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Reborn in Adversity - Memoir Excerpt and Review of Resiliency Research: Risks and Traits

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Reborn in Adversity

*A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Studies*

by

Alina Patterson

May, 2013

*Mentor: Dr. Sharon Carnahan
Reader: Dr. Patricia Lancaster*

*Rollins College
Hamilton Holt School
Master of Liberal Studies Program*

Winter Park, Florida

Reborn in Adversity

By

Alina Patterson

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Project Approved:

Mentor

Reader

Director, Master of Liberal Studies Program

***Dean, Hamilton Holt School
Rollins College***

Abstract: Resiliency Memoirs (Idiographic Approach)

Reborn in Adversity describes the journey one young girl makes as she seeks to self-actualize amidst multiple risk factors or packages. Raised in an abusive, hypocritical, and assaultive family, the author is faced with crisis after crises along each milestone of life. Once she leaves her abusive family, the risks and crises multiply in magnitude and number. In this journey she exhibits multiple resiliency traits that allow at risk children to rebound from adversity. She does more than rebound, as she is convinced that she has become a “better person” than she would have been had she not been tested and tried at so many levels in so many ways. With the assistance of surrogates, mentors, spirituality, education, and more she learns to adapt to the crises and grow from them. Her life story is an example of thriving in adversity, and it provides insights into how she was able to resist succumbing to risk and be true to her self.

Lyrics: Independent Study *Island Child* Album Lyrics

Song 1: Won't Obey --This song is about a child who refuses to let abuse kill her spirit.

Song 2: Come to Me --Dreaming about real love

Song 3: Follow the Signs --When all the doors are closed, what is one to do?

Song 4: Can't Hear a Word --I can't hear a word you say, your actions speak so loudly.

Song 5: Celebrate Life --Celebrate the bounty of life!

Song 6: Legacy --You live on in me and you are part of me.

Song 7: Island Child --We are your guardians and you are not alone.

Song 8: Where?--Where have all my grandchildren gone?

Song 9: Charismatic Forces --I found the power to live through supernatural elements.

Abstract: Resiliency Memoirs (Nomothetic Approach)

This review accompanies an autobiography, *Reborn in Adversity*, which was completed as a creative work in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Liberal Studies Degree at Rollins College. In the “Review of Resiliency Research: Risks and Traits,” I provide a nomothetic approach, summarizing work on risk and resilience

across the research field, looking for areas of agreement on definitions, causes, and treatments.

This Thesis Submission includes Three Parts:

Part I: The first 51 pages of the memoir “Reborn in Adversity” including the table of contents for the entire book.

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Inquiries for the rest of the book may be directed to charison_inc@yahoo.com.

Part II: Appendix A of “Reborn in Adversity” which includes the song lyrics to the album *Island Child* scheduled for release by Charison Inc. in 2013.

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Part II also includes an excerpt of Appendix B: Discussion Questions. The questions related to the first 51 pages of the memoir are provided.

Part III: “Review of Resiliency Research: Risks and Traits”

PART I of THESIS SUBMISSION

The first 51 pages of the memoir “Reborn in Adversity”

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Somewhere along my life, I lost my voice, my most precious inner self. Although I want to thank all the people who helped me in my life, and especially thank God for being ever present, I must start out with the people who helped me speak.

First most, there is Rollins Writing Coach Linda Hargreaves. An expert English instructor, she has not only helped coach me in expressing myself, but she has given me priceless emotional and spiritual support to finally tell my story. She believes in me and that can't ever be minimized. Thank you.

Secondly, Dr. Patricia Lancaster encouraged me to write my memoir as part of my thesis. She saw value in my story. Because of her prompting, I took many classes and began to aim towards writing this work. She graciously helped me fine tune the story as my second reader.

Along the journey several professors helped ignite my spirit as I began to express myself: Dr. Joseph Siry, Dr. Patrick Powers, Dr. Robert Smither, and most importantly, Dr. Sharon Carnahan. Thank God for her patience, great wisdom, and guidance. The first class I took from her she commented that I was one of "those kids." I didn't know what that meant, but I came to learn that I belong to a group of children who are considered resilient. Suddenly all my suffering, life lessons, and behaviors had a framework that helped me cognitively restructure my memories. A light bulb didn't go off: It was more of a supernova. I studied about "those kids" and came to understand myself. I also came to understand how to tell my story, because although I have been victimized, I am not a "victim." So thank you Dr. Carnahan and all my Rollins professors. You are treasures of great worth.

Deepest in my spirit lies my musical voice. It has been hidden over the years because of abuse and the negativity of others. One day I dared venture over to the music building at Rollins and plead to join some of the classes. As a non-music major, their interest in helping me was thrilling and life changing. Professor Daniel Flick taught me song writing, and he is the best stage brother a woman could hope for. He tells me that I can do it. He encourages me, picks me up, dusts me off, and encourages me some more. My vocal coaches have been equally wonderful, and they have had to endure watching me cry with tears of release as I have broken through so much of the past. My current Rollins vocal coach Christina Carter of Carter Vocal Studio has never failed to indulge me for just a moment and then press me further with twinkling eyes and smile. Then my piano instructor, Dr. Heather Mitchell! She is so full of life and enthusiasm it intoxicates me and fosters the passion I have for music. Together these three, Professor Flick, Christina, and Dr. Mitchell have helped me write and develop an album of musical memoirs. This album is filled with key themes along my journey. The album includes a

song that says a person's actions speak so loudly I can't hear a word, and another song that thanks my surrogates. All nine songs are available on an album called *Island Child* due to be released in 2013 by Charison Inc., and the lyrics are included in **Appendix A** of this book.

I have so many more to acknowledge besides my Rollins College professors, but I shall not name them all to protect all my surrogates and friends. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I love you Laila, Sobhi, Rita, Issam, Seenu, Venilla, Linda, Tarran, Augustine and so many others. My surrogates are from all over the world and that is the island where I live, an island in the cosmos: earth.

I also thank my three children. Without you I would not have tried so hard and found a way to a better life. I love you all so much. I have no favorites amongst you because you are all special in your own ways. I share the legacy of the best surrogates I could find and continue to invest that in your lives. Let the love keep flowing and let's all rise above the pain. Love, Mom.

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FORWARD

Sharon Carnahan, Ph.D.

Rollins College

In *Reborn in Adversity*, Alina Patterson describes a life that no child should be forced to lead. An unwanted and unloved baby, a battered child, an abused young woman – surely there is no happy ending to a story that begins this way. And yet, there is.

What does it mean to be a successful adult? Sigmund Freud, the first name in psychoanalytic theory, defined adult success as the ability to work, plus the ability to love. Child development research has also shown that children need food, shelter, care, and a responsive caregiver, in order to learn to trust others in infancy.

However, we have known since the study of concentration camp survivors (some of it conducted by Freud's daughter, Anna Freud), that some children survive; even thrive, in conditions so adverse that they might be better off abandoned. What of these resilient ones? They are everywhere. What makes them so?

In this memoir, Patterson layers many small stories to weave the fabric of her life as a victim. In keeping with a child's confused sense of time, her narrative moves from present to past and back again, as she re-lives the trauma and relates it to the present day. She also shows us the complex attract-and-repel cycle of ill treatment.

Woven into this tapestry like a thin line of gold is the story of her resilience. With an educated eye, she points the reader towards those characteristics (personal, environmental, interactional) which enabled her to bounce back and emerge from the crucible of her childhood, scorched but not disfigured by the fire.

Studies have shown that resilient children share some characteristics. In 1955, a scant 10 years after the end of WWII and the Holocaust, researchers Emmy Werner (University of California, Davis) and Ruth Smith (licensed psychologist, Kauai) began a longitudinal study that followed all of the children born on the island of Kauai during that year. The researchers found that "... there were a percentage of children in their sample that faced very adverse conditions as they grew: perinatal stress, chronic poverty, parents who had not graduated from high school, and family environments that were engulfed in the chronic discord of parental alcoholism or mental illness. Many of these children developed serious problems of their own by age 10. However, to the researchers' surprise, about one-third of the children in adverse situations did very well in their lives. Werner and Smith called them the "vulnerable, but invincible."

Patterson's life story is a testament to making the most of one's talent and resources in difficult times. Read it to see how some vulnerable children become invincible. Read it to see how the little sparrow with the broken wings learned, despite the odds, to fly.

GUIDES FOR DISCUSSION

To tie directly in with research on risk and resilience, this edition includes:

1. **Table 1:** identifying resilience characteristics as they are described, and
2. Discussion questions (**Appendix B**) focusing on trauma and recovery.
3. In addition, the reader can find a short bibliography of risk and resilience research (**Appendix C**).

Resiliency Traits

Researchers cite numerous childhood risk factors that have the potential to negatively influence an individual's social development. Such risk factors include poverty, disability, abuse, deprivation, rejection, abandonment, and other types of adversity.¹ In *Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love*, Robert Karen notes, "Attachment category said nothing about the child's inherent resiliency, his luck in finding other, alternative attachment figures—or his determination to do so—or his ability to hold on to and nurture a kernel of positive experience with a teacher or relative."² In the 1950s researchers began to recognize that some children endure risk environments and enter adulthood without negative social outcomes such as psychopathology, suicide, delinquency, poor attachment, and more.³ Consequently researchers increased the study of resilience and the traits of resilience in these children.

Specific traits, circumstances, and skills are associated with better life outcomes for children at risk. In this book, I've told a life story and annotated it with reference to these resiliency factors.

This book describes one individual's risk factors and resiliency traits. In a type of case study, the author intends to provide the reader with insights into resiliency.

Appendix A provides reference citations relative to resiliency traits. The reader can

¹ Aldwin, Carolyn, Michael Cunningham, and Amanda L. Taylor, "Resilience across the Life Span: A Tribute to Emmy E. Werner," in *Research in Human Development* 7, no. 3 (2010), 160. James Garbarino, *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them*, (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).

² Robert Karen, *Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 247.

³ Aldwin et al., "Resilience across the Life Span," 159-60.

reference **Table 1** to review the traits found in the case study. The different resiliency traits explored include:

Table 1: Resilience Factors

1	Attitude - Choosing Responses
2	Adaptation - Actively Respond to Events
3	Sensitivity or Vigilance
4	Emotional Intelligence
5	Talents and Special Skills
6	Wit
7	Positive Regard
8	Temperament
9	Attractiveness and Physical Looks
10	Ignoring Emotions and Focusing on Solutions
11	Resourcefulness
12	Wariness
13	Analytical Thinking - Capacity to Plan
14	IQ and Ability to Learn
15	Developing Compensatory Relationships
16	School as Locus of Resilience
17	Faith and Spirituality
18	Avoidance
19	Denial
20	Positive Perceptions
21	Examples/Inspiration
22	Gratitude
23	Performing Non-Traditional Gender Skills
24	Intrinsic Self Worth
25	Personal Bias towards Stability

INTRODUCTION

This is the true story of my life. I have edited out some parts for the sake of brevity. I have also changed some names and places for personal reasons. Many characters are “shadows” as my means of focusing on resiliency, providing a legal buffer, and keeping out specific details that would reveal too much about the real identity of some of the characters. Most conversations are not linear; and we often tell the story of our lives according to themes, hopping from one age to the next, one place to the next, one lesson to the next. My story is written in this style.

The stories return to the larger story of one of my greatest trials in life, being incarcerated as an innocent person. This great tribulation of my life describes the more mature use of the various resilience traits I picked up or learned to use over the years. After I discuss a portion of the great tribulation, I digress and help the reader understand the back story and how my resiliency built over time and how external risk factors continued to press me to adapt.

For clarification, I added my age, the place, and date information before the applicable passages. I also included a brief, and yes, incomplete chronology. I have had many lives within one life, so I have chosen to only focus on a few of them.

Why did I choose certain lives and events? Because people always ask me, “Why?” and “How?” They want to know why I am able endure the hardships that life throws at me. They wonder how I could be so happy, intent, and caring. They all agree I should have succumbed to adversity in one way or another and don’t understand why and

how I didn't. They are looking for some of my secrets. This is not a fairy tale story of how a prince saves an abused little girl and woman. This is the story of how an abused little girl grew into a woman who saved herself using multiple sources of inspiration and the help of many people. This is also a story of great and grievous trials and obstacles. It is a book on suffering, defeat, victory, growth, and self-actualization. I am who I am because of the adversity I faced. It trained me to look deeper and tap into things I might otherwise have never uncovered.

My parents were raised in up-and-coming middle class families. My father's family lost much of their fortune during World War II, and many of them were bitter and ambitious to obtain higher social-economic status again. The things they never lacked were huge senses of entitlement, bitter envy, selfish ambition, and pride. My mother's family was kinder and my maternal grandparents lived a happy life of yacht clubs, country clubs, and vacations, with a blend of avid outdoorsmanship.

My maternal grandmother was socially established, self-accomplished, and grounded in family. In my eyes she could do anything, and I imitated her. She taught me to bake, to fish, to hike, to boat, to sew, to swim, and she tried, poor soul, to teach me to be as good a golfer as she. I learned to cross many socio-economic boundaries because my grandmother taught me to be a woman for all seasons and an active participant in all aspects of life. She never looked down on any person for any reason. Grandmother was beautiful with dark eyes that she inherited from her American Indian heritage. Her active lifestyle kept her in wonderful shape, and she turned many a head, but Grandfather didn't worry. His tall handsome features mirrored her beauty. Life had not been easy for Grandmother in the early years, but she made the best of everything and prospered with

my grandfather. They had beautiful homes in two states, mountain cabins, boats, and more. My mother didn't have these things but she wanted them with a never ending lust.

There were some caste wars between the two families: My father's family thought they were better than everyone but they lacked the affluence they craved, and my mother's family built a successful business centered on my grandfather's trade. There were cruel comments about my grandfather being "blue collar." My maternal grandparents were very intelligent and hardworking, and he owned a business that flourished. My grandmother was related to a prominent statesman. While her own family had its vanity over their "position," Grandma just ignored it. A child could never hope to be loved by a finer woman. She guided, played, and taught. She left me quite a legacy.

My mother was attractive but never beautiful and pear shaped figure gave her curvy hips and nothing else. She became religious but was never kind or spiritual. She seemed in a game to prove she was better than everyone else without going through the efforts to excel in intelligence, beauty, fitness, talent, or character. She wanted to BE someone without going through the authentic motions of being someone. Her best hope to get rewards without work was to marry well. She eyed my very handsome athletic father and through pregnancy entangled him in her life and the required marriage. My grandparents had not wanted the marriage. My father told me he would never have married her if she had not gotten pregnant. He had a bright future and athletic scholarship to college that died with his marriage. His marriage to my mother also ended some of the great hopes and expectations of his family. He wasn't really a victim though because he failed to take advantage of life's opportunities and develop a good personal character. He was infected with a chronic selfish gene that would consume and grow until his self

became a deformed cancer that replaced the good parts of the man with its own malignant lusts and appetites. He went to an all boy Catholic High School that socialized with my mother's all girl Catholic High School. My father was a player, and he had no qualms about his many female conquests.

While my parents might have outwardly looked like an upwardly mobile devout Catholic family, nothing was further from the truth. They hid their lusts, crimes, and cruelty behind a well-constructed religious veneer. They knew the right words to say, but never read the whole Bible. They were model hypocrites and only the people who lived with them knew what they were like. Of course this confused me until I came to understand that religion and spirituality are often in opposition to each other. When I chose to follow God and try to overcome my character flaws, I became even more of an enemy to my mother.

I was born in Olympia, Washington. I became a recent addition to a family with two older siblings, a stay-at-home mother, and a father who worked two jobs to try and keep the family afloat. While my older sister and brother were nearly four years in age apart, I was conceived well before my sister's first birthday. I was born with an undiagnosed neurological brain disability that would plague me my entire life. After two short years my family began to move for my father's jobs. After a short time in two other states and the addition of my younger brother, my family moved to Salem, Oregon. Our family fractured when I was thirteen years old and my divorced mother stayed in Oregon while the rest of the family moved to Denver, Colorado. When my father remarried a year later, all of his children were sent back to Oregon to live with our mother while he raised his new family in prosperity.

I graduated from an Oregon high school and immediately attended university to earn a bachelor's degree in science. I annulled a failed marriage in college. We had nothing in common, and I only married him because he said he would kill himself if I didn't. While at university, I worked on the Oregon coast in the summers as both a scientist and a game enforcement officer. I met my soon-to-be second husband my last year of college. I married him because he made me feel guilty and like I had to prove that I was not vain. He told me "beautiful women" were never nice to him. He told me that I was a snob. He told me he needed someone to believe in him. His features were common and I never found him attractive. He flunked out of junior college and learned his trade in the military. He was lazy and a procrastinator, but I found purpose in "helping" him and being "needed." It wouldn't last.

His own family never advanced far because of his alcoholic parents. His mother was a bitter angry obese woman. She indulged her son, and he never suffered a consequence for bad behavior. Permissiveness and lawlessness were encouraged. I didn't realize this at first or else I would have never married into such a family. They claimed to be Catholic and religious. They weren't. His mother bullied the entire family and ran things her way. She also wanted to be a Somebody. Her angry outbursts were shocking, constant, and everyone except her favored son walked on eggshells to keep her from exploding. She was an ugly woman with an ugly heart. She raised a sociopathic son who knew how to lure people into doing what he wanted and who would punish them if they didn't comply. My second husband had no sexual discernment, and he liked to sleep with older women, ugly women, younger women, married women, for some sort of personal

gain or power. He molested his own sister when they were younger. I didn't know. I was his sister's age.

He didn't start out abusive until after the marriage. Then he seemed to change overnight. He began to scream like his mother, posture, push me around, and in time the abusive behavior escalated further and further. He broke things. Sometimes he would break glass on the floor and leave it for me to step on while I walked barefoot in the house. I suffered some terribly nasty cuts. I learned to watch where I trod. Whenever I would try to speak about his treatment he would just get angrier and more threatening. He was not only verbally and physically abusive, but he was passive aggressive and would destroy things and create crisis situations that I had terrible times resolving. More than once he destroyed the things I liked or loved the most. I dared not speak after a few short months of marriage because he was "perfect" and beyond reproach. To say otherwise would make my life even worse. Not only was he an eager lawbreaker, but he was an alcoholic and drug user. I had no idea what to do, and he surrounded me with his friends and lovers who pushed me into even deeper silence. I began to think that marriage was just this way.

When I married him after graduation and moved away, I couldn't find any local jobs in my field. I returned to school and graduated with a second degree to become a practicing RN in the specialty of critical care. My husband moved us to several states as we began to build our own family of three children. Eventually we returned to Salem, Oregon to spend many years near our parental families. We briefly moved to the coastal mountains of Oregon, but relocated a year later to Tallahassee, Florida. My congenital disability grew steadily worst with migraines, weakness, confusion, and vertigo, but I

pressed through because no one in my family was willing to consider that I felt bad because I had a serious physical problem. I had terrible episodes but my parents and husband demanded I do most of the work and never complain. So, I kept silent.

Once I moved to Florida, I immediately expressed marital discontent, and my husband moved us to the Florida Keys for nearly half a year to isolate us and try to regain control of me. I nearly died in the Keys and found an opening to bring the children back to Tallahassee and file for divorce. During the divorce proceedings my family and estranged husband tried desperately to get me to return to them. They also tried to get me to remain silent as to their actions. The more they tried to silence me, the more I had to speak, as did my daughter as she pled with various people to protect us.

I ended up in six abuse shelters in three states and lived with many families as well. I lost custody of my children the summer I visited Oregon to see a friend during the divorce proceedings. I later regained the children, only to have to flee to safety in Kentucky. I then lost custody again and the children were taken against their wills to Oregon, where they spent approximately six years away from me. Shortly after I lost custody the second time I was arrested and placed in jail with no bond. This is the key life event I describe in the book that tested my many resiliency traits and allows the reader to see them in action. After 93 days I was released.

As the children matured they began to return to visit and then live with me in the state of Florida. Eventually under the advice of the state attorney general's office, the federal trade commission, pastors, friends, and the local sheriff's office, I changed my identity for safety. Even after the children were grown, my ex-husband, dubbed "anti-husband," would come to Florida and prowl around. He became especially active after

his second wife left him. During one camping trip that I took to the Keys with the children he just “happened to be staying with friends” fifteen minutes from our campsite. He planned to come to the campground, but I immediately alerted the local police.

To date no punishment has been given to those who committed so many offenses and criminal deeds. I have to leave justice to time. All three of my children struggle with psychological issues, such as post traumatic syndrome. These issues stem from the abuse they suffered while under the care of their father and grandparents. They also stem from my children’s malevolent separation from their resiliency locus of support, me. It caused them great anguish to lose contact with me. The outpouring of the lies about me and the steady grind of parental alienation by their captors traumatized them even deeper.

I can not look back for long and must keep looking ahead. I continue to love and minister to my children, to help them heal and thrive after enduring their own great adversities. I regret that I didn’t have the power or resources to shelter them, but now that is a moot point. I must work with what the world has dealt me, and my children will forever be the focus of my energies until they recover and establish their lives.

