

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RESILIENCY WITHIN BOYS & GIRLS
CLUB

by

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This study is dedicated to my parents Terry Jones and Carrie Jones, two people whose love and support never wavered for me. I want to give a special thanks to my siblings Terry and Tiffany, who are the backbones of my success. My mother's unconditional love and prayers provided the guidance needed to complete this journey. I also thank my amazing fiancée, Giavanna McCall, who has had the kindness and patience through this process.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions and experiences of adolescents at the Murfreesboro Boys and Girls Club (MGBC), in the context of the agency goals, as they relate to the theory of resiliency. Examining adolescents who are exposed to adversity or challenging issues within their environment will aid in developing a better understanding about today's youth. Understanding if the Murfreesboro Boys and Girls Club facilitates resiliency for adolescents is a primary goal of this study. A resilience theoretical framework was utilized to identify the interaction of risk and protective factors upon the individual's development. Rutter (1990) suggested that resiliency could be used to help youth who are exposed to risk achieve a pleasing quality of life, despite their hardships, through protective factors (Garmezy, 1971; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982).

It is anticipated that the development of resiliency manifested through the three aims of MGBC: academic success, leadership and development and healthy lifestyles could promote positive youth behavior. Based on the research question and objectives, a qualitative methodology was selected. Twenty MBGC members were interviewed in this study using focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Findings from the study indicated that the subjects perceive that the club is making a positive impact in the lives of the members. This study provided insights that could assist with the future development of programs and services. Comments and observations suggested that youth who engage in MBGC service projects and programs on a regular basis had improved self-esteem, avoided conflict and made positive connections with peers and leaders.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This case study will examine how resiliency is perceived and learned in the Boys and Girls Club. Resiliency is a personal trait with which I have firsthand experience. I am the first child of three from a single-parent household to attend college, and given my family background attending college was a real accomplishment. My mother became a single parent after my father died. On countless nights I watched my mother struggle to provide for our family, all the while working two jobs to feed us. Living in a household of five people that is supported by one parent can cause a financial strain on a big family. My neighborhood environment also encouraged negative behavior. The neighborhood had a high rate of crime, and my school had a low graduation rate. I was part of this environment, and I contributed to it. Getting suspended from school was a frequent occurrence. Finally, not all of the inhibitors to my success were external to my psychology. I was the class clown, and my behavior caused my grades to suffer tremendously. I became a rebellious teen who did not care what others thought of me. In sum, growing up in poverty, watching as family members became addicted to drugs and witnessing friends who became victims or perpetrators of violence, made it difficult for me or my siblings to see past any of us earning a high school diploma. So one can see that the odds of significant academic achievement or other types of personal growth were not good for my siblings or me.

Pursuing a college degree was not high on the priority list in my family. Yet, my mother instilled in me the importance of education, and this was one of the most important factors in my understanding the value of education. But there was another positive influence as well: my mentor, Ernstine Boyd from the local Boys and Girls Club.

I never really had a real life plan, but my mentor showed me that I could better myself and turn my life around by joining the Boys and Girls Club. The Boys and Girls Club consequently played a significant role in my life. In fact, the organization helped me leave a rough childhood environment and gave me the incentive to reach my full potential.

During my adolescent years I was a member of the Chicago Heights Boys and Girls Club (BGC), and my mentor, Ernestine Boyd worked for the Boys and Girls Club. Thankfully, Ms. Boyd helped me realize my full potential and encouraged me to put forth more effort in school. I believe that the BGC instilled in me responsibility, self-worth, humility, proper etiquette, communication skills and an appreciation of group cohesiveness. It is my belief that the programs and services provided at the club helped me develop *resiliency*. Overall, it was the relationship with staff in addition to the sense of belonging that enabled me to persevere through adversity, which is a simple, “back of the envelope” way of understanding what *resiliency* is. It also left me with a question: What is it about the Boys and Girls Club (BGC) that helped change my life? Clearly my mother and my mentor had an impact, but so did the BGC. The staff at the BGC was dedicated to helping young people improve their lives by empowering them to live healthier lifestyles.

Boys and Girls Clubs

Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGC) is an institution in the United States known for providing quality youth and adolescent programming. BGC’s mission is, “To inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens” (Boys and

Girls Club of America, 2007, p. 7). The organization serves over four million youth nationally. The national organization has been active and helping youth for more than 150 years. The organization is essential because it helps young people become successful and overcome challenging situations by providing quality services and programs. After-school programs are provided for young people with the mission of enhancing social skills and academic performance. Community-based organizations like the Boys and Girls Club offer after-school programs for low-income children, which could serve as an antidote to the alternative environment of gangs (Halpern, 1999). The mission is consistent with the BGC aim of promoting productive and responsive citizens (Anderson-Bitcher, Ferrari & Newsome, 2003).

These goals are congruent with the academic literature that studies institutions such as the Boys and Girls Club. Several studies found that Boys and Girls Club-like organizations can have a positive impact on at-risk youth (Anderson-Bitcher, Ferrari & Newsome, 2003). Anderson-Butcher, Cash, Saltzburg Midle, & Pace (2004) noted, "...youth development organizations have been increasingly identified as important institutions that promote healthy youth development" (p. 84). The Boys and Girls Club also strives to build good character and leadership in youth by helping youth become well-rounded individuals. Anderson-Butcher & Fink (2005) found that simply belonging to a Boys and Girls Club was positively associated with less risk, decreased problem behaviors, and greater safety.

This case study will examine the three goals for participant members of the Murfreesboro Boys and Girls Club (MBGC): academic success, good character and citizenship and healthy lifestyles. All members participate in numerous activities and

programs that have as their aim the achievement of these three goals. There are several programs at the Boys and Girls Club that are aligned with each goal. For example, Keystone is a teen program that aims to develop leadership skills, community collaborations and career preparation, skills that fit nicely with the good character and citizenship goal of MGBC. Additionally, Keystone promotes health and life-skills. Healthy lifestyle is a goal created to help influence healthy habits and improve young people's overall well-being (Boys & Girls Club of Rutherford County, 2015). Another program, SMART Moves (Skills Mastery and Resistance Training) is a prevention program designed to address drug, alcohol, and sex education. Prevention programs and activities at the club are aimed to help the youth develop skills and training to act in a healthy manner. Many programs at the BGC were created to target at-risk youth.

At-Risk Adolescents

According to Edwards, Mumford & Serra-Roldan (2007), "Adversity experienced by children considered at-risk include various high risk factors such as poverty, divorce in the family, death in the family and an incarcerated parent" (p. 33). At-risk youth are individuals who experience serious life issues that could manifest themselves later in life in the form of health problems, single parenthood, drug and alcohol use, community discord, behavior problems, family discord, low socioeconomic status, and psychosocial stressors (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2012). Although youth are exposed to these risk factors, they are not necessarily involved in them. Addressing the needs of at-risk youth has certainly become a major issue for society. When creating effective youth programs, it is vital to understand the trials that many young people face growing up (McWhirter et al., 2012). Studying at-risk youth is a worthwhile academic

endeavor. Such studies can lead to interventions and recommendations for youth organizations seeking to improve developmental outcomes, which will make more likely the successful transitioning into adulthood.

What are the risks and behaviors of at-risk youth that grow up in adverse environments? Research provides some insight to this question. Children from adverse environments are faced with hardships, making it difficult for them to succeed during youth. Consequently it is seen as in society's best interest to develop institutions such as the BGC to help children overcome adverse environments. According to Rak & Patterson (1996), recreation professionals have a positive impact on at-risk youth. The authors noted that at-risk adolescents are less likely to reach their full potential as adults. Family discord and poverty are determining factors as well for children, but most importantly children are more likely to succeed with a strong support system (Rak & Patterson, 1996). According to Connolly & Morris (2011), stressors such as poverty, parental conflict and violence, mental health issues, and parents' misuse of drugs and alcohol can negatively affect children and their families. At-risk adolescents who are exposed to stressful environments are in danger of future negative outcomes such as, one-parent families, greater drug abuse, higher likelihood of crime/crime victim and greater incarceration rates (McWhirter et al., 2012). Edwards et al. (2007) noted, "...children at-risk are usually those who do not make good decisions or who make decisions that differ from the expectations of society. These children often do not achieve their personal and academic potential" (p. 31).

Parental involvement in education, or more specifically lack of parental involvement, is regarded as the initial factor in becoming at-risk. It is argued that

parenting is important for healthy success and development. Student achievement in school is closely related to parents who express high expectations, and parents who are involved in the learning process and in the community (Heymann & Earle, 2000). It is argued that while parental support is important, positive environments outside the home are needed to help young people transition into adulthood. Having adults other than parents present and involved in developmental experiences makes a significant difference in the lives of children and young adults, and helps children achieve their full potential through education and interventions (Heymann & Earle, 2000). Gutman, Peck and Sameroff (2003) suggested that adolescence is a time to examine risk factors and early detection can lead to better understanding of developmental outcomes. Halpern (2002) noted that organized programs for young people were created to provide them with positive opportunities. Inner city gang violence can have a negative impact on programming and recreational activities for adolescents. Halpern (1999) suggested that after-school programs provide safe places for young people. After-school programs can house children that live in rough neighborhoods during the evening hours, since most of the youth crimes are committed after-school. Edwards et al. (2007) noted that there is a combination of factors that contribute to an adolescent being at-risk. However, there is the belief that the development of resiliency can overcome many of the risk factors that children in these environments experience.

Resiliency

Resiliency is defined as having the strength to recover from a stressful situation despite adversity (Chen & George, 2005). This case study uses resilience, resilient and resiliency as an interchangeable expression of the same concept. Similarly, Resnick

(2000) noted that a

“Resiliency paradigm seeks to identify protective, nurturing factors in the lives of those who would otherwise be expected to be characterized by a variety of adverse outcomes. It explores positive prospects for adolescents at risk, a term used to describe a segment of the population that under current conditions has a low probability of growing into responsible, high functioning adulthood” (p. 159).

Resiliency and youth development emerged from research on at-risk children. The findings from previous resiliency studies provided the initial evidence that an individual can be resilient despite adversity and traumatic experiences faced throughout his or her life (Garmezy, 1971; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982). Boys and Girls Club and Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs have shown that participants that attend their program have a better chance of overcoming adversity, implying that some form of resiliency has been acquired through participation in these institutions (Anderson-Butcher & Cash, 2010; Lutz & Madia, 2004).

Richardson (2002) described three waves of resiliency inquiry: internal and external factors, environment factors, interventions and developmental systems. The first wave identified features that marked people who thrive in spite of high-risk situations or setbacks. This phase generated lists of qualities, assets, and factors considered important in protecting the individual. Most of the resiliency literature falls into this set.

Furthermore, the first wave of resiliency inquiry helps with understanding the internal and external factors that help young people cope with hardships in adverse environments. For example, in a study by Werner & Smith (1982) researchers studied children who were exposed to high risk environment factors for 30 years. The children involved in the study were exposed to poverty, perinatal stress and parental health issues (Werner & Smith, 1982). During the study researchers were able to examine and categorize

resiliency qualities that were present and helped young people overcome high-risk environments. The first wave of resiliency inquiry is essential because it identified qualities, traits, conditions and influences that helped people persevere despite adverse events and environment.

The second wave of inquiry examined the process of resiliency, and looked into the factors that nurture particular strengths. It attempted to understand the process of dealing with adversity. How an individual acquires or develops resilient qualities is important to the second wave of resiliency inquiry. Richardson (2002) noted that most individuals often find ways to overcome adverse situations by learning new skills, or by adapting to their environment. For example, in a study by Afifi & Keith (2004), post-divorce stepfamilies experienced a loss of family bond as well as the nuclear family idea. Some participants were able to persevere through the loss of family because of past family bonds, social support systems, previous family practices or the presence of a biological parent.

The last wave of inquiry examined innate resilience and focused on theories of resilience, motivational influences within individuals and groups, and experiences that fostered the growth and use of those influences (Richardson, 2002). The third wave of inquiry also argued that innate resilience is an identification of influential forces within individuals and groups that fosters the resilient qualities needed to predict social and personal success (Richardson, 2002). For example, the author noted that intuition from a spiritual source can be a strengthening factor, and individuals may experience resilience (Richardson, 2002).

