	Priorities			+	+								+	+	
f)	Peers														
	Nature of relationship				+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
	Achievement ideology					+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		
	Diversity			+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
g)	Extracurricular activities/events			+		+		+	+	+			+		
3.	What is the role of family involvement?														
a)	Socio-economic context				+	+		+		+					+
b)	Structure				+	+		+	+	+					+
c)	Expectations														
	Academic					+	+	+	+	+			+		
	Moral					+		+	+	+					
	Social					+		+	+	+					
d)	Nature of support					+	+	+	+	+			+		
4.	What are the resources in the community?														
	County and city			+	+										
	School district			+	+										
5.	What are the characteristics of the student?														
a)	Physical/mental health	+				+			+	+					
b)	Social & relational competence	+													
	Attachment and trust	+				+	+	+	+	+		+	+		
	Ability to recruit people that help					+	+	+	+	+		+	+		
c)	Cognitive competence														
	IQ														+
	Language	+		+		+	+	+	+	+			+		+
	Capacity to plan and implement														+
	Initiative					+	+	+	+	+		+	+		+

	Locus of control	+				+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
	Self-efficacy					+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
	Self-understanding and self-esteem	+				+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
d)	Emotional competence													
	Emotional regulation	+				+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
	Creativity	+				+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
	Sense of humor					+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
e)	Moral competence		+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		

Observations

The sites of observations were the school, the family home, two community locations, the family home neighborhood, the school site neighborhood, the local library and a video store. All observations were organized around aspects that were described to be conducive to educational resilience in the review of literature. Prepared observations forms were initially filled out in the field; and then reread and completed immediately afterwards.

A total of 27 observations (62 hours) were conducted. Three (3) school observations (2 hours) were focused on the following elements: physical setting of the school and the resources, inclusion, diversity and orientation, structure and order as well as school climate. Fifteen (15) observations (45 hours) were conducted in the homeroom, art and music rooms, the school gym, the media center and the computer lab. The classroom observations were focused on inclusion and diversity, size, structure and order, classroom climate, teachers, expectations, attitudes and instructional practices. I observed Natasha's interaction with peers during two (2) sessions (one hour), one during recess and one in the school cafeteria. Three (3) observations at home (10 hours) included the

socioeconomic context, the family structure and interactions as well as the family relationships. One (1) observation in the school neighborhood and one (1) observation in the family home neighborhood (half an hour each) centered on the socioeconomic aspects of the area. Two other observation-interactions involved working with Natasha in the local library (we spent two hours together learning how to tell time) and helping the siblings negotiate a decision on renting a video in a video store (one hour). Most of the observations were guided and disciplined by the Observations Forms in Appendix One, prepared prior to starting the project based on the literature review.

Interviews

Six (6) taped interviews (12 hours), which were later transcribed, were conducted with the student, her sister, her closest friend, her parents and the school principal. The Interview Guides in Appendix One and the administrator's questionnaire were used for this purpose. The interviews included open-ended questions about variables that were described as being relevant to educational resilience in the review of literature.

Additionally, I received information from multiple non-taped conversations with the parents (both by telephone and in person), the teachers, the principal, the school counselor, other school staff and peers. Careful notes were taken mostly right after the conversation in an effort to reconstruct the previous dialogue.

Questionnaires

Four (4) questionnaires were completed, one by the parents and three others by Natasha's teachers. Copies of the questionnaires are in Appendix One. The school principal chose to do a taped interview instead.

Relevant Documents and Records

The relevant documents and records studied covered four areas:

- (a) The students herself: these included Natasha's Russian passport, her report cards for all classes attended in the USA, the level test scores which are standardized tests that measure the school district and Colorado curriculum standards and her Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) scores.
- (b) The school: (a) copies of the school newsletter, (b) a flier on student services, (c) the mission statement, curriculum, programs, enrichment, technology, staff, parents and partnerships -received from the schools web site upon recommendation of school principal, (d) level test and CSAP results of Natasha's cohort –from the Colorado Department of Education official web site, (e) enrollment data-from the school district web site, (f) overall academic performance- from the State of Colorado School Accountability Report-received from the school district web site.
- (c) School district: philosophy and mission statement, enrollment, student teacher ratios, resources, curriculum, services-received from the school district official web site.

- (d) Community data: (a) 2002 County Index of Community Wellbeing and Assets for Youth- received from the web site of County Division of Health and Human Services and the local area United Way that presented statistics describing the quality of life in the county and comparing it to the state and the nation, and (b) the local newspaper.
- (e) Natasha's self expression: (a) copy of the self-image collage prepared in the art class (b) the class journal and (c) "Who-Am-I?" chart. Both (a) and (b) were done at school and were used with permission from Natasha, her parents and her teachers.

Data Analysis

The goal of data analysis was trifold: (a) the recognition of risk factors/ processes/ chains and protection factors/processes/chains in the student, her family, the school she attends, her peers and the community she lives in; (b) the identification and examination of the transactions between the various systems mentioned above and (c) the tracking of the development and operation of educational resilience.

Data analysis was mainly qualitative, but as needed, quantitative methodology (mostly descriptive statistics) was also used. Data analysis preceded the decision of presenting the findings. It was a lengthy and laborious process due to the multiplicity of sources of information. The usual process included (a) identification of themes, (b) clustering, and (c) establishment of the nature of relationships in the clusters. Deductive

coding methodologies were used primarily. Inductive coding methodologies were also amply employed.

The issue of trustworthiness was given careful consideration at every stage of the research process: at data collection, data analysis and data presentation. In order to secure credibility (the equivalent of internal validity of the quantitative approach), the following strategies (as recommended in the qualitative research literature) were used: (a) triangulation- different data collection methods, different data sources, (b) peer examination (a local expert on the education of children adopted from eastern Europe reviewed the preliminary results), and (c) member checking (the parents received a copy of the preliminary results and their comments were included in the final copy) (Cresswell, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Transferability (external validity) was attempted through dense description (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1990; Patton, 1990). Dependability (reliability) was endeavored through (a) dense description, (b) triangulation, (c) code/recode procedure and audit trail. Last but not least, conformability (neutrality, objectivity) was (hopefully) secured by (a) audit trail, (b) triangulation and (c) reflexivity (Cresswell, 1994; Guba, 1990; Krefting, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The results of this project will be presented in two main sections: *Findings* and *Analysis and Discussion*. The Findings section will be divided into four parts. The first part (the Prologue) will be a chronological narrative of Natasha's life prior to starting her school experience, with the intention of throwing light on the complexity of the interplay of risk and protection in shaping her developmental experiences and determining her school readiness. The second part (Natasha Goes to School) will focus on identifying the nature and impact of multiple educational extra-personal and personal risk and protection factors, which have shaped Natasha's school experience. The third part will focus on Natasha's family, whereas the fourth part will concentrate on Natasha's personal factors. The major extra-personal variables and their sub-variables, which have been established to have a significant impact on the educational resilience of at-risk students, will be explored in an ecological and transactional framework in four contexts, starting from the more distal ones: community, school and family. The major personal risk and protection factors will also be investigated according to one of the recognized categorizations described in the review of literature. Whenever possible a developmental approach to variables will be utilized. The Analysis and Discussion section will present the clusters of strengths at different points in Natasha's life that have created the premises for her

educational resilience and will include my interpretations of the events/processes. At the end, the results will be summarized and a model for Natasha's educational resilience will be described.

Findings

Part One: The Prologue

Pre-Adoption: Life with Her Biological Family

"They were what they now call traumatized children..."
(Adoptive mother)

Natasha was born in September 1990 in Perm, Russia. She was the first of five female children of a young unwed mother. Natasha's biological father was not in the picture. Until she was five, Natasha lived with her mother, her sisters and possibly her young uncle and aunt (Natasha sometimes refers to them as her older brother and sister). Natasha's maternal grandmother lived on a farm not far from them, and Natasha seems to have visited her frequently.

The city where Natasha was born and lived with her family, Perm, is about 600 miles northeast of Moscow and just west of the Ural mountains that divide Europe from Asia. The city has a population of 1.1 million people (third largest city in Russia), but it is not densely populated as it stretches for 40 miles along the banks of the Kama River. In the better days of the Soviet Union, Perm was an important industrial city; its major products included timber, steel, oil, coal, and metal products including airplane parts. As

the center of the Prikamye area, Perm was also a major cultural and educational center, with four state theaters, among which one is an Opera and Ballet Theater, a State Art Gallery with over 360,000 exhibits, a Planetarium, a zoo, 7 universities/community colleges and 3 military schools (City of Perm, n.d.). Mrs. J. S., head of an international adoption agency, who has visited Perm several times and has adopted three children from the region, says that the end of the Soviet centralized economy as well as the long distance from Moscow have had detrimental effects on the city and its people. Many industries have shut down, leaving a large number of people unemployed with a virtually non-existent social security system. Substantial cuts in the funding for education, culture and arts have added more people to the ranks of the unemployed (personal communication, 25 April 2003). The same situation is reported by other Western visitors, who have observed that “the Perm region is incredibly poor” (Dungennes Community Church Newsletter, November 2000).

There is no information available on Natasha’s birth mother’s educational and occupational status, nor is there any information about her physical and mental health condition. However, because of her young age when she gave birth to Natasha (she was 18 years old), there is a very strong likelihood that she might have not graduated from high school. Without a high school diploma, the chances are that with the high unemployment rate in the city after 1990, she might have even been unemployed or might have had low-paying part-time jobs. We also do not know if she had good (or for that matter any) prenatal care when she was pregnant with Natasha. That seems unlikely with the deteriorating public health situation in Russia. Adoptive parents have been told

that she was an alcoholic, but there is no knowledge as to whether she drank when she was carrying Natasha.

What did Natasha experience as a child? She lived in a distressed community, her family was very poor, her mother was an alcoholic and she was soon followed by four younger siblings. The family life was very chaotic and people had roles that were not clearly identifiable in the mind of a little child (she still thinks that her uncle was her older brother and her aunt was her older sister). Many distressful events followed: One of her sisters died as a baby. Her uncle was forcefully taken by the soldiers in her presence; he was later sent to fight in Chechnya. The only stable element in Natasha' life at that time seems to have been her grandmother, who lived on a farm nearby. Natasha remembers her grandmother fondly. But unfortunately, the kind lady, who according to the adoptive mother, "had been the glue that kept Natasha's family together" and had played a very significant part in Natasha's first years of life, passed away when Natasha was only five. After her death, Natasha's birth mother started using five-year-old Natasha as the baby sitter for her three younger siblings, when she went out. There is no information on what really transpired when Natasha was left in charge of her siblings, but one can only imagine: Diapers needed to be changed, children needed to be fed, crying infants needed to be put to sleep! Natasha' memory of those days is feeble, she seems to have shut out the distressing events, but the recounting of her lingering pain is dramatic:

Interviewer:	Before that (<i>i.e., the adoption home</i>) do you remember anything?
Natasha:	Well... You see...I don't remember anything and... hmm... I...was crying a lot... I was obnoxious... I was a little brat... I was noisy... I loved to scream a lot.
Interviewer:	Yeah? Why did you love to scream?
Natasha:	I don't know.

By all accounts, Natasha was “a traumatized child” [adoptive mother’s quote] when she was removed from her home due to “abuse and neglect [adoptive father’s quote] sometime in 1995-1996. There is no information as to the nature of abuse and neglect, whether it was extreme physical neglect only or there also was some form of sexual and physical abuse. However, the state’s case for abuse and neglect must have been very strong, because parental rights were terminated against her biological mother’s wishes.

Institutionalization

As Natasha became a ward of the state, she was placed at an institution together with her third sister, Katya, two years her junior. As to the kind of institution, it seems that though the adoptive mother called it “an orphanage”, the place does not seem to have been what is considered to be a typical orphanage. The father referred to it as a “rehabilitation house, like a transition home,” Natasha called it an “adoption home” whereas an adoption specialist from the agency that does adoptions in the Perm region referred to it as “a shelter”. According to the explanations of Mrs. J. S. (the director of the adoption agency mentioned previously), in Perm, sometimes, when children are removed from home, they are temporarily placed in a medical complex, in a wing in a hospital or in some other building, until they are sent to a permanent place, which may be an adoptive home or an orphanage. During the time in this place, children, who have a mental health diagnosis, are supposed to receive treatment. Some children may also receive speech and physical therapy as well as play therapy (personal communication, 25 April 2003). Mrs. J. S.’s description is confirmed by the following note about child protection services in Russia written by the Eastern European Child Abuse Prevention

and Treatment Program, an international organization created in 1995 as a collaborative project of Open Society Institute, Soros Foundations Network and Children's Mental Health Alliance:

A network of special establishments providing social services for families and children has been developed since 1993 to provide the necessary support for children who have suffered mental and physical violence and various forms of neglect and to promote their social reintegration. These institutions provide a temporary home for juveniles who have been experiencing a difficult life and who need assistance. The children are given first aid treatment and a range of medical and social forms of assistance, and there is provision of individual reintegration programmes, temporary placement in a family and other measures.

(canee.net, n.d.)

What was Natasha's life like in the orphanage? She says she does not remember much. Natasha's adoptive mother and father visited the orphanage a couple of times during the eight days they stayed in Russia to have the adoption finalized. Although they did not see the whole place ("I don't think they wanted us to get worried"), mother noticed many things. The building had "an interesting architecture," but it was "kind of run down," "a tired- looking building", "kind of dark, and a light bulb on here and there". The rooms and hallways were "clean" and the place "wasn't falling apart or anything like that." The adjacent grounds were "pretty large" with "a whole lot of trees."

It was obvious that this orphanage/shelter, like the other 45 in the region, was going through difficult financial times and they were struggling to meet the basic needs of the children with very scarce resources⁶. The dearth of resources also seems to have had a

⁶ According to Social Ural Charitable Fund "Noble Deed", founded in August 1999 in Perm, "orphans and orphanages of Perm are in a very serious situation", and "there is not enough money to feed the children properly. The provision of one child is only 16 rubles, i.e., \$0.64 a day... In the last ten years the orphanages received no financing on repairing the buildings, no payment for public utilities and here is the result: the roof leaks, the sewerage needs repairing, there is no money to pay for light, water, central heating." (Retrieved April 20, 2003 from http://www.mtu-net.ru/noble_deed/infoeng.htm)

direct impact on the quality and quantity of food children were having: “You know, the kids don’t have...they hardly had anything to eat” [adoptive mother’s quote]. This dramatic situation seemed to have had a bearing on Natasha: She weighed 48 pounds when she came home. In her mother’s words, she “was just skeletal”. Natasha’s Russian passport picture, taken a week before she left the country, showed a skinny little girl, younger-looking than her age, with sparkling big blue eyes that had noticeable black circles underneath them.

Similar to many other children adopted from Russia, Natasha had hidden medical problems. She had a very serious ear infection, which the parents were not told anything about. She must have been in constant pain while she was in the orphanage. When she had ear surgery in the United States, the doctor found that “her infection was so deep in her ear that the hole was too big...” [adoptive mother’s quote].

The staff of the orphanage seemed “very kind” and “very caring”. Mother believes that, “they really cared about the children. I think they were pretty sad to leave them go...” Her mother thinks that Natasha did not seem to enjoy special privileges, like her younger sister did “because of her (*the younger sister’s*) ability to manipulate people into giving her cookies and candy” and she did not seem to have had any particular attachment to any member of the staff. However, she made friends at the place, friends who are still very alive in her memory:

Interviewer:	Did you have good friends in Russia?
Natasha:	Yes. I did.
Interviewer:	Do you remember them?
Natasha:	At the adoption home I had a very special friend, the best friend I’ve ever had. Her name was Masha.
Interviewer:	Masha?
Natasha:	Her full name was Mashenka, but we called her Masha.
Interviewer:	Ehee. What did you do with her?

Natasha: Well... We sat together at the story time. We spoke together, we played together... we stayed together all the time.

As difficult as her life with her mother was, being placed in an institution must have been strenuous for Natasha. At the very tender age of five, she had already lost a sibling and her affectionate grandmother to death, and an uncle that she considered as a brother to the army. As she was removed from home, she suffered the pain of separation from her mother and the twin sisters that had been in her care. This might have amounted to a feeling of loss of family. There is no information on whether Natasha received any professional help to deal with all these traumatic changes in her life while she was in the institution.

Natasha spent about two years in this institution. She was kindergarten age when she was placed there and first-grade age when she left it on February 6, 1998. However, there is no indication that she received any formal education during this crucial period in her preparation for future schooling. She never had any math and she was never introduced to the letters of the Cyrillic alphabet. Children were sometimes read to "in a reading circle" [Natasha's quote], but Natasha does not seem to remember any other school-related events. At the age of seven and a half she did not know the numbers, and she was never taught to tell the time.

This case of utter educational neglect, while in state's custody, may be attributed to the transitional nature of the institution she was placed in. However, it is hard to comprehend how an institution, supervised by the Department of Education, failed to deliver any formal education. The parents were not given any explanation for it, nor did they ask for one, overwhelmed with the complexities of the adoption process as they

were. The situation was also difficult to explain for Mrs. J. S. and a caseworker from the same agency.

Adoption: The Beginnings

"I was so glad; I finally had a family..."

(Natasha)

Natasha's and Katya's adoption was finalized in early February 1998 by a sympathetic judge in Perm, Russia, who heard the case briefly and determined that Mr. and Mrs. McCaffrey were fit to be parents and would take good care of the siblings.

The adoption was not "accidental" [adoptive father's quote in the local newspaper]. Before they got married in 1990, Mr. McCaffrey had raised two biological daughters, but Mrs. McCaffrey had never had any children and her desire to have a child was "intense" [adoptive mother's quote in the local newspaper]. "Being a mother was always a part of my expectation", Ellen explained. The parents, first, tried for domestic adoption but they were disqualified due to their disabilities (both of them have severe visual impairments) and possibly age (they were in their late forties, then). So, left with the alternative of international adoption, parents decided "to go with a program from Russia"[adoptive mother's quote in the local newspaper]. Making that decision, they were aware that most of the children coming from Russia had spent time in an institution and that "they generally have attachment problems" [adoptive mother's quote]. Mrs. McCaffrey did a lot of reading and met other adoptive parents to prepare herself for the new journey. Mr. McCaffrey had fewer worries, as he himself had grown up in an institution, at the School for the Blind in Benton, Iowa. They decided to adopt the siblings from Perm, then ages

three and seven, when they saw a short video clip that featured the girls and “thought they were perfect for them” [adoptive mother’s quote]. Parents were aware of some of the challenges of this adoption: (a) two children at the same time, (b) older children, and (c) a prior history of institutionalization and severe child neglect. However, they decided to go ahead. Adopting two children at the same time would be less costly. Adopting siblings meant that they had bonding with each other. Additionally, they had heard that the staff of that particular orphanage took good care of children, and children coming from there were not having major attachment problems. As the parents prepared the necessary adoption documents, a scrapbook with pictures of them, other family members, the house, and the family pets was sent to the girls in Russia. The staff showed the pictures to the children frequently, pointing to the father and saying “papa” and to the mother and saying “mamma”. Mother thinks that this process must have helped a lot to prepare Natasha for the new family. She bonded with her adoptive parents quickly, while the process seemed to have been more difficult for her younger sister. This is how Natasha described the whole process:

I was living in an adoption home when I first saw my mother and father. I was so glad, I finally had a family. My little sister was pretty scared. She didn’t know what was happening.

Natasha did not seem to care very much for the orphanage and the staff there. If she did really care for her friends that she was leaving behind, probably her young age did not let her “realize the whole permanence of... of ...her never seeing that place and those people again” [adoptive mother’s quote]. Other factors must also have had an impact on Natasha’s eagerness to have a ‘normal, two-parent’ family. She grew up in a dysfunctional family, with a single mother and no father figure, in a society where the

two-parent family is the norm. Additionally, she was abruptly removed from the familiarity of her small home, which she shared with her siblings and her biological mother and put in a large, impersonal building which she had to share with many unrelated children and many staff who changed every eight hours and who did not develop an affinity with her. Furthermore, she had had a special role in her family as the caretaker of her siblings: “the boss” [an adjective used by Natasha to describe herself in the self-collage] which she had lost upon setting foot in the new place. She inherently felt the need for a family where she could feel “loved” and “safe” [both adjectives were used by Natasha to describe herself in the self-collage]. She saw the adoption as a great opportunity to “finally have a family” [Natasha’s quote]. It is difficult to tell whether the country of adoption, the United States, played a role, as well. In former communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, ‘America’ is the place where the wildest dreams of affluence are realized. Growing up in extreme poverty, where the scarcity of food and other basic life necessities were the norm, it is a great probability that she might have overheard conversations, either in her family home or in the orphanage, on the American prosperity and abundance, and she might have longed to experience it first hand. Last, but not least, as many stories of people who have gone to select children for adoption at orphanages tell⁷, being selected for adoption gives the child in the orphanage a special status ‘of being wanted’. Living in a transition orphanage, Natasha might have seen other children leaving for permanent homes and she might have been yearning for the experience.

⁷ John Irving masterfully describes this situation in his critically acclaimed novel “*The Cider House Rules*”.

Natasha came to Colorado after 14 hours of flight through different time zones on a cold, snowy day. The weather and the scenery here was very much like what she was used to back home. She was happy to meet the dog and the cat, although the dog scared her at first as he looked more like a wolf. She was very eager to start a new life: "I was pretty happy. I had a home and a loving family." She felt "rescued" [an adjective Natasha used in her self-collage to refer to herself].

Adjustment to a New Life

It was the beginning, we weren't sure about anything... We were just fumbling around... So, I don't know how we managed to get through it... I mean, it was really hard...

(Natasha's mother)

Natasha spent her first year in Colorado mostly in the family home, with her stay-at-home mother and her sister. Her father had to go back to work as the adoption had been very costly (expenses amounted to \$25,000). However, he made it a point to spend as much time as he could with the girls and he provided all-round support to his struggling wife. The beginning was difficult for everybody. Mother felt overwhelmed as she juggled taking care of the multiple needs of her two adoptive children without any external support. Mother's biological family, who were very supportive of the adoption, lived in the East Coast and could not provide any help. At the beginning, both daughters had serious medical problems that needed immediate attention. Natasha had a very deep ear infection that took a year to heal enough so that she could have surgery and her sister had two strabismus correction surgeries. Mother remembers that in the summer and fall of the first year they "had to see a doctor every week." To make matters worse, Ellen's father had a stroke a couple of weeks after the girls came home (he eventually died in June of

that year). During this time, Ellen had to make the very painful decision of not traveling to be with her father when he most needed her. She feared that if she separated from her newly adopted daughters, even for a brief period, they might “feel abandoned”.

None of the agencies they had worked with had given the newly created family the appropriate post-placement support services they were supposed to deliver.

Interviewer: Did you have any support after the adoption?