CHRONOLOGY TABLE

<i>Age</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
0	Olympia, Washington	1960	Born – third child
2-4	Phoenix, Arizona	1962-63	Move
4	Salem, Oregon	1963	Family settles
5	Salem, Oregon	1964	Attend public kindergarten
6-13	Salem, Oregon	1965-73	Attend Catholic Grade School
13	Salem, Oregon	1973	Parents’ Divorce: move with dad to Denver where Father remarries
15	Denver, Colorado	1975	Live with mother and step-father in Salem, Oregon

<i>Age</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
18	Salem, Oregon	1978	Graduate from public high school
18	University, Oregon	1978	Attend university away from home
18-21	Oregon Coast	1978-82	Summer jobs in science and game law enforcement
20	Salem, Oregon	1980	Marry and annul marriage
22	University, Oregon	1982	Graduate with BS degree
23	Sacramento, California	1983	Marry and move
24	Sacramento, California	1984	Enroll in Nursing School
25	Sacramento, California	1985	Daughter born
25	Sacramento, California	1985	Graduate from nursing school
25	Salem, Oregon	1985	Move back to Salem, Oregon and proximity of parents
26	Juneau, Alaska	1986-87	Move to and from Alaska File for divorce
27	Salem, Oregon	1988	Reconcile marriage and birth of son
29	Salem, Oregon	1990	Birth of second son
33	Oregon Coast	1993	Move to Oregon coastal home
34	Tallahassee, Florida	1994	Move to Florida with husband and children: Entombed Dream
35	Key West, Florida	1995	Discuss divorce; husband moves family to Key West; get very sick
36	Tallahassee, Florida	1996	Leave husband and file for divorce
37	Salem, Oregon	1997	Visit friend for summer in Oregon Estranged family starts threats
37	Tallahassee, Florida	1997	Enter abuse shelters, get restraining orders, lose custody
38	Tallahassee, Florida	1997	Regain custody and evacuate to other state for protection
39	Frankfort, Kentucky	1997-98	Divorce final Lose custody again
39	Tallahassee, Florida	1998	Arrested
40	Tallahassee, Florida	1999	Released from incarceration

PART ONE: SOUL CRIES FROM THE ABYSS

1. Buried Alive

Age: 34, Tallahassee, FL (1994)

I woke up filled with terror, dread, suffocation, and the realization that there was no way out: no way. At first I struggled to figure out my surroundings. I don't know what brought me to this awful place, but here I found myself, buried alive. I knew I was in serious trouble as my vision grew more accustomed to the palpable darkness that squeezed out every breath and pressed against me with forces only found deep in the earth. As I explored my situation, I discovered that I had become entombed inside something like a cylindrical cement pipe. The object obviously had been built with the intention to carry water and life to some large population, but it had been crafted into my early grave instead. For the first time in my life I fully realized I was in a place of no escape.

The tunnel ran a short distance in either direction and then ended with feet of concrete that sealed any hope of exit. I couldn't see clearly, but the material of my circumstances pressed upon my mind. I barely scratched at the cement plugs and tore the ends of my fingers in the painful understanding that it was useless, meaningless, dire. I could only wait for certain death, yet something inside me would not resign to this demise. Yes, I was stranded. Yes, I was buried alive with no escape route. Yes, I was completely alone: so alone, so unnecessary, so unloved, so irrelevant, so isolated and unfulfilled. Yes, I felt all these emotions, but more. I had a voice somewhere inside of me. I was not made of inert materials. I fiercely recognized that I existed and that life burned inside of me.

That's when it began to rise within my spirit: a deep choking all-consuming wail. I cried in the greatest anguish of spirit that I had ever felt. I didn't care that no one could hear me. I had to make a sound and somehow let loose the chains that held my spirit like the underground burial vault held my body. I struggled in the oxygen depleted air and refused to conserve my last breaths. Again I wailed—a tremulously harmonic wail that rose under its own power and rang in musical circles about me. I could barely catch my wind. Only my last breaths remained, and I knew it. Yet, I dared to push back against the dark pressure vise. This time the bellows of my spirit, my heart, my soul rose in unison, as I screamed and wailed with the last drop of air and energy I possessed. Sweat poured down my face. My skin was clammy with fright and felt distantly attached as if it wasn't really part of me: such fear; such hopelessness. At the end of the last long tormented wail I woke up from my deep sleep and lunged upright and ready to run into the night.

Tears filled my eyes; my heart pounded like a race horse spreading its limbs with all its power but knowing it could not win, ever. I sank back into the darkness of my drenched bed, and hoped I had not woken the children. This was no ordinary dream. It was a soul dream that spoke to me. Deep within I had uttered soul cries from the abyss.

I had learned years ago to pray for guidance on the interpretations of my dreams. I prayed to silence my mind and heart, and only analyze the dreams that had some substance in my journey. All dreams of flight and fancy I ignored. This one could not be ignored because I understood its message immediately. My spirit had spoken what I had dared not admit. I was trapped: trapped in an abusive loveless marriage, trapped in the malevolent fellowship of a family that tore me from limb to limb and plundered every good thing I dared produce. I was trapped and would die trapped. The lingering taste of

melancholic hopelessness gave off the musky flavor of death and disappointment ... no, of despair. And it was in this still night, in this moment, that I understood that I had to change everything to find freedom—everything. I was not a creature of the deep or of the darkness or of nether places. I belonged in the light and the air and the wind and rain and in the whirring of a world charged with atomic life and musicality.

I knew who I was, or at least I knew who I had so tried to be. I knew that I had morphed myself to survive. I had taken a form so grotesque that even I could not recognize what form I should take. As steamy tears engulfed my face like a torrential river, I prayed again. “God? Who am I? Who am I supposed to be? Help me to be true to my real self and to somehow escape this pressing crushing darkness.”

The next morning my husband called long distance. His voice had a tinny sound as it travelled thousands of miles from his jobsite to my ear. I didn’t listen, because for this once, I dared not keep silent and had to speak. I told him I couldn’t take it anymore. Something had to change. This life I lived had become too much, and I needed to find love and air and light and rain and mostly wind. I needed to feel the wind against my skin and know I was in a wide open space.

He listened and his stunned silence broke the pace of the conversation. He had no idea what to say. His prize slave challenged a life he found quite fulfilling. I did all the work raising the children, building his kingdom, doing all the handwork, and he sat back and basked in the glory of his greatness for having trapped such a good and loving woman. Unwittingly I had declared open war and had drawn the battle lines. I didn’t mention divorce, only the need for change. He knew where that would ultimately lead. I had left once years ago, and under all circumstances he would not let that happen. I

belonged to him and had no rights to my own life. It was then he began to plot. Ignorant of his thoughts, I began to honestly look at who I was, how I got there, and to disassemble everything that supported a concrete-like grave where spirits die in anguish. He immediately quit his job and flew home to Florida in hopes of securing his position, wealth, and claims. I didn't possess the remotest idea of the lengths he would go to in order to establish absolute control over me. That recognition would only come with time.

PART TWO: DARKNESS ENVELOPS THE WORLD

2. The Power of Revenge

Age: 39, (Jail) Tallahassee, FL (1999)

A few years later, I felt completely broken and devoid of any honor or respect. Still I found one defiant flame, one singular aim, one inner power that would not die. In the nightmarish scene I endured the humiliation of being arrested, bound, and imprisoned in a squad car. I could barely blink, barely think, and certainly barely breathe. The police held me in the city jail for a few hours until the sheriff took me on to the county jail. I had no idea where this path would end and what I would endure.

I was so completely out of my element: I was the child—the woman—who didn't do drugs, didn't rob, didn't harm others, and didn't get drunk. I was the good child, the golden child, the accomplished child who did all kinds of good works in the community and world. Now, I suddenly stood as the blackest sheep in the fold. I became immensely confused by an upside down world where good was "evil," evil was "good," and where lies won the day while the truth was silenced.

I had no voice. The more I spoke about the abuse I suffered under the care of my husband and malevolent biological family the more vicious the backlash. Their tsunami of revenge swept me off my feet and tumbled me in an airless world of debris, death,

destruction, and darkness. The world about me moved so quickly that one second I was up, then down, then deep, then near the top of the wave. I simply had no time to orient myself, and I became completely dazed by the events that led up to my show trial. Leaving abuse was the crime and sparing my children from further abuse and molestation were the charges.

This may seem incomprehensible to outsiders. Who can understand such malevolence? Who is trained to understand that the legal system's coils are often sprung by corruption, sloth, and a desire to validate itself with bodies? Innocence or guilt matter not. In a show trial the authorities and accusers create false allegations to paint victims into monsters. When they destroy the sheep they painted as a wolf, they seek to prove they are the saviors and not the sinners. Too often courts are a place where lawyers who murder the truth for mercenary wages twist tufts of lies and outrageous accusations into a cormorant's nest of death, decay, and debris. Hope is sparse, for the very lawyers who blind the world to the truth to gain riches later become judges. One can only ask, "How can a person who has done violence to truth and justice their entire legal career suddenly become a judge and see? How can a life dedicated to killing justice and burying it suddenly be shrewd enough to recognize the very thing they assassinated time and time again?"

Guilt and innocence are token words backed by a façade of pomp. Money, power, and contempt for true justice often let the guilty go free and imprison those too weak to fight the powers of so many. It is like a snowball that starts at the top of a mountain peak. As it rolls down the ridge it is slow and small enough. These are the first lies, the first errors of the judicial system that often likes to take long lunches more than to smell

out something that doesn't really fit. As the frozen snow and ice roll they gain speed, mass, and dirt. The accumulation begins to roar into an engulfing avalanche that buries its intended alive until the mountain quiets again with its belly satisfied with new sacrifices. Once the lie starts it rarely stops. Who wants to stop it? Each agent along the way believes the fellows before did their job well and everything is in place. They don't question their peers. They just pass the thing along until there is no stopping it. They don't want to stop it, because for most getting a paycheck and paying for things occupies their mind more than the nagging concern that they may be doing harm to an innocent person. That became my perception after being buried under lies, incompetence, and apathy.

It is an altogether foreign and overwhelming thing to be hit by a freight train of mercenaries. Deep in my spirit I felt something dreadful approach, but neither my divorce lawyers nor my friends would believe me. False platitudes that "everything will be all right" rang in the air while I trembled with the powerless realization that I had to face the storm alone. Escape simply didn't offer itself. As a matter of fact, upon my arrest all these friends, lawyers, clergy, and others vanished into the shadows. I think rats on a sinking ship stick around a little longer than those who promised to help me leave abuse. In the murky days that followed one thing became abundantly clear: I had overestimated my advocates and underestimated my abusers. I discovered that the hate of my malevolent family fueled flames of evil action. Their hate overpowered the meager efforts and concerns of those who promised to help the children and me. In short, those who wanted to hurt me had more focus and drive than the people who tried to help. It is hard to be told you possess rights, only to discover you really don't. Reality blasted in

and opened my eyes to the real world, and no rose-colored glasses would ever burn the image from my mind.

No greater humiliation have I suffered than to be paraded into one holding cell to the next, only to be strip searched, photographed, and thrown into maximum security with many people who lived to shred sheep like me. I understood the feeling of being thrown into a lion's den or pit of vipers. Every instinct is to run, but there is no running.

I felt really really really sorry for myself, but that ember, that inner defiance did not die. When the police woman roughly handed me something to hold for my mug shot, I remembered, "Don't let them know they have hurt you. Be brave, be the better person, and make the most of everything." It was then that I gave the Mona Lisa smile to the camera. Yes, I was entering a strange and cruel world, but even then I had some control over my response to that world. I would be true to myself and refuse to become embittered or give in to them.

I also refused to sign extradition papers that would have given the liars and abusers an easy chance to get me under their immediate control. I felt somewhat proud of that, and later would become even prouder. I would be lying if I said I didn't cry. It's hard for someone who hasn't been molested and raped to understand the psychological trauma of a strip search. I tried to escape and heal from the very men who molested, raped, and violated me: my father, step-father, relatives, and my husband. But still they somehow found a way to get outsiders to do it again for them. The wound in my spirit gushed and pushed out pulsating tears.

When the corrections officers gave me a "boat" or a hard plastic bed that fit anywhere, I sat up and held my knees tightly and bowed my head low into a sitting fetal

position. I felt on display in the maximum security jail pod. I didn't even have the dignity to be in a double room with the other inmates in maximum security. My boat sat on the floor in the middle of the small metal tables and chairs riveted to the floor. All the tables were filled with very loud people who didn't mind "accidentally" kicking or trampling me. I finally shifted my boat and my personal space into an impossible corner near the water fountain.

Perhaps the acoustics of the ceiling of the two story pod made sounds ring louder. But it was more than that. These women in maximum security were often bellicose as they cursed and slammed things during constant confrontations over something as simple as a card game. Howler monkeys in an altercation are a lot quieter. As a woman traumatized already by abuse and verbal tirades, I fell deep into myself to try to find a place to hide. Of course, the bulk of them mocked me for crying.

Who were these women? I had never been in the company of people like them before. The sheriff's office placed me in maximum security because they considered me a flight risk. Anyone with out-of-state charges is a flight risk, no matter what the actual severity of the charges. I faced three felony counts and the possibility of fifteen years in prison. As a matter of fact, the out-of-state DA wanted to make a name for herself by crucifying me. My family pressed them to do this and vomited a steady stream of projectile lies to make it happen. If I had any doubts that I should leave my family and life of abuse earlier, the crystalline truth that they hated me shone brightly in a place where every other woman had their families trying to get them out of jail, not into the next step—prison .

So, I cried and a few kinder souls tried to comfort me. Then I grasped that this was not a place for pity or to become emotionally frozen. This place had become my new world, and I had to learn to make it work for me—the sooner the better. Inmates aren't allowed anything to tie back their hair, and my long tresses tangled and felt dirty. I remembered the pioneers and combed my hair. Carefully I took strands left in the comb and wove them into an eight inch cord. I used this to tie my hair back. The other inmates watched in wonder. They realized no one could confiscate my hair tie, because it was my hair tying my hair. A few muttered that I had done some sort of witchcraft. Others whispered that I was very clever. I watched to see each one's affect. Abused women and children like me often become very sensitive to social cues. I had to learn as quickly as possible and uncover who would be for or against me.

Dinner came with a ham slice, and I don't eat pork. My family condemned me for this dietary habit, but here it helped save me. I had scanned the crowd and one pregnant woman, Jeanerette, seemed to have a lot of clout in the maximum security pod. Besides, her pregnancy made her need more nourishment than the rest. I quietly got up and respectfully stood in her doorway with my untouched tray and meekly asked for her attention. I had learned to be emotionally intelligent, and courtesy goes a long way toward any person's ego and favor. She asked me what I wanted. I responded, "I seem to be in a bit of a situation. You see, I don't eat pork. I would hate to waste food in a place like this. Would you like my pork every time they serve it?" She smiled and heartily slapped one of her followers with delight. "Yes, of course. I will help you any time you want." I then let her take the meat off my tray. I didn't eat each time the jail served pork until she first got to choose her extra portion.

Despite the craziness of the environment, I immediately tread gently but with knowledge. Jeanerette was the leader, but she allowed me to live in relative peace, because I had recognized her power immediately and helped her as she willed. In two days' time, many of the inmates came and asked me to help them write letters, draw pictures on paper so they could send family members handmade cards, and so forth. I laid my hands on colored pencils and paper the second day, and my rough drawing talents and wit became a commodity. In time I began helping people outline legal defenses and draft other documents as well.

A mannish woman named Lena faced sentencing for violently murdering two people. She hated me at first sight. She's the only one who ever confessed she was guilty of her crime, as she expressed great pride in her horrific deeds. One day as I bounded up the stairs I inadvertently caught Lena in a sexual act with another inmate. She looked up from her lover like a lion from its prey. Shadows raced like dirt devils across her face as she rose in violent anger. To this day, I don't know why Lena thought she could do that on the stairs and no one would see her. Half the inmates had their cells on the upper floor and were sure to pass by. Her sexual act played out in full sight of nearly everyone. I had simply not expected it, and I suppose she thought I should have. Who knows the thoughts of a darkened mind?

Lena rose and rushed at me grasping a shiv and railing death threats. I stood my ground several steps below her and refused to be intimidated. I would take what came. Hadn't my sister tried to stab me with a knife years earlier? I was focused, intent, and my wits were alive, weighing the options. My bravado froze Lena from furthering her

advance. Now I had caught her off guard, because nearly everyone else felt terrified of her.

It was then that Jeanerette got off her bed and came into the central part of the pod. One of her followers alerted her to the scene playing on the stairs. Jeanerette had powerful connections inside and outside the jail and that carried considerable weight. Jeanerette fought my battle for me and warned Lena to back off. Jeanerette warned, “Look at her Lena. She is quiet, but she stands like a warrior. Messing with her will not go well with you. The prison guards like her, the church ladies like her, and I like her. So back off!” And that was the end of it. The self-acclaimed murderer glowered but always steered clear from me from that point on. I silently thanked God that I had chosen the right woman to curry favor with that first day. It may well have saved my life.

My best friend in jail was “Grandma,” an elderly black woman. Grandma found herself arrested for trying to defend herself during a purse snatching. With no money to bail herself out, she sat in that jail for months awaiting trial. I would go and visit with her in her cell often, and we would discuss the world and make light talk. Three days a week the jail permitted the inmates to go out into the yard for one hour to exercise in the outdoors. Usually the other inmates acted up and it was a lucky week when the correction officers (COs) let us out even two of those days. Grandma and I would talk and gently dribble the basketball and shoot hoops on the days we actually got to go in the yard. Perhaps we seemed the odd couple, but I treated her with special kindness, and Jeanerette and many others greatly respected that. Grandma’s depression began to fade, and in time she was released. I dared not think for one moment how I missed her company; I was too happy to see one innocent bird find freedom. The trouble in jail is

one need not bother saying they are innocent. Everyone says they are innocent. So no one believes anyone. In this case, Grandma really didn't do anything other than defend herself. It would be a long time before I knew my fate. Would I be sentenced to go to prison? Would I find a way to freedom? At the moment I only knew that time held me in its grasp. It's stifling to be in such a place and not know the ending or timetable. This was an unexpected journey, and I was trapped along its route until I reached an unknown destination. The only place I could travel was back into my memories to reflect on the life events that led up to this spirit-crushing climax.

3. Raised in Darkness

Ages: 0-2, Olympia, WA (1960-62)

Somehow the heavens seemed to mix it up. From the moment of birth I viewed the world with love, smiles, and wonder. My twenty-five-year-old mother viewed me with disdain and self-pity. She had not wanted this child, this child of no worth, this child otherwise known as me. From conception she hated me and tried to justify aborting me in an age and time when such things were done in back alleys. Twisting the dentist's words about an abnormal gum growth, she led outsiders to believe that she would die if she didn't abort me. The intent and desire to kill me as a fetus did not arise from her gum hyperplasia. Her intent seeped and seethed inside a heart that harbored the darkest sins of selfishness, self-righteousness, and entitlement. She hated serving needy children, and the first two had shown her that motherhood entailed hard work and self-sacrifice. She didn't want any more responsibility and work. She alone wanted to be the center of all attention and adoration.

My grandmother and the Catholic nuns spared my life through prayer and strong contentions. They argued that my life had more value than my mother's fears. My mother

hated me for that. Suddenly she no longer captivated the focus of attention. Her intent to murder me backfired, and people rallied to pray for me and love me before I first saw the world. No one fussed and pitied her. It was not a role she willingly played, yet hypocrites must pretend and do their evil deeds outside of the eyes of others. As long as the spotlight shone upon my unborn soul, she pretended to care. No doubt existed about her lack of genuine love for me once I came into the world. Her attitudes and actions failed to display the expected maternal nurturing. A third child in a family already bestowed with a boy and a girl was simply redundant and undervalued.

Yet I experienced love. My grandmother loved me with all her heart as did the church. Neglected at home, I found immense support from others. From the day I first faced the dawn of the world of men I sputtered an infantile smile and searched and followed faces with bright, intelligent cinnamon-colored eyes. My lips pursed in a rosebud as my features drew attention from many. I became my father's favorite instantly for I performed—I cooed and gazed with an inner love that radiated. Some of my earliest memories include hopping from lap to lap, cuddle to cuddle, and being happy while avoiding my mother's neglect and being labeled a "love bug."

I came to understand the power of my temperament and appearance when I observed people's response to my own youngest son, Kavan. The church called him the "Baby with the Face." He drew crowds because he responded so intimately with everyone. All my children were beautiful in their own rights, but Kavan knew how to play a crowd from early infancy just like his mother. Surely his good looks attracted others, but in truth, I smiled and cooed more with him than the other children. I had more time, more ease, more confidence, and I infused a glowing love in him that spilled into

the audiences he captivated. I highly suspect my grandmother and the nuns did the same to me when I lay in their arms, a seemingly powerless child of light. At first my dad worked two jobs and could not find time to coddle me, so I relied on outsiders.

