FAMILY &
CHILDREN'S SERVICES
OF THE WATERLOO REGION

Evidence Informed
Department of Research & Innovation

THE CHILD & YOUTH RESILIENCE PROJECT: COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

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THE CHILD & YOUTH RESILIENCE PROJECT: 2014 to 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The Resilience Project is a recent Family and Children's Services collaborative project that aims to provide realistic and effective opportunities to children and youth, to help them develop essential protective factors important to enhance their life skills, reduce challenging behaviours, improve relationships with family members, and play a productive role within the community. Children who have participated in the Resilience Programs have either received services from Family and Children's Services or one of our partners also servicing at risk children, most of them have experienced difficult risk factors such as family separation, negligence, or maltreatment, that have resulted in trauma, and emotional-behavioural problems. In neuroscientific terms, when a child's brain faces danger a chemical cascade is initiated that allow the child to run away from risks. Thus, children's brains naturally produce resilience to stress (Stix, 2011). For Bonanno (2004), coping and recovery is not enough to attain an optimal functioning. The author states that resilience programs can help people to increase the innate ability for resiliency. Thus, it is fundamental that the Resilience Project through its programs effectively provides evidence-based protective factors to children and caregivers that contribute to restore their abilities to cope and function in their lives.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1
- Programs will increase children's sense of security.

Hypothesis 2
- Programs will boosts a sense of belonging.

Hypothesis 3
- Programs will encourage the use of strengths to face adversity.

Hypothesis 4
- Parental programs will enhance parental resilience

Methodology

Sample

- A mixed method approach was taken for the evaluation. For the quantitative evaluation, there were 104 children ages 6-12 who completed the pre- and post-test questionnaires. Fifty-one percent of children were females and 49% were males. Fifty-four caregivers took part in the pre- and post-test questionnaires for the parenting programs. Finally, 46 individuals (16 group facilitators; 19 caregivers; 10 children) took part in the qualitative interviews.

Procedure

- Recruitment to the programs could be facilitated through referrals from child protection workers (for children who are involved in Family and Children's Services), or through the programs being open to the public for referral. Formal programs are those 10 weeks or more in length *(The Creative Space, Players Theater, Mindful Kids, Mountain Bike Madness, Family Centre Players and SMILES)*. For caregivers, formal programs are Mindful Caregivers, and Trusting Loving Connections, while informal programs are drop-in programs, or Family Fun Activity days.

Measures

- To assess children and youth's resilience, participants were presented with 40 items measuring their developmental assets (Search Institute, 2011). Developmental assets are related to resilient factors: when youth score highly in developmental assets, they are less likely to participate in risky behavior (Search Institute, 2011). The scale is composed of eight subscales: four, which are internal assets (exist within the person) including Positive Values, Commitment to Learning, Social Competencies, and Positive Identity; four, which are external assets (exist outside the person) including Use of Time, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, Support.

Overview of Results

Sense of Security

- *Attachment with dependable adults* – children were able to make stronger connections with family members (Strengthening Families), and had constant exposure to supportive adults (Trauma informed facilitators across various programs).
- *Self Esteem* – children's view of themselves increased across the multiple programs, with statistically significant increases experienced in children who were part of Creative Space, Mini Me-to-We, Music Academy, and SMILES.
- *Social Competence* – increases in children's social skills were found across the various programs, with significant increases seen in children who were part of Creative Space, Mini Me-to-We, Music Academy, SMILES, and Strengthening Families.

Sense of Belonging

- *Belonging with Peers* – Parents reported that the Family Centre was a safe place for their children to participate in programs, they thought other children with similar experiences would make their children feel more connected to their peers (Qualitative Analysis)
- *Belonging with Adults* – Children felt they were able to significantly open up to adults as a result of their participation in Strengthening Families and SMILES; however, increases in feeling supported by adults was seen across all programs.
- *Belonging with Community* – using Boundaries and Expectations as a proxy for belonging in the community, children reported increases across all programs, albeit none was statistically significant.

Use of Strengths to Face Adversities

- *Personal Power* – although children felt more empowered by sharing their skills with others in the programs, no statistically significant changes were seen across programs.
- *Self-Efficacy/Positive Values* – Most programs seen a statistically non-significant increase in Positive Values, while SMILES and Strengthening Families saw statistically significant increases in ability to have fun and enjoy time with family.
- *Constructive Use of Time* – children reported statistically significant increases in their use of time in constructive activities for children who participated in Creative Space, Music Academy, SMILES and Strengthening Families.
- *Commitment to Learning* – across the various programs, parents reported seeing children commit to the activities they were learning, even when they were challenging. Children who

participated in Music Academy reported a statistically significant increase in commitment to learning.

Parental Resilience.
- *Sense of Security* – Strengthening Families and Trusting Loving Connections saw a statistically significant increase in parents ability to support their child or see their child's behaviour as more positive, both of which are linked to better attachment with children.
- *Sense of Belonging* – Strengthening Families was the only program that measured this construct, and it was found that parents who completed the program felt that they could enjoy their time with their children more. This construct needs more rigorous evaluation in future studies.
- *Use of Strengths to Face Adversities* – Parents who participated in Strengthening Families reported being able to say nicer things to their children after participating in the program. This construct needs more rigorous evaluation in future studies.

Learnings
- Engineering resilience is a multifaceted and dynamic process that promotes the ability to navigate psychologically, socially, and physically to restore emotional equilibrium and respond to challenges in a positive way.
- Children and youth who have a sense of security are able to feel more comfortable challenging their limitations to reach their full potential within the community. This challenging of self enables children to be more productive and not only receive benefits from the community, but also give back to the community
- Boosting sense of belonging and acceptance allows youth to increase their self-esteem and confidence as it increases the likelihood they have people in their lives that think highly of them. Various agents (communities, schools, agencies) play a pivotal role in helping children feel like they belong.
- Helping to nourish the strengths children and youth have essentially creates a bubble of support around the child to persevere through adversities. This can be achieved by offering children and youth informal and formal programming to nurture their strengths.
- Providing programs that increase attachment and provide ways to regulate parents' emotions is essential to family functioning.

Recommendations
- Learnings from our qualitative analysis suggested an expansion of resilience based measurements. At times, resilience constructs were not captured adequately but the tool utilized and proxies had to be used.
- Expansion of programs to different populations to help build resilience on a greater scale.
- More collaboration between organizations to help build capacity in one another in offering resilience based programs.

INTRODUCTION

According to many researchers, resilience is the achievement of positive adaptation despite exposure to significant threat or severe adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker, 2000; Masten, 2011; Nash & Bowen, 1999). In other words, resilience is the ability to engage sets of qualities that facilitate the successful adaptation and functioning of the individual, even though the person is facing one or more adversities, without experiencing serious long-term damaging outcomes.

What is adversity? Adversity can be an event that is time-limited, even short-lived, or it can be periodic, continuous, and is both objective and subjective. When an adverse event has occurred children may:

a) succumb to circumstances,
b) survive, but with lasting impairments,
c) be resilient, by returning to pre-adversity level of functioning,
d) thrive in the face of adversity by surpassing pre-adversity level of functioning.