Mother: Pretty much, this agency... the Colorado agency in Denver... Officially, they were supposed to do a follow-up with post placement and that person did come once. At this...that point... we were pretty fed up with that agency because they were saying they wanted us to come down to Denver right away within about six days, in person, to readopt in a court in that county, not Denver County, but I think it might have been Arapahoe county and we said: He, what is this? It would cost us another thousand dollars or something... We would have to go all the way down to Denver and they were pretty nasty about it... Anyway, the person we did the home study with, within a few weeks of our arrival, actually came for an official post-placement visit. She was very uninformed about kids from other countries. Obviously, she does home studies and that type of things on the side... Her real expertise... I think she works with children that have substance abuse problems. I don't really think she had any real knowledge of things. At this point, we had so much going on. So, we did have a kind of falling out with them and then the director of that agency wrote a nasty letter and my husband called and let them know what we thought.

At that time, the County Department of Human Services did not provide any services for families that had adopted their children internationally. Additionally, there were no adoptive parents support groups in the area that the parents could use for help.

The language barrier between the girls and their parents did not prove to be a major hardship. Natasha picked up English “pretty fast, by listening to people around” [Natasha’s quote]. But acting and accepting the new roles of mother and daughter seemed to have been hard for both Ellen and Natasha. Mother remembers having “a couple of real confrontations” with Natasha, who “was a very strong-willed child” and would

scream in Russian if things were not going her way. At the beginning, when the confrontation started, mom would yell back helplessly: "I am doing the best I can!" [adoptive mother's quote]. But as time went by, coached by her husband (whose degree in psychology proved very helpful) mother started affirming her parental role and position. To her big surprise and delight, Natasha accepted Ellen's parental role and this is when, according to mother, the bonding started to happen.

The McCaffreys kept their daughters at home for about a year before they enrolled them in school. During this year Natasha learned to speak English for everyday purposes, bonded with her parents, adjusted to the new family life style and routines, put on the weight that she so desperately needed and had her ear infection cured. She met with her two older sisters (from her father's first marriage) and their families, as well as other members of the extended family on her mother and father's side, and was well received by all. In order to deal with her past issues, her parents took her to a psychologist. Her mother read stories to her in English and also enrolled her in gymnastics classes. Her father gave her understanding and support to be herself by believing that "parents should meet their children where they (i.e. the children) are"[adoptive father's quote in a meeting of the local adoptive parents support group]. Natasha was adjusting well to her new life and her parents felt that after eleven months at home she was ready to go to school. She started school in January 1999. She was eight years old.

Part Two: Natasha Goes to School

This section of the results will present findings on Natasha's school experience, her achievements and challenges and the impact of relevant protection and risks factors in the three contexts relative to Natasha's educational resilience: (a) community, (b) school, and (c) family.

Brief Overview of the Community

The city in which the family resides is situated in the Northern Front Range area in the State of Colorado. The scenery is very picturesque: the city lies close to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and alongside the banks of a River. The population of this mid-sized city (n= 126,848) is predominantly white non-Hispanic (about 89.6%) and well-educated (about half of the population, 42.7%, has completed four or more years of college) [information retrieved from Choice City Website]. The city, frequently referred to as "the Choice City", enjoys a national reputation for the good quality of life enjoyed by its residents (the city ranked 3rd as *the Best Place to Raise a Family* in the Reader's Digest Special Edition list of 1997, 10th on *Best Cities to Have it All* by A&E Network in 1999, one of Top 10 *Best Places to Retire* - Money Magazine, 2000, 4th of the *50 Best Places to Live in the United States* as selected by Men's Journal, May 2003). In 2002, the median household income was \$60,800 for a family of four (higher than the minimum of \$ 41,954 calculated by the Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute needed to cover the basic necessities of life for a family of four [information retrieved from the County Study]. The unemployment rate at the time the research was conducted was 3.5% (which was lower than Colorado and national unemployment rates). A major State University (with

an annual enrollment of 24, 000 students), is the main source of employment. Other major employers are Anheuser Busch, Hewlett Packard, Woodward Governor, Water Pik Technologies and Eastman Kodak.

Besides 600 acres of spacious parks, 20 miles of hike and bike trails, three golf courses, three swimming pools and an ice rink, the city boasts of a cultural arts center, (the activities of which include professional theatre, dance, music, visual arts and children's programs) and the city museum. The library, with its two facilities, has received a high rating for its services: a score of 790 out of 900 in the HAPLR Index, which is Hennen's American Public Library Rating [information retrieved from the County Study].

Another important source of information on the quality of life in the area is "The 2002 County Index of Community Well-being." This document provides data and scores⁸ as quality indicators on the following service categories: (a) basic needs and personal safety, (b) self-sufficiency and strengthening families, (c) advancing health and wellness, (d) nurturing the next generation and (e) supporting seniors and people with disabilities. A study of the scores shows the county to be above Colorado average in all core indicators [information retrieved from the County Study]. It must be noted, however, that a close look at all scores and an inter-comparison of sections reveals that the situation is more complex than what meets the eye at first glance when it comes to the well being of children and youth. While children and youth are doing generally well in school: CSAP Reading and Math,

⁸ In order to determine an indicator's score, the authors, who were not affiliated with county authorities, calculated the relationship of the county to the average score of the 10 largest counties in Colorado. Each number on the scale represents ½ a standard deviation from the mean of 5. The scale is 1-9, with 1 indicating a poor score and 9 indicating an excellent one.

Drop-out Rate and Graduation Rate all received a rating of 7 out of 9, and Nurturing the Next Generation Received 6.3 out of 9, Youth Risk Factors received the fourth lowest score of 5.2.)

Table 3

County Index of Community Well-being

Category	Score
Basic needs and personal safety	6.0
Self-sufficiency and strengthening families	5.8
Advancing health and wellness	6.0
Nurturing the next generation	6.3
Supporting seniors and people with disabilities	7.0

Note. Source: "The 2002 County Index of Community Well-being."

The youth of the community are also appreciative of the advantages they enjoy, as made evident by the number of developmental assets identified by young people⁹ in a recent survey, administered by a local organization in 1998 and tabulated and analyzed by the Search Institute. The school district used a random sample of classrooms in grades

⁹ The framework of developmental assets was developed by the Search Institute. As explained on the official website of the Search Institute, "This framework identifies 40 critical factors for young people's growth and development. When drawn together, the assets offer a set of benchmarks for positive child and adolescent development. The assets clearly show important roles that families, schools, congregations, neighborhoods, youth organizations, and others in communities play in shaping young people's lives. Search Institute research has found that these assets are powerful influences on adolescent behavior-both protecting young people from many different problem behaviors and promoting positive attitudes and behaviors. This power is evident across all cultural and socioeconomic groups of youth. There is also evidence from other research that assets have the same kind of power for younger children." (Retrieved May 5, 2003 from <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>)

7– 12 in both regular and alternative schools. The average number of assets identified by the local youth was 20.1 out of the “ideal” 31. This was above the national average (n=18). Table 4 contains data on the percentage of local children who identified different levels of assets compared against national data. As the reader will notice, the percentage of young people who identified over 21 assets is higher locally than nationally.

Table 4

Percent of Children with Different Levels of Assets

	0-10 Assets	11-20 Assets	21-30 Assets	31-40 Assets
Local	14	39	34	13
National	20	42	30	8

Note. Source: Information retrieved from the County Study.

Another way of looking at the data from this survey is the local comparison to the national break-down of the percentage of youth that indicated they have each of 40 assets. Locally, more than 50% of the students identified 8 external assets and 11 internal assets, whereas the respective national figures are 5 for external assets and 8 for internal assets.

Brief Overview of the School District

Welcome to P. School District, two-time gold medal award winner for outstanding student test scores and graduation rates.

(From the official website of the school district)

Natasha has attended classes in the P. School District. During the school year 2001-2002 this school district taught 24,162 students enrolled in 29 elementary schools, 8 junior high schools and 4 high schools. The majority of the students (80.6%) were white, 13.2% were Hispanic and the other 6.2 % were identified as Asian or Pacific Islanders, African American and American Indian /Alaska. About one fourth (24.9%) of all students in K-6th grades participated in free and or/reduced-price lunch program. (School District Newsletter, 2003)

In the school year 2001-2002, the school district provided employment for 3,270 people, of whom 1,701 were teachers and other licensed professionals. The ratio of certified staff to students was 1:20.6. The teachers were qualified and experienced: 55.4% held master's degrees or above, and they averaged 12 years of experience. (School District Newsletter, 2003)

The school district was moderately well-funded: During the school year 2001-2002 the school district had a budget of \$165,122,613. The funding per pupil was \$5,107, lower than the Colorado average of \$6,313. (Colorado Department of Education Financial Information)

The school district has adopted "The Five Cores Plus" program as the heart of its standards-based curriculum. The Five Cores of Learning include: (a) learning,

communication and reasoning, (b) citizenship and social studies, (c) cultural studies, (d) mathematics, science and technology and (e) wellness and living skills. Most of the students (80%) use the standards-based curriculum, but the school district also offers several alternative programs or curricula either on a school wide basis or as a track within a school.

The school district offers a wide array of pupil services that include amongst others Special Education, the Extended School Year, Counseling, English as a Second Language, Title One (the Federal program that gives preschool, kindergarten and elementary school students an opportunity to receive extra assistance and support in reading and math), Migrant Outreach, Safe Schools Project, Alternative Schools, and others. About one in every ten students (9.9%) was served by special education programs in the school year 2001-2002. [Official website of the school district]

The special education services are intended to cater to the educational needs of the individual student. Whenever possible, these services are provided in the least restricted environment. The assessment of children with suspected learning difficulties is done in the following areas: educational, (b) communicative, (c) psychological, (d) health, (e) social and (f) transitional/ vocational. The six models of services include:

(a) *consultative services*, which allow for the student to take all his /her classes as a regular classroom student by assisting the regular classroom teacher to develop special ways for meeting the child's needs; (b) *itinerant services*, which are provided by a special educator in areas directly related to the child's disability, while the student continues full time as a regular education student; (c) *mild or moderate needs services* ensure that the student may be taught in a pull-out or inclusion model or a combination of these models;

(d) *the self-contained model* provides the opportunity for the child to receive all his/her educational instruction and support in a self-contained classroom; (e) *homebound services* provide education to a child at his/her home if a physician has determined that his/her condition prevents him/her from attending a public school for an extended period of time (4 weeks or more); and (f) *approved facilities model* takes the education to the facility the student is in if his/her conditions require it. The related and/or support services provided by the school district include: assistive technology, audiological services, nursing services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychological services, social work services, speech /language, transition and transportation.

According to the information provided at the official school district website, the students have displayed steady indicators of success: in 2002, 90 percent met behavior standards, the attendance rate was 94.9% and the graduation rate was 92.7%. The students have also been doing well in standardized tests. Since 1997, the year when the first CSAP¹⁰ scores were released, the students of this school district have consistently averaged from 9 to 20 percentage points above the state average in each subject, at each grade level.

For its achievement in education the school district was named a “Gold Medal District” by Expansion Management Magazine for 2000–01, after earning the “Blue Ribbon District” for seven straight years. The Gold Medal places this school district in the top 16 percent of school districts nationwide. Additionally, the school district was a recipient of the 2003 “What Parents Want” Award, which recognizes the top 14 percent of the nation’s public school districts for meeting the needs of families and providing

educational options for students. The criteria for this award are the percent of graduates going to college and the average ACT/SAT scores over the past several years.

The school district enjoys the all-round support of the community. In November 2000, the voters voted for a mill levy override that amounted to \$175 million over 10 years to build new schools and to increase staff salaries. Additionally, the local businesses contribute regularly to the School District Foundation with money and in kind: computers, office equipment and so on. More than 3,500 volunteers help in the classroom through the Partnership and Volunteer Program. Ten percent of the volunteers are university students, and the remaining 90 percent are parents and other community members. The University also supports the school district through its joint Research and Development Center, staffed mainly by University professors and graduate students from the School of Education.

The First School

I was very disappointed with the first school. I felt that they really failed Natasha in terms of helping her to catch up with where she was supposed to be.

(Natasha's mother)

Natasha started school in the spring semester of 1999. She was enrolled in I. Elementary. Although not far from her home, this was not her neighborhood school. The parents chose I. Elementary over their neighborhood school because the former is a magnet site for students needing English as a Second Language (ESL) services. The

¹⁰ This is academic testing administered every year to students in third through tenth grade. The tests are subject-based, covering Reading, Writing, Math and Science.

school, which is located in the semi-rural northwest corner of the city, serves approximately 400 students from Headstart through sixth grade. Sixty-one (61) percent of the students of the school have Spanish speaking parents and 80 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches. A large number of students are transient, they have not previously attended any school regularly. The committed staff (with an average of 10 years of teaching experience) and a very dedicated school principal (who in 2002 was one of three finalists selected by the Colorado Association of Elementary School Principals for Colorado's National Distinguished Elementary School Principal for 2003) have been struggling for years with the poor student achievements¹¹ as measured by standard tests as well as lack of parents' participation in their children's education.

Although Natasha had never been to school before, she was assigned to the second grade, which was her age-appropriate grade. No placement tests or assessments were done to determine Natasha's readiness for school in general and second grade in particular. Her mother, who was aware that her initial academic needs as a post-institutionalized international adoptee, who had not been through kindergarten and first grade, were very different from mainstream students, was greatly disappointed:

They didn't seem to want to listen to us, our explanations of how she had never really... she had never had any education..... She was eight in January of '99. They insisted on putting her in second grade and there was just no way in the world she could do any second grade work and she was totally lost. I felt that right from the beginning they were pretty much not listening to us, the parents, and what we knew about her...and they just.....

¹¹ According to the 2002 School Accountability Report (SAR) by the Colorado Department of Education, the SAR student achievement rating for this school was *low*. (Source: <http://reportcard.cde.state.co.us/reportcard/CommandHandler.jsp>, retrieved May15, 2003.)

To understand what Natasha's mother meant by "*she was totally lost*" one must take into account the following facts:

1. Based on the description of Natasha's English at this time by Natasha herself and her mother, it might be assumed that Natasha's English language mastery skills were at the intermediate level of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)¹², while she was rapidly losing her mother tongue. BICS proficiency is heavily based on contextual clues. In order to operate successfully in an academic setting where some of the learning occurs in academic situations with reduced contextual cues, she needed to be at the second level of proficiency known as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPS)¹³.
2. The school was a new social environment that Natasha had never had the chance to experience. According to curricular requirements she needed to display self-control, be able to handle conflicts appropriately, be responsible for belongings and property and demonstrate organizational skills [Curriculum Guide at a Glance, 2003]. There was a strong probability that Natasha did not possess these important skills because (a) she had not been through kindergarten and first grade, and (b) she had been placed in an institution where her development had been arrested at the time when, according to the well-known Erikson's developmental stages, she was supposed to acquire and develop them.

¹² Glennen (2002) explains that BICS proficiency is attained when bilingual children are fluent in a second language for day-to-day social interactions or interactions that have lots of contextual cues. This level of fluency is achieved quickly, typically within 1 to 3 years of exposure to a second language.

3. All the second-grade courses she was taking were built upon academic knowledge and skills that other students in her class had acquired in kindergarten, first grade and first semester of second grade. A quick study of “Curriculum Guide at a Glance” indicates what Natasha was supposed to have mastered at that time to be able to successfully attend classes at the level in which she was enrolled. These are a few examples: In *Language Arts, Writing and Literacy*, she should have mastered reading strategies to gain meaning from print, writing strategies to produce written and spoken materials, grammar and spelling, etc. In *Math* she was supposed to know numbers up to 99, bar graphs, how to read a clock, computation concepts of addition and subtraction, etc. In *Science*, she should have mastered concepts about balance and motion, plants and plant growth, life cycles, environments, air weather and astronomy, etc.

How did she do in school? According to “Report of Progress, Second Grade, Year 1998-1999”, she showed herself to be “a very energetic and motivated learner” and also thanks to the “continued support at home” she “adjusted very well socially to a school setting”. She received *Most of the Time* (the highest rating) for Effort for Personal Development. She struggled in both Reading and Math as she was Below Grade in both of them, but she liked Reading more than Math, as she showed more effort in it. The results indicate that she must have been frustrated with Social Studies and Science. For both of these classes Achievement was graded as *Needs Improvement* and Effort goes from *Most of the Time* for the third quarter to *Part of the Time* for the fourth quarter. She did very well in Art (Achievement: *Satisfactory*, Effort: *Most of the Time*), Music (Achievement: *Satisfactory*

¹³ Glennen (2002) explains that this level of proficiency takes from 5 to 9 years to achieve. Most of the mainstream second grade students are at this level of proficiency.

and *Excellent, Effort: Most of the Time*) and Physical Education (Achievement: *Satisfactory* and *Excellent, Effort: Most of the Time*).

Natasha loved her second grade teacher who “was nice, ...was fun, and... was very pretty, too.” Mother believed that this teacher “really wanted to help Natasha, but she didn’t really know what to do”.

Natasha also received ESL classes, which her parents considered of little help. The classes were targeted to the Hispanic students and the ESL teacher did not show any regard for the fact that Natasha’s mother tongue was Russian and this was her first year in a school setting. This is how Mother remembers this class:

They put her in an ESL class...this is an example... in that semester ...the spring semester of 99, because she still was not a native English speaker. She had learned a lot of English by then but ...Any other kid in her class was Hispanic and the teacher would speak to Natasha in English and would speak to the other kids in Spanish. And then she gave them this bizarre homework. And I don’t know if it was part of teaching ESL but it was math. Double digits math addition problems. But she didn’t have any idea what she...I even tried to help her ...but it was torture. She couldn’t even add two plus two and they wanted her to add 34 and 16. I don’t know what that had to do with teaching English as a Second Language. I thought...like this teacher...I mean this teacher could have at least asked her to teach her a couple of Russian phrases or something like that. Just didn’t seem interested...

With the parents’ persistence, Natasha repeated the second grade with the same teacher during the school year 1999-2000. Natasha did not seem to have any regrets on having repeated the same grade twice. She reported it as a matter of fact:

I had to stay in second grade for two years because I came by in the middle of the year, and it was almost time for our vacation.

The Report of Progress, Second Grade, year 1999-2000 indicates that Natasha’s academic engagement was not diminished by the repetition of the grade. She approached her learning with “refreshing enthusiasm” and “she truly made great gains”. Also thanks

to “help/support at home” she managed to show “fine growth in all academic areas”. Although her Reading was at Below Grade for the first three quarters, she attained the grade level in the fourth quarter thanks to “the consistency at home with reading”. She was at her Grade Level in Math in all quarters, although the teacher advised to “practice facts and concepts of time for math”. She did well (i.e., *Satisfactory*) in Handwriting, Social Studies, Science and Physical Education and very well (i.e., *Excellent*) in Music and the last two quarters in Art. In the Personal Development areas, she was graded on Effort as *Most of the Time* for the four quarters on 72% of the domains. Her weakest area was: Displays Self-Control, where she received *Part of the Time* for the four quarters and Demonstrates Organizational Skills, where she received *Part of the Time* for the first two quarters. The teacher must have been impressed with Natasha as she wrote: “She has an amazing spirit”.

Natasha continued her third grade in the same school. This time she had a new teacher. The Report of Progress, Third Grade, Year 2000-2001 indicates that Natasha struggled with Math during the first two quarters, as shown by her Achievement Grade (Improving) and the comments on the 2nd Quarter which specify as areas that needed more attention “time, money and basic facts”; and on the 4th Quarter: “Please work on mastering multiplication facts at home this summer.” However, she did very well in all the other classes. She enjoyed going to school and the teacher observed that she was “very enthusiastic about learning,” and “very creative”. She started to enjoy reading and her teacher noted in the Report of Progress that, “she is beginning to be a fantastic reader.” In Personal Development she had three areas of weakness: Displays Self Control, Listens and Follows Directions and Demonstrates Organizational Skills.

Natasha did not make any special comments about the first school. However, a goodness of fit analysis indicates the diversity of the school's student body and its transient nature allowed for her to be just another student, rather than a foreigner and an outsider. The fact that the other students were low achievers may also have been an advantage in regard to the level of pressure she experienced to succeed when she did lack appropriate skills and knowledge. Additionally, Natasha was an at-risk student amid a body of at-risk students. The experience of the teachers and their commitment to at-risk students was another important protective factor.

The Current School

The difference is that the staff here wants to be here because they want to work here with students that have higher needs. They want to make that difference in their lives.

(From the interview with the school principal)

Natasha went to a new school in the fourth grade: P. Elementary. Unhappy with the lack of differentiated support for Natasha's needs in I. Elementary, the parents decided to take their daughters to the neighborhood school, as, at least, this would solve the problem of transportation.

Natasha did not find the new school very different from the previous one. In many regards, P. Elementary is like I. Elementary. It is an average size school (in the school year 2002-2003, P. Elementary was school to 408 K-6th grade students) and the student demographics are comparable in regards to diversity and socio-economic status. The school is located in the northwestern part of the city, customarily inhabited by working class families of Hispanic origin. Most of the school students live in homes that are rentals with typically unkempt front yards or in a mid-sized, run-down trailer park. A

small group of students are bussed from other more affluent areas of the city. The student body is very diverse: 46.5% of students belongs to an ethnic minority (mostly Hispanic: 39% of the total), and “a high number of students live in poverty” [school principal’s quote]: 72.8% receive free or reduced-price lunch (this figure is about three times higher than the district average). Many of the students, more than in any other elementary school in the city, “have on any given day one or more parents or a significant adult in their lives who is incarcerated” [school principal’s quote].

The school staff is made up of 58 members (38 certified and 20 classified). Nineteen (19) teachers (i.e., 50% of the certified staff) hold master’s degrees or above. The average years of teaching experience of the staff is 17.47 years (higher than that of the school district and according to the local newspaper among the highest in the district, which is somewhat unusual for teachers at high-poverty schools (Nick, 2002). The school principal is proud of this accomplishment:

...the teachers really want to be here. This is where they want to be. And I think that would be true of every elementary school. If you went and asked them, they would all say, “the staff is very loyal, the staff really cares about the kids.” The difference is that the staff here wants to be here because they want to work here with students that have higher needs. They want to make that difference in their lives. So, that makes it unique, in the way that they want to be that, that’s really their passion. Umm... very little turnover. Teachers come and they stay forever, they don’t want to leave. So, that speaks a lot for the school.

The school principal recognizes the following characteristics of the school teachers:

- (a) they “are really a community of learners. They are really ready to embrace new instructional pedagogy as long as they really believe in that, as long as they feel it’s researched and you know, best practices...”
- (b) “they are willing to do what’s the very best for kids,” “they care for them”,
- (c) “they are willing to put in the extra time” and
- (d) “their expectations are high”.