Ages: 2-4, Phoenix, AZ (1962-63)

As I approached two years of age my parents moved far from my support system and my desert years began. It's funny how a person can have early memories of desert years. My mother didn't want another pregnancy, but she was a church lay leader at the time, and she knew she had to at least outwardly embrace it. I vaguely remember another child being born and sucking all the attention. I remember loneliness while I waited all day for my dad to get home from work. I remember a black widow spider making a nest in my younger brother's crib. I remember watching this fourth child as if he were my own. Often times he would cry for long periods of time, and I would rush to comfort him. I was scolded for "spoiling him," but eventually my mother left me to do what I instinctively felt I must do. I soothed him and cared for him instead of letting him cry and fuss because his needs were going unmet. I learned to change his diaper and get his bottle when I was still very little. Loving him helped fill the void my parents created. In fact, I raised my youngest brother as much as any little mother can. He is the only sibling I have hopes of ever repairing relationships with, if only he would do the soul work of healing from such a toxic family of parents and older siblings.

Our nuclear family became established in Phoenix. It included a twenty-nine-year-old father, a twenty-seven-year-old mother, and three children: a boy aged seven, a sister nearly four years old, me at the age of two-and-a-half, and my infant brother. This family structure was typical for a Catholic family of my parents' generation. My mother

stopped having sex to prevent further children, and my father happily continued satisfying himself through various affairs.

My mother's punishment always felt harsh and unnecessary. I became an avoidant child. I stayed to myself except in the company of the baby. Only when outsiders or my dad came home did I light up. Only then did I risk notice. It is a sorry state when a woman is so filled with self that she is jealous of her own child, but my mother's contempt grew daily. The more people loved me, the more I demanded love and performed for love outside the nuclear family.

When she observed my ways, she felt that I was somehow not her child. She joked about me being fathered by a redheaded Chinese milkman. She told others I was switched at the hospital. The magnitude of the chasm between us would shock everyone once I began to come into my own. I embodied everything she wanted to be but was unwilling to work for. As a child I knew we had problems, but it would take decades for me to stop blaming myself and come to the conclusion that she didn't love me. I wasn't "unlovable and unworthy" as she led me to believe. Quite simply my mother loved only one person: herself. A thin veneer covered her mean-spiritedness that aimed at recruiting and using others for her own gain. Her greatest assets lay in pretending to be religious and good so she could entrap and consume souls. I tried to earn her love for decades but never once did she tell me she loved me.

I watched her curry favor with my older siblings by obviously neglecting me. I quickly manifested my spirited nature as I embraced life, danced and twirled in the living room to music for hours, sang non-stop, cared for my brother, and loved animals with a

fierceness of soul. She had wanted me sad and defeated, but I didn't seem to get the memo.

In the house, I behaved quietly and creatively when my mother was afoot. However, her lazy streak gave me a lot of liberty, and I found ways to stay beyond her abusive reach and enjoy life. I loved the TV show "Sea Hunt" and made scuba tanks from oatmeal boxes and swam along the floor. I had many private creative games, but I played mostly alone as a toddler and preschooler. I developed a secret life outside the house when I went to school.

Ages: 5-10, Salem, OR (1964-70)

In kindergarten the teachers slowly pulled me from my own world and got me engaged in the world of others. Professionally they saw that I was shy, avoidant, and reluctant to be close to mother figures and other children. I hid my inner optimism from them. They coaxed me out with fun activities. One of the greatest moments that ignited my creativity involved tracing shapes, sawing wood with my own handsaw, painting the wood a beautiful bluebird blue, and fastening sails upon it. I could not believe I had the power to build a toy boat! After that I never stopped building boats. Whether I carved boats from ivory soap, or pumice stone, or prowled the neighborhood for stray wood, I constantly immersed myself in building projects. I painted my boats after I lovingly made them. My older brother destroyed most of them. He was that way; he destroyed almost everything I loved. That's how he got revenge for my dad so obviously loving me more than him. He was five years older, and although I struggled with his contempt, I did not stop building and living.

One day I found an old outhouse door in the mountains near some cabins we visited many weeks each summer. I proudly added wood below it, made a makeshift oar, and cast it into the lake under my grandma's gaze. My mother wanted to destroy it, but grandmother encouraged me. She took many pictures of me on that boat, and I wore myself out on it until water seeped into the wood and sank my treasure one night. I was sad but not too sad.

Grandma immediately opted to teach me to row a real boat then. She told me what to do and fastened a rope around a tree and the other to the boat. She set me free in a small bay and cautioned me, "If you can't get in, I will pull you in!" She smiled a huge smile daring me to make her pull me in. I would have none of it. Small as I was, six or seven at most, I "tortured over" the oars until I got a fix on "how to use them." I came in under my own steam, and Grandma praised me endlessly. She restricted where and when I could row, but that day I gained some sense of freedom and accomplishment.

How was I to know my brother, sister, and mother would jealously punish me for making a fool of my mother because she bet that I couldn't do it. She had openly mocked me saying the skill was beyond me. When I learned to row a boat more quickly than she or my siblings, it set up a jealous sense of competition. As a matter of fact, later in the trip my older brother took me into the forest along a pond and caught a snake. He knew I loved animals. He beat it to death against a tree as I pled for its life. He saw me catch a frog and went for it as well. I screamed and ran and set the frog free deep in the pond, wading in beyond my permitted limits and sinking into the ancient glacial silt to my knees. My brother loved to kill animals in front of me. He loved to torture them. It would

come to a head a few years later when I was nine years old, and he called me to the basement where we played.

In that basement, unexpectedly I rounded the corner to see my brother holding our dog with a rope around her neck. The dog didn't see the risk. The rope went from its neck, over the water pipes in the basement ceiling, and back to my brother's hands. As soon as he saw me he dropped the dog, pulled the rope, and left my poor dog screaming and yipping for its very life as it threw itself in terrified contortions in an attempt to free itself and live. This time I tried to save the dog, but a boy five years older filled with pure evil intent is no match for a young girl. He threw me to the ground as the dog's eyes started to roll into its head. Panic stricken I had to think of something, anything. I threw myself at his feet and pleaded with him on bended knees with folded hands like a supplicant at church. This greatly pleased him, this power to make me beg and plead at his feet in complete submission. He dropped the rope and let the dog fall as if nothing had been done and walked off. The dog hid far behind the dryer. I squeezed to meet her and comforted her.

When I tried to tell my mother what happened she was sitting in her "throne room." That's what I called the living room. She sat in there when she finally got out of bed late in the afternoon. She wore her zip-up blue striped bathrobe and dared us to bother her. She had no time for children. She hissed at me upon my arrival and barked, "If you are here again to tattle on your brother and sister, I don't want to hear it. Handle it yourself!" She spanked me and sent me away with tears in my eyes and a breaking soul. There was no place for justice in my home: my older siblings were given the right to rule in terror, and they both inflicted much violence on me and my animals.

When I was ten, my brother called me downstairs again. How I hated his call. If I didn't go he would find me and hit me several times. Unless I was out of the house or outside ear reach, I had to go. This time I came down the stairs slowly and reluctantly. I didn't fear for the dog. He had taken her for a walk at the beach a year earlier and "lost" her. No search found her, and he didn't even bother to help in the hunt. He seemed to know she was not coming back. My dad had taken my beloved cat and dumped it in the woods at my mother's demand. Now my brother no longer could torture my pets to traumatize me.

The three of them, mother, brother, and sister, had taken to destroying things that I loved, won in contests, or respected. I learned to curb my enthusiasm and love for things if I hoped for them to survive for any time at all. Every birthday, my brother "accidentally" broke the few toys my grandparents gave me before I went to bed that very night. My mother only gave me clothes and contempt. She derived pleasure from dressing me "ugly," actually super-ugly. So this particular day when my brother called me, I pensively went down the stairs, but I had no real fear of anything of value being destroyed. Everything I valued was already destroyed.

Imagine my fear to see a teenage boy, my brother, standing on a chair with a rope. This time the rope looped around his neck and extended over another water pipe in the ceiling. Damn water pipes. I hate them in basement ceilings. I hate basements! I shrieked and pleaded for him not to hang himself. But he gave me a hugely evil grin. He then jumped from the chair, and it tumbled behind him. He thought he was crafty and had measured the rope just right so his feet would touch the ground. He didn't account for the extra rope required for going around his neck. Suddenly, in a reenactment of the dog's

near demise my brother violently twitched and threw himself from side to side as he tried to force his hands between the rope and his neck! He was draining of color and dying before my very eyes! I ran to him, the enemy, weeping and again in great shock, but all these years of troubles had trained me to try to ignore my emotions and focus on the solution. I became a more resourceful girl with every act of torture and abuse. This day I grabbed his feet and prayed to God above for strength. I was so little and my brother so big. I pulled the chair closer with one leg while I tried to hold my brother up enough to take the strain from his neck. Somehow I found that strength; I would learn to summon it again and again in years to come. I lifted him up enough and guided him back on the reset chair. He threw off the noose and ran cursing up the stairs and out the back door with an angry and violent abrasion around his neck. We never spoke about it. He never changed in his attitude towards me, either. But I was learning, and that day I learned that I had a special inner strength by the grace of God. His would not be the last life I would save by calling upon that inner power.

PART THREE: THE WILL TO FLY

4. “Foolish” Resolve

Age: 39, (Jail) Tallahassee, FL (1999)

The very first day I landed in jail, they held me in a large common holding cell. Cold air flooded the space that contained long steel benches against two walls and an open toilet-sink in the corner. Many of the women were frightened and others acted as if this were their second home. In the morning most of the prisoners began to steadily leave the holding cell as their families made bail for their quick release. I had a visitor too, but one of a very different kind. A woman in business attire brusquely called me to the door and shoved paperwork in my hands, “Sign here.” She held out a pen and every action she

took had the appearance of some standard form. It was not. She would not even permit me time to examine it thoroughly, so I had no idea what I was being asked to sign.

I had signed forms when I was in my twenties and blindly trusted people. I remember a former pastor turned realtor who made me spend twice as much on property than I wanted. He compelled me to sign something by persuading me to trust him. He told me the approximate acreage and said a survey would verify the exact size of the parcel. He locked me into the deal with that initial signature and would not modify it when the land ended up being three times the agreed on purchase size! I hated sending that check every month. It really hurt my home finances. No, I had learned a smile, a symbol of authority, and certainly a person pretending to be a faithful servant-leader could be, by all means, one of the most treacherous types of souls. Everyone smiles, even many serial killers. They use the smile and sweet words to lure their victims into a false sense of trust. I had no sense of trust, except cursory politeness. I made people earn my trust when it involved important issues and certainly when it involved potentially life-changing issues.

Hidden beneath her veneer of complete control, a shadow of anger and irritation rose across her face when I started to read what she wanted me to sign. She tried to intimidate me with words like “standard form” and “just sign it.” She didn’t know. She didn’t know that many abuse victims are hypersensitive to negative social cues. Some of us have been around so many rats; we can smell them while everyone else thinks the world is fine. It’s not a mental illness or paranoia; no, it is a high level of social intelligence and an understanding that many individuals will cause harm and pain for their own gain and convenience. Her attitude deteriorated subtly, and I caught it. I handed

her back the clipboard and told her I would not sign. She got very angry at me. I asked, “Do I have to sign?” She wanted to lie, but I bored my eyes into the depths of her soul and watched every flicker of her face, especially her eyes. We both knew I didn’t have to sign; I hadn’t even seen a lawyer yet. No, I would not give in to bullying. I certainly wouldn’t do anything without consulting an attorney. I would have to ask an attorney what the form said since she mumbled its purpose and wouldn’t let me read it.

She huffed that it would do me no good to refuse to sign her paper. It would only cause the courts a lot more trouble if I didn’t sign. I still had no idea why. Now she tried to manipulate me into feeling guilty about troubling the courts. Again I stood firm; my mother used to control me with manipulation. I was no longer her child, and any attempt to manipulate me usually resulted in me digging in my heels and becoming completely determined to stand my ground and find out more facts before I made a move. This quite irritated more than a few people.

My staunch attitude marked a surprising change in my life. I had always been overly compliant. I tried to survive abuse and keep from antagonizing the abusers by being a people-pleaser. Experience taught me that sometimes compliance is the only path until a hidden trail opens. But I also learned that compliance can be a noose, and I hated nooses from those times in the basement with my brother. To this day, when I am humble and compliant in an abusive or destructive situation one must know that I am biding time until an opportunity presents itself, or I create one, to remove myself from that situation. This always surprises people. What you see is not what you get. My family thought I would never leave their control, but I could vanish in an instant. I spoke politely but firmly to this woman, as I again refused to sign. She slammed the heavy metal door that

trapped me behind her as she muttered something. Several times she would return over the course of weeks, yes, even months. Always my answer consistently remained, “No, I won’t sign.”

Two days after my arrest I sat in a crowded single visiting cell with my public defender. The other inmates called him the “public pretender.” A man well advanced in years, he tried to hide the effects of time under a very bad sandy colored toupee with long side burns that complimented his retro 1970s untailed business suit. He spoke volumes before he even opened his mouth. I was just another number in his huge list of cases and he wanted things done and over quickly. He picked up where the woman ended a day earlier. “Florida doesn’t want you. This is an out of state warrant. We just want you to sign those papers agreeing to extradition so that you can go and face the charges in the state that wants you.” Now I understood the power of a “simple signature” on the form and felt grateful that I had developed the good sense to refuse to act until confusion cleared.

My resolve tightened even more as I passionately exclaimed to the attorney, “I’m innocent ... those charges are made up to force me back where they can harm me. They hunted me and violated restraining orders. They had to use the police to ...” He cut me off. He didn’t care; not one bit. He argued his point over and over. I argued mine. I had long learned that giving in to the desires of my enemies only gave them more power. He let out a big sigh and flopped his head down as his toupee squirmed to the right and had to be tugged back in place. He hoped I didn’t notice the little adjustment. Of course I did, and I wondered how bald a man would have to be to take such unsuccessful measures. His wig made him seem strangely inhuman and other worldly.

“Listen,” he said as he raised his eyes and only half met mine. “No one, and I mean no one ever beats extradition. I have done this forever and ever. You can’t beat it, just sign and go.” Only a fool thinks I am one to see impossibility in the face of unknown potential. I had faced impossibility and won too many times. Yes, I lost many battles, but great miracles often happened. I had given up on only one thing in my life: my expectations. It used to make me miserable when life wasn’t perfect, or people didn’t act the way that I wanted, or I couldn’t make things flow exactly the way I wanted them to. No, I had learned to look up and in looking up one constantly operates between heaven and earth, seen and unseen, light and shadow, and only in motion does the next opportunity present itself. I functioned with a multi-dimensional viewpoint.

I pursed my lips and spoke slowly, confidently, and defiantly. “Perhaps you see no hope. But I tell you this, I will not give in to these people... not even one inch by my own power. I will leave room for God to give me a miracle.” He rolled his eyes at this and tried to interrupt, but I would have none of it. I didn’t follow the voices of men; I followed the inner voice that shouted “Stand your ground!” I explained that if I signed the extradition papers, I would only make it worse. Until I spoke with my lawyer I had never understood what extradition entailed or why people were extradited.

As a matter of fact, my father, my mother, my now ex-husband, their mercenaries, and a cruel-spirited pastor’s wife had put me in this position. I had given in then. I had left Florida when the pastor’s wife and lawyer, along with her chosen church members attacked me. One day the pastor’s wife and her friend stormed up to me and my children after service. Her nostrils flared as did her friend’s. She told me that no one cared what happened to me and my children. No one cared that I was abused or that my young

daughter molested by her father. She told me I was in rebellion and was a Jezebel. She told me to return and submit to my soon to be ex-husband and my father. I couldn't speak, I couldn't swallow. I had no idea my voice could vanish and refuse to be summoned until she confronted me that day. My young children and I froze in shock.

The pastor's wife fell into an uproar once one of her followers told her that I had been leading a small Bible study group. It infuriated her that the women really respected my knowledge and that I had personally written to the pastor to see if he had any issues with my teaching the study. When he didn't protest, I went ahead and taught the women because they had pleaded with me to instruct them. In a large church I felt obligated to get the pastor's input. I had no idea that it would threaten his wife. I had not anticipated her desire to have complete and utter control over the congregation as the only woman with Bible knowledge. She seemed to feel threatened and jealous, but in fact she had all the power. She used the excuse that I was a "Jezebel" to ostracize me. She acted like a victim. She was a self-proclaimed "prophetess" and her staff believed she spoke as God and wanted me far from their congregation. What church wants a Jezebel?

In religious circles Jezebel refers to the wife of King Ahab and to another woman called Jezebel in the book of Revelations. In both instances Jezebel represented a woman who destroyed the true prophets, exalted false prophets, and who used the law, sexuality, and other means to scheme wicked plans. Jezebel carried great clout in both instances as she helped rule or lead God's people. To ensure that I left, they had their church lawyer and security staff intimidate me. It wasn't necessary. I was neither a Jezebel nor a person who destroyed the truth, law, and faith of the church for personal gain.

Later the church sent security to return the prayer requests I had personally mailed to the pastor. They had to embarrass me in the motel my children and I had been forced to live in. Then letters from the church lawyer came: three letters, all the same but two certified. Like Peter denied Jesus three times on the eve of his crucifixion, these letters basically told me that the pastor was no one's pastor. It told me to find a church where someone cared about me, because that church didn't.

Greatly wounded, I sent the church lawyer seventy dollars to pay for his time. I told him I would leave and wanted to trouble no one. I called a friend and left to visit her in Oregon to rest and to try to recover the money my father embezzled that year. My children and I would spend the summer with my friend, regroup, and return to Florida in the fall. I made a very stupid decision and gave myself and my children over to the desires and snares of those who wished us great and grave harm. My family and estranged husband lived out west and had been trying to regain control over me for years. Oregon was the last place I should have gone, and I let the pastor's wife so stir up my emotions that I threw myself into danger instead of holding my ground. That decision led to my great tribulation in jail. So knowing that giving in would only open doors for incendiary destruction, I squared off with this elderly experienced man with long teeth and no honest hair.

"I tell you again. If this jail... if even the threshold of my cell is all the ground God gives me, then I will hold that ground. I will hold it and see if He doesn't make a larger path before my feet and set me free!" The public defender could only shake his head from side to side in complete loss. He mistook tempered faith for the easily born and abandoned jail house religion. I didn't walk in the world of religion. As a matter of

fact, my insistence to follow my good conscience and divine guidance in the face of religious people like that church and my family is what led me to avarice and malice of a lynch mob. I would hold my ground as long as I could.

I remembered the story of Corrie Ten Boom. Her release from Auschwitz resulted from a clerical error. She became free shortly before women her age faced the chambers and died. Silently and often I prayed for a clerical error. That is all it would take; just as paper held me, paper could free me. I no longer blindly accepted all counsel, and tenaciously clung to good counsel and abandoned counsel that appeared bad. If I didn't know if it were good or bad, I would wait and find out more.

The public defender lost his patience and willingness to argue with me. He told me he would prove me wrong. I smiled in even greater defiance and noted, "Perhaps but perhaps not. Perhaps God is real after all, and perhaps He will work in ways you have not seen. Let time have its way." This was too much for him, and he left me to be escorted back to my jail pod and cell. He muttered something about "religious fanatics," as he hustled down the hall to his next client. When I returned to the pod, I had finally been moved off the dining area floor and put in a second story cell with three other people. I would spend many more nights on the floor in the boat until a bunk in a room intended to house only two people became available. There was no room to walk. Eventually my world opened up as two people left, and I could finally sleep on my own hard metal bed. I cared, but I didn't care.

Jail: unwholesome companions, yelling corrections officers, the confiscation of my bra and underwear, all this meant nothing to me compared to the battle I enjoined. I refused to be just a victim; I was a combatant. I focused on the fight for my children's

freedom from a cycle of abuse and neglect. I fought for them more than for me. I still hadn't learned to value myself, and that made me even more of a kamikaze, a Japanese "divine wind." I too would take a seemingly suicidal flight and pray for a divine wind to save me. I found strength in flight imagery.

5. Downy Wings

Age: 9, Salem, OR (1969)

As much as I loved boats and scuba diving games as a child, I loved flying more. The age of nine proved pivotal for so many reasons. My greatest lessons were oft my most painful. As a child my imagination and resolve that any problem had a solution resonated at the cellular level. I loved to climb trees, but not for the view—for the prospect of taking flight. Although my big brother tortured and killed a lot of birds, most sang their songs in the tree tops in defiance only to flutter away beyond the reach of cat and cruel boys alike. I loved the way birds sang. I loved the way they flew. And I loved the way they were above the chaos below, coming only to earth temporarily to tease out earthworms and dazzle the eyes.

