

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Resilience in Adulthood: Turning Points and Generativity

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This analysis uses data from a larger ethnographic study examining community effects of mobile home park residence on child and youth development to explore the resilient pathways of 8 mothers and maternal guardians in order to understand better how successful adaptation is achieved despite significant threats present throughout the life course. The findings join a growing body of literature that suggests that opportunities for resilience occur at various points throughout the life course. Women speaking from their own lived experiences described patterns of risks such as drug addiction, domestic violence, and poverty that persisted throughout generations of their families and influenced their development. Yet, despite the odds against positive development, they displayed a remarkable capacity to overcome these adversities to move toward successful adaptation adulthood. Our research offers evidence of significant turning points such as connections to supportive mentors or surrogate parents, distancing strategies, and entry into healthier relationships that altered negative developmental trajectories toward more positive outcomes. In addition, faith and a generative commitment offered significant support and reinforcement for successful adaptation.

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Resilience in Adulthood: Turning Points and Generativity

by
Megan L. Notter

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CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

Dr. Katherine A. MacTavish was responsible for the design and implementation of the study. She was also involved with data collection, interpretation of the data, and the writing of Chapter 2. Devora Shamah assisted with data collection and interpretation of the data.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Resilience in Adulthood: Turning Points and Generativity

Although much of the current research on resilience focuses on childhood (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000), there is a growing interest in the life histories of adults who achieved resilient outcomes later in the life course (Werner, 2000). This is in part because the achievement and maintenance of resilience is a life-long process. Adulthood is a time characterized by opportunities to become more independent in making decisions about the future. Opportunities for change such as a career or marriage may allow individuals to direct their lives toward more resilient pathways than those that constrained them throughout their earlier life (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000). During adulthood, individuals also encounter opportunities to form families of their own and to create a protective environment for their children.

Consider the following composite scenario:

As a child, Felicia was neglected by her mother who was addicted to drugs and alcohol. Felicia's family was very poor and she was bounced between her mother's home and her grandparents' home even though her grandparents were also addicted to alcohol. In fact, the majority of Felicia's extended family members abused alcohol and drugs. Felicia had few friends and she floundered in school. She developed an attachment to a mentor at her church, however, who exposed her to what life was like in a middle-class family. As a teen, Felicia was kicked out of her mother's home when her mother discovered that she was pregnant. Felicia moved in with her husband who subsequently began abusing her. Finally, when Felicia's husband began abusing their child, Felicia left him and moved back in with her mother. Shortly afterwards, Felicia's husband was incarcerated on drug-related charges.

At age 32, Felicia's life differs substantially from her earlier life experiences. Felicia and her second husband have a healthier, nonviolent marriage and neither has issues with substance abuse. Felicia obtained her GED and she and her husband both work full-time jobs that provide health insurance and the opportunity for economic stability. The affordability of the mobile home park in which they reside has enabled

them to stabilize their family in place. Felicia and her family are active in the faith community and they derive much support from their church and their faith in God.

Felicia has three children to whom she is devoted and she strives to make sure they are successfully achieving in school and are able to participate in community activities. Felicia's children are blissfully ignorant of the risks that Felicia encountered in her own family of origin and Felicia is committed to ensuring that they grow up happy, healthy, and protected. Felicia maintains ties to her family of origin and works to heal the wounds created in her childhood. She remains physically distanced from her family, however, by residing in a different town in order to avoid the risky behaviors that persist among her family members. Felicia and her family continue to be challenged by job insecurity and economic constraints, but Felicia is happy to have achieved the kind of family stability that she lacked in her childhood and youth.

Felicia's experiences are an example of how resilient outcomes can occur through turning points and commitment to the next generation. Felicia experienced a turning point when she established a connection with a mentor at church who showed her another way of living. She also benefited from another turning point experience when she entered into her second marriage with a nondeviant spouse who helped her stabilize her family and distance herself from the negative behaviors of her family of origin. Felicia's generative commitment to her children helped her maintain her resilience because she was determined that her children would not experience the risks that she faced as a child.

Implicit in the process of resilience is the exposure to environmental threats that substantially increase the risk for negative outcomes (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000b). Resilience is characterized, then, by positive developmental outcomes, or successful adaptation, despite these threats (Masten, 2001). There has been some discussion in the literature about what constitutes successful adaptation. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) assert that successful adaptation does not mean that excellence has to be achieved, but simply that the person in question is on a trajectory that is "unexpectedly positive" given their exposure to risk. Thus, the avoidance of serious antisocial behaviors or internalizing problems (rather than excellent social competence) is sufficient to be considered as successful adaptation. Turning points

refer to opportunities that occur throughout the life course that significantly impact the achievement of successful adaptation by turning a negative developmental trajectory into a more positive trajectory (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). Generativity can also provide support for successful adaptation. Generativity is the concern for and commitment to fostering the development and well-being of future generations (Erikson, 1963; McAdams, 2006; McAdams, Hart, & Maruna 1998; McAdams, & Logan, 2004).

Within the context of a larger ethnographic study, we had the unique opportunity to engage with 8 women who presented intergenerational patterns of risk, but who, like Felicia, also experienced turning points that positively altered their developmental trajectories. The women resided in rural mobile home parks, a context characteristically low in neighborhood and community support (MacTavish & Salamon, 2001). Early life experiences such as low educational attainment and residential instability that first directed women on a pathway toward mobile home park residence continued to shape their lives. In addition, they were further challenged by histories of enduring intergenerational patterns of substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence, divorce, teen pregnancy, mental health issues, and time in foster care. The women demonstrated a remarkable capacity to overcome challenges associated with their life histories, however, and to realize successful adaptation in adulthood. Turning point experiences and a generative commitment contributed to their resilient outcomes.

This analysis uses data from a larger ethnographic study examining community effects of mobile home park residence on child and youth development to explore the resilient pathways of 8 mothers and maternal guardians in order to understand better how successful adaptation can be achieved despite significant threats present throughout the life course. This thesis furthers our understanding of resilience by exploring an understudied group of adults: mothers in fragile rural families. The ways in which these mothers were able to successfully adapt in adulthood despite familial and structural challenges has important implications for policies, programs, and interventions aimed at ending intergenerational patterns of risk and alleviating the pernicious effects of poverty.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Risk and Resilience Perspective

A risk and resilience perspective, the guiding framework for this study, maintains that resilience is a dynamic interaction of risk and protective processes that occurs over time and operates at individual, family, and community levels (Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). Congruent with life course and feminist perspectives, which further inform the study, this perspective argues that individual development is influenced by multiple contexts and it focuses our attention on these contexts in research. As such, the larger social contexts in which individuals are embedded can either facilitate or constrain the process of resilience (Masten, 2001; Rubin, 1996). Characteristics of the individual and the contexts in which they reside are explored to identify turning point experiences that may moderate the effect of risk on the individual. Positive turning points that occur throughout the life course impact risk factors by shifting a negative developmental trajectory toward a more positive developmental trajectory and may help compensate for the effects of earlier risks experienced by the individual (Rutter, 2000b).

Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective is ideal for examining transitions occurring at different points of development that shape successful adaptation in adulthood. The life course framework considers change in individuals and families from a dynamic perspective, taking into account time, context, process, and meaning (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Elder & Conger, 2000; Elder, Modell, & Parke, 1993). There is great value in looking across time to examine resilience because opportunities for change occur at different points in the life course (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Werner, 2000). Elder, Nguyen, and Caspi (1985) found that as the environment changes throughout development, risk factors vary in type and influence. Thus, individuals who are deviant in their youth may still have the capacity to experience positive change.

Three of the five themes associated with a life course framework are relevant for this thesis. First, multiple temporal contexts of development and the interactions between them are considered (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Elder, Modell, & Parke, 1993). These include ontogenetic (individual), generational (family events and transitions), and

historical contexts. Context greatly influences development in that family, neighborhood, community, and political contexts can serve to either facilitate or constrain resilience depending on the level of support they provide. This theme maintains that family and individual behavior is partially a result of developmental status, generational status, and the broader social context. In this study, data were collected on ontogenetic, generational, and historical contexts to explore the influences and interactions of each. This framework also calls for researchers to be mindful of social patterns formed over multiple generations. Consistent with this idea, data were collected on at least four generations of family members.

In terms of the historical context, the study community was once a stable timber community that was dependent on the natural resource-based economy for survival. The rapid decline in the timber industry that occurred in the 1980s resulted in a population of workers who were once able to earn a living wage, but could no longer provide for their families. Community informants spoke of increased rates of domestic violence, divorce, and drug and alcohol abuse that accompanied this loss of economic security. The relationship between historical events and family dynamics demonstrates the importance of locating families within historical time and place (Elder & Conger, 2000; Elder, Modell, & Parke, 1993).

The second theme posits that multiple social contexts of development, including sociostructural, sociohistorical, and cultural contexts need to be taken into account (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Bowen, Richman, & Bowen, 2000). In terms of the sociostructural location, this study is focused on rural poor and working-poor families because multiple risks are often found bundled together in these populations (Rutter, 2000b). Inherent in this research is the social construction of meaning that occurs through social interactions. How families in mobile home parks perceive the surrounding neighborhood and community may influence their perception of the availability of social support. Researchers need to address the interface (family-environment fit) between families at certain stages of the life course and the community in which they reside (Bowen, Richman, & Bowen, 2000, p. 117).

The third theme of a life course framework relevant to this study maintains that heterogeneity in structures and processes associated with development need to be acknowledged (Bengtson & Allen, 1993). Overall trends need to be considered as well as within-group differences. The process of adaptation is likely to be different for individuals with diverse risk factors in their histories. Although each woman in this sample demonstrated successful adaptation in adulthood and a strong generative commitment, they each followed a different pathway to achieve this outcome. There were, however, shared elements of resilience that emerged in the findings as well. This variability demonstrates that women are active agents in their own development in the context of multiple community and neighborhood influences, both current and historical (Elder & Conger, 2000; Elder, Modell, & Parke, 1993).

Feminist Perspectives

Feminist perspectives call for a critical examination of issues of gender and power to give voice to how life is experienced by marginalized and devalued populations (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). There are five main themes associated with feminist perspectives (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). The first is that the centrality, normality, and value of the experiences of marginalized populations are assumed. In this study, the experiences of poor and working-poor families in rural mobile home parks will be explored, giving voice to a population that has typically been marginalized and understudied.

The second theme identifies gender as a basic organizing concept. Traditionally, the responsibility of parenting has largely fallen to mothers. Consistent with this pattern, the majority of data collected about the implementation of family management strategies was from the perspective of mothers in the study, although both mothers and fathers were invited to participate. Only a few fathers chose to actively take part in the study. In contrast, all of the children were excited to participate in the study and information was included from their perspectives.

Along with the concept of gender as an organizing concept, is the notion that exaggerated differences between genders serve to legitimate power differentials (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). This is also true of power differentials that occur as a result of

differences in social class. Power differentials are evident at a community level in that differences in social class status create barriers to accessing services for poor and working-poor families. Class and power relations in rural communities evolve over time and are rooted in tradition, reputation, and history (Duncan, 1996). Long-time residents have seen multiple generations of families and often judge current generations on family reputations alone, affecting the available opportunities and aspirations of young people in the community (Duncan, 1996). Historical patterns of class relations sustain current poverty levels and influence opportunities for social mobility for many rural families (Duncan, 1996). Furthermore, the stigmatization of families living in a mobile home park potentially serves to maintain power differentials between social classes.

The third theme associated with feminist perspectives posits that relations in marginalized populations need to be examined within sociocultural and historical contexts (e.g., extended kin relations and community characteristics). In this study, data were collected on both kin and friendship relations. In addition, data were collected in the contexts of the home, school, neighborhood, and community. Feminist perspectives, like life course perspective, sensitize researchers to take into account the various contexts families encounter in their daily lives.

The fourth theme involves questioning the normative concept of “the family.” Feminist perspectives assert that women have always lived in varied household forms and the notion of the family contributes to the oppression of women (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). A variety of family forms are represented in the sample for this study, allowing for experiences across different family structures to be explored. Resilience is examined in terms of how unique individual and family life course events shaped the accomplishment of successful adaptation in adulthood.

The final theme associated with feminist perspectives maintains that feminist studies need to be used to facilitate social change (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). One goal of this thesis is to examine policy, program, and prevention implications associated with resilience in adulthood. This information will be used to establish a better understanding of poor and working-poor rural families and to inform further research, policy, and

intervention efforts aimed at supporting resilience in vulnerable populations. Findings and recommendations for social change will be provided for the study community.

Research Questions

Within a risk and resilience framework, the following research questions are explored in this study: First, given the existence of multiple risk factors experienced throughout their life courses, did the women achieve successful adaptation in adulthood? Second, were there turning point experiences that influenced the likelihood of successful adaptation in adulthood for the 8 women in this study? If so, what were these turning points? Third, did the women display a generative commitment to their children? If so, did a generative commitment contribute to reinforcing the achievement or maintenance of successful adaptation? (See Figure 1.) In this study, risk is defined by the participant's cumulative exposure to adverse family and environmental conditions likely to increase the chance of harm or onset of psychopathology (e.g., substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty). Successful adaptation is defined by the absence of serious antisocial or internalizing behaviors in adulthood characteristic of the women's families of origin. Generative commitment is defined by expressed and observed efforts to buffer the next generation of children from the kinds of risks mothers experienced throughout their own development.

EXPANDED LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on six content areas and the interactions among them. The review begins with an overview of current research on risk and resilience, followed by a review of the concept of generativity. Contextual effects are then considered by reviewing the effects of neighborhood on child development and parenting because neighborhood contexts can serve to facilitate or constrain successful adaptation. Family management strategies in low-income urban families are described and the lack of research on these strategies in low-income rural families is noted. Next, the review considers both rural communities and mobile home parks as contexts for development. Myths related to idyllic rural communities are addressed and emerging research on families living in rural mobile home parks is discussed.

Risk and Resilience

Intergenerational patterns of poverty typically persist in poor and working-poor families and often come bundled together with other risks such as job insecurity, drug abuse, or domestic violence (Rubin, 1976; Rutter, 2000b). The accumulation of risk factors greatly increases the chance for negative developmental outcomes and the same appears to be true of cumulative protection, in which one protective factor alone rarely has a significant impact on developmental outcomes (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1979, 2000b). Thus, cumulative life course experiences, both negative and positive, influence resilient outcomes in adulthood. Protective factors such as academic achievement, supportive relationships, or self-esteem modify a person's response to risk (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000). Turning points, in contrast, modify risk by significantly altering the context or the individual's personal perceptions by reducing risk and presenting new opportunities that lead to a more adaptive developmental trajectory (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004; Rutter, 2000b).

Werner and Smith (1992, p. 178) refer to turning points as "second chance opportunities," which occur at major life transitions. Examples of turning points that can have positive consequences for the life course include graduating from high school, joining the workforce, joining the military, joining a church, experiencing a spiritual conversion, entering into a healthy marriage with a nondeviant spouse, and giving birth to a child (Masten, 2001; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). The experience of establishing a connection with a mentor or a surrogate parent during times of adversity is often an important turning point. Werner (2000) and Rubin (1996) assert that an alternate caregiver can be an important stress buffer in the life of a child and that resilient children appear especially skilled at attracting mentors and surrogate parents. Another example of a turning point is distancing oneself from negative influences or dysfunctional families. In a follow-up of participants in a longitudinal study of resilience, Werner (2000) found that some high-risk youth developed into resilient adults by detaching themselves from parents and siblings to avoid their risky behaviors.

Generativity

A generative commitment can reinforce successful adaptation in adulthood and can in itself be a turning point in the life course. A generative commitment to the future can be expressed through many different areas such as work, volunteerism, activism, or involvement in religious organizations, but is most often expressed through childrearing practices (McAdams, 2006). Although generativity is typically seen as a positive commitment to future generations, Kotre and Kotre (1998) assert that there is also a negative side of generativity in which damaging behaviors are passed on through generations. One example is the intergenerational cycle of violence, in which abusers intentionally teach their children to abuse others in their family. Kotre and Kotre argue that a person can demonstrate a generative commitment by actively choosing not to pass something on to future generations. They refer to such a person as an *intergenerational buffer*. Kotre (2004) explains that adults who suffered during their own childhood vow to protect their children from damaging experiences by halting the intergenerational transmission of risk.