Built in 1956 and remodeled in 1999, the school building has a simple architecture. It is almost U-shaped, with classes alongside the long halls on the two sides and the administrative offices and the reception area near the entrance. A well-equipped media center is at the lower part of the U and so is a nice spacious gym, part of which also serves as cafeteria. Exhibits of students' artwork, which are changed frequently, decorate the walls and the halls (the Chinese slippers and the Egyptian clay work as well as self-collages were a real attraction!). Portraits of female Hispanic leaders in the main hall draw the attention of the visitor and so does the welcoming sign in two languages as well as brochures in Spanish and English. The school is always very clean and tidy and it conveys a warm feeling and a sense of community. The staff smile at the visitors and they treat parents (some of whom speak little or no English) with apparent respect. Students move from one classroom to another or to the two computer labs in an orderly fashion without much prompting from the teachers, who accompany them. The teachers and staff seem very caring (I noticed many occasions of openly "motherly" attitudes towards the students by making sure they had washed their hands and were getting a decent lunch). Students look relaxed, comfortable and happy both in and out of class. In the courtyard and in the cafeteria they act like typical elementary school children: giggling and playful. Very rare fights are short-lived, as they are tactfully interrupted by the watchful staff.

The district-adopted curriculum is taught in school and conspicuous efforts are made to implement it rigorously. The school has a block schedule that allows for two hours of literacy instruction, an hour of math and an hour of social sciences or social studies each day. The school also provides a full array of student services amongst which are ESL,

Title 1, Literacy, Special Education, Student/Teacher Assistance Team (STAT), programs for gifted and talented, Extended Learning Opportunities (which provides after school help with homework), outreach services for families of academically at-risk students, and counseling. The enrichment programs include Robotics Lego League, Girls Science and Technology, Chess Club, Odyssey of the Mind, Math Olympiads and SWAT (Skills with Art and Teamwork- a program that combines literacy and science with art.).

The focus of the school administration is to provide a “safe”, “positive” and “nurturing environment for each student” [from the school’s mission statement] so that each student can succeed. The teachers have high expectations for the students. “They raise the bar higher in the hope that the kids will get there” [school counselor’s quote]. The efforts of the teachers have paid off. In 2003, the school’s overall academic performance was rated as “Average¹⁴” and “improving in all areas” by the Colorado Department of Education. The “Average” rating was higher than that of other schools in the district serving a comparable population of students.

Parental involvement in school is low. According to the school principal, “both parents have to work; some of the parents have to work two jobs.” Natasha’s mother is of the opinion that another factor that might contribute to low parental involvement is that “sometimes a lot of Hispanic parents don’t really feel comfortable, because you know , they figure out whatever... a mainstream institution or something like that.” The school relies “on volunteers from other places more than parent volunteers” [school principal’s quote].

¹⁴ The system of classification has four categories: *low, average, high* and *excellent*.

Fourth Grade

Natasha came to this school in the fourth grade. Transition was difficult as all the other children had been together since kindergarten. However, in a year and a half she has been here, she has made tremendous progress.

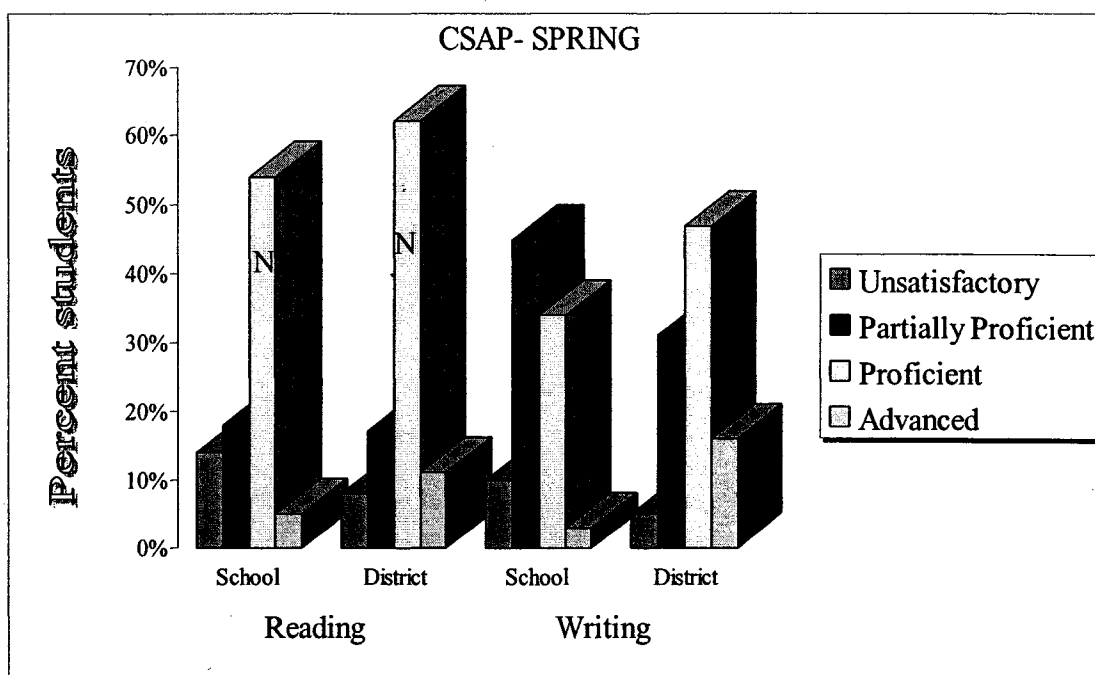
(From the interview with the school counselor)

Natasha did not mind changing schools. Although she admits she still misses some of her former teachers, she seemed to take going to a new school as a fact of life, accustomed maybe as she is with changes in her life. The parents took the opportunity of the new placement to express their concerns on Natasha's problem areas. They asked to have her tested for special education on the grounds of her history of trauma caused by abuse and neglect and institutionalization. None of the teachers, who were approached to consider her for special education, agreed that she had any learning problems; although they concurred she was having a slow start. Natasha's mother thinks that the reason her teachers failed to see her learning difficulties is that Natasha tries hard and "she is really good at fitting in if she has to". Although she may have difficulties "it could be that she doesn't like to ask for help, she doesn't like to admit in front of the other kids that she doesn't understand something and on and on." Hence, Natasha was not assessed for special education and she was placed in a regular class without any supports. The parents were disappointed. However, in general, as far as Natasha's school experience goes, mother is of the opinion that at the new school the "situation has been somewhat better", mostly thanks to "smaller class sizes" and the "staff members... who really care and want to teach the kids."

How did Natasha do in school during the fourth grade? She was an average student. Her GPA¹⁵ in academic classes (Reading, Language, Spelling, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science) was 2.63 and her overall GPA was 2.76 (she performed the poorest during the second quarter: GPA= 2.44). She struggled in Math (Math GPA=2.00) where she put less effort during the second and third quarter, missed some assignments and did not turn homework in on time. She did well in Science (GPA =3.25) and Spelling (GPA=3.00). She also did well in Art, Music and Physical Education (GPA=3). As regards Personal Development, she got M (*Most of the Time*, the highest grade) in all quarters for 12 of the 18 areas of Personal Development. She continued to display problems in these four areas: “displays self-control”, “demonstrates organizational skills”, “attends to task and used time wisely” and “completes assignments on time.”

In spring 2002 Natasha participated in the CSAP testing in Reading and Writing. She tested Proficient in Reading (her score was 615) and Partially Proficient in Writing (her score of 472). In Reading she did better than 32% of the students in her school and 25% of the students in the school district. In writing she did like the majority of the students in her school, but poorer than the majority of the students in her school district. Figure 5 shows where she stood in regard to the other students in her school and in her school district.

¹⁵ The school district uses the following system to calculate the GPA: A, A-, A+:4 points, B, B-, B+:3 points, C, C-, C+:2 points and D, D-, D+:1 point.



Note. N stands for Natasha.

Figure 5. Natasha's CSAP Results as Compared to Other Students

Natasha also participated in a Level Test¹⁶ administered by the school district in April 2002. In Math she scored in the 31st percentile and her performance level was determined to be "Basic".

Socially, Natasha might have had some difficulty fitting in. Initially, she was not included by her peers. She was even harassed by some boys on the school bus. In another incident, a classmate took possession of one of her small school pictures and painted a moustache and glasses on her face with a black marker, and also wrote: "Natasha is gay" a couple of times. The fact she was adopted and that she was from Russia did not seem to

¹⁶ Level tests measure the curriculum standards of the school district and of Colorado. The performance levels are measured in the following terms: "In Progress", "Basic", "Proficient" and "Advanced".

have played any role in the situation as it was never mentioned in any of the interviews with Natasha, her mother, her teachers, or her peers. According to the school counselor, it was more because, initially, Natasha seemed to lack appropriate socialization skills, her clothes had a different style from those of her peers, and her peers were judgmental of her parents' visual impairment. Natasha's attitude to all of this seems to be very mature:

Interviewer: Do you care what people think about you?

Natasha: I don't care [*said without any hesitation*]. If they make bad remarks about me, I don't care, but if it gets out of hand, then I start to care. And I go talk or try to work it out myself. But if it goes on for about a week, I just go tell a teacher and let her work it out with both of us.

Interviewer: And how do you work it out by yourself?

Natasha: Well... how I work it out by myself is, I don't talk to the friend for a week and then she comes back and asks me for my forgiveness. I say, well, "Do you remember what you did?" and she says, "I didn't do anything," but I still forgive her.

The Fifth Grade

This section covers the period when this research project was conducted. Findings have been organized around variables.

Teachers

Classroom teacher. Natasha started the fifth grade in August 2003 at P. Elementary. She had a new classroom teacher, Mrs. C., who taught her Literacy, Math, Science and Social Studies. Mrs. C. had a master's degree in Education and 11 years of teaching experience. She was excited about teaching and seemed to relate well to her students. This is how she summarized her teaching philosophy: "I believe every child has the

capacity to learn. Some learn in different manners, but the expectation needs to be there.”

She had a no nonsense approach in class, she expected her students to behave appropriately, be on task and follow instructions. However, she seemed to be relaxed and did not mind it if occasionally the students would be just kids. She combined working as a class with group work and pair work effectively. She introduced the new concepts carefully, building on the students’ previous knowledge and scaffolding into higher concepts. She spoke softly and used examples from students’ everyday life. She used humor sparingly, but successfully. These were my favorites:

Never, ever, ever, ever, from now till the end of time, NEVER add denominators. The God of Math will get down on Earth and slap you dead! [She was explaining addition and subtraction of fractions.]

This is a CSAP moment brought to you by Mrs. C. on the chalkboard! [She was reviewing for CSAP.]

Mrs. C. treated her students with respect and she made an effort to keep them generally engaged in class. However, it was my impression that she expected them to do their part and follow her without being prompted to do so. She rarely checked if all students were following her, especially in Math, although she welcomed questions and took time answering them. She would involve in discussion the same four or five students who were willing to participate and never called on the students who did not raise their hand. This strategy might have been intended to increase the students’ independence and their sense of responsibility for their learning and it seemed to work well with about 20% of the students in class. Natasha was not one of them.

Other teachers. Natasha had four other teachers, one for Art, one for Music, one for PE and another one for Media and Library. Of these teachers that she met once a week for 55 minutes, the Art teacher seemed to be the one to be more connected with her, although Natasha did not set her apart during our first interview. Mrs. S. was young, she had only 2 years of teaching experience, but she really loved what she was doing and it was easy to be infected by her excitement while being in her class. Asked to summarize her teaching philosophy she wrote the following:

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he/she grows up”-Pablo Picasso. My teaching is based upon DBAE: Discipline Based Art Education, which includes Art History, Art Aesthetics, Art Production and Art Criticism. I believe in an all-round education which integrates all subject areas and students.”

Mrs. S. had a very high regard for Natasha. She considered her “unique, incredibly creative and expressive, who stood out as an artistic mind.” She believed that “setting high expectations” for her “gets great results”. Mrs. S. took great pains to encourage every student to do his/her best and she exhibited the best work of her students in the hall.

The music teacher, Mrs. H. had 26 years of teaching experience and she had first met Natasha at I. Elementary as she also taught music there. She taught a big class, about 35-36 students and she had very little interaction with individual students. I attended one of her classes: the material was interesting and she combined appreciation for music and knowledge about it with singing. Students participated willingly and most of them paid attention, some of them seemed to enjoy the class.

I also attended one of the PE classes, although I did not have the chance to talk with the teacher. The class was very well organized and Mr. U. kept all the students involved

and on task, although more than 35 students participated in it. The teacher tried to encourage participation of all students in all activities according to their abilities.

Curriculum

Natasha was taught the School District approved curriculum. According to the Curriculum Guide published by the School District, this curriculum was “rigorous” and “standards-based”. The standards were said to “meet and exceed Colorado’s educational requirements”. The curriculum laid out the 5th grade standards for each core learning area grouped as follows: (a) Language Arts, Writing and Literacy, (b) Math, (c) Science, (d) Geography, History, Economics and Civics, (e) Art, (f) Music, and (g) Information Literacy and Education Technology. In my opinion, the curriculum showed clear efforts to provide a solid and well-rounded academic basis of knowledge to the students in addition to multiple opportunities to acquire and practice a vast array of age-appropriate skills. The curriculum also provided opportunities for character education as well as art and music appreciation. The requirement for the participation of all students in CSAP and the focus of the school to improve its results seemed to be a great encouragement for the teachers to implement standards-based teaching, although they did not seem to be particularly partial to it. The textbooks and classroom materials provided a good support for the implementation of the curriculum and efforts were made to include technology and computers extensively and naturally.

Class Size and Diversity

Natasha’s regular class consisted of 24 students, 11 boys and 13 girls. The composition of the class was diverse: About one third of the students were of Hispanic

origin, one student was African American and one student was a child with developmental disabilities. The student with developmental disabilities was pulled out most of the time.

Relationship with Peers

Most of Natasha's friends were her school peers, fifth grade students. All people who completed the questionnaires (three teachers and her parents) agreed that she had made friends at school. They were two years younger than she was, although nobody noticed the difference in age (neither her parents, nor the teachers, who completed the questionnaires, checked the statement: *She usually plays /hangs out with children younger than herself*). Although she "liked to mix with the more popular crowd" [a quote from the questionnaire completed by a teacher], she did not seem to be part of it. It seemed that in her class "the popular crowd" consisted of four or five young girls and a couple of boys who took on the more "mature" role. The girls dressed up older than their age, changed their hair style daily, had manicures and used lip gloss. Natasha was aware that she did not belong to the group and seemed a little resentful. From my observations in class, during recess, at the school cafeteria and in her neighborhood, I got the impression, which was later confirmed by her parents' observations, school counselor's comments and the remarks of a teacher that two factors contributed to the situation: Natasha' attire and her behavior. Natasha's clothes were more conservative than most of the other young girls in her class and not always stylish. Natasha's behavior swung between two extremes. At certain times, it could be interpreted as "bossy" and even sanctimonious. This could be attributed to the hidden age difference and her "take

charge” attitude. And at other times it was very childish (I noticed her clap her hands with joy like a five-year-old child and rock herself in her chair for a good five minutes in the computer lab¹⁷).

Natasha’s parents were of the opinion that Natasha tried hard to fit in and she could succumb to peer pressure to the extent that “she does not show all the sides of her personality, she does not let herself shine.” But they thought that peer pressure was mostly demonstrated in her desire to wear jewelry and make-up, things that they disapproved of. However, they believed that her attitude towards the academics was most influenced by her teachers and staff at school rather than her peers. In my interviews with Natasha, her teachers and her friends I did not notice any impact of her friends on school achievement ideology. Additionally, as reported by her best friends Daisy and Maggie, most of the conversations about school focused on the social aspects of school rather than the academics. Natasha could not even tell if her best friend Daisy was doing well in school (Natasha’s mother reported that she was encountering difficulties and I got the same feeling from my interview with the young girl).

Grades

Natasha’s report card for the first two quarters of the fifth grade gave the following information: Natasha received instruction at her grade level in Reading, Language and Math. She received a GPA of 3.33 for the academic classes and an overall GPA of 3.22 for the first quarter and a GPA of 3.00 for the second quarter both in academic classes and overall. She was doing very well in Reading (she got A in both Quarters) but she was

¹⁷ It was brought to my attention by the peer reviewer that both of these behaviors are very “institutional” in nature, not uncommon to fall back on them for post-

having problems in Spelling and Social Studies; the cumulative GPA for the first two quarters for both these classes is 2.50). In the Areas of Personal Development she was having problems in the following areas: Displays Self-control, Attends to Task and Uses Time Wisely, Listens and Follows Directions (she was graded with P, i.e., demonstrating effort only *Part of the Time*).

Although her grades were good, Natasha admitted to having difficulty in Math and Social Studies. Her parents were very worried about the difficulties she was experiencing in Math, in particular. She had difficulty telling time, did not have a clear concept of division and was unable to do any computation mentally. These deficiencies were creating hardships for her to master the fifth grade curriculum. Natasha's mother had three intertwining explanations for the challenges Natasha was encountering in math: (a) Natasha's prior history of abuse and institutionalization had affected some of her cognitive abilities in general and abstract thinking in particular, (b) in the four years that Natasha had been attending classes, the school system had not provided adequate support for her, (c) Natasha's natural abilities were more artistic and creative than mathematical. Mother's efforts to advocate for her daughter had not been very successful:

And this year, I wrote a big long letter to her fifth grade teacher about her situation especially the problems with math and ummmm... And I think she was kind of unresponsive to it. She did talk a little bit about it to me at the first teacher conference. But she said things like in terms of math , ummm.. she said, "Now, she is in fifth grade, I can't interrupt the class to help one child or a couple of children who aren't understanding basic math concepts. I have to teach this." She is basically saying that she has to teach fifth grade math and if some kids aren't up to that, then it is up to their parents to do something about it.

institutionalized adoptees.

Natasha's Academic Engagement

It was her parents' perception that Natasha enjoyed going to school because, "She likes learning" and she "seems to enjoy the social part of it." Natasha's parents also believed that she liked her teachers and other staff and got along well with them. Natasha herself said only good things about her teachers using the attributes "fun and nice" to describe them. The only thing she admitted she didn't like about her current school was related to lunch ("very little time" and "not enough to eat").

Natasha's love of reading was a very important factor in ensuring her academic engagement. She loved to read both fiction (narrative and poetry) and non-fiction and this was recognized by her herself in the interview: "I love to read. I love to read. Any kind of book mystery, fiction, nonfiction, historical fiction, and funny books, those I love the most. And fantasy... I really like...like Unicorn, all kinds of books..." In the profile of herself "Who Am I?" reading came first in "Things I Enjoy Doing", second (after recess) in "School Subjects I Enjoy" and first in "Some Things I Really Do Well". Her current teacher recognized it by writing in the questionnaire she completed: "She loves to read!" Her mother thought that her love of reading was the main contributing factor to her school success: Natasha started achieving "once she did learn to read". As to what accounted for her love of reading and good reading skills, Natasha's mother explained it with a combination of three factors: (a) her own "natural interest and abilities", (b) the good job of the second grade teacher who "got that going" and (c) parental influence. Natasha's mother was an avid reader and there were lots of books in the family home. She also used to read to Natasha every evening until she started reading on her own and she continued to take her to the public library once a week.

Natasha seemed to enjoy the involvement in the learning process and overcoming of difficulties, provided she was an active participant and had a degree of control over the experience. I observed it in many situations. These are a few examples: Natasha was actively attentive as she worked with me in the library for an hour and a half, learning how to tell time by drawing clocks and coloring sections of the clock for “past” and “to” in different colors. On another occasion, I worked with her for about an hour on the concept of division by using crayons (she had been drawing for me and crayons were at hand when she asked a question about division). Not only was she attentive all the time, but she clapped her hands with joy any time she was successful in solving the problem. We could have continued for another hour if her parents had not interrupted her because I needed to leave. On yet another occasion in the computer lab, she remained seated and continued working at her project even when the teacher had left to ask for help from the media specialist and the other students were chatting. She was trying different commands on her own to solve the logging-on issue every student was experiencing. She remembered her student ID number by heart, although the teacher had only said it once at the beginning of class. She asked me for help, tried my suggestions and was not frustrated that none of them worked. She then decided to wait for her teacher to come back.

Natasha’s desk was well-organized. She was generally attentive in class and she participated willingly in all class activities and followed all class rules, even when she would admit to me afterwards that she had not enjoyed that particular activity in that Music or Physical Education class. She really enjoyed going to the school library. Instead of joining her classmates, who would spend most of the time chatting with each other,

she kept searching for the right book. (In certain cases she seemed more mature than many of her classmates.) In an art class, students were doing paper- machete. Natasha was among very few students who followed all instructions conscientiously and she emerged as a group leader as she made sure that all her group members were doing the job right.

When the task was beyond her grasp cognitively, mostly in Math classes, she resorted to her wits. This is an example. In a Math class, she was given the following task: She first needed to try to reduce the fractions on the sheet. Then she needed to color the reducible fractions in yellow and the ones she could not reduce in blue. When all coloring was done, a word would appear on the sheet. The success of the task would be evaluated based on whether the students were able to come up with the right word. I had talked with Natasha prior to class and she had explained to me that she did not understand the reduction of fractions at all. As students started working on the sheet, the teacher went around and offered to help the students that asked for her help. Natasha did not ask for help. She seemed to focus intensely on her sheet. Then she got up and went to the pencil sharpener and sharpened her yellow pencil. Went back to her desk and started coloring. In a minute she was back at the pencil sharpener: she sharpened her black pencil. Went back and worked for a minute. Up she was again ...All in all, she went to the pencil sharpener seven times. Every instance, she took time to put the wood leftovers in the trash can... When the class was over (this was the last activity) I checked her sheet. To my surprise, she had colored the sheet appropriately. Natasha smiled and told me that she had guessed the correct answer right away, although she still did not have a clue how to reduce fractions. And she added, "My mom will help me at home. I hate Math. Math is a

nightmare.” I talked with Natasha’s teacher the next day and, busy as she had been helping other students, she had not noticed Natasha’s disengagement.

Natasha rarely asked her classroom teacher for help, even when she encountered difficulties. It was my impression that she was somewhat embarrassed to admit in front of her classmates that she was unable to do what others were doing. The desire to fit in seemed to take precedence over her learning needs. In all the classes I observed, Natasha asked her teacher for help in front of her classmates only once and that was more in regard to instructions on how to do a task. In the interview, though, Natasha said “I try to get as much help as I can.” Then she added, “If the teacher is very busy and is out of the room I just try to figure out on my own”.

Extracurricular Activities and Events

P. Elementary offered many extracurricular activities. According to her mother, Natasha was eager to try any after-school program but mother was somewhat reluctant to give her permission, because Natasha tended to get tired after school. She wanted to join the Lego Club, but mother was concerned of the hours the club was meeting. The previous year, Natasha had tried a club and had enjoyed it, but she was very tired when she came home and could not focus on her homework. The Art teacher had invited Natasha to participate in the Art group and she was disappointed when her parents had not given her permission to attend.