This case study was grounded on the theoretical framework of resiliency theory

(Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Rak & Patterson, 1996; Rutter, 2012). This current study also explored Richardson's second wave of resilience development more in depth by examining resilience in adolescents in a specific BGC. This case study contributed to the overall knowledge base of the Murfreesboro, Boys and Girls participants regarding their programs.

Significance of Study

This study examined if Boys and Girls Club participants perceive the trait of resiliency as being facilitated at the Murfreesboro, Tennessee Boys and Girls Club. Changing the environment of youth by placing them in youth organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club could foster resiliency. Further, the mission of the club strives to provide young people with life enhancing opportunities, which aims to provide at-risk youth with a trait that may help them as adults.

This study will contribute to the literature on youth development in three ways. First, this study used the theoretical framework of resilience to see if its characteristics are evident in the perceptions of the youth at the MBGC. Secondly, youth will participate in program evaluation through direct accounts of their perceptions and experiences of program success. Finally, previous studies explored single programs, club experiences, typical club experiences, developmental skills and attendance records (Anderson-Butcher & Cash, 2010; Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003; Arbretton, 2009; Haberlin, 2014). These studies highlighted the importance of club for youth who attend. All of these studies suggest that there are significant factors present at the Boys and Girls Clubs that promote positive outcomes. This case study will explore the three aims of the

Murfreesboro, Boys and Girls Club through the lens of resiliency, rather than focusing on a singular aspect of the adolescents' experiences at BGC.

Operational Definitions

Resiliency is defined as having the strength to recover from a stressful situation in spite of the presence of adversity (Chen & George, 2005). Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that are related to risky behaviors, and which in turn lead to unwanted outcomes (Masten, 1994). In contrast, protective factors are conditions that help an individual overcome stress and adversity. Protective factors can include family, community, peers, programs, and mentorship programs that may counterbalance stress or adversity (Werner & Smith, 1982).

Research Design

A qualitative case study research design was used in this study to identify the perceptions of children who attend the Boys and Girls Club. This type of design was used to gain an understanding of the social and human problems that MBGC youth experience. Focus groups, interviews and field observations were conducted during this study to gather perceptions and the attitudes regarding the Murfreesboro, Boys and Girls Club. Selected participants were chosen for interviews based on responses during the focus groups. Fern (2001) suggested that focus groups are used to collect thoughts, identify, discover and for participants to share their experiences and feelings.

Inductive word coding was used to analyze the field notes and interview transcripts. Coding was used to identify patterns of words, phrases, and concepts in the data. Triangulating data from all these sources led the researcher to better understanding the findings presented in this study. First, this research design allowed the researcher to

gain a better understanding of feelings, values and perceptions of club participants overall experiences. Secondly, the research design also helped the researcher gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the different services and programs offered at the Boys and Girls Club. Lastly, this research allowed the researcher to examine resiliency from the participants' perspective.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of adolescents' overall experience at the Murfreesboro Boys and Girls Club, in the context of their goals, as they relate to the theory of resiliency. While it would be convenient to explore specific programs and their objectives, the variety of the Boys and Girls Club programs differ in structure, demographics and content. Thus the objectives of this study, based on the three goals, were to explore how resiliency is facilitated through the programs aligned with these MGBC goals: academic success, character and leadership.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Youth development is the process through which young people acquire skills and training to become healthy and productive adults. Resilience is associated with closely connected to positive youth development; resilience allows individuals to succeed during environmental threats, risk and stressors. Throughout the field of leisure studies, scholars have described resiliency in many ways. For the purposes of this study resiliency is defined as having the strength to recover from a stressful situation despite adversity (Chen & George, 2005). More succinctly, resiliency is the result of an individual persevering when faced with challenging situations.

There are theories within resilience research that have suggested that there are external factors that foster resiliency, while other theories have suggested that resilience is hardwired into the individual. Belsky and Pluess (2009) suggested that the commonly used dichotomy of nature and nurture can be used as descriptors summarizing the literature that explain factors for developing resilience early in life. The literature suggests that nature and nurture are influential in human behavior and argues that they both play interacting roles in human behavior rather than one being a more determinant factor.

Nature and Nurture

Several studies suggested that the interaction between nature and nurture both might have an influence on individual growth. Individuals tend to react differently to the environment but there is a need to understand the interaction between gene and environment (Dolan & Molenaar, 1995; Dunn, Eaves, Maughan et al., 1997; Plomin,

1995). Instead of human behavior being determined by one or the other, the literature suggests that nature and nurture both act in various degrees that impact human development. Genetic and environmental factors can act as protecting factors. However, it is difficult to determine how both may affect an individual. This notion of nature and nurture interplay is essential for examining resiliency among adolescents. There are numerous protective influences during the course of adolescence that contribute to young people developing resiliency from an early age.

Early studies highlighted individuals who were at risk for developing issues due to genetic and environmental factors. These studies were the building blocks for resiliency research. Researchers such as Garmezy (1985), Masten (1989), and Rutter (1979) examined resilience in children who were displaying maladaptive behaviors, while adapting positive outcomes despite being exposed to high-risk conditions. More longitudinal studies that examine nature and nurture are needed to determine the direct effects of genetic and environment. Nature and nurture are important considerations but facilitating resiliency is a more practical consideration for this study. The scope of this study is not about nature or nurture but more about youth who are capable of developing resiliency through social organizations.

Resiliency

Resiliency practices have been evolving over the last eighty years, and within the last two decades resilience studies have had a significant impact in the field of youth and resiliency (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Rak & Patterson, 1996; Rutter, 2012). Resiliency theory has grown into a unique field of study that addresses individuals from all walks of life including children

and adults, families, communities and individuals with disabilities. Rutter (1987) has described resiliency as the “positive pole of individual differences in people’s response to stress and adversity” (p. 316). Likewise, Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) defined resiliency as the “positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma” (p. 2). Yet, Rak and Patterson (1996) defined resiliency as the “ability to recover readily from illness, depression, adversity, or the like” (p. 368). Literature surrounding resiliency has indicated there are multiple definitions and understandings of resiliency. For this study resiliency was operationalized as having the strength to recover from a stressful situation despite adversity (Chen & George, 2005).

Resiliency studies are based on two different constructs, one being the exposure to adversity, and the second being achievement of positive adaptation regardless of existing risk (Luther and Cicchetti, 2000). Masten & Obradovic (2006) noted that in order to evaluate the effects of resiliency a precedent must be in place for identifying whether the child is responding as it should be in a situation and also if there has been a threat that can possibly cause harm. The literature is suggesting that resilience is most understood as a process. A process of developing skillsets that allow an individual to adapt to a hostile environment. For instance, children thriving socially and academically in spite of adverse situations, they still manage to survive.

In short, resilience theory addresses the strengths that individuals exhibit during challenging life experiences that allows them to rise above adversity. Resiliency will not necessarily make problems go away, but resiliency can provide one with the ability to overcome adversity. Rutter (1987) noted that some individuals might overcome adverse

situations, while other people become victims of stressful situations. People respond differently to certain stressful events but furthermore, people that survive stressful events earlier in life might struggle with another stressful event later in life (Rutter, 1987).

Understanding how and why at-risk adolescents prosper in spite of their situations, such as violence, poverty, substance abuse and family illness is essential for this study. Using a resilient-based approach for understanding youth development led to identifying the protective factors and processes that account for positive outcomes.

Building Resiliency

The idea of resilience emerged from several studies that were conducted in the 1970s. Pioneering researchers such as (Garmezy, 1971; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1981) examined children who were exposed to adversity, poverty and chronic stress. Interestingly, the findings from these studies suggested that many children, despite exposure to high risk factors, did not experience permanently harmful developmental outcomes.

Garmezy (1971) examined children from schizophrenia families. He was interested in understanding the long-term effects of children born to schizophrenic mothers, which later led to strategies for investigating resilience. The study revealed that children from schizophrenic families are more likely to develop schizophrenia later in life. However, a very small percentage of children in this study actually developed schizophrenia. He suggested that children from high-risk communities are at-risk for experiencing high-risk conditions late in the late adolescent stage. On the other hand, there were a small percentage of children who overcame adverse situations in spite of their situations that were labeled as invulnerable. From this study, Garmezy used the

findings to further suggest the need for longitudinal studies that focused on invulnerable and vulnerable children from high-risk environments who are capable of prevailing regardless of their situation.

Rutter (1979) examined children of parents who suffered from mental illnesses on the Isle of Wight. This epidemiological study highlighted evidence of resilience factors among at-risk children. There were over 2,000 boys interviewed in this study ranging from nine to 12 years of age. It was also further noted that a large number of children in the study did not exhibit abnormalities in their development. Rutter (1979) suggested that more than one stressor needs to be present in order to have a significant impact on the development of children, and that multiple stressors could lessen the chances of positive outcomes. He emphasized the importance of schooling and how students can develop protective factors from school environments. Rutter's study shifted the focus from resiliency to the importance of understanding how protective factors are developed in the midst of at-risk environments.

Smith and Werner (1981) conducted a longitudinal study on 660 children of Kauai. This study examined the resiliency of children that were faced with poverty, perinatal stress and family discord. The study revealed high risk factors that children were subjected to within their environment. Smith and Werner (1981) noted that children with multiple risk factors developed serious problems by later in life. However, one-third of the children exposed to risk factors did well regardless of their taxing situation. More importantly, it was the presence of protective factors that led to positive development in resilient children. Smith and Werner (1981) suggested that protective factors were both

internal and external, and such factors included; family, friends; environment and care during infancy. Overall, these three studies were instrumental in developing the foundation for resiliency theory. Each study provided evidence that there are other factors that contributed to positive developmental outcomes. From these three studies arose the terms *risk* and *protective factors*, which are terms used to investigate and identify certain children who are able to succeed regardless of their situation and being classified as resilient. The next section examines the emergence of risk factors and protective factors in relation to the study of resilience and adolescents.

Risk Factors. Among many researchers the most common predictor of resilience is the presence of risk factors for the individual. According to Best, Garmezy and Masten (1990), risk factors are generally a set of conditions or variables that are related to risky behaviors and adverse outcomes. This literature suggests that resilience researchers study risk factors to gain a better understanding of the resilient characteristics a person displays in the midst of high-risk situations. Furthermore, Best, Garmezy and Masten (1990) suggested that many individuals still succeed despite the exposure to high-risk conditions, such as: family distress, low income, prenatal stress and poverty.

Rak and Patterson (1996) noted that in order for a risk to occur there has to be an identifiable risk for adversity to exist. Risk does not always end in a negative outcome. At-risk adolescents can also avoid negative outcomes despite their circumstances (1996). Interestingly, the research revealed that there has to be more than one stressor to be considered a risk factor. There are also family conditions that promote resiliency. Support from family members and close neighbors can have a positive effect on adolescent

outcome. Nurturing during the early stages and parent cohesion can help foster resiliency in children. Rak and Patterson (1996) mentioned that the environment plays a vital role in buffering children. It has been noted that most resilient children receive outside support from mentors. Role models outside of the family may provide positive assistance. For example, adolescents from low-income households may receive additional assistance from teachers or coaches.

Johnson and Wiechelt (2004) noted that there are a number of risk factors that individuals are exposed to but it is important to keep in mind that not everyone responds the same in traumatic situations. Child poverty is very much linked to low quality parenting, which is a result of low socio-economic status. Resiliency is achieved when individuals are able to see past their adversity. Johnson and Wiechelt suggested that everyone might not demonstrate resiliency during a stressful situation, because different risk factors lead to different outcomes (2004).

Identifying underlying risk factors can be complex. Many resiliency scholars have had trouble identifying specific factors that are associated with negative outcomes within resiliency. Eckenrode and Gore (1996) suggested that it is difficult to measure potential risk indicators because each individual experiences different life stressors. Each individual is exposed to different levels of adversity, which makes it difficult to address the nature of each experience (Eckenrode & Gore, 1996). Therefore, assumptions should not be made about the influence of risk factors on individual outcomes. It is important to understand how risk factors affect the individual in high-risk environments. Even though individuals that are exposed to risk have a higher chance of negative outcomes, it does

not guarantee a negative outcome. Protective factors are positive attributes in individuals that help them persevere through high-risk situations.