Contextual Influences

Neighborhood effects. Recent research exploring the effects of neighborhood and community influences on child development has highlighted the importance of examining development within the broader contexts that affect children and families. Sampson and Laub (1994) emphasize the importance of looking beyond a family “under the roof” to include the broader contexts of neighborhood and community. Although several theories address the relationship between community and family well-being, the effect of family-level processes on individual outcomes has not received enough attention. Existing theories focus on neighborhood resources (availability of and access to resources), collective socialization (community social organization), epidemic or contagion models (peer influences), competition approaches (neighbors compete for scarce resources), and relative deprivation models (evaluation of own situation as compared to others) (Burton & Jarrett, 2000; Burton & Price-Spratlen, 1999; Jarrett & Jefferson, 2003; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Thus far, however, these existing theories have not been able to fully explain developmental outcomes.

Development is influenced by three levels of processes including individual, social and interpersonal, and neighborhood and community-level processes (Aber, Gephart, Brooks-Gunn, & Connell, 1997). In terms of neighborhood and community processes, a growing body of research links the geographic concentration of poverty and disadvantaged neighborhood characteristics, such as a lack of safety, residential stability, positive role models, and formal and informal resources, to negative child and family well-being (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, Vidal, 2001; Gephart, 1997; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000, Sampson, 2001). Contextual neighborhood characteristics are considered *conditioning influences* in the sense that they promote or constrain community resources (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, Vidal, 2001). As such, neighborhood and community characteristics can either support or undermine resilience.

Bowen, Richman, and Bowen (2000) found that families are also influenced by family structure, life events, and the demands on time and energy of family members. They note the importance of examining the fit between the family and the environment in which they reside. *Family-environment fit* refers to how well communities meet the needs of families (e.g., social support) and how well families meet the demands of community (e.g., parental monitoring) (Bowen, Richman, & Bowen, 2000). These findings point to the importance of considering the simultaneous effects of both neighborhood and family influences on child and family well-being. Coley and Hoffmann (1996) note that even young children are affected by both neighborhood and family characteristics. In addition, the life course perspective posits that families are embedded in the larger historical and cultural contexts of the surrounding community, so these contexts must be considered as well (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Elder & Conger, 2000).

Neighborhood influences and parenting. Research supports that neighborhood effects on child development are mediated through family processes. For example, research demonstrates that the quality of the home-learning environment mediates neighborhood effects for school-aged children (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, Chase-Lansdale, & Gordon, 1997). The home-learning environment was measured by the child's level of academic and language stimulation in the home environment. In addition, the overall home environment, measured by learning stimulation, safety of the physical

environment, and parental warmth, was found to moderate the effects of neighborhood (Klebanov et al., 1997). This was consistent across age groups, measures, samples, and neighborhoods characterized by diverse economic conditions. In a review of the literature, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) reported that parents mediated the association between children and neighborhood through the use of family management strategies such as monitoring and child involvement in organized activities. They also found that some parents acted as brokers or advocates for their children, securing community services and resources important to child development such as positive role models and supportive networks.

Contextual neighborhood variations impact parenting in terms of perceptions of the meaning of successful development (Brodsky, 1996; Brodsky, O'Campo, & Aronson, 1999; Burton, 1997, 2001). For example, middle-class goals for successful development such as academic achievement are not always relevant in inner-city neighborhoods where physical survival and adult responsibilities are emphasized for adolescent development (Burton, 1997, 2001; Burton, Obeidallah, & Allison, 1996). This variation is an example of how ontogenetic and social time clocks are contextually influenced. Furthermore, although objective measures of neighborhood resources such as a playground for parents and children to gather may be identified, subjective measures may not validate objective findings if, for example, parents feel that the playground is unsafe for their children because of drug or gang activity (Korbin & Coulton, 1997). This finding emphasizes the importance of considering the social construction of meaning fundamental to life course theory.

A lack of attention to family-level processes, including family management strategies, partially explains the inability of current theories on neighborhood and community processes to fully account for the effects of context on child and family outcomes (Burton & Jarrett, 2000). Burton and Jarrett (2000) note the importance of taking into account both family- and parent-level processes (e.g., residential movements, extended kin networks, family routines, parenting styles, child-monitoring strategies, and generational role boundaries) in examining the link between community and child outcomes. Furthermore, there is not enough information regarding how family and

neighborhood processes function in rural communities because the research to date is comprised mostly of urban samples (Simons, Johnson, Conger, & Lorenz, 1997). Consistent with feminist perspectives that focus on increasing knowledge about marginalized populations, I seek to determine the relationship among communities, neighborhoods, families, and individual well-being in this understudied population.

Family management strategies. Although poor and working-poor families living in high-risk, low-resource neighborhoods face many constraints, family management strategies to a great extent shape how neighborhood risks and resources are experienced by children (Elder & Conger, 2000; Jarrett 1997; Jarrett & Jefferson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1994). Family management strategies intended to ameliorate the negative effects of lower-class status and neighborhood context and promote successful development are well documented for urban contexts (Burton & Jarrett, 2000; Furstenberg, 1993; Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999; Jarrett & Jefferson, 2003; Lareau, 2002, 2003; Rosier & Corsaro, 1993). Parents essentially act as buffers between children and neighborhood influences by utilizing a variety of family management strategies such as monitoring, restrictiveness, shared family activities, and community involvement (Furstenberg, 1993; Furstenberg et al, 1999; Jarrett & Jefferson, 2003). A study of third and fourth graders residing in working-class and poor neighborhoods showed that monitoring was a protective factor for children, especially in low-resource neighborhoods (Coley & Hoffman, 1996). Urban studies have demonstrated the importance of family management strategies for navigating risky contexts.

This section details three exemplar studies that examine the intersection between neighborhood and family management strategies. In a study of adolescents residing in Philadelphia, family management strategies were explored in five distinct neighborhoods, which varied by level of risk and available resources (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999). By using promotive and preventive family management strategies, parents in each neighborhood attempted to protect their children from risks while linking them to resources and opportunities not available in the immediate neighborhood (Furstenberg et al., 1999). Promotive strategies such as activity involvement, skill enhancement, shared family activities, and support for autonomy were used to foster

adolescents' talents and to provide opportunities for success. Preventive strategies such as talking with children about dangers, teaching good judgment, enforcing rules, restrictiveness, and monitoring friends, were used to protect adolescents from exposure to dangerous circumstances. In addition, strategies such as the implementation of daily routines, involvement in religious organizations, school selection, and parental involvement in organizations served to facilitate adolescent success by linking children to community resources and role models (Furstenberg et al., 1999).

Jarrett (1995, 1997, 1999) also found evidence of family management strategies employed by low-income African-American mothers to promote the safety and positive development of younger children in impoverished inner-city Chicago neighborhoods. Two types of family management strategies, buffering and enhancing, were identified, which were similar to those identified in the Philadelphia study (Jarrett & Jefferson, 2003). Buffering strategies included monitoring, cautionary warnings, danger management, chaperonage, and confinement. Enhancing strategies included resource-brokering (bridging children to community resources and role models) and in-home learning activities (enhancing reading and writing skills). Jarrett and Jefferson (2003) determined that although high-risk neighborhoods posed many barriers to successful child development, neighborhood constraints were mediated by parent's personal agency and creative family management strategies. They noted, however, the high personal costs when parents attempted to employ these strategies without institutional supports from the neighborhood or broader community (Jarrett, 1997).

Another factor that shapes the use of family management strategies is class status. Lareau (2002, 2003) compared the family management strategies of urban White and African American middle-class, working-class, and poor families in the Northeast region of the United States. She did not examine neighborhood context, but instead focused on the intersection of race and social class. Family management strategies differed most significantly across social class rather than racial group (Lareau, 2002, 2003). Working-class and poor families used similar family management strategies to foster child development. Lareau (2002, 2003) identified two logics of child rearing strategies: concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth. Concerted cultivation

was employed by middle-class parents and was characterized by strategies to actively foster children's skills, encourage involvement in multiple organized activities, and develop reasoning and negotiation skills. These families typically had weak ties to members of their extended families. The result of employing concerted cultivation strategies was an emerging sense of entitlement on the part of the child.

In contrast, working-class and poor families engaged in strategies related to the accomplishment of natural growth. These parents cared for their children and allowed them to grow in a more unstructured environment. Children spent time "hanging out," especially with extended family members. Directives were used in conversations, rather than reasoning and negotiation. The result of employing accomplishment of natural growth strategies was an emerging sense of constraint on the part of the child (Lareau, 2002, 2003). Parents in poor and working-class families tended to involve their children in a few community activities, but their motivations for doing so were different from the motivations of middle-class parents. Poor and working-class parents sought to involve their children in community activities to keep their children busy or to keep them away from risky neighborhoods, rather than to promote skill development. This reference demonstrates that class differences, as well as neighborhood contextual factors, influence family management strategies.

Variations in family management strategies. Parents who were able to effectively implement family management strategies had children and youth who were navigating more successful pathways of development. Although families in each of the above studies used family management strategies to guide their children toward positive outcomes, families differed in their responses to the same situations and utilized different family management strategies within the same neighborhoods. For example, in comparing five different neighborhoods, Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, and Sameroff (1999) observed that parents in neighborhoods characterized by differing levels of risk used similar family management strategies. Research supports that parents' perceptions of their neighborhood and community are important in determining which family management strategies to employ (Brodsky, 1996; Brodsky, O'Campo, & Aronson, 1999;

Burton, 1997, 2001). This research demonstrates the importance of the social construction of meaning inherent in the life course perspective.

Also consistent with a life course perspective, family management strategies were influenced not only by neighborhood characteristics and class status, but also by life experiences, including educational attainment and economic stability (Lareau, 2002, 2003). Family management strategies differed based on the availability of institutional resources, social networks, occupational status, and the degree of cohesiveness in the neighborhood and community as well (Furstenberg et al., 1999). Parents work as active agents to promote positive child development in the midst of neighborhood risks and in the context of multiple community influences both current and historical.

Family management strategies and rural families. Limited evidence exists for whether poor and working-poor rural families adopt either preventive or promotive family management strategies in guiding their children's development. (For the purposes of this paper, Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff's, 1999, terminology is used to discuss family management strategies.) Current research on family management strategies in rural communities reveals that poor and working-poor rural families use preventive strategies to isolate themselves in small, kin-based clusters to avoid perceived risks and stigmatization associated with the adjacent community (Duncan, 2000). Unfortunately, social stigmatization, rather than social integration is a daily reality for rural-poor families (Duncan, 2000; MacTavish, 2002; Struthers & Bokemeir, 2000). Another rural family strategy for overcoming economic hardships and neighborhood risks involves using promotive techniques to bridge a child or family to social networks and institutional resources in the larger community (Elder & Conger, 2000). Access to local social resources, however, depends directly on a household's integration into the community. Length of residence, life stage, and socioeconomic position also shape a household's ties to community (MacTavish & Salamon, 2003).

Preventive and promotive strategies require a large investment of family time and energy. An availability of such resources among poor and working-poor families in rural communities is further challenged by randomly changing work schedules and extended commutes resulting from rural distance (MacTavish & Salamon, 2003). Thus,

implementing effective family management strategies in the context of a rural community with few formal and informal supports requires a massive effort on the part of parents (Elder & Conger, 2000). A study of single mothers residing in rural Iowa found that high-quality parenting was undermined by the level of social disorganization that is characteristic of concentrated neighborhood disadvantage (Simons, Johnson, Conger, & Lorenz, 1997). Social disorganization is characterized by the lack of formal and informal support networks that provide fundamental needs for residents such as quality schools, job opportunities, and social support (Simons et al., 1997).

Rural Communities

"Ideal places." Lack of attention to rural neighborhoods and communities as potentially risky contexts for families is in part because of the persistent notion that rural, small town communities are ideal places to raise children. Recently, however, there has been a growing interest in issues of rural poverty and family well-being. Rural communities have traditionally been associated with safety, neighborliness, good schools, tight-knit social and kin networks, strong values, and beautiful landscapes (Children First for Oregon & Washington Kids Count, 2004; Elder & Conger, 2000; Salamon, 2003). This notion is reinforced by the belief that urban areas are declining in social resources and social control (Struthers & Bokemeir, 2000). Although poor and working-poor rural families are not as likely to be exposed to risks to the same degree as families living in urban ghettos, they are similarly affected by chronic stressors such as economic disadvantage, poor housing, and a lack of social support, characteristic of areas of concentrated poverty (Struthers & Bokemeir, 2000). In addition, although rural communities are valued for safety, the prevalence of gangs, crime, violence, domestic violence, and drug abuse is increasing in rural areas (Struthers & Bokemeir, 2000). Elder and Conger (2000) describe this discrepancy between the idealized and actual rural community as the "two faces of rural America." One is characterized by the appeal of an agrarian life style and the other is characterized by chronic, debilitating poverty. This discrepancy highlights the increasing need to better understand how rural communities function for families.

Converging social trends. Historical differences in social trends between rural and urban families are converging. One myth surrounding rural families is that they are characterized by traditional family structures (Struthers & Bokemeir, 2000). Research indicates, however, that rural trends in family structure, marital disruption, remarriage, family size, nonmarital child-bearing, and teenage pregnancy are now similar to urban trends (Lichter & Eggebean, 1992; MacTavish & Salamon, 2003; Struthers & Bokemeir, 2000). Although the effects of poverty in urban ghettos have been emphasized in the literature, poverty in rural areas is actually more prevalent and persistent than urban poverty (Economic Research Service, 2003; Lichter & Eggebean, 1992). Rural poverty has been largely ignored, however, because it is less visible. Rural residency in itself is a predictor of children's poverty status, even after controlling for maternal, household, and economic characteristics (Garrett, Ng'andu, & Ferron, 1994).

Fitchen (1991) found that the key factors underlying rural impoverishment were lack of employment opportunities, housing shortages, and changing family relations. A study of rural families in Oregon and Washington revealed that rural families were significantly concerned about unemployment, inadequate child care, educational opportunities, the lack of youth activities, health care challenges, and transportation difficulties (Children First for Oregon & Washington Kids Count, 2004). These concerns are directly related to family well-being and are similar to the hardships families face in impoverished urban neighborhoods. In addition, low-income families in rural areas are the least-served population because of the interaction of the peripheralization of poverty, in which residents are forced to rural areas for affordable housing, and the centralization of services, in which formal social support remains only in the county seat (Fitchen, 1991). Issues of efficiency and economy of scale prevent services from being widely distributed in rural communities. Mobile home parks have increasingly become one of the only affordable housing options for rural poor and working-poor families.

Rural Mobile Home Parks

Mobile home parks are a characteristic rural community form providing housing for poor and working-poor families. Manufactured or mobile homes now represent one-in-five new homes and one-in-eight existing homes in nonmetro America (Meeks, 1998).

Mobile homes offer an attractive form of alternative housing in rural areas, providing affordable access for some low-income families to achieve the “American dream” of home ownership or at least stand-alone housing (Geisler & Mitsuda, 1987; MacTavish, 2002; MacTavish, Eley, & Salamon, in press). The manufactured-home industry has long promoted mobile home parks as functional places marked by positive social interactions, cohesiveness, and networks of support (Wallis, 1991). Although five million children and youth reside in rural mobile home parks, few studies have examined how this community form functions in terms of child and family well-being. Furthermore, few studies have considered family and social aspects of living in a mobile home park from a life course perspective.

Historically, mobile home parks have been marginalized to the outskirts of town and residents have been subjected to stigmatization from residents of the adjacent town (Salamon & MacTavish, 2005). Kiter Edwards (2004) found that some working-poor families residing in mobile home parks engaged in family identity management strategies to present a positive view of their family to the community. Family identity management strategies included familial boundary maintenance (boundaries between family, extended kin, and outsiders) and territorial boundary maintenance (boundaries between neighbors), as well as mobility restriction (monitoring of friends and places) and social restriction (minimizing social interactions) (Kiter Edwards). Family identity management strategies were used to separate families from other residents of the mobile home park to avoid stigmatization from the larger community.

Mobile home parks are typically characterized by a dense concentration of younger, poorer, and less educated residents (MacTavish, 2002; Meeks, 1998). As such, the mobile home park has the potential to function in ways similar to an inner-city ghetto, a community context known to be a risk factor for successful child development (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Although neighborhood risks in rural areas may not be as great as those in inner-city ghettos, children living in rural areas are likely to be exposed to risks that parallel those found in urban areas, especially in terms of difficulties accessing community resources. The geographic concentration and isolation of poor and working-poor families creates

barriers for accessing community resources and opportunities that foster positive child outcomes (Korbin & Coulton, 1997).