Natasha took advantage of the Study Hall, the after-school program, where students did their homework and received help. She also attended a social skills group with young girls conducted by the school counselor, which according to her parents, she enjoyed.

Analysis of Report Cards and Test Scores

This section contains quantitative analyses of Natasha's grades in the areas of Academics and Personal Development as well as level test and CSAP scores, as measurements of her academic achievement.

Academics

The accumulated GPA¹⁸ for the period of studies from second grade (repeat) up to the second semester of the fifth grade is 2.96. Comparing the GPAs for each grade (2nd grade repeat= 2.79; 3rd grade=3.23, 4th grade=2.74 and first semester 5th grade=3.11) it is easy to notice that the change of schools affected Natasha's grades, possibly because of the impact of transition, a recognized risk factor. (Please see Figure 6.)

The Progress Report Cards also contained information on Effort alongside Achievement. The correlation of the Achievement grade with the Effort grade was calculated: Pearson $r = 0.3246$, r^2 (coefficient of determination) =0.11. This value is low. Only 11 percent of the variance in grades can be associated with the variance in effort.

Progress to Grade Level in Math, Language and Reading. Analyzing the data, it is interesting to notice that although according to Natasha and her parents, she experienced the most difficulties in Math right from the beginning and she has been lagging behind in mastered skills and concepts year after year, she was considered to be at her grade level

¹⁸ I calculated Natasha's GPA in a similar way to the school district, i.e., A, Excellent =4points, B, Satisfactory =3 points, C, Improving =2 points and D, Not Improving =1 point (the minus and plus were not considered).

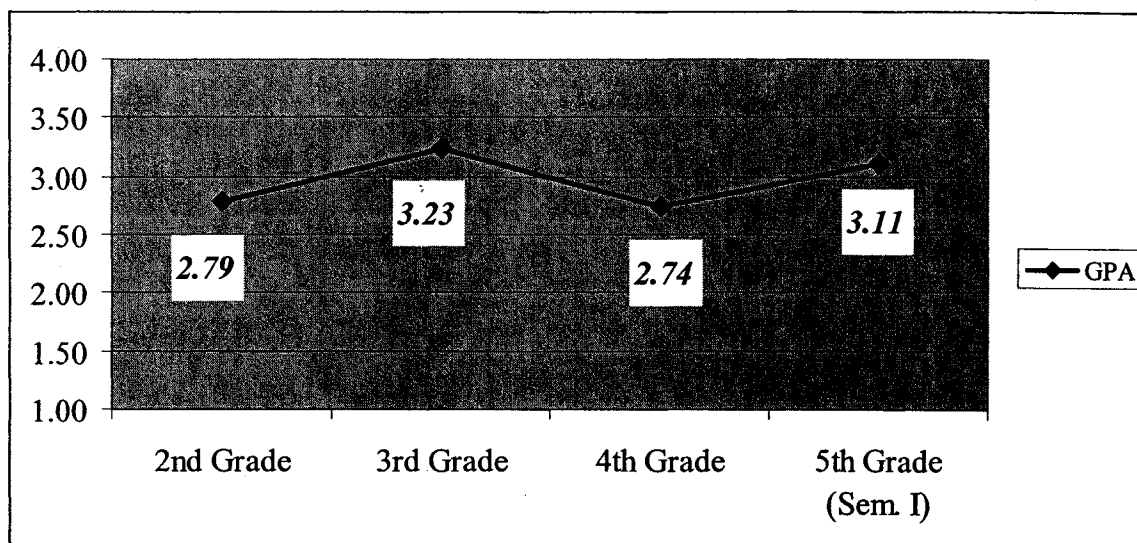


Figure 6. Trend of Natasha's GPA

when she started the second grade (repeat). (Please see Figure 7). While Natasha still had difficulties expressing herself in writing, she was considered to be at her grade level in language in second grade (repeat) when it is doubtful that her mastery of English after two years of living in the country was at the level of her peers born in the USA. The assessment of her reading skills level seems to be more realistic: she was not considered to be at her grade level until the third grade.

Literacy. Calculating the Cumulative GPA for each aspect of Literacy (this cumulative GPA does not include the results for the two quarters of the second semester of the first time Natasha attended school) we have the following results: Reading=2.92, Language=2.50, Spelling=2.79 and Handwriting =3.25. An analysis of the trend of the grades for

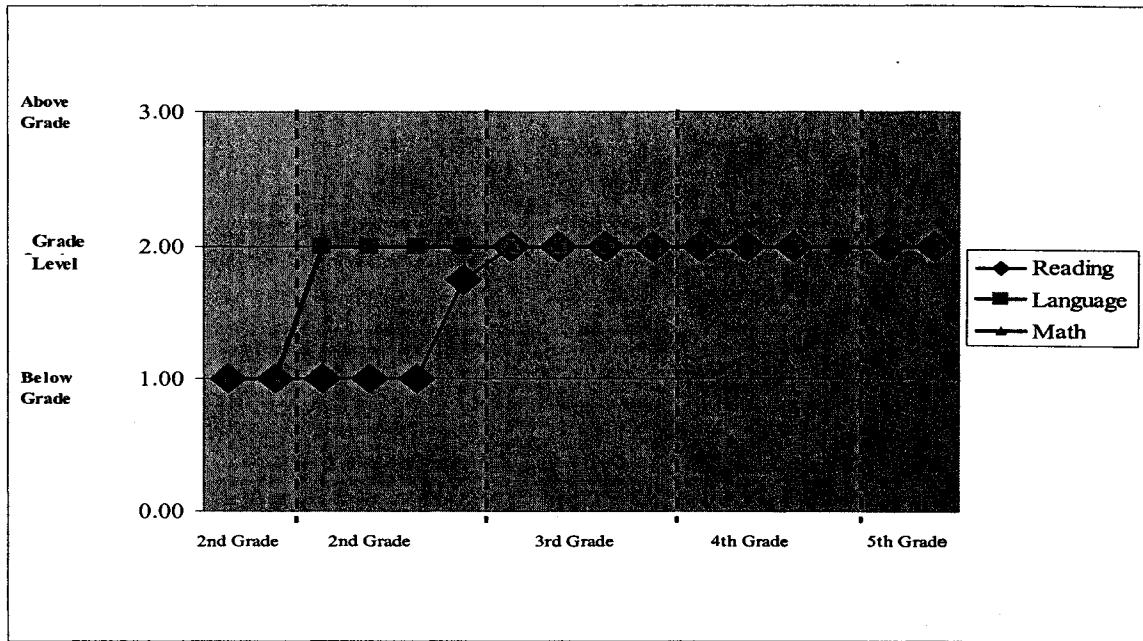


Figure 7. Trend of Natasha's Instructional Level in Reading, Language and Math

the four aspects of Literacy Achievement (Reading, Written Language, Spelling and Handwriting) shows oscillations in the four components (Please see Figure 8). A reasonable explanation for these oscillations is that they are indicative of the difficulties that Natasha encountered and overcame.

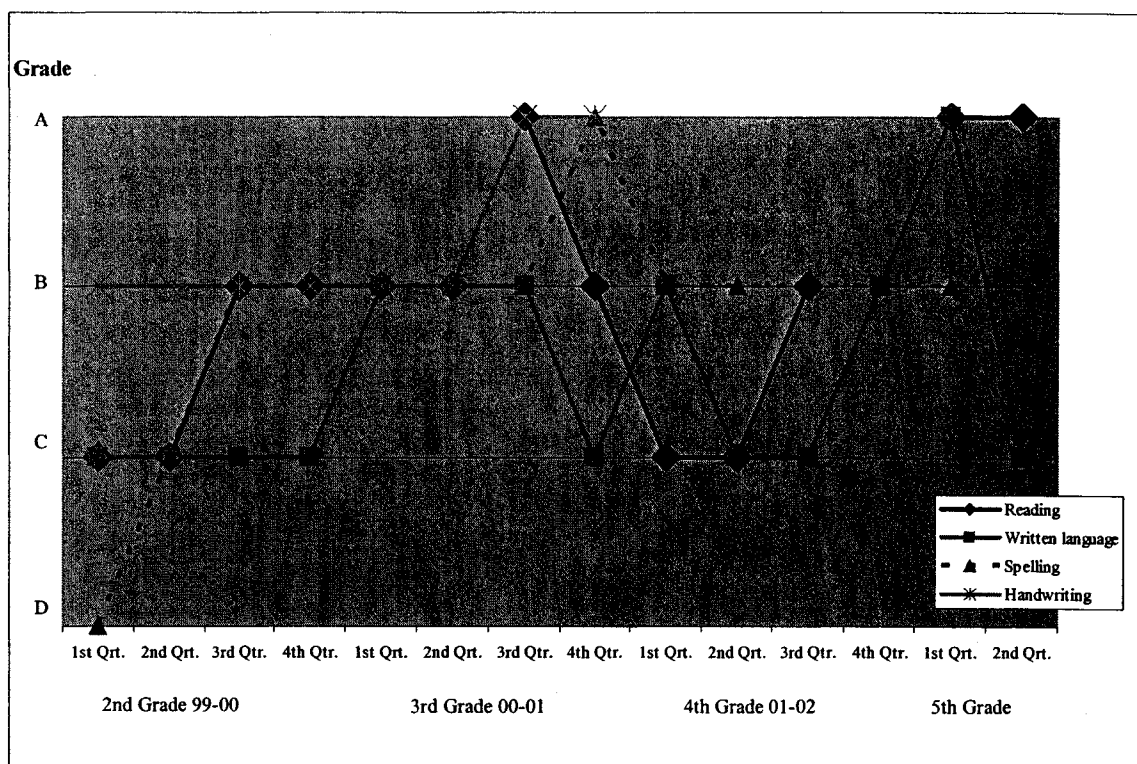


Figure 8. Trend of Natasha's Literacy Achievement

How do Natasha's grades in Reading compare to the results of standardized tests (RIT scores and CSAP scores)? Her RIT Scores coincide 50 percent of the time with her respective grades for the quarter in which the Level Test was conducted. In the other 50 percent of the cases, the grade is higher than the level placement according to the RIT score. (It must be noted that the RIT level shows oscillations between Basic and Proficient in the level at different times.) The same is true of CSAP results: They coincide 50 percent of the time with the respective grade, however CSAP results in one case are higher than the actual quarter grade. However, the oscillations observed in the school grades were present in the RIT scores as well, confirming the hypothesis that the learning process in the area of literacy was not straightforward, but rather with notable ups and downs.

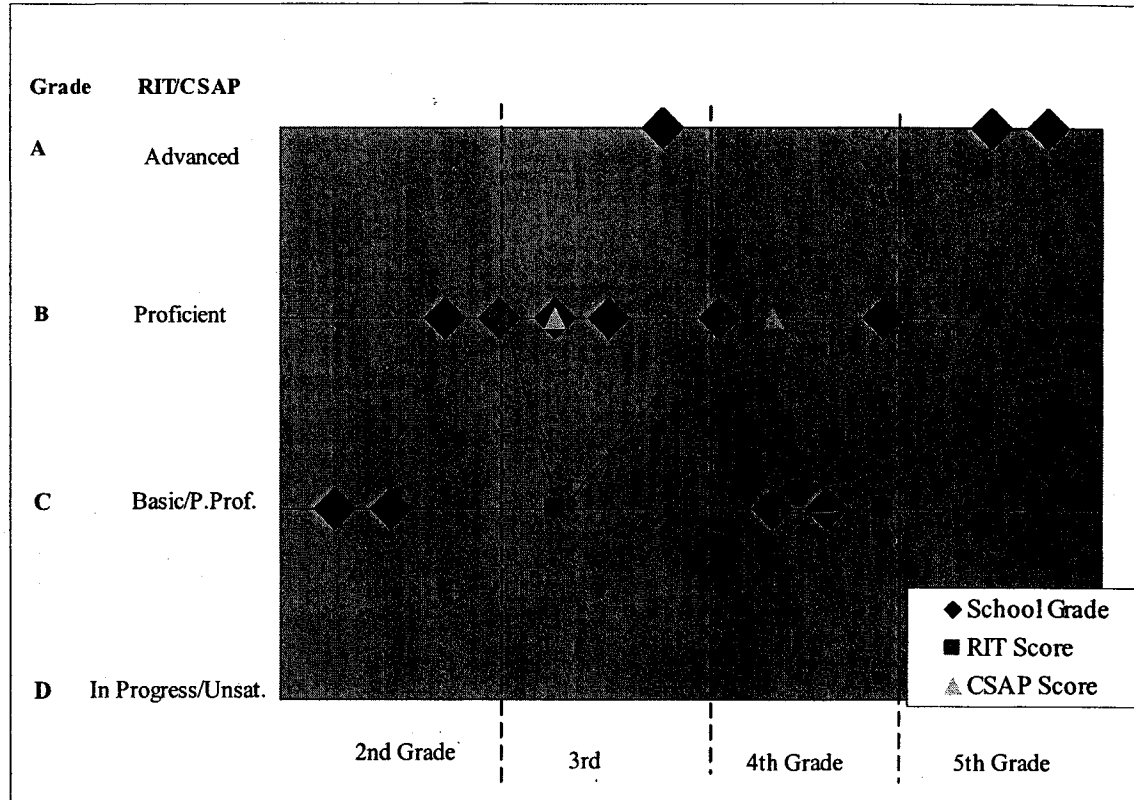


Figure 9. Comparison of Natasha's Grades with her CSAP and RIT Scores

Math. Math results are generally poorer than Reading: the cumulative GPA= 2.13.

The oscillation pattern is similar to that of Literacy though, many ups and downs with a brief periods of stability (please see to Figure 10). The RIT scores are also oscillating, alternating *In Progress* with *Basic*. Comparing grades with the RIT Scores, they coincide in 2 out of 7 cases, that is 28% of the time. In five cases, grades are one level higher than RIT scores.

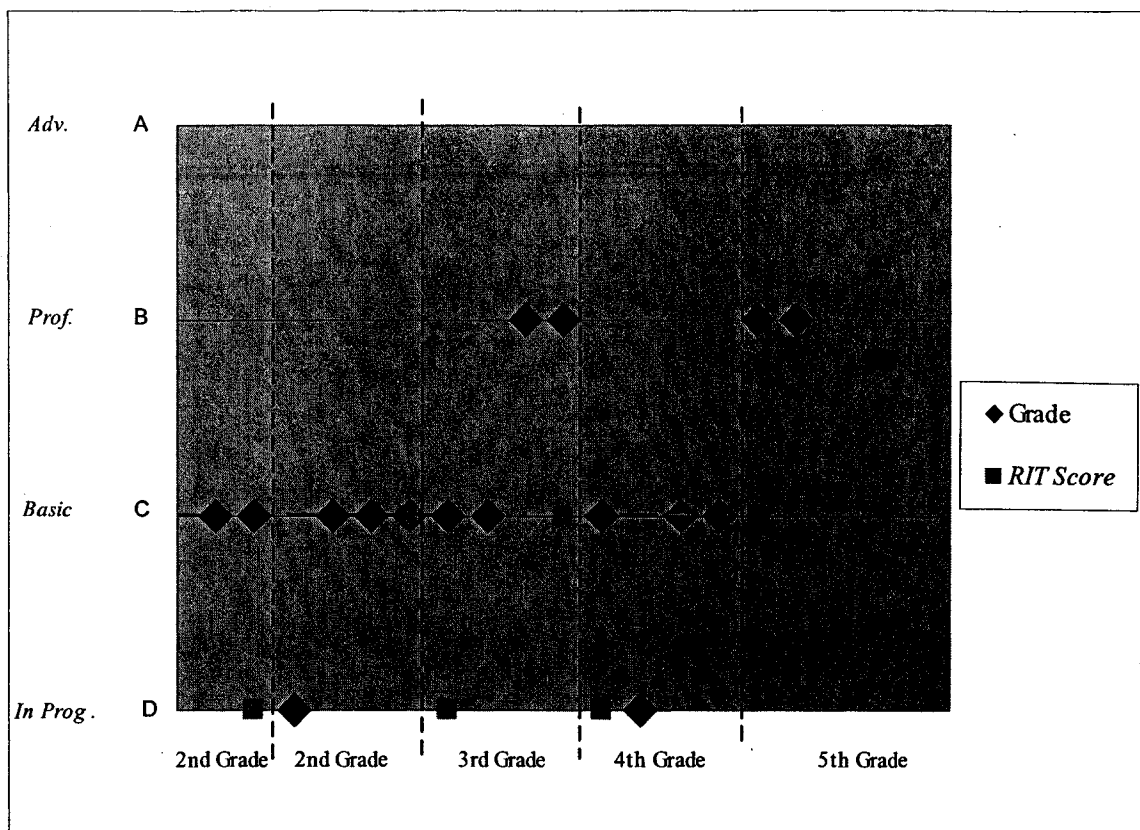


Figure 10. Natasha's Math Grades and RIT Scores

Personal Development

Personal Development was graded for *Effort* quarterly in the Progress Report for the following areas: (a) social interaction, (b) responsibility, (c) self-control and (d) study skills. The grading system used is *M* for Most of the Time, *P* for Part of the Time and *R* for Rarely. As Table 5 shows, Natasha did not receive any *Rs* and 82% of the grades were *Ms*. She demonstrated more effort in *Social Interaction*, where 82% of her grades were *Ms* and in *Responsibility*, where 95% of her grades were *Ms*. She had difficulties in *Self Control* (31% of the grades were *Ps*) and in *Study Skills* (20% of the grades were *Ps*). As sub-areas, the three most problematic ones were: *Displays Self-Control* (75% *Ps*), *Organizational Skills* (*Ps* account for 63% of the grades) and *Listens and Follows Directions* (44% of the grades are *Ps*). Her areas of strength are *Respect for Individuals*

and Property as well as Authority, Accepts Responsibility for Behavior and Is responsible for Belongings and Property as well as Displays Initiative and Positive Attitude.

Table 5

Natasha's Personal Development Skills Grades

Description	G.2. 98-99			G.2. 99-00				G.3. 00-01				G.4. 01-02			G.5 01-02		
	Q3	Q4	Q.1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1.	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
Social interaction																	
Respects individuals and property	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	
Respects authority	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	
Interacts well with others	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	P	M	M	M	M	M	M	
Responsibility																	
Accepts responsibility for behavior	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	
Is responsible for belongings and property	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	
Is responsible for homework and home school com.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	P	P	M	M	M	
Self-control																	
Displays self-control	M	M	P	P	P	P+	P	P	P	P	M	P	P	M-	P	P	
Handles conflict appropriately	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	P	M	M	M-	M	M	M	
Displays initiative and positive attitude	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	
Study skills																	
Works well with others	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	P							
Attends to tasks and uses time wisely	M	M	P	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	P	P	M-	P	P-	
Listens and follows directions	M	M	P	M	M	M	P	P	P	P	M	M	M	M-	P	P-	
Demonstrates organizational skills	M	M	P	P	M	M	P	P	P	P	M	P	P	P	M	P	
Completes assignments on time	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	P	P	M	M	P	
Produces quality work	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	P	
Uses language effectively	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M							
Uses technology appropriately	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M			M	M	M	M	
Uses library media to enhance learning	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M				M	M	M	
Keyboarding											I			M		M	
Writes legibly											M	M	M	M	M	M	

Part Three: Natasha's Family

The Home

The family home was a two-bedroom, one-floor house in the northwestern part of the city, in a working class neighborhood, where most of the houses were rentals and the majority of the population was Hispanic. The house had a nice backyard, where father had built a waterfall, and a small front yard, with a big trampoline for the girls and a small water fountain. The house had all the basic amenities and furniture. It was untidy at times, as it was difficult for mother to keep up with the mess both girls seemed to generate continuously, especially in the presence of her visual impairment.

Natasha's Parents

Natasha's household family was made up of her adoptive parents and her nine-year old biological sister. Her parents were in their early fifties. Both of them had master's degrees: mother in English Literature and Arts, and father in Psychology. Mother was a stay-at-home mom, while father had a successful piano tuning business in the area (he made an average of \$50,000-\$55,000 per year). Both parents had vision impairment, father's was more severe. However, their disability did not seem to have any handicapping effect on them, with the exception of driving. They generally used the public transportation to get around and mother sometimes used a three-wheel bike. Father was a member of the local Lion's Club. He helped a local disability organization with repairs of their equipment and he built model trains in his free time. Mother enjoyed reading. She also attended the local cultural events. Both parents loved music and they played various musical instruments, which one could see in their living room. Father was

very much an optimist with an apparent “joie de vivre”, very active and always on the go. Mother was quiet but assertive. She seemed somewhat tired and even a little overwhelmed by the many difficulties of adjustment:

It was so hard...you know. We managed, but I think, you know, I still feel pretty burnt out from the whole thing. I mean, it's been five years now and I don't know if I'll ever manage to...whatever you call it...regroup or catch my breath or something like that...

The parents were not very religious, although mother was a Catholic and father was a Methodist. Four to five times per year they went to their neighborhood church, which happened to be a Catholic church. Father said that he liked the values and the teachings of religion like: *honesty, be good, be kind and so on* and both he and his wife were teaching these values to their children, rather than the teachings of a particular religion. He thought that it would be best for the children to come to religion on their own terms.

Natasha's parents were effective in locating and using resources. At the time when this research was conducted, they both attended an adoptive parents support group, they took advantage of six free family therapy sessions offered by the Adoption Division of the Human Services Department and took their children to a local respite care program once a month.

Natasha's Sister

Katya, Natasha's biological sister, who was also institutionalized, had been determined to have a developmental disability, according to the school counselor. Her level of functioning seemed to be at mild-to-moderate mental retardation. However because of her history of early institutionalization, this diagnosis might not have been correct. Katya was very sweet and polite with me-she even introduced me to her teacher

and invited me to have lunch with her in the school cafeteria. Her mother reported that she generally was very friendly with adults. She required attention all the time (as I was interviewing Natasha, she kept interrupting her sister every two-to-three minutes to talk to me) and she blamed Natasha a lot in her interview for both real and imaginary events. Natasha and Katya shared the same bedroom, which according to their mother, might be one of the reasons why they did not get along and bickered a lot. According to mother, the other reason was that Natasha was bossy with Katya, who was too “babyishly” dependent. In a four-hour observation with both sisters (during which time we negotiated renting a DVD and buying candy, they watched a video and had had dinner with my family and I provided two-way transportation) I noticed that underneath the bickering was a stable and loving relationship. While Natasha played with Katya as an equal and would not accept that she get any special privileges as a younger sister, she mentored her carefully by giving her hints on the appropriate behavior (both girls were very anxious to do the right thing) and explaining things to her. One of the school teachers observed that Natasha was embarrassed by her sister’s behavior in school, especially when she was with friends, and she tried to distance herself from her sister because of the latter’s cognitive disabilities. In my observations, I did not notice any embarrassment. It was more like annoyance than any other thing. This is how Natasha’s friend, Daisy described it: “When we are playing and her sister comes bugging us, ruining our game and...Natasha says, ‘Go do something else.’ Because we like to play together by ourselves.”