Protective Factors. Being exposed to traumatic experiences can have lasting effects on people, in particular young people. Not everyone is affected the same way; resiliency literature suggests that protective factors impact the way people process stressful events. Bogat, Eye, Lenendosky and Torteya (2009) noted, “protective factors refer to the characteristics that enhance adaptation” (p. 563). Yet, Eckenrode and Gore (1996) proposed that protective factors are arranged in two groups: (1) internal factors, with a personal and natural factor that is influenced by social interactions; and (2) external factors, for example support systems, caring relationships, positive peer influence, sense of community and positive relationships with parents. Eckenrode and Gore (1996) noted that internal and external factors are significant for decreasing risk. However, Werner and Smith (2001) noted that protective factors help promote positive well-being. The more internal and external factors available to an individual the more likely an individual will be successful in spite of adverse situations. It was noted that the presence of protective factors would help offset risk for individuals that are exposed to multiple risk factors. Protective factors, whether internal or external, are able to prevent risk (2001).

Resilience research indicates that protective factors are conditions that protect individuals from exposure to risk. Therefore, protective factors should foster positive development. Rutter (1990) proposed four types of protective processes: there are those that reduce the risk impact or a person’s level of exposure to a potential risk; protective factors that reduce negative chain reactions as a result from a negative experience;

protective factors that promote positive self-assurance through success and, new opportunities that encourages growth and positive development. Therefore the more protective factors that are present the greater amount of resiliency is developed. Overall, the resilience literature proposes that risk and protective factors together can influence developmental outcomes.

Sensitizing Resiliency Research

This section will focus on studies of resilience that have most influenced this investigation (Bauman, Bearman, Blum, et al. 1997; Buzzanell & Lucas, 2012; Portman & Williams, 2014; Shaw & Vanderbilt-Adriance, 2008). Shaw and Vanderbilt-Adriance (2008) investigated benefits of sole protective factors and how they might change depending on the severity and persistence within the neighborhood. Using a sample of young men followed from infancy to early adolescence they found that three to five protective factors were closely related with child positive outcome regardless of exposure to neighborhood disadvantage. Also, high levels of significant-other relationships were closely related with positive social adjustment for children in low disadvantage neighborhoods. Overall, this current study noted the importance of family environment and child IQ for promoting positive adjustment for children.

Portman and Williams (2014) examined African American high school graduates to gain a better understanding of what students from high-risk areas needed to succeed. They discovered six themes that participants shared relating to the interview questions. Themes consisted of shared responsibilities for educational outcomes, being a part of the solutions, parental involvement, natural support systems, school counselors and community collaborations. It was further noted that children from low-income

backgrounds expressed the need for partnerships among families, community groups and schools in order to successfully address personal and academic concerns. Most importantly, the study revealed how internal and external support systems are significant to positive development and academic progress.

In a study of hard times and how resilience is created, Buzzanell and Lucas (2012) analyzed messages from families about finances during children's young years. These messages seemed to contribute to short and long-term resiliency behaviors among participant children. It was suggested that communication is the heart of developing resiliency in young children. Four themes were generated from their study: numbers talk, tightening the belt, sidelining, and preparing (Buzzchell & Lucas, 2012). As a result, the study revealed that straightforward conversations presented a sense of self-confidence that the family would persevere through tough times. Family support and trust are defining factors for creating resiliency. The study indicated that family conversations during hard times helped children overcome difficult circumstances in their lives.

Bauman et al. (1997) examined the risk and protective factors at the school, family and individual level. Bauman et al. (1997) used a cross sectional analysis of data in comparison with their longitudinal study. The study indicated that parent family connectedness and perceived school connectedness were protective against health risk variables that were measured except past pregnancy. Additionally, the parental academic expectations regarding school performances were closely related to lower levels of risky behaviors.

All four studies shared similar commonalties in their findings. Support, communication, community, protective factors and family relations all seem to have an

impact on the amount of resiliency in young people lives. Similarly, the results from the four studies suggest that positive internal and external factors are significant in promoting positive social adjustment for individuals that are exposed to high-risk conditions. The following section of the literature will focus on research in Boys and Girls Club organizations.

Research in Boys and Girls Clubs. This section will focus on Boys and Girls Club studies that have most influenced this investigation (Anderson-Butcher & Cash, 2010; Anderson-Buchter, Newsome & Ferrari, 2003; Arbretton, Bradshaw, Pepper & Sheldon, 2009; Campbell, Kaltreider, Mark, & St. Pierre, 2001; Carruthers & Busser, 2000; Kaltreider & St. Pierre, 1997). Campbell, Kaltreider, Mark, and Pierre (2001) examined the effectiveness of the after-school substance prevention program for high-risk youth. The program was created to reduce the risk of substance abuse and increase protective factors. Findings from the study suggested that programs had a positive effect on youth personal competency skills. Anderson-Buchter, Newsome and Ferrari (2003) examined participation in educational and prevention programs such as Project SMART and Project Learn at the Boys and Girls Club. Results revealed that attendance had a direct impact on positive outcomes. It is important for youth to actually attend to experience benefits from such programs. Further results suggested that the presence of friends at club and parents expectations of attendance motivated youth to attend club daily. Similarly, Kaltreider and St. Pierre (1997) conducted a three-year longitudinal study using parents of high-risk youth involved in a drug prevention program for members of Boys and Girls Club. Participants were exposed to high-risk neighborhoods, drugs and violence. The study revealed that youth who were involved in the prevention

program activities and Boys and Girls Club had a greater resistance to drugs, alcohol and cigarettes. Busser and Carruthers (2000) examined the level of congruence between the agency's mission statement, goals, staff members, parents, and club member's perceptions of the club impact. The study revealed that youth who participated in the club experienced positive behavior and an increase in self-esteem. Results further suggested staff should strive to make a greater connection between activities and program goals. Moreover, staff tended to focus on activities that developed caring relationships and positive behaviors.

All four studies shared commonalties in their findings. Support, parents, community, protective factors and structured prevention all seem to be related to positive outcomes among youth. Similarly, the results from the four studies suggest that attendance, staff, active participation, structured programs, and internal and external factors are significant in promoting positive social adjustment for individuals that are exposed to high-risk environments. The following section of the literature will focus on the two Boys and Girls Club studies that most sensitized this current study.

Arbreton, Bradshaw, Pepper & Sheldon (2009) examined the three aims of Boys and Girls Club of America in relation to development. Attendance records were collected from a 30-month period. In order to gain a better understanding of the club and participant interactions, interviews were used to collect information. The findings from this study showed that teens felt much safer while participating and attending the club. The authors noted that teens voiced a sense of connection to the club just from attending, and that teens who were engaged in the club at a younger age were more involved in activities and leadership roles. Additionally, the findings from this study highlight the

importance of club for teens that attend. The club served as a safe environment where teens felt comfortable and welcomed by supportive adults. It was suggested that the teens from this study had positive attitudes toward school based on their club participation. Findings from this study explored attendance records, club experiences and single programs. This study used a resilience framework to explore positive adjustment outcomes for youth. The researchers were able to identify protective factors that were present at the Boys and Girls Club. It is important for the Boys and Girls Club to understand the process that allows individuals to succeed in spite of adverse situations.

In a study on participation in Boys and Girls Club and problem behaviors, Anderson-Butcher and Cash (2010) analyzed whether participation in programs decreased vulnerability, which lessens the chances of young people getting into risky situations. Anderson-Butcher and Cash (2010) referred to the risk and resilience context because it examined direct experiences and behaviors associated with positive outcomes for young people. Vulnerability and problem behaviors are results of negative exposure to internal and external features. However, when young people are exposed to protective factors, they are less likely to perform problem behaviors (2010). They found that youth involvement in the organization was essential for self-concepts among young people. It is important to note that questionnaires were used to assess problem behaviors, multiple risk and protective factors. The Utah Division of Substance Abuse Needs Assessment Survey was used to collect data and provide information about youth behaviors.

The existing literature on the Boys and Girls Club is consistent with the first wave of resiliency research. The researchers focused more on understanding internal and external factors that help young people cope. This case study focused on understanding

the processes of resiliency. The researcher examined the perceptions and experiences of adolescents' at the Murfreesboro Boys and Girls Club in order to understand how an individual develops resiliency traits.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The question asked in this dissertation is, “Do participants in the Murfreesboro Boys and Girls Club perceive themselves to be “resilient” because of their participation in the BGC”? It was anticipated that the development of resiliency would have a positive impact on academic success, character and leadership development and healthy lifestyles, which promoted positive youth behavior. The research question was designed to capture the perceptions and experiences of the adolescents’ at the MBGC. There are a variety of methods that can be used to answer this question, including philosophical, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method, and a combination of these methods were used to answer the above question.

Based on the research question and objectives, a qualitative methodology was selected, as this provided the best mechanism for getting answers to the questions generated. In general this study seeks to understand the perspective of children active in Boys and Girls Clubs, and Erickson’s (2011) argues that regarding qualitative inquiry explains why this method was chosen. “Qualitative inquiry seeks to discover and to describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. It identifies meaning-relevant kinds of things in the world” (Erickson, 2011, p.43). Qualitative research allowed the researcher to collect facts about human behavior, personal characteristics and emotions.

The data collected from qualitative research is the exact description of the participants, and consists of information about needs, specific behaviors and even routines. Unger (2003) stated that qualitative methods are appropriate for researching resiliency because:

Well suited to the discovery of unnamed processes; they study the phenomenon in very specific contexts, their trustworthiness strengthened by the thickness of the description of that context; they elicit and add power to minority 'voices' which account for unique localized definitions of positive outcomes; they promote tolerance for these localized constructions by avoiding generalization in favor of transferability; and they require the researchers to account for the bias inherent in the social location (p. 86).

The researcher is responsible for reporting the various ways in which resiliency is experienced by the youth at the MBGC. Thus, a qualitative inquiry allowed the findings to convey a richness of detail regarding the MBGC programs as it relates to the facilitation of resiliency.

Merriam (1998) suggested that qualitative inquiry helps describe and understand conditions in their natural setting with minimal disruption. It further noted that the participants' perceptions of a social phenomenon is imperative, and is more important than the researcher's perspective. Case studies, which can be generated from the accounts gathered by an investigator, are used to gain an in-depth of understanding of a particular experienced phenomenon. Consequently the perceptions lead to discovery rather than confirmation. Case studies are simply analyses of the reports of participants' decisions, organizations, programs, events and policies.

Case Study Methodology

A qualitative case study research design was used for this study. Merriam (2001) noted that a case study methodology can be used as a means to truly understand a situation and the importance of the phenomenon studied to those involved. Case study

method should be selected to fit the case and research questions, and should be studied in its own wholeness. A strength of using case study research is that it involves using multiple sources and techniques during the data gathering process (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Using a case study methodology allowed this research to be conducted in a meaningful context that described the development of resiliency within the Boys and Girls Club of Murfreesboro (MBGC). According to Flyvbjerg (2001), a case study provides the chance to collect more in-depth information about the phenomenon in greater detail. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggested that case study methodology, along with being a mechanism of research, is also a way of learning. Case study research offers both an understanding of the topic as well as it can be used to improve theory. Case study research is both analysis and examination of a single or collective case, with the intent being to grasp more fully the complexity of the phenomenon under study (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

The nature of the research questions and the need for an in-depth description of a phenomenon in its natural setting makes case study methodology the ideal methodology for this study. Stake (2000) noted that the case study approach is used as inquiry to explore a program, activity, and process of one or more individuals. This investigation is initiated by a need to know about the distinctiveness of the case, instead of trying to compare multiple cases.

Case studies help researchers depict a holistic point of view of the phenomenon under study. A case study allowed a depth of information to be obtained using a specific phenomenon such as an individual unit, event or program (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Case study facilitates examination of a phenomenon by using numerous data sources.

Multiple data sources were used to examine the cases within its natural context, which allowed exploration through a variety of lenses. Focus groups and interviews provided high quality data in a context that allowed the researcher to understand the phenomenon in a natural and real-life environment. According to Flyvbjerg (2001), case studies are problem driven and seek to gain a depth of understanding, therefore they attempt to understand the whole phenomenon in the totality of the environment.

