

How Community-Based Organizations Can Incorporate and Utilize Critical and Creative Thinking Processes to Develop and Support Resiliency in Adolescents

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“The way we name ourselves colors the way we live. . . We must be careful how we name ourselves.”
(Wayne Muller, *How Then Should we Live*)

Over the course of my graduate work in the *Critical and Creative Thinking Program*, I have become extremely interested in the idea of resiliency in learners/thinkers. I have always wondered what sustains those who strive to be original, innovative and different from the norm. What allows these individuals to persevere in the face of obstacles or adversity? How does this resiliency develop, and why are some individuals more resilient than others? This idea of resiliency has not only struck a cord with me personally, as I wonder about my own resilient core and my ability to strengthen it, but also through the work that I do with young people. Traditionally, the term resiliency has been mainly connected with the idea of “at risk” or “high risk” youth, but I believe that this interpretation is much too narrow. Resiliency is an innate ability that must be supported and encouraged in all learners and thinkers in order to support the ability to meet the challenges that all individuals will face in their lives.

Resiliency, therefore, must be supported in all learners and thinkers, and this support must be intentional and reinforced throughout the learning process. This supportive process must be especially present when working with adolescents, through many moments during this fragile developmental stage, who do not have the support they need to deal with life’s challenges. The development of young people must include processes that allow them, as learners and thinkers, to be inquirers that are empowered to be their own guides on the path of their own learning. The critical and creative processes must be utilized in an interdisciplinary approach so as to create a seamless transition from who they are as learners and thinkers, and how they can use their higher-ordered thought process to develop beyond the classroom or the community-based program. The building of creative and critical thought is essential in developing learners/thinkers as individuals. They must learn the importance of risk-taking and also the importance of “active,” open-mindedness. These are important skills in molding and encouraging young minds to strengthen who they are and how they cope with obstacles and adversity that they will certainly face in their lives. Therefore, it is important for community-based organizations (CBOs) and youth development professionals to utilize tools that will allow them to engage and support their young people in building their resilient cores and developing who they are as thinkers, creators and risk takers. It is this idea of resiliency building through the tools of the critical and creative processes that I am exploring and developing over the course of my research and this paper.

What is Resiliency?

Resiliency is a process of change. It is the ability to face and overcome an obstacle and emerge as a stronger individual. Developing resiliency is a process that takes time, must utilize perspective-building and it must be supported in an environment that encourages individual growth and reflection. Historically, however, resiliency had been studied through a “problem-focused” approach. As Bonnie Bernard, M.S.W., Senior Associate, School and Community Health Research, Oakland, CA (1991) states, resiliency research was developed by looking at risk factors of specific diseases. “These studies have been retrospective in design, that is, they do a onetime historical assessment of adults with

these existing, identified problems” (Bernard, 1991, p.1). In my review of the literature, the study and evaluation of resiliency in individuals typically did not take into account how and when resiliency was developed and/or utilized. The study of resiliency focused on assessments of patients, typically adults, who were involved with “onetime” evaluations, not longitudinal studies. Furthermore, this research mainly examined patients with existing disorders. Resiliency studies, therefore, were filled with the assessments of risk factors due to existing disorders, sicknesses and/or socioeconomic status. This problem-focused perspective, as Bonnie Bernard states, perpetuates a perspective of continuous, negative outcomes.

However, over the course of the past 30 years, the focus of resiliency as risk-based or as a preventative approach has experienced a shift in thinking. With the inclusion of the first longitudinal studies by researchers such as Emmy Werner, Ruth Smith (Henderson, Bernard, Sharp-Light, 1999, pp. 5-9), and Norman Garmezy and Michael Rutter (Davis, 1999, pp. 1-4), researchers began looking at resiliency in younger children and developed their studies and evaluations as they continued to follow and study these young people into adulthood. In contrast to the previous negative view of those considered “high risk,” resiliency studies have moved from a preventative arena to a more “protective” process. The focus on resiliency-building is not solely to help individuals overcome specific challenges in their lives, it is however, an opportunity to develop and encourage innate abilities that allows individuals to face vulnerabilities and bounce back through a process that can grow and change with them. Bernard stresses resiliency-building through a proactive approach, through examining the traits of a resilient young person and the protective factors that must be present within the family, the school and the community (pp.8-23). My central question then, is how can tools such as critical and creative thinking strategies be utilized in order to create an environment that encourages and supports resiliency-building in young people? If we are to help to develop “whole,” resilient young people, what roles must professionals play within their specific arenas of youth development? Furthermore, what roles should community-based organizations play within the development of the resilient young person?