I most liked the water ouzel and the osprey. Both lived at the water's edge. The first was a small greyish bird of no great beauty, yet it hypnotized me the way it dipped rhythmically on the large granite stones that filled the rivers. It delighted my soul and never once have I seen or thought of one without smiling. The second way is the great osprey. It hovers in the high drafts above lakes, bays, and rivers in seeming detachment to the world below; then suddenly it tucks itself into a gravatronic missile and plunges head first into the water in a splash that would cause any Olympic diver envy. One cannot help but hold their breath as bird becomes fish and vanishes only to fly up from the watery

depths with prey in its talons. It holds the fish head forward and fin back and now the two are one as the fish flies with the osprey to a hidden destination. Amazing and inspiring.

It was no wonder then that I wanted to capture part of their world. No one told me that I couldn't fly. If they did, I must have ignored them because flying was my personal mission. At first I was happy to grab the large arborvitae that stood as giant sentinels in front of the high brick front porch. I would stand on the porch and pull the evergreen back, back, back until it bent to my will. When I could pull no more I enthusiastically wrapped my legs and arms around it and let it fling me far over the porch, over the hedge, and into the air. I got in great trouble for pulling this stunt so I learned to restrain my flying for other places or for times when the neighbors were not about.

Then I began to jump off the low lying room at the back of our detached garage. I leapt into the compost pile of leaves and yard debris. I never really liked this option. I fell into debris that poked and scraped. The flight felt good—the landing not so much. So I began to climb my neighbor's tree with my playmates. My family never knew. These were the safe neighbors. They didn't yell; they didn't hit; they didn't discourage. Of course they told us not to climb too high. I minded them for a bit and climbed just enough to make a wild leap to the ground. Then I climbed again and waited my turn. My son Kai displays the same unexplainable urge to take wing, and I worried less than others when he made his various efforts. I understood the impulse and tried to safely guide it.

As a child, I began to wonder as I studied the local song birds: if I had broader arms, more like wings, wouldn't I be able to soar further? I took my carpentry skills to a new level and rummaged and begged neighbors for stray pieces of light plywood. Soon I made two wings complete with rubber brackets to hold my arms. I had to climb the tree

without them, but my friends handed the wings up to me. I jumped but found I didn't soar much. Not one to give up, I went to the local park and collected duck feathers along the pond. I glued feathers all over my wings, but to no avail. I then began to think it was an altitude problem. Perhaps my wings were good, but I didn't start high enough in the tree to let the wind carry me. I progressively went higher and higher in the tree.

One day I climbed higher than I had ever gone before. I felt a little afraid, but I trusted the wings and my plan. Oops. This time when I plummeted, the ground seemed to rise to teach me a lesson. I hurt myself and knocked all the breath from my body. I lay there stunned for a moment and made a note to self: "I am not a bird and neither am I designed to fly." I learned a healthy respect for heights that day, and now I avoid jumping farther than I should.

I still have marvelous dreams about flying; I sincerely hate waking from them. Often people are trying to catch me and bring me down to earth in my dreams. They grab at my feet and sometimes nearly get me, but I hide high in places they don't think to look. If I get trapped inside I fly in unpredictable patterns until I find an open window. Most of all I fly in the quiet of the day rise or luminescent moon. I sing and sing and fly and fly. The people who try to catch me discover me sometimes because I can't resist flying in patterns and circles while singing from the very core of my being. They hear me and try to grab me. Sometimes I take someone with me on my back, or try to teach them to fly by just tipping their fingers and arms slightly this way or that. In my dreams I am the only one that flies under my own power, and I never ever get caught no matter how many chase me. I don't belong to their terrestrial world, and I live between the heights and the heavens.

When I was ten, my self education about the limits of my own body saved me. My older brother kept jumping off a sandy bluff that seemed to be a cliff. I screamed, but he always came back safely. He cajoled me and taunted me telling me I was a coward for not jumping, "It's safe. It's fun. Come on scaredy cat." He never jumped when I stood on the cliff side of the bluff, and I couldn't see how it was safe. Something inside me urged me to be cautious and not blindly trust him. Instead I walked down the trail to the beach. That day I noticed that he jumped to a ledge just off to the side. While it looked like he jumped straight off the bluff, he would twist to the side and lie on this ledge. I became very scared when I understood the layout. If I had jumped as he told me to I would have fallen over 20 feet onto the rocks below! That was the first time I became aware of how a person could lay a trap to harm me. I began to be much more analytical and think things through.

Years later when I was in college for my first degree I found myself crawling along a coastal dunes area working with my summer-time boss trying to observe some illegal activity at night. The man was twice my age and my superior. He had me lead out in the front. I may have been twenty, but I had matured beyond my years. I stopped in the thin moonlight. The light didn't illuminate enough to see well, and we dared not use flashlights for fear of detection. My boss muttered at me to keep going, but I noticed that the dune grass thinned out, and I could not see what lay before me. He got very upset and told me to keep going, but I would not budge. I asked our other co-worker to feel around and find a rock, a piece of driftwood, anything that I could drop and listen to see how far the dunes dipped in front of me. My boss grew impatient, but my coworker told him to humor me. He gave me a rock, and we all held our breaths to listen as I tossed it a few

feet in front of me. The silence pierced the night until a dull thud far below us rang back the location. My boss looked at me wide-eyed and whistled, “Wow. That would have killed you!”

We went a different way and they followed closely behind me. At first having me take a lead simply gave my male coworkers a chance to test me, “the female.” Suddenly they wanted me to lead because I had a sense of danger, shadows, sounds, and the incongruous signs that they did not. Living by my wits had trained me to adapt, learn, and listen. Most of all, it taught me to distrust “older and wiser” leaders. Age is no guarantee of either wisdom or maturity. More important than leading is to consider what will happen to one’s followers if they do listen. It would be a lesson I shared over and over with my children, especially Kai. I would tell them, “I have trained you to be good leaders and think things through. The question is not then whether you can lead or not, but the question is what will happen to people if they choose to follow you?”

6. Hide and Seek

Age: 9, Salem, OR (1969)

When I was nine I also learned to hide. I hid in all kinds of places to avoid my family. I used to cry to myself, and I felt very lonely when I had to be in the house. I loved to call my grandmother and sprawl on the stairs while I talked to her as long as I dared. However, my parents cut me off from her. In the interest of saving their marriage they blamed my grandfather for all their troubles, so they cut them out. It left a huge hole in my heart, and I mourned for their presence. It would take a year for me to mention it to one of the nuns at the Catholic grade school I attended. As soon as she knew my parents had cut me off from my grandparents she put an end to it. I felt overwhelmed with relief to have my grandparents back in my life thanks to the nuns pressuring my

parents. Nevertheless during that year many monumental things would happen. People do things when no one is watching.

I loved my father so much, but by the age of nine sitting on his lap became a confusing hazard. He began to put his hands in places I didn't know I had. While it felt good, it also felt very bad. I began to avoid sitting on his lap and insisted on sitting at his feet on the floor when I watched TV in the evenings with the family.

My mother started beating me even more in those days. She found a reason out of nothing, while my siblings went unscathed. I didn't understand it. Despite a slow start I was a straight A student in Catholic grade school. I was obedient. I played the piano, did the housework, and didn't dare talk back. I woke up every morning at six and played the piano before making breakfast, and called my family to eat, except my mother who slept in until two or three most every day. I then made lunch for my siblings, mostly out of sheer survival. If my older brother made lunch I usually found at least one heel of dry bread in my sandwich and only a pat of butter. That was all. We had food, but he didn't bother for my lunch.

I learned to work at Catholic grade school. When I did good things, I got positive rewards and most of all, love. I helped clean the blackboards after class just to avoid going home. I volunteered to wipe the cafeteria tables after lunch so I could avoid going out on the playground and being taunted by my older brother and sister and their gangs of friends. Besides, the noise on the playground gave me headaches. Soon I was working in the lunch room rinsing dishes. I loved to do it and joined in the happy conversations with the older women. I worked for free because I wanted to, and I loved these women and they loved me. Eventually they told me to come in a little early, and they gave me a free

lunch. By the end of the year I became their number one helper and stayed working with them through both lunch periods. My teachers let me. They didn't fully understand why I behaved this way, but they respected my love for the adults at school.

I wasn't always a good child. Sometimes I would get my cafeteria work done early and not want to go on the playground. I began to explore the hidden spaces where only the custodian and maintenance men worked. The men let me explore and see how things worked. They never touched me, and strangers were far safer than my family and their friends.

I also loved playing in the empty bathrooms before the students returned for class. I would swing back and forth on the stall bars like a monkey, and then fly off to land on my feet. One day I was laughing and swinging with my best friend whom I persuaded to join in the special secret world I had constructed. We worked with the cafeteria women and then had five minutes to swing in the bathroom stalls before the bell rang.

Suddenly the bathroom door opened and Sister Mary, principal of the school, caught us in mid-swing. I thought quickly and opted for distracting her with humor. As she began to open her mouth to scold us I swung out, hunched down like a chimpanzee and made chimp sounds as I scooted past her. She stood frozen and shocked in place. My friend quickly followed, imitating my every move. Sister Mary really wanted to scold me, to scold us, but she couldn't resist the complete surprise of my chimp act. She laughed and tried to cover her face as I told my friend, "Let's get to class a little early. It's time."

I didn't always escape nun discipline. Every child who has gone to Catholic school has their own version of it. If I talked in class instead of sitting with my hands

folded listening I would get punished. Sometimes I would have to copy pages out of the dictionary. Sometimes I would have to write on the board. Once I had to sit in the small round trash can and hold books straight out for several painful and humiliating minutes. I hated that and learned quickly to control myself and become a disciplined student. Deep inside I hadn't lost my playful, inquisitive, ebullient nature, and was a virtual volcano of enthusiasm, but I had learned to control the eruptions. By the age of ten I had become very self-disciplined under the watchful but loving eyes of my beloved nuns and mother figures.

7. A Heavenly Wind

Ages: 9-13, Salem, OR (1969-73)

The age of nine marked an accelerated time of opening doors, opening minds, opening hearts, and opening the chasm between me and my family: that's why I hid from them. At times I would hide in the park under the bushes. At other times I secreted myself in the care of others. I learned to shroud myself as an invisible child whenever I did not feel safe.

I hid in the attic space that opened next to my bedroom. I hunkered behind the Christmas decoration boxes. I sought shelter from my brother and sister who were bent on torturing me that day while my mother sat in her throne room thinking about how entitled she was to being waited on hand and foot. She didn't do much to raise her children, and that left a huge vacuum. While I gravitated towards the best the world had to offer in the form of mature adult relationships at school and in the neighborhood, my older brother and sister used their freedom to follow the darkness of their souls.

Beyond my nuclear family I had too many surrogate parents to count: the post man who let me walk his route and gave me a dime or nickel while imparting his wisdom; the neighbor grocer, George, who let me linger in his small store after school and listen to the comings and goings of the world; an elderly neighbor; a young Japanese neighbor; my friend's parents; the nuns and more. My mother often gave me money to buy cigarettes at the grocer's. If she didn't

send me for her nicotine fix, I would occasionally steal a little money from my mother's purse so I had an excuse to visit George. It only took a penny or a nickel to buy candy in those days, so I needed very little to cover up my real reason for visiting. George acted a little rough around the edges, but he seemed to know he was giving me sanctuary. I would also go to the single Japanese neighbor's house at the end of the street every few weeks when I caught him home. He would invite me in. He would drink tea while I had a small glass of milk with a couple of the intriguing cookies that exploded into a myriad of types and flavors inside little sleeves in fancifully colored tin boxes. He indulged me, and he told me a lot about his country and the world. Quiet and wise, he felt safe and exciting at the same time. He seemed a little lonely, and I noticed I was the only neighbor that pressed into his world. I felt so glad when he eventually married.

I spent the most time with the widow across the street. Mrs. Decline had many cats of all sizes and ages. We would rock in chairs and talk for hours. We often laughed at the way one of her cats ran at the screen door full steam. He would fly into it and cling in the center of the screen with all his claws long enough to ride it as it swung open. Then he let himself out. He liked to fly too. Maybe pigs don't fly, but I knew cats could.

Mostly we worked in the garden together. Sometimes Mrs. Decline would pay me, sometimes she would not. I didn't work for the money anyway, but these adults insisted on giving me something from time to time. A nickel or dime seemed too much for a few hours of work. In fact I felt like I should have paid them for loving me so much. I no longer had to steal from my mother to see George and use penny candy as an excuse. Years later I would repay everything I stole from my mother with interest and an apology, but not then. Since I had no allowance and worked so hard at home, I didn't feel too guilty at the time. I only felt guilty later.

Mrs. Decline's son would come to visit, and he raised his eyebrows when he saw me the first time. His mother and I seemed like such an unlikely pair. Then he began to welcome my presence and thanked me for keeping his 85-year old mother company. I didn't feel that way.

She loved me. I didn't need thanks. In those days I should have worn a shirt emblazoned with, "Will share your world for love."

I don't know why I came into the lives of others so easily. At the time I didn't understand that being blessed with a cute face and polite manners opened hearts and doors. I felt painfully shy around most people, but if I found a glimmer of goodness I pressed in to see if I had another new friend. I interjected myself in so many fine people's lives, and they changed me. The more they taught me, the more I grew, and the more my older siblings and mother treated me with contempt. I felt like the ugly duckling in a family with whom I had nothing in common.

I learned to develop this secret world, and I thrived in it. What other child has so many high quality parents, friends, and uncles, and grandparents? I feared going into no realm, because life intrigued me. The nuns often invited me to the convent after school. Later when the convent became a Jesuit noviciary I would sit in the parlor and talk for hours with one of my greatest mentors, a black novitiate from Trinidad. Carmichael poured and poured and poured some more goodness into my thirteen-year-old soul. He helped equip me to face the hostile world of my family. The older priests kept an eye on us. They chuckled at us as we walked side by side through the gardens deep in conversation. I had long learned to ignore people's surprised stares when I formed a close connection with individuals outside of my culture, age, race, or family. The whole world made up my family, certainly not the people that lived in my house! My family may have been racist in a predominantly white community, but they neglected to indoctrinate me. When they tried to teach me "Racism 101," I probably daydreamed about flying instead; no one can excel in every subject, after all.

When I was nine I had just begun learning to recruit adults. In first grade my education fell way behind all the other six- and seven-year-old students. My parents never read to me, and the first months of first grade were brutal. Only three students did not read, and I didn't even know my alphabet making me the most clueless.

I felt very frustrated, but Sister Mary brought in another nun to sit with the three of us and teach us to read in a small room offset from the main classroom. By the end of first grade I achieved the highest reading scores in the class! God bless the nuns, and their desire to open my world and mind. Unwilling to let the new ember die, another Sister Mary took me to the library and gave me a book called “Caddie Woodlawn.” It was about a spirited young girl. There were so few pictures in the book, that I hated the thought of reading it. However, once I entered in the first few pages of her world I burst into the flames of intellectual curiosity and delight that never died, even under persecution.

In time my teachers asked me to help tutor some of my classmates, and I even helped lead the class if the teacher had to step out for a minute. Sister Patrice dropped her jaw when she came back in our fifth grade room, and I stood at the blackboard teaching my peers how to diagram sentences. Being teacher’s pet year after year, day after day, didn’t endear me to many of my peers. They called me “Miss Encyclopedia” “Goody-goody” and more. I honestly never asked favor from my teachers. I only asked to be in their presence. I basked in the radiance of their goodness and knowledge like a hypothermic man clings to the flames of a campfire. I loved the light, and I often became the teacher’s pet not because they chose me, but because I chose them. I didn’t choose all of them. Some of them proved unsuitable. I gave it no mind and moved on, always open for increasing my family of surrogates elsewhere. I had begun to learn that you can’t make someone love or like you: you can be nice, do your best, be polite, but some are unwinnable. There are too many kind souls in the world to get bogged down by the one who seeks to unravel your sense of worth.

I felt very sad, alone, and invisible one day in the attic. It had been a school break, and I had been distanced from my grandmother and my beloved nuns, cafeteria workers, custodians, and teachers. I tried to be strong but my dog and cat were gone, and the torture of my eleven- and thirteen-year-old siblings exploded in heightened brutality. My older sister loved to hit me. She placed a tape line down the center of our shared room. The closet and my bed were on the far side

of the line, and the line started at the door! If I touched any part of her side before I got across the room to my side she would violently batter and bruise me. But I had to cross her space to get to my bed or clothes. I tried to leap from the door, but the ten- to twelve- foot span overwhelmed me. She set up impossible scenarios so I would struggle to obey her rules. I would always suffer her punishment when I could not. That made her feel powerful, superior, and special.

My brother also let his boredom turn on me in a wave of destruction. I had worked hard selling school candy to get a beautiful silver plastic statue of Jesus. Jesus had his arms extended out in an open embrace and a loving smile crossed on his face. Before the break I received the statue at the school assembly. The next day my older brother took it from my room and melted Jesus's arms with a lighter amidst my screams for him to stop. He then broke the rest of the statue and went off ever triumphant. He knew that I wouldn't tell because my family didn't care. I felt powerless and devastated when I slunk into the closet to avoid any more traumas that day.

It had been a hard day for me, and I carefully traced the plaster that had oozed in frozen lumps between the lathe walls. It calmed me somewhat. My world became dark but safe in that room. I much preferred the light and wind, but this day I also felt dizzy and had a headache. I needed to rest, and this was the only place I could rest. No one knew why I got dizzy and had headaches or became suddenly exhausted as a child. No one cared: they only cared that I work or take enough of their torment to satisfy their lust to lash out. I had learned to find places where I could ease my pain alone.

That day became different. That day I thought about the nuns and what they taught. I thought about my poor statue of Jesus and what it stood for. That day, I prayed my first private non-formulaic prayer. I uttered a simple prayer: I asked Jesus to please help me. I said I was alone and life was hard. I said I was scared and at times didn't know what to do to stay safe and find peace. It was a simple child's prayer, but something touched me inside that I could not explain. Suddenly I felt that I was not alone, that Jesus was with me in spirit. I felt this warmth, this peace, and this presence that flickered dimly but perceptibly. After my spiritual experience

and prayer, the chasm between my family and me would open even wider. I began to see, know, and act by some sort of inner voice and instinct.

8. A Question of Parenting

Ages: 9-10, Salem, OR (1969-70)

The nuns noticed the change in me right away when I returned from the break: my face began to radiate, and I smiled all the time. I beamed so much that by the end of the day my cheeks hurt from so much joy. My spirit calmed, and the expression of my faith appeared so absolute they gasped. One day during religion class, several students said things that dishonored and misrepresented Jesus. I can't tell you what they said. I can't explain my reaction. I simply could not take it. I raised my hand and with a nod of permission rose to my feet and looked around the room spanning each set of accusatory eyes. With a passion beyond my years I looked at all of them and none of them. "How can you say that about Jesus? You don't know Him. He is not like that at all. He is my best friend..." Tears began to pour down my little face and splash on the catechism book. "He's so much more than you can imagine. You should never say those things. It's not true." I then sat down with a thud. No one moved. No one dared move.

The sister didn't know what to say, and it took her a moment to openly clarify what I had said to the class. My classmates stood corrected. From that point forward the sisters began to watch me closer. They gave me more books, and some of those books discussed becoming a nun. They pressed my mother to help foster my faith. She felt she had to prove her sanctity before such an influential audience. She began taking me to join the nuns in the daylight services in the chapel. After service she would go back to bed until we came home from school. Eventually I would take myself. I loved chapel service, and I can't remember a single other child attending. I sang and sang and sang praises and hymns and felt like I was flying. My ten-year-old heart felt overflowing when I sang. I had become happy, so very very happy. I loved starting my days in that small chapel. I don't know why. I only know that I began to change and grow beyond my years.

The nuns also spoke to my mother about my singing. The sisters had three of us sing in the choir loft at weddings or go to nursing homes. My mother nodded that she would also encourage me as she pursed her lips. She then enrolled my older siblings in the city's all-boy and all-girl choir, taking them as often as necessary. She didn't allow me to go, even though I begged and pleaded. As a matter of fact, every time she caught me singing in the house she punished me and told me I sang like "an old lady." My dad led us on hikes in the woods in the summer, and we sang hiking songs then. He didn't know what the nuns had said. I found more freedom in the mountains with my father during vacations. My mother stayed in the cabin most of the time and didn't know to stop us.

She began to bully me when I practiced the piano. My dad insisted we all take lessons, but I alone stuck with it. No matter when I practiced, she would come in the room and complain or tell me to do some sort of work. My piano instructor used to tell me I had talent but she would scold me for not practicing enough. I couldn't practice, because my mother wouldn't let me after the nuns told her I had musical potential. Eventually my mother sold the piano because my siblings didn't play it, and she effectively put an end to my playing.