This study attempted to determine if the Boys and Girls Club programs are fostering resiliency by examining the three aims of the Boys and Girls Club. A case study methodology was best suited for this study because the Boys and Girls Club programs are suspected to be a determining factor for the level of resiliency being developed. The cases are the individuals that participate in Boys and Girls Club, and they are relevant in the context of resiliency; while attending and participating in the club. Additionally, an advantage of case study research is that it allows the researcher to isolate an individual case, event or specific population. For instance, “Learning to see—habituating the eye to repose, to patience, to letting things come to it; learning to defer judgment, to investigate and comprehend the individual case in all its aspects” (Flyvbjerg, 1997, p. 1).

Flyvbjerg argued that is not difficult to develop generalizations with the use of a case study. In fact, making generalizations and providing in depth examples can strengthen a study. The task is to make generalizations in an appropriate manner based on the responses received from the participants. According to Flyvbjerg (2001), case studies are capable of producing generalizations because of their in-depth approach. The resiliency theory is used as a guide. The strength of the cases lies in how many cases support the theory. Therefore the more cases that support the hypotheses, the more the

results will represent theoretical replication. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggested that interpretations and findings create a glimpse of time and practice, which produces “concrete, practical and contextual dependent knowledge” of circumstances that can be generated or connected to familiar practices (pg. 70). Case study research suggests that more good case studies will strengthen social science. Case studies can help bring meaning to a complex issue and add value to what is already known by conducting research (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Multiple cases that have common conclusions provide generalizability of findings according to the theory, which will allow findings to be generalized among the experiences of the participants at the MBGC. For this proposed research, there was very little research regarding the facilitation of the development of resiliency at the Boys and Girls Club, so knowledge gained from this study was new and distinctive. This case study furthered Boys and Girls Club research by examining the level of effectiveness of program goals and program components at a particular club site. Previous studies examined how individuals coped with adversity, instead examining protective processes that were targeted to the youth.

Another goal of this study is to evaluate the different components of the program. The real strength of a case study lies in the “depth, richness, completeness, and within-case variance-whereas for statistical methods it is breadth” (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 314). This specific study focused on the three aims of the Murfreesboro, Boys and Girls Club. More specifically, this study examined the perceptions and experiences of participants in order to draw conclusions from their responses. This study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs at the MBGC. The important components of this study were the perceptions and experiences, which provided the assessment needed to evaluate

the three aims of MGBC. Participants responded to questions that were specifically created and asked through the use of semi-structured group interviews and individual interviews.

The participants' experiences and perceptions were the cases used to evaluate the objectives of MGBC. This is what made it a case study design instead of a narrative analysis. Data for a narrative and a case study can be very similar, but the way the data is collected matters. The case study approach that was selected for this study allowed participants to report a direct representation of their experiences versus an assembly of their stories. Creswell (2013) stated, "Narrative analysis focuses on stories told from individuals, and stories are then arranged in chronological order" (pg. 102). When a researcher does narrative analysis he gathers data through collecting stories to construct a narrative about a person or phenomenon; the story becomes the object of the study. On the other hand, "case studies are selected to illustrate an issue or study a social phenomenon in order to draw a conclusion, the researcher compiles a detailed description of the cases" (Creswell, 2013, p. 102).

Ultimately, it is important to select a case that can be limited or explained within a real-life setting (Creswell, 2013). The voices from participants' will provide insight for future research, by identifying key issues and services that will help strategize ways to implement successes that could foster the development of resiliency.

Sample Selection

The researcher used information-oriented process to obtain participants for this study. Flyvbjerg (2011) suggested, "Cases should be selected on the basis of expectations about their information content" (p. 307). This selection process allowed the researcher to

select intense cases that were directly related to the phenomenon, which allowed the cases to be thoroughly analyzed. Flyvbjerg (2011) further noted that information from small samples and singles cases would increase the value of information received from each case. The researcher contacted the executive director to gain access and permission into the MBGC, before conducting the study. In this study, the researcher asked the MBGC staff to identify members who likely participate in this case study. An IRB approved consent form was sent to the parents of all of the members involved in the teen center at the MBGC (Appendix D). This helped the researcher save time and allowed participants to be selected who would provide a great deal of information.

Maxwell (2005) noted that having a selection strategy to help select specific individuals, places or events in order to extract specific information that cannot be gathered from any other sources. The teenagers for this study were selected using the information-oriented process (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The researcher collected data from the teenage population (ages 13-18) of 20 teenagers at the Murfreesboro site. All twenty participants who were part of the focus groups volunteered to be interviewed. Seven of the participants were male and thirteen were female. There were eleven participants in the study that identified as African American, five participants identified as Multiracial American and four participants identified as White American. Eleven of the participant's parents received a college education. There were six participants' who parents only completed high school. Two of the participants' parents received some college education but did not finish the program. Lastly, one participant reported that his parents went on to complete a graduate program.

Table One provides a description of the participants” who participate in the study. The table includes demographics, interview and focus groups, grade level, race, birth date and gender.

Table 1. *Participant Description*

| Names: | Gender | Grade | Race | Age | Focus Group | Interview |
|---------|--------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----|-------------|-----------|
| Tammy | Female | Freshman | White and Black | 15 | Yes | Yes |
| Lamar | Male | Junior | Black | 17 | Yes | Yes |
| Corey | Male | 8 th grade | Black | 14 | Yes | No |
| Tony | Male | Sophomore | Black | 16 | Yes | Yes |
| Tiffany | Female | 8 th grade | Black | 15 | Yes | No |
| Carrie | Female | 8 th grade | Black and Hispanic | 15 | Yes | Yes |
| Stacey | Female | Junior | Black and American Indian | 17 | Yes | No |
| Mae | Female | 8 th grade | Black and American Indian | 15 | Yes | Yes |
| Sarah | Female | Sophomore | White | 16 | Yes | Yes |
| Dre | Male | Freshmen | Black | 15 | Yes | No |
| Nick | Male | 8 th grade | Black | 14 | Yes | No |
| Jess | Female | Sophomore | Black | 16 | Yes | No |
| Alicia | Female | 8 th grade | Black | 14 | Yes | No |
| Lindsey | Female | Sophomore | Black and American Indian | 16 | Yes | No |
| Ronnie | Female | Freshmen | White | 15 | Yes | No |
| Ted | Male | 8 th grade | White | 14 | Yes | No |
| Ci Ci | Female | 8 th grade | Black | 14 | Yes | No |
| Nancy | Female | 8 th grade | White | 15 | Yes | No |
| Ann | Female | 8 th grade | Black | 15 | Yes | No |

Case and Location

Location. The Boys and Girls Club is located in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, which is one of the independent organizations within the national organization. For this study the researcher surveyed and collected data at the Murfreesboro club site. The Murfreesboro club site offers services and resources to all youth and teenagers located in the area between the ages of 5 and 18 years old. The population is composed of approximately 35 teenagers enrolled at the Murfreesboro club site location. The hours of club operation are Monday through Friday, 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM. During non-school days the club is open from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM. There is a cost per member at the club site. Each member is required to pay a membership fee of forty dollars at the start the program.

Teens are offered three programs throughout the year at the club site. The teenage members all participate in the following activities and programs: Academic Success, Good Character & Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles. Healthy Lifestyle is a program designed to help young people engage in positive behaviors that allow them to be accountable for their own well-being. Young people actively engage in programs that facilitate physical fitness skills and stress management skills. The Healthy Lifestyle program addresses: teen based mentoring, drug/alcohol prevention, gang resistance training and Internet safety. The recreational aspect of the Healthy Lifestyles program seeks to increase participation in intramural leagues, social recreation, and daily activities. The Academic Success program was created to help young people with literacy, mathematics, and science skills. This program aims to prepare young people with tools to access technology needed to compete in today's society. Youth at the club

receive tutoring and homework assistance. Young people participating in the program receive cultural enrichment skills such as: create writing, cultural appreciation, fine arts and digital arts. Character and Leadership Development is a program designed to encourage young people to be leaders. Young people engaged in this program gain opportunities to serve their community. This program helps to build good character and leadership skills by having young people collaborate with community leaders and serve on various community projects.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study involved multiple sources including focus groups, semi-structured interviews and field observations. The use of multiple sources led to triangulation. Triangulation is the confirmation and generation of data from multiple sources using several methods (Stake, 1995). It was further noted that triangulation is a good method for ensuring reliability in results (Stake, 1995). Multiple methods were used to collect and compare data. Triangulation for this study included focus groups, interviews and field notes. According to Yin (2013) triangulation can be used to crosscheck information during data collection in order to permit integrity. Methods and data source triangulation is important for strengthening the validity. Yin (2009) and Stake (2000) agree that triangulation is vital to performing a case study consistently. Further sources of data allow case study researchers to construct a story that honors participants' meaning-making processes.

The use of multiple sources of data allowed case studies to be more complete. Multiple sources of evidence strengthened the research design. The emerging themes determined when enough data was gathered. Finally, when new themes ceased to appear,

saturation was achieved and additional data were not required. Placing data in different categories helped the investigator develop several themes that helped provide good descriptive information for later conclusions and recommendations.

Participants were told that engagement was voluntary and confidential. Stake (1995) noted that qualitative researchers enjoy determining and surveying multiple views of the case. Focus groups and interviews provided multiple views of the case and experiences. It was further suggested that participant's responses and their own words allowed the researcher to obtain an insight of feelings, experiences, reactions, and intentions (Biklen, 1992). It is understood that it is difficult to maintain confidentiality within focus groups using case study methods. It is important to note that participation in a focus group discussion was not a requirement for participation. The researcher conducted focus groups in locations that were accessible to participants and time convenient. The focus groups served as a method to refine the theoretical understandings that emerged.

Field Observations. The researcher observed the physical setting, the participants in action, the activities and interactions, and conversations between the members of the Boys and Girls Club. The researcher also observed their less obvious actions as well, like their nonverbal communication cues. For instance, observing their physical space and interactions with different social groups. A note taking method was used to gather and document what they were doing throughout the club in a passive and discreet manner so that the researcher did not draw attention.

Focus groups. Focus groups allowed participants to express views, attitudes and experiences, which helped the researcher gain a better understanding of the overall club

experience. Casey and Krueger (2010) suggested that focus groups could be used as a first step to identify potential problem areas allowing a more in-depth analysis. Each participant was able to draw from another experiences, which led to more openly expressed ideas and opinions. Focus groups recognize participants as experts and allow group interactions that encourage attempts to identify, analyze and find solutions to problems (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Focus groups were conducted at the MBGC facility inside of the teen center during club normal operational hours. The guiding questions for each focus group were prepared by the researcher and approved by the committee chair (See Appendix B). The focus group questions were directly related to the research question and each objective. The researcher successfully completed Middle Tennessee State University's IRB training before the study took place.

Participants selected for the study signed consent documents prior to the session, and parents signed consent forms before participants were selected (See Appendix A). Focus groups lasted from 55 to 70 minutes in length. Focus groups were audiotaped with permission of the participants, and the researcher served as a mediator during the group discussion. The researcher took hand written notes during each session to ensure accuracy of the transcriptions received from the audio recordings.

Individual interviews. In order to gain a detailed illustration of participants' experiences related to their club participation, the researcher conducted interviews after the focus group. Interviews were audio recorded and semi-structured. All forms of qualitative interviews are naturalistic extensions of conversations, interviewees become "partners in the research enterprise rather than subjects to be tested or examined" (Rubin

& Rubin, 2005, p. 12). The questions pertaining to the interview were included in the focus group protocol. An interview protocol was used during the interview (See Appendix C).

The participants' insights were extremely helpful in assisting with understanding their experiences at the Boys and Girls Club. The participants were interviewed between April 20, 2015, and April 25, 2015. The interviews were held in a closed off classroom to protect the participants' identity. Interviews were conducted face to face and lasted 50 – 65 minutes. Recording the audio during the interview helped capture accurate transcription. During each interview the researcher jotted down notes, this helped highlight key points of importance from each participant during the interview.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview approach. Merriam (2002) noted that open-ended questions are good for obtaining demographic information, and participants' perceptions and experiences. All questions from the interview protocol were open-ended questions. Follow-up questions and a probing technique were used to help encourage participants to generously respond to questions. After all interviews were completed the researcher started the transcription process. A secondary transcriber reviewed each transcript to ensure additional accuracy.