In the review of the literature, it became very clear that the process of developing resiliency in young people should begin with the development of skills and dispositions that include higher-ordered thinking and transference. Such knowledge-building should include learning, not only for immediate comprehension-building, but also learning for meaning and understanding that transcends the moment. Learning through transcendence should be an integral component of the critical and creative processes. Although many researchers look to critical and creative thinking as a product of the resilient person (i.e. are they flexible, problem-solvers, aware of complexities, weighing alternatives, innovative, original, open-minded, able to move beyond the norms?), these thinking strategies can and should be utilized as tools in order to produce or strengthen the outcomes that are then measured as resiliency.

In utilizing critical and creative thinking processes as strategies for authentic learning, young people must be immersed in environments that offer and support learning and thinking that goes beyond the classroom, the individual and the community. In order for this to occur, those schools, organizations and agencies, must offer young people

opportunities to think beyond themselves. Dispositional thought must be encouraged in all areas of thinking and living. For the sake of this research and also my own interest and work, I am focusing on the work of community-based organizations (CBOs), and highlight the work that they can offer that can compliment the work of other organizations and learning environments around resiliency.

How Does Resiliency Manifest Itself?

“The world breaks everyone, and afterward some are strong at the broken places.”
(Ernest Hemingway)

When we think about resiliency we automatically think of a strong individual who can face any challenge and be victorious, however this is typically not the case. Also, when thinking about those young people who have been labeled “at-risk” or “high-risk,” we normally label them as not being resilient or without the capacity for resiliency. As researcher, Bonnie Bernard states, that although the idea of resiliency-building is important in young people who are considered “high-risk” due to socio-economic status, families dealing with mental illness, criminality and also drug and alcohol abuse, the percentage of young people repeating the patterns of their family, in their adult lives are low. Although a certain percentage of “high-risk” children developed problems, a higher percentage did not; “while one out of four children of alcoholic parents develops alcohol problems, three out of four do not” (Bernard, 1991, p.3). Furthermore, researchers such as Norman Garmezy, who was a pioneer in the research of children who were viewed as “high risk” (i.e. born into poverty, living in war-torn areas, parents were mentally ill, and/or parents were abusers or addicts), found that “50% to 70% of them somehow manage to develop significant competencies and grow up to lead successful lives as adults with strong abilities to love and to work.” (Davis, 1999, p.2). Therefore, my questions are, what is it to be resilient and how does one develop resiliency?

Resiliency, by nature, is a fluid, ever-changing component of who we are. To be resilient thinkers and learners, individuals must build dispositions that allow them to face life-long adversity with a mental flexibility that also allows them to see through adversity. Resiliency is not static, nor does it remain the same throughout our lives. Resiliency ebbs and flows throughout our lives; some times we may remain strong, at other moments we may give in to our vulnerabilities. What matters is how we return to our resilient cores and how we decide to use those challenging times as tools. As Werner and Smith state, resiliency offers individuals, “self-righting” capacities (Duffy, 1999, p.3). In order to persevere, there are specific capacities that “appear to transcend ethnic, social class, geographical and historical boundaries” (Henderson, Bernard, Sharp-Light, 1999, p.7). These self-righting capacities are the keys to our resilient natures and also integral mechanisms for human development.

Although “we are all born with innate resiliency,” (Henderson, Bernard, Sharp-Light, 1999, p.5), in order for it to develop, it must be nurtured in an environment that understands how and why the individual and the process are integral components of each other’s growth. In Davis’s research, Michael Rutter’s work is highlighted, stating that although resiliency is an innate part of who we are, “resilience may reside in the social

context as much as in the individual.” (Davis, 1999, p.3). Therefore, in order for young people to build their resiliency and prosper, protective factors must include support from their families, schools and communities. In each of these areas, these individuals must be given opportunities to develop and practice behaviors that allow them to not only build competencies, including social competence, problem-solving, autonomy and a sense of purpose and future, but also dispositional thought that they can access beyond the classroom, enrichment programs or the confines of the family unit.

Therefore, when offered the supportive environments necessary for not only academic, but also human (socio-emotional) development, the resilient individual, namely the resilient young person, will exhibit key traits that are measures of resiliency: Competence (feeling successful); Belonging (feeling valued); Usefulness (feeling needed); Potency (feeling empowered); Optimism (feeling encouraged and hopeful) (i.e. CBUPO) (Sagor, 1996, p.39). These resiliency outcomes (CBUPO) must be essential components of building a resilient community. Young people must have opportunities in which they are and feel encouraged towards these outcomes. The classroom, as well as enrichment programs, must encourage young people to achieve beyond the learning environment. Furthermore, other attributes that exemplify resiliency in children also include “responsiveness, flexibility, empathy and caring, communication skills, a sense of humor and any other pro-social behavior” (Bernard, 1991, p. 4).