Responses to Adversity
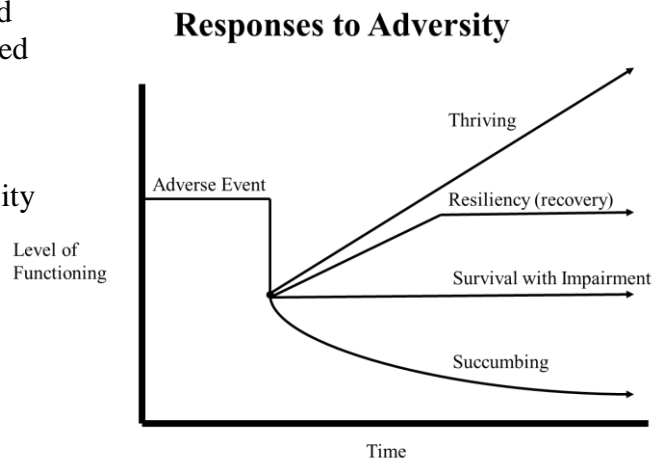
What factors contribute to making a person resilient? Resilience is the ability to restore emotional equilibrium using internal and external strengths (Bonnie, 1995; Cesarone, 1999). Internal strengths are factors found within the person, such as self-efficacy, social competence, self-esteem, and positive identity. External strengths are attributes found outside of the person, such as level of support and sense of belonging, both within the community and with peers. In neuroscientific terms, when individuals face adversity, the brain has an innate resilient capacity to restore functioning through the production of a chemical cascade that allows risks to be mitigated (Stix, 2011). However, this innate way of processing adversity is not always sufficient to help children and adults overcome adversity when they have also experienced trauma or struggle with disruptive behavioral issues. For example, Bonanno (2004) indicates that attaining "natural resilience" through coping and recovery is not enough to achieve an optimum outcome.

Why focus on resiliency with the child welfare population? Children and families involved with child welfare have faced diverse adversities in their lives. Child maltreatment is correlated with trauma, emotional and behavioral problems, stress, sadness, anger, confusion, low self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness, low commitment to learning, poor sense of belonging, disruptive conduct, poor social competence, and disrupted sense of security (e.g., Bruskas, 2008; Palusci, 2011).

Given the risk factors and adversities that child welfare populations are vulnerable to, the Family and Children Services of the Waterloo Region sought to investigate how resilience-based programs, through a variety of recreational and psycho-educational formal or informal programs, contributed to restore the children and families' resilience proficiency. This work was funded by

the Hallman Foundation. The Child & Youth Resilience Project (CYRP) is anchored in the belief that resilience can be engineered via different resilience building experiences. With that in mind, what makes one child resilient (e.g., an arts program where a child can explore their creativity) may not necessarily make another child resilient (e.g., a music program as opposed to an art program). Using a variety of resilience-based programming allows the CYRP the best chance at engineering resilience in children and youth. This report will examine the programs used to engineer resilience and the effects that these programs have had on the children, youth, and families who participated.

ENGINEERING RESILIENCE

Authors who have studied resilience consider it to be a multifaceted term defined as the ability of individuals to be open to change and respond positively to challenges in life (Luthar et al, 2000; Masten, 2011). A 15-year-old high school student cleverly described resilience as bouncing back from problems and gearing up with more energy and more brain power (Cooper, Estes, & Allen, 2004). The concept of engineering resilience means to purposefully and intentionally create experiences for children, youth, and families that will offer them opportunities to become resilient. Engineering resilience, from a social science standpoint, is the provision of positive or protective factors intentionally placed in the lives of children and families to fulfil the purpose of making the children and families stronger.

Interventions that focus on engineering resilience could be focused on creating positive outcomes, boosting internal and external assets, and tailoring strengths that a person innately has (Masten, 2011). For Vanistendael (1995), engineering internal factors of resilience can be focused on enhancing spiritual life skills, such as discovering meaning in life or having a greater sense of control over life events. Families that have strengths and resources that they can lean on to build solutions to face adversity are more likely to be resilient (Lee et al., 2009). For example, Luthar, et al. (2000) include the presence of supportive friends and interests in activities as positive external factors. Opportunities are another pathway to engineer resilience. In fact, children who are resilient frequently participate in youth groups, camps, and other social functions (Grant, Oxford, & Boyle, 1989; Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004; Perry & Felce 1995; Werner, 1989). Given the different pathways through which resilience may be achieved, it is important when engineering resilience to cast a wide net in an array of programs or experiences, as what protective factor or experience will make a child or family resilient is unknown.

THEORETICAL SUPPORT OF PROTECTIVE RESILIENCE FACTORS

Engineering resilience involves offering opportunities and experiences to regain equilibrium or create positive adaptation to face adversity. With that said, the concept of resilience endorsed in this evaluation maintains that resilience is a multifaceted and dynamic concept comprised of the ability to navigate psychologically, socially, and physically through recreational and psycho-educational activities to promote the ability to restore emotional equilibrium, foster strengths to endure adversity, and respond to challenges in life in a positive manner.

The CYRP focused on fostering four dimensions of resiliency:
1) Sense of security,
2) Sense of belonging,
3) Use of strengths to face adversity,
4) and Parental resilience.

RESILIENCE FACTOR 1: SENSE OF SECURITY

Sense of security is a person's feeling of confidence and safety, as well as feeling valued and supported by family, peers, and community (Mester, 2008). Sense of security is a resilience factor comprised of attachment with dependable people, self-esteem, and social competence.

Attachment with dependable people: Luthar et al. (1994) maintain that building resilience requires a support system, including significant relationships with adults. These relationships are characterized by encouragement, acknowledgment, accomplishment, and enhancement of self-efficacy. According to Mundy (1996), adult support is paramount to fostering resilience in children and youth. The 40 Developmental Assets Questionnaire (Research Institute, 2011) includes attachment with dependable people as an external asset that implies a meaningful relationship with non-parental adults.

Self-esteem or self-concept: Is built in two ways, by the attributes that the child adopts, and by those the child believes other infer about him/her. If members of a group give a favourable perception to the child supporting his/her creativity and success, the child will feel connected and identified with the social group, and his/her positive outcomes within the group will be higher than if the members of the child's group do not give favorability (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994).

Social competence: Was defined by Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, Brown and Gottman (1986) as the social exchange in children's processing patterns and social behaviors. Authors consider that social competence is a way to interact effectively with others through processing information, including encoding social cues, and the evaluation of adequate responses (Dennis, Brown, Renwick, & Rootman, 1996). In the simplest terms, social competence is the ability to be empathetic, to seek help from others when needed, and to think creatively and reflectively (Bernand, 1995). The 40 Developmental Assets (Research Institute, 2011) states that social competence is an internal asset that reflects the ability of children for planning and decision-making, developing interpersonal competence to be empathetic, sensible, and friendly.

Sense of security is acquired thanks to the combination of significant relationships with adults, and building both positive self-esteem and confident social competence.

RESILIENCE FACTOR 2: SENSE OF BELONGING

Sense of belonging is defined as the experience or personal involvement in a system or environment whereby the person feels like an integral part of the system or environment (Hagerty, Lynch Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992). Sense of belonging is a resilience factor comprised of positive relationships with peers, family, and the community. All children

need a safe place where their needs of support, respect, and friendship are met. Sense of belonging has many positive benefits for children, such as fewer mental health problems, increased happiness, and more motivation to learn (Kids Matter, n.d.).