Data Analysis

For this study, participant names were coded using fictional names. A strict process was used to protect the names and the information concerning all of the participants. The participant's information was stored on a secure flash drive and locked in a file cabinet. Audio recordings were stored in a locked file cabinet at all times. Inductive word coding and thematic analysis was used to analyze the field notes.

Inductive word coding was used to identify patterns of words, phrases, and concepts that are located on the field notes. Thematic analysis was used to further analysis the data by identifying common themes that exist throughout the coded data (Creswell, 2009). A researcher who was not associated with the study was asked to review the field notes (without identifying data) and report their interpretation from the field notes. This additional researcher helped to strengthen the reliability and validity of the study.

Stake (1997) believed that the bulk of the findings are determined by the researcher's interpretation. Therefore, a solid analytic approach was in place for examining the data. Creswell (2009) developed a coding approach for social sciences that allowed codes to emerge during the data analysis (p. 187). For this study, the researcher used Creswell's (2009) six steps of coding for the data analysis process. This coding technique helped with development of emerging themes from the data collection.

Step 1: Organize and prepare data for analysis. During this step, the researcher evaluated audio files from focus groups and interviews and transferred them into word document transcripts.

Step 2: Carefully read through the data. The researcher reflected on the complete meaning to ensure that he gained a general sense of the information received from the participants. The researcher listened to the audio files a number of times to understand the participants' perspective.

Step 3: Start a detailed analysis with the coding process. The researcher used Creswell's procedure for organizing the data into sections by turning the text data into categories. The researcher also labeled the categories with key words that the participants actually used.

Step 4: Involves using the coding technique to generate a description of the setting or people and categories for these analyses. This process helped me generate codes for descriptions, which lead to generalizing themes. Overall, this step led me to analyzing the themes that emerged.

Step 5: Advance how the narrative of the themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative. The researcher merged the emergent themes into narrative passages, so that the findings emerged reasonably from the responses of the participant.

Step 6: Interpret the meaning of the data. For this step, the researcher engaged in the meaning making process. It is important to transfer the participants' perceptions of their experiences accurately.

Developing codes furthered understandings of the organization, programs and participants. Once data was collected through focus groups, audiotapes and interviews it was manually transcribed to a Word document to facilitate analysis.

Delimitation

This case study was delimited to three Rutherford county Boys and Girls Club locations. This study was confined only to the Murfreesboro, Boys and Girls club location. Focus groups, field observations and interviews were used for this case study. Each participant guardian gave permission for participation in this study.

Limitations

1. Participants' experiences and perceptions of the MBGC will vary between clubs and members. Findings from this study will not be generalizable to other Boys and Girls Clubs.

2. Since the participants were limited to club members, a larger sample including staff, parents, community mentor and teacher could provide additional insight to the overall club experience, by reporting information according to their perceptions and experience.

3. Another limitation to the study was based on the data collection. Information was depended on the participants' personal perceptions and experiences, which was limited to their experiences. Nonetheless, the triangulation method used in this case study helped verify findings, and helped support the participant responses.

Evaluation and Trustworthiness

It is important for the researcher to show trustworthiness so that this case study will be credible. Validity issues for this case study are based on field observations, interviews and focus groups pertaining to the authenticity of the representations of the participants' reality. It is important to constantly check the creditability of sources that are used throughout the study. In this case study, the researcher established trustworthiness through transferability and credibility.

Transferability. The research findings should be able to be applied in other studies. The researcher should use thick descriptions. Thick description is when the researcher collects in depth descriptions of data from participants' and reports them in a very detailed manner that will allow others to relate to the responses. The researcher used very detailed accounts of participants' responses from focus groups, interviews and field observations. The findings should be able to display applicability in other contexts (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). For this case study, the findings should help other Boys and Girls Clubs develop a criterion to evaluate their program.

Credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that there must be a level of confidence in the truth among the findings. There are seven techniques used to establish credibility in a study, the techniques include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy and member checking. For this case study the researcher used triangulation. Stake (1995) noted that triangulation is the confirmation and generation of data from multiple sources to collect data such as interviews, focus groups and field observations. Triangulation helped check and obtain consistency among the findings.

An ethical issue to consider during this study would be informed consent of minors and anonymity. Ethical concern about privacy, confidentiality and anonymity can easily arise in phenomenological inquiry, when people reveal their personal experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The initial research question that guided this study was “Do participants in the Murfreesboro Boys and Girls Club perceive themselves to be “resilient” because of their participation in the BGC?” The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of adolescents’ overall experience at the Murfreesboro Boys and Girls Club, in the context of their goals, as they relate to the theory of resiliency. During this study the MBGC participants were asked to provide an in-depth understanding of their personal development in which the club has helped in a positive or negative manner to determine the overall influence of the club on each participant and their life experiences. Specifically, the study examined the three goals of the organization: academic success, character and leadership development and healthy lifestyles.

This chapter presents the findings based on the research question and objectives. All findings were related to the participants’ experiences and perceptions at MBGC: perceptions and experiences of academic success, perceptions and experiences of character and servant leadership, perceptions and experiences of healthy lifestyles and caring relationships at the MBGC. The objectives of this study, based on the three goals, were to explore the:

- (1) Impact of the academic success goal on MBGC adolescents’ perceptions of various club academic programs;
- (2) Impact of character and leadership development of club activities on MBGC adolescents perceptions of their ability to become leaders and build meaningful relationships with others; and
- (3) The effectiveness of club healthy lifestyle activities on MBGC adolescents’

perceptions of their ability to engage in positive behavior.

Objective One

Impact of the academic success goal on MBGC adolescents' perceptions of various club academic programs

The first theme: perceptions and experiences of academic success at the MBGC, provided personal stories and experiences of participants' academic success. Participants reported that good students follow the rules in school, complete all assignments, get good grades, and follow directions. Other participants reported that MBGC provides adequate academic assistance for all members. Participants shared their perceptions and experiences through their personal stories about academic success. Their stories consisted of academic assistance received from within and outside of the MBGC. All of the participants appreciated the programs and additional support offered at the Boys and Girls Club. This theme provided insight into the academic experiences participants received from the MBGC as members. According to the participants' perceptions and experiences academic programs are having a significant impact in their life. Although, several participants reported a significant improvement in their academic performance, there were other participants that expressed the lack of academic assistance.

During interviews and focus groups participants described different types of activities and programs that had an impact their academic performance and created positive interactions between staff and peers. Sarah was a 16 year-old participant who enjoyed hanging out with her friends, listening to music and attending club daily. Sarah mentioned that she has made the honor roll three times now since coming to the Boys and Girls Club. Sarah stated,

My grades now are much better than my grades before the Boys and Girls Club.

And the reason for that is probably because the Boys and Girls Club has really gotten me motivated to get my grades up. They also taught me about how in high school you have to keep your grades up and keep your GPA up.

Tony, another participant who has been a member at the club for nine years, expressed how his academic performance has significantly improved since receiving assistance from the MBGC. Tony really enjoyed playing basketball at the club. He was also a part of the basketball team at his high school. He shared his experience with staff and how they have affected his performance in school. Tony stated, “The Boys and Girls Club forces me to empty out my backpack to see if I have any homework everyday”. Tony mentioned that the level of support and concern motivated him to work hard in school and put forth an even greater effort to get good grades. Tony further expressed that “if I did have homework they made me do it and check it, so my grades would go up. I had to read books and stuff, so it helped me out a lot in school”.

Another participant explained how Boys and Girls Club has helped with her school performance. Mae, 15-year-old participant who loved hanging with her friends and playing basketball, mentioned how the MBGC was very helpful. Mae described how school is challenging and stressful at times. Mae believed the higher you get in school and the older you get in school the harder it gets for you. Mae explained that the MBGC has provided ongoing support and encouragement for her while being in school. Mae revealed that the staff at the Boys and Girls Club taught her about the importance of good grades and GPAs. Mae believed she will get a good paying job and scholarships if she is a good student. She stated, “they help me a lot, they help me understand that school is

really important and that I have to do my homework at all times”. Mae went on to describe how the MBGC pushed her forward, and encouraged her to keep trying no matter how difficult the task might be.

One participant also expressed different opinions about the level of academic assistance being received at the MBGC. One participant described the lack of academic assistance received from the teen center. Stacey, a 15 year-old participant that enjoyed dancing and cheerleading, mentioned that when she first started attending club no one would ask her if she had any homework. She explained, “they don’t really care about your grades in the teen center, to me; they don’t really help you try or make sure you have homework and its not mandatory, which I think they should change”.

Participants were encouraged to specify other activities and actions that influenced successful academic performance. One participant acknowledged how other actions taken at the Boys and Girls Club helped them improve their academic performance. Carrie, a 15-year-old participant at the MBGC, really enjoys playing basketball and attending club. Carrie really valued school. She explained how her family is extremely proud of her for having good grades, and how school is her main priority. When asked how the club as actually influenced her academic performance, she replied,

Before I came to club I was failing my Algebra class. The staff at the club helped me raise my Algebra grade up. There are staff members at the club that majored in Algebra, so I received help. The club has a lot of homework rooms.

She went on to explain how MBGC disciplinary system has helped her stay focus during school. She stated, “I think that the way their disciplinary system is set up that once you do something wrong, you learn not to do it next time. It shows the other

students not to do that as well”. Carrie explained that the club cares about her and her academic success.

Based on of the participant comments and observations, it was clear that the youth were aware of how MBGC provided academic support, and one can infer that this support facilitates the development of resiliency in MBGC youth. This is consistent with Portman and Williams (2014) that internal and external factors are significant to academic progress. The academic programs are having a positive impact in their life. Based on the investigators field observations, the staff at the MBGC seemed very interested in the members’ academic achievement. The staff conducted an activity in the teen center that was geared towards helping all the members. The activity “homework help & tutoring” consisted of staff assisting members with school assignments at the beginning of club. For example, the staff would ask each of the teens if they had any homework or if they needed any assistance with their homework. There were computers setup in the teen center to provide additional assistance for writing assignments and online assistance. The researcher also noticed that the Big Brothers and Big Sisters organization came in once a week to further assist the MBGC members with academic support and mentorship.

Several participants stated that their grades improved after attending the MBGC. Participants’ provided personal stories and experiences of academic success. Participants’ reported that MBGC provides adequate academic assistance for all members. Academic enrichment is highly practiced at the MBGC. The club offers academic help, training sessions and various extracurricular activities. Therefore, it is important for MBGC to provide members with strategies to be successful in the classroom.

Objective Two

Impact of character and leadership development of club activities on MBGC adolescents' perceptions of their ability to become leaders and build meaningful relationships with others

The second theme described the participants' leadership experiences. Character and servant leadership emerged from participants reporting about programs that provided them with opportunities to lead and develop leader responsibilities. Participants noted that a good leader is someone who is well respected and respects other people. Participants' specifically defined character and servant leaders as people who are honest, well respected among their peers and someone who is well respected and respects other people. Participants suggested that someone of decent character should have good values and good behavior. It was further suggested that good character is understanding the difference of right from wrong, and someone who does the right thing. During the focus group participants stated that people of good character are responsible, fair, and trustworthy and are people who help in the community.

Participants described a variety of programs and services that were important components for positive development. Many participants noted that they had received social support from the MBGC. There were other participants who reported negative experiences with staff and services. The findings suggested that MBGC helped participants develop a sense of personal responsibility. There were numerous examples provided by the participants of leadership roles and experiences that allowed them to develop personal responsibility. According to the participants' comments and

observations participants believe that the MBGC provides plenty of opportunities for them to develop good character and leadership traits.