Family Life

Mother described the family as “traditional two-parent”, with “traditional values, but fairly open-minded”. However, she felt that the family was “not yet established” and they were “still struggling to find out” who they were “as a family”, even though the girls had been there for five years. Father saw things a little differently. He thought that they had blended very well adding, “Families are always chaotic”. The parents were of the opinion that the girls had bonded well and they did not manifest any attachment disorders.

Both parents spent a lot of time with the children, talking and playing and doing various things together. Mother took the children to the library and artistic events, while father sometimes took them with him when he went to tune pianos in the after-school hours. The family had been to Disneyland, Sea World and the San Diego Zoo in California. In Philadelphia, they had visited the Liberty Hall. The family daily routine was dependent on the girls’ school and the father’s work. Mother tried to arrange a family meal every dinner and children had a regular schedule for bed time.

The family rules were flexible. They basically covered (a) fundamental moral values “not to say bad words” [Natasha’s quote] not being “dishonest”, “no lying or cheating” [mother’s quote], (b) the family privacy “don’t say anything that is in the house”, “don’t talk about family business to others” [Natasha’s quotes], (c) house maintenance “if anything looks messy, clean it up” [Natasha’s quote] and (d) respecting family property “no running in the home” [Natasha’s quote], do not touch parents’ musical instruments and (e) safety: “ somebody always makes sure that the door is locked in the evening”[father’s quote]. Natasha seemed to be aware of these rules as she would gently

remind her sister at times that “she was not supposed to..” and she generally tried to respect them.

The parents considered preserving and nurturing the Russian heritage of their daughters important. Both girls had retained their original Russian names, they called their parents “mama” and “papa” and their grandmother “babushka” in the Russian way. They had been to a heritage summer camp and mother had bought a Russian ABC book for them to learn the Cyrillic letters. I was offered Russian tea on my first visit.

Parents’ Support for Natasha’s Education

Both parents were desirous that Natasha received a good education and was successful academically. They were disappointed with the lack of individual support for Natasha at school. That might be the reason why father graded the education her daughter was receiving at school with a C+. Mother provided the necessary support at home for Natasha by helping her with homework and encouraging her to perform to her ability. As shown previously, she had advocated on Natasha’s behalf with the school staff to make them aware of her particular needs as a post-institutionalized adoptee.

Parents’ expectations for Natasha were high, but not pressuring. Her mother expected Natasha (a) “to enjoy being a kid, for all she can”, (b) “work hard at school and do as well as she can” (c) “finish high school” and then (d) follow her heart (be it dancing, hairdressing, veterinary sciences or marine biology-some of Natasha’s recent interests). Natasha’s father expectations were more in the realm of her emotional growth. He wished for Natasha to be “self-centered” and grow “to be her own person”. In regards to academics he stated,

I think I am not worried about the education. I think she will go as far as she wants to go. If she wants to be a veterinarian, she'll do it. She is very, very tenacious. She follows through, she does what she wants to do. That part I am not worried about.

Parent's School Involvement

Parents, especially mother, followed very closely what was happening in Natasha's school (for example she was aware of the hard work of the school principal to improve the students' CSAP scores and she knew that the school would be taking a science orientation). They did not show a very involved attitude by volunteering or being involved in the PTO organizations. Mother explained her non-direct involvement with two reasons: (a) she did not feel comfortable going there and (b) she did not have the energy to do it.

Interviewer: What is your family's involvement with school?

Mother: No, not a lot. We don't actually feel really comfortable going there. I ... you know, I have a visual impairment, too... We're both visually impaired and we feel we are not really accepted there. Hmm... I, personally, never have any issue, but they seem to be really walking on tiptoes around us and not really knowing how to handle that. ...That's one thing...I don't go and do things in the classroom, or anything like that. I never have and I know I feel kind of sad about that because before I became a parent I thought I was going to be really involved but as it ...it's probably because I had this feeling of discomfort or probably because ...umm... things... they're so intense to take care of and they need so much attention. It's really hard to be around them sometimes. If they're at school, you know, gives us a chance to breathe....And I have a feeling... I don't think that's something that teachers really understand ..umm and I don't know what it's like to be a parent the other way and of the kids who are relatively unscathed. So, that's a little bit disappointing. I have gone to a couple of PTO meetings that ...umm. I just I finally realized, you know... I can only do what I have the energy to do. I help them here and we go the library and we do things as a family and that's stuff that I can do. I can't ...ummm... drive myself crazy trying to do everything.

Natasha at Home

Natasha was affectionate towards her parents and she hugged them often. She talked of them with respect and made conspicuous efforts to follow their instructions and orders. Parents believed that she was “devoted” to them. One of the school staff brought up the issue of her parents’ disability; she believed that it was a factor that made Natasha’s life more difficult.” I did not ask direct questions to get her feelings on her parents’ disability. However, she never brought up the issue as a hindrance, a source of frustration or embarrassment in any of the formal interviews or in any of the many informal conversations I had with her. Once, she used the term “visually impaired” to talk about their disability, in a tone that was matter-of-fact without any negative connotation. She was really thankful for what they had provided for her and her sister. Natasha was also very fond of her extended family. She showed me a quilt she was making for her grandmother; her mother told me that she had shown interest in their family’s personal history and she mentioned her extended family as people who are most important to her:

Interviewer: Who are the people that are most important to you?

Natasha: My family. My grandparents, my cousins, my nieces, my sister, my big sister. My brother-in-law and just mostly my whole family everywhere. My aunts and uncles who are down there in Arizona and Philadelphia and any place...

Natasha had her responsibilities at home, she was supposed to do some cleaning, take care of the trash and do other chores, as needed, which she did compliantly but somewhat resentfully when asked. She also did some cooking (loved to make pancakes!). Family’s laid-back life style when it came to housekeeping was a good fit with Natasha’s lack of desire to be involved in it.

Generally speaking, Natasha had a good relationship with her parents. However, there had been a few problems. Natasha had lied to her parents and she had also stolen money from them. (This issue will be treated more at length in the upcoming section)

Part Four. Natasha's Personal Factors

Physical and Mental Competence

Physically, Natasha was in “excellent health”, “she had not been to a doctor in a couple of years” [adoptive mother’s quote]. Although she enjoyed a very good appetite and she ate a lot (twice as much as an adult, in her father’s opinion), she was fashionably slim. She was energetic and welcomed physical activities such as running and jumping, and playing various games outdoors. In regards to mental health, she was “usually happy” [Natasha’s quote] and had a positive mood [her father and the three teachers that completed questionnaires checked this characteristic].

Social and Relational Competence

Attachment. Parents had not noticed any attachment issues; they believed that Natasha had bonded well with them. She was “affectionate” and “devoted” to her parents and in her father’s words, she really cared about her family. With other adults (teachers and strangers) Natasha was outgoing, nice and very polite. Although this is a behavior that is sometimes characterized as indiscriminate friendliness, in my opinion Natasha’s behavior was more indicative of good manners.

Natasha also related well to her friends (one of her friends characterized her as loving and loyal: “if I tell her something.....she won't go tell anybody”). But, all of her friends

were younger than she was. Her father was of the opinion that this happened because “that one part of her personality is not fully developed” and the school counselor considered it as a sign of emotional and social immaturity. However, another teacher put a positive spin on it:

She’s a “little girl” which is refreshing. She is surrounded by some very mature girls. She still seems playful and less concerned with music, boys and other issues. This also spills over into appearance. She is not as concerned with clothing and hair as the others. Although she does like lip gloss!

In my opinion, another factor that needs to be considered is the fact that she had been socialized into this age group through school. Her age peers were in all Junior High, while she still went to elementary school.

Trust. It was her father’s concern that Natasha trusted people, especially adults, indiscriminately. He believed that that this behavior came from the fact that some parts of her life in Russia were very sheltered:

“She does not have all the building blocks. She lacks knowledge of the American culture and the American mores. She did not have a chance to experience them as a kid, you know... Although she is much brighter than many of her friends, she does not seem to have the street smarts... She is not fully aware of risks and dangers... She is also gullible to strangers. It is not that if somebody asks her to get in the car with her, she will get in. But if somebody tells her that she has permission from us to get in the car with him, she might just go. She does not question anything that adults tell her. She never learned these things as a kid. Some parts of her life in Russia were very sheltered.”

Regarding this behavior as socially immature, one of the school staff was concerned that Natasha might be an easy prey for sexual exploitation in the future. However, the trust in adults had been helpful in school: Both her parents agreed that, educationally, Natasha was more influenced by her teachers than her peers.

Relational competence at school. The section of the Progress Report Cards on the Personal Development Skills indicates that Natasha had hardly ever had any social interaction issues in the school environment. She got 100% of the time M (*Most of the Time*, the highest grade) for Respecting Individuals and Property as well as Respecting Authority. She got only one P (*Part of the Time*) in the fourth quarter of the third grade out of the 16 quarters she was evaluated for her behavior.

Ability to recruit people that help. Natasha not only knew how to ask for help, but her behavior was also very encouraging and rewarding. Although at school Natasha was reluctant to ask for help from her teachers in front of her classmates, she did not hesitate to ask my help on several occasions. This is one example: She was working on a science project, which she herself had developed. She was making a simple experiment with boys and girls in her class to find out which of the genders had a better memory of words and pictures. I learned about this project when I went to her home for the second part of the interview with her parents. She showed me the board with the words and the pictures that the students were supposed to remember and she asked my advice for the best way to conduct her experiment. Later that week, she encountered some difficulties when she started the work on processing the data and writing the results of the project. She called me on the phone to ask a couple of questions in regard to the averages and the charts she needed to do. As she realized that some parts of the project were still not clear to her, she did not hesitate to ask more questions. She was very open to learning and tried to follow all instructions closely. The next evening, she called me at home to let me know that she had received a ribbon for her presentation and she owed it to the help I had given her.

Cognitive Competence

Intelligence. No official assessment of Natasha's IQ has ever been made. However, her parents and one of the teachers checked "intelligence" as one of her assets in the questionnaire they completed.

Language. Natasha had good expressive oral skills. Her pronunciation was flawless. Her vocabulary was not poor, it included words like "obnoxious" "companion" and "purchase", but she encountered some difficulty with the lingo of social sciences. Her use of oral grammar was impressive: it included good use of the modals, of gerunds and infinitives, as well as very good use of prepositions and articles.

Natasha seemed to enjoy writing, although she encountered many grammatical and spelling difficulties as the following (an entry in her reading response journal) shows:

THAKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is a speiacial Holoday it is a time of giving thanks for our food and good havest and it is a time of spending you time with family and Friends for as long as your heart desiers that is what we do for thanksgiving at least at my home a lot of people have different customs or ways on celebrating their thanksgiving with familys or maby friends too!!

Capacity to Plan and Implement

Initiative. Natasha displayed initiative at school and at home. At school, she had received 100% Ms (*Most of the Time*) in the section "Displays Initiative." At home she often started projects on her own. This is an example that her mother gave:

She likes sewing... and a week or so ago she started sewing a piece of material... white... She says she is doing a quilt for her grandmother. I said that is very nice. It was her idea in the first place doing it...

One of her strengths, as recognized by her parents and the teachers at school, was her enthusiasm for everything. This is what her father said, “I don’t think she is ever bored. She is really excited by everything.” Parents saw her enthusiasm as her primary strength and closely related to the initiative she displayed. Very often her enthusiasm was coupled with intuitiveness (which was another asset identified by both parents), a combination which seemed to be the promoter of her displayed initiative.

Locus of control. Although Natasha was greatly influenced by others, both adults and children, it was my impression that her locus of control was more internal than external. At school, one of the school staff interviewed saw her as a follower. But at school or at home, I did notice very often a “take-charge” attitude anytime she wanted something done. Her father also recognized this tendency when he said: “She follows through; *she does what she wants to do.*” (Please note the italicized part of the quote.)

Attention to task. Generally speaking, Natasha’s parents were of the opinion that she was “tenacious” and “determined”, two characteristics that helped her stay focused on task and finish it.

Mother: I would say that she is sometimes...a good characteristic is her determination, her really head-strong quality which can work to her advantage when she is working on something. If she wants to do it, that is, she can be very determined about.... Nothing will stop her.

Father: Yeah. She will finish what she started.

However, she seemed to display a somewhat different attitude at school. She received P (*Part of the Time*) in five quarters (27%) in her grades for Personal Development Skills at the section “Attends to Task and Uses Time Wisely” and 7 Ps in “Listens and Follows

Directions” (i.e., 47% of the time). The parents explained some of these issues with her temperament:

At this point in the year [the end of April] she is starting to get burnt out. She starts out really enthusiastic. She is disappointed that the weekend comes...because there is no school, you know... But then, like toward the end, as Ellen said, she is not so quite as enthusiastic...

However, an analysis of the grades in the Personal Development Skills does not support this explanation.

According to school grades and teachers’ remarks, the related area Natasha has most problems with seems to be organization (i.e., lack thereof): she received Ps 63% of the time! From my observations, this concern was mostly in regard to messiness and clutter rather than proper organizational skills per se. She did not seem to mind at all the chaos around her. While at school her desk was well organized, at home she would just throw things all over the place. Whether this was a temperamental personality trait, a corollary of her emotional immaturity, a consequence of her chaotic upbringing in the first five years of her life or an effect of the laid-back family life style, it was difficult to determine.

Self-efficacy. Natasha seemed to be aware of her strengths and she was involved in activities in which she could exercise them. Table 6 was created based on Natasha’s notes in “Who Am I?”, a tool used in the research, included in Appendix One. Note that four of the activities Natasha said she does well are the same as the activities she enjoyed doing.

Table 6

Comparison of What Natasha Does Well and What She Enjoys Doing

Some Things I Really Do Well	Things I Enjoy Going
Read	Reading
Run	
Jump	Jumping
Sing	Singing
Dance	Dancing
	Playing
	Swimming

It must be noted that two of these activities “singing” and “dancing” were also mentioned by Natasha as probable future career paths.

She was also a good judge of some of her issues. At “Things I Need Help With” she wrote two concerns, one academic (“spelling”) and another of emotional regulation (“being nice to my sister”). Both those concerns were valid.

Self-understanding and self-esteem. The self-collage Natasha did at school throws light on her self-understanding. The self-collage was made in an art class during the fifth grade and Natasha’s was exhibited together with those of some other students as best works. She had made a self-portrait at the center and then had pasted words cut from newspapers and magazines around her portrait. Table 7 gives many of the words she used to describe herself, which I divided into the following categories: “traumatic past”, “self-characterization”, “self-perception” and “identity”: The words used in the self-collage

show that Natasha was proud of her national identity, she felt safe, loved and rescued with her adoptive family, she was high energy, and sometimes had an attitude. She was willing to share with others, but she was also aware of her needs, and she had dreams, one of which was related to fashion industry. (At a home visit, she proudly showed me the fashionable clothes-three different sets, she had made for her doll with fabric from her old clothes.) The words under the category of self-perception are all words used to refer to successful and powerful people. She certainly had high-self esteem and thought of herself in very positive terms. (Please see Table 7.)

Table 7

Self-perception and Self-esteem in a Self-collage

Traumatic Past	Self-characterization	Self-perception	Identity
Loved	Attitude	Star	Russia
Safe	Share	Genius	
Rescued	Gives	Queen	
Changed	Needs	Flower	
	High energy	Treasure	
	Great laughs	Brilliant	
	Dream	Grand	
	A marvel of fashion	She's the boss	
	Traditional	Diamond	

Emotional Competence

Emotional regulation. Natasha was characterized by positive emotionality, expressed in her predominant mood, which was positive and cheerful. However, she also was “pretty impulsive” and had “a short fuse” [adoptive mother’s quotes] at home and she had issues displaying self-control at school. (In this section of the Personal Development Skills Report Cards she got *Part of the Time* 80% of the quarters, making it the most problematic area.) Natasha was aware of this issue and as the following quote shows, she had started to develop a mechanism for dealing with it. The analysis of the report card data shows that she had been successful at handling conflict appropriately in school; she had only received one P in the 16 quarters she was evaluated. All the other grades were Ms.

Interviewer: Do you ever get angry?

Natasha: Yes. I get angry a lot when Katya wakes me up in the morning. I get angry when I have to do something I don’t like. I get angry when I trip or something doesn’t go right. I get angry a lot. Sometimes, but not always.

Interviewer: When you are angry, what do you do about it?

Natasha: I tend to yell a lot. I send Katya out of the room when she touches my things. I go tell my dad when she messes in my backpack, also. And sometimes I just work it out.

Interviewer: How do you work it out?

Natasha: Move the things that I bump into, fix them...

Was the intermittent efficiency of emotional regulation a temperamental trait or was it caused by her experience of deprivation and institutionalization at an early age? Mother told me that a therapist, who was working with the family at that time, had characterized Natasha to be emotionally delayed by three years due to her past experiences.

Creativity. This trait was recognized as one of Natasha's main strengths by her parents, her art teacher and her class teacher. This is what the Art teacher wrote when asked if she had noticed anything that made this student dissimilar from her peers: "Unique-yes! Natasha is incredibly creative and expressive. She stands out as an artistic mind-it is wonderful!" Then, she continued: "I can only praise her talents and abilities. She is such a joy to have in class."

Natasha was good at arts and music. She loved to draw and to create her fashion designs, which she implemented as clothes for her doll. She loved to sing and dance and was good at both those activities. Additionally, she was taking piano lessons once a week at the time of the research. Natasha enjoyed the piano lessons and she did not mind practicing.

A sense of humor. Natasha's father reported that she had a sense of humor (please see Table 9), but this characteristic was not recognized by other people interviewed. However, in my observations, I noticed that when she felt comfortable, she loved to make jokes.

Moral competence

"Being socially responsible" was one of Natasha's assets recognized by two teachers and her father. However, there were a few issues in regard to moral competence: Natasha had lied to her parents a couple of times and she had also stolen money from them. Natasha's mother was very frustrated with the behavior and considered it unacceptable. Natasha's father regarded the occasions of lying and stealing more as behavior symptomatic of institutionalization than character flaws. The behaviors seemed to be

contained at home only, as a school staff, who was aware of these events, told me that none of Natasha's teachers had reported any similar behavior at school. At the time of the research, the family was dealing with these issues in family therapy. I did not talk with Natasha about this topic. However, according to Natasha's mother, "Natasha seemed reluctant to communicate with the therapist on these issues and the whole experience made her somewhat uncomfortable". From these words, it might be concluded that Natasha herself felt embarrassed by her actions.

Natasha's Assets as Recognized by Her Teachers and Her Parents

Table 8 presents Natasha's educational assets as recognized by her parents and her teachers in the questionnaires they completed. All surveyed agree on two qualities: *positive mood* and *tries hard to please*. *Socially responsible* and *creative* were the next higher recognized assets. All in all, the parents recognized more assets than Natasha's teachers, a total of sixteen. Amongst teachers, the Art teacher recognized more assets than the other teachers (12 versus 7 and 4).

Table 8

Natasha's Assets Recognized in Surveys

Personal Assets	Class Teacher	Art Teacher	Music Teacher	Parents
Positive mood	x	x	x	x
Tries hard to please	x	x	x	x
Socially responsive		x	x	x
Creative	x	x		x
Responsible	x	x		
Positive coping skills			x	xx*
Intelligent		x		x
A sense of moral values	x	x		
Self control	x	x		
Flexible		x		x
Achievement oriented		x		x
Initiative		x		x
Proud		x		xx
Self-esteem	x			
Assertive				x
A sense of humor				x
Stands up for herself				x
Highly competitive				xx
Other: tenacious				x
Total number	7	12	4	16

Note. xx denotes strong showing.

Analysis and Discussion

The findings established that Natasha was an at-risk student because of her pre-adoption history, both prior to institutionalization and during institutionalization as well as the educational challenges she had to overcome during her school experience. What follows is an analysis of the interaction of the risk and protection factors that have shaped Natasha's social, psychological and educational development.

Life with Her Biological Family

During her life with her biological family, Natasha was exposed to many extra-personal risks factors and processes of both proximal and distal nature as well as a few protective factors. The risk factors were pervasive and numerous. She was born to a single, teenage alcoholic mother, who had four other children after Natasha in five years. The family lived in poverty in a depressed community. The family life was chaotic. As a young child Natasha experienced three known traumatic events: the death of a sibling, the death of her dear grandmother and the forceful removal from home of her uncle by the army. Additionally, she experienced abuse and neglect as she was left home alone to take care of her three younger siblings. It may be reasonable to speculate that Natasha's immaturity of the emotional regulation indicates that the impact of these risks is not yet fully neutralized. Natasha was also subject to educational neglect, as no effort was shown to introduce her to any form of pre-school education, either formal or informal. Among the protective factors, four

stand out. Natasha was the first child, which meant that she received her mother's undivided attention and love for at least nine months. Additionally, she lived with her uncle and aunt, who also must have cherished her and given her attention and love. Her grandmother was a stabilizing factor in her family's life. These three protective factors may account for Natasha's sense of belongingness to a family and love of the family and her lack of attachment issues. The fourth protective factor was life in an open environment (not isolated), which was conducive to diverse emotional and cognitive experiences. The combination of the four protective factors in a cluster of strengths may have contributed to what Erikson calls the successful solution of the first psychosocial-crisis, basic trust versus basic mistrust, in the favor of trust (Erikson, 1993).

Institutionalization

Natasha's institutionalization interrupted the action of the mother-related risk chain: She was safe from maternal neglect, abuse and exploitation. But it also interrupted the action of two important protective factors: belongingness and real world experiences, which led to the emergence of two new risk factors: non-belongingness and social isolation. The impact of non-belongingness (the main source of attachment disorders) was fortunately abated by the placement with a sibling (which became an important protective factor). Institutionalization subjected Natasha to other risk factors, the most detrimental of which were: deficient nourishment, medical neglect, and total educational neglect. Although of kindergarten

and first grade age, Natasha was not placed in a formal educational environment and was never taught the basics of the three Rs. This proved to be the most significant and damaging risk factor, the effect of which has not been fully neutralized yet.

Additionally, the placement in the institution must have had an impact on Natasha's cognitive development, by arresting and slowing down the development of the last stage of what Piaget calls preoperational thinking and nipping in the bud like an early spring frost the development of the initial stage of concrete operational thinking (Piaget, 1972). This may be the reason why Natasha was still struggling with abstract concepts at the age of 12. The action of protective factors was more apparent in the emotional-relational arena: Natasha made good friends and the staff were caring and loving. Three other important protective factors were the temporary nature of the placement (2 years only), the age at institutionalization (five years old) and the preparation of Natasha for adoption. The latter proved to play an important role in decreasing the initial shock of the impact of adoption into a new family and a new culture.