Emerging research. A recent ethnographic study compared families with children and youth living in mobile home parks in the Midwest and Southwest regions of the United States. Findings from this study revealed that that mobile home parks function differently for different populations (MacTavish & Salamon, 2001). Some residents reported experiencing a sense of community, but this was more likely for older residents than for families with children. Many families found it difficult to form supportive networks in their neighborhoods and residents often viewed residence in the mobile home park as a temporary rather than a permanent home (MacTavish & Salamon, 2001). Thus, most residents were unlikely to engage in neighborhood interactions or to invest in relationships with neighbors, creating a neighborhood context low in social support for families. Resilience in such a context becomes an individual rather than collective effort making the demands for family time and energy even greater. This finding is consistent with research in urban neighborhoods (Furstenberg, 1993). A neighborhood and community context low in social support for families challenges resilience because achieving successful adaptation and maintaining successful adaptation in such a context becomes an individual rather than a collective effort making the demands for personal agency even greater.

In another analysis of the above study, MacTavish and Salamon (2006) discovered three distinct pathways of youth development described as flourishing, floundering, and static that differed by patterns of engagement in the mobile home park, quality of resources accessed in the community, and family strategies utilized (MacTavish & Salamon, 2006). Flourishing youth disassociated themselves with the mobile home park, and strategically found ways to access community resources and to engage in structured activities outside of the park. In contrast, floundering youth focused their time socializing with peers in the mobile home park and perceived barriers to accessing community resources. Static youth fell between flourishing and floundering youth, and divided their time between the community and the mobile home park, so they were not fully invested in either context. Consistent with life course perspective, this

research demonstrates the importance of taking into account within-group differences when studying community effects on children and families (Bengston & Allen, 1993).

Youth pathways were also influenced by family management strategies. Parental decisions about which strategies to employ were shaped by perceptions of the trailer park, the neighborhood, and the adjacent town (MacTavish & Salamon, 2006). In general, parents of flourishing youth invested time, energy, and money to promote access to the adjacent community. In contrast, parents of floundering youth employed preventive strategies to keep youth away from the broader community in an effort to protect youth from the effects of stigmatization. The finding that rural parents use both promotive and preventive family management strategies parallels findings from urban studies on parents' use of family management strategies.

In a similar analysis of neighborhood effects, MacTavish (draft) examined younger school-aged children residing in mobile home parks. Consistent with adolescent pathways of development, flourishing, floundering, and static children were identified. The neighborhood context functioned differently for children than for adolescents, though, often because of the use of family management strategies (MacTavish, draft). Flourishing children had parents who allowed them access to their neighborhood. They demonstrated mastery over their neighborhood and felt it was a familiar, safe place. Neighborhood friendships were important source of social support. This access contributed to the development of an increasing sense of autonomy that is known to be an important factor in child development (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999). In contrast, floundering children reported limited engagement in the neighborhood as a result of parent restrictions, and did not perceive the neighborhood as a familiar and safe place. Floundering children lacked the opportunity to start developing a sense of autonomy. Static children were allowed access to the neighborhood, but did not take advantage of this opportunity and instead preferred to engage in television or video games. This variability demonstrates that an element of individual personal traits affects how a neighborhood functions for children (MacTavish, draft). Thus, the mobile home park in itself had a neutral neighborhood effect for children and child pathways of development in this context were largely influenced by family management strategies.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND FIELD STUDY METHODS

Our study employed an ethnographic methodology to explore the lives of women living in mobile home parks in rural Oregon, and is part of a larger cross-sectional study including a sample of families with children and another sample of families with adolescents. A pseudonym, "Mountainview," was created for the study community to maintain anonymity of the town, park, and people involved in the study. Mountainview was chosen for this study because mobile homes comprise 20% of the housing in Mountainview and because it afforded the research team an opportunity to study families residing in rural mobile home parks. In addition, Mountainview provided an opportunity to examine the impact of an economically declining timber-dependent community on families, as it was once part of a stable timber industry.

Study Location

"Mountainview" is a small town in rural Oregon with a population of just over 8,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). A four-lane highway lined with shops and businesses serves as the main street in Mountainview. Many of the businesses, however, are vacant and boarded up illustrating the persistent economic decline of the town. The population in Mountainview is primarily White (93.6%) and, in general, is less educated and poorer than the average population in both Oregon and the United States (Table 1). The population of Mountainview also has a greater percentage of individuals in poverty than the national rate for nonmetro poverty (17.5% in Mountainview compared to 14.2% nationally). Just over half of the population 16 and older is in the workforce and the mean travel time to work is 25 minutes, indicating that many people in the workforce do not work within Mountainview and must travel to surrounding communities for work. Commuting to other communities to find work is characteristic for many small town residents. In Mountainview, the percentage of individuals and families in poverty is higher than both state and national percentages. Families with children are more impoverished than any other group. These demographic characteristics identify Mountainview as an appropriate community in which to study the effects of rural poverty on family well-being.

Mountainview is also an appropriate place to examine issue of family well-being in terms of the economic survival of a natural resource dependent community, as it was once a stable timber community. The economic decline of timber dependent communities is a trend seen throughout much of rural Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. In 1978, 81,400 workers were employed in the timber industry (Hibbard & Elias, 1993). By 1990 the number of workers employed in timber dropped to 64,000, and an additional loss of 25,000 more jobs was expected to occur by 1995 (Hibbard & Elias, 1993). Community informants revealed that Mountainview in itself lost 1,500 mill jobs. What followed was the emergence of “two Northwests.” Rural economies did not share in the economic boom of the late 1990s. Although the Portland area thrived, rural areas steadily declined because of the loss of economic security (Children First for Oregon & Washington Kids Count, 2004; Hibbard & Elias, 1993). For families, this decline in the timber industry meant that workers once able to earn a living wage could no longer provide for their families through employment in timber. This created not only a loss of income, but also a loss of personal identity. Community informants spoke of increased rates of domestic violence, divorce, and drug and alcohol addiction that accompanied the loss of economic security. Despite the challenges of economic survival and the lack of community resources across the rural region of the Pacific Northwest, the overwhelming majority of rural residents want to stay in their communities (Children First for Oregon & Washington Kids Count, 2004).

Data Collection

Mothers and maternal guardians from three mobile home parks in Mountainview were included in the study. Two of the three parks were similar in resident characteristics and appearance as well as resident estimations of neighborhood relations and safety. The majority of the sample was drawn from these two parks. Only one family resided in the third park (the smallest park of the three). The third site differed from the other two sites in that it was characterized by shabbier homes, more obvious drug use, and poorer families. Because mobile home parks are private property, permission was carefully sought from each of the three owners before the research project began. The managers of each park were also interviewed and were an integral part in facilitating the research

study in terms of validating the study to park residents. Data were collected by a team of three researchers including one professor and two graduate students. All three researchers were White, middle-class women who had experience working with low-income families.

Data that are the focus of the current analysis were collected from 8 women included in a small intensively studied sample as part of a larger ethnographic study. Using theoretical sampling for the larger study, we targeted families with children in 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade (between the ages of 8 and 11). Middle-childhood is a developmental stage in which children are generally exposed to family and neighborhood influences more so than peer group influences (Coley & Hoffmann, 1996). Focusing research on family and neighborhood effects is appropriate at this stage of development because children spend the majority of their time at home, in school, or in their neighborhood (Coley & Hoffman, 1996). The initial research goal for the intensive sample was to recruit 20 children. The method of recruitment included door-to-door canvassing of the parks, snowball sampling, and participant help with recruitment. The research team went door-to-door in each park seeking families with children in the targeted grades. The parks were repeatedly canvassed on weekends and after school. The park managers and families already enrolled in the study also provided names of other families to contact. A packet of information was provided for the families and an incentive of \$125 in gift cards to Safeway or Wal-Mart was offered.

Sample Limitations

We identified 29 children in the 3 mobile home parks whose families met the criteria to participate in the study. Parents of 13 children agreed to participate (45% participation rate), which provided a sample of 8 mothers. Throughout the recruitment process, we often heard parents tell us that they were moving out of the mobile home park soon, so they would not be there to participate or that they simply did not have time for such an in-depth study. In other families, the mother expressed interest in the study, but the father would not allow the family to participate. Because we had not yet reached our desired sample size, families already enrolled in the study were also asked to help with recruitment and they received an additional incentive of \$25 for each family they contacted that enrolled in the study. Unfortunately personal referrals were limited, as

parents in each of the three parks revealed that they did not know very many of the other parents in the parks.

Sample

Table 2 presents the characteristics of the 8 respondents. The women lived in various family forms, allowing for experiences across different family structures to be explored. Five were biological mothers, one a stepmother, one a grandmother, and one a great grandmother. All of the women were White and the majority of the women were in their 20s and 30s (mode = 30) with the grandmother in her mid 40s and the great grandmother in her late 60s. Seven of the 8 women were married (4 were in a second or third marriage) with the last being widowed. Three of the women had a high school education and one had a GED. One woman had a nursing certificate, one woman had completed some college, and two of the women did not complete high school.

Four of the 8 women were employed (2 full-time and 2 part-time), 2 were homemakers, one was disabled, and one was retired. Three of the four women who were employed maintained stable employment throughout the study year. The other woman worked at various jobs throughout the year and had a difficult time maintaining employment. Annual incomes ranged from approximately \$10,428 to \$48,000 (median = \$17, 826). Five families had incomes below the federal poverty guideline for a family of four, which was \$19,350 in 2005 (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2005). Recent conceptualizations of how poverty guidelines should be calculated suggest that 200% of the current figure (\$38,700) is a more accurate estimate of what families actually need to make ends meet (Northwest Area Foundation, 2006). By this conceptualization, only one family was above the poverty line, but only slightly because they were a family of five. Three of the families owned their mobile home and 5 rented their home.

Instruments

Detailed information about the study was provided and informed consent procedures were reviewed during the first visit with each family. The forms were orally explained by the researcher and then signed by the participants. The parents completed a consent form to participate in the study, a parent permission form for the child to participate, and a

release of records form allowing school records to be reviewed. The children also signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the study. Fieldwork with the intensive sample began in January 2005 and was completed a year later in January 2006. The length of the study varied for each family, ranging from one year to six months, depending on when they agreed to take part in the study. The majority of the families were involved in the study for the entire year of data collection, allowing the researchers to observe changes in family patterns over time. Researchers spent approximately 12 to 20 hours in the home with each family.

A series of semistructured interviews captured uniform data across the sample while allowing for further probing as new topics emerged. The mothers and maternal guardians completed five formal interviews that lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to 4 hours depending on the interview and the participant. Researchers sought to make the interviews as much like a conversation as possible to increase the comfort level of the participants. Interviews with children in a family allowed for additional interactions and observations with the women. Interviews with the women, interviews with children, and participant observation allowed for triangulation of the data. Separate parent and child interviews were conducted throughout the study. The majority of the data for the study is drawn from the background, follow-up, and exit interviews. A typical day interview and an economic overview provided further support for the analysis. Each interview was completed on separate occasions with the exception of the parent follow-up interview and exit interview. In addition, family observations occurred at each interview and were carefully recorded in field notes.

Background interview. Background interviews focused on household members, extended family, friends, and residential, work, and educational histories. These interviews began the formal data collection process and allowed the researchers a means of assessing household patterns such as socioeconomic class, residential mobility, employment stability, family relationships, and social support networks. Parent and child background interviews were completed separately to obtain viewpoints from multiple family members. Age-appropriate language and examples were used to guide interviews with the children. All of researchers had past experience in working with children. Most

often, the mother (or female guardian) completed each interview, but there were a few families in which the father (or male guardian) participated in the interviews as well.

The background interviews began by asking for detailed descriptions of each family member of the immediate household. Relationship to the respondent, age, gender, education, and occupation were noted. Similar information was also obtained for extended kin, as well as length of association, amount of current contact, and types of supportive exchanges. In total, data were collected on at least four generations of family members (including the focal child). Similar information on friendships was also collected. Parents were then asked to visually document their relationships with family and friends on a graph with three concentric circles. The inner circle represented those with the closest relationships to the respondent and the outer circles represented relationships more socially and emotionally distant (Antonucci, Sherman, & Vandewater, 1997). A detailed account of residential, work, and school histories was collected, as well as a parental report of the child's school history. The child background interview followed a similar format to collect data on household members, extended kin, friendships, residential history, and school history.

Follow-up interview. The parent follow-up interview was intended as an opportunity to collect detailed information focused on neighborhood- and community-level data. Parent concerns about the mobile home park were documented by asking parents what kind of things they worry about for themselves and for their children in the neighborhood. Parental rules for their children in the park were explored, including monitoring strategies, boundaries, curfews, and restrictiveness. Parent and child participation in community activities (e.g., sports, church, and civic organizations) were documented, as well as the reasons for participating in each activity. Parents were asked specifically about their children's participation with the local Boys and Girls Club because this was the primary institution serving children in the community (outside of school). Parents reported on use of the after school care program, participation in sport programs, cost, and needs at the Boys and Girls Club. Finally, parents were asked about what they perceive as neighborhood and community needs, as well as to provide

suggestions for ways to improve the neighborhood and community for themselves and their children.

Exit interview. Exit interviews were completed with both parents and children to collect data on future plans for each family. The parent interview requested information on how their life was the same or different from their parent's lives, as well as things they hoped their children would do the same or differently from them. Parents were asked what their hopes and dreams were for the next year and for life 15 years from now for themselves, their children, and their neighborhoods. This interview also gave researchers a chance to follow up on any questions about previously collected data and offered the families a chance to share any other important information concerning their family, neighborhood, or community. This interview provided particularly revealing information about goals that motivated their decisions about their own lives and their children's lives. The child exit interviews included questions about their future including what kind of jobs they hoped to have and what kind of parents they would like to be. The children were also asked what they are doing now to ensure the future they want, and what could stop them from achieving or help them to achieve their goals. Finally, the children were given a chance to share any other important information about themselves, their family, or their neighborhood.

Typical day interview. The typical day interview focused on describing a typical household day for the family. Many respondents laughed at the idea of this and noted that there was no such thing as a "typical day." The intent of this interview was to document daily household patterns, such as morning routines, after-school care, evening activities, and bedtime routines. Differences in weekend patterns and events were also documented. In addition, information was collected concerning strategies for navigating family and work responsibilities, such as the division of household labor, meal preparation, work schedules, and child monitoring.

Economic interview. Toward the end of the study, an economic interview was completed with each family to assess their overall household economic status. The economic strategies interview was conducted late in the study in order to have a substantial amount of time to develop a more open, trusting relationship with the families

before discussing sensitive issues. Surprisingly, though, the families were all quite open about their financial status. Parents were asked to detail household income sources (e.g., wages, SSI, or food stamps), expenses (e.g., housing, utilities, child care, transportation, and entertainment), and strategies for budgeting daily and major purchases. Parents also reported on savings or investment plans, loans, and credit card debit. How and when major purchases such as the home, appliances, furniture, and vehicles were made was documented. Families were asked whether they had medical, home, or car insurance, or retirement benefits. Financial plans for their children's future were also explored. The family's household financial security was assessed by obtaining information about crisis-management strategies, which were based on how they would handle both minor and major financial emergencies

Activities

In addition to household-level data, specific activities were completed to more fully document experiences for the women and children at home, at school, and in the community. The 5 activities and instruments included: (a) school record review and observations, (b) a drawing activity, (c) a weekly activity log, (d) a neighborhood walk, and (e) a family dinner observation. Often, these activities were combined with one of the interviews described above. For example, the typical day interview and the drawing activity interview were often completed during the same visit to the home.

School record review and observation. Individual school records were reviewed for each child to document academic and social competence in the school setting. Grade reports, standardized test results, behavior reports, number of schools attended, and general teacher comments were examined. In general, parent and child reports of school performance were verified and supported by the review of school records. Classroom observations were conducted on two separate occasions; one early in the intensive phase and other near the end of data collection. The children were observed in their classrooms, at lunch, and during recess. A school awards ceremony, which occurred monthly, was also observed. The principal, teachers, and students were extremely welcoming and helpful during our observation sessions. In addition, school administrators, teachers, and

the school counselor were interviewed regarding the specific study children, as well as their general perspective on children residing in mobile home parks.