MBGC values youth development. Youth leadership and character building are important components for positive youth development. The MBGC uses concepts of leadership to develop activities and programs for members to have opportunities to be leaders and build character. Participants described how MBGC helped them develop healthy leadership behaviors such as empowerment, effective communication, cooperation, courage and collaboration. The participants recognized that staff members are very supportive by encouraging them to become more responsible citizens. During field observations participants were encouraged to engage in a democratic process for most of the activities. The teen center staff held various activities that allowed them to lead youth groups, develop their communications skills through volunteering and assist charities by fundraising. Most of the activities consisted of the teens learning how to remember names, building relationships, planning and taking the initiative, organizing ideas, public speaking practice, building trust, and becoming more proactive. For instance, at the club during sport time members were assigned captain roles to assist with picking players for the basketball team. Teddy, an 8th grader who has been attending MBGC for more than a year, acknowledged that the teen center instills trust in its members by allowing them to facilitate some of the activities. Teddy stated, “ there are a lot of programs to get involved with at the club. We have presidents, vice-presidents for Keystone and team captains for sports”.

Participants were encouraged to describe how they perceived leadership behaviors and how staff members at the club provided opportunities for members to develop

healthy leadership behaviors. Several participants described their experiences and observations of leadership behaviors. Lamar, a junior in high school enjoys playing football. Lamar's long-term goal is to play in the National Football League after college. He feels that the Boys and Girls Club is doing a great job with college and career preparation. Lamar suggested that activities at the MBGC teen center provided teens with opportunities to be leaders. Lamar shared,

We do group activities. If it's not one person, there's another person that has to be a leader everyone has a specific role whenever we're doing activities. It gives everyone a chance to become a leader in some shape of form or fashion.

Further field observations suggested that staff at the MBGC encourages their members to take on leadership roles. For example, young children ages 6-9 years old attend the MBGC. The staff often selected teenagers to be bathroom monitors, homework tutors and activity chaperones. Providing teens with leadership opportunities empowers and helps build self-confidence, which demonstrates how teens at the MBGC are developing leadership qualities. Two participants shared experiences of how they were influenced to lead. Both participants believe that MBGC provide programs and positive role models that encourage healthy living.

Carrie, a 15 year-old member that is involved in the Smart Girls program affirmed that the staff at the MBGC influences youth to take the initiative by leading by example. Carrie stated,

The teachers especially here are like the oldest in the club, so they help like with fieldtrips and certain things. They try to influence us to help the younger kids' cuz

they look up to us [the staff would like for the teens to be role models for the younger kids].

Many participants believed that the programs provided meaningful opportunities for them to gain leadership experience. Some participants reported being presidents, vice presidents and team captains of various programs and activities at the MBGC. Several club members noted that these positions helped them learn new skills and created some great experiences. Stacey is a member of the MBGC, and she really enjoys the teen center. Stacey also likes to dance, act and cheerlead. During an interview with Stacey, she shared how the club has helped her turn her life around in the right direction. Stacey expressed how MBGC has provided her with countless opportunities to be a leader at the MBGC. She described her experience in different leadership roles at the club:

I took the initiative to stand up and go for those roles cause they have like president. You can be president of the teen center, you can be chairman, and I'm chairman. Like there are all types of opportunities to be a leader. They have a competition here called Youth of the Year. You can show your leadership by becoming the voice of your club, and implementing all the changes that you want to see happen in your club. And—there's also the Keystone program where you have opportunities to be a leader.

While it is important to note the significance of programs and opportunities that assist members with leadership experience, it is also just as important to report the voices of the members that feel MBGC lacks leadership support. Two participants expressed their opinion about the MBGC not providing a lot of opportunities to be a leader and a lack of caring relationships. Mae is a member of the MBGC, and she has been a member

since she was seven years of age. Mae is very grateful to attend club every day. Mae reported her level of concern and disappointment with the new staff members at the MBGC. She feels there is disconnect between the staff and youth. Mae does not believe that the staff members are genuinely concerned about her well-being. She described her experience as a decline in the staff's passion for helping the youth:

I've been going here since I was seven years old. When I first came it was like a whole bunch of kindness, and people actually caring for what you believed in and how you felt. They actually took up for you and actually wanted you to converse with one another. The staff actually took the time to actually understand your issues and concerns and everything. But as I get older and where I am now in life, I keep to myself and joke around and stuff like that with other teens; but some people actually have problems that they need to sit down and actually discuss.

What we have to say is important but it may not seem important but adults need to encourage young people.

During the interview Mae appeared to be very frustrated, and her passion about the topic was noticeable. The researcher asked Mae to describe her relationship with staff and youth during the interview. Further field observations displayed the closeness of staff and youth relationships. Several of the same teens often sought assistance of a particular staff member for issues dealing with family distress or personal reasons. It was suggested that only certain staff members at the MBGC actually provided support and encouragement. Mae further noted that the new staff members do not really care as much as the old members. She further explained how teens are feeling disconnected. She stated,

The staff just tells you to get over issues, or tell you to forget about it. And sometimes the people go home and they don't really have anyone to talk to. They might not really have a connection with their mom or their dad so they can't really discuss what they really feel like. Some teens feel like they have a connection with the staff that we have for our teams, but they just don't know how to go up to them. Some of the teens think the staff won't take them seriously.

Corey D, another participant that attends the teen center believes the club could offer more programs and activities. Corey noted, "The Boys and Girls Club should have more hands on activities outside of the Boys and Girls Club, like field trips and things to do to get us ready for work. Like working activities [career activities] for when you graduate."

Participants further noted that they received respect and guidance from various leaders at the Boys and Girls Club. Many of the participants reported that MBGC has positive role models. It was stated that a lot of these close relationships are more like friends because of the closeness. Participants expressed that the leaders at the club influences them to practice healthy lifestyles.

During focus groups several participants mentioned the importance of personal growth. Participants mentioned that programs at the club helped them developed skills needed to be a well-rounded citizen. It was noted that this experience was developed during interactions with leaders, peers, parents, and staff and during club activities. Participants said that leaders at the club helped them express themselves in a positive way. Participants also stated that the programs at the MBGC helped them develop social support and that the programs and activities often fostered social support. Some

participants experienced low self-esteem, but the staff members at the club provided emotional support for them, which helped boost their confidence.

Two of the participants recalled a program at the MBGC in which the staff provided a comfortable atmosphere for them to discuss his future plans and encouraged him to connect with different community members. The participant shared in a focus group how he has a lack of confidence and often struggled with meeting new people. Several responses from participants indicated that participants of MBGC understood the significance of healthy leadership practices. The MBGC played a critical role in helping young people develop good character attributes and positive leadership traits.

Keystone is another program that Boys and Girls Club offers youth opportunities to develop leadership skills. Members involved in the teen program are provided with experiences in and out of the club. Keystone provides youth with academic assistance, career preparation and community service. During multiple focus groups several participants explained how Keystone has impacted his or her life. Other participants reported how the program helps them feel comfortable with talking about their future and current issues they are facing in their life. Sam described Keystone as:

Keystone helps, I'm not a part of it this year but I have been in previous years. It just helps you be a leader, be responsible, respectful, and a lot of things that you probably wouldn't be taught outside of Boys and Girls Club.

I asked Sam to go a little more in-depth about the Keystone program. Sam stated, “

If you're a part of the Keystone program, they encourage you to get community service hours, work hard in school, and how to be prepared for the future. We also go on field trips with Keystone during the school year and summer.

Another participant described a program that was encouraging and helped her develop leadership skills. Stacey a participant from the teen center stated,

I've always been like a different person and strong willed. But the Boys and Girls Club actually like made me stronger with the Smart Girls program. We also had Big Brothers and Big Sisters come here with us. They played games, learning activities and held debates, which made me want to pursue my interest in law school.

The MBGC gives back to the community through many services and programs. Community service for the youth can be a life changing experience. Boys and Girls Club provides numerous opportunities for youth to get involved in the community. Community service can lead to career opportunities, development of new skills and positive relationships with adults. During focus groups participants were asked to discuss how MBGC encouraged them to actively engage in community service. It was suggested that community service encourages MBGC members to be better individuals.

One participant described her experience and perception towards helping in the community, and how giving back to the community has positively affected her. Sarah, a sophomore in high school described her experience with working in the community.

Sarah often volunteers inside of Kid's Café. Sarah stated,

I like community service because sometimes we go on trips. Especially, in the teen center we do community service, and we go to the VA hospital and play bingo. Community service helps us and persuades us to do stuff that we don't normally do. It makes me feel better about myself because I know that I made somebody happier and made a difference in their life.

Based on of the participant's comments and field observations, it was clear that they perceive that the MBGC is helping develop good character and leadership traits through high quality daily interactions with staff and programs. This is consistent with Rak and Patterson (1996) suggesting that environmental and support from role models outside of the family play a significant role in the lives of young people. The comments in this theme suggest that the programs and activities at MBGC are having a significant impact in their life. Participants reported that they have a greater perspective of leadership and character development when positive leadership practices are reinforced in their environment at the MBGC. The MBGC strives to help young people gain the skills, experience and confidence needed for the youth to become well-rounded citizens of society. The participants noted that they received respect and guidance from various leaders at the Boys and Girls Club. Several of the participants reported that MBGC has plenty of positive role models. It was stated that a lot of these close relationships are more like friends because of the closeness. Participants expressed that the MBGC leaders influences them to practice healthy lifestyles. Participants seemed to respond well to personal growth activities that focused on them gaining skills needed to be a well-rounded citizen. This experience was developed during interactions with leaders, peers, parents, and staff and during club activities. Participants said that leaders at the club helped them express themselves in a positive way. Some participants experienced low self-esteem, but the staff members at the club provided emotional support for them, which helped boost their confidence.

Objective Three

The effectiveness of club healthy lifestyle activities on MBGC adolescents' perceptions of their ability to engage in positive behavior

The third theme described participants' effectiveness of healthy living activities and services. Participants believed that the MBGC provided services that influenced positive behavior and healthy lifestyle choices. At the MBGC, participants were encouraged to participate in positive group discussion, teen lead activities and teen center programs that promote good nutrition, respect, physical activity and healthy relationships. Programs at the MBGC promote physical, social and emotional growth. Participants describe services that influenced positive behavior and healthy lifestyle choices. The findings from this study suggested that participants felt great about the positive changes they were making in their lives and in the community. Yet, other participants felt that staff members displayed passive behavior. Further results suggest supportive environments played a role in social and emotional development. Leaders and staff at the MBGC should focus more on programs that help youth develop and sustain meaningful relationships. The data gathered suggests that programs are having a positive effect on the youth that are attending the teen center. It seems that the programs are encouraging and reinforcing positive behavior based on the participants comments and experiences. Participants are making smarter lifestyle choices. According to the participants' comments and observations participants believe that the MBGC provided encouragement and education for them to make smart lifestyle choices.

Two participants shared stories of good relationships of how good relationships function between peers. It was stated that MBGC leaders provide support and resources

for good relationships. Participants stated peer relationships are more likely to influence their friendships, health and happiness. They also reported that the MBGC strives to teach members to choose friends wisely, it is important to be honest and support one another. Participants believed MBGC challenges and encourages them to develop lasting meaningful relationships. It was reported that programs and leaders at MBGC helped them understand the dynamics of a relationship and relationship behaviors. Dre, a freshman that loved to attend MBGC, reported that the staff in the teen center helped him understand the dynamics of a relationship. Dre stated,

The staff cares enough to learn about you more and build relationships with you.

The staff at the club is always willing to talk to you about pressing issues. The Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and staff at the Boys and Girls Club, helped us learn the difference between a strong and negative relationship.

Tiffany is an 8th grader that loved attending club every day and hanging out with her friends after school. Tiffany believes that the teen center had an impact on her personal development. Tiffany was encouraged to share how she learned about healthy lifestyles and positive relationships. Tiffany stated,

The Boys and Girls Club taught me about healthy relationships. The teen center staff knows right from wrong because they have been through most of the stuff we are going through. We have the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program, and their staff often shares stories with us about their childhood that relates to ours.

Other participants described healthy lifestyles and caring relationships as foundations for strong and healthy relationships. During a focus group it was stated that caring relationships and healthy lifestyles meant that people should be loyal, trustworthy

and good friends as a result of what they've experienced and learned at MBGC. Field observations suggested that the MBGC strives to teach their members to communicate openly, trust one another, support one another and comprise with one another, say sorry and talk arguments out. It is not easy to find strength in the face of adversity. Having a strong and supportive relationship is key sometimes to finding your way through a tough situation. During an interview a participant provided a specific example of a program at the MBGC that assisted him with developing better relationships. This experience was meaningful to him because it taught him how to interact with peers.