Adoption

The adoption by the McCaffreys interrupted the action of the institutional risk chains and opened up new opportunities for Natasha, while it exposed her to new but minor risks. The protective factors of adoption were multiple and ecologically nested. At a proximal level these were the major ones: (a) a stable, two-parent, middle-class family, (b) educated parents, (c) resilient and resourceful parents, (d) stay-at-home

mother who was the in-home tutor, (e) acceptance by extended family, (f) sibling group adoption, (g) goodness of fit with mother in terms of talents, inclinations and interests. The risk factors of adoption at the proximal level were: (a) adjustment to a new culture and acquisition of a new language, (b) older parents, (c) sibling with a developmental delay; and (d) ineffective post-adoption support for the family. Of the risk factors, ineffective post-adoption support seems to have had the most detrimental effect on the family and Natasha's educational experience.

At a more distal level, family lives in a "choice city" with numerous assets, where (a) quality-of- life indicators are above state average; (b) the community is very supportive towards education, (c) there are many educational and recreational resources, (d) and recently, there are resources for adoptive parents. Adoption also gave the opportunity to Natasha to attend classes in a nationally recognized school district for high student achievement, which has numerous assets, such as: (a) qualified and experienced teachers, (b) good ratio of staff to student, (c) it is moderately well-funded, (d) standards-based curriculum, and (e) a wide array of student and special education services.

School Experience

All findings lead to believe that Natasha's school experience was generally positive academically, besides the very difficult beginnings and the bumps on the road. Since the third grade, she took all classes in her grade level. (It must be noted, though, that due to circumstances beyond her control, she was two years behind in

age-appropriate grade level.) Her cumulative GPA was 2.96. The lowest annual GPA value was 2.74 (fourth grade) and the highest 3.23 (third grade). These results put Natasha in the category of average students. This status is reinforced by comparing her CSAP and Level Test results to her cohort in her school and in the school district.

The analysis of the trend of the grades per quarter in Literacy (Reading, Language, Spelling and Handwriting) and in Math showed oscillations, and so did the analysis of the CSAP and RIT scores. The lower peaks did not coincide with the last quarter (which might have been explained with loss of energy and enthusiasm). If we consider the grades and standardized test results as outcome measurements of academic achievement, it may be speculated that the path of educational resilience is with ups and downs, very similar to how general resilience is usually described in literature. The lower peaks show the tension of the difficulties to be overcome at the period when risk factors are at play actively, and the higher peaks indicate the actual overcoming of the difficulties and the build-up of resilience.

Natasha attended classes in two schools. Her parents were unhappy with her experience in the first school. Her needs as a post-institutionalized adoptee were not taken into account in the initial placement. Her parents advocated on her behalf, but they were ignored mainly because the staff were not aware of the challenges of a post-institutionalized international adoptee. The school provided instruction as well as a wide array of services that catered to high-risk students with intermittent educational experiences, coming from lower socioeconomic strata, whose English was a second language. Natasha had enough similarities with these students to be supported as one of them with the services of ESL and teaching practices that had

worked with those students. However, her original background and her status as a post-institutionalized international adoptee made her very dissimilar to them and created a lack of goodness of fit between her needs and the kind of instruction she received. Yet, thanks to the cluster of strengths which came into play as the interaction of her personal protective factors (enthusiasm for learning, trying hard to please), her parents' support and the commitment of her classroom teachers, she overcame many of the initial educational difficulties which were created by the lack of goodness of fit.

Natasha's educational experience in the second school was considered to be better, but not yet adequate, by her parents. The second school displayed some of the same risk factors of the first school but to a lesser degree: almost half of the student body was considered to be at-risk due to lower socio-economic background and English as a Second Language. Additionally, the parental involvement in school was low. However, there were many protective factors at school that supported Natasha's education such as: (a) highly qualified teachers, committed to teaching at-risk students and who had high expectations for them, (b) school philosophy and atmosphere that celebrated diversity and individuality, (c) structure and order in the school that was conducive to learning, (d) educational technology resources that were used creatively (e) small class sizes, (f) solid, standards-based curriculum that was rigorously implemented, (g) an array of services for students that catered to their individual needs, and (h) classroom practices that encouraged learning and academic engagement. The main extra-personal school related risk factor, which was identified by her parents and affirmed by my observations at school and interviews with school

staff, was lack of individualized teaching that would have helped Natasha fill in the gaps in her knowledge created during the first three years of learning and help her develop her abstract thinking. In my opinion, this was not due to a dearth of professional resources. It was mainly caused by the stereotyping of special needs education and lack of understanding of Natasha's needs as a post-institutionalized international adoptee. Because Natasha school performance was average, her learning issues were overlooked.

Personal Factors

The findings showed that Natasha's personal assets that seemed to have played an important part in overcoming difficulties and ensuring academic success were:

(a) good physical health, (b) prevalent positive mood, (c) enthusiasm for learning, (d) loving and caring disposition, (e) ability to relate well to adults, trust them and try hard to please them, (f) average intelligence, (g) good language skills and love of reading, (h) initiative and predominantly internal locus of control, (i) tenaciousness, (j) good self-efficacy, (k) high self-esteem and (l) creativity. Natasha's personal risk factors were identified to be: (a) emotional immaturity expressed as impulsiveness and difficulties in emotional regulation, (b) lack of organizational skills, (c) difficulties in abstract thinking, (d) desire to fit in socially which took precedence over meeting her learning needs, and (e) struggling moral competence.

The nature of some of the assets and risks may be inherent, mostly temperamental, like prevalent positive mood, enthusiasm for learning, or creativity.

Some assets and risks may have been developed in the pre-adoption period. It might be speculated that her internal locus of control might have originated from the days in which she was left in charge of her siblings. (If so, this would be an example of the steeling effects of adversities.) Her difficulties in emotional regulation may be caused by the multiple traumatic events in her life as a young child as well as by abuse and neglect. The cases when she did not display moral competence (lying to her parents and stealing) may be a side effect of life in the institution, where she lost total control over meeting her individual needs. Her quick adaptation to a new family, a new country, and two different schools may be attributed to a good interaction of her temperamental enthusiasm for new things with her earlier chaotic upbringing, when she was required to impose her structure on things to make sense to her.

The proximal external protective factors in the home and at school may also be credited for both supporting the development of Natasha's assets and buffering or decreasing the impact of personal risk factors. For example, love of reading and good language skills may be attributed to the continuous support she received at home from her adoptive mother besides her internal inclination. She had high-self esteem due to the respect and high expectations of her parents and teachers at school. The teachers at school created the necessary buffer to abate the impact of lack of organizational skills and the barrier to prevent lack of moral competence. Her parents helped her with the emotional immaturity and desire to fit in socially getting precedence over her learning needs. Additionally, they provided support for her moral competence.

Concluding Summary: Natasha's Educational Resilience Model

The analysis of the findings demonstrated that Natasha had been subjected to many outstanding risk factors, risk events and risk chains at different points in her life. Among the most impactful were identified to be abuse and neglect in the maternal home in the first five years, educational neglect in the institution, lack of post-adoption support for the family, and the oversight of her specific educational needs by the educational system. However, a multitude of protective factors, events and chains were also identified at the same points in her life. Among the most efficacious were the love of maternal grandmother, the caring staff and good friends at the institution, adoption together with a sibling by resilient, educated, middle-class parents, living in a city noted for good quality of life and attending school in a school district distinguished for high achievement and good resources.

Natasha's educational resilience is the outcome of a very complex model of interaction of risk and protection. At certain cases the interaction of risk and protection was proven to be concurrent. An example is her mother's support with homework when Natasha encountered difficulty at school because the teacher did not pay attention to her individual learning needs. At other cases, the protection factor was antecedent to the activity of the risk. For example, Natasha fell in love with reading when she was read to by her adoptive mother, prior to learning how to read. This love of reading was instrumental in helping overcome the difficulties of learning how to read without the gradual exposure to it in kindergarten and first grade.

Often, the activity of the protection factors, events or chains decreased and even neutralized the effects of risk factors, events or chains. Adoption was a major protection event that triggered the activity of a multitude of protection factors. Some of these factors gave Natasha the much-needed sense of belonging and a feeling of security, which neutralized some of the effects of institutionalization. When a risk factor in one domain went unrecognized and it was coupled with the activity of another risk factor in the same domain, the effect became long lasting. This was the case when the educational neglect Natasha experienced in the institution was coupled with the lack of response of the American educational system to her needs as a post-institutionalized adoptee. The consequence is Natasha's two years' lagging behind her age peers in the classes she attended.

Natasha's educational resilience is a by-product of complex transactions between different systems embedded in each other. The impact of larger systems was strongly felt on smaller ones both in regards to risk and protection. The activity of familial risk factors that Natasha was subjected to as a child, when living with her biological mother, was elevated in the context of the socio-economic conditions of the region and of the country the family lived in. On the other hand, the activity of the familial protection factors in the adoptive family was enhanced in the context of the resources of the community the family lives in the United States. Natasha's educational resilience was manifested in the school context, however it was a byproduct of the transactions of many educational and extra educational factors. Although the importance of attending school in a school district distinguished for high achievement and good resources and having highly qualified and committed teachers cannot be

underrated, the all-round support of Natasha's parents was a very important factor in securing her educational outcomes.

Natasha had many significant personal assets such as good physical health, prevalent positive mood, enthusiasm for learning and initiative, ability to relate well to adults, good language skills and love of reading, creativity and tenaciousness, good self-efficacy and high self-esteem. She also displayed some traits that have been recognized in the literature as risk factors. They were emotional immaturity expressed as impulsiveness and difficulties in emotional regulation, lack of organizational skills, difficulties in abstract thinking especially in math and struggling moral competence. The support she received from her family, her teachers, her school counselor and her therapist was an important protective factor in reducing the effect of those risk traits.

The best way to describe the model of Natasha's educational resilience is by borrowing the concept of the *resultant* from Mathematics and Physics and modifying it for simplicity. The resultant is a vector that results from the interaction of two or more vectors. In Mathematics and Physics, the vector represents a force in the form of a quantity possessing both magnitude and direction, represented by an arrow the direction of which indicates the direction of the quantity and the length of which is proportional to the magnitude. In our model, a vector may represent either risk or protection. For simplicity, major risk factors/events are represented with north-south vectors (arrows) and major protection factors/events are represented with south-north vectors (arrows). The magnitude of risk or protection is represented by the length of the arrow. The resultant (represented by the double line arrow) is the trajectory of development, which, at the last stage, is also representative of the educational

resilience. In order to interpret the model accurately, one must bear in mind that the resultant vector is the result of the effects of individual vectors, but it is not the sum of the vectors; the effect of the resultant vector is always greater than the effect of its individual components.

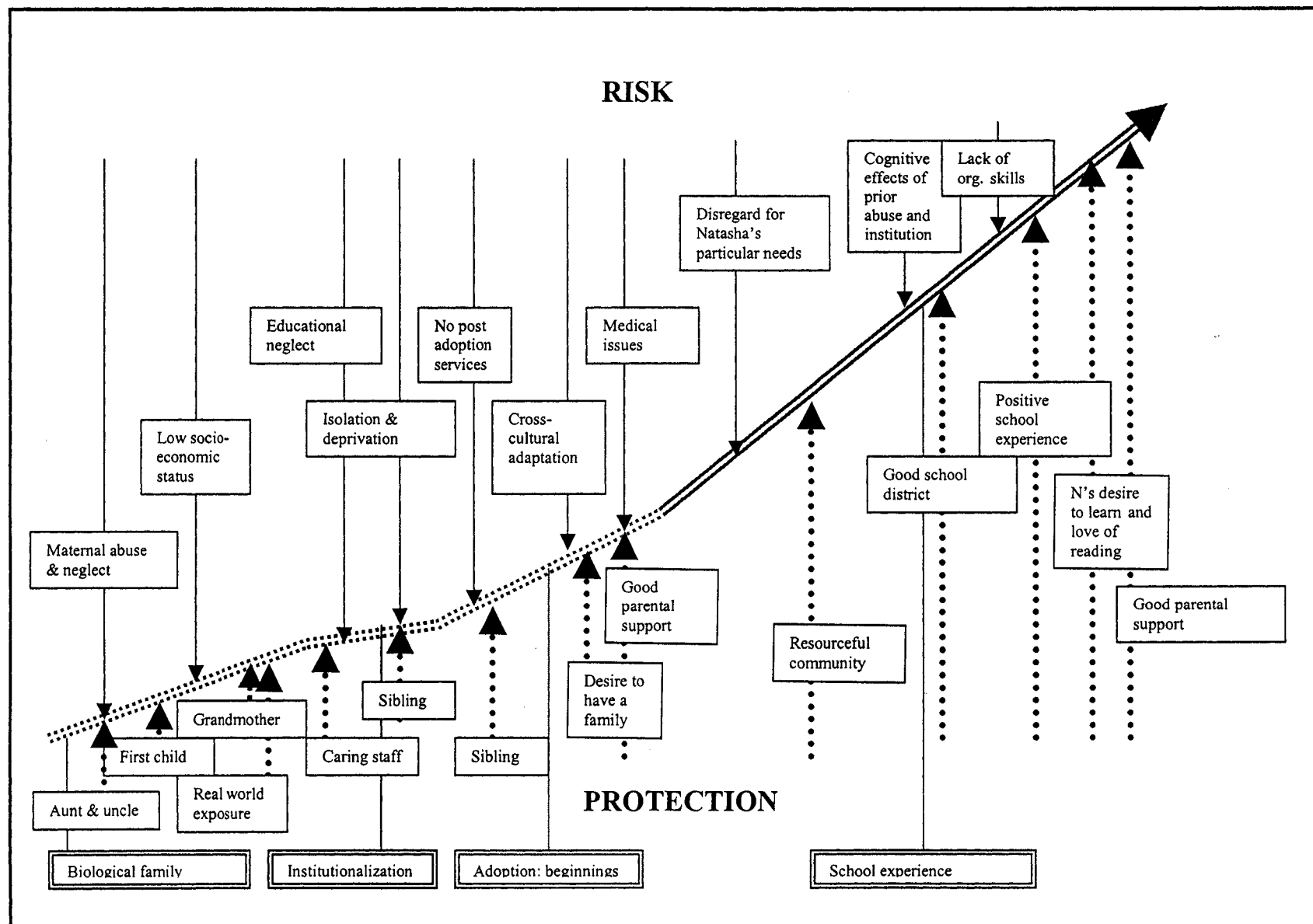


Figure 11. Natasha's resultant of educational resilience

CHAPTER FIVE: SOME THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to advance the understanding of resilience in general and of educational resilience in particular. Post-institutionalized adoptees from Eastern Europe were selected as the target population of the study. The literature review established that they are a high-risk population. Nevertheless, many of them have shown remarkable resilience.

A case study design was selected for the research as the methodology that permitted the use of an ecological-transactional-developmental approach. A thorough literature review determined this approach to be appropriate in understanding the mechanism of resilience. The ecological perspective was helpful in identifying the protection factors as resources and assets in the student, her family, her school and her community. The transactional perspective helped throw light on how the transactions between and among these systems contributed to the welfare of each other. The developmental perspective allowed following the history of the psycho-social development of the student and identifying risk and protection factors and processes that had played an important part at different periods in the student's pre-school life. A post-institutionalized international female adoptee from Russia, who was taking regular education classes in the fifth grade, and had a cumulative GPA of 2.96, was selected to be the subject of the case study. The

ecological-transactional-developmental approach guided both data collection and data analysis. The data were gathered through (a) six taped interviews with the student, her parents, her sibling, her best friend, the school principal and school counselor, (b) four questionnaires completed by the student's teachers, (c) 27 observations in class, school, neighborhood, family home and the library as well as (d) through the student's school related documents, (e) documents and studies on the community, school district and schools the student attended and relevant publications in the local press, and last but not least, (f) the student's self-expression through a self-collage and entries in her reading journal.

The findings established that the student, who chose to be called Natasha, had demonstrated educational resilience: she was an at-risk student who had achieved good educational outcomes. Many facts pointed to Natasha's status as an at-risk student. As a young child, she experienced abuse and neglect as well as many traumatic events. She was, then, institutionalized for two years, during which time she experienced malnutrition, medical neglect and educational neglect. She was an older adoptee (she was seven years old when she was adopted). As an international adoptee, she had to learn a new language and adjust to a new culture. Additionally, her adoptive parents had visual impairment and her sibling had a developmental disability. All the above facts are recognized as risk factors that affect educational outcomes. But at the time this research was conducted, Natasha had beaten her odds. She was an average student in a mainstream regular education class.

The original research questions that informed the study were:

1. Which personal and extra-personal risk factors, events and processes may affect the academic outcomes of a post-institutionalized adopted student?
2. Which personal and extra-personal protective factors, events and processes may have an effect on the academic outcomes of a post-institutionalized adopted student?
3. What specific clusters of strength may help the student overcome difficulties?

These questions were answered in detail in Chapter Four, where the work of risk and protective factors, which shaped Natasha's development and had an impact on her educational outcomes, was first analyzed thoroughly and then presented graphically through the model of the resultant vector. What follows is a brief summary.

Risk Factors, Events and Processes

Pre-adoption risk factors were identified to be profuse: Natasha was born to a single, teenage alcoholic mother who had four children after Natasha in four years. The family lived in poverty in a depressed community. Family life was chaotic. Natasha experienced traumatic events such as death of a sibling, death of grandmother, forceful removal of uncle from home. She was neglected and exploited by her mother. She was not introduced to any form of pre-school education (either formal or informal). When she was institutionalized, she experienced deficient nourishment, medical neglect and total

educational neglect at school age, in addition to isolation from real world experiences. These pre-adoption risk factors had an important impact on Natasha's school readiness.

The post-adoption risk factors were far less numerous. Among adoption-related risk factors were stress caused by adjustment to a new culture and acquisition of a new language, older parents, sibling with developmental delays and lack of post-adoption support for the family (the latter proved to be the most impactful). Among school-related risk factors were disregard for Natasha's unique needs as a post-institutionalized international adoptee by the school system and consequent inadequate individualized support to help her overcome difficulties related to abstract thinking.

Natasha's school related personal risk factors were identified to be emotional immaturity expressed as impulsiveness and difficulties in emotional regulation, lack of organizational skills, difficulties in abstract thinking, overwhelming desire to fit in socially and struggling moral competence. The origin of these personal risk factors may be tracked down to the impact of extra-personal risk prior to adoption.

Protective Factors, Events and Processes

Some pre-adoption protection factors that assisted Natasha in fulfilling most of the tasks of cognitive and psycho-social development amidst risk were identified to be: the supportive role of the maternal grandmother, the love and care of uncle and aunt, having the undivided attention of her mother for nine months and richness of life experiences in an open environment. While in institution, Natasha was placed with a sibling, she made friends, the staff was caring and loving and they had a favorable attitude towards

international adoptions. Other protection factors were age at placement, short duration of institutionalization and preparation for adoption.

Adoption was the most important protective event in Natasha's life. She lives with a stable, two-parent, middle class family. Her parents are educated, resourceful, mindful and resilient. Her stay-at-home mother has become her in-home tutor. Natasha has a goodness of fit with her mother in terms of talents, inclinations and interests. She was adopted with her sibling. At a more distal level, the family lives in a community recognized nationally, where quality-of-life indicators are above state average. The community is very supportive towards education and provides many educational and recreational opportunities. Recently, there are resources for adoptive parents.

Natasha's academic experience was generally positive. She attended classes in a nationally recognized school district for high student achievement which had numerous assets such as qualified and experienced teachers, good ration of staff to students, was moderately well-funded, had a standards-based curriculum and provided a wide array of student and special education surveys. Natasha went to two schools with a special focus on at-risk students. Her teachers were committed, qualified and had high expectations. The school philosophy and atmosphere celebrated diversity and individuality. There was structure and order in the school that was conducive to learning. There were educational technology resources that were used creatively. The class sizes were reasonable and classroom practices encouraged learning and academic engagement.

Natasha's personal assets were numerous. She had good physical health, prevalent positive mood, enthusiasm for learning, a loving and caring disposition, ability to relate well to adults, trust them and try hard to please them, average intelligence, good language

skills and love of reading, initiative and predominantly internal locus of control, tenaciousness, good self-efficacy, high self-esteem and creativity. The nature of some assets (like prevalent positive mood, enthusiasm for learning and creativity) might have been temperamental. Some assets, like internal locus of control might have originated from the days when she was left in charge of her siblings. The proximal external protective factors at home at school might be credited amongst others for love of reading and good language skills, as well as high self-esteem.

Clusters of Strength

Protection was never found to be a single factor; it came in clusters. Some of the clusters were made up of elements that were concurrent in time (for example: being the first child, support of grandmother, love of uncle and aunt). Some of the clusters were made up of elements present at different points in time (for example: experience of having a family, positive attitude towards adoption by staff at the orphanage, acceptance as member of the extended family were the elements of her sense of belongingness, an import protection factor). Some clusters were a combination of opportunities, personal assets and existence of resources (for example, Natasha's creativity, which was one of the foundations of her self-esteem in school, was due to her inherent talent, opportunities at school, support from her parents and existence of necessary material resources). Not rarely, clusters of strength were formed as a result of the support the extra personal factors provided for personal assets. Such was the case of Natasha's academic engagement. Initially triggered by Natasha's enthusiasm for learning, it subsisted on

support for learning by two educated parents, a school climate that encouraged learning, teachers with high professionalism and high expectations for their students, and, last but not least, a community that valued learning and provided resources for it to occur.

Some Theoretical Implications

In this part of the dissertation, I will present some findings/conclusions which, probably, may be of relevance beyond Natasha, and may be helpful to other researchers and practitioners interested in resilience.

1. *There may be potent protection amidst preponderance of risk and harmful risk amidst preponderance of protection.*

These are some examples from this study: Although Natasha's preadoptive period was characterized by a preponderance and dominance of risk factors, the fewer present protection factors (such as the stability her grandmother provided for her) not only mitigated some of the effects of risk, but also planted the seed for future protection. Similarly, the post adoptive life and school experience was characterized by the prevalence of protection factors both in quantity and power. However, the activity of a few existing risk factors had a diminishing factor on the educational outcomes. For example, Natasha attended classes in a school district with high student achievement; she had highly qualified teachers with high expectations who taught standards-based curriculum to small class-sizes. However, the fact that her educational needs as a post-institutionalized

international adoptee were ignored and, besides her family, there was nobody else to advocate on her behalf, had an impact on her educational outcomes.

2. *An educationally resilient student may have a blend of risk and protective personal traits.*

The results indicated that Natasha possessed many personal traits that have been recognized to being conducive to educational resilience. She demonstrated enthusiasm for learning and initiative; prevalent positive mood; ability to relate well to adults, trust them and try hard to please them; good language skills and love of reading; creativity and tenaciousness, good self-efficacy and high self-esteem, and last, but not least good physical health. But, she also displayed personal traits that are recognized as risk factors. Such were emotional immaturity expressed as impulsiveness and difficulties in emotional regulation, lack of organizational skills, difficulties in abstract thinking especially in math, struggling moral competence as well as desire to fit in socially which got precedence over meeting her learning needs.