Meanwhile, the school gave IQ tests to all of us. My mother said that my brother and sister scored very high and were very intelligent. I always wondered how I scored, but she led me to believe I had no intellect of note. I always thought it was strange: I alone performed as the straight A student while my siblings performed far worse, yet I came to accept my complete inferiority. They alone were the gifted and special children. I had to accept the notion that I was a nothing and had no real talent. I couldn't fight my mother's judgment nor could I understand the basis for her decisions. I felt so confused. It didn't stop me though. I tried to earn my mother's love and respect through excellent marks. It didn't work. I still did the best I could and didn't give up.

Age: 22 University, OR (1982)

Eventually both my brother and sister dropped out of high school, and I graduated in the top of my class. In college I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree at the very top of my class and received special honors and scholarships for my hard work. Still, I never felt bright or smart or talented. No, my brother and sister were the ones with those accolades.

While everyone else celebrated with their families, my mother didn't even go to my college graduation because the two hour drive to my campus wasn't worth her time. I left the party my best friend Yiorgos planned for me because my mother insisted I drive to her house to "celebrate." I hated to leave Yiorgos and all my other international friends. Our parties were full of food, fellowship, and dancing. My Greek friends taught me how to dance, and I loved to share in the celebration of life with rhythmic music and wonderful people. My fondest college memories included Greek dancing on a sailboat with Yiorgos. The university sailing club rented the boat to cruise the San Juan Islands for a week. The boat heeled over, the sails filled with invisible power, and our boat captain kept yelling, "This is a sailboat, not a dancing boat!" Yiorgos and I just kept on dancing.

When I attended the graduation party that my mother hosted, my mother, sister, and her husband all tortured me along with my step-father. They told me I was going to hell because I had a secular college degree. I fled from my party in tears. I should have expected that. My mother told me I could not go to college in the first place. When I won big scholarships and worked summers at the coast to pay my own way it incited her. She went so far as to claim me as a tax dependent when I had not lived at home for over a year. She wanted to save taxes, and I nearly lost all my grants and had to drop out of school. Thank God the financial aid department believed me.

I thought I accomplished quite a feat to graduate with no loans, while paying for everything by work, scholarships, and careful spending. So did my dad, but he wanted the credit without helping pay the bills. He started telling people he sent me through college. I dared not

confront him. Later my husband would claim the same thing and try to garnish my earnings in an unsuccessful grab to make me pay him alimony.

I learned to accept that good work was its own reward. I came to think that I had no value or could accomplish no feat that deserved any lasting honor in this world. I believed I was a “no one.” It’s a strange duplicity in light of all my awards and accomplishment, but I came to accept that I didn’t deserve praise for my good work. Only entitlement and unmerited favor meant something in my family’s mind. I couldn’t fight that. Personal pride and self-esteem became casualties of war. If I thought of them, or held onto them, then bitterness would destroy me. I cast them off like excess weight on a balloon or ship. Abandoning personal pride and self-esteem was maladaptive but in the wake of so much injustice I found no other recourse at the time.

Age: 9, Salem, OR (1969)

At the age of nine I kept trying anyway, even if I thought it a hopeless exercise. My surrogate family all loved and encouraged me. I found it hard to believe them when my own family’s hatred was so compelling. I learned to hide my accomplishments from my family out of the need to prevent jealous and bitter attacks. I seriously had the nuns put a “zero” on my paper so no one knew I got a perfect score. I truly developed a secret life purely out of the need to survive so toxic a home life.

When I was nine years old, I had my first telepathic and precognitive dream. Because I had these types of dreams, I became very motivated to learn what dreams to trust and what dreams to ignore. In third grade I awoke from a troubling dream in the middle of the night and dared to go and wake my parents. I knew this act would incur the wrath of my abusive parents, but I loved my grandmother dearly. I had a terrible sense that she was in trouble and great pain. When I told my parents, they became so startled they only verbally abused me and sent me back upstairs to my bed. I tried to lie down—I really did—but I knew that my grandmother was in great distress. I wanted my parents to call and check on her, to help her, to at least pray for her. I sat on the dark stairs a long time and could not restrain the tears.

I had to try again. This time my parents were extremely angry, and my mother had my father hit me and threaten me with worse if I didn't go to bed immediately. If she didn't feel like hitting me, she always told my father to do it, and he never failed her. When he hit me for her sake, he greatly failed me. I understood that his love for me would be thrown to the wind to stay in her favor. When I crawled halfway up the stairs I sat in the shadows again until the phone rang: it was my grandfather. My grandmother had fallen on the ice, shattered her knee cap, and had just been admitted into the hospital in excruciating pain and in need of immediate surgery. My parents looked towards the stairs and became stone silent. I listened in to the call and held my breath as I hovered at the foot of the stairs to get the full story. My dad felt ashamed, and he came to me to tell me quickly what had happened. My mother rushed to the hospital without a word. My father stayed home to keep an eye on me and my sleeping siblings, and this time he consented to pray for my grandmother with me.

One day when I was nine I had to stay home from school. I hated to do it because I loved school, but I had become terribly sick. My mother went golfing for the day with my grandmother. My grandmother was wonderful at everything; at the yacht club, at the country club, in the woods, and in the home. She embodied an awesome role model with her "can do" attitude and eyes that twinkled like the Milky Way. No better grandmother lived in the entire earth. If she knew what would transpire she would never have taken mother golfing that day.

My dad decided he felt sick too, and he stayed home from work. He watched television downstairs while I slept in my bed upstairs. Only the attic and two bedrooms, one for the boys and one for the girls, were upstairs. I became surprised when I heard him come up the stairs. I didn't feel safe being home alone with him. I loved my dad, but since he had begun molesting me a year earlier, I also felt afraid of him. It quite confused me.

He asked me to go down the stairs and snuggle with him in his bed and watch television. I kindly refused. I told him, "I only like to sleep when I don't feel well." Before I even got the words out, my dad jumped into my small twin bed and held me from behind. His legs and arms

locked in a vice as he began to grind against me and I felt the pressure of his ... I didn't know what it was! It was hard, and it was hot, and it was throbbing as my dad pushed it against my small body and began to tear his hands into my pajama pants in the front.

Perhaps I didn't know exactly what was happening, but I had a strong inner voice that told me it was very very wrong. I surprised my dad by elbowing him and twisting free. He had not expected it. If he had, I would never have gotten away. He cursed as he rose from the bed to chase me, but I could run very fast. I had learned to run in the forest. I had learned to run from my brother and sister, and now I learned to run from men. I had so many hiding places that I ducked into one until he went into the basement to look for me. I knew the house would eventually give me up, and I couldn't remain there.

My father kept softly calling my name and telling me not to be afraid. He promised he wouldn't hurt me, we would just have "fun" and I would like it very much. I didn't believe him just like I didn't believe my mother, older brother, or sister. I fell into shock and felt dazed because I thought simply staying off his lap would keep me safe. He had initially fondled me as soon as the rest of my family was out of the television room. Over time he got bolder and bolder. I had never imagined though that he would hunt me like a predator when no one else was around. How could a nine year old know or think such things could be possible? I really thought he loved me as a person. I had no idea he had something else he wanted to take. How much could a child offer?

Shaking with fever, chills, and terror I ducked out the back door and wildly sprinted into the garage on my tippy toes. Grandma taught me how to run quietly. Even the garage would not remain safe; this I knew. But, in my nightgown I didn't have the attire to go too far, and if I bolted for the neighbors the distance would give me into his hands. I doubted my own endurance as I suffered weakness and a racking fever. My heart pounded and I looked up. My greatest fear in the garage loomed in the form of a great ladder that went straight up to a very large hole in the garage attic.

I knew that heights were dangerous, and everyone knew I would never climb a rickety ladder like that. It wasn't the ladder that scared me; it was getting off the ladder without falling over fifteen feet to the cement floor that scared me. The attic I hid in next to my room could be accessed by opening a door and walking in. In this situation, it wasn't an option and it wasn't safe.

I had a fear of attics like the garage attic from my earliest memories when my family moved me back to Oregon at the age of four. All three of us "older" children slept upstairs in the attic space. We had a very steep staircase with no rail to convey us to our perch. A single light bulb hung in the center of the room, and the string had been cut too short for me to reach. No other switches at either the top or bottom of the stairs presented themselves. I would have to get up in the night to go to the bathroom nearly every night because they put me to bed to stay out of their way for nearly twelve hours a day. Each night I had to go down the stairs to the bathroom in the dark. I was so very young. I would tell myself to be careful of the first step, but my visual perception always fooled me into thinking the first stair started in a different place than I thought. I tried so hard to see it; I really did. When I missed the stair I fell headlong down the stairs and crashed into the closed door at the bottom again and again.

Every time I got a scolding and a beating from my mother. My baby brother slept downstairs, and she worried I might wake him. I kept apologizing to minimize the beatings, but they always came and I carried bruises from the fall and from the beatings for days. My mother made me hide them. My parents never cared to tie some more string on the light bulb cord so I could reach it. Eventually I learned to go down the stair on my rear end one step at a time.

So even though I loved to fly, I felt terrified of climbing into high attics and falling. But now my dad would surely come and look for me, and the main level of the garage held no good hiding places! I knew because my brother kept finding me when I hid from him there. I fearfully started the climb up the ladder and prayed the whole way. I shook with double terror: scared not

to climb and scared to climb. I had to face my fears and try. If I fell onto the hard cement floor and got hurt, at least I had tried. That's what I thought.

It took me two minutes to unfreeze my death grip from the top rung and dare to squirm onto the attic floor. The area right in front of the ladder was blocked so I had to bend impossibly to find a footing. I then crept into a safe corner and looked out the small central window that overlooked the house and driveway. I stayed back a foot or so and dared not let any movement give away my location. Sure enough my dad came out of the house and kept calling for me. He looked in the empty garden that yielded my raspberry patch in the summer. He kicked the posts that held my vines when he didn't find me there. Just then the weather hit me with its extreme cold like a wave of freezing ocean water. I don't know what made me shiver more, the cold, the fever, the sickness, or the great dread. Yet I stayed put and didn't move. I sat upon a small piece of wood that blocked my frame from being seen through the many attic floor cracks. A potato bug couldn't roll up any tighter.

My dad went into the garage looking for me and calling. I heard him stop at the foot of the ladder, breathe heavily, and look up momentarily. I just kept praying. He grunted in anger and left to go back into the house. He slammed the back door. He must have thought I had gone farther. I stayed frozen with silent tears streaming down my face for hours. It would be many hours before the rest of the family came home from school and golf. I don't know why I didn't think of telling the neighbors. Perhaps my mother had beaten me so many times for telling on my brother and sister that I learned to keep these things to myself.

I kept some of these secrets for a long time. No one talked about child abuse or molestation in those days. I didn't make that mistake with my own children. I told them about their privacy and not letting others touch them. It saved my own daughter from being raped by her dad years later, although she carries the scars and represses the trauma to this day. I shivered and waited and my sickness grew steadily worse as cold rain pelted the window and tried to come in. I could not believe I found sanctuary in the very place I most feared. I would never tell my

family I had become brave enough to go into that attic. I felt safer to keeping it a secret, because who knew when I might have to return?

Finally my brother and sister came home, with my younger brother in tow. I still did not go into the house. No one came looking for me. I don't know what my dad told them. Long after the midwinter sun set, my mother drove up and parked her car below my sick and shaking body. She went in the house a little tipsy. She had a habit of drinking too much at the yacht club or country club, even though my grandmother frowned upon people who let alcohol master them versus being the master of alcohol. Grandma drank, but never to excess. That habit belonged to my mother and sometimes my father.

As soon as she went into the house I knew she would be distracted with my dad for a few minutes. I gingerly climbed down the stairs, and then bolted through the back door rounding the corner to go upstairs to my bed before anyone noticed me. I operated in stealth mode, like my grandma taught me to do in the woods when we wanted to get closer to wild animals. Shaking and reeling like the ground after a huge earthquake, I jumped into my bed. My siblings were downstairs in the basement watching television. Almost an hour later my mother came up the stairs. She wanted to see if I could go to school the next day. I boldly and blatantly lied giving one of the best performances of my young life. I told her I would be more than good to go to school in the morning. My dad came up right behind her and made threatening gestures behind her back so I knew I could not speak of that day. The rest of my time in grade school and high school I never stayed home sick, no matter how sick I felt. I didn't dare risk it.

9. Too Many Secrets to Keep

Age: 9, Salem, OR (1969)

It's hard to be a nine year old and learn about things in such a confusing way. I wished I could talk to someone, but fifth grade Sex Ed loomed two years in the future. I didn't even know what sex meant or what Sex Ed would even possibly teach. I had no idea why my family thought they had the right to give me a crash course in human sexuality at such a young age.

A few months later my favorite uncle came to visit with my aunt and cousins. They were my sister's kissing cousins. She had liaisons early on that even included taking a pie pan of heated oil down to my brother's basement room and spending quiet time with him while we were all ordered to stay away. She only did it when my parents were gone. I had been too young to understand what the two of them were doing, but in time it became much clearer. So shortly after my dad tried to rape me, my uncle came to visit. I thought that perhaps it was my fault for being too loving and too trusting. Men seemed to lose control over themselves with me. I wrongly would blame myself for years until I realized the shame and guilt lay with them alone.

He stayed in the basement alone with me while everyone else went upstairs. He started acting strange and conflicted and had told me to stay so he could tell me a secret. I waited for the secret and he sighed and said it could wait. Then asked me to kiss and hug him goodbye, something I always willingly did. This time he held me tight and forced his tongue into my mouth! I couldn't understand the violent probing of an adult's tongue in my mouth, and I inwardly recoiled and wanted to vomit or bite. I instantly dropped my weight and wrestled out of his arms. I ran from him too. I had no chance for innocence. My brutal education into the lusts of men started at nine, but it didn't end there. I came to quickly see that learning to fight back and get away from my older brother helped me get away from these men I thought I could trust.

I sank into my own world for a while then. My third grade teacher was concerned but didn't understand the shift in my attitude. I became quiet, pensive, and needed constant coaxing to come out of my shell. She was just the one to do it I suppose. Soon the sisters compelled my parents to let my grandma back in my life, and that helped some. I thought to myself, it's not my grandparents that make my parents fight and have a bad marriage: it's my parents. They were so quick to blame the world and never look at themselves. They went to church, taught religion classes and more, but their only good intentions rested on pretense. If only the real world knew what happened behind the pretty red and white striped awnings of my house. If only. One neighbor complained that they heard us children yelling and screaming when no one was home.

My siblings blamed me and my mother beat me with a stiff hair brush made out of widely spaced sharp plastic quills.

It's true that I could yell. I felt so pent up with the need for justice that sometimes it just spilled out. It spilled out when someone cheated at a street game. It spilled out when my siblings hit me. It spilled out when even my younger brother would taunt me. He would get in my face and say all kinds of hateful things. If he complained about me to my mother he knew he could do no wrong, and she was itching to inflict pain on me some more. So he taunted me. I would tell him to please stop or I would hit him in his upper arm. I would give him until the count of ten. Still he would not stop. I would count, "nine, nine and half, nine and three quarters, nine and nine tenths..." just trying to give him a chance to control himself and stop. Finally I would punch him once, and he would run and tell my mother if he could find her. Eventually I stopped counting and just let him torment me. I didn't want to hit him, and I knew he would grow up to be bigger than me soon enough. Then I would be no match against three siblings and my parents. I simply had to learn not to yell or hit back. Not only would I get punished, but I would be forced to sit under the large crucifix where Jesus's hands bled red paint from the realistic nail spikes. My mother told me to sit under that cross and think about being a better child.

That's why I became depressed. When I was good I was punished. When I was bad I was punished. When I was a victim I was punished. When I loved something or someone it was destroyed or taken from me. The relentless abuse began to wear down so young a child. I used to cry when I read the book *Are You My Mother?* The poor baby bird fell out of its nest and wandered everywhere to find its mother. Finally the bird reunited with its mother in a joyful moment. I wanted a mother too, but no matter how much I tried to win her love, I never heard the words "I love you." Were these words spoken to my siblings? Yes. To me? Never.

Every day my teacher made us write a short story for a half hour to an hour. I found it hard to be so creative every day, but I learned to tell stories about nearly everything. One theme started to rise in my stories: the quiet peaceful rest of death. I told it from many angles. In one I

described a lonely dog wandering about as it looked for a home and only found abuse, neglect, and deprivation. The dog finally lay down and closed its eyes in the quiet peace of darkness and death. Sometimes the dog death theme came in a story about a person. I played the concept out and dreamed of such relief. I don't know why this didn't send a red flag up for my teacher. I found it shocking to think about once I became older and stronger.

I carried the weight of sadness hidden under the veneer of a happy child for years. I also learned to hide the terrible headaches, vertigo, and weakness that overcame me when my disability attacked. I would disappear until I felt better. I didn't know I was disabled, I only knew that I would be chastised if I didn't work twice as hard as everyone else in my family. Fear kept me in denial. I learned to lie to myself about everything, especially the abuse. From time to time it bubbled out, but without confronting the truth and letting out all the toxins of abuse, it had nowhere to go but inward. I blamed myself for everything and anything. I found joy in distractions and denial. I detached from my dreams, desires, loves, and hopes. If I clung to nothing I could not be traumatized once it was attacked or stripped. It had been easier to find surrogates as a smaller child than as a teen or pre-teen. I really wanted to run away, but had no idea how to successfully pull it off. I had begun to cave in to the fate they set before me. Bit by bit they chiseled away at my self and I began to bury and hide the pieces they themselves did not obliterate. I compartmentalized and learned to act. Somehow, I kept a flicker going though, and I learned to live for the small joys and expect so much less out of life. Unknown to me, I had begun to learn so much more that would carry me out of the doldrums of sadness, repression, and constant abuse.

PART II of THESIS SUBMISSION

APPENDIX A: SONG LYRICS

Below are the lyrics to the nine songs found on the original album: *Island Child*.

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This song is about a child who refuses to let abuse kill her spirit.

Song 1: Won't Obey

1. A Fire that can-not die,
The flame will not comply,
My Spirit demands to fly,
My soul will fight n' vie.

*You try to bury me within,
I wrestle free from your whim.
To kill a child's soul is your sin,
This is a fight you won't win!*

2. You live to please just you,
You claim the right to rule.
Pretend that you're not cruel,
Let justice vanquish you!

3. You can't make me obey,
My soul refuses your way.
Your plans for me are vain,
Now free am I once again!

*I'll storm n' cry like the wind,
I'll never stop or give in,
The tyranny comes to an end!*

Dreaming about real love

Song 2: Come to Me

1. If only in my dreams I find you;

If only in my heart I hide you;

If only in my sleep embrace you;

Then that's where we'll meet;

(Chorus)

Come to me,

Fulfill our destiny.

Come to me,

Proclaim love openly!

2. Alone you're my dearest lover;

Alone you're my greatest treasure;

Alone my every thought you capture;

With you life's so sweet.

(Coda)

Come to me,

To me.

When all the doors are closed, what is one to do?

Song 3: Follow the Signs

1. If all the doors are closed;
 And there's no-where to go;
 When you find you're opposed;
 And all answers lead to no;

(Pre-chorus)
Learn to follow the signs;

And you won't be left behind.

(Chorus)
No's an answer true;

(Let) barriers guide you;

Turn around and see;

There's somewhere else to be!

2. Then's the time to look;
 Yes, look deep, deep, within.
 It's now the time to pray;
 And a whole new course begins.

3. When you think you're lost;
 Surely, that's the time you're found.
 Then you tally up the cost;
 It's time to turn a-round.

(Coda)
Learn to follow the signs;

*And you won't be left behind...
 behind...*

I can't hear a word you say, your actions are speaking so loudly.

Song 4: Can't Hear a Word

1. You say that you love me;
You tell how much you care;
But when I trust in you;
You're never there!

(Chorus)

You speak of love so proud.

Yet in such a physical way;

Your actions speak so loud;

I can't hear a word that you say;

2. Such promises you give me;
Not one word have you kept;
Think you're a gift to me;
I've only wept;
3. Then you say we've a future;
But we've only a past.
Your love's a lethal poison;
Why would we last?

(Coda)

I can't hear a word --that you say,

I can't hear a word...

Celebrate the bounty of life!

Song 5: Celebrate Life

1. Squirrels gather gleefully;
 Bees are dancing joyfully;
 Geese now sing a symphony;
 Reveling o'er their bounty;
 Riots of colors ablaze;
 Like picturesque Monets.

(Chorus)

Let us all feast and celebrate;

Our freedoms we commemorate;

Life's joys our hearts do captivate;

Thankfully, we participate;

2. Living life so freely;
 Prizing all our liberty;
 Gather close the family;
 We soon feast so happily;
 Generous good-will conveyed;
 Life inspires loving-days.

(Coda)

Let's feast n' celebrate;

Let's feast n' celebrate;

Celebrate.

You live on in me and you are part of me.

Song 6: Legacy

1. Like thick mists water stately trees;
Like springs that share their essence;
Like gentle dew that nurtures seeds;
I grew with-in your presence.

(Pre-Chorus)

I left my mourning far behind;

What you give me fills my mind.

(Chorus)

I am your legacy;

Your living legacy.

Your love's now deep in me.