Another participant explained how he received helpful information from his favorite program. This experience was meaningful to the participant because it taught him how to interact with peers. This interview provided a deeper understanding of the benefits of healthy lifestyle choices are being created for teens. The participant stated,

The activity Passport to Manhood teaches me how to conduct myself in public. I was mostly affected by the lessons that taught me how to treat other people and girls. You should always treat women with respect or treat women like you treat your mama. You should never go around talking bad about other people. This program has also taught me about relationships, hygiene, careers and everything.

This experience suggested that the programs at the Boys and Girls Club are providing the members with opportunities to learn and engage in positive behaviors. For example, Passport to Manhood teaches young boys responsibility and accountability. There are specific sessions designed to develop specific parts of character during different activities provided by the club to help foster healthy habits.

One participant described how she had to overcome low self-esteem issues.

During an interview she described how the lessons from the Smart Girl Program saved her life.

Cindy talked about self-esteem issues before attending Boys and Girls Club. She stated:

I remember, I think I was ten and I was going through a lot. I was chubby and big! A whole lot of people used to put me down so I had very low self-esteem. I kept everything to myself. I didn't know who to trust I didn't even trust my own parents at that time.

Cindy even mentioned thoughts of committing suicide during such a pressing time in her life. She described the situation:

I was mostly by myself. I would take my food upstairs and just be by myself. I would talk to myself and people thought I was crazy. I didn't think I was but now that I've thought about it, I was crazy. I was at a point where I wanted to leave and go on to somewhere else. I guess you might call this suicide. When I started coming here to the Boys and Girls Club, they opened up their arms to me. They took the time to embrace me and work with me. I finally warmed up to them. I know now there's more to life and you don't have to waste your life by killing yourself!

During the interview Cindy described the program that has been most influential in her life. It was stated that the program helped her deal with low self-esteem. She stated:

The Smart Girls program helped me out a lot. It keeps me away from the things that I know are not right. For example, mostly doing drugs because at our school

they sell drugs right out the school. I remember one time this one dude tried to sell it to me and he just kept on going on. No, I'm not buying any drugs from you, I'm not like that and he just got mad.

During field observations it was noticeable that young people were challenged with social pressures and emotional distress. The researcher noticed how individuals displayed different behaviors among different groups of peers. For example, one participant was more friendly and outgoing between two different groups of friends. The researcher observations suggested that different actions with peers produce different social outcomes. During another field observation it was noted boys spent more time in larger groups than girls usually did. This observation suggested that boys are possibly more susceptible to peer pressure. Participants were asked if they felt safe at the club and, if they have experienced any negative social pressures at the club. More than half of the participants reported that they felt safe at the MBGC. However, one of the participants described her safety concerns regarding Boys and Girls Club. She feels that the MBGC does not value safety all the time or the well-being of the members on a consistent bases. She explained how bullying has been an issue at club for her in the previous years. She stated,

When I was a junior I got bullied by a group of girls constantly. I told staff members about the ongoing bullying all the time. They would talk to the girls but it just seemed like nothing would really happen to the girls. So one day I was doing this little project that was assigned to my group. The staff walked off and left me alone with the girls. I was doing what we were supposed to do; yet they were getting on my nerves. I wasn't talking to them or whatever. They kept on

knocking down my materials on top of the table. We were supposed to build up a tower as tall as we could build. Every time I get to the few last pieces, they would knock down my tower.

The participant further explained how she finally had to stand up for herself at the Boys and Girls Club. She felt the staff at MBGC was very unsupportive. She explained how the bullying was so bad that her mom pulled her out of the Boys and Girls Club for a year. She said, “my mom pulled me out of the Boys and Girls Club after to many repeated situations”.

The participant further explained that is very minimal bullying at the club. The members that are being bullied have no support from the staff. She explained,

There's not a lot of bullying at the Boys and Girls Club, but the people who do get bullied have no help. The staff member's don't realize that it's not just playing around that the people are actually getting bullied. But the good part about the Boys and Girls Club is most of the time it gets your mind off the bad stuff in life. It gives you a place to go where you can learn and grow.

MBGC values the overall well-being of the youth. The club provides healthy living and educational experiences for all members. MBGC emphasized good nutrition and physical activity. A participant described how the MBGC provided food for his family when they were experiencing some major hardships. Three participants described in an interview the impact that the feeding program has had on their life. The interview responses indicate that healthy lifestyle programs are having a positive direct effect on the youth at the MBGC.

Tony, a member of nine years, just truly loves the MBGC. During an interview Tony explained the relationship his family has developed with MBGC. Tony mentioned in the interview that the healthy lifestyle eating initiative at the Boys and Girls Club has influenced his family to eat healthy and exercise daily. He provided a very descriptive account about how his family fell on hard times and the MBGC provided food and other resources. He stated,

The feeding program is a big deal because at one point my mom, my brother and I would stay up here every day just to eat. We didn't have anything at home to eat so if we didn't eat here we'd just be hungry all night.

Tony further explained how the club has assisted him during difficult times in addition to providing food for his family. Tony explained:

We always struggle when my mom don't have enough money for food or even membership fees. The club provided the needed services. As a kid I wasn't supposed to come here because my mom couldn't pay the fee. But the club staff saw the good that I could do and they helped her out so I've been coming up here ever since for free, my brother and I. If we ever needed something to eat or, did not have food at the house they would send food home with us. The club is so helpful in so many ways.

Another participant from the teen center discussed how the club has helped her develop healthy habits. Sam mentioned during the interview how the Boys and Girls Club culture has improved her social skills and eating habits. Sam stated, "The healthy lifestyle activities teach us certain things that you should eat and things that you cannot eat. We learn how food affects your body in good and bad ways so that has always helped me".

Sam went on to explain how the club provides opportunities to meet new people. She described her experience:

Coming to the Boys and Girls Club you get to meet different people from different schools so you're not just used to the same people. You get a chance to be around different races, genders, and different backgrounds. So at school it is so easier to be social with people you thought you would never talk to.

Two participants described how the MBGC promotes healthy lifestyles choices. One participant stated:

Yes, you get off the bus you get a snack and then later on they feed kid's café [they provide two meals a day]. Kids Café is a program that gives dinner for anybody. It's free! You just come here and eat and like during summer they do the same thing. Even on breaks they feed you, they're always just trying to watch out for us and make sure that we're doing well.

Another participant shared her perspective on the healthy lifestyle initiative at the MBGC. She stated,

We have snacks here at the Boys and Girls Club. They usually give us a dairy product, a fruit, or like some chips and stuff. The chips aren't like regular chips, they're like baked healthier. I think it's really great that they do provide snacks. You know they don't have to do that necessarily. And, I like how they do have Kids' Café too, because it brings a different variety of meals. The meals are more like home-cooked instead of McDonald's, you know. It allows people who can't really afford to have a decent meal to get a decent meal.

Summary

Based on of the participant's comments and field observations, it was clear that the participants perceive that they benefited from the academic success, character and leadership, healthy lifestyle programs and caring relationships experienced at the MBGC. This is consistent with Eckenrode and Gore (1996) research suggesting that external factors can foster protective factors for youth to have positive development outcomes. The comments suggest that members are being provided opportunities and support that helps them develop their future and avoid negative outcomes. At the MBGC participants were encouraged to participate in positive group discussion, teen lead activities and teen center programs that promote good nutrition, respect, physical activity and healthy relationships. The MBGC aims to help young people become caring citizens and responsible young adults. Some of these relationships that were developed during activities and programs actually helped a good number of the participants avoid risky behaviors. Several participants described how MBGC helped them deal with challenging situations. At the MBGC participants were encouraged to participate in positive group discussion, teen lead activities and teen center programs that promote good nutrition, respect, physical activity and healthy relationships They also reported that the MBGC strives to teach members to choose friends wisely, it is important to be honest and support one another. Participants believed MBGC challenges and encourages them to develop lasting meaningful relationships.

This chapter reveals that there are major research ideas that can be discussed as a result of this study. The findings from this study were directly related to the objectives of this study, which were related to the participant's experiences and perceptions at MBGC:

perceptions and experiences with academic success, character and servant leadership and healthy lifestyles and caring relationships at the MBGC. The first objective was partially supported. Although, participants reported significant improvements in their academic performance, other participants expressed the lack of academic assistance. The second objective was partially supported. Many participants reported the benefits received from social support at the MBGC. There were other participants who reported feelings of disconnect among staff and services. The third objective was also partially supported. Participants felt staff showed very little concern for personal issues. All three objectives were partially supported. The findings from this study suggested that participants felt great about the positive changes they were making in their lives and in the community. The next section will address the implications that may be drawn from this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Resiliency theory provided a framework for this study by providing a context to understand the experiences of the 20 adolescents' at the MBGC. Resiliency theory addresses the strengths that individuals exhibit during challenging life experiences that allows them to rise above adversity, or resistance to environmental risk experiences. Resiliency emerged from three influential studies (Garmezy, 1971; Rutter, 1979; & Werner and Smith, 1981). The findings from these studies created the need for further research to examine more specific factors and practices that enable young people to persevere through adverse situations. Previous studies have measured and explored single programs, club experiences, typical club experiences, developmental skills and attendance records (Anderson-Butcher & Cash, 2010; Anderson-Butcher, Ferrari and Newsome, 2003; Arbreton, 2009; Haberlin, 2014;). Nonetheless, specific experiences and factors that promote positive development using a qualitative approach have not been identified. The current study addressed this issue by underlining specific programs, giving participants a voice, and highlighting specific protective factors that participants consider significant to their development through a resilient lens. The findings from this study indicate that MBGC fosters some resiliency through programs and services, staff relationships, personal support, meaningful opportunities and caring environments.

However, future research needs to examine more specific factors within the Boys and Girls Club. It seems that there is a false assumption that risk and protective factors are similar in everyone. Recent findings from this case study suggest that each individual will respond differently to the same experience. There are a number of variables that

factor into each individual outcome. Resilience is an interactive concept that is studied on the basis of risk and protective factors being measured. Resiliency involves the actions of both risk and protective factors. Resiliency requires the presence of multiple risk factors or adversity. Risk factors are potential threats to an individual. For example, youth who are exposed to drugs and alcohol are at risk for using drugs. Resiliency also needs the interaction of a protective processes or factor. Resiliency provides a level of prevention. Protective factors are characteristics that offset negative outcomes. For example, a young person from an abuse home is more likely to have a successful outcome with the presence of a role model. According to Richardson (2002) most of the early resiliency research focused more on internal and external factors that helped young people cope adversity.

There are two research implications that stem from the resiliency theory. The first implication of this study for resiliency is related to individual responses to risk. There were differences in risk factors among each participant. Individuals respond to risk and experience resiliency differently. For example, two individuals involved in the same academic assistance program would perceive the level of assistance differently. Therefore, understanding how each individual responds would help structure protective processes so individuals would receive a more directed outcome. A possibly more useful undertaking would be to explore the difference between members and how resiliency affects them differently. These changes could have substantial effects on future studies for understanding the different degrees of risk that individuals are exposed to, and the needed protective factors to become resilient.

Another implication of this study for resiliency relates to the fact that there were a

number of protective factors offered at the MBGC such as role models, prevention and intervention programs, feeding services, academic programs and fitness programs. Based on the perceptions of the participants' each individual responded or benefited differently. Specifically, identifying characteristics needed to support the efforts of other Boys and Girls Club that are committed to fostering resiliency in their members would be beneficial to future research. Examples of such would be to understand how resilience could become structured and fostered into youth organizations. In addition, there is a need to understand how resilience can be fostered into youth organizations with a more structured approach. This could contribute to the existing resiliency literature and youth development literature.

Implications for Boys and Girls Club

Findings from this study suggests that teens are developing leadership skills, receiving academic assistance, developing healthy relationships, and participating in community service. This study provided insight that could assist with future development of programs and services. Additional implications for Boys and Girls Clubs in this study include findings regarding academic achievement for all children, character and citizenship and community partnerships.