Vanistendael (1995) suggests that a key factor to building resilience in children includes social support networks that do not judge or criticize the child but have unconditional acceptance toward her/him. Indeed, engineering resilience includes the presence of supportive friends and the existence of stimulating activities, such as youth groups, camps, and other social functions. (Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004). It is important to highlight that both formal and informal non-school environments are critical to helping children develop a sense of belonging (King, Law, Rosenbaum, Kertoy, & Young, 2003). Formal activities have structural programing, rules and goals, and are led by an instructor or a coach, whereas informal activities do not, and include reading, exercising, or playing and other activities. Children's participation in recreational activities, whether formal or informal, are correlated with increases in child wellbeing (Brown, Renwick, & Rootman, 1996); Perry, et al., 1992; Schalock, 1990).

The 40 Developmental Assets (Research Institute, 2011) highlights the importance of positive peer influence, and participation in the community, which provides empowerment. In addition, it affirms that family support and positive family communication are factors that intervene as external assets to increase sense of belonging. A sense of belonging is acquired thanks to the combination of positive relationship with peers, active participation within the community and receiving support and care from adults and family.

RESILIENCE FACTOR 3: USE OF STRENGTHS TO FACE ADVERSITY

Use of strengths to face adversity: Through improvisation, experimentation, and perseverance, we learn and obtain benefits of experience to overcome difficulties and obstacles (Pasick, 2014). What is important to remember about this resilience factor is that in this sense, resilience is comprised of any factor the person innately has that can be nurtured by the environment. The use of strengths to face adversity is a resilience factor made up of personal power, self-efficacy, positive identity, constructive use of time, positive values, and commitment to learning. However, it may include more aspects not discussed in this report.

According to Ungar (2004), resilience is the capacity to navigate into the psychological, social, and physical assets that produce and sustain our well-being and our capacity to build and receive social resources in a meaningful way. Grotberg (2007) determined that children are able to overcome adversity by outlining the three principles of resilience: "I have," "I am," and "I can," these three factors combine to form personal power and self-efficacy. Luthar, et al. (2000) maintains that resilience requires a support system that includes significant relationships with adults who foster constructive use of time, self-efficacy, personal responsibility, optimism, and the ability to cope. The 40 Developmental Assets (Research Institute, 2011) emphasizes that positive values include caring, honesty, and responsibility amongst other internal assets. Positive identity includes autonomy to act independently and have control over one's self (internal locus of control) and self-efficacy (Bernard, 1995).

Moreover, in a study to identify the impact of commitment to learning in children academically, results suggested that children who were more committed to learning created a community of learners who were more involved in making decisions with classmates, more collaborative in learning with peers, and who became engaged in multi-age activities promoting active participation in the community (Mester, 2008). Commitment to learning comprises social and emotional learning. These types of learning are important components of school and nonacademic programs and are part of lifelong learning. Learning is a social process that happens in the company of peers, and is preferable when it comes with family support. Commitment to learning enables children to attain success, and also helps them to educate themselves to become responsible and active members of the community (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004).

### RESILIENCE FACTOR 4: PARENTAL RESILIENCE

Parental resilience comprises sense of security, sense of belonging, and use of strengths to face adversities. The US Department of Health & Human Services' Child Welfare Information Gateway, cited on The Institute for Family Violence Studies (n.d.), indicates that parents who are emotionally resilient "have a positive attitude, creatively solve problems, effectively address challenges, and are less likely to direct anger and frustration at their children. In addition, these parents are aware of their own challenges - for example, those arising from inappropriate parenting they received as children - and accept help and/or counseling when needed" (p. 4).

Additionally, engineering resilience in children highlights the importance of engineering parental resilience. Parental resilience is defined as "the capacity of parents to deliver competent, quality parenting to children despite adverse circumstances" (Gavidia-Payne, Denny, Davis, Francis & Jackson, 2015, p 111). According to the Circle of Security, parents attending to the child's needs encompass support to the child's exploration, watch over the child, delight in the child, help him/her, enjoy with him/her, welcome him/her when he/she comes back to the parents, and protect, comfort, delight, and organize his/her child's feelings (Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, & Powell, 2000). The Circle of Security states, always be bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind. Whenever possible, follow the child's needs, and whenever necessary, take charge. In addition, Cooper et al. (2000) also propose the circle of repair, consisting of helping the child trust, and providing support when the child is upset (frustrated, withdrawn, whiney, demanding, or out of control) by remaining calm, taking charge, being kind, staying with the child until both the parent and child understand his/her feelings, and helping the child return to what he/she was doing with a new option.

Resilient parents will learn to build realistic expectations of the child, helping the child to
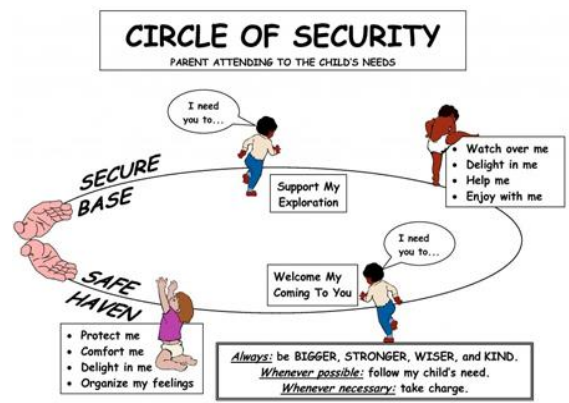
pursue only tasks that he/she is developmentally ready to take on, avoiding anxiety, confusion, and nervousness that often turn into behavioural and emotional problems and a sense of helplessness (Iwaniec, Larkin & McSherry, 2007).

CURRENT STUDY

Taken together, by examining the existing literature on engineering resilience through various activities and experiences, we sought to identify if Resilience-based Programming heightened protective resilience factors in children and caregivers. We hypothesized that resilience-based programs would a) increase sense of security, b) boost sense of belonging, c) encourage use of strengths to face adversity, and c) enhance parental resilience (parenting programs only).

METHODOLOGY

Procedure

Under the umbrella of the CYRP, many diverse programs were available for children ages 6 to 12. Recruitment to the programs could be facilitated through referrals from child protection workers (for children who are involved in Family and Children's Services), or through the programs being open to the public for referral. Formal programs are those 10 weeks or more in length (*The Creative Space*, *Players Theater*, *Mindful Kids*, *Mountain Bike Madness*, *Family Centre Players* and *SMILES*). For caregivers, formal programs are *Mindful Caregivers*, and *Trusting Loving Connections*, while informal programs are drop-in programs, or *Family Fun Activity* days.

A mixed method approach was taken for the evaluation. Quantitative pre- and post-tests were voluntarily completed for all formal programs, and were typically completed on the first and last day of the program. All questionnaires were voluntarily filled out with no compensation. We also recruited children, caregivers, and facilitators to participate in semi-structured interviews. Length of interviews varied depending on respondents (facilitators: 1 hour in length; caregivers: 30 minutes in length; 15 minutes for TLC caregivers; children: 10 minutes in length). Facilitators voluntarily took part in interviews. Caregivers were compensated with $25, and children with a $10 gift card, except for the TLC program in which caregivers were compensated with $15 at time 3.

Sample

For the quantitative evaluation, there were 104 children ages 6-12 who completed the pre- and post-test questionnaires. 51% of children were females and 49% were males. There were 54 caregivers who took part in the pre- and post-test questionnaires for the parenting programs. Finally, 46 individuals (16 group facilitators; 19 caregivers; 10 children) took part in the qualitative interviews.