Your living legacy.

2. As power bursts from northern lights;
As moon reflects the day;
As man's inspir'd by comets' flights;
Your wisdom lights my way!

3. Like sighing gusts make forests sing;
Like currents lift on high;
Like winds unseen that fill the wing;
You taught me how to fly.

(Coda)

Your love's embodied deep in me;

I am your legacy.

We are your guardians and you are not alone.

Song 7: Island Child:

(Chant 1 [Child])

Doesn't any-one see or care?

I feel like invisible air...

1. Welcome Is-land Child!-----

E Komo mai Moku Keiki

Unfolded by the water are the faces of the flowers;

By kindness shall your soul blossom with aloha's powers.

Aloha nui loa,

Aloha nui loa

Aloha

(Chorus - Guardians)

Those who love you are many:

While the sun shines we will raise you;

While the sun shines we will teach you;

While the sun shines we will guide you.

Those who love you are many.

(Chant 2 [Child])

Giant waves do crash a-bout,

I feel full of questions n' doubt...

2. Welcome Island Child!

E Komo mai Moku Keiki

Be-hold [heavenly] stars of [all] the waves [and the breeze];

With wisdom learn to navigate the storms and the seas.

Aloha nui loa,

Aloha nui loa

Aloha

(Chant 3: [Child])

How am I to survive my days?

I feel lost and blind to the ways...

3. Welcome Island Child!

E Komo mai Moku Keiki

[Great] Love is like a cleansing dew that heals [depths of spirit],

Internal fire shall light the way to seek and to hear it.

Aloha nui loa,

Aloha nui loa

Aloha

(Coda)

Aloha nui loa,

Aloha

Where have all my grandchildren gone?

Song 8: Where?

(Chorus)

In sorrow my tears stream and flood mighty rivers;

In torment the seas foam as earth reels and quivers;

In languish the stars fall from heaven and fail;

In mourning the winds tear the skies as they wail;

1. Where have my grandchildren gone?

My eyes ever search dusk to dawn.

Until I find them I won't close my eyes or sleep;

My soul's delight is gone and now I only weep.

(Bridge)

What is this my leaders do?

All that is done turns a-round;

All secrets and mysteries are found.

(Chorus)

In sorrow my tears stream and flood mighty rivers;

In torment the seas foam as earth reels and quivers;

In languish the stars fall from heaven and fail;

In mourning the winds tear the skies as they wail;

(Coda)

All that is done turns a-round;

Turns a-round

I found the power to live through supernatural elements.

Song 9: Charisonic Forces:

1. The empty void of love and power,
A lonely place of the darkest hour,
Tears of a tortur'd soul a-midst mute cries,
How could a small child find an-y way to rise?

(Chorus)

Charisons beam light radiant;

Waves musically burst transcendent;

They are graceful streams of water;

Charisons beam light radiant;

Waves musically burst transcendent;

They are graceful streams of water;

Char-i-sons in-fuse with super-natural matter!

2. Now a-live by unseen vigor and life,
Now resilient to worlds of strife,
Hope never dies-and my spirit grows new,
Fed by the elements that are pure and true.

(Coda)

Charisonic forces give the power of resiliency...

APPENDIX B: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Related to Excerpt)

*As you read this book, use a colored marker or pencil to "code" the themes. We suggest you identify 5 themes, and track them throughout the book in different colors. **BLUE** - Flight, escape, freedom. **BROWN** - Bondage, abuse, oppression. **GREEN** - Resiliency, factors in the person. **Yellow** - Sources of light, love, humor. **ORANGE** - Surrogate family.*

Page #	Question
Pg. 5	The book begins with a dream. 1. What elements of the dream seem symbolic of life events? 2. Why did the author begin with a dream?
Pg. 6	The author describes being "hit by a freight train of mercenaries" (p.6), what does this mean to her?
Pg. 7	Have you experienced times when hate overpowers the meager actions of those who try to help? What did you do?
Pg. 8	What techniques did the prison officials use to intimidate and isolate the inmates? Choose one, and tell how the author made it backfire.
Pg. 9	Strong women are often accused of witchcraft. Explain the author's word choice here.
Pg. 16	The power to build a boat: Identify 3 other places in the narrative where creativity is mentioned as a force (flight imagery p.27, 29) for resiliency.
Pg. 18	Imagine the dog and brother strangling events. What factors made it <u>so</u> terrible?
Pg. 21	The author states she has "no sense of trust." In the book, who does she find to be trust worthy? Who does she <u>NOT</u> trust? Dig Deeper: Check out Erik Erikson's stage theory of psychosocial development, and relate this passage to his first 2 stages (Trust and Autonomy).
Pg. 21	The author mentions a form of social intelligence sometimes called discernment. How did this prove to be a protective factor for her?
Pg. 25	The author mentions the church here for the first time. How is the church described? How does this compare to the author's other sources of spiritual faith or belief or hope?
Pg. 26	Multiple stressors can over come even the strongest resilience. What sort of people come to "win" temporarily over the author? What are her weaknesses?
Pg. 37	What was the secret role of other adults outside the family in the author's resilience? List 3 "recruited adults" who have been mentioned so far.

- Pg. 37 "There are too many kind souls in the world to get bogged down by the one who seeks to unravel your sense of worth," says the author. Do you agree, or do you tend to work on failed relationships for a long time?
- Pg. 43 Why does the author abandon her pride and self esteem? In what ways is this adaptive in the short run?
- Pg. 45 Running Away and Secrets are important themes in this book. Collect incidences of each, and see what they have in common.
- Pg. 48 The author states that she "never stayed home sick" from school again after the events in this section. Why not?
- Pg. 50 Under stress the author's need for justice "spills out" (p.50). In what ways is this good for her...or likely to bring negative consequences?
- Pg. 50 How is self control a resiliency factor? Or, how might it lead, instead, to a victim stance?
- Pg. 51 What mental health risk signals are the author sending out by age 4 (p. 51)?

PART III of THESIS SUBMISSION

Essay: "Review of Resiliency Research: Risks and Traits"

Review of Resiliency Research: Risks and Traits

*A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Studies*

by

Alina Patterson

May, 2013

*Mentor: Dr. Sharon Carnahan
Reader: Dr. Patricia Lancaster*

*Rollins College
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Introduction

This review accompanies an autobiography, *Reborn in Adversity*, which was completed as a creative work in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Liberal Studies Degree at Rollins College. The autobiography focused on the risk factors and resiliency traits exhibited via the story of one life, which is an idiographic approach in psychology. In this review, I provide a nomothetic approach, summarizing work on risk and resilience across the research field, looking for areas of agreement on definitions, causes, and treatments.

Researchers cite numerous childhood risk factors that have the potential to negatively affect an individual's social development. Such risk factors include poverty, disability, abuse, deprivation, rejection, abandonment, and other types of adversity.⁴ But some children succeed in life, despite great risk, and success is studied less often. In *Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love*, Robert Karen notes, "Attachment category said nothing about the child's inherent resiliency, his luck in finding other, alternative attachment figures—or his determination to do so—or his ability to hold on to and nurture a kernel of positive experience with a teacher or relative."⁵

In the 1950s researchers began to recognize that some children endure risk environments and enter adulthood without negative social outcomes such as

⁴ Carolyn Aldwin, Michael Cunningham, and Amanda L. Taylor, "Resilience Across the Life Span: A Tribute to Emmy E. Werner," in *Research in Human Development* 7, no. 3 (2010), 160. James Garbarino, *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them*, (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).

⁵ Robert Karen, *Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 247.

psychopathology, suicide, delinquency, poor attachment, and more.⁶ Consequently researchers increased the study of resilience and the traits of resilience in these children. Over the course of these studies, what have we learned about risk factors and resiliency traits? Researchers vary in the answers they provide, including giving different definitions of key terms and using diverse methodologies and models.⁷

1.0 Challenges in Risk and Resiliency Research

A first step in any science is to describe what is known and to agree on definitions of terms. While researchers agree that a risk factor is any trait or life circumstance which is statistically correlated with an increased likelihood of a negative outcome in life, researchers still vary widely on the definition and models of resilience. Resilience is more than “did not succumb to stress,” but exactly how is it to be positively defined?

Charles S. Carver delineates the concept of resilience into two different states, “resilience and thriving,”⁸ while Luthar and Cicchetti describe resilience as a single construct “to build an operational framework for research,” and they do not describe or document instances where adversity may actually be beneficial to the individual.⁹ Carver considers four possible outcomes to adversity: “succumbing, survival with impairment, resilience (recovery), and thriving.”¹⁰ Some researchers like Carver see resilience as a recovery state, while thriving in the face of adversity entails reaching a “superior” or

⁶ Aldwin et al., “Resilience across the Life Span,” 159-60.

⁷ Stephan Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment: Evidence from a Community Sample.” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 31 (2007): 213.

⁸ Charles S. Carver, “Resilience and Thriving: Issues, Models, and Linkages,” *Journal of Social Issues* 54, no. 2 (1998): 245-266.

⁹ Luthar and Cicchetti, “The Construct of Resilience,” 861. This framework investigates both negative and positive outcomes, “positive adaptational outcomes and their antecedents,” “deficits and strengths” in the presence of emergent maladaptations, and “adaptational failures” especially amongst high risk individuals and groups. Summarily the use of empirical knowledge calls from a transition from exploring the risks and the problems to competency factors that may be preventative agents. (861)

¹⁰ Carver, “Resilience and Thriving,” 246.

higher state of functioning.¹¹ Studies that group thriving and resiliency states into the singular definition of *resilience* shroud the specific abilities and traits of individuals that rise above resilience and thrive. The lack of agreement on the division of resilience into two different states instead of one is just one example of how resiliency models and terminology are changing and refining over time. During the early stages of an emergent field of study, it is not uncommon for definitions to fluctuate and eventually formulate into a more unified conceptualization.¹² While resiliency models, terminology, and general processes continue to be refined, researchers have been able to identify many risk factors, resiliency traits, and relationships.

2.0 Risk Factors

Adversity or risk factors are associated with poorer outcomes and bias an individual towards maladaptive behaviors. According to Luthar and Cicchetti, risk is equivalent to adversity and as such “typically encompasses negative life circumstance that are statistically associated with adjustment difficulties.”¹³ Risk itself is multifactorial; being influenced by context, simultaneous protective factors, and concurrent risk factors.¹⁴ Overall, when people face numerous risk factors, the threat to their psychosocial development increases especially when the availability of protective factors is diminished.¹⁵ Garbarino states that, “Threats accumulate; support ameliorates... and trouble really sets in when these threats accumulate without a parallel accumulation of

¹¹ Carver, “Resilience and Thriving,” 246.

¹² Sharon Carnahan. Personal note in relationship to work done by Kuhn. Furthermore, as a science develops its ability to accurately predict increases.

¹³ Luthar and Cicchetti, “The Construct of Resilience,” 858. . They note that researchers try to identify “vulnerability and protective factors that might modify the negative effects of advers[ity]. . Ultimately they look for the “mechanisms or processes that might underlie associations.”

¹⁴ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 75.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

compensatory ‘opportunity’ factors.¹⁶ Increasing exposure to risk over time through numerous types of risk factors creates a climate of cumulative adversity.

Psychologist Alan Kazdin speaks of “packages” of risk factors [also known as risk clusters] that interact to produce chronic patterns of bad behavior in boys.”¹⁷ For example, children in poverty may also have poorer diets, inadequate schools, and less parental supervision, so these factors are a part of a “poverty risk cluster.” Rutter further explains that numerous factors correlate with increases in the “risk of disorder.”¹⁸ However, he advises that some statistical evaluations mistake correlation for cause and effect, and he cautions researchers to move “from [studying] statistical risk indicators to understanding *how* risk processes operate.”¹⁹ In this move from individual factors to processes and mechanisms, researchers are able to investigate adverse social ecosystems and study the cumulative impact of risk factor packages. For example, using statistical techniques, researchers can deconstruct a risk cluster like “child abuse” and identify the most harmful aspects of that risk (such as severity, frequency, duration, perpetrator).

2.1 Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Systems Theory

In 1994 Urie Bronfenbrenner and Stephen J. Ceci expanded upon earlier work and proposed a “general theoretical and operational framework,” to investigate human development and the “mechanisms through which genotypes are transferred into

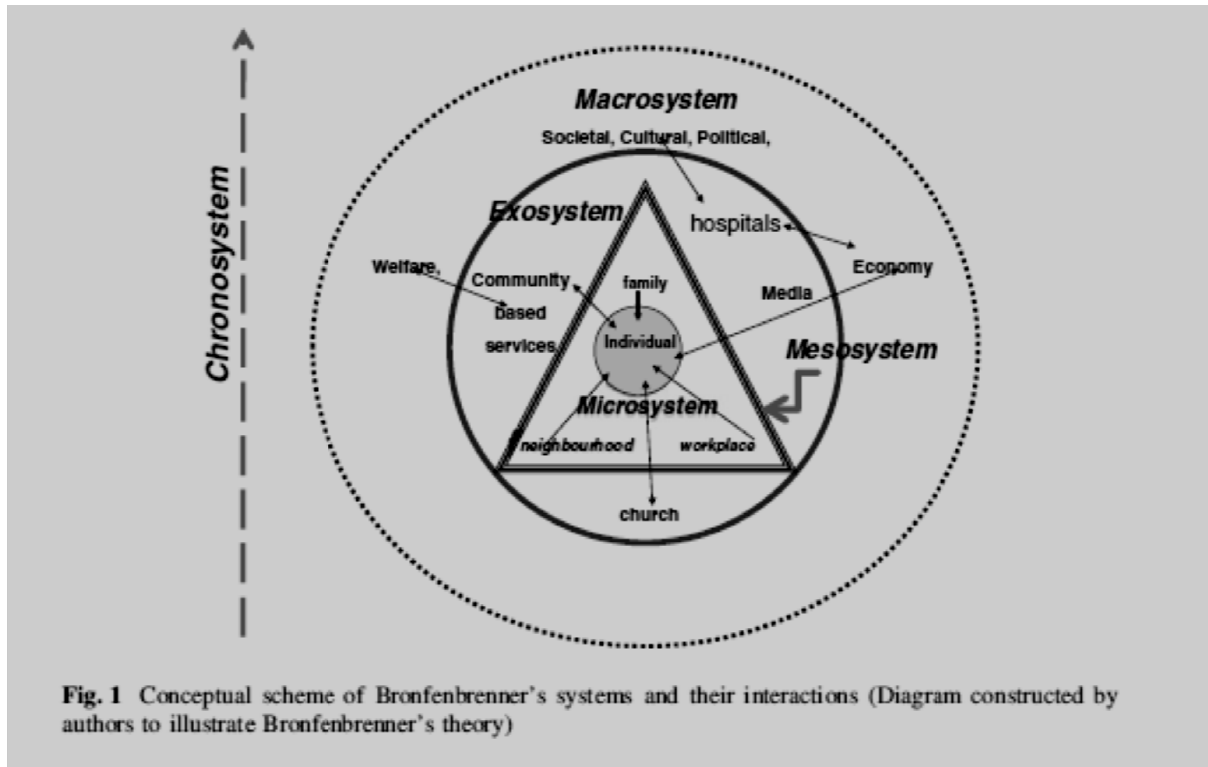
¹⁶ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 75.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁸ Rutter, Michael. “Psychosocial Adversity: Risk, Resilience and Recovery.” *Southern African Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 7, no. 2 (1995): 75. He defines this list of variables as a encompassing a “broad” range from social, to family, to individual risks. Rutter differentiates between “risk indicators” and “risk mechanisms.” He lists inept parenting as an example of a “psychiatric risk mechanism.”

¹⁹ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 76. He goes on to forewarn that, “Unless we have that knowledge, our efforts in the field of prevention are likely to rather inept and ineffectual.” He notes that studies have included both cross-sectional and longitudinal methods.

phenotypes.”²⁰ Boon et al summarize Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of development and resilience using the following conceptual figure.²¹



Overall, Bronfenbrenner’s bio ecological systems theory creates a conceptual framework where the various factors that influence an individual’s resilience and are within their specific ecosystem are represented. Boon et al. affirm that, “Using this framework, we can evaluate effectiveness of within person characteristics, such as adaptive coping, self-efficacy and optimism, as well as factors external to the person, such as family support, neighborhood networks, health provision, and government

²⁰ Urie Bronfenbrenner et al, "Nature-Nurture Reconceptualized in Developmental Perspective: A Bioecological Model." *Psychological Review* 101, no. 4 (1994): 568-86, <http://ezproxy.rollins.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/614312873?accountid=13584> (accessed April 30, 2013)

²¹ Helen J. Boon et al., “Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory for Modeling Community Resilience to Natural Disasters,” *Natural Hazards Journal of the International Society for the Prevention and Mitigation of Natural Hazards*, (2011): 389-391, <http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.rollins.edu:2048/article/10.1007/s11069-011-0021-4/fulltext.html> (accessed April 30, 2013).

financial support and so on for promoting individual resilience.” This graphic demonstrates that the processes and mechanisms that influence individual resilience are multifactorial and interrelated. The ecosystem includes an individual’s microsystem; the mesosystem comprised of the interactions of microsystems; the exosystem which includes external “entities and organizations” as potential resources; the macrosystem that accounts for social, cultural, and political influences; and the chronosystem that represents the interaction of time upon the environment.²²

In the next sections, we will consider risk and resilience factors at each of Bronfenbrenner’s sociocultural levels of analysis.

2.2 Individual Risk Factors

Resiliency literature highlights numerous risk factors at the level of the individual. These factors include physical attractiveness, temperament, and impulse control.²³ According to Hayden *et. al.*, “the term *temperament* is used to refer to early emerging patterns of behavior and emotion expression that are relatively stable across time and situation and are partially rooted in individual differences in biological systems.”²⁴ In general, children who have easygoing temperaments are less at risk. Researchers study temperament traits to identify which traits have the potential to increase risk, but this

²² Boon et al, “Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory,” 389-91.

²³ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 77. “Judith Harris pinpoints a series of temperamental traits that put a child at risk for becoming troubled and aggressive. Luthar and Cicchetti note that “poor impulse control,” can also increase risk. (Luthar and Cicchetti, “The Construct of Resilience,” 859.) They also assert that a “high sense of self-efficacy or an easy-going temperament,” has the potential to steer individuals towards positive coping. They make this observation based on the research of others, however, in their tight definition of resiliency they specifically exclude individual “personality traits... or attributes.” (857)

²⁴ Elizabeth P. Hayden et al., "Parent Reports and Laboratory Assessments of Child Temperament: A Comparison of their Associations with Risk for Depression and Externalizing Disorders," *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment* 27, no. 2 (2005): 89-100, <http://ezproxy.rollins.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/756980441?accountid=13584> (accessed April 30, 2013).

relationship is complex.²⁵ Early childhood experiences may catalyze a young child's simply irritable temperament towards "chronic bad behavior and aggression... which is mostly an adaptation to early mistreatment, rejection, and inept parenting."²⁶ Impulse control is one aspect of self-control which also includes behaviors such as "suppression of aggression, consideration of others, and responsibility."²⁷ The use of impulse control and overall self-restraint has the potential to increase resilience while the failure to exercise them has the potential to increase risk.

Individual risk factors may also include gender bias. According to Luthar and Cicchetti "boys are typically more reactive than girls to negative influences within the community."²⁸ However, this gender bias doesn't necessarily mean girls are more resilient, because girls may manifest reactions to adversity in less noticeable ways.

Intellectual challenges also "compound... the effects of negative social influences in the environment by undermining a child's resilience and coping processes."²⁹ Whether low IQs are related to heredity, experience, or their interaction, a lower IQ score may index a reduced ability to respond to the environment, especially in the presence of adversity, and it represents increased risk. Furthermore, some risk packages, or risk clusters, may lead individuals to believe there are no options or hope, causing individuals

²⁵ Hayden et al., "Parent Reports," 89. Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 77.

²⁶ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 77. "Gerald Patterson and his colleagues found that chronic bad behavior is most likely to arise in the early years of life when parents use harsh, inconsistent punishment practices instead of clear, firm, but warm responses when the child exhibits unacceptable behavior. The former approach reflects inept parenting, the latter competent parenting. As it turns out, parents who use harsh punishment and mainly pay attention to their child's negative behaviors and ignore the positive ones are unintentionally encouraging aggression." (78)

²⁷ Daniel A. Weinberger, "Distress and Self-Restraint as Measures of Adjustment Across the Life Span: Confirmatory Factor Analyses in Clinical and Nonclinical Samples." *Psychological Assessment* 9, no. 2 (1997): 132-5, <http://ezproxy.rollins.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/614340294?accountid=13584> (accessed May 1, 2013).

²⁸ Luthar and Cicchetti, "The Construct of Resilience," 858.