Drawing activity. After the initial background interview was completed, the children were presented with a drawing assignment activity. The purpose of this activity was to obtain data about their individual perceptions of home, neighborhood, community, and social networks. The children were provided with colored pencils and paper, and asked to draw a self-portrait and a picture of their family, home, friends, favorite place in the community, least favorite place in the community, and an important person in their life. When the children completed the assignment, an interview was conducted to discuss each drawing, so as to gain greater insight into their thoughts on each topic.

Activity log. To capture a typical measure of daily time and social interaction, each child completed a detailed log of their daily activities for a week. They were asked to document each hour they were awake during the day, detailing what they were doing, who they were with, and where the activity took place. The activity log was reviewed and discussed with each child once completed.

Neighborhood walk. Toward the end of the intensive phase, each child was asked to take the researcher on a walking tour of the neighborhood. The neighborhood walk instrument was designed to uncover familiarity with the park neighborhood and residents, to document use of space and modes of transportation, and to reveal family and neighborhood rules of passage from the home and in the neighborhood. Children were asked to identify their immediate neighbors and to describe their contact with them. Children were also asked to identify other peers, adults, and older persons with whom they had regular contact. Each child reported on places in their neighborhood they would go to be alone, to be with one friend, to be with a group of friends, places that they would never go in their neighborhood, and who they would go to for help in an emergency. Family and park rules about children's travel in the park were documented and verified with the parents. Often these accounts differed with children reporting more freedom in the park than their parents allowed.

Family dinner. In order to observe the entire family in a focused activity, we asked to participate in a family meal. Although family meal routines differed for each family, all

of the families agreed to this request. Participating with the family in this manner allowed for the observation of interaction styles, taken-for-granted routines, and household processes not otherwise obvious. Dinner appeared to be an important part of the family routine for the majority of the families in the study, although many differed in how they spent this time. This activity was instrumental in further establishing a comfortable rapport with each family and provided a wealth of data on family processes.

Participant Observation

Neighborhood, school, and community observations were conducted in addition to in-home observations. General neighborhood observations took place during each visit to the mobile home parks. In addition, researchers resided part-time in a mobile home rented for one summer in order to better understand neighborhood rhythms and dynamics of the mobile home park. This enabled researchers to become more a part of the neighborhood and to further enhance relationships with residents by allowing for more casual contact outside of the formal interviews. In general, relationships with study participants naturally became closer over time. At the start of the study, researchers were constrained by missed appointment and difficulty contacting participants. As the study progressed, however, missed appointments were no longer a problem and families appeared to look forward to our visits. The more we got to know families, the more open and comfortable they became in sharing information about their lives with us.

Background Study and Community Survey

The intensive data collection was part of a larger study that included a background study of Mountainview and a neighborhood survey of the mobile home parks. The background study focused on establishing a general physical, demographic, and social understanding of Mountainview. Key community informants were interviewed to gain a context in which to place the results of the research study. In addition to formal interviews, participant observation was conducted throughout the course of the study to increase familiarity with the town. Community festivals, local sporting events, and church activities were attended, and local recreation areas, restaurants, and retail stores were patronized. The survey phase concentrated on a door-to-door survey of randomly selected households in all three mobile home parks. The survey instrument was designed

to capture descriptive data about household demographics, residential experiences, neighborhood and community perceptions, and patterns of social engagement in the park and nearby community. Specific sections of the survey focused on housing, household members, work and sources of income, the neighborhood, the community, and future plans. In addition, field notes were completed after each in-home interview to provide a contextual record for each interview. For the purposes of this thesis, the background study and neighborhood survey were used only for descriptive and background information, to contextualize information gathered from the families.

Data Analysis

A grounded theory methodology was employed during this study in which the outcome was not assumed, but rather was generated from the data. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, so that one informed the other through the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative methods are especially useful for discovering themes not originally anticipated by the researcher. In this case, the original purpose of the study was to examine community effects of mobile home park residence on child and youth development. As we began interviewing family members and reviewing the data, however, a pattern of significant intergenerational family risks emerged. These risks appeared to underlie family processes and parenting efforts in this sample of women. Instruments were modified and developed to follow up on these emerging themes. In addition, individual follow-up questions were constructed for each family to clarify existing data or to fill in missing gaps of information.

Grounded theory requires “slices of data” from multiple perspectives to establish a better understanding of the population under study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This understanding contributes to establishing a general theory that is applicable under diverse conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, multiple perspectives were included in the data collection including those of parents, children, teachers, and other community informants. This method not only allowed for triangulation of the data, but also for establishing an understanding of the larger context in which to situate the data. Grounded theory posits that the interpretation of the data

must include the perspectives and voices of the people studied, and that researchers have an obligation to the study participants to tell their stories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In addition, substantive theory should be useful not only for understanding a phenomenon, but also for informing direct application and policy. Implications for policy, intervention, and programs related to the study population were explored through analysis of the data.

Field notes were completed as soon as possible after each interview, observation, or contact with a family. Field notes for each family totaled between 40 and 50 pages and yielded a wealth of rich, thick data that is necessary for qualitative analysis. All of the names in this article are pseudonyms. Subsequent data analysis also followed a constant comparative method. The field notes were read and reread, and categories were derived as they emerged from the data. Data were then entered into a qualitative software analysis program, MAXqda, to facilitate data management and analysis. The use of MAXqda allowed for themes to be compared across cases in an organized format and for the prevalence of each theme to be determined. As the analysis progressed, themes found in the data were compared to those in the existing literature and theory in order to explore connections to current understandings of resilience and generativity.

Data matrices were also constructed to reduce the data into more manageable components. The tables included information regarding the parents, children, intergenerational stressors, social support, school performance, family economics, and community needs.

Table 1

Comparison of Demographic Variables for "Mountainview," Oregon, and the U.S. (%)

Variables	Mountainview	Oregon	United States
High school education or higher	71.8	85.1	80.4
College education	< 6.0	25.0	24.0
Adult population in the workforce	55.1	65.2	63.9
Individuals below the poverty line	17.5	11.6	12.4
Families below the poverty line	14.0	7.6	9.2
Families in poverty with children under 18 yrs.	18.7	12.4	13.6
Families in poverty with children under 5 yrs.	21.2	16.6	17.0
Median family income	35,833	40,916	41,994

Note. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

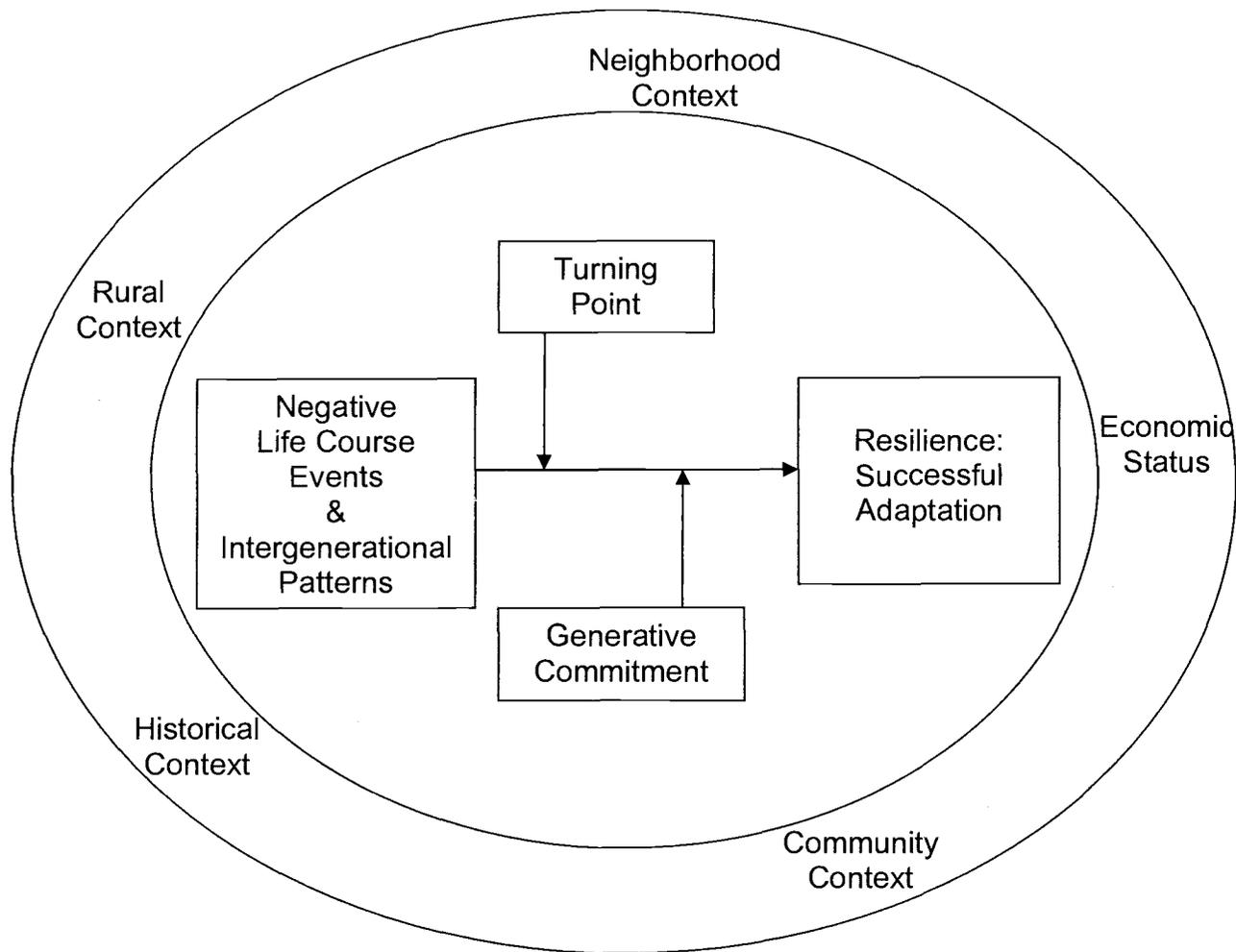
Table 2

Sample Characteristics (n = 8)

Respondents' Characteristics	<i>n</i>
Race/ethnicity	
White	8
Age (years)	
25 – 30	4
31 – 35	2
36 – 69	2
Family Structure	
Married	7
Widowed	1
Educational attainment	
Less than high school	2
High school or GED	4
Technical or some college	2
Employment status	
Employed	4
Not employed	3
On disability	1
Family income	
Less than 19,000	5
19,000 – 29,000	1
More than 29,000	2
Housing status	
Own home	3
Rent home	5

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



CHAPTER 2: MANUSCRIPT

Resilience in Adulthood: Turning Points and Generativity

Although much of the current research on resilience focuses on childhood (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000), there is a growing interest in the life histories of adults who achieved resilient outcomes later in the life course (Werner, 2000). This is in part because the achievement and maintenance of resilience is a life-long process. Adulthood is a time characterized by opportunities to become more independent in making decisions about the future. Opportunities for change such as a career or marriage may allow individuals to direct their lives toward more resilient pathways than those that constrained them throughout their earlier life (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000). During adulthood, individuals also encounter opportunities to form families of their own and to create a protective environment for their children.

Consider the following composite scenario:

As a child, Felicia was neglected by her mother who was addicted to drugs and alcohol. Felicia's family was very poor and she was bounced between her mother's home and her grandparents' home even though her grandparents were also addicted to alcohol. In fact, the majority of Felicia's extended family abused alcohol and drugs. Felicia had few friends and she floundered in school. She developed an attachment to a mentor at her church, however, who exposed her to what life was like in a middle-class family. As a teen, Felicia was kicked out of her mother's home when her mother discovered that she was pregnant. Felicia moved in with her husband who subsequently began abusing her. Finally, when Felicia's husband began abusing their child, Felicia left him and moved back in with her mother. Shortly afterwards, Felicia's husband was incarcerated on drug-related charges.

At age 32, Felicia's life differs substantially from her earlier life experiences. Felicia and her second husband have a healthier, nonviolent marriage and neither has issues with substance abuse. Felicia obtained her GED and she and her husband both work full-time jobs that provide health insurance and the opportunity for economic stability. The affordability of the mobile home park in which they reside has enabled

them to stabilize their family in place. Felicia and her family are active in the faith community and they derive much support from their church and their faith in God.

Felicia has three children to whom she is devoted and she strives to make sure they are successfully achieving in school and are able to participate in community activities. Felicia's children are blissfully ignorant of the risks that Felicia encountered in her own family of origin and Felicia is committed to ensuring that they grow up happy, healthy, and protected. Felicia maintains ties to her family of origin and works to heal the wounds created in her childhood. She remains physically distanced from her family, however, by residing in a different town in order to avoid the risky behaviors that persist among her family members. Felicia and her family continue to be challenged by job insecurity and economic constraints, but Felicia is happy to have achieved the kind of family stability that she lacked in her childhood and youth.

Felicia's experiences are an example of how resilient outcomes can occur through turning points and commitment to the next generation. Felicia experienced a turning point when she established a connection with a mentor at church who showed her another way of living. She also benefited from another turning point experience when she entered into her second marriage with a nondeviant spouse who helped her stabilize her family and distance herself from the negative behaviors of her family of origin. Felicia's generative commitment to her children helped her maintain her resilience because she was determined that her children would not experience the risks that she faced as a child.

Implicit in the process of resilience is the exposure to environmental threats that substantially increase the risk for negative outcomes (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000b). Resilience is characterized, then, by positive developmental outcomes, or successful adaptation, despite these threats (Masten, 2001). There has been some discussion in the literature about what constitutes successful adaptation. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) assert that successful adaptation does not mean that excellence has to be achieved, but simply that the person in question is on a trajectory that is "unexpectedly positive" given their exposure to risk. Thus, the avoidance of serious antisocial behaviors or internalizing problems (rather than excellent social competence) is sufficient to be considered as successful adaptation. Turning points

refer to opportunities that occur throughout the life course that significantly impact the achievement of successful adaptation by turning a negative developmental trajectory into a more positive trajectory (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). Generativity can also provide support for successful adaptation. Generativity is the concern for and commitment to fostering the development and well-being of future generations (Erikson, 1963; McAdams, 2006; McAdams, Hart, & Maruna 1998; McAdams, & Logan, 2004).

Within the context of a larger ethnographic study, we had the unique opportunity to engage with 8 women who presented intergenerational patterns of risk, but who, like Felicia, also experienced turning points that positively altered their developmental trajectories. The women resided in rural mobile home parks, a context characteristically low in neighborhood and community support (MacTavish & Salamon, 2001). Early life experiences such as low educational attainment and residential instability that first directed women on a pathway toward mobile home park residence continued to shape their lives. In addition, they were further challenged by histories of enduring intergenerational patterns of substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence, divorce, teen pregnancy, mental health issues, and time in foster care. The women demonstrated a remarkable capacity to overcome challenges associated with their life histories, however, and to realize successful adaptation in adulthood. Turning point experiences and a generative commitment contributed to their resilient outcomes.

This analysis uses data from a larger ethnographic study examining community effects of mobile home park residence on child and youth development to explore the resilient pathways of 8 mothers and maternal guardians in order to understand better how successful adaptation can be achieved despite significant threats present throughout the life course. This study furthers our understanding of resilience by exploring an understudied group of adults: mothers in fragile rural families. The ways in which these mothers were able to successfully adapt in adulthood despite familial and structural challenges has important implications for policies, programs, and interventions aimed at ending intergenerational patterns of risk and alleviating the pernicious effects of poverty.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Risk and Resilience Perspective

A risk and resilience perspective, the guiding framework for this study, maintains that resilience is a dynamic interaction of risk and protective processes that occurs over time and operates at individual, family, and community levels (Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). Congruent with the life course perspective, which further informs the study, this perspective argues that individual development is influenced by multiple contexts and it focuses our attention on these contexts in research. As such, the larger social contexts in which individuals are embedded can either facilitate or constrain the process of resilience (Masten, 2001; Rubin, 1996). Characteristics of the individual and the contexts in which they reside are explored to identify turning point experiences that may moderate the effect of risk on the individual. Positive turning points that occur throughout the life course impact risk factors by shifting a negative developmental trajectory toward a more positive developmental trajectory and may help compensate for the effects of earlier risks experienced by the individual (Rutter, 2000b).

Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective is ideal for examining transitions occurring at different points of development that shape life-long adaptation. The life course perspective considers change in individuals and families from a dynamic perspective, taking into account how time, context, process, and meaning shape development (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Elder & Conger, 2000; Elder, Modell, & Parke, 1993). There is great value in looking across time to examine resilience because opportunities for change occur at different points in the life course (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Werner, 2000). Elder, Nguyen, and Caspi (1985) found that as the environment changes throughout development, risk factors vary in type and influence. Thus, individuals who are deviant in their youth may still have the capacity to experience positive change. Context also greatly influences ontogenetic development (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999; Sampson & Laub, 1994). Family, neighborhood, community, and political contexts can serve to either facilitate or constrain resilience depending on the level of risk they expose individuals to or the level of support they provide. Power differentials are evident

at a community level in that differences in social class status and the stigmatization of families living in mobile home parks create barriers to accessing services for poor and working-poor families. In addition, the life course perspective calls for researchers to be mindful of the social patterns formed over multiple generations (Bengston & Allen, 1993).

Also relevant to this study is the idea that heterogeneity in structures and processes associated with development need to be acknowledged (Bengston & Allen, 1993). The process of adaptation is likely to be different for individuals with diverse risk factors and unique turning points in their life histories. Although each woman in this sample demonstrated resilience in adulthood, they each followed a different pathway to achieve this outcome. There were, however, shared elements of resilience that emerged in the findings as well. In this study, a feminist life course analysis is used to explore the experiences of poor and working-poor mothers in rural mobile home parks, giving voice to a population that has typically been marginalized and understudied.

Research Questions

Within a risk and resilience framework, the following research questions are explored in this study: First, given the existence of multiple risk factors experienced throughout their life courses, did the women achieve successful adaptation in adulthood? Second, were there turning point experiences that influenced the likelihood of successful adaptation in adulthood for the 8 women in this study? If so, what were these turning points? Third, did the women display a generative commitment to their children? If so, did a generative commitment contribute to reinforcing the achievement or maintenance of successful adaptation? (See Figure 1.) In this study, risk is defined by the participant's cumulative exposure to adverse family and environmental conditions likely to increase the chance of harm or onset of psychopathology (e.g., substance abuse, domestic violence, or poverty). Successful adaptation is defined by the absence of serious antisocial or internalizing behaviors in adulthood characteristic of the women's families of origin. Generative commitment is defined by expressed and observed efforts to buffer the next generation of children from the kinds of risks mothers experienced throughout their own development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Risk and Resilience

Intergenerational patterns of poverty typically persist in poor and working-poor families and often come bundled together with other risks such as job insecurity, drug abuse, or domestic violence (Rubin, 1976; Rutter, 2000b). The accumulation of risk factors greatly increases the chance for negative developmental outcomes and the same appears to be true of cumulative protection, in which one protective factor alone rarely has a significant impact on developmental outcomes (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1979, 2000b). Thus, cumulative life course experiences, both negative and positive, influence resilient outcomes in adulthood. Protective factors such as academic achievement, supportive relationships, or self-esteem modify a person's response to risk (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000). Turning points, in contrast, modify risk by significantly altering the context or the individual's personal perceptions by reducing risk and presenting new opportunities that lead to a more adaptive developmental trajectory (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004; Rutter, 2000b).

Werner and Smith (1992, p. 178) refer to turning points as "second chance opportunities," which occur at major life transitions. Examples of turning points that can have positive consequences for the life course include graduating from high school, joining the workforce, joining a church, entering into a healthy marriage with a nondeviant spouse, and giving birth to a child (Masten, 2001; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). The experience of establishing a connection with a mentor or a surrogate parent during times of adversity is often an important turning point. Werner (2000) and Rubin (1996) assert that an alternate caregiver can be an important stress buffer in the life of a child and that resilient children appear especially skilled at attracting mentors and surrogate parents. Another example of a turning point is distancing oneself from negative influences or dysfunctional families. In a follow-up of participants in a longitudinal study of resilience, Werner (2000) found that some high-risk youth developed into resilient adults by detaching themselves from parents and siblings to avoid their risky behaviors.

Generativity

A generative commitment can reinforce successful adaptation in adulthood and can in itself be a turning point in the life course. A generative commitment to the future can be expressed through many different areas such as work, volunteerism, activism, or involvement in religious organizations, but is most often expressed through childrearing practices (McAdams, 2006). Although generativity is typically seen as a positive commitment to future generations, Kotre and Kotre (1998) assert that there is also a negative side of generativity in which damaging behaviors are passed on through generations. One example is the intergenerational cycle of violence, in which abusers intentionally teach their children to abuse others in their family. Kotre and Kotre argue that a person can demonstrate a generative commitment by actively choosing not to pass something on to future generations. They refer to such a person as an *intergenerational buffer*. Kotre (2004) explains that adults who suffered during their own childhood vow to protect their children from damaging experiences by halting the intergenerational transmission of risk.

Contextual Influences

Recent research exploring the effects of urban neighborhood and community influences on family well-being has highlighted the importance of examining development within the broader contexts that affect children and families. There is a growing body of research that links the geographic concentration of poverty and disadvantaged neighborhood characteristics, such as a lack of safety, residential stability, positive role models, and formal and informal resources, to negative child and family well-being (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001; Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000, Sampson, 2001). Rural neighborhoods and communities, however, have often been overlooked as potentially risky contexts for families in part because of the persistent notion that rural, small town communities are ideal places for families to reside. Research indicates, however, that rural trends in family structure, marital disruption, remarriage, family size, nonmarital childbearing, and teenage pregnancy are now similar to urban trends (Lichter & Eggebean, 1992; MacTavish & Salamon, 2003; Struthers & Bokemeir, 2000). In

addition, although rural communities are valued for safety, the prevalence of gangs, crime, violence, domestic violence, and drug abuse is increasing in rural areas (Carsey Institute, 2006; Struthers & Bokemeir, 2000).

Although the effects of poverty in urban ghettos have been emphasized in the literature, poverty in rural areas, though less visible, is actually more prevalent and persistent than urban poverty (Economic Research Service, 2003; Lichter & Eggebean, 1992). Poor and working-poor rural families may not be as likely to be exposed to risks to the same degree as families living in urban ghettos (e.g., level of violence or gang activity), but they are similarly affected by chronic stressors such as economic disadvantage, poor housing, and a lack of social support that are characteristic of areas of concentrated poverty (Korbin & Coulton, 1997; Struthers & Bokemeir, 2000). In addition, issues of efficiency and economy of scale prevent services from being widely distributed in rural communities (Duncan, 2000; Fitchen, 1991). Poor and working-poor families are often forced to the edges of town to find affordable housing, whereas services remain in the adjacent town or county seat, preventing access for many families. Mobile home parks have increasingly become one of the only affordable housing options for rural poor and working-poor families. Historically, however, mobile home parks have been stigmatized and marginalized to the outskirts of town (Salamon & MacTavish, 2006).

Neighborhood and community contexts low in social support for families impedes resilience because achieving and maintaining successful adaptation in such a context becomes an individual rather than collective effort making the demands for personal agency even greater.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND FIELD STUDY METHODS

Our study employed an ethnographic methodology to explore the lives of women living in mobile home parks in rural Oregon, and is part of a larger cross-sectional study including a sample of families with children and another sample of families with adolescents. In this study we use interview data from the mothers and maternal guardians of the child sample only. Ethnographic methods are especially well suited to exploring the influence of dynamic neighborhood and family processes on adult development

because of the in-depth data collection involved with this methodology (Burton, 2001; Burton & Price-Spratlen, 1999).

Study Location

“Mountainview” is a small town in rural Oregon with a population of just over 8,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). A four-lane highway lined with shops and businesses serves as the main street in Mountainview. Many of the businesses, however, are vacant and boarded up illustrating the persistent economic decline of the town. The population in Mountainview is primarily White (93.6%) and, in general, is less educated and poorer than the average population in both Oregon and the United States (Table 1). In the past, the town was fully dependent on a natural resource-based economy. Many large timber mills now stand vacant in town signaling the end to what was once thought to be a stable industry in the community. As the timber industry declined, an increasing number of workers across Oregon and the Pacific Northwest were no longer able to support their families (Hibbard & Elias, 1993). Individuals with low educational attainment were once able to find jobs in the timber industry that provided a family-living wage, but few of the service oriented jobs that are now replacing the timber industry pay a family-living wage (Fitchen, 1991). The loss of jobs forced many families into poverty, resulting in a not only a loss of income, but also a loss of personal identity. Community informants spoke of increased rates of domestic violence, divorce, and substance abuse that accompanied the loss of economic security.

Data Collection

Mothers and maternal guardians from three mobile home parks in Mountainview were included in the study. Two of the three parks were similar in resident characteristics and appearance as well as resident estimations of neighborhood relations and safety. The majority of the sample was drawn from these two parks. Only one family resided in the third park (the smallest park of the three). The third site differed from the other two sites in that it was characterized by shabbier homes, more obvious drug use, and poorer families. Because mobile home parks are private property, permission to conduct the research was carefully sought from mobile home park owners and managers. Data were collected by a team of three researchers including one professor and two graduate

students. All three researchers were White, middle-class women who had experience working with low-income families.

Data that are the focus of the current analysis were collected from 8 women included in a small intensively studied sample as part of a larger ethnographic study. Using theoretical sampling for the larger study, we targeted families with children in 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade (between the ages of 8 and 11). Middle-childhood is a developmental time in which children are generally exposed to family and neighborhood influences more so than peer group influences (Coley & Hoffmann, 1996). The method of recruitment included door-to-door canvassing of the parks, snowball sampling, and participant help with recruitment. Parents were asked to participate in a study intended to understand better life in a rural mobile home park. A packet of information was provided for the families and an incentive of \$125 in gift cards was offered. Fieldwork spanned two years beginning in January 2004 with the first year spent collecting background information on the community and the second year spent intensively interviewing families.

Sample Limitations

We identified 29 children in 3 mobile home parks whose families met the criteria to participate in the study. Parents of 13 children agreed to participate (45% participation rate), which provided a sample of 8 mothers. Throughout the recruitment process, we often heard parents tell us that they were planning to move out of the mobile home park soon, so they would not be available to participate or that they simply did not have time for such an in-depth study. In several families, the mother expressed interest in the study, but the father or male in the household would not allow the family to participate. Families already enrolled in the study were also asked to help with recruitment and they received an additional incentive of \$25 for each family they contacted that enrolled in the study. Personal referrals were limited, however, as parents in each of the three parks revealed that they did not know very many of the other parents.

Sample

Table 2 presents the characteristics of the 8 respondents. The women lived in various family forms, allowing for experiences across different family structures to be explored. Five were biological mothers, one a stepmother, one a grandmother, and one a great

grandmother. All of the women were White and the majority of the women were in their 20s and 30s with the grandmother in her mid 40s and the great grandmother in her late 60s. Seven of the 8 women were married (4 were in a second or third marriage) with the last being widowed. Three of the women had a high school education and one had a GED. One woman had a nursing certificate, one woman had completed some college, and two of the women did not complete high school.

Four of the 8 women were employed (2 full-time and 2 part-time), 2 were homemakers, one was disabled, and one was retired. Three of the 4 women who were employed maintained stable employment throughout the study year. The other woman worked at various jobs and had difficulty maintaining employment. Annual incomes ranged from approximately \$10,400 to \$48,000 (median = \$17, 826). Five families had incomes below the federal poverty guideline for a family of four, which was \$19,350 in 2005 (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2005). Recent conceptualizations of how poverty guidelines should be calculated suggest that 200% of the current figure (\$38,700) is a more accurate estimate of what families actually need to make ends meet (Northwest Area Foundation, 2006). By this conceptualization, only one family was above the poverty line, but only slightly because they were a family of five.

Instruments

A series of semistructured interviews captured uniform data across the sample while allowing for further probing as new topics emerged. Researchers spent approximately 12 to 20 hours with each family in their home throughout the year of data collection. The mothers and maternal guardians completed five formal interviews that lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to 4 hours depending on the interview and the participant. Researchers sought to make the interviews as much like a conversation as possible to increase the comfort level of the participants. Interviews with children in a family allowed for additional interactions and observations with the women. Interviews with the women, interviews with the children, and participant observation allowed for triangulation of the data. The majority of the data for the study is drawn from the background, follow-up, and exit interviews. A typical day interview and an economic overview provided further support for the analysis.

An initial background interview focused on collecting detailed information about household members, extended family members, friends, and residential, work, and educational histories. This interview allowed us a means of assessing household patterns such as residential mobility, employment stability, changes in socioeconomic status, family relationships, and social support networks. In total, data were collected on at least four generations of family members (including the child in the family). The parent follow-up interview was intended as an opportunity to collect detailed information focused on neighborhood- and community-level data. Parent concerns about the mobile home park were documented by asking parents what kind of things they worry about for themselves and for their children in the neighborhood. Parent and child participation in community activities (e.g., sports, church, civic organizations) were documented, as well as the reasons for participating in each activity. Finally, parents were asked about what they perceived as neighborhood and community needs, and were asked to provide suggestions for ways to improve the neighborhood and community.

The final exit interview addressed future plans for each family. Information was collected on how their lives were the same or different from their parent's lives, as well as things they hoped their children would do as they did or differently from them. Mothers were asked about their hopes and dreams for the next year and for life 15 years from now for themselves, their children, and their neighborhoods. This interview provided particularly revealing information about goals that motivated their decisions about their own lives and their children's lives.

The typical day interview explored daily household patterns such as morning routines and after school-care for each family. In addition, information was collected about strategies for navigating family and work responsibilities, such as the division of household labor, meal preparation, work schedules, and child monitoring. The family's overall household economic status was detailed during an economic interview. Participants reported household income sources, expenses, and strategies for budgeting daily and major purchases. They also reported information about insurance (health, life, car, and home), savings or investment plans, loans, and credit card debt. The family's household financial security was assessed by obtaining information about crisis-

management strategies, which were based on how they would handle both major and minor financial emergencies

Participant Observation

General family and neighborhood observations took place during each visit to the mobile home parks. In addition, in order to observe the entire family in a focused activity, we asked to participate in a family meal. Participation in the family meal was instrumental in further establishing a comfortable rapport with each family and provided a wealth of data on family processes. In general, relationships with study participants naturally became closer over time. At the beginning of the study, we were constrained by missed appointments and difficulty contacting participants. As the study progressed, however, missed appointments were no longer a problem and family members appeared to look forward to our visits. The more we got to know the participants, the more open and comfortable they became in sharing information about their lives with us.

Data Analysis

A grounded theory methodology was employed in which the outcome was not assumed, but rather was generated from the data. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, so that one informed the other through the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative methods are especially useful for discovering themes not originally anticipated by the researcher. In this case, the original purpose of the study was to examine community effects of mobile home park residence on child and youth development. As we began interviewing family members and reviewing the data, however, a pattern of significant intergenerational family risks emerged. These risks appeared to underlie family processes and parenting efforts in the sample of women. Instruments were modified and developed to follow up on these emerging themes. In addition, individual follow-up questions were constructed for each family to clarify existing data or to fill in missing gaps of information.

Field notes were completed as soon as possible after each interview, observation, or contact with a family. Field notes for each family totaled between 40 and 50 pages and yielded a wealth of rich, thick data that is necessary for qualitative analysis. Together, these data allowed us to construct a life history for each woman. All of the names in this

article are pseudonyms. Subsequent data analysis also followed a constant comparative method. Field notes were read and reread, and categories were derived as they emerged from the data. Data were then entered into a qualitative software analysis program, MAXqda, to facilitate data management and analysis. The use of MAXqda allowed for themes to be compared across cases in an organized format and for the prevalence of each theme to be determined. As the analysis progressed, themes found in the data were compared to those in the existing literature and theory in order to explore connections to current understandings of resilience and generativity.

FINDINGS

Three themes emerged as particularly salient to the life experiences of the eight women. First, numerous risks affected each woman throughout her life and similar risks were identified throughout multiple generations of each family. Second, multiple turning point experiences occurred throughout the life course and emerged as significant in supporting pathways toward resilience in adulthood. Third, a strong generative commitment was evident as the women focused their daily lives preventing the intergenerational transmission of risk for their own children. Such a generative commitment reinforced the maintenance of their successful adaptation.

Intergenerational Patterns of Risk

A pattern of enduring intergenerational risk factors was evident in the life histories of each woman (Table 3). Life histories were characterized by substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence, divorce, teen pregnancies, unfinished educations, psychopathology, and time spent in foster care (both formal and informal family care). These risks were identified as patterns that affected at least three generations in most women's families. Successful adaptation is exponentially more difficult to achieve when multiple risk factors are present (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000b). Furthermore, overcoming risky behaviors that are entrenched in multiple generations of family members is extremely challenging. The following excerpt from field notes details Ellen's perspective of her family history.