Measures

To assess children and youth's resiliency, participants were presented with 40 items measuring their developmental assets. Developmental assets are related to resilient behaviours: when youth score highly in developmental assets they are less likely to participate in risky behavior (Search Institute, 2011). The scale consists of 44 items divided into eight subscales. The subscales include *Use of Time* (four items), *Empowerment* (four items), *Boundaries and Expectations* (six items), *Positive Values* (six items), *Commitment to Learning* (five items), *Support* (six items), *Social Competencies* (five items), and *Positive Identity* (four items). These eight subscales can be separated into two categories: internal assets and external assets. Internal assets are assets that exist internally and are not dependent on external factors. External assets are all assets that exist outside of the self. Developmental assets are scored into four levels: *challenged*, *vulnerable* (low number of developmental assets), *adequate, and thriving* (high number of developmental assets). Ideally, we want to see a greater number of developmental assets after the program comes to an end.

External Assets	# of questions	Scoring Criteria			
Constructive use of Time	Four	Challenged (range 0-2)	Vulnerable (range 3-7)	Adequate (range 8-10)	Thriving (range 11-12)
Empowerment	Six	Challenged (range 0-4)	Vulnerable (range 5-10)	Adequate (range 11-16)	Thriving (range 17-18)
Boundaries & Expectations	Six	Challenged (range 0-4)	Vulnerable (range 5-10)	Adequate (range 11-16)	Thriving (range 17-18)
Support	Six	Challenged (range 0-4)	Vulnerable (range 5-10)	Adequate (range 11-16)	Thriving (range 17-18)
Internal Assets					
Positive Values	Six	Challenged (range 0-4)	Vulnerable (range 5-10)	Adequate (range 11-16)	Thriving (range 17-18)
Commitment to Learning	Five	Challenged (range 0-3)	Vulnerable (range 4-8)	Adequate (range 9-13)	Thriving (range 14-15)
Social Competencies	Five	Challenged (range 0-3)	Vulnerable (range 4-8)	Adequate (range 9-13)	Thriving (range 14-15)
Positive Identity	Four	Challenged (range 0-2)	Vulnerable (range 3-7)	Adequate (range 8-10)	Thriving (range 11-12)

Qualitative Interviews to measure sense of security, sense of belonging, use of strengths to endure adversity, and parental resilience, we used a semi-structured interview.

HYPOTHESIS 1: SENSE OF SECURITY

ATTACHMENT WITH DEPENDABLE ADULTS

FACILITATOR

"… [the program] encourages self-esteem in terms of them feeling good about themselves and realizing that we are all different people but this is a really neat quality of myself that I really love, when kids have done enough and have the time to pick something they really like from themselves…I think this group really tries to change that mentality in terms of focusing on strengths, focusing on the positive and all of those things. I think it contributes to increased self-esteem, increased resiliency, and increased community involvement. I think the more that we get kids into the communities the more they will decrease the challenges that they may have. Not saying they are taking the challenges away but I think that it gives them the opportunity to know that there is the help, the support for them regardless what they are encountering"
(Mini Me-to-We)

CAREGIVER

"Broadened my perspective toward parenting and helped me understand the impact that attachment makes on children during the "early years" and after"
(Trusting Loving Connections)

"My children took the programs [Creative Space, Mindful Caregivers & Kids and Music] because it was for children who are connected with Family and Children's Services. I knew that the teachers and people running the programs have a fair understanding of adoption, fostering, trauma, attachment and the behaviours that many of the kids display, and how they are affected by those issues"
(Creative Space)

CHILD

"In the beginning of the class I thought people will criticize me, but the facilitator told me I was not making mistakes, she said: 'it was fine,' and I felt good. I learned in the program that you can't always be perfect, and nobody can stop you from doing what you want."
(Creative Space)

Table 1. Pre-and post-test scores for Support using Developmental Assets

Program	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	82%	73%	Thriving
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	4.24	4.84	Parenting ability
Mini Me-to-We	74%	89%	Thriving
Music Academy	70%	75%	Thriving
Players Theatre	50%	88%	Thriving
SMILES	4.39	5.72[a]	Able to express yucky feelings
Strengthening Families	1.57	2*	Talking to parents about feelings
Trusting Loving Connections	5.63	5.94	Parenting ability

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

HYPOTHESIS 1:
SENSE OF SECURITY

SELF-ESTEEM

FACILITATOR

"[the girl] came in initially and didn't want to take part. But as the weeks went on she was excited. She wanted to be there, she wanted to be engaged, she wanted to try every single musical instrument, and she wanted people to listen to her perform."
(Music Academy)

"SMILES has an educational piece, but it's also so much about self-care. As soon as we talk about self-care and making yourself important I think it helps the kids understand that 'Yes, I have a parent with a mental illness but this is about me too and that can be hard on me'…It's OK. It is not something that I have done or something that my family member has done. I think it increases self-esteem, it helps them to feel better about themselves with mental illness…"
(SMILES)

CAREGIVER

"Last fall [at school] he was hitting a lot, and got very frustrated very quickly. We are working with a therapist for controlling issues from adoption. He is a big personality. There is not a lot of grey; there are black and white and he is always right. In the program, there is something he can do well. It is something that he enjoys. It is something that he can do a little bit more [he thought]: 'I can do something,' 'I can be good doing something,' 'something that I enjoy.' Very rewarding!"
(Music Academy)

"[My child] didn't feel confident about anything, she didn't want anyone to see her drawing. By the end of the program she was using that as an outlet. Her self-confidence is much better now. I mean she still has worries about what people think of her art but not as much as she used to."
(Creative Space)

CHILD

"[I felt] probably confident maybe some kind of nervous…I was afraid people don't like me…I made one of the drawings and everybody liked it. People said: 'Awesome!' 'Good job!' 'Nice!' It really made me feel confident."
(Creative Space)

Table 2. Pre-and post-test scores for Self-Esteem using Developmental Assets Positive Identity

Program	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	36%	64%[a]	Adequate
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	-	-	
Mini Me-to-We	17.07	19.20*	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
Music Academy	20%	80%***	Adequate
Players Theatre	25%	50%	Thriving
SMILES	6.84	8.21*	Ability to feel good about self.
Strengthening Families	-	-	
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

HYPOTHESIS 1: SENSE OF SECURITY

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

FACILITATOR

"At the beginning, they were all very strong personalities. They were stubborn in what they wanted, but by the end they were understanding that this is a group, that they were not the only person thinking: 'I can get what I want in this place.' So we have to compromise…interpersonal competency, showing empathy sensitivity, that definitively grows"
(Players Theater)

"…they realized they can have an impact on the world, in general they really add aid, can make changes in the world, can have an opinion on what they would like to have different in the world. I think the more that we do that the more it builds resilience by getting them out, by getting them the opportunity, by helping them to understand how big a role they can play in what they want to look like, also what they want in general to look like."
(Mini Me-to-We)

CAREGIVER

"I believe this program helps to enhance many social skills…I think he learned social skills, maybe a little bit about running a business and maybe he got other opinions on things from the other children and their ideas. I think he learned so many things."
(Junior Achievement)

"I think a lot of this program to help her realize it is okay to make mistakes. It is okay take a chance, but she is just afraid to take chances at school and get hurt. Before she was very quiet. Kids came to me and asked 'why is she so quiet?' Now she was going to birthday parties, she is talking to other kids."
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids)

CHILD

"[Other kids and I] kind of working together and helping them through it because there were a lot of people that didn't really want to answer, so I waited a bit, let them think and then I would raise my hand and help them remember and feel better."
(SMILES)

Table 3. Pre-and post-test scores for Social Competence using Developmental Assets