Objective 1: Perceptions and experiences of participants' academic success

The first implication would be to increase resources and services that are targeted towards academic assistance. Participants reported that good students follow the rules in school, complete all assignments, get good grades, and follow directions. Other participants reported that MBGC provides adequate academic assistance for all members. This is consistent with Bauman et al. (1997) that indicated that parent family

connectedness and perceived school connectedness were protective against health risk conditions. Although this is an area that is important for all staff, the findings from this study indicated that the youth believe they would benefit from tutors with a direct subject focus. This will help members increase their academic confidence and classroom effort. Community partnerships could also be an opportunity for BGC to connect with schools and families to help reengage them in the classroom academic process. Providing club members with academic scholarship award opportunities could encourage members to actively engage in their academics, and become excited about postsecondary education. This could improve attitudes about school, which could lead to an increase in graduation.

Objective 2: Perceptions and experiences of participant's character and leadership development of club activities in encouraging adolescents to become leaders and build meaningful relationship with others

The second implication for BGC would be for them to develop more programs that directly teach members leadership skills. Several participants reported having held leadership positions within MBGC. Some members actually served as Presidents, Vice-presidents and captains. Some members actually served as Presidents, Vice-presidents and captains. Other participants mentioned that they wanted to see more career activities that were geared towards helping secure jobs in the community, resume builders, or mock interviews held in the community. This is consistent with Arbreton, Bradshaw, Pepper and Sheldon (2009) teens who were engaged in the club at a younger age were more involved in activities and leadership roles. BGC should continue to create leadership positions so all members have an opportunity to hold a position within the club. Additional positions will help members learn responsibilities and experience new

leadership roles. Providing members with more work experience opportunities involving more professional leaders in the community and more service-learning activities will help youth become caring citizens and acquire needed skills to enhance their well-being.

Objective 3: Perceptions and experiences of participants' healthy lifestyles

The third implication for BGC would be to encourage more community partnerships. It was felt by the teens that exposing members to various community service opportunities will encourage them to build meaningful relationships outside of the club. Community partnerships are necessary for positive youth development. More opportunities could be created that allows club members to socialize with volunteers who have similar career interests by creating field trips within the local community. Participants reported the importance of community involvement and how they were positively affected. This is consistent with Kaltreider and St. Pierre (1997) that that programs had a positive effect on youth personal competency skills. Several participants reported that community service projects help them become better citizens. They discussed the difference it made in other people's lives. A few participants noted that community projects helped them learn to interact, trust and build relationships outside of their families. It is important that BGC staff continue to encourage youth to seek new experiences outside of the BGC.

Conclusion

This study provided evidence that members of the MBGC who were involved in the teen center seemed to be developing resiliency. Based on the data collected from the participant's experiences and comments, it was clear that they believed that MBGC generally provided academic support, character and leader development and healthy

lifestyle activities that encouraged positive behavior. First, participants described how the programs, activities, services and staff helped them overcome numerous obstacles. Second, comments and observations suggested that youth were engaged in community service projects and programs on a regular base had improved self-esteem, avoided conflict and made positive connections with peers and leaders. Finally, the findings support an increase in resources and services needed to further assist club members, as these members believe such an increase would make more likely successes in academics, character building, and healthy lifestyles. In other words, teen expectations become a self-fulfilling prophecy. By providing members meaningful opportunities the BGC is essential to their growth and also a reflection of the entire organization. There was a healthy balance of concerns and positive reports from the participants. It was evident that all participants enjoyed MBGC, and expressed that there is certainly a need for the organization in the community.

This study contributed to the existing literature by using resilience as a framework for youth development within the Boys and Girls Club. There is an interaction between risk and protective factors. Participants that were exposed to risk were also exposed to a high number of protective factors at the MBGC. The effects of MBGC staff, peers, family, community factors and individual factors helped influenced how an individual responded in their environment. The findings from this study also addressed a gap in the literature by identifying features of MBGC that participants reported to be significant to their well-being and development. Youth highlighted key factors that contributed to positive development. Additional research should consist of a longitudinal study that focuses on participants beyond high school, college and into the workforce. This

information can further guide youth practitioners, BGC staff, and community leaders, and teachers on many aspects. This study can provide the framework for future research involving resilience and positive youth development.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Consent form**INSTRUCTIONS FOR INVESTIGATOR**

The following is a template for a complete informed consent document. As a guide, it can be partially revised to fit your study. However, the first two (2) paragraphs and all questions need to be included, as required the by the Office of Human Research Protections.

If you choose to alter or waive consent for your study, you must provide justification to do so. Fill out the appropriate portion of the Request for Waiver or Alteration of Consent and attach it to your IRB application. The form can be accessed at <http://www.mtsu.edu/irb/irbforms.shtml>

If a question is not applicable to your study, simply insert n/a. You should also eliminate suggested language (in brackets and red type) if not pertinent to your study, to enhance participant comprehension. If used for a parent/legal guardian, alter language to refer to child.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Compliance Officer

compliance@mtsu.edu

Box 134

Sam Ingram Building 011B

(615) 494-8918

Principal Investigator: Daniel Jones

Study Title: Examining the Impact of Resiliency within the Boys & Girls Club

Institution: Boys & Girls Clubs of Rutherford County, Murfreesboro Unit

Name of participant: _____ Age: _____

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your child's participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your child's participation in this research study is voluntary. He or she is also free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event new information becomes available that may affect the risks or benefits associated with this research study or your willingness to participate in it, you will be notified so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to continue your participation in this study.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

1. Purpose of the study:

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study because we want to gain a better understanding of how teenagers at the Boys & Girls Club of Rutherford County at the Murfreesboro Unit perceive their overall perception and experience at the Club. This study will also seek to examine if the Boys & Girls Club's programs are facilitating the development of resiliency.

2. Description of procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:

This study will use semi-structured interviews and focus groups to gather perceived experiences from Club members. Focus groups will happen first in the study. Selected participants will then be chosen from interviews based on focus group connections. The duration of this study will last from Spring 2015 through Summer 2015.

3. Expected costs:

There is no cost associated with this study.

4. Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or possible risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:

N/A

5. Compensation in case of study-related injury:

N/A

6. Anticipated benefits from this study:

a) Acquiring an overall understanding of the participant's interactions and perceptions can help staff identify key issues and services that will help strategize ways to implement successes. We will use the results of this study effort to learn more about the needs and interests of our youth and improve our program and services for them in the context of resiliency.

7. Alternative treatments available:

N/A

8. Compensation for participation: There will be no compensation or incentives offered for anyone involved in this research project.

9. Circumstances under which the Principal Investigator may withdraw you from study participation:

The researcher will be observant of children becoming upset or uncomfortable participating in the focus groups and interviews, and if there are any issues they will be dealt with immediately, including refereeing the child to familiar staff members who are present to assist them, and ending participation in the study.

10. What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:

There are no consequences for choosing to withdraw from this study.

11. Contact Information. If you should have any questions about this research study or possibly injury, please feel free to contact Daniel Jones at (224) 209-4132 or Faculty Advisor, Dr. Steve Estes at 615.898.2906.

12. Confidentiality. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your child’s research record private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, *if* you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

14. STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I give permission for my child to participate in the study.

Date

Signature of patient/volunteer

Consent obtained by:

Date

Signature

Printed Name and Title

APPENDIX B: Focus Group Protocol

FOCUS GROUP INTRODUCTION (SCRIPT)

Hello everyone, and thank you for being here today. I know you are all very busy and I want you to know how much I appreciate you taking this time out of your lives to talk with me and help me better understand your overall experience at Boys and Girls Club.

Let me introduce myself; my name is Daniel Jones. I am a Doctoral Candidate and I will be facilitating our group tonight.

Tonight I will be asking for your opinions and experiences from Boys and Girls Club. Your feedback will be very helpful in guiding new programs and policies throughout Boys and Girls Club and making sure that they work well and make sense for families and staff. I want to assure you that everything that is shared here tonight will be kept confidential as far as who said what. In other words, although your feedback will be used in general, your identity will be protected so that you can speak freely.

To keep a record of your comments, I will be recording our group on this digital recorder and will also be taking some notes. Again, no one outside of Boys and Girls Club will see or hear the raw records.

What am I going to do with all the valuable information you provide? I am going to take what I learn here about what your needs, barriers, and experiences, examine club resources, and draw on national research showing what really works to improve the aims of the club, and help other Boys and Girls Clubs develop new and better ways to help members and families enjoy their overall club experience.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Introduction (reassure participants about the confidential nature of this process and plea for open and honest responses)

The objectives of this study, based on these three goals, are to explore the:

Impact of the academic success goal on young people participating in various club academic programs;

Implications for character and leadership development of club activities in encouraging adolescents to become leaders and build meaningful relationships with others; and

Effectiveness of club healthy lifestyle activities on at-risk adolescents designed to help young people engage in positive behavior.

In your own words, please describe a “good student”? What behaviors do good students do that other students don’t do?

Where did you learn what good students do?

- School
- Television
- Home
- Club

In your opinion, does anything at Boys and Girls Club influenced student behavior?

How did it happen?

What ways?

In your own words, please describe a leader? What behaviors do leaders do that others don’t?

Where did you learn what leaders do?

- School
- Home
- Television

In your own opinions, does anything at Boys and Girls Club influenced leadership behaviors?

Can you provide specific examples, please? How do you decide if a relationship is good?

What is a bad relationship like? Where did you learn about relationships? In your opinion, does anything at Boys and Girls Club influence understanding of relationships?

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol Interview Questions:

I am interested in hearing about your experiences at the Boys and Girls Club.

What do you and your friends do at the Boys and Girls Club?

How did you spend your afternoons before you came to the Boys and Girls Club?

Academic Success

School liking: How do you feel about school?

School effort: How hard youth work in school?

Importance of school: How important school is to you?

Teacher connectedness? How do you get along with teachers?

Academic confidence: How comfortable are you with doing schoolwork?

What are your grades like now and before Boys and Girls Club?

Healthy Lifestyles

How much do you think about your future?

How does your current activities help you get prepared for the future?

Positive peers: How many of your friends are involved in school clubs, activities or sports?

How many of your friends did certain things like cheating on school tests or pressured to drink alcohol and try drugs?

How do you prevent peer pressure?

Are there any programs at the Boys and Girls Club that helped you with avoiding peer pressure?

Good Character & Citizenship

Community service: How often have you participated in community service in the past four months?

Why did you do it? Did your friends do it too?

The Boys and Girls Club say that their programs promote three core values:

- a) Mutual respect (for example, treating others with respect, and getting respect in return)
- b) Teamwork (for example, working with others to reach a common goal or outcome)
- c) Social responsibility (for example, promoting positive change, giving back to community and participating in service to others).

Based on your experiences at the Boys and Girls Club, how do feel about these programs and what they promote?

Were there any other experiences at the Boys and Girls Club that you thought about while we were talking, but that you haven't shared yet?

APPENDIX D: University IRB Approval



4/10/2015

Investigator(s): Daniel Jones and Steven Estes
Department: Health Performance, Leisure Sport and Tourism Studies
Investigator(s) Email: dj3b@mtmail.mtsu.edu; steven.estes@mtsu.edu

Protocol Title: "Overcoming adversity examining the impact of Boys & Girls Club on at-risk youth "

Protocol Number: 15-231

Dear Investigator(s),

The MTSU Institutional Review Board, or a representative of the IRB, has reviewed the research proposal identified above. The MTSU IRB or its representative has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants and qualifies for an expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110, and you have satisfactorily addressed all of the points brought up during the review.

Approval is granted for one (1) year from the date of this letter for **25 (TWENTY FIVE)** participants.

Please note that any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918. Any change to the protocol must be submitted to the IRB before implementing this change.

You will need to submit an end-of-project form to the Office of Compliance upon completion of your research located on the IRB website. Complete research means that you have finished collecting and analyzing data. **Should you not finish your research within the one (1) year period, you must submit a Progress Report and request a continuation prior to the expiration date.** Please allow time for review and requested revisions. Failure to submit a Progress Report and request for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of your research study. Therefore, you will not be able to use any data and/or collect any data. Your study expires **4/11/2016**.

According to MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who works with data or has contact with participants. Anyone meeting this definition needs to be listed on the protocol and needs to complete the required training. **If you add researchers to an approved project, please forward an updated list of researchers to the Office of Compliance before they begin to work on the project.**

All research materials must be retained by the PI or faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) for at least three (3) years after study completion and then destroyed in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University