Ellen reported that for about the last year of her parent's marriage they became suddenly abusive towards one another and began using alcohol and drugs, together and separately. She was not sure then, but believes this

was around the time her father had the first affair. After her father left, she revealed that her mother went downhill dramatically, becoming addicted to alcohol, speed, and methamphetamine. Ellen reported that the house was often a filthy mess filled with strangers crashing on the floor and couch. She expressed feeling continuously out of control and responsible for the care of her sisters. She recalled often not having electricity and food. She reported that once, a boyfriend of her mother's beat her as she attempted to defend her sisters from his rage.

Further, Ellen described her stepmother as a "hopeless alcoholic" who spent a year in jail for a drunk driving conviction. Ellen lived with her maternal grandparents off and on while her mother was unable to care for her even though her grandparents (both maternal and paternal) also struggled with drug and alcohol addictions. Both Ellen and her mother were teenage mothers. Ellen reported that many of her kin did not complete high school, although Ellen, one of her sisters, and her mother have since received their GED.

Barbara's family of origin and extended family displayed a similar history of risky behaviors. She reported that her family was characterized by drug use, incarceration, domestic violence, divorce, teen pregnancies, and mental and physical health issues. Barbara now has custody of her two great grandchildren because their mother is incarcerated for drug-related charges. It is revealing that child services had to look back two generations to find a family member stable enough to care for the children. Barbara herself spent the majority of her childhood living with her grandmother. She reported that she was sent away by her mother at the age of 2 to live with her maternal grandmother. She spoke of her memories of her conflicted relationship with her mother:

Just me, none of the others [were sent away]. I had a lot of hatred for her. When she was in the hospital a while back, I told her I forgave her for what she had done. I'm not sure I have. She still hasn't explained it to me. She tried to sell me at age 9 or 10. Dad stopped that. We were close. I helped him take care of the younger ones when mom would run off now and again.

In addition, Barbara revealed that she struggled with a teenage pregnancy, depression, and multiple cancers. She also had to confront an abusive husband, divorce, drug abuse with her own children, and the incarceration of her granddaughter. The rest of the women displayed similar histories of risk throughout several generations of their

families. Yet, all of the women were able to achieve successful adaptation in adulthood despite exposure to multiple risks.

Successful Adaptation

Successful adaptation is defined by the absence of serious antisocial or internalizing behaviors in adulthood characteristic of the women's families of origin. Each woman met this definition of successful adaptation and was determined to achieve a better life for herself and her family. In addition, these women saw themselves as having successfully adapted. The women expressed that they were satisfied with their lives even though most were financially insecure. Eve conveyed that her family did not have a lot of money, but they had each other and they were happy. All but one of the women evidenced a life free from antisocial behaviors or internalizing problems similar to those they experienced throughout their lives. At the time of the study, there was no evidence of risks such as substance abuse, domestic violence, impending divorce, or mental health issues in the women's lives. Anne was the only woman with her own history of substance abuse. Anne was unique, however, in that she was coping with a severe and persistent mental illness. When we spoke with her, Anne reported that she had overcome her addictions and was receiving treatment for her illness.

Although each woman met the definition of successful adaptation, some women were more stable than others in terms of economic and family stability. For example, Ellen, a young, easy-going mother of three who lived in a newer doublewide home in the park, had attained both economic and family stability. In contrast, Gloria, a talkative family-oriented woman who had moved her family to Oregon to care for her husband's dying father, was very economically insecure as she struggled to find consistent employment. Her family relationships, however, appeared to be very loving and stable. Hillary, a guarded but friendly mother of three lived in a singlewide unit that was always in a state of disarray. Her family had one of the highest incomes, but her family life was chaotic, especially in terms of her children's behavior. In part, differences in stability emerged because these women were at different places in their life courses. Resilient pathways differed for each woman and resulted in a range of levels of stability, but each woman evidenced a trajectory more positive than expected given their exposure to risk.

Examining the life histories of these women revealed important turning points that influenced their pathway to successful adaptation.

Turning Points

Multiple turning points. Three main experiences emerged from the data as significant turning points: the connection to a mentor or surrogate parent, distancing, and healthier relationships. The positive experience of these turning points was further supported by faith and generativity. For all of the women, more than one turning point contributed to their resilience in adulthood and turning points often occurred at different points throughout their life courses. In addition, the occurrence of a turning point often provided access to other sources of support such as those from extended kin, a mentor, or a church family. Table 4 details the multiple turning points experienced by each woman. Gloria benefited from the connection to a mentor during her childhood, but was also significantly impacted by the entry into a healthier marriage as an adult. Hillary provides additional evidence of multiple turning points in that after she distanced herself from her family of origin as a teenager, she connected to a surrogate family and then entered into a healthy marital relationship of her own as an adult. Although Anne distanced herself from her family of origin as a teenager, she continued to lead a life of risky behaviors until she was a young adult, at which point she entered into a healthier relationship and was significantly impacted by her husband's mentoring. The experiences of these women illustrate that turning points can occur at various points throughout the life course and may have a cumulative protective effect similar to the effect of cumulative risk.

Mentors and surrogate parents. A significant turning point for 6 of the 8 women was the establishment of a connection to a mentor or a surrogate parent who acted as a positive role model. As a child, exposure to a supportive mentor at church influenced Gloria's successful adaptation. Gloria remembers:

It was back in the late '70s, early '80s. There was this pretty young woman and her husband . . . see my mom wasn't church going, but she let me go to church with people she knew. The church had this mentoring thing through the kids ministry where they hooked kids who came to church without their parents up with adults. You went to church with the people and out to dinner and did things together. They would take me to their house. They were middle-class people and we were, well we were poor They had a daughter who was older than me and they let me

have her clothes that she had outgrown so I could look nice at church. That kept me from walking around in rags. They were really, really, nice good people.

Gloria discussed the three women who were most influential in her life and talked about the different things she learned from these women. She reflected:

There were three women who had a big influence on my life. Susan [church mentor] was one of them. My mom was not real elegant. She was more rough neck and Susan was a real prim and proper lady. She always wore a dress and she wore white gloves. My mom was a good person—she taught me important things . . . to be a good person, to be honest and tell the truth. These are the things I pass on to my girls, but Susan taught me how to be . . . how to be a little more elegant.

The third person who further influenced Gloria's life was her foster mother. Gloria indicated that, from this woman, she learned more about how not to behave than how to behave. Gloria endeared herself to others and incorporated the positive aspects of their lives into her own.

Barbara lived in a singlewide unit with her two great grandchildren. The living room was decorated in shades of light and deep pink and was always tidy despite the two young children in the home. Lines of time and worry were etched on Barbara's face, but she was always welcoming and talked openly in a very matter-of-fact manner about her life experiences. Barbara expressed that she struggled with her family of origin throughout her childhood and at the age of 2 was sent to live with her grandmother who became a surrogate parent to her. Although Barbara continues to struggle with being abandoned by her mother, moving in with her grandmother was an important turning point in her life. Barbara reported feeling as though her grandmother was her mother. She noted, "I felt loved and cared for when I was with her." The connection with her grandmother enabled Barbara to establish the kind of supportive relationship she lacked with her own mother. Their relationship also laid the foundation for Barbara's education and career path.

Barbara described her grandmother as a homemaker who was strict, but loving. She sent Barbara to a religious school until age 14 when Barbara began living on her own. Barbara explained, "I still lived by her rules though. I went to school and got a job

assisting in the hospital. . . I took care of myself and paid my own way.” Barbara received much of her nursing training while going to high school. She seemed proud to be one of the few siblings in her family who graduated from high school and was even prouder to announce, “I was the only one who didn’t have to get married. I waited until I was 19 to be married.” This experience is consistent with what McAdams (2006) describes as a *redemption sequence*, in which a negative situation is immediately followed by a positive outcome. The positive outcome can result in a turning point for the individual. Although Barbara’s rejection by her mother was extremely difficult for her, it resulted in a loving relationship with a substitute parent figure who supported Barbara and guided her toward successful adaptation in adulthood.

These findings illustrate that establishing a connection to a mentor or a surrogate parent provided support and resources that the women lacked in their own families of origin. Surrogate parents were instrumental in addressing crises (e.g., caring for an abandoned child, providing refuge from an abusive family) and mentors were instrumental in filling gaps (e.g., providing positive role models, evidence of another way of life, and material resources). For these women, the connection to a supportive adult outside of their family of origin was an important event that positively altered their developmental trajectories.

Distancing. The concept of distancing, physically, emotionally, or both, was another significant turning point in the lives of several women. Hillary revealed little about the specifics of her family, but she alluded to an abusive family history. She noted that her father died when she was young and her mother had “no patience for children.” Hillary distanced herself from her family both physically and emotionally at the age of 16 when she moved in with her boyfriend’s (now her husband’s) family. Hillary expressed that she now has very little contact with her mother and that they are not close. She contrasted the two families in terms of the kind of support they provided in the following excerpt from field notes:

As for her family’s involvement in her schooling, Hillary said, “I wasn’t forced to go. If I wanted to go I had to get myself up and make myself breakfast. I was held back in the 6th grade. When I moved in with Alex’s family I was *made* [italics added] to go. There was someone there to wake

me up and make me breakfast.” Hillary said this is why she finished high school—because Alex’s family encouraged her to go to school.

Hillary has three siblings, although she has not talked to one of her brothers in years and she talks to her other brother infrequently. Hillary remains closest to her sister whom she talks to by phone approximately once a month.

Ellen provides additional evidence of the effectiveness of distancing as a turning point. Ellen distanced herself from her family of origin’s instability by physically moving away from her family. Ellen’s mother kicked her and her boyfriend (now husband) out of the house when Ellen became pregnant at the age of 17. Ellen took this opportunity to move away from her family to another town because her mother’s house was always crazy with people up all night doing drugs and fighting. Ellen and her husband ended up having to move from place to place, though, because they could not sustain paying rent. Eventually, Ellen and her husband moved into the mobile home park where they have lived for 8 years. Ellen first moved into the mobile home park because it was available and affordable and although she would like to move into her own house one day (a dream many share), the affordability of the mobile home park has allowed her to stabilize her family in place while remaining at a distance from the risky context she grew up in.

Even though Ellen physically distanced herself from the instability of her family of origin, she remained emotionally close to her two sisters and speaks to them daily. Ellen also remained close to her grandparents and her great grandmother. Ellen acknowledged that she does not have a good relationship with her father or stepmother, but she revealed that her mother has been clean from drugs for three years and now encourages her children to talk about their childhoods in an attempt to become emotionally closer.

Distancing was an effective strategy for 4 of the 8 women we interviewed. This strategy, however, came with emotional costs. The women talked about the difficulty of distancing themselves from their family members and many remained emotionally tied to their families of origin even though they physically distanced themselves. Over the course of the study, we observed fluctuations in family dynamics as some of the women

attempted to repair the damage from their childhoods and to forge new relationships with their family members.

Healthier marital relationships. Findings revealed that entry into a relationship with a nondeviant spouse was an important turning point for every woman in this study. Anne, a recovering methamphetamine and alcohol addict with an 8th grade education, revealed during our interviews that she was physically and sexually abused as a child, and suffers from posttraumatic stress disorder and bipolar disorder. Anne lived in a run-down singlewide unit and could usually be found walking around the park talking to her neighbors. She was a friendly woman who was quick to smile, but appeared to lack confidence in herself. The following excerpt from field notes details how her relationship with her husband was the turning point that led her away from drug addiction that had persisted for 16 years.

Dave, Anne's husband, wanted to teach her how a man could treat a woman and told her that if she would get off the drugs she and Jack [her son] could come live with him—no sexual expectations for three months and he would show her how a relationship could be. Anne left for a year and went to Nebraska to stay with a distant relative. She got off of methamphetamines (an addiction that began when she started shooting up at 9 years of age). She quit cold turkey and then came back and said she was ready to take him up on his offer. She and Jack moved in with Dave, but the only problem was Anne was hooked on alcohol. She had substituted the alcohol for methamphetamines. Eventually Anne learned to control her drinking to where she hardly drinks now. Four years ago the couple that call themselves soul mates married.

Gloria's life history also demonstrates the significant impact of entering into a relationship with a nondeviant spouse, as evidenced by the establishment of her third marriage. Gloria's first marriage ended when her husband was incarcerated for drug-related charges, and her second marriage was also unsuccessful. Gloria's third husband, to whom she has been married for 3 years, proved to be a very supportive, loving man with a strong extended kin network. In addition, he became a father figure for Gloria's three daughters. Gloria explained, "He's patient and a good dad. The girls really hadn't had contact with their dad so they really think of him as their dad—he's the only dad they have known." This marriage was instrumental in stabilizing Gloria's family life and in providing support for her parenting efforts.

Entry into a healthier marriage with a nondeviant spouse, not just any marriage, was key to this turning point. Three of the 8 women were in their second marriages and one was in her third marriage. Their previous marriages were characterized by domestic violence, drug use, and incarceration. Although a healthier marriage contributed to family stability, it did not necessarily go hand-in-hand with economic stability. For example, Gloria's marriage did much to stabilize her family emotionally, but they remained economically unstable; a pattern that was evident for the majority of the women in our study.

Faith. In addition to the turning points described above, faith was an important source of support, and at times, a turning point in itself for many of the women. Eve, an optimistic woman who was always joking around with her family, displayed great faith that God would get her through the hard times. Eve said, "God knows. . . We trust that God will show us the way and he never fails us." Eve was usually found in her older doublewide home comfortably sitting on her sectional couch in an oversized t-shirt surrounded by a group of chihuahuas that her family bred for extra income. Eve expressed that she feels God blesses people who are faithful. Eve attributed her faith in God to her relationship with her husband. She explained that he taught her that God comes first, then your husband, and then your family. When I asked Eve what it would take for her to reach the goals she holds for the future, her only reply was "God—can't do nothin' without the big guy." Eve was confident that her faith in God would support her and her family regardless of the challenges they might face in the future.

Mary and her family also appeared greatly affected by their faith in God. Mary took custody of her three grandchildren after they had been removed from their mother because of abuse and neglect and had already been in several foster homes. She and her family lived in a singlewide unit that barely had enough space to hold them. Mary often appeared tired and was usually found tending to her two youngest grandchildren. Mary also lived with her second husband who suffers from cancer. She reported that drinking and drugs were a big problem until her husband joined the Jehovah's Witnesses. Joining the church and experiencing a spiritual conversion was a turning point for Mary and her

family life. They attended church meetings several times a week and derived much support from their church family. The following is an excerpt from field notes:

They got involved [with the church] about 5 years ago, and were baptized in the church 4 years ago. They do lots of things. . . including potlucks, and a program they call "feed the speaker" where a special speaker will come to the group and speak before a potluck dinner. She adds that they have gotten a lot of help. Mary said the Hall paid for the coast trip that she and her husband took last summer. The members took care of the kids, and sent them to the coast, and once there, the Hall there let them use their aquarium membership and took care of them. She said they only had to pay for the gas to get there. Mary says the break was truly helpful for them, as it was during her husband's chemo.

Faith was an important factor that supported resilience in adulthood for 6 of the 8 women. Although some were not active in a particular church, they expressed that their faith in God was instrumental in their lives. Barbara's spoke of her faith saying, "I don't go to church, but I still believe strongly in God and it must help." For others, the church community provided access to mentors and support networks in times of need. This was an important resource not only as a turning point, but also for sustaining successful adaptation.

Generativity

Commitment to the next generation was another strong influence in the lives of the women in this study. For all 8 of the women, a generative commitment served to reinforce their successful adaptation in adulthood through their dedication to ending the intergenerational pattern of risks for their own children. In addition, such a commitment prompted a turning point for 2 of the women.

Generativity as a turning point. Barbara's commitment to the future generation was a turning point for her during her marriage to her first husband. Barbara's first husband severely abused her; one of her pregnancies ended in premature birth and death after a beating by her husband. Barbara took the abuse until her children became involved. She explained, "I took it for 14 years and lost that baby, but when he turned on my kids, that was it." The commitment to her children prompted Barbara to leave her husband and to stabilize life for herself and her children.