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	50%	77%[a]	Adequate
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	-	-	
Mini Me-to-We	63%	89%[a]	Thriving
Music Academy	25%	70%*	Adequate
Players Theatre	25%	0%	Challenged
SMILES	6.63	7.68**	Ability to listen to others
Strengthening Families	1.71	2.14*	Supportive of family
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

BELONGING WITH PEERS

HYPOTHESIS 2:
BOOST SENSE OF BELONGING

FACILITATOR

"I think the thing that was most beneficial [of the program] was the peer support. I think it does de-stress the kids. I think it does reduce some of the anxiety and fear…"
(SMILES)

"…All of them were friends at the end. At the beginning, I had a lot more of those tantrums, setting themselves in the corner, and at later classes I didn't baby this much when they did that and other students actually went over and brought that person back into the group. The others comforted that person and said 'It's okay, just do it like this.' They come up with alternative solutions or compromises they play and bring the students back in. They learned how to work as a team, as a group, and take care of the person that was feeling, like, left out…they learned how to take care of each other, bring people back into the circle."
(Players Theater)

CAREGIVER

"I think the programs give the strength of feeling confident in themselves, also to see others children's behaviours. They are not alone…a simple little thing is that I know a couple of the kids. They go there and some of them have some of the same issues…it doesn't make me feel awkward. These other kids have the same things. We see how they handle and we handle that way too."
(Creative Space)

"[His favorite part of the program] was probably the meals, making the friendships…he struggles with making friends but this program helped him. He knew the other kids. I saw his ability to make friends come out."
(Junior Achievement)

CHILD

"I taught my friends something I was learning in the program."
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids)

"I had a lot of fun. There was a game each day of something called mindfulness. That was fun, and I met a ton of new friends. Almost everybody there was my friend."
(SMILES)

Table 4. Pre-and post-test scores for Social Competence using Developmental Assets

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	50%	77%[a]	Adequate
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	-	-	
Mini Me-to-We	63%	89%[a]	Thriving
Music Academy	25%	70%*	Adequate
Players Theatre	25%	0%	Challenged
SMILES	6.63	7.68**	Ability to listen to others
Strengthening Families	1.71	2.14*	Supportive of family
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

HYPOTHESIS 2:
BOOST SENSE OF BELONGING

BELONGING WITH ADULTS

FACILITATOR

"I think this program intends to support them [the children] by the nature of it. We bring them to the same room every day, they have the same facilitators, we have snacks, we have lunch for them, we have the curriculum. We really try to slow down and really empathize with their mentality and their feelings and really help them to understand. You know this is a group for them. We really want them to feel safe. We start talking about confidentiality and what confidentiality means and talk about respect and how do you respect your peers and really create that environment of safety because we know that it is a heavy group to talk about mental illness."
(SMILES)

CAREGIVER

"[Our kid improved communication with us] because he tells us about things he is proud of, something that he enjoys, something that he wants to tell us about."
(Music Academy)

"…we had these little ones talking about this house on their street and the person always decorated for Halloween, but he had gotten older and couldn't decorate for Halloween anymore and the kids all decorated. 'We want to decorate your house!'…so they were out and decorating and helping a neighbour decorate their house so they enjoyed that. Over Halloween that was really neat… to see these kids coming and saying they wanted to help…"
(Mini Me-to-We)

CHILD

"[In the program] I made new friends, I liked the teachers. I had fun, I smiled a lot, I felt other kids liked me. We respect each other and became friends…I helped the teachers…one of them (teacher) was my old teacher. I learned everything from her…"
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids)

Table 5. Pre- and post-test scores for Support using Developmental Assets

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	82%	73%	Thriving
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	4.24	4.84	Parenting ability
Mini Me-to-We	74%	89%	Thriving
Music Academy	70%	75%	Thriving
Players Theatre	50%	88%	Thriving
SMILES	4.39	5.72[a]	Able to express yucky feelings
Strengthening Families	1.57	2*	Talking to parents about feelings
Trusting Loving Connections	5.63	5.94	Parenting ability

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

HYPOTHESIS 2:
BOOST SENSE OF BELONGING

BELONGING WITH COMMUNITY

FACILITATOR

"Everybody is counting on them. Consciously or unconsciously they know someone is relying on them to play their part and typically speaking this encourages more practice, encourages a greater commitment at home in order to develop some skills because they know that there are other people…it is kind like a hockey team, a sport team, a soccer team…"
(Music Academy)

"I remember we had hot water. They wanted to prepare tea and give it to everyone. They wanted to take care of one another."
(Creative Space)

CAREGIVER

"Having safe programs where the child can go also benefits the caregivers, foster families, adopted families because you have a break, knowing that your child is safe…"
(SMILES)

"I feel very confident and comfortable because of the kids going into these programs. They have similarities and commonalities with my kids. I want my kids to be around them. They all belong to the same circle."
(Creative Space)

CHILD

"When I was in the group, I gained a sense of responsibility and loyalty."
(Junior Achievement)

Table 6. Pre- and post-test scores for Boundaries and Expectations using Developmental Assets

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	73%	77%	Thriving
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	-	-	
Mini Me-to-We	68%	72%	Thriving
Music Academy	50%	80%	Thriving
Players Theatre	13%	25%	Adequate
SMILES	-	-	
Strengthening Families	1.71	2*	Has rules and follows them
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

RESULTS

HYPOTHESIS 3:
USE OF STRENGTHS TO FACE ADVERSITIES

PERSONAL POWER

FACILITATOR

"Each week, we introduce different tools to slow down and listen to the body and different techniques that may have an effect on a busy mind or an active body. We did have a parent that came and said the child in her home had used a new skill during something that was difficult for her."
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids)

"They wanted to be good, they wanted to rehearse, they wanted to not mess up the line. Building sort of a pride in their own work…At the beginning one kid just did not want to participate. 'I don't want to participate,' 'I don't want to do a solo,' and by the end he was in a place where he wanted to and was participating."
(Players Theater)

CAREGIVER

"She now uses drawing as a way of calming herself. If she feels angry or agitated or scared she will grab a note pad or ask me for a paper and pencil and she starts to draw and then she changes her mood, she calms down. Somehow drawing calms her."
(Creative Space)

"[Our kid improved communication with us] because he tells us about things he is proud of, something that he enjoys, something that he wants to tell us about, whereas before he didn't."
(Music Academy)

CHILD

"I think other kids saw me as a big sister and laid back. So as a big sister, I liked the little kids, it was like awesome they were learning new instruments. I helped them to learn."
(Music Academy)

Table 7. Pre- and post-test scores for Empowerment using Developmental Assets

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	55%	77%	Adequate
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	2.67	2.40	Mindfulness
Mini Me-to-We	21%	0%	Challenged
Music Academy	50%	92%	Adequate
Players Theatre	25%	50%	Adequate
SMILES	6.32	6.95	Ability to problem solve
Strengthening Families	-	-	
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

HYPOTHESIS 3: USE OF STRENGTHS TO FACE ADVERSITIES

SELF-EFFICACY

FACILITATOR

"…because there are so many messes and not truths or there are personal ideas that kids might believe. For example, they sometimes conclude they have done something to cause their parent to sleep the whole day, because the parent doesn't want to get up. I think those beliefs have a direct repercussion on their self-esteem and how they see themselves as a person. As soon as they can dispose of those messes, as soon they get a better understanding of the mental illness and how it is affecting their parent, hopefully they are able to find that balance between 'I know about my parent but still feel good about myself and take care of myself and know that I can't change what my parent is experiencing.'"
(SMILES)