3. *Extra personal factors may play a very important role both as risk and protection.*

By all means Natasha did not do it alone. A careful investigation of her life circumstances during her developmental trajectory located clusters of strengths even in the most deprived environments. The love and care of her grandmother, the fact that she was the first child, interactions with her uncle and aunt formed that cluster of strengths that was crucial in helping her achieve the main

developmental milestones of the age, even though she experienced neglect and abuse by an alcoholic single mother and lived amidst economic deprivation.

While in the institution, she did not receive the necessary professional support to deal with her past and her separation issues; she was subjected to malnourishment, real world isolation, and inadequate cognitive, social, emotional and sensory-motor experiences. The educational neglect she experienced (she did not attend kindergarten and first grade) not only prevented her from receiving the necessary knowledge and skills that she needed to build upon for subsequent schooling, but also kept her two years behind her age peers in the classes she attended. However, her caring and loving disposition helped her make good friends, something that filled the void of separation from her natural family. She was placed with a sibling, which helped her maintain a sense of belonging amidst the real-world isolation. The staff was caring and trustworthy and they had a positive attitude towards international adoptions, which was transferred to her. She was read to in a circle, which planted the seed for fondness of reading. It was this cluster of strengths that proved to have a long-term protective impact on her on many aspects, the most important of which was her eagerness to become part of the new family.

Without any doubt, adoption was the most important protective factor in Natasha's life. The chain of former risks was interrupted, and a new world of opportunities opened up to her. She currently lives in a peaceful and resourceful community, with an above the average quality of life, where education is held in high esteem and where the average number of assets the youth identify is above the national average. She is part of a stable, loving, cohesive two-parent family. Her parents are educated, resilient and although traditional in values, open minded and not judgmental. The family structure provides

enough order and routine to keep her grounded and enough flexibility to promote her feeling of independence. She was adopted with her sibling, which provided a continuity of her former emotional support system and belonging. The adoption, although successful, has by no means been an easy process both for the parents and the children. The family struggled to build cohesion without any professional post-adoption support for the first four years. The parents felt lonely as they tried hard and often fumblingly to cater to the emotional and social needs of two young girls with a background of deprivation and institutionalization. As Natasha went to school, besides her mother, there was nobody there to advocate on her behalf and help raise awareness among school staff of the educational needs of a post-institutionalized adoptee. As a result, she was not given the differentiated support she needed especially at the beginning, although the school district had the resources to meet those needs. Lack of family support services in general and respite care in particular, was one of the reasons that Natasha's mother did not volunteer in Natasha's classes: she felt the need to use the time when her daughters were in school as her respite from the intensive demands of caregiving. The offering of some post-adoption services during the fifth year of adoption like the adoptive parents support group, respite care once a month and six sessions of free family therapy were an appreciated support for the family and helped make a difference. Lack of professional post-adoption support was the most significant risk factor with a major impact on the family in general and Natasha's educational process in particular.

Natasha attended classes in a moderately well funded school district, which has been recognized nationally for high student achievement. She went to two schools where teachers had experience in working with students at risk. Many other protective factors

were at play especially in the second school: standards-based curriculum, positive school climate, qualified, experienced and committed teachers with high expectations for their students, a diverse student body where she could fit in, small class sizes and others. However, she experienced disregard for her preadoptive history and did not receive any differentiated support to cope with her difficulties.

4. *The development of the clusters of strengths may entail a complex process, which involves the activity of numerous protective factors, with different degrees of visibility. The less conspicuous factors, especially those of an emotional nature, may be as impactful as the more visible ones.*

Natasha's story revealed that the educational clusters of strengths, i.e., "the bunches" of protective factors and processes that accounted for her educational success were made up of very diverse elements and complex transactions of these elements embedded in various systems, both personal and extrapersonal. Without doubt, the presence of numerous school- related protective factors created the necessary background for the development of her educational resilience. However, many of the protective factors and processes that led to her educational resilience occurred prior to her school experience and outside of the school environment. Some of the protective factors were opportunities, some were linked to resources, some were positive feelings, and others were positive transactions. Some of the factors were parallel, and others were hierarchical. Some factors, especially the emotional reactions to events, were easy to overlook. An example was Natasha's development of love of reading, which by all means was considered to be the cornerstone of her successful school outcomes. A quick analysis of this process

indicates that it entails a minimum of twenty protective factors and processes. The first time that Natasha remembers she was exposed to books was when she lived in the institution (probably at the age of five and a half). There she was read to in a reading circle. Her first experiences in the reading circle were positive; she remembers those times fondly, especially because that is where she met one of her most beloved friends, Mashenka. When she was adopted, Natasha's adoptive mother started reading to her in English every evening. During the reading time, Natasha not only expanded the knowledge of English (which she was eager to learn as part of her desire to fit in with her new family), but she also received attention from her new mother. The activity was pleasurable for her mother too, who was an avid reader and had a degree in English. When Natasha started school, she found an environment that valued reading. Her second grade teacher was very appreciative of Natasha's love of reading and so was her fifth grade teacher. Some of Natasha's individual traits were also valuable contributors: she was creative and artistic and enjoyed fiction. Additionally, she was a person who loved to be in charge: she could choose her own books. The fact that both schools she attended had good media centers with a moderately rich collection of books was also an important contributor. Then, one can add to the list the fact that the city library was not very far from her home and Natasha's mother visited it often and she always took Natasha with her. The services in the library were good and the environment was very welcoming to children.

5. *Struggles are part of the process of the building of educational resilience.*

Natasha's school experience was far from smooth; there were many valleys and peaks. Results showed that, at different points, she struggled more, as was indicated by her lower grades. At times, she was even discouraged and felt overwhelmed by the learning task, as I observed in a Math class. But, when she felt supported in her efforts, she was encouraged to continue to apply herself and, as a result, her educational outcomes improved.

6. *The mere existence of assets, resources, opportunities and other personal or social capital per se may not guarantee their activation as protective factors. The latter seems to be triggered and mediated via mindfulness.*

Mindfulness is "best understood as the process of drawing novel distinctions" (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, p.1) whereas mindlessness is "overreliance on past categories and distinctions whereby the individual is context dependent and oblivious to novel aspects of situations" (Demick, 2000, p.142). The theory of mindfulness was first developed in the field of social psychology by Ellen Langer in the mid seventies, and since then it has been widely embraced as a theory of human development which has "the potential to become a unifying framework for the field of psychological science" (Demick, 2000, p.142). According to Langer, mindfulness can lead to a number of diverse and positive consequences such as greater awareness of one's environment, more openness to new information, the creation of new categories for structuring perception as well as enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving. According to

Sternberg (2000), mindfulness may be understood as a cognitive ability, as a personality trait or as a cognitive style.

Natasha has exhibited many instances of mindfulness, which in my opinion may be helpful in explaining her successful adaptation to a new family and a new culture and have helped her overcome difficulties. It might be speculated that Natasha approached becoming part of the new family as a novelty (in all my informal conversations with her she never once said: “like a similar situation in Russia!”). She did not get stuck in the memories of her past experiences of her life with her biological family, which by all means might have driven her apart from her new parents. Her adoptive mother was not just a mother (a category she was familiar with), she was a new person and Natasha developed a uniquely new relationship with her. The relationship Natasha built with her adoptive parents was mediated by mindfulness on both sides. Natasha’s parents demonstrated mindfulness in designing expectations for her that were not based on rigid “this-is-what-a-child-is-supposed-to- do” mentality. They were aware of her difficulties of adjustments and met her where she was, not where she was supposed to be. This mindfulness demonstrated by both sides was the foundation of filial-parental attachment and bonding, a very important prerequisite for Natasha’s good mental health.

Mindlessness usually results from categorical thinking and stereotyping (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Langer (1989, 1997, 2000) explains that the roots of mindlessness are repetition, premature cognitive commitments (when we accept a piece of information at face value without thinking critically about it), belief in limited resources (thinking that resources are limited, we create clear and stable categories so that we can determine who

gets these resources), the notion of linear time, education for outcome, and the powerful influence of context.

Premature cognitive commitment may explain why the staff of the orphanage never exposed Natasha to age-appropriate education when she was in the process of being adopted internationally. It was mindlessness and not lack of educational resources that created the first major educational risk in Natasha's life.

Another manifestation of mindlessness rooted in the powerful influence of context is Natasha's placement in the second grade, although she had never been through kindergarten and first grade. The placement may be tracked back to similar practices in the school district with the children of international students and transient populations. While age-appropriate grade placement may work well for children who have started their educational experience in another language and they transfer the previously acquired skills in a new cultural environment, this was by no means the right solution for a student like Natasha. This created the second major educational risk for Natasha.

Yet another example of mindlessness, which has been translated in educational risks is the lack of differentiated support for Natasha. This lack of differentiated support does not originate from a real scarcity of resources. As explained in the Results section, the school district has an elaborate system to provide individualized supports for students that need it. However, this system of supports falls under special education, which is mandated by Federal laws, where students' eligibility is categorized into labels. Because Natasha did not fall in any of the categories, she was denied the much needed individualized support.

7. *Resilience may be described as a developmental process that involves the mindful process of overcoming risk through protection. A resultant vector may best represent it. Resilience is also an outcome of a prior process that becomes part of a later developmental process.*

In Natasha's case, her resilience has developed over time, since her first encounters with risk and protection when she was living with her biological mother and later at the orphanage. She has also demonstrated resilience at different points in her life: when she adjusted to life in the orphanage without much difficulty after she was separate from her biological family, when she started a new life in the United States by bonding with her new parents and accepting their love and guidance. At school, she demonstrated resilience by coping with all the difficulties without losing her enthusiasm for learning and finding ways of being successful through reading and arts.

Some Implications for Practice

The analysis of Natasha's post-adoption risk and protective factors revealed that two important protective factors were missing: (a) individualized support at school that would take into account Natasha's background of deprivation and institutionalization and its school-related effects and (b) post-adoption support services for her family that would have included an advocate for Natasha in the school system.

As Natasha's story suggests, the students who have been adopted from Eastern European orphanages have unique stories and educational challenges even in the cases when they have good educational outcomes. However, more often than not, the school

system has failed to adequately respond with appropriate supports (Schell-Frank 2000, Gindis 2000, Federici, 2003a). One reason may be the small numbers that have not yet reached a critical mass. The post-institutionalized students adopted from Eastern Europe constitute about 0.07 % of the general student membership of American public schools (K-12). They are about 30,500 students who are spread over 93,273 schools and 14,859 school districts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

The second reason is the recency of the phenomenon: the post-cold-war wave of adoptions from Eastern Europe started in the early nineties and schools “are navigating uncharted waters” (Gindis, 1999, 2000). The uniqueness of the group has not yet been recognized as a special category amidst labels served by the IDEA or Rehabilitation Act, although research done in the field of neuropsychology has gathered enough evidence to prove it (Federici, 2003b). A third reason may be the wide diversity of the needs of American students and the “compassion fatigue” (Kees and Lashwood, 1996) experienced by the system. In this situation, many of the parents of the post-institutionalized adoptees (very much like Natasha’s) are fighting hard to make sure that their children receive appropriate education by arranging proper academic placement as well as remediation and supportive services (Schell-Frank, 2000). Some non-profit organizations of parents like FRUA (Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoptions - including neighboring countries) and EEAC (Easter European Adoption Coalition) are working to educate the school system of the needs of this group. Some level of awareness has been raised. But, the overall process seems to move slowly (Federici, 2003) and it is not yet beneficial to all students adopted from Eastern European orphanages.

Meanwhile, another solution is needed to help on a case by case basis to accelerate the process of providing adequate supports for the unique needs of the post-institutionalized student. This solution may come in the form of an advocate, who is knowledgeable of the major factors affecting the post-institutionalized child in school. He/she knows the student's and the family's strengths well as he/she has developed a work relationship with them. This individual is able to negotiate the maize of special education and other services offered by the school district. I believe that this advocate needs to be part of post-adoption services for families that adopt internationally together with other post-adoption services on an as-needed basis such as available emotional support, coordination of available resources, respite care, relevant information and others.

Natasha's family did not receive any post-adoption services at all for four years and this proved to be a major risk factor in the welfare of the family and affected Natasha's educational outcomes. Unfortunately, theirs is not a unique case. The inadequacy of post-adoption services has been recognized nationally (Gibbs, Siebenaler & Barth, 2002), although the need for them has been identified clearly:

The long-term consequences of children's early trauma and repeated disruptions may be manifested in significant functional impairments at home, in school, or in the community, which in turn creates stress for the entire family. To respond to these challenges, families draw on a variety of services. Many families would prefer that the service they use be tailored to the needs of adopted children and their families, and provided with sensitivity to the adoption-related aspects of their problems. (p. 1)

The national study of post-adoption services conducted in 2002 (Assessing the Field of Post-Adoption Services: Family Needs, Program Models, and Evaluation Issues, authored by Gibbs, Siebenaler and Barth) also studied the different post –adoption services programs and noted that the needs of the adoptive families were identified along these

areas: (a) information services, (b) clinical services, (c) respite care , (d) material services- adoption subsidies, medical care and special education options, and (e) support networks. According to the same report, new programs are being designed at the state and county level as a response to the needs, with differing degrees of success which is yet to be determined empirically.

An existing program, which if adapted to meet the needs of families that have adopted internationally, would have worked well for Natasha's family and would have ultimately contributed to her educational resilience as a major protection factor, is the Colorado Family Support Services Program. This program has been designed to support the families that have members with developmental disabilities and prevent out-of-home placements, but it may also work very well for families who have adopted internationally. The program is individually customized after an assessment of family's strengths and needs. A case manager, well trained and qualified, is assigned to the family. He/she provides emotional support, information as needed on disability-related issues and community resources, does referrals to other resources and coordinates supports for the family. The case manager is also an advocate on family's behalf in the medical and educational issues the family may be encountering. Additionally, the program allocates financial resources to the families to meet needs created by the presence of the disability such as respite care, therapy and counseling, parent and sibling support and others. The capacity building part of the program allows for small programs to be developed that are beneficiary to a number of families, such as support and educational groups for parents, for the children with disabilities and for the siblings, respite care coordination, a newsletter with cutting edge information, and others. The program is guided and

monitored by the Family Support Council, which consists of family members of children enrolled in the program, community members, and staff of the agency that runs the program. The program is flexible, it wraps the family up with the services that it needs and it can change, as the families' needs change. A program like this may be run by an international adoption agency, by the county human services department, or by an agency that provides post-adoptions services only for a certain area. Asked whether the family could have benefited from a program like this, both Natasha's parents agreed.

Some Directions for Future Research

As I was studying the phenomenon of resilience, I often wondered whether there was more to it than the pillar concepts of risk and protection. Summarizing basic assumptions about resilience in *Resiliency: An Integrated Approach to Practice, Policy, and Research*, a volume that synthesizes key aspects of resilience theory and practice as applied in social work practice, Greene & Conrad (2002) agree that "a more adequate conceptualization of this human phenomenon is necessary" (p.41). Given the importance the correct understanding of a phenomenon has in designing effective practical interventions, I believe that more research is needed in this area. A continued theory building of resilience may require both the continuation of the study of the interaction of risk and protection (Fraser, 1997), of stressors and their effects (Gordon & Song, 1994) or may explore other directions. One direction worth pursuing may be the introduction of the theory of mindfulness and the constructs of mindfulness and mindlessness to the resilience discourse. This would not only enrich the latter, but would also increase the

gamut of the possibilities of practical interventions in the field. This is an example: It is generally agreed that resilience “encompasses an adaptational process of goodness of fit” (Greene & Conrad, 2002, p.41). If we could say that this adaptational process of goodness of fit requires recategorizing and relabeling the world around us, openness to new information and to more than one view, a process rather than an outcome orientation and constant reevaluation of the context, then we would agree that mindfulness lies at the core of the process of the adaptational goodness of fit for both the individual and the systems this person interacts with. Langer (1997) explains that mindfulness can both be learned and taught. It might be hypothesized that teaching and learning the tools of mindfulness would improve the chances for the adaptational goodness of fit and increase resilience, and also have other benefits. The above example speculated the potential.

However, theoretical and empirical research is needed to determine whether the theory of mindfulness and its basic concepts may be valid contributors to a better understanding of resilience. It would also be of practical interest to research the direct application of including mindfulness in the interventions. So, it might be worth researching whether social work practice interventions that aim at mindfulness, increase the potential for resilience in the individual and the interacting systems. Another direction of research might be the exploration of how nurturing the disposition of mindfulness in a mindful classroom contributes to educational resilience. Yet another direction for further research might be how introducing the concept of mindfulness in the training of teachers and other school professionals may have an impact on the educational resilience. A fourth direction of research would be to target the current special education system and study

those implementation aspects that promote mindlessness and make the system rigid and label-based, losing the originally intended flexibility of services.

APPENDIX ONE
MEASUREMENTS

INTERVIEW GUIDE

PARENTS

PART ONE: ADOPTION

1. What do you know about your child's life prior to adoption?
2. How did you decide to adopt this particular child?
3. How prepared were you for the adoption?
4. What did you know about children with a background of institutionalization prior to adoption?
5. What supports did you have after the adoption?

PART TWO: SCHOOL

6. What do you think of the school your child goes to?
7. What do you like most about this school?
8. What do you like the least about the school?
9. What is your opinion of the teachers of your child?
10. Is there a teacher that has shown special interest in your child?
11. Do you feel that your child is treated the same or different? Please explain.
12. What is your family's involvement with school?

PART THREE: FAMILY LIFE

13. How would you describe your family?
14. What are three things that you consider as unbreakable rules for everybody in the family?
15. What is a routine day in your household?
16. What is this child supposed to do at home? (Chores, etc.)
17. How does the child get along with his sibling?

PART FOUR: THE CHILD

18. How is his/her health?
19. How would you describe the temperament of your child?
20. What are three characteristics that you believe are the strengths of your child?
21. What are three characteristics that you think may get your child in trouble?
22. What expectations do you have for your child?
23. What do you think he/she may become when he/she grows up?
24. Does he/she enjoy going to school?
25. What does he/she love most about the school?
26. What does he/she love the least about the school?

PART FIVE: PEERS

27. Does your child make friends easily?
28. How would you describe his/her friends?
29. Where does he/she make friends?
30. In your opinion, do his/her friends have any impact on his/her school outcomes?

INTERVIEW GUIDE

STUDENT

PART ONE: PREADoption

1. What do you remember of the life before you came to the United States?
2. Did you go to school there?
3. What do you remember about the school?
4. Did you have good friends?

PART TWO: TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

5. What do you usually do? Can you describe a day in your life for me?
6. What do you love to do most?
7. What do you love to do the least?
8. Do you care what other people think of you?
9. What do you think of yourself? Who are you?
10. Have you ever volunteered? If yes, tell me about it.
11. Do you ever get angry? If yes, tell me what makes you angry. What do you do about it?
12. Who are the people that are most important to you?
13. What do you want to do when you grow up?

PART THREE: TELL ME ABOUT SCHOOL

14. Tell me about your school.
15. Tell me about your teachers.
16. Which teacher do you like the most? Tell me about him/her.
17. Are your classes difficult?
18. Which class do you love the most? Tell me about it.

PART FOUR: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

19. What do you like to do with your sibling?
20. What do you like to do with your parents?
21. What are the family rules that you need to follow?
22. Tell me about a family event that you really enjoyed.

PART FIVE: PEERS

23. Tell me about your closest friends: Who are they? Where did you meet them? How are they?
24. What do you love to do with your friends?
25. Do you ever talk about school with your friends? If yes, what do they say?
26. Do you know how your friends are doing at school? If yes, can you tell me?

INTERVIEW GUIDE

SIBLING

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR BROTHER/SISTER

1. What do you usually do together?
2. What is your brother/sister like? Tell me about him/her.
3. What do you love most about him/her?
4. What does he/she love to do the most?
5. What does he/she love to do the least?

INTERVIEW GUIDE

PEER

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FRIEND

1. How did you two meet?
2. Have you been friends for a long time?
3. What do you usually do together?
4. What is your friend like? Tell me about him/her.
5. What do you like most about him/her?
6. What does he/she love to do most?
7. What does he/she love to do the least?
8. How are you doing in school?

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PART ONE: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Child's name _____
2. DOB: _____ month _____ day _____ year
3. Age at adoption _____ years _____ months _____ days
4. Adopted from _____
5. Time spent in the orphanage _____
6. My child had school experience prior to coming to the USA ☐ Yes ☐ No.

PART TWO: SCHOOL INFORMATION

7. Please check one statement in each column that best describes your child:

☐ My child's learning abilities are at grade level	☐ My child attends school at his/her grade level
☐ My child's learning abilities are above grade level	☐ My child attends school above his/her grade level

8. If you think that your child has a successful school experience, please, check three primary characteristics that, in your opinion, account for his/her academic success:

☐ self-esteem	☐ self-control
☐ positive mood	☐ socially responsive
☐ responsible	☐ flexible
☐ assertive	☐ achievement oriented
☐ positive coping skills	☐ creative
☐ a sense of humor	☐ initiative
☐ intelligent	☐ proud
☐ a sense of moral values	☐ tries hard to please
☐ stands up for him/her self	☐ highly competitive
☐ other _____	☐ other _____
☐ other _____	☐ other _____

Please check the statements that best describe your child:

- ☐ My child has made friends at school.
- ☐ My child has problem maintaining friendships with his/her school peers.
- ☐ My child is treated as an equal by his/her school friends.
- ☐ My child is withdrawn and he/she does not make friends easily.
- ☐ My child usually plays/hangs out with children younger than him/her.
- ☐ My child usually plays/ hangs out with children older than him/her.
- ☐ My child usually plays/hangs out with children of his/her age.

10. Does the school staff take you child's history into consideration? ☐ Yes ☐ No

11. What grade would you give to the education your child is receiving in his/her school?

Please circle one letter: A B C D F

12. Do you do any supplemental learning activities after school, at home? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. If yes, please list three activities that seem to work:

14. Have you had any input from experts in post-institutionalization? ☐ Yes ☐ No

15. If the answer is Yes, please check all that apply:

- ☐ Medical
- ☐ Psychological
- ☐ Behavioral
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. This information will be very helpful.

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What subject(s) do you teach to _____ ?

Years of teaching experience _____

2. How would you summarize your teaching philosophy in 3-4 sentences?

4. Have you noticed any particular things that make this student dissimilar from his/her peers?

☐ Yes ☐ No.