²⁹ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 76.

to exist in the now—in the survivor mode. According to Garbarino these youth face a “terminal thinking” that often couples with “a crisis of purposefulness.”³⁰ These factors can cast youth “psychologically adrift and [make them] prone to seek any harbor in their storm of alienation and fear. These are the boys who are drawn to nihilism, Satanism, and all the other isms of the dark side.”³¹

Maltreatment presents significant risk, and represents a complex risk cluster.³² Some developmental dangers resulting from “psychological maltreatment” include rejection, isolation, terrorism, corruption, and ignoring.³³ Collishaw et al. note that maltreatment may propagate “cognitive delays, lowered IQ, neurobiological abnormalities, dysfunctional behaviors such as conduct problems, aggression and substance abuse, and an increased risk of adolescent and adult psychiatric disorders including depression, suicide, anxiety disorder, PTSD, and somatization disorders.”³⁴

Maltreatment and sexual abuse have the potential to exert both direct and indirect influence through risk factors. Directly, the child may be emotionally or physically damaged. But indirectly, “many detrimental outcomes are associated with experiencing childhood maltreatment such as running away, re-victimization, and overall lower well-

³⁰ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 157 and 161.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

³² *Ibid.*, 77. “Judith Harris pinpoints a series of temperamental traits that put a child at risk for becoming troubled and aggressive. These include high activity level, insensitivity to the feelings of others, lack of physical fear, being easily bored with routine, tendency to seek excitement, and less than average intelligence.” Luthar and Cicchetti note that “poor impulse control,” can also increase risk. (Luthar and Cicchetti, “The Construct of Resilience,” 859.) They also assert that a “high sense of self-efficacy or an easy-going temperament,” has the potential to steer individuals towards positive coping. They make this observation based on the research of others, however, in their tight definition of resiliency they specifically exclude individual “personality traits... or attributes.” (857)

³³ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 191.

³⁴ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 211-229. They note that previous studies “suggest” that “high self-esteem, internal locus of control, external attributions of blame, and ... coping strategies,” all contribute to a more successful management of adversity. 223-224. PTSD is the abbreviation of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Accessed from dictionary.com . November 5, 2012.)

being.”³⁵ Garbarino summarizes that “child maltreatment leads to survival strategies that are often antisocial and/or self-destructive.”³⁶ Adult survivors of child abuse also have an increased likelihood of victimization and other interpersonal dysfunctions.³⁷

Generally, when people suffer from trauma, they become more liable to manifest “psychological and physiological symptoms that can become debilitating, often to the point of requiring psychological care.”³⁸ Collishaw et al. assert that “important gaps in understanding remain” in predicting and understanding the dynamics between risk and outcome and they encourage researchers to investigate further using well-defined parameters in longitudinal studies with control groups.³⁹

2.3 Sociological Factors

Risk and resilience factors also include community dynamics, living circumstances, and the shared beliefs in a group. For example researchers find that “social support for religion and spirituality [is] one of the defining characteristics of a healthy community.”⁴⁰ Communities where the youth attend religious services on a regular basis manifest fewer behavior problems than communities without a religious

³⁵ Kimberly A. Tyler et al., "A Longitudinal Study of the Effects of Child Maltreatment on Later Outcomes among High-Risk Adolescents." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 37, no. 5 (2008): 506-21, <http://ezproxy.rollins.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/204637369?accountid=13584>. (accessed May 1, 2013).

³⁶ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 17.

³⁷ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 213.

³⁸ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 158. “If the crisis of meaning and purpose inherent in the experience of trauma is not acknowledged and resolved.”

³⁹ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 214. Furthermore they cite the need to incorporate abuse resiliency and outcome studies with “representative epidemiological surveys.”

⁴⁰ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 170. A study by sociologists Dale Blyth and Nancy Leffert. “Communities with a majority of high school students attending religious services at least once a month were twice as likely to be among the communities with the fewest problem behaviors among youth than were communities with the fewest problem behaviors among youth than were communities in which a majority of kids did not participate in religious experiences.”

bias.⁴¹ In addition, Jonathan Crane asserts that “when the proportion of ‘affluent leadership class’ families... drops below 6 percent, there is a rapid increase in such social pathologies among teens such as delinquency, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, and dropping out of high school.”⁴² Collishaw et al. agree that such interpersonal relationships “are of crucial importance for understanding the effects of child abuse on mental health outcomes.”⁴³ Garbarino also cautions that “emotionally needy boys who are rejected by teachers and parents are prime targets for antisocial older youth and adults [who actively recruit them].”⁴⁴ In other words, the level of risk amplifies in the absence of positive social role models and anchors while resilience increases in positive loving relationships.

2.4 Psychiatric Causalities for Children at Risk

Luthar and Cicchetti state that without intervention, “many children facing multiple adversities have a high probability of developing serious (psychiatric) difficulties as they move along their developmental trajectories.”⁴⁵ While criminal acts and violence committed by children and young adults might appear to be a good measure of maladaptation, Garbarino forewarns that “85 percent of kids who commit serious, violent offences as juveniles—*don’t get caught*.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, not all individuals externalize their behavior, and internalized maladaptation has different indicators than

⁴¹ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 170. A study by sociologists Dale Blyth and Nancy Leffert.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴³ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 226.

“These negative role models recruit vulnerable boys, and they exchange self-affirmation for loyalty to the antisocial cause.”

⁴⁵ Luthar and Cicchetti, “The Construct of Resilience,” 865. For example if faced with two simultaneous risk factors, a child’s likelihood of developing maladjustment increases 400%, with the trajectory of maladjustment steeply climbing with each additional risk factor. (865)

⁴⁶ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 117. This percentage is based on a study by Rolf Loeber and David Farrington.

crime statistics, such as the levels of depression reported in a group of youths.⁴⁷ Rutter affirms that in some risk-exposed individuals, mechanisms like denial, distortion, and defensiveness impair healthy adult functioning.⁴⁸ In this respect many “troubled kids respond with self-destructive acts and inner turmoil, with what psychologists call ‘internalizing’ problems, that is, headaches, depression, self-loathing, bad dreams, and the like.”⁴⁹ Female behaviors tend towards internalization and male behavior tends towards externalization.⁵⁰

Garbarino warns that no individual is impervious to succumbing to adversity. Adverse conditions have the potential to overcome any individual’s coping mechanisms at different levels, and durations, and everyone has a breaking point.⁵¹ A greater understanding of the doses, duration, and potentiality of packages of risks factors requires further investigation.

3.0 Resiliency Research

3.1 Background

Despite the risks that some children experience, Garbarino notes that “some boys achieve a state of grace in which, though victimized, they find a positive path. This is resilience at its highest level.”⁵² While this appears to be an elegant summation, not all

⁴⁷ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 117.

⁴⁸ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 82 and 85. “Empirical findings show that there is a meaningful distinction between objective experience and the way they are conceptualized later...”

⁴⁹ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 117.

⁵⁰ Luthar and Cicchetti, “The Construct of Resilience,” 858.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 115-16. Garbarino notes that veteran studies show that 100% of those engaged in combat for at least sixty days in a row showed either psychiatric effects or psychopathy (2%). “Resilience is not absolute; some settings overwhelm human capacities... the relentless pressure imposed on children exposed to the lethal combination of community violence, family disruption, racism, and personal experience of trauma is uniformly overwhelming. The accumulation of threat is too much for any of them to bear.” (Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 77)

⁵² Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 83.

researchers quantify or define resilience in the same manner. What then is the root of resiliency studies and how do various researchers define resilience?

While some think resilience is rare, George Bonanno contends that it is more common than many have thought, although he narrowly defines adversity in terms of a traumatic event and does not fully consider the impacts of long-term groups of risk packages such as divorce, poverty, disability, parental alcoholism, overcrowding, and discrimination.⁵³ He continues that researches often fail “adequately distinguish resilience from recovery.”⁵⁴

Pioneer researcher Emmy E. Werner conducted a longitudinal study of children at risk in Kauai, Hawaii beginning in 1955.⁵⁵ Although adverse risk factors were associated with approximately 30 percent of the subjects, “at every assessment, the majority of the children appeared to be developing normally, despite the considerable adversity they faced.”⁵⁶ Werner found that internal and external factors all play a role in resiliency.⁵⁷ Her “work emphasize[s] the plasticity of development and the necessity of taking a contextual, life-span approach to resilience as a phenomenon that can unfold over decades.”⁵⁸ Her analysis catalyzed the field of resilience studies.⁵⁹ It is important to note, that while she documents resiliency traits, her overall concept lies in the context of a phenomenon in that generation of children, whom she calls “vulnerable but invincible.”

⁵³ George A. Bonanno. “Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events?” *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, vol. S., no. 1 (2008): 101-113. George A Bonanno, Sandro Galea, Angela Busciarelli, and David Vlahov, “What Predicts Psychological Resilience After Disaster? The Role of Demographics, Resources, and Life Stress.” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, vol. 75, no. 5, (2007): 671-82.

⁵⁴ Bonanno, “Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience,” 102.

⁵⁵ Aldwin et al., “Resilience across the Life Span,” 159-163.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

3.2 Developments and Challenges in the Field of Resiliency Studies

Current resiliency studies are in flux because the definitions, models, and scope are dynamic. For example Rutter notes “that resilience is not a single entity and it is certainly not an absolute.”⁶⁰ Rutter warns that “what appears to be resilience is [at times] just an error in measurement.”⁶¹ He continues that scars remain although the individual manifests “good psychological function[ing].”⁶² This definition that includes scars defines resiliency at a different level of functioning than in Carver’s conceptual model. Garbarino provides an additional definition; “resilience is the ability to bounce back from or overcome adversity.”⁶³ He explains that, “resiliency is more than outside success... It also means developing a positive sense of self, a capacity for intimacy, and a feeling that life is meaningful.”⁶⁴ While these definitions have some cross-over, they are not uniform, so individual studies will exhibit inherent definitional biases.

Overall, researchers emphasize that survival and resilience are not the same and differ significantly.⁶⁵ Carver extends the concept of resiliency and breaks “thriving” out from “resiliency,” while other researchers do not. **Figure 1** presents Carter’s cognitive model of the types of functioning that result from an adverse event. According to Carver, the concept of thriving embraces the notion that adversity may promote increased skills and psychosocial functioning, as well as other benefits, such as overall well-being.⁶⁶ In this model “thriving” is beyond resilience, and Rutter’s scar postulate is difficult to

⁶⁰ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 77.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 77.

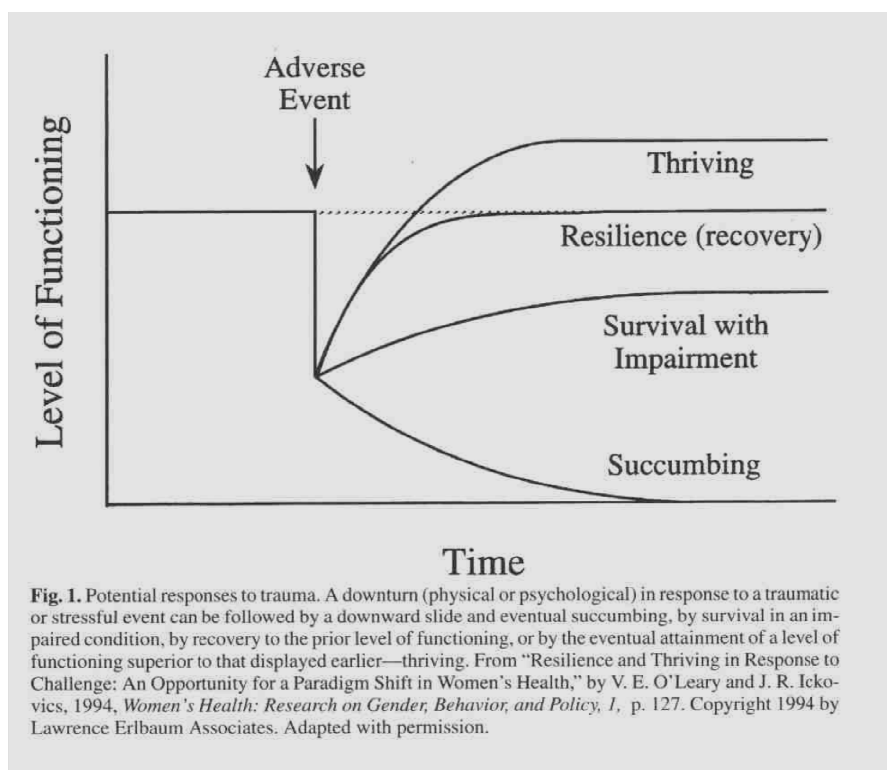
⁶³ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 36.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁶⁵ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 166.

⁶⁶ Carver, “Resilience and Thriving,” 247. Carver categorizes the benefits of thriving under several conceptual beneficial outcomes such as: “Desensitization, enhanced recovery potential, taking it to a higher level, increased skills and knowledge, promotion of confidence, and strengthened personal relations.” (248-252)

differentiate. This is a graphic example of how the very scope and outcome of ways to study responses to trauma vary between researchers.



Carver emphasizes that understanding thriving dynamics and working to “teach the skill to others,” carries an enormous sociological benefit.⁶⁷ In the terms of thriving, adversity has the potential to catalyze beneficial adaptations. In general, Carver notes that trauma presents an individual with an opportunity to thrive by “reorganizing...self.”⁶⁸ Many researchers concentrate on specific resiliency traits and the fostering of resilience. Conversely, some fail to study the potential benefits that adversity. In some instances resilience is built up by successful experiences and individual increase their ability to thrive and develop over time.

⁶⁷ Carver, “Resilience and Thriving,” 263. Carver encourages further research in this area.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 253.

3.3 Resiliency Traits

Resilience proves hard to define. Although researchers closely study and evaluate resiliency traits, Garbarino sums it up honestly, “I would be bluffing if I said I can always specify what in this world can sustain a child living in the midst of an earthly hell.”⁶⁹ Rutter states that resiliency traits are not simply artifacts of the “now” but are often embedded in past and future circumstances.⁷⁰ He continues that resiliency can vary even within an individual, and a person may exhibit resilience in one setting and not in another. This idea, of situation-specificity, is seen in other psychological traits as well. Resilience may be seen in a circumstance where a trait or strategy has been rewarded in the past. For example, a child at risk who has received positive attention and benefits for sports performance may emphasize that ability in new settings.⁷¹ Rutter encourages researchers to look beyond the moment of risk or adversity and examine risk and resilience from a longitudinal perspective “within an appropriate developmental framework.”⁷² Resilience can become a tautology; those who have thrived despite difficult circumstances must have “it.” Instead, researchers look to find the factors which statistically predict adult thriving after great risk.

This type of examination may find evidence that more closely supports the model that includes thriving, because past experiences help actualize some individuals to positively deal with future adversity and life circumstances. According to Diane Snyder Ptak, “Resiliency means being capable of withstanding personal shock and injury through our choices; it involves flexibility when confronted with challenges and being

⁶⁹ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 37. “How does a soul survive a world of torment? What keeps a soul from dying? The controversial psychological answer has several parts.” (36)

⁷⁰ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 77-8.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷² *Ibid.*

prepared.”⁷³ Ptak’s definition includes cognitive choices and functioning, but not all resiliency traits fall into this realm. In general, researchers divide resiliency factors into three broad categories: heritable factors, cognitive factors, and inter-personal factors. In addition, resiliency is a function of the community and environment and is not purely a function of the individual.⁷⁴ Garbarino criticizes the actions of policymakers and stakeholders who apply the “the concept of resilience [as] a kind of moral judgment, policy explanation, or excuse.”⁷⁵ Some went so far as to contend that “we don’t need to have intervention or prevention programs because children are resilient.”⁷⁶ These conceptualizations about resiliency and resiliency traits ignore the social agents that potentially move individuals either towards or away from healthy social development and adaptations. Ptak asserts that “some... characterize... resilience as a state of mind driven by core policies and a flexible nature, but it is also something that is nourished by the strong, caring support of others in times of need,” and the access to other resources such as money”⁷⁷ Luthar and Cicchetti caution researchers to “explicitly note that children cannot ‘make themselves’ enduringly resilient.”⁷⁸ As such, resilience is predicted by a set of individual traits, but is not solely within the functioning of an individual.

The first broad category of resiliency traits that have been identified by researchers includes individually heritable traits such as temperament. Children manifest variable temperaments which interplay with attachment, orientation, and a predisposition

⁷³ Diane Snyder Ptak, “Reflections--Character Education: What Makes a Child Resilient?” *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* (Sept 2002): 9 ProQuest Research Library (accessed October 25,-2012).

⁷⁴ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 77

⁷⁵ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 117. Garbarino reports the absurdity of this line of thinking when a boy being charged with murder was questioned, “What’s wrong with you that you weren’t resilient growing up in this environment? Other kids seemed to survive without becoming criminals. What’s wrong with you?”

⁷⁶ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 117.

⁷⁷ Ptak, “What Makes a Child Resilient?” 92.

⁷⁸ Luthar and Cicchetti, “The Construct of Resilience,” 863. Resiliency traits are shaped in an individual and are not “indelibly implanted in children.” As such, they can be lost, re-shapen, or built.

to positive or negative behaviors and outlooks.⁷⁹ In the Kauai longitudinal studies of a cohort of island children, studies the resilient subjects exhibited “‘easy’ temperaments, soothing easily and [being] good at eliciting positive responses from their caregivers.”⁸⁰ Rutter states that individual differences in reactions to adversity may be linked to “personal characteristics that have an important constitutional component.”⁸¹ However, a child’s temperament also responds to how the child is treated, and “temperamental features do not lead inevitably to any disorder.”⁸² Garbarino asserts that “the question of whether bad behavior is preprogrammed genetically is one of the central controversies in child development.”⁸³ Certain genetically-based behaviors could be artifacts of an inheritable survival trait.⁸⁴ However, the context of behaviors and environmental influences is intertwined with genetic predispositions and leads to the need for further research and an integrated approach⁸⁵

Collishaw et al. consider genetics and biological factors such as stress-reactivity as important traits that influence adversity responses.⁸⁶ They state that “heritable factors have been shown to be important predictors of resilience in the context of adverse childhood experience.”⁸⁷ For example, Caspi et al. performed a longitudinal study to see if genotypes potentially influence an individual’s ability to adapt positively in the face of

⁷⁹ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 36.

⁸⁰ Aldwin et al., “Resilience across the Life Span,” 160. “Temperament plays an important role in determining which souls survive and which depart.”

⁸¹ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 81. As noted in a study by Wachs & Plomin, 1991.

⁸² *Ibid.* He notes that temperament has a strong interplay with how others respond. He affirms, “It is up to us to undertake the type of research needed in order to find out how to influence interactions in the appropriate direction.” (81) Temperament is epigenetic.

⁸³ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 72. “Sociobiology emphasizes a genetic origin for social behavior: some characteristics promote survival, and thus reproduction, more than other characteristics.”

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁸⁶ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 213.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

maltreatment.⁸⁸ They found that “a functional polymorphism in the gene encoding the neurotransmitter-metabolizing enzyme monoamine oxidase [MAOA]... moderate[s] the effect of maltreatment.”⁸⁹ This research provides one instance where genotype strongly influences a child’s “sensitivity to environmental insults,” and results in individualist responses to the same risk factors.⁹⁰

Cognitive factors form the second broad category of resiliency traits that have been identified by researchers. Collishaw et al. consider the following critical cognitive factors that influence an individual’s resiliency: “intelligence, locus of control, self-esteem, planning, and self regulation.”⁹¹ Other positive cognitive traits include: compensatory relationships, positive perception, androgyny, spirituality, and talent.⁹² These all have the potential to build resiliency when present.

3.3.3.1 *Intellectual Capacities*

Intelligence traits that build resiliency are reasoning, problem solving, and abstract conceptualizations that enhance an individual’s ability to “think about complex realities and make sense of the world.”⁹³ According Garbarino, emotional and social intelligence are also parts of the resiliency intellectual package, and all these facets of intelligence expand a child’s overall adaptation and coping skills.⁹⁴ Because intelligence

⁸⁸ Avshalom Caspi et al., “Role of Genotype in the Cycle of Violence in Maltreated Children.” *Science*, 297 (2002): 851.

⁸⁹ Caspi et. al., “Role of Genotype in the Cycle of Violence in Maltreated Children,” 851. This study was initiated in an attempt to better define potential genetic resiliency traits that minimize the risk of maltreatment manifesting in conduct disorder, violence, and anti-social behaviors.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Previous studies found a close association between the presence or absence of MAOA (monoamine oxidase) and aggression. MAOA enzymes are active agents in the metabolism of “neurotransmitters such as norepinephrine, serotonin, and dopamine.” In summary the researchers call for verification and further studies.

⁹¹ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 213.

⁹² Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 150.