The birth of Ellen's third child, who is now 6 years-old, served as a turning point for Ellen and her husband. She explained:

He wasn't the best husband or father then. He would leave for days. I told him that if he didn't change, I would divorce him. It took him a long time, but he really came around and is a great dad now.

In addition to providing the stimulus for a turning point, a strong generative commitment provided reinforcement for successful adaptation for all 8 of the women as they were determined to protect their children from the risks they had experienced in their own lives.

Intergenerational buffers. Kotre and Kotre (1998) argue that a person can demonstrate generative commitment by not passing something on to future generations. The women in this study demonstrated their commitment for the next generation and acted as intergenerational buffers for the children in their care. When asked how her life had been the same as her parents', Ellen replied that her life has been nothing like her parents' life. She said, "I've taken what my life was and said I don't want that for my kids." In speaking of how she learned how to be a "good" parent, Ellen explained, "I think about how my mother did it and I try and do the opposite. . . I pick up ideas from everywhere—the Head Start parenting classes, books, magazines . . . everything I can get my hands on." Ellen was also careful to shield her children from any knowledge of the risky behavior present throughout the generations of their family. She and her husband worked split shifts so that one of them was always available to care for the children. Ellen noted, "I guess I am just overprotective, but I won't have my kids staying with anyone but us. I would worry too much." Ellen was protective of her children because of her own experience as a child and adolescent.

Gloria also displayed a highly generative commitment to her children, and although she struggled economically, Gloria never allowed that to interfere with her parenting. She explained:

You know we never had much but my kids have never thought they were poor because I always made sure they had what they needed. I shopped sales and yard sales for their clothes and I didn't spend my money on beer and cigarettes like so many other people did. . . I remember in between classes I studied in the library—I would work really hard to try and get my

school work done during the time they were in school so I could be with them in the afternoons.

Gloria also discussed with her children the pathway that led her to where she is now in her life in the hopes that they will have a more economically stable future. She reflected:

I was so goal-oriented then, but then I ended up having kids, so I put off going to school. I've talked to the girls about that—I mean I tell them I don't regret having any of them, but the order I did it in meant that things turned out differently than I had planned. I had babies and stayed home instead of going to school. I was always going to go to school but having kids first changed my goals. I wanted to be a nurse, but when I looked at the schedule and having kids—there's no way I could work that schedule and be there for my kids.

Gloria was committed to supporting her children and guiding them along a positive developmental trajectory to prepare them for a successful future. Eve also wished for a better future for her children. When asked what her hopes were for her children 15 years from now, Eve replied, "I really hope they don't make some of the mistakes I made. When I got out of high school I married the first person who said I was pretty. . . I hope they realize they have time." Eve noted that she grew up without self-confidence and that this lack of confidence contributed to the formation of her first marriage with a man who abused her. Eve expressed that she does not want her kids to grow up without confidence. She said, "I want them to know they can do anything. I don't want them to grow up not liking themselves."

Anne displayed a strong generative commitment in that she was dedicated to ensuring her son did not make the same mistakes she did in terms of drug and alcohol addition. She and her husband monitored where he went and who he was with at all times. Anne noted, "We're really protective of Jack [her son]." Keeping her son away from drug users was a big issue in their family. Anne added, "I worry about druggies, but I don't worry about him much. He knows what to look for from being around me." In talking about her hopes for her son's future, Anne said:

I pay attention to how my mother raised me and I try to do it different. I try to teach him how to take care of himself. He knows how to do chores and how to cook. I had to learn all of that on my own. I try to teach him

how to state his opinion. My mother never taught me to do that. . . . I hope he never goes into drugs like I did.

Many of the women who benefited from the generative commitment of mentors and surrogate parents in their own lives were providing that role for the children in their care. Hillary's sister lost all nine of her children to child protective services and when we last spoke with Hillary, she was in the process of trying to adopt her sister's youngest daughter, a medically fragile two-year-old. Hillary found a supportive surrogate family to guide her development when she distanced herself from her family of origin, and she now hopes to provide a supportive surrogate family for her niece.

Barbara was very committed to protecting her great grandchildren from the risks present throughout multiple generations of their family. In reflecting on her own history with her mother, Barbara noted that she feels that she can relate to her great grandchildren because her own mother did not want her. Barbara's experiences of living with a surrogate parent in her own childhood were influential in shaping her generative commitment to fostering the well-being of her great grandchildren. She spoke of her hopes for her great grandchildren saying, "I want them to grow up good. . . to have a childhood. . . [they] never had that until I took [custody of] them."

Timing of life course experiences also appeared to influence generative commitments. Barbara went through periods of more and less successful adaptation throughout her life course, but did not stabilize her life until she was an older woman. Mary also did not achieve successful adaptation until later in life when she and her family experienced a spiritual conversion. In addition, these women were not successful in deterring their own children from substance abuse and other risky behaviors. Their children's outcomes perhaps helped move them toward a generative commitment with their grandchildren and great grandchildren at a time when their own lives were more stable. In speaking of her hopes for herself in the next year Mary said, "I want to raise these kids the best I can and hopefully we can get them adopted; it would add more security for them." Barbara expressed similar hopes saying, "[I hope] I stay good and healthy, so I can keep track of these kids."

Contextual Considerations

Both life course and feminist perspectives sensitize researchers to take into account the multiple contexts that affect families. In terms of the mobile home park, the women in this study had very different experiences. Two of the women relied on each other and a small pocket of neighbors to provide social support for both them and their children. The other 6 women, however, were much more isolated and reported that they did not interact very often with their neighbors and did not rely on them for support. Eve noted that her biggest concern about the neighborhood was that she did not know everyone. This is why she developed boundaries for where her kids could and could not go in the park. She noted that living in a mobile home park was different from living in a neighborhood because the density of people in the park prevented her from knowing everyone.

The managers of the mobile home parks differed significantly as well. One manager provided very little support to families living in the mobile home park and was not concerned with improving the park's quality. In contrast, one manager was very supportive of families, worked hard to create a quality living environment, and established a neighborhood watch program. The third park had a very supportive manager when we first started the study, but she was replaced by a manager who was unresponsive to residents' needs. Overall, informal support networks were very limited for the women in this study. Most of the women relied on support from their spouse and extended family in times of need. Almost all of the women had extended kin who lived in or close to the study community.

On a broader level, residence in a small town often came with challenges to overcoming adversity. When they could afford the costs, the women encouraged their children to participate in community activities, but they had very few ties to the community themselves outside of church and their children's school. In addition, the majority of services for families were located in the next town over from where the women lived, so it was difficult for them to access assistance when needed, especially in families for whom transportation was difficult to secure. The women also spoke of the stigma that exists toward low-income people in the community, and especially those that

reside in mobile home parks. Ellen explained, "If you live in a trailer park, you're on welfare, use drugs, and are a bad parent—automatically." Ellen said this perception is especially bad where she works and people joke with her saying, "What do you know, you live in a trailer park." Hillary also spoke of stigmatization saying, "The kids get named as trailer trash. . . . It might be cheap, but it's not worth the hassle people have to go through. . . . The stigma is not worth it."

DISCUSSION

These findings join a growing body of literature that suggests that opportunities for resilience occur at various points throughout the life course. There is much value in looking across the life course not only to identify intergenerational patterns of risk, but also to identify occurrences of resilience that occur in adulthood. Women speaking from their own lived experiences described patterns of risks such as drug addiction, domestic violence, and poverty that persisted throughout generations of their families and influenced their development. Yet, despite the odds against positive development, they displayed a remarkable capacity to overcome these adversities to move toward successful adaptation in adulthood. Gloria expressed that she tries to keep the philosophy that "everything happens for a reason" and she hopes that she will be able to learn from the experiences of her past. Our research offers evidence of multiple turning points such as connections to supportive mentors or surrogate parents, distancing strategies, and entry into healthier relationships that altered negative developmental trajectories toward more positive outcomes. In addition, faith and a generative commitment offered significant support and reinforcement for successful adaptation.

The results of this study support a perspective that views risk and resilience within the context of individual, family, and community influences (Werner & Smith, 1992). Personal agency and the capacity to take advantage of turning point opportunities certainly impacted resilient outcomes. In addition, dedication to family provided a strong reinforcement for successful adaptation, which was evident in the generative commitment displayed by each woman. As intergenerational buffers, women sought to protect their children from the risks they experienced throughout their own developmental histories. Outside of individual and family contexts, this study revealed little informal or formal

support in the neighborhood or community in which the women resided. Women spoke of a stigma that exists toward residents of mobile home parks and reported that they had very few ties to the community. Thus, women had little choice but to rely on themselves and their families for support in maintaining successful adaptation. Perry-Jenkins and Salamon (2002) point out that the majority of working-poor families choose to live near their relatives, but that this proximity is only beneficial if their extended family is perceived as emotionally and instrumentally supportive.

Cumulative Risk and Turning Points

Our analysis lends support to previous studies of resilience that identify turning points as significant influences on resilient outcomes (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). In addition, the negative effects of cumulative risk and the positive effects of cumulative protection were observed. In line with Rutter (1979) and Rubin (1976), intergenerational patterns of economic constraints characteristic of poor and working-poor families came bundled together with other risks such as job insecurity, drug abuse, and domestic violence. The women in this study had been exposed to diverse environmental threats during their development. They also benefited, however, from multiple opportunities at various times during their lives that functioned as turning points, countering the risks they experienced and supporting successful adaptation.

Establishing a connection to a mentor or a surrogate parent proved to be one significant turning point for many of the women. Mentors and surrogate parents offered powerful examples of other ways of living and also facilitated connections to new opportunities. Establishing this connection with a supportive adult outside of the family of origin was fostered by the capacity for what Rubin (1996) terms *adoptability*. Adoptability refers to the ability to attract mentors or surrogate parents who provide support, present the possibility of another life, and fill lonely gaps from past relationships (Rubin, 1996). Previous research has found that resilient individuals are especially skilled at attracting alternate sources of support (Rubin, 1996; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992).

Distancing was another turning point and was an effective strategy for breaking away from damaging family patterns for many of the women in our study. This finding supports previous research suggesting that high-risk individuals who had developed into successfully adapted adults often felt the need to detach themselves from family members whose negative behaviors persisted (Rubin, 1996; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). Werner (2000) noted that this was particularly true for adult children of alcoholic parents. Rubin (1996) refers to the process of leaving a family and its way of life behind as *disidentifying*. Distancing often came with an emotional cost and was further challenged by the loss of family support, which is highly valued in poor and working-poor families (Perry-Jenkins & Salamon, 2002; Rubin, 1976).

Entry into a healthier relationship with a nondeviant spouse often accompanied distancing strategies and further served to stabilize families. This turning point was important for every woman in this study regardless of whether they had distanced themselves from their family of origin. Rutter (2000b) found that entry into a harmonious relationship (whether marital or cohabiting) with a nondeviant partner was one of the most important factors associated with resilience. He noted, however, that the quality of the relationship determined whether it served as a risk or protective factor. Many of the women experienced first marriages characterized by risks such as domestic violence or drug addiction, but they made healthier choices in their subsequent relationships.

Faith, and for some the connection to a faith community, provided valuable support for the achievement and maintenance of successful adaptation. In a longitudinal study of resilience, Werner (2000) found that faith was one of the most important protective factors among resilient adults. Evidence from our study also showed that each woman displayed a strong generative commitment through childrearing efforts that reinforced their adaptation. McAdams and Logan (2004) found that adults with higher generativity scores were more involved with their children and were more effective parents than those with lower generativity scores. In addition, higher ratings of generativity were positively associated with measures of psychological adaptation and effective coping strategies in adulthood. Consistent with the work of Kotre and Kotre (1998), we found that women demonstrated a generative commitment by acting as

intergenerational buffers for the children in their care. Intergenerational buffers vow, “It stops here. It ends with me” (Kotre & Kotre, 1998, p. 367).

Neighborhood and Community Influences

Our findings reveal that there was little formal or informal support available in the neighborhood or community. Findings of the lack of community support are consistent with Fitchen (1991) and Duncan’s (2000) research on rural families in terms of the stigma that exists toward poor and working-poor families and the centralization of community resources. Findings of unsupportive neighborhood contexts are also consistent with previous research showing that families residing in rural mobile home parks often have a difficult time forming supportive networks (MacTavish & Salamon, 2001). Over and over, we heard that participants moved into the mobile home park because it was affordable and available. This context enabled them to stabilize their families in place allowing for important consistency for their children in terms of home and school, but provided little support for successful adaptation.

Limitations

Although our study has a number of strengths, it also has several limitations. First is the small, theoretically sampled population of study. Because we sought to recruit mothers with children in a certain age range, we were not able to include the experiences of women with children at different ages. Although our study is comprised of a nonrepresentative sample, we are encouraged that the results support previous research on the significance of turning point events throughout the life course. In terms of the small sample size, although our goal was to include more mothers in our sample, we experienced several barriers to recruitment. Many residents claimed to be moving out of the mobile home park or that they did not have time for such an in-depth study. In addition, snowball sampling recruitment was ineffective because parents did not know very many of the other parents in the parks, so they were unable to make personal referrals. Because participants self-selected into the study, another potential limitation is who agreed to participate and who did not. Throughout the year of fieldwork, we heard from participants about some of the families who chose not to participate in the study. These families were often characterized by domestic violence or drug abuse. We also

heard about children who were removed from families by child protective services and, more often, about children who needed to be removed from their families. It is possible that we were unable to reach the families who had not made transitions toward resilience.

Thus, our study did not benefit from a comparison group that would have allowed us to understand better diverse pathways of adaptation, both positive and negative, across the life course. Attention to recruitment of these families should be a top priority for future research. If we are going to endeavor to support all at-risk families, we need to examine how the experiences of less resilient individuals differ. Also, although our criteria for successful adaptation included the absence of internalizing problems, we did not use a measure of internalizing behaviors such as a depression scale, but instead relied on self-reports and participant observation. Future research should examine the life course histories of less resilient individuals to explore whether turning point opportunities occurred throughout their life histories and, if so, determine what prevented them from being able to benefit from these experiences. Establishing support for positive turning point effects in many different populations can provide support for broader policy and program initiatives focused on facilitating turning point experiences for at-risk individuals and families

Implications

The pathways that led to successful adaptation for these women in adulthood provide insight into how policies and programs might better support the lives of poor and working-poor families. Multiple turning point opportunities were needed for the achievement of successful adaptation. Access to community mentors, the ability to move away from problematic families through finding affordable housing, and faith connections emerge as important support systems. As an existing institution that connects with individuals and families, churches may be effective forums for providing turning point experiences and supporting resilient outcomes. Our results also point to the importance of a strong generative commitment in reinforcing successful adaptation. Masten and Coatsworth (1998, p. 215) note, "Time and again, research points to the importance of parent-child relationships as a crucial context for the development of competence." Increasing support for programs and policies that nurture generative

commitments by providing parent education classes and building parent-child relationships would be an effective means of helping more parents learn about the importance of healthy family contexts and enable them to become intergenerational buffers for their own children.

Policies and programs need to focus not only on reducing risks, but also on facilitating protective processes (Masten 2001; Werner, 2000). Based on the exponential negative effects of cumulative risks, Rutter (2000b) asserts that a reduction in the overall level of risk can have a significant impact on fostering resilience. Therefore, although risks tend to come bundled together, eliminating even a few risk factors may be enough to deter the onset of psychopathology or antisocial behavior. Creating opportunities for multiple turning points at various times throughout the life course may decrease the negative effect of multiple risk factors. Our research shows that turning points that occur later in life, regardless of the level of risk up to that point, can significantly influence pathways of successful adaptation. Thus, the ability to intervene on behalf of at-risk individuals and families, at any age, to create positive turning points is crucial to supporting low-income populations who are constrained by the pernicious effects of poverty and the intergenerational transmission of damaging behaviors.