5. If the answer to this question is "Yes," please, describe what makes this student unique.

6. Please check the statement that best describes this student:

- ☐ This student's learning abilities are at his/her grade level
☐ This student's learning abilities are above his/her grade level

7. Please, check all characteristics that, in your opinion, account for _____'s good school results:

☐ self-esteem	☐ self-control
☐ positive mood	☐ socially responsive
☐ responsible	☐ flexible
☐ assertive	☐ achievement oriented
☐ positive coping skills	☐ creative
☐ a sense of humor	☐ initiative
☐ intelligent	☐ proud
☐ a sense of moral values	☐ tries hard to please
☐ stands up for him/her self	☐ highly competitive
☐ other _____	☐ other _____

Please comment:

9. What strategy(s) work best with this student?

11. Please check the statements that best describe this student:

- ☐ This student has made friends at school.
- ☐ This student has problem maintaining friendships with his/her school peers.
- ☐ This student is treated as an equal by his/her school friends.
- ☐ This student is withdrawn and he/she does not make friends easily.
- ☐ This student usually plays/hangs out with children younger than him/her.
- ☐ This student usually plays/ hangs out with children older than him/her.
- ☐ This student usually plays/hangs out with children of his/her age.

12. Is there anything else you think I need to know about this student? I would appreciate any comments.

QUESTIONNAIRE

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

1. What, in your opinion, makes your school stand out from the other elementary/junior high/ high schools in Fort Collins?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal black lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

2. How would you describe your school climate:

a) In regard to teachers

b) In regard to students:

OBSERVATION FORM

FAMILY HOME

IMPRESSIONS

Date: _____ Time: _____

Family members: _____

Family members present: _____

Setting: _____

What is going on: _____

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

OBSERVATION FORM
Class

IMPRESSIONS

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

School: _____

Subject: _____

Period: _____

Teacher: _____

Class size: _____

Diversity: _____

Structure and order: _____

Classroom climate: _____

Setting: _____

What is going on: _____

IMPRESSIONS

IMPRESSIONS

Teacher's interactions with student:

Student's interactions with peers:

OBSERVATION FORM
SCHOOL

IMPRESSIONS

Date: _____

Time period: _____

Student: _____

School: _____

Physical Setting: _____

Resources: _____

Diversity: _____

Inclusion: _____

Structure and order: _____

IMPRESSIONS

Orientation : _____

Volunteer opportunities: _____

Extra curricular activities: _____

Other: _____



Who Am I?

Favorite Song

Some things I really do well

Things I enjoy doing

School subjects I enjoy

Favorite ice-cream
flavor

Things I would rather
not do

My favorite color to
wear

Things I need help with

My favorite book

My best friend

APPENDIX TWO
RECRUITMENT AND PERMISSSIONS

COPY
MEMORANDUM



Office of Regulatory Compliance
Office of Vice President for Research
and Information Technology
Fort Collins, CO 80523-2046
(970) 491-1563
FAX: (970) 491-2293

TO: James Banning, School of Education, 1588
FROM: Celia S. Walker, Regulatory Administrator for the
Human Research Committee
SUBJECT: **PROJECT APPROVAL**
Title: Clusters of Strength: A Case Study of Educational Resilience of Post-
Institutionalized Adopted Children from Eastern Europe.
Protocol No.: 02-180H
Funding Agency: N/A
Funding Agency Deadline: N/A
DATE: October 23, 2002

I am pleased to inform you that the above-referenced project was approved by the Human Research Committee on October 17, 2002 for the period October 17, 2002 to July 18, 2003 with the condition that the attached consent form is signed by the subjects and each subject is given a copy of the form. It is the investigator's responsibility to obtain this consent form from all subjects. *NO changes may be made to this document without first obtaining the approval of the Committee.* The child's assent form must be signed by participants under the age of 18 years old. Approval is for one student in elementary, junior, or junior high school, one (two) parent(s), one sibling, one school administrator, five teachers, and three peers.

A status report of this project will be required within a 12-month period from the date of approval. You will be sent a reminder approximately two months before the protocol expires. The Principal Investigator will report on the numbers of subjects who have participated this year and project-to-date, about problems encountered, and provide a verifying copy of the consent form or cover letter used. The necessary form (H-101) is available from the Regulatory Compliance web page (see below). Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

It is the responsibility of the investigator to immediately inform the Committee of any serious complications, unexpected risks, or injuries resulting from this research. It is also the investigator's responsibility to notify the Committee of any changes in experimental design, participant population, or consent procedures or documents. This can be done with a memo which completely describes the changes and their consequences (new consent form or cover letter, or altered survey instrument, for example). Students serving as Co-Principal Investigators may not alter projects without first obtaining PI approval. The PI is ultimately responsible for the conduct of the project.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's OHRP Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 issued July 1, 2001. If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the researcher's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

Please direct any questions about the Committee's action on this project to me for routing to the Committee.

Additional information is available from the Regulatory Compliance web site at www.research.colostate.edu/regulatory/

Attachment

cc: Marita Rumano

Animal Care & Use • Drug Review • Human Research • Institutional Biosafety • Radiation Safety
410 University Services Center • www.research.colostate.edu/regulatory/



Research and Development Center for the Advancement of Student Learning
222 West Laurel, Fort Collins, CO 80521
TEL: 491/3179; FAX: 491/3180

July 10, 2002

Marita Rumano
543 Walden Way
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Dear Marita:

RE: A Case Study of Educational Resilience of Post-institutionalized Adopted Children from Eastern Europe

Poudre School District has given approval of your project to conduct a study to identify educational clusters of strengths of an adopted student from an Eastern European orphanage. Project approval is based upon the following qualifications:

1. Permission from the building's principal is obtained to participate.
2. Upon principal approval, teachers' participation is strictly voluntary.
3. Consent forms must be provided for all participants who will be interviewed or surveyed. Written permission from parents, students, and teachers must be obtained prior to his/her involvement in the project.
4. No classroom time will be used to conduct the interviews or surveys.
5. All participants will be guaranteed anonymity of their names and responses in any form of communication.
6. Any special documentation, i.e. student records, assessment data, etc., will be obtained from the parents with their permission and not through the schools.
7. Results and data analysis will be available for any interested PSD administrator upon request.
8. CSU's Office of Regulatory Compliance procedures are followed.
8. A final report will be submitted to interested PSD participants and to me at the R&D Center.

If you have questions or need additional information, please call me at 491-3168.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ann Foster'.

Ann Foster, Ed.D.
Director

C Joe Hendrickson
Gary Bamford

Recruiting Telephone Script

For International Adoption Agencies and Local Adoption Support Groups

Hi. My name is Marita Rumano and I am a CSU doctoral student in the School of Education. I am interested in the education of children that have been adopted from Eastern European orphanages and who are currently living in the Fort Collins area. Do you know of any families that have adopted children from Eastern Europe through your agency? Are you in a position to help me find an interested family, whose child is doing well in school? I am looking for a child who is older than 12 years.

I am from Albania myself and my son, now 16, was in such an institution for six years. I have a degree in teaching and I also am a social worker. I work from the strengths perspective and I believe that identifying clusters of strengths for one student may throw light on what needs to be done to help students of the same group who are encountering difficulties. I am looking for students in Fort Collins area who are doing well in school, as I am interested in finding out what makes them successful. I will select only one student for my research, but I would appreciate more than one referral, as I need to select a student who is demonstrating a higher degree of resilience. I intend to interview the student, his/her parents, a sibling and friends and will also make observations in school. The research will also involve teachers and school administrators. There are no direct benefits for the student and his/her family. Measures have been devised to protect the confidentiality of the information and I do not foresee any harm either towards the child

or the family. If the family is interested, I will certainly be happy to share the findings of my research with them.

Is there any protocol that I must follow to use one of your families in my research project? Could you mail/e-mail a letter that explains my project to your families? Could you explain my project to them (by phone or in one of your meetings) and find out if they are interested? I would really appreciate any support. For all those who would like to learn more about this research project, I may be contacted at home at (970) 204-9204. My e-mail address is geldon@lamar.colostate.edu. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Recruiting Letter

CSU Letter Head

Date

Research Study

Project Title: Clusters of Strengths: A Case Study of the Educational Resilience of a Post-Institutionalized Adopted Child

We are conducting a study on the educational resilience of a post-institutionalized adopted child. The main objective of this research project is to identify educational clusters of strengths (i.e. resilience competencies) of a student who has been adopted from an Eastern European orphanage. The purpose of this study is to examine factors and processes that lie at the core of academic success of an internationally adopted student who has experienced institutionalization.

We need a student over 12 years old to be the subject of our case study. Criteria of selection include: experience for at least one year of an Eastern European orphanage prior to adoption by a two parent family. The student attends one of the Poudre School District schools and he/she has attended classes in the USA for at least one full school year. The student has no failing grades and does not receive any special education support services. The family and the student are open about the status of the child as an international adoptee with a background of institutionalization.

We will interview the student, his/her parent(s), his/her sibling(s), three of his/her friends and will ask his/her teachers and a school administrator to complete a questionnaire. The research will also include unobtrusive classroom observations and collecting any relevant documents that family is willing to share.

Measures are in place to protect the identity of all people involved in this research project. All information received will be considered confidential. There are no benefits for participating in this research project.

We would very much appreciate your participation in this study. With your help, this study should provide us with some insight on the factors and processes that account for the academic success of this group of children. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call or e-mail us.

Thank you,

James Banning, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator
School of Education
Colorado State University
970-491-7153
banning@CAHS.colostate.edu

Marita Rumano
Co-Investigator
School of Education
Colorado State University
970-204-9204
geldon@lamar.colostate.edu

Recruiting Letter

**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

TITLE OF PROJECT: Clusters of Strength: A Case Study of the Educational Resilience of a Post-Institutionalized Adopted Child from Eastern Europe.

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: James Banning, Ph.D.

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Marita Rumano, MSW

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: Marita Rumano
Home (970) 204-9204
Work: (970) 266-5425

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

To understand factors and processes involved in the academic success of a student that has been adopted from an Eastern European orphanage.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:

This is a case study. We will gather information that is related to your son's/ daughter's school success through interviews, questionnaires, observations and relevant documents and records. We will conduct interviews with you, with your son/daughter, with your other child(ren), and with two or three of your son's/daughter's friends. You may be present when we interview any of your children if you so choose. We will tape the conversations and then transcribe them. We will erase the tapes once we have transcribed them. We will give you copies of all questionnaires and interview-guides in advance. We will also collect any relevant documents that you may share with us. We will also conduct observations in school, in different classes and will ask two or three teachers and a school administrator to complete a questionnaire. Some of the questions in the questionnaires will be about your son/daughter.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

We do not foresee any major risks or discomforts to your son(s)/daughter(s), or your family. However, a very careful consideration of everything that is involved points to these issues:

- (a) protection of identity of all people involved
- (b) protection of confidentiality of interviews, questionnaires, notes, documents, etc.
- (c) memories from life in the orphanage may trigger feelings of discomfort for your son/daughter.

We are taking the following measures to address these three issues:

- (a) We will protect the identity of all people involved in this research project by changing all names in our final report.
- (b) Tapes of the interviews will be erased when transcribed. Transcriptions of interviews, copies of completed questionnaires, observation notes and copies of documents will be kept in a locked drawer. The information stored in the computer will be protected by a password.
- (c) If your child feels uncomfortable talking about his/her life prior to adoption, we will immediately discontinue the interview.

Page <u>1</u> of <u>3</u> Subject initials _____ Date _____

Informed Consent: Parent

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

BENEFITS:

There are no direct benefits for your children or your family.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

This was addressed in the section: Risks Inherent in the Procedures

LIABILITY:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about subjects' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION:

The participation in this research of you and your children is voluntary. If you and your children decide to participate in the study, you and/or they may stop participating at any time without penalty.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Page 2 of 3 Subject initials _____ Date _____

Informed Consent: Parent

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian you authorize _____ (print name) and
_____ to become a participants for the described research. The nature and general
purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to you by Marita Rumano and you are satisfied
that proper precautions will be observed.

Minor's date of birth

Minor's date of birth

Parent/Guardian name (printed)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Page 3 of 3 Subject initials _____ Date _____

Informed Consent: Parent

**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

TITLE OF PROJECT: Clusters of Strength: A Case Study of the Educational Resilience of a Post-Institutionalized Adopted Child from Eastern Europe.

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: James Banning, Ph.D.

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Marita Rumano, MSW

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: Marita Rumano
Home (970) 204-9204
Work: (970) 266-5425

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

To understand factors and processes involved in the academic success of a student that has been adopted from an Eastern European orphanage.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:

This is a case study. I will gather information that is related to your son/daughter's school success. As part of the process I need to conduct an interview with your other son (s)/daughter(s). You may be present when I interview your child if you so choose. I will tape the conversation. I have prepared the questions that I would like to ask to your son/daughter and I will give all of them to you in advance.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

I do not foresee any major risks or discomforts to your son/daughter or to your family. However, if your child feels uncomfortable talking about his/her brother/sister or about himself/herself or is simply bored during the interview, I will discontinue it.

I will keep all information received confidential and will protect the identity of your child by changing his/her name.

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

BENEFITS:

There are no direct benefits for your child.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

I will not reveal the true identity of your child. Instead I will use another name for him/her. All records will be kept in a locked cabinet. The audio tapes will be erased once transcribed. All information stored in my personal computer during the work process will be protected by my password.

Page 1 of 2 Subject initials _____ Date _____

LIABILITY:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about subjects' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION:

The participation of your child in this research is voluntary. If you decide that he/she may participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop his/her participation at any time.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian you authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to you by Marita Rumano and you are satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

Minor's date of birth

Parent/Guardian name (printed)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Page 2 of 2 Subject initials _____ Date _____

Informed Consent: Sibling

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: Clusters of Strength: A Case Study of the Educational Resilience of a
Post-Institutionalized Adopted Child from Eastern Europe.

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: James Banning, Ph.D.

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Marita Rumano, MSW

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: Marita Rumano
Home (970) 204-9204
Work: (970) 266-5425

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

To understand factors and processes involved in the academic success of a student that has been adopted from an Eastern European orphanage.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:

This is a case study. We will gather information that is related to a student's school success. As part of the process we need to conduct an interview with your son/daughter. He/she has been identified as one of _____'s friends. You may be present when one of us interviews your child if you so choose. We will tape the conversation. We have prepared the questions that we would like to ask to your son/daughter and we will give all of them to you in advance.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

We do not foresee any major risks or discomforts to your son/daughter or to your family. However, if your child feels uncomfortable talking about his/her friend or about himself/herself or is simply bored during the interview, we will discontinue it.

We will keep all information received confidential and will protect the identity of your child by changing his/her name.

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

BENEFITS:

There are no direct benefits for your child.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

We will not reveal the true identity of your child. Instead, we will use another name for him/her. All records will be kept in a locked cabinet. The audio tapes will be erased once transcribed. All information stored in a personal computer during the work process will be protected by a password.

Page 1 of 2 Subject initials _____ Date _____

LIABILITY:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about subjects' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION:

The participation of your child in this research is voluntary. If you decide that he/she may participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop his/her participation at any time.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian you authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to you by Marita Rumano and you are satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

Minor's date of birth

Parent/Guardian name (printed)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Page 2 of 2 Subject initials _____ Date _____

Informed Consent: Friend

Child's Assent (Student)

Hi,

I am a social worker. Do you know what a social worker is? I am also a teacher. And I am a student, too. I go to Colorado State University. I study education, that is I learn how to help students get better results. This is called research. My research is about what would help a student get good results in school. I have selected to study you because you are a good student. I have talked with your mom (dad) and he/she has given me permission to talk to you. I need your help to understand what really works for you. If you say it is OK, I will ask you some questions, about your life before you came to the United States and your life here, what you like most about school and classes and so on. There isn't a right or wrong answer --- it is just about what you think or what you feel. It will take about 30 minutes. If you get bored or you just don't like any of my questions you tell me and we will stop. I will also ask your parents, your brother/sister, some of your teachers and some of your friends questions about you. I will also come to school and attend some of your classes. How do you feel about it? Do you have any questions so far?

Then I will write my report. I will give you another name in the report, so that nobody knows it's you. This will be our secret. What name would you like to have?

Agreeing to be in this project cannot hurt you. It won't help you, either. You won't get any gift for doing it. You don't have to do it if you do not want to. This is your

decision. If you say "yes" now but later change your mind, you can stop being in the research any time by just telling me.

If you want to be in this research, sign your name and write today's date on the line below.

Student	Date

Researcher	Date

Child's Assent (Sibling)

Hi,

I am a social worker. Do you know what a social worker is? I am also a teacher. And I am a student, too. I go to Colorado State University. I study education, that is I learn how to help students get better results. This is called research. My research is about what would help a student get good results in school. I have selected to study _____ because he/she is a good student. I have talked with your mom (dad) and they have given me permission to talk to you. I need your help. If you say it is OK, I will ask you some questions. There isn't a right or wrong answer --- it is just about what you think or what you feel. It will take about 15 minutes. If you get bored or you just don't like any of my questions you tell me and we will stop. How do you feel about it? Do you have any questions so far?

Then I will write my report. I will give you another name in the report, so that nobody knows it's you. This will be our secret. What name would you like to have?

Agreeing to be in this project cannot hurt you. It won't help you, either. You won't get any gift for doing it. You don't have to do it if you do not want to. This is your decision. If you say "yes" now but later change your mind, you can stop being in the research any time by just telling me.

Child's Assent: Sibling

If you want to be in this research, sign your name and write today's date on the line below.

Student

Date

Researcher

Date

Child's Assent: Sibling

Child's Assent (Peer)

Hi,

I am a social worker. Do you know what a social worker is? I am also a teacher. And I am a student, too. I go to Colorado State University. I study education, that is I learn how to help students get better results. This is called research. My research is about what would help a student get good results in school. I have selected to study _____ because he/she is a good student. I have talked with your mom (dad) and they have given me permission to talk to you. I need your help. If you say it is OK, I will ask you some questions. There isn't a right or wrong answer --- it is just about what you think or what you feel. It will take about 15 minutes. If you get bored or you just don't like any of my questions you tell me and we will stop. How do you feel about it? Do you have any questions so far?

Then I will write my report. I will give you another name in the report, so that nobody knows it's you. This will be our secret. What name would you like to have?

Agreeing to be in this project cannot hurt you. It won't help you, either. You won't get any gift for doing it. You don't have to do it if you do not want to. This is your decision. If you say "yes" now but later change your mind, you can stop being in the research any time by just telling me.

Page 1 of 2. Subject initials _____ Date _____

If you want to be in this research, sign your name and write today's date on the line below.

Student

Date

Researcher

Date

Letterhead
Date

Dear Mrs./Mr./Ms. _____

Marita Rumano is a doctoral student in the School of Education in Colorado State University. She is studying the educational resilience of a child adopted from an Eastern European orphanage. She has selected _____, a student in your school, to be the subject of her case study. The student's parents have given their informed consent and the student himself has agreed to participate in the study (please see attached letter of consent). The design of her research includes class observations and the completion of a questionnaire by _____'s teachers and a school administrator. Ann Foster, approving administrator of research request at the Research and Development Center has approved our application (please see attached). This is a request to use your school as a research site. This involves classroom and school observations, and 3-5 teachers and a school administrator completing the questionnaires.

Safeguards have been taken to protect the identity of the school and that of the participants in this research project. We do not foresee any psychological harm for any of the participants involved in this project. The participation in the research is voluntary and there are no direct benefits to any of the participants.

If you have any questions, you may contact Marita Rumano at (970) 204-9204.

James Banning, Ph.D.

Marita Rumano, MSW

Principal Investigator
School of Education
Colorado State University

Co-Investigator
School of Education
Colorado State University

Letterhead

Date

Dear Mrs. /Mr. /Ms. _____

Marita Rumano, a doctoral student in the School of Education in Colorado State University is studying the educational resilience of a child adopted from an Eastern European orphanage. She has selected _____, a student in one of your classes, to be the subject of her case study. The student's parents have given their informed consent and the student himself has agreed to participate in the study. The design of her research includes class observations and the completion of a questionnaire by _____'s teachers.

Ann Foster, approving administrator of research request at the Research and Development Center has approved our application to conduct research in Poudre School District and your school principal, Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ has given his/her consent to use your school as one of our research sites.

Safeguards have been taken to protect the identity of the school, as well as that of all the participants in this research project. We do not foresee any psychological harm for any of the participants involved in this project.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There will be no direct benefits to you from participating in this project. If you agree to participate, please complete this teacher's questionnaire and return it by.....in the self-addressed envelope here included.

If you have any questions, you may contact Marita Rumano at (970) 204-9204.

Thank you.

James Banning, Ph.D.

Marita Rumano, MSW

Principal Investigator
School of Education
Colorado State University

Co-Investigator
School of Education
Colorado State University

Cover letter questionnaire teacher

Letterhead

Date

Dear Mrs. /Mr. /Ms. _____

Marita Rumano, a doctoral student in the School of Education in Colorado State University is studying the educational resilience of a child adopted from an Eastern European orphanage. She has selected _____, a student in your school, to be the subject of her case study. The student's parents have given their informed consent and the student himself has agreed to participate in the study. The design of her research includes the completion of a questionnaire by the one of the school administrators.

Ann Foster, approving administrator of research request at the Research and Development Center has approved our application to conduct research in Poudre School District and your school principal, Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ has given his/her consent to use your school as one of our research sites.

Safeguards have been taken to protect the identity of the school, as well as that of all the participants in this research project. We do not foresee any psychological harm for any of the participants involved in this project.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There will be no direct benefits to you from participating in this project. If you agree to participate, please complete this questionnaire and return it by.....in the self-addressed envelope here included.

If you have any questions, you may contact Marita Rumano at (970) 204-9204.

Thank you.

James Banning, Ph.D.

Marita Rumano, MSW

Principal Investigator
School of Education
Colorado State University

Co-Investigator
School of Education
Colorado State University

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: Clusters of Strength: A Case Study of the Educational Resilience of a
Post-Institutionalized Adopted Child from Eastern Europe.

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: James Banning, Ph.D.

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Marita Rumano, MSW

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: Marita Rumano
Home (970) 204-9204
Work: (970) 266-5425

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

To understand factors and processes involved in the academic success of a student that has been adopted from an Eastern European orphanage.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:

This is a case study. We will gather information that is related to a student's school success. As part of the process one of us needs to conduct observations in your class. All the observation times will be prearranged with you. When in class, the researcher will be as unintrusive as possible.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

We do not foresee any major risks or discomforts to you or the students in your class. However, if you feel that for whatever reasons the presence of the researcher is disruptive she will quietly leave the classroom.

We will keep all information received confidential and will protect the identity of all people involved in this research project.

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

BENEFITS:

There will be no direct benefits to you or your class from participating in this project.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All records will be kept in a locked cabinet. We will use other names to protect the identity of all participants in the project. All information stored in a personal computer during the work process will be protected by a password.

Page 1 of 2 Subject initials _____ Date _____

Informed Consent for Observation: School Teacher

LIABILITY:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about subjects' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION:

Your participation this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop your participation at any time.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Witness to signature

Date

Page 2 of 2 Subject initials _____ Date _____

Informed Consent for Observation: School Teacher

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