CAREGIVER

"I know she can do it [to endure adversity], I've seen her display resilience in everything that she's done and I've seen her grow as a person…she has a good caring capacity, she has the strength and ability to be herself and stand up for herself…at school she is willing to put forth the effort to get things done, to be a highly participating person in class. She likes to show the teacher that she can be relied upon, so she's got her everyday skills that I noticed she can work with. Every day she has the ability to make the people around her happy."
(SMILES)

"I should say the music program…at first she didn't have that self-confidence but toward the end she was getting more self-confident, and all of them were playing the guitar…she played!"
(Music Academy)

CHILD

"I learned how to make self-portraits and how to sketch people's faces."
(Creative Space)

Table 8. Pre- and post-test scores for Positive Values using Developmental Assets

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	9%	14%	Adequate
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	-	-	
Mini Me-to-We	74%	94%	Thriving
Music Academy	90%	75%	Thriving
Players Theatre	0%	25%	Adequate
SMILES	8.58	9.16^a	Ability to have fun
Strengthening Families	1.57	2*	Enjoy my time with my family
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

^{a} p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p <.001

HYPOTHESIS 3:
USE OF STRENGTHS TO FACE ADVERSITIES

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

FACILITATOR

"…So I see kids who are very shy in the beginning to open up. The main focus is to paint murals and ceramics. Using murals is as a technique in which you see how they become part of the group interacting with each other to paint a mural. I reinforce that part because the mural will belong to all of us, so we need to know each other and what part each one of us is going to do. Some kids will want drawing. Some of them will do a really good job cleaning. To develop the creation of a mural they need to know they are good at developing something. I say 'This work is huge, we need you, take this art piece.' They start feeling overwhelmed: 'Are we going to do something like that?' So, during the process of how to do it they get the confidence of thinking 'Yes, we can do it!' I think that is the highlight for me as a teacher. It is a very slow process. They learn to be patient, to be calm, to be careful. There are lots of life skills involved in the process of painting a mural."
(Creative Space)

CAREGIVER

"Lots of times I'm busy and don't remember and he was always telling me 'don't forget tonight I have Junior Achievement.' He always remembered."
(Junior Achievement)

"She was going through loss. She was stuck in the anger. That anger was there almost a year but we needed her to move on and to accept the reality. After taking this program she takes it upon herself to get her tools. She actually got a box and she collected all the tools and that was when resilience was coming in. She understands this is not a good feeling to have and I am responsible for my own feelings."
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids)

CHILD

"I liked the kids but they were not my age…I liked the teacher…I learned new things. I didn't really expect for me to learn ukulele and activities we did around ukulele. I was very happy… other kids liked me…I did help a few people with the ukulele. I learned to play ukulele and riptide cords…I said to my friends 'Hey guys! I learned riptide cords on piano, I want to show you!'
(Music Academy Program)

Table 9. Pre- and post-test scores for Constructive Use of Time using Developmental Assets

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	48%	86%*	Vulnerable
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	-	-	
Mini Me-to-We	47%	56%	Thriving
Music Academy	30%	5%*	Vulnerable
Players Theatre	25%	50%	Adequate
SMILES	7.47	8.79*	Ability to be creative
Strengthening Families	1.43	1.57*	Does things with family
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

HYPOTHESIS 3:
USE OF STRENGTHS TO
FACE ADVERSITIES

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

FACILITATOR

"They wanted to be good, they wanted to rehearse, they wanted to not mess up the line or things like that. Building sort of a pride in their own work…at the beginning one kid just strove to not participate. 'I don't want to participate', 'I don't want to do a solo,' and by the end he was in the place and he was participating."
(Players Theatre)

CAREGIVER

"The program is good because he is not going to learn the instruments right away. For him it was a wall. He had to get over the wall. He is learning that he has to follow instructions; he can learn [the instrument] but it is going to take long term focus for him to do that."
(Music Academy)

"When we started the program my child was dealing with a lot of anger. Negative thoughts all the time. At first after the program she was mad that the tools didn't change her mood quickly. But with practice she has an easier time controlling her angry moods. She uses the tools given when in desperate need."
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids)

CHILD

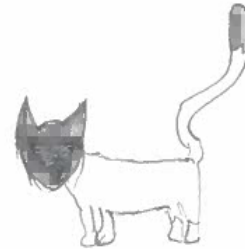"I feel like a cool cat because I was proud of what I learned."
(Music Academy)

Table 10. Pre- and post-test scores for Commitment to Learning using Developmental Assets

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	9%	0%	Challenged
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	-	-	
Mini Me-to-We	16%	22%	Adequate
Music Academy	40%	75%*	Adequate
Players Theatre	25%	0%	Challenged
SMILES	4.05	7.00	Understanding mental illness
Strengthening Families	-	-	
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	Parenting ability

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

RESULTS

HYPOTHESIS 3: USE OF STRENGTHS TO FACE ADVERSITIES

POSITIVE VALUES

FACILITATOR

"For the most part I would say most of the children involved did learn how to respect the rules pretty quickly and during the sessions. The sessions are running for eight weeks, so usually by the third week they are aware of some of the crown rules in terms of how to interact with the instruments. I can ask…any of the students what the most important part of being a musician is and they say 'Listening!' What do we need before we start playing in a room? They say 'Silence!' I think creating those sorts of boundaries is very useful and the most exciting is they know the answers of these two questions so they know what is required. Lots of them help me clean up after the session, help me to move things around to two different rooms we are using…each group has been able to adapt and learn how to follow the rules and work collectively as a team."
(Music Academy)

"Working hard, being respectful – we are all different. I always say that working hard gives you something. Respect each other, respect the material, respect people's space. Respect differences because we are different in the class a lot."
(Creative Space)

CAREGIVER

"I like [of the program] that it was non-judgmental. It is finally a course that didn't judge you, didn't tell you what to do, it was all about what you wanted to do…and my daughter, she feels there are other kids going through the same issues. She knows she is not alone. She likes the group that we go to, and other kids like her actually helped her."
(Mindfulness for Caregivers & Kids)

"He is not going to learn of the instruments right away. For him that's an adversity. He is learning that he has to follow instructions. He can learn but it is long term focus that will get him there. The program helps him learn long term focus."
(Music Academy)

CHILD

"When I was in the group, I gained a sense of responsibility and loyalty."
(Junior Achievement)

Table 11. Pre- and post- test scores for Positive Values using Developmental Assets

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Creative Space	9%	14%	Adequate
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	-	-	
Mini Me-to-We	74%	94%	Thriving
Music Academy	90%	75%	Thriving
Players Theatre	0%	25%	Adequate
SMILES	8.58	9.16[a]	Ability to have fun
Strengthening Families	1.57	2*	Enjoy my time with my family
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

RESULTS

HYPOTHESIS 4:
FOSTERING PARENTAL RESILIENCE

SENSE OF SECURITY

FACILITATOR

"In the group for women's crisis we just ran in session # 1. There was a little girl who would come and go away, never checking back, not really looking for that engagement with mom. Through the course of the group and discussions around how have you been present for your child if you are in your cell phone and how does it impact your interaction, mom was able to learn about herself: 'I have been sitting with my child but I'm not really available to her, I'm not engaging, I'm shut down emotionally, I have been on my phone.' By the end of those four sessions, there was a remarkable change because mom was cueing and her daughter started cueing her back. You really see that circle of security. Her child may go out but bring back that toy to mom who was delighted her. That wasn't happening before. Every time it was an incredible change for this woman."
(Trusting Loving Connections)

"One of the foster parents was saying that when she came home, she flicks on the radio or TV and still she had all this noise and she had realized that the kids were yelling, and she was like: 'How was your day?! Bla, bla, bla!'After a couple of sessions here, she went home, turned on the TV and realized how loud it was and turned it off. And then when the kids came in, normally yelling, she said: 'How was your day?' 'It was terrible' 'Oh!' And she heard that…she had learned to turn off the TV and the radio. She turned down that background, the house was quieter and she could hear more clearly…she wasn't hearing before."
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids)

CAREGIVER

"I look at the way all of my children act differently now. I support them, give them reassurance and apologize when I am wrong to show everyone makes mistakes. This program has impacted my parenting in a very positive way."
(Trusting Loving Connections)

"Mindfulness helped me be able to assist my child with emotional control."
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids)

Table 12. Pre- and post- test scores for Sense of Security Using Proxy Variables

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	4.87	4.84	Perception of child's behaviour
Strengthening Families	1.5	2***	Being supportive of child
Trusting Loving Connections	4.87	5.44*	Perception of child's behaviour

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

HYPOTHESIS 4:
FOSTERING PARENTAL RESILIENCE

SENSE OF BELONGING

FACILITATOR

"[A young lady who] really came from a place of being in adaptive despair not in a good place in her life, accepting help from the agency and participating in the program. I was able to see the growth and changes in her, her daughter, and their relationship."
(Trusting Loving Connections)

"[The relationship between peers] is amazing. They come in as a group of strangers and they leave as friends. Talking about resiliency and support network – they often don't have a lot of support. They need this new support, which is a really neat thing."
(Trusting Loving Connections)

CAREGIVER

"At the end of the day is what you guys want: to bring these tools home and use them…I think it also promotes the communality…because the children know what they are doing, we know what the children are doing, and see each other do it. A lot of times children work from example, so they see their parents doing that and having found that, they may be more encouraged."
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids)

"I enjoyed the interaction piece and being able to discuss with other moms that have similar problems and similar upbringings. We just need to know how to do this and it really helps being in that group to talk about it."
(Trusting Loving Connections)

Table 13. Pre- and post- test scores for Sense of Belonging Using Proxy Variables

Programs	Pre	Post	Category
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	-	-	
Strengthening Families	1.25	2.00***	Enjoy my time with my child
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

HYPOTHESIS 4: FOSTERING PARENTAL RESILIENCE

USE OF STRENGTHS TO FACE ADVERSITY

FACILITATOR

"[Caregivers often have] lots of trauma, lots of child abuse. Lots of them have been in Family and Children's Services in care as children, some of them grew up in care, parenting abuse, domestic violence, in this group you really get that whole variety of the spectrum of different things impacting people. This group came here because either they have a child in care or the child is at risk of coming into care, so we are really getting people [when they are wondering] 'Which way am I going to go to build the capacity to be that better parent if my child is coming into care or my child is in care? How can I build those skills that help me to be able to return my child into my care?"
(Trusting Loving Connections)

"I think people have a good level of commitment toward the activities. We have a lot of families fulfilling the attendance…In terms of group we have really committed participants. I think we are meeting a need they have, so that is the draw. That is why they come back every week. It's quite important for them to attend."
(Trusting Loving Connections)

CAREGIVER

"It was something new for me to learn new techniques. At that moment she [her daughter] was going through a hard time and it gave me some tools to try and help with her – how to calm down and not feel so upset…the tools of the program were pretty good."
(Mindful Caregivers & Kids for Caregivers)

Table 14. Pre- and post- test scores for Use of Strengths to Face Adversity Using Proxy Variables

Program	Pre	Post	Category
Mindful Caregivers & Kids	3.61	3.52	Mindfulness
Strengthening Families	1.75	2*	Says nice things to my child
Trusting Loving Connections	-	-	

[a] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

DISCUSSION

Given the conditions and vulnerabilities children in the child welfare population face (Bruskas, 2008; and Palusci, 2011), Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region implemented the CYRP aiming to promote resilience within children and their families. Based on authors who have studied resilience (Bonanno, 2004; Cooper, et al., 2001; Felce, et al., 1992; Grotberg, 1995; Grotberg, 2007, Grant, et al., 1989; Johnson, 2004; Lee, et al., 2009; Luthar, et al., 2000; Masten, 2011; Pisapia, et al., 1994; and Vanistendael, 1995) and taking into account the 40 Developmental Assets (Research Institute, 2011), the CYRP generated recreational and psycho-educational formal and informal activities to grow resiliency in children. The CYRP mixed method approach to program evaluation intended to identify if the resilience-based programs actually engineered resilience factors in children and caregivers. Specifically, we targeted the following resilience factors: sense of security, sense of belonging, use of strengths to face adversity, and parental resilience.

Engineering resilience is a multifaceted and dynamic process that promotes the ability to navigate psychologically, socially, and physically to restore emotional equilibrium and respond to challenges in a positive way. Through engineering resilience, it is also possible to help children discover meaning in life, have some control over life events, and have a healthy self-esteem (Estes et al., 2004; Grotberg, 1995; Grotberg, 2007, Nash & Bowen, 1999; and Vanistendael).

Building Sense of Security

The concept of sense of security is based on authors who stated that sense of security is constituted by feelings of confidence and safety alongside of feelings of being valued and supported by family, peers and community. The 40 Developmental Assets states that children have a sense of security when their families provide love, support, and positive communication. Sense of security is acquired due to attachment with dependable people, self-esteem, and social competence (Brown, et al., 1990; Dodge, et al., 1986; Dutton, et al., 1994, Luthar et al., 2000; Mester, 2008; Research Institute, 2011).

Helping children build a sense of security is a significant opportunity for them to be able to grow healthy and have happy relationships in their lives (Grotberg, 1995; and Grotberg, 2007). Children with a sense of security tend to be surrounded by individuals who care about them, which boosts their confidence, and enables them to become successful adults who are capable of exploring their interests and overcoming fears of facing adversity.

Building from the idea that caregivers are able to nurture resilience, strengths, and resources in children to overcome emotional and behavioural problems (Lee, et al., 2009), it is essential to support caregivers to actualize their circle of security with their children to ensure they receive secure resources from their parents (Cooper, et al., 2004). Encouraging, and being non-judgmental when correcting a child's behaviour, gives space for children to understand that making mistakes is acceptable and that they can try again with support from their caregivers (Cooper, et al., 2004; Iwaniec, et al., 2007; & Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). In fact, research has shown the importance of using an anti-oppressive approach, that is non-authoritarian or

based on power in the relationship between parents and children or between group leaders and children, but based on a positive attachment between these types of dyads actually encouraged children to accomplish new goals (Ruch, 2014). The CYRP exposed the heightened awareness children had to failure, and the possibility to develop confidence and willingness to participate in group activities when facilitators reassure their skills and strengths instead of remarking on deficiencies.

Children and youth who have sense of security are able to feel more comfortable challenging their limitations to reach their full potential within the community. This challenging of self enables children to be more productive and not only receive benefits from the community, but also able to give back to the community (Cameron and Birnie-Lefcovitch, 2000; Campbell, Cohn, & Meyers, 1995). It is essential that child welfare agencies offer programs that foster a sense of security in children and youth

Boosting Sense of Belonging

The concept of sense of belonging with peers, family, and the community was defined as the personal involvement in a system. In that way, the person feels to be an integral part of the environment (Hagerty, et al., 1992). Resilience includes the presence of supportive friends and interests in activities. Authors assert children who have resilience have frequent participation in youth groups, camps and other social functions (Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004).

Boosting sense of belonging and acceptance allows youth to increase their self-esteem and confidence as it increases the likelihood they have people in their lives that think highly of them (Vanistendael, 1995). Children and youth involved in child welfare may suffer from low self-esteem and social anxiety. Although anxiety and sad feelings are a normal part of life, research suggests that children with high levels of anxiety reported lower quality of life and low self-esteem (Martinsen et al., 2016). In our study, we found that most children reported high levels of social anxiety, but as a result of interactions with the resilience-based programs, children were given the opportunity to lower their anxiety and increase their self-esteem.

Communities need to provide spaces for children and youth to be able to create healthy connections and relationships within the community. Communities will be healthier if communities work at creating space for children and youth to participate in activities that deter them from being involved in crime or drug use (Coulton, Korbin & Su, 1999). Rules and boundaries are a critical part in building sense of belonging in children and youth (Kids Matter, n.d; Vanistendad, 1995). Adequate rules and boundaries will allow children and to increase their sense of belonging and decrease their anxiety. This process of increasing sense of belonging in children and youth in turn encourages them to make healthy choices and have supports when needed. Again, the importance a non-authoritarian but authoritative relationship amongst group leaders and children is highlighted in the literature as helping children accept rules and boundaries, that then promote self-confidence, self-esteem and interest for learning (Omer, Steinmetz, Carthy, &Von Schlippe, 2013; Ruch, 2014). Communities have a responsibility in ensuring they reach out to children and youth and offer them programs that are engaging and

allow them to create new skills or gain awareness of the ones they already have to create a sense of belonging in their community.

It is essential that child welfare agencies play a role in providing a wide variety of programs that children and youth can choose from in to provide them with the opportunities they need to create positive experiences in their lives. It is important for the child protection workers to not only encourage, but facilitate this connection for those interested, and ensure they check-in on how the program is going for them. The greater understanding that frontline workers have of the impact of resilience-based programs, the better equipped they will be to facilitate children and youth development in programs.

Use of Strengths to Face Adversity

Experimentation, improvisation, and perseverance are some strategies to face adversity and overcome difficulties and obstacles (Pasick, 2014). Aspects such as personal power, self-efficacy, positive identity, constructive use of time, positive values and commitment to learning can be considered tools that children and youth have to help them overcome adversities.

Sengs (1997) pinpoints the three principles of resilience: "I have, I am, and I can." In the author's opinion, those principles crystalize the use of strengths to face adversity. Grotberg (2007) explains those principles:

- I HAVE: This encompasses supports around the child or youth. These are individuals who support the child in learning and achieving goals, and who love them unconditionally.

- I AM: This focuses on inner strengths within the child or youth. These children are likeable by others, they respect themselves, and take responsibility for their actions.

- I CAN: This focuses on the child's or youth's ability to solve problems and seek support from others when needed. Basically, these children and youth find ways to solve problems.

When a child agrees with the "I have," "I am," and "I can" statement their ability to effectively cope with challenges is increased. They know they not only have a support network to help them overcome problems, but they also feel equipped to be able to tackle adversities (Grotberg, 1995). Youth who feel supported at home, school and in the community are able to gain a sense of independence and self-efficacy. A child who feels more responsible for his or her future is able to set realistic goals that reinforce their control over their future (Brown, et al., 1990; Dodge, et al., 1986; Dutton, et al., 1994, Luthar et al, 2000; Mester, 2008; Research Institute, 2011). It is essential for children and youth to have a support network to fall back on when their goals are not met or when they feel as though they may have failed (Zhao et al., 2015). Children and youth who can release negative emotions with peers, and cope in a healthy way, have strengths to endure adversity, they are better equipped to cope with difficulties in their lives.

As a child welfare agency, helping create or bolstering the support networks of children and youth is a win-win situation for both parties. Helping to nourish the strengths children and youth have essentially creates a bubble of support around the child to persevere through adversities. This can be achieved by offering children and youth informal and formal programming to nurture their strengths. Another example is by accepting children and youth as volunteers, as this encourages their sense of responsibility. The more children and youth feel that they are equipped to face adversities with their own repertoire of strengths, the better life trajectory they may have; in turn, the more proactive they may become in looking for solutions for adversities their communities may face.

Enhancing Parental Resilience

Engineering resilience in children also embraces the importance of building parental resilience defined as the capacity of parents to deliver competent, quality parenting to children despite adverse circumstances (Gavidia-Payne, et al., 2015). The US Department of Health & Human Services' Child Welfare Information Gateway, cited on The Institute for Family Violence Studies (n.d.) indicates that emotionally resilient parents have a positive attitude, creatively solve problems, effectively address challenges, and are less likely to direct anger and frustration at their children. In addition, these parents are aware of their own challenges. For example, those who grew up with inappropriate parenting accept help and/or counselling when needed.

Therefore, it is essential that a parent is able to support themselves physically and psychologically to effectively parent a child and nourish their development. If the parent is not able to understand their own trauma or limitations, their child is at risk of developing the same difficulties and less likely to manage their own emotions or behaviours (Casanueva, & Martin, 2007). Parents who are able to learn about their own trauma and limitations are more fit to be able to succeed and care for their children effectively. This will encourage the development of healthier families and create a home environment that is healthy. Having parent-focused, resilience-based programs that promote parental nurturing response and help parents understand patterns of hyper activation behaviours are valuable to be able to teach parents emotional regulation skills (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). Parents that are able to feel more confident as parents will rely on skills they have learned and will seek out help if they are unsure can model these behaviours for their children and provide them similar supports.

Providing programs that increase attachment and provide ways to regulate parents' emotions is essential to family functioning and need to be part of every family service plan including those children living in foster care (Hambrick, Oppenheim-Weller, N'zi & Taussig, 2016). Healthy parenting typically equates to healthy children, which translates into healthy families that are able to contribute to ending the cycle of poverty and violence. Less poverty and violence in a community is indicative of a healthy community (Feindler, Rathus & Silver, 2003).

Limitations & Future Research

Engineering resilience and promoting change in children were fostered by the CYRP, yet the project is not without limitations. First, qualitative interviews were not completed for all

programs. Some voices from programs are more pronounced than others. Second, the 40 Developmental Assets Questionnaire (Research Institute, 2011) used across various programs is cumbersome, with 44 items, created fatigue in answering questions for children between the ages of 6 to 12. Further, the 40 Developmental Assets Questionnaire (Research Institute, 2011) did not necessarily highlight the constructs the programs targeted. In other words, quantitatively, more work needs to be done to hone in on the constructs the programs are targeting. Future research could explore expanding the resilience-based programming to other populations outside of child welfare. Additionally, continuing to take a mixed-method approach in evaluation would ensure that the constructs and changes occurring for children, youth, and families are captured, either verbally or in numbers.

Conclusion

The CYRP appears to be a powerful tool to engineer resilience in children and youth. The project covers essential areas of resilience, making it paramount that we continue to deliver resilience-based programs. Results suggest evidence for positive effects on children, youth, and families. The resilience-based programs are helping children to better restore emotional equilibrium, social competence and attachment with dependable people. At the same time, they expand a sense of belonging with peers, community, family, and adults. The ability to use strengths that these programs clearly foster contributes to boosting self-esteem and heightening the ability to deal with life challenges.

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