Table 1

Comparison of Demographic Variables for "Mountainview," Oregon, and the U.S. (%)

Variables	Mountainview	Oregon	United States
High school education or higher	71.8	85.1	80.4
College education	< 6.0	25.0	24.0
Adult population in the workforce	55.1	65.2	63.9
Individuals below the poverty line	17.5	11.6	12.4
Families in poverty with children under 18 yrs.	18.7	12.4	13.6
Median family income	35,833	40,916	41,994

Note. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2

Sample Characteristics (n = 8)

Respondents' Characteristics	<i>n</i>
Race/ethnicity	
White	8
Age (years)	
25 – 30	4
31 – 35	2
36 – 69	2
Family Structure	
Married	7
Widowed	1
Educational attainment	
Less than high school	2
High school or GED	4
Technical or some college	2
Employment status	
Employed	4
Not employed	3
On disability	1
Family income	
Less than 19,000	5
19,000 – 29,000	1
More than 29,000	2
Housing status	
Own home	3
Rent home	5

Table 3

Summary of Personal and Intergenerational Risks

Participant	Drug Abuse	Domestic Violence	Teen Pregnancy	Divorce	Mental Health Issues	Time in Foster Care	Time in Prison	Unfinished Education
Eve	*	X	*	X	*		*	
Gloria	*	*	X*	X		X	*	*
Mary	*	*	X	X	*	*	*	X*
Barbara	*	X	X*	X*	X*	X*	*	*
Carol	*		*	*	*	X	*	*
Ellen	*	*	X*	*		X	*	X*
Anne	X	X*			X*	X	*	X*
Hillary		X*	X			*		*

Note. X represents personal risks and * represents risks experienced by other family members. Time in foster care includes both formal and informal family care.

Table 4

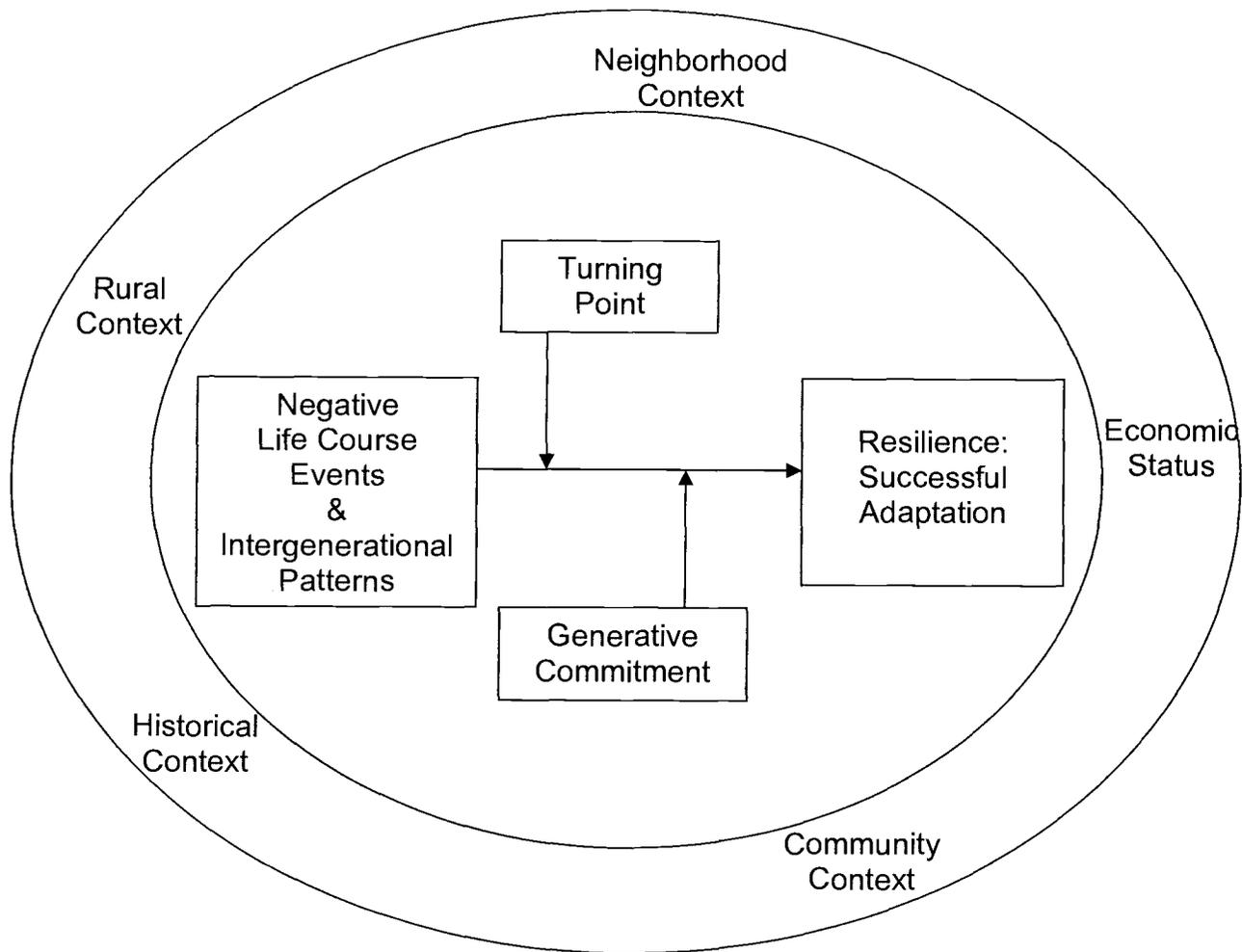
Summary of Turning Points and Supporting Factors

Participant	Mentor/ Surrogate	Distancing	Healthy Marriage	Faith	Generativity
Eve			X	X	X
Gloria	X		X	X	X
Mary			X	X	X
Barbara	X		X	X	X
Carol	X	X	X		X
Ellen	X	X	X		X
Anne	X	X	X	X	X
Hillary	X	X	X	X	X

Note. Faith and generativity were most often supporting factors

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



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CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION

These findings join a growing body of literature that suggests that opportunities for resilience occur at various points throughout the life course. There is much value in looking across the life course not only to identify intergenerational patterns of risk, but also to identify occurrences of resilient outcomes that occur in adulthood. Women speaking from their own lived experiences described patterns of risks such as drug addiction, domestic violence, and poverty that persisted throughout generations of their families and influenced their development. Yet, despite the odds against positive development, they displayed a remarkable capacity to overcome these adversities to move toward successful adaptation in adulthood. Gloria expressed that she tries to keep the philosophy that “everything happens for a reason” and she hopes that she will be able to learn from the experiences of her past. Our research offers evidence of significant turning points such as connections with supportive mentors or surrogate parents, distancing strategies, and entry into healthier relationships that altered negative developmental trajectories toward more positive outcomes. In addition, faith and a generative commitment offered significant support and reinforcement for successful adaptation.

The results of this study support a perspective that views risk and resilience within the context of individual, family, and community influences (Werner & Smith, 1992). Personal agency and the capacity to take advantage of turning point opportunities certainly impacted resilient outcomes. In addition, dedication to family provided a strong reinforcement for successful adaptation, which was evident in the generative commitment displayed by each woman. As intergenerational buffers, women sought to protect their children from the risks they experienced throughout their own developmental histories. Barbara’s observation that she felt she could relate to her great grandchildren because her own mother did not want her points to the importance of looking across the life course and considering how people make meaning of events in their life, and how this meaning-making influences their future decisions.

Outside of individual and family contexts, this study revealed little informal or formal support in the neighborhood or community in which the women resided. Women

spoke of a stigma that exists toward residents of mobile home parks and reported that they had very few ties to the community. Thus, women had little choice but to rely on themselves and their families for support in maintaining successful adaptation. Perry-Jenkins and Salamon (2002) point out that the majority of working-poor families choose to live near their relatives, but that this proximity is only beneficial if their extended family is perceived as emotionally and instrumentally supportive. We know from our sample that some extended kin provided support for the women, but that others were unsupportive and continued to engage in risky behaviors.

Cumulative Risk and Turning Points

Our analysis lends support to previous studies of resilience that identify turning points as significant influences on resilient outcomes (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). These studies emphasize the value of major opportunities in late adolescence and early adulthood in positively altering life course trajectories. In addition, the negative effects of cumulative risk and the positive effects of cumulative protection were observed. In line with Rutter (1979) and Rubin (1976), intergenerational patterns of economic constraints characteristic of poor and working-poor families came bundled together with other risks such as job insecurity, drug abuse, and domestic violence. The women in this study had been exposed to diverse environmental threats during their development. They also benefited, however, from multiple turning point opportunities at various times during their lives that functioned to counter the risks they experienced and to support successful adaptation.

Establishing a connection to a mentor or a surrogate parent proved to be one significant turning point for many of the women. Mentors and surrogate parents offered powerful examples of other ways of living and also facilitated connections to new opportunities. Establishing this connection with a supportive adult outside of the family of origin was fostered by the capacity for what Rubin (1996) terms *adoptability*. Adoptability refers to the ability to attract mentors or surrogate parents who provide support, present the possibility of another life, and fill lonely gaps from past relationships (Rubin, 1996). Previous research has found that resilient individuals are especially skilled at attracting alternate sources of support (Rubin, 1996; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith,

1992). Similar to our findings, these alternate sources of support often came from other family members such as grandparents or siblings (Werner, 2000). Adoptability requires that individuals be open to experiencing new relationships and to incorporating new ways of being into their own lives (Rubin, 1996). Gloria demonstrated great adoptability in endearing herself to others and provided evidence of the importance of being open to new experiences when she spoke of the three women who influenced her development and how she took the positive aspects of their lives and incorporated them into her own.

Distancing was another turning point and was an effective strategy for breaking away from damaging family patterns for many of the women in our study. This finding provides evidence to support previous findings that high-risk individuals who had developed into successfully adapted adults often felt the need to detach themselves from family members whose negative behaviors persisted (Rubin, 1996; Rutter, 2000b; Werner, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1992). Werner (2000) noted that this was particularly true for adult children of alcoholic parents. Rubin (1996) refers to the process of leaving a family and its way of life behind as *disidentifying*. Although many women distanced themselves from their families of origin, we observed fluctuations in their relationships over the course of the study. For some, changes occurred as they attempted to heal the wounds from childhood and to forge better relationships with their parents. For others, life events such as a former husband being released from prison prompted renewed contact and renegotiation of relationships. Distancing often came with an emotional cost and was further challenged by the loss of family support, which is highly valued in poor and working-poor families (Perry-Jenkins & Salamon, 2002; Rubin, 1976).

Entry into a healthier relationship with a nondeviant spouse often accompanied distancing strategies and further served to stabilize families. This turning point was important for every woman in this study regardless of whether they had distanced themselves from their family of origin. Rutter (2000b) found that entry into a harmonious relationship (whether marital or cohabiting) with a nondeviant partner was one of the most important factors associated with resilience. He noted, however, that the quality of the relationship determined whether it served as a risk or protective factor. Many of the

women experienced first marriages characterized by risks such as domestic violence or drug addiction, but they made healthier choices in their subsequent relationships.

Faith, and for some the connection to a faith community, provided valuable support for the achievement and maintenance of successful adaptation. In a longitudinal study of resilience, Werner (2000) found that faith was one of the most important protective factors among resilient adults. Our findings are also consistent with previous research that found that faith provided protection from risk through connections to coping strategies, belief in a higher power, and support networks (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990).

Evidence from our study also showed that each woman displayed a strong generative commitment through childrearing efforts that reinforced their adaptation. McAdams and Logan (2004) found that adults with higher generativity scores were more involved with their children and were more effective parents than those with lower generativity scores. In addition, higher ratings of generativity were positively associated with measures of psychological adaptation and effective coping strategies in adulthood. Consistent with the work of Kotre and Kotre (1998), we found that women demonstrated a generative commitment by acting as intergenerational buffers for the children in their care. Intergenerational buffers vow, "It stops here. It ends with me" (Kotre & Kotre, 1998, p. 367). Our findings provide support for the assertion that resilient individuals are committed to using their past experiences to improve the future not only for themselves but also for others (Rubin, 1996). Similar to Rubin's (1976) findings, women invested themselves in caring for the next generation and hoped that their children would be happy in the future.

Neighborhood and Community Influences

Our findings reveal that life course events, family dedication, and personal determination were more influential in achieving and maintaining successful adaptation than the social contexts in which participants resided. In part, this was because there was little formal or informal support available in the neighborhood or community. Findings of the lack of community support are consistent with Fitchen (1991) and Duncan's (2000) research on rural families in terms of the stigma that exists toward poor and working-poor

families and the centralization of community resources. Findings of unsupportive neighborhood contexts are also consistent with previous research showing that families residing in rural mobile home parks often have a difficult time forming supportive networks (MacTavish & Salamon, 2001). Although the manufactured-home industry has long promoted mobile home parks as functional places marked by positive social interactions, cohesiveness, and networks of support (Wallis, 1991), MacTavish and Salamon (2001) found that residents who reported experiencing a sense of community were most often older, retired residents. Most young families found it difficult to form supportive networks in their neighborhoods.

The affordability of the mobile home park played a large role in stabilizing families, though. Over and over, we heard that participants moved into the mobile home park because it was affordable and available. This context enabled them to stabilize their families in place allowing for important consistency for their children in terms of home and school, but provided little support for successful adaptation. Since the completion of our study, 4 of the 8 families have moved out of the mobile home park. Three families moved into their own houses in the community (one funded by HUD), and the other family moved out of state and we do not have an update on their housing status.

Limitations

Although this study has a number of strengths, it also has several limitations. First is the small, theoretically sampled population of study. Because we sought to recruit mothers with children in a certain age range, we were not able to include the experiences of mothers with children at different ages. Although our study is comprised of a nonrepresentative sample, we are encouraged that the results support previous research on the significance of turning point events throughout the life course. In terms of the small sample size, although our goal was to include more mothers in our sample, we experienced several barriers to recruitment. Many residents expressed that they were moving out of the mobile home park soon or did not have time for such an in-depth study. In addition, snowball sampling recruitment was ineffective because parents did not know very many of the other parents in the parks, so they were unable to make personal referrals. Because participants self-selected into the study, another potential limitation is

who agreed to participate and who did not. Throughout the year of fieldwork, we heard from participants about some of the families who chose not to participate in the study. These families were often characterized by domestic violence or drug abuse. We also heard about children who were removed from families by child protective services and, more often, about children who needed to be removed from their families. It is possible that we were unable to reach the families who had not yet made transitions toward resilience.

Thus, our study did not benefit from a comparison group that would have allowed us to understand better diverse pathways of adaptation, both positive and negative, across the life course. Attention to recruitment of these families should be a top priority for future research. If we are going to endeavor to support all at-risk families, we need to examine how the experiences of less resilient individuals differ. Also, although our criteria for successful adaptation included the absence of internalizing problems, we did not use a measure of internalizing behaviors such as a depression scale, but instead relied on self-reports and participant observation.

Future Research

Future research should examine the life course histories of less resilient individuals to explore whether turning point opportunities occurred throughout their life histories and, if so, determine what prevented them from being able to benefit from these experiences. Future research needs to explore resilient pathways in other marginalized populations living in diverse contexts to determine whether the influence of turning points and generativity is significant in varied populations. Attention to ethnic populations and cultural contexts will be important as well. Establishing support for positive turning point effects in many different populations can provide support for broader policy and program initiatives focused on facilitating turning point experiences for at-risk individuals and families.

Implications

The pathways that led to resilience in adulthood for these women provide insight into how policies and programs might better support the lives of poor and working-poor families. Multiple turning point opportunities were needed for the achievement of

successful adaptation. Access to community mentors, the ability to move away from problematic families through finding affordable housing, and faith connections emerge as important support systems. As existing institutions that connect with individuals and families, churches may be effective forums for providing turning point experiences and supporting resilient outcomes in at-risk populations. Our results also point to the importance of a strong generative commitment in reinforcing successful adaptation. Masten and Coatsworth (1998, p. 215) note, "Time and again, research points to the importance of parent-child relationships as a crucial context for the development of competence." Increasing support for programs and policies that nurture generative commitments by providing parent education classes and building parent-child relationships would be an effective means of helping more parents learn about the importance of healthy family contexts and enable them to become intergenerational buffers for their own children.

Policies and programs need to focus not only on reducing risks, but also on facilitating protective processes (Masten 2001; Werner, 2000). Based on the exponential negative effects of cumulative risks, Rutter (2000b) asserts that a reduction in the overall level of risk can have a significant impact on fostering resilience. Thus, although risks tend to come bundled together, eliminating even a few risk factors may be enough to deter the onset of psychopathology or antisocial behavior. Creating opportunities for multiple turning points at various times throughout the life course may decrease the negative effect of multiple risk factors. Our research shows that turning points that occur later in life, regardless of the level of risk up to that point, can significantly influence pathways of successful adaptation. Thus, ability to intervene on behalf of at-risk individuals and families, at any age, to create positive turning points is crucial to supporting low-income populations who are constrained by the pernicious effects of poverty and the intergenerational transmission of damaging behaviors.

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