In thinking about adolescents, the need for resiliency-building must not cease to be present. The need for resiliency-building in the adolescent years must continue and also evolve with the needs of these growing young people. The challenges of the adolescent years, in which caring and support of these young adults seems to decrease as they get older, must include a process that is more intentional, strengthened and carried on or continued through the secondary years. In a discussion with resiliency-building and adolescence with Dr. Donna Duffy, clinical psychologist at Middlesex Community College (Bedford, MA), on November 10, 2008, she expressed the need for environmental buffers in order for young people to “persevere” or thrive. These buffers are areas that can have these young people identify who they are as thinkers, individuals, evaluators and reflectors that would allow them many opportunities to rise above the adversities they face. Dr. Duffy also identified the main factors that she felt were integral foci of resiliency-building. These include strong, healthy relationships and supportive networks, a feeling of safety, an ability to be flexible and also, especially for adolescents, the deliberate integration of peer groups and opportunities to control and create their environment and their own individual processes.

The process of resiliency-building must therefore, never end, and continue to grow with the young person so as to meet the needs and challenges that he/she will encounter. The resilient adolescent (as with all-aged-learners) must play a role in how their resiliency and competencies are developed. Dr. Sharyn Zunz identifies six protective factors that adolescents can develop in order to counteract adversity:

- Developing a realistic ‘locus of control’ or appraisal of one’s environment
- Nurturing a skill or talent
- Encouraging the development of ‘fair fighting’ and good conflict resolution strategies

- Developing the ability to adaptively distance themselves from negative influences
- Promoting the development of mid/long term purpose or goal
- Being (or assisting in helping identify) a mentor, guide, role model coach or tutor for a teen (Zunz, 2005)

To emphasize the importance of the adolescent years, that in many ways, mold who those teens can and will be, it is how they determine how to maneuver the many “pulls” they face daily, will in affect influence their emerging identities, independence, self-esteem and ultimately, pro-social behavior and health. What we do to encourage resiliency-building and how adolescents deal with the “pulls” in their lives will determine how malleable their inner “rubber-bands” (Zunz) remain. This malleability can also determine how developmentally sound their adult lives will be in terms of how effective they were in building identity, autonomy, sense of purpose and future and transference. In order for these qualities and/or competencies to be developed in our young people, these capacity-builders must be embedded within what we do. Therefore, learning environments must offer opportunities to develop and practice behaviors that are not only fundamental to the learning environment, but are also key elements of learning and living beyond structured learning. Therefore, how do we then include resiliency building in the work that we do?

While offering adolescents an opportunity to build their own resiliency, as well as offering a supportive environment that encourages capacity-building, community-based organizations (CBOs) (along with other learning institutions), must utilize strategies that allow for independent, knowledge-building, while at the same time fostering the development of dispositions and habits of mind that they can transfer beyond that learning system. Young people must have ownership of their role or the process, must understand that they can be in control and that they are an important voice in the collaborative effort. In order to meet the needs of these young people, research has identified that youth development professionals must “not only identify risk and protective factors, but to what extent they elaborate on the “mechanisms” or “processes” involved in the development (or lack thereof) of resilience” (Davis, 1999, p.7). The capacity-building in these young adults must include buffers that allow them to persist and strengthen as they move through moments of hardship and anxiety. The development of young people must include processes that allow them as learners and thinkers to be inquirers that are empowered to be guides on the path of their own learning.

How can we utilize Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies in Building Resiliency?

The utilization of mechanisms or processes to develop resiliency in adolescents must be an embedded approach that allows the learner/thinker to become part of the thinking community, values his/her ideas and allows the thinker to build perspective beyond the self. By incorporating the use of these mechanisms or processes into daily learning routines, young people then become a fluid part of learning and living. This embedded approach allows learners and thinkers an opportunity that encourages and challenges them to understand who they are and what role they play in their own learning. This

strategy also allows them to build dispositions that can be utilized beyond the moment of learning, which is an essential component of resiliency-building. Resiliency-building must allow for the development of autonomy, a “locus of control,” higher-ordered thinking and transference. Utilizing critical and creative thinking strategies encourages a process that develops a thinking culture beyond the moment, the learning environment or an immediate idea. Using these strategies as a mechanism for resiliency-building in adolescents would not