⁹³ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 165. Aldwin et al., “Resilience across the Life Span,” 160

⁹⁴ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 166.

can help build resiliency, Rutter explains that researchers are exploring interventions and techniques that may help people deal with cognitive behaviors (such as problem-solving strategies) that are deficit or problematic.⁹⁵ However, he cautions that it is too early to determine how cognitive behavioral therapy methods measure against more “traditional therapies.”⁹⁶

3.3.3.2 *Capacity to Actively Respond to Events*

Effective coping skills are also tied to resiliency. These coping skills include thinking skills, like proactive approaches to adversity and creative solutions to problems. Positive coping strategies empower individuals to reasonably react to adversity instead of simply react.⁹⁷ Garbarino notes that “some kids seem to have this drive to master their environment, to make it meet their needs.”⁹⁸ It is the momentum to acquire the tools, talents, and resources to develop a more positive life that fosters resilience.⁹⁹ Garbarino simply states, “Resilient kids find positive ways to cope with difficult situations.”¹⁰⁰ It is this positive bias that keeps some children moving forward and allows them to see hope in the future and effectively solve current problems.

According to Robert Brooks, “A resilient child has some sense of mastery of his own life, and if he gets frustrated by a mistake, he still feels he can learn from the mistake.”¹⁰¹ In the Kauai study, children with well-developed communication and

⁹⁵ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 82.

⁹⁶ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 82. However, cognitive therapies have proven “effective” and help individuals develop new tools to face future adversity and stress. Rutter stresses that a positive attitude towards life’s challenges is more critical than thinking there is an optimal way or right answer.

⁹⁷ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 150, 164.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Robert Sullivan, “What Makes a Child Resilient?” *Time International (Canada Edition)*, 3-19-2001, vol. 157. Issue 11.

problem-solving skills and a sense of “sense of control and meaning”¹⁰² were more likely to achieve stable levels of adult psychological functioning.

In another perspective on thinking skills, Rutter includes the ability to change course and get off a “maladaptive life trajectory” as a resiliency trait.¹⁰³ Rutter contends that some “challenges and difficulties are a necessary part of growing up and children need to learn how to cope successfully with them.”¹⁰⁴ Using biological reactions to pathogens as an example, Rutter postulates that limited exposure, instead of avoidance, builds up resiliency in both the immune system and in the ability to endure adversity.¹⁰⁵ However, he cautions that a child may become overwhelmed by adversity, and the timing and number of challenges a child faces influences his ability to succeed and positively cope.¹⁰⁶ According to Rutter, constructive coping comes from experience with “social problem-solving.”¹⁰⁷ Generally these researchers agree that being able to positively

¹⁰² Aldwin et al., “Resilience across the Life Span,” 160.

¹⁰³ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 78. For example Rutter notes that enrolling in the military and building more positive experiences can build resilience. This is person-specific and all may not benefit from the same life changes.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 84. Rutter, “Resilient Children,” 60. In their abuse resiliency study, Collishaw et al. confess that an “individual’s cognitive style and coping strategies,” were not addressed and these two parameters are potentially relevant to understand “resilience to psychopathology.” Collishaw et al. “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 224. They didn’t include genetic factors either. Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 77. Collishaw et al. include “timing, duration, frequency, severity, degree of threat, and relationship to perpetrator” in the analysis of the extent of the adversity faced. (“Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 213.

¹⁰⁵ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 77. Rutter postulates that “steeling’ effects are more likely to arise when people have coped successfully with stress experiences.” (78)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 84.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Rutter, “Resilient Children: Why Some Disadvantaged Children Overcome their Environments and How We Can Help.” *Psychology Today* 18, no. 3 (1984): 60. This adaptive ability to problem solve includes being able to brain storm multiple solutions and their potential outcomes. He cautions that teaching these skills as merely an intellectual exercise minimizes the coping learned when trying to solve real life adversities. Furthermore, resilience is fostered when children have alternatives and are taught what not to do, but are also taught what they should be doing. (62)

respond to adversity helps a child become more resilient, and in this respect resilience is built over time with experience.¹⁰⁸

3.3.3.3 *Capacity to Plan*

Rutter notes that some individuals often “shape and select environments they later experience,” and he continues that these “people can do a good deal to influence what happens to them.”¹⁰⁹ In other words, those who deconstruct adverse situations and construct new positive environments help direct their own lives into greater stability.

Researchers have found that those who plan for future events formulate a protective process.¹¹⁰ Resilience is nurtured when individuals experience a level of control over their lives and decisions, instead of feeling at the mercy of others.¹¹¹ Children can construct some of their own protective mechanisms and are not wholly reliant on the benevolence and protection of outside social forces. Werner’s initial studies noted that “[at risk Kauai] children had developed a style of coping characterized by autonomy and the ability to elicit help when needed.”¹¹²

3.3.3.4 *Intrinsic Self-Worth*

One of the more difficult cognitive traits to acquire and maintain is an authentic sense of self-worth.¹¹³ It is difficult to acquire for children at risk because general risk and maltreatment often erode self-confidence. Authentic self-esteem develops when

¹⁰⁸ A. J. Sameroff, and Rosenblum, K. L. “Psychosocial Constraints on the Development of Resilience.” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol. 1094 (2006):116–124. doi:10.1196/annals.1376.010 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ezproxy.rollins.edu:2048/doi/10.1196/annals.1376.010/> (accessed April 30, 2013).

¹⁰⁹ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 78. Rutter, “Resilient Children,” 60.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.. Rutter, “Resilient Children,” 62.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 78. He is quick to note that not all adversity is under the control of the individual.

¹¹² Aldwin et al., “Resilience across the Life Span,” 160.

¹¹³ This type of self-esteem is rooted in authenticity, versus the gesturing and false esteem that gives pretense to healthy ego but is covering over-inflated self or under-valued self.

children are “treated as responsible people” and are rewarded for responsible actions.¹¹⁴

According to Garbarino, when children have positive self-esteem they are further empowered to “deal with the ups and downs of life without panicking or concluding that each down signals impending disaster and rejection.”¹¹⁵

3.3.3.5 Ability to Develop Compensatory Relationships

As noted earlier, researchers emphasize that resiliency increases when an individual “is a “relationship with... [another person] that balances out an abus[ive environment]... someone ... who is positively crazy about the child and who does not let the child’s emotional life wither on the vine but lovingly helps redraw the child’s social maps.”¹¹⁶ According to Sullivan this is often a ““charismatic adult,’ a person with whom children ‘could identify and from whom they gather strength.’”¹¹⁷ This may be a teacher, relative, neighbor or friend. While one positive relationship may increase resiliency, more than one positive social relationship increases it even more.

3.3.3.6 Positive Perceptions

Perception and people’s world views can significantly impact their resilience especially if they cognitively reframe or conceptualize “some better world.”¹¹⁸ Rutter agrees that an individual’s perception of a given circumstance influences their reactions towards that event.¹¹⁹ Collishaw et al. assert that an individual’s “prospective and

¹¹⁴ Rutter, “Resilient Children,” 62.

¹¹⁵ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 167.

¹¹⁶ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 37 and 83. Also noted by Robert Sullivan, “What Makes a Child Resilient?” *Time International* (Canada Edition), 3-19-2001, Vol. 157. Issue 1, Ebscohost (accessed August 25, 2012). Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 78. Collishaw et al. “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 213.

¹¹⁶ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 57. Aldwin et al., “Resilience across the Life Span,” 160.

¹¹⁷ Sullivan, “What Makes a Child Resilient?” 92.

¹¹⁸ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 37.

¹¹⁹ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 81. For example one person may see the birth of their child as the beginning of a new positive relationship, while someone else may view it only as an interpersonal burden that lasts at least 18 years before “freedom.”

retrospective assessments of” their interactions and overall relationships with others “were potent predictors of adult resilience.”¹²⁰ Positive perceptions of life have the potential to carry through childhood. Rutter asserts that “psychologically healthy adult development and relationships” incorporates positive and negative experiences into a personal worldview that presents a positive “concept of themselves and their lives.”¹²¹ This conceptualization does not support the traits of denial and repression; on the contrary a resilient individual perceives the good and bad in life and integrates both into a meaningful and positive construct.

3.3.3.7 *Androgynous Traits*

According to Werner, “androgyny is adaptive and thus an element in resilience.”¹²² When children are able to build and implement a mixture of traditional masculine and feminine characteristics, they have greater resources to address adversity and variable situations.¹²³ In the field of psychology, the incorporation of both positive masculine and feminine gender features in one individual is called “androgyny.”¹²⁴ The more ways people are able to respond to a given situation, the more empowered, successful, and less helpless they feel. Androgyny makes pro-social and adaptive tasks possible regardless of gender. For example, a young boy who is able to prepare his food and lunches has a greater ability to self-feed in comparison to a young boy who is solely reliant on women who take traditional female roles to do it for him.

¹²⁰ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 224.

¹²¹ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 82.

¹²² Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 169.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

3.3.3.8 *Spirituality*

According to Garbarino “the ultimate resilience lies in the spiritual life.”¹²⁵ He continues, noting that “faith is the most profound cognitive restructuring that I know of.”¹²⁶ Psychologist Joanne Shortz also “found that spiritually based coping activities, such as ‘trusting God for protection and turning to him for guidance,’” were most significantly related to positive coping behaviors.”¹²⁷ “These included keeping a ‘positive focus’ on life and making connection with ‘interpersonal support.’”¹²⁸ Garbarino goes further and confesses that divine intervention sometimes seems to find “the spark in a child’s soul before it dies out entirely and that keeps it alive, ready to shine brightly if the child’s social conditions ever permit that to occur.”¹²⁹ As previously noted youth who regularly attend religious services manifest fewer behavior problems, and religious and spiritual support help characterize healthy communities.¹³⁰ Religious and spiritual communities have the potential to foster positive character traits, give a positive perspective to difficulties, teach positive coping skills, inspire intelligence, model prosocial behaviors instill self-worth, offer the opportunity to belong to a close community, provide a pool of possible surrogates, and more. Even for those who do not believe in Garbarino’s notion of “divine intervention,” it is not difficult to attribute

¹²⁵ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 159.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹²⁷ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 160.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 170. A study by sociologists Dale Blyth and Nancy Leffert. “Communities with a majority of high school students attending religious services at least once a month were twice as likely to be among the communities with the fewest problem behaviors among youth than were communities in which a majority of kids did not participate in religious experiences.”

religion and spirituality with the ability to help provide, develop, and fortify resiliency traits in children at risk.¹³¹

3.3.3.9 *Talents and Special Skills*

The development of talents and special skills help to build resiliency.¹³² Brooks notes that a child needs only one or two “‘islands of competence’ at which the child can succeed and thus derive a measure of self-confidence.”¹³³ Rutter notes that while the mechanism is not wholly understood, “success in one arena gives people positive feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy that make it more likely that they will” face future challenges with positivity and resilience.¹³⁴ Developing one’s talents and following positive passions provide a child at risk with a creative outlet that encourages external and self-reinforcement. Children who have a special talent (music, sports, debate, mathematics) that garners extra resources and attention for them are more likely to be resilient.

3.3.3.10 *Interpersonal Resiliency Traits*

Interpersonal factors form the third broad category of resiliency traits that researchers have identified. According to Collishaw et al. interpersonal factors that influence resiliency include: “emotionally-responsive parenting, peer affiliations and friendships, support and affectionate marital relationships.”¹³⁵ The child’s ability to seek out and

¹³¹ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 150, 155, 156, and 161. According to a study by Andrew Weaver’s research, “spirituality (in the form of non-punitive religion) exerts an anchoring effect on kids,” such as “reduced suicide, less depression, less casual sex, better response to trauma, [and] less substance abuse.”

¹³² *Ibid.*, 37.

¹³³ Sullivan, “What Makes a Child Resilient?” 92. Furthermore, clinical psychologist Barry Plummer proposes that others should “encourage a kid to master something even if he stinks at school—a sport, music, someplace he can go where he is of value. This helps build a pocket of resilience.”

¹³⁴ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 78-79.

¹³⁵ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 213.

develop positive interpersonal relationships “appears to be another important factor in predicting positive adaptation in the context of child abuse.”¹³⁶

Children of abuse are less likely to develop positive models in their childhood, and they need to work out new maps, interpersonal skills, and strategies with supportive relationships. Researchers note that abused children “may see others as less trustworthy and predictable, and relationships as a potential source of conflict rather than a source of support and enjoyment.”¹³⁷ In other words, while compensatory relationships offer increased resilience, a child’s ability to trust and have the courage to build new relationships may be difficult. Overall, a child’s ability to experience positive relationships over time was “particularly likely to demonstrate resilience.”¹³⁸ Furthermore, researchers cite the need to study the development and maintenance of “relationship competencies,” because these “may be a core target for clinical interventions.”¹³⁹

3.3.3.11 Personal Bias towards Stability

One interpersonal skill that assists in building a child’s resilience is the ability to find the calm, or eye, in the middle of the storm. Garbarino couples the child’s motion towards stability with the presence of accessible anchors in society.¹⁴⁰ The child is able to cognitively seek and then to develop and maintain a “stable positive emotional relationship with at least one person, someone absolutely committed to the child and to

¹³⁶ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 213.

¹³⁷ Ibid.,” 226.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 226.

¹⁴⁰ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 150. Garbarino calls many of these cognitive traits “psychological anchors.”

whom the child feels a strong positive attachment.”¹⁴¹ Garbarino sums it up as, “Someone Who Loves Me.”¹⁴² In this example the child not only needs the cognitive recognition and drive to seek out a surrogate, but also the ability to develop interpersonal skills that build and maintain a new surrogacy relationship. In other words, a child can desire and seek a better relationship with someone, but without adequate skills he may not be able to court, recruit, and foster a positive relationship with anyone. Successful attachment to a surrogate is a multi-pronged process. Once achieved, this social support from a surrogate integrates the child with the community and encourages a child’s positive social behavior through good role models.¹⁴³ The Kauai study confirms this principle as it emphasizes the importance of community resources that provide interpersonal support, such as supportive teachers, relatives, and the Big Brother/Big Sister programs.¹⁴⁴

According to Brooks, “The hallmarks of a resilient child include knowing how to solve problems or knowing that there’s an adult to turn to for help.”¹⁴⁵ Even if abuse is occurring in the home, some children are able to profit from experience and are “able to feel a measure of love and acceptability from their parents at the times when they are not abused.”¹⁴⁶ In other words, even a partially nurturing household can hold hope for a resilient child.¹⁴⁷ While learning to cling to love during a period of quiescence may

¹⁴¹ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 150 and 163. Rutter, “Resilient Children,” 60. “A positive and stable emotional relationship provides a concrete image for a child. It shows that child that the world is grounded and rooted in being loved, and therefore in being loveable. Being the center of someone’s universe is hard to beat as a resilience factor.” (164)

¹⁴² Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 163. Rutter, “Resilient Children,” 60.

¹⁴³ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 168. Aldwin et al., “Resilience across the Life Span,” 160.

¹⁴⁴ Aldwin et al., “Resilience across the Life Span,” 160.

¹⁴⁵ Sullivan, “What Makes a Child Resilient?” 92. Robert Brooks is a clinical psychologist at Harvard Medical School.

¹⁴⁶ Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, 83. Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 213.

¹⁴⁷ Collishaw et al., “Resilience to Adult Psychopathology Following Childhood Maltreatment,” 213. The “more sensitive, caring, and safe,” the home environment is the “more adaptive the outcome will be.”

temporarily help a child find love in even an abusive relationship, the blueprint for the child to accept the classic abuse-honeymoon stages of domestic violence cannot be ignored, and must be countered by a realistic way out.

4.0 Issues with Resiliency Mechanisms and Processes

Sir Michael Rutter admits that there are no simple means to make a child resilient, and outcomes to risk are highly variable.¹⁴⁸ Researchers seek to identify risk factors, develop empirical models, and try to uncover processes and mechanisms.¹⁴⁹ Luthar and Cicchetti advise that “stringent scientific standards” are needed in resiliency research.¹⁵⁰ They report that resiliency research suffers from “variations in the use of terminology by different investigators; diversity in methods used to operationalize risk, competence, and the association between these constructs; and insufficient attention to theory in empirical efforts.”¹⁵¹ Luthar and Cicchetti call for the application of precautions in the development and use of research on resiliency, including the development of clear definitions and the use of the term resilience as a construct and not as an individual trait.¹⁵² When they seek to identify and apply the intervention[s] with the most potential for positive outcomes in a given situation, the variable outcomes of protective and risk factors in specific contexts create another challenge for researchers and interventionists.

¹⁴⁸ Rutter. “Resilient Children,” 60. Rutter notes that resiliency is multifaceted and one of the most important features is to have a sense of control over one’s situation.

¹⁴⁹ Luthar and Cicchetti, “The Construct of Resilience,” 859. This includes looking for correlations and links between events, factors, and outcomes in an attempt to “understand the mechanisms that might explain the effects of salient vulnerability or protective factors.”

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 858.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 862.

¹⁵² Luthar and Cicchetti, “The Construct of Resilience,” 862. When resilience is used as a personal trait, policy makers and others may begin to stigmatize non-resilient individuals and blame them for not possessing the trait. In this case the authors encourage that “the term ‘resilient’ [be] used as an adjective” as it is “appl[ied] to profiles or trajectories of adaptation.”

According to Wolin, “So far, resiliency (research) has been good at describing a situation but hasn’t been very prescriptive.”¹⁵³ Rutter also cautions that knowing risk factors and actualizing resources to alter them are not the same. He notes that despite the lines of investigation that seem to lead somewhere, overall “the truth of the matter is that we do not really know”¹⁵⁴ why some children are resilient. Rutter (1995) cautions that “the phenomenon of ‘escape’ from stress and adversity,” may not be an escape at all because the presence of risk factors was slight or non-existent¹⁵⁵ or poorly measured. He advises that instead of studying individual risk factors and outcomes, research should “focus on the specific processes that operate in particular circumstances for a particular outcome.”¹⁵⁶ While researchers have focused primarily on ways to reduce exposure to adversity, Rutter advises that it is just as important to examine “features that, while not promoting good outcomes, enhance resistance to psychosocial adversities and hazards of various kinds.”¹⁵⁷

5.0 Ongoing Resiliency Research Considerations

Luthar and Cicchetti counsel researchers to be proactive in the dissemination of information on resiliency to non-scientific audiences.¹⁵⁸ Without proper understanding and information, resiliency knowledge may be misapplied and misinterpreted. For example, some may misconstrue that resilient children are invincible, or that all children may become resilient if they apply themselves correctly.¹⁵⁹ Because policymakers and

¹⁵³ Robert Sullivan, “What Makes a Child Resilient?” *Time International (Canada Edition)*, 3-19-2001, vol. 157. Issue 11.

¹⁵⁴ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 75.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Rutter, “Risk, Resilience, and Recovery,” 78.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 82. He says “surprisingly little is known about protective mechanisms.”

¹⁵⁸ Luthar and Cicchetti “The Construct of Resilience,” 863.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

educators are intent on finding ways to build stronger and healthier individuals and communities, they need scientists to present resiliency findings in the proper context.¹⁶⁰ According to Luthar and Cicchetti, practitioners try to develop resiliency programs to “foster resiliency in children.”¹⁶¹ This implies, falsely, that resiliency is all within the child, or under the child’s control. The terminology of “fostering resilient trajectories or outcomes rather than resilient children,” recognizes that resilience is not a trait but is instead a phenomenon¹⁶² where factors in the child, family, community and culture are involved. They note that:

“Applications of resilience research must entail (a) attention to theory and research evidence on the group served; (b) consideration of the interface between intervention goals and the child’s own background; (c) provision of intergrated services rather than fragmented ones; and (d) clarity regarding resilience as a phenomenon, not a personal trait.”¹⁶³

Luthar and Cicchetti emphasize the need to integrate “basic and applied science concerning resilience” on four fronts: the development of numerous protective factors, flexible interventions, increased program evaluations that include long-term studies and more, and “controlled experimental studies.”¹⁶⁴ In addition, the authors call for research and interventions “at all developmental transitions,” over longer time periods, and during life transition periods.¹⁶⁵

6.0 Summary

Luthar and Cicchetti summarize research in the field of resiliency effectively:

¹⁶⁰ Luthar and Cicchetti “The Construct of Resilience,” 863-64. For example the interpretation of statistics, correlations, and trends require sound empirical statistical analysis and summaries of findings. (864)

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 865

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Luthar and Cicchetti “The Construct of Resilience,” 876.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 876-77.

“The benefits of applying the resilience paradigm can be seriously jeopardized without careful attention to several critical precautions.

Documentation in both science and practice must include explicit clarifications that resilience represents competent adaptation in the face of adversity preempting misconceptions that this is a proxy for some individuals’ innate imperviousness to life stresses.”¹⁶⁶

Resiliency studies and conceptualizations are developing over time, and the need for clear, uniform definitions and indicators is necessary. Constructs for resiliency are also undergoing revision as the concept of thriving is better understood and integrated. There is a need for strong scientific approaches including adequate comparison groups, longitudinal studies and more. Despite the fact that resiliency is not completely understood, researchers have made great gains in recognizing types of risk, risk clusters, traits of resiliency, and the process of building resiliency. The challenge lies in integrating these concepts into a cohesive developmental and psychosocial model that can be further explored, communicated, and effectively implemented with applicable interventions and programs.

(9165 words)

“On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work.” *Alina Patterson*

¹⁶⁶ Luthar and Cicchetti “The Construct of Resilience,” 878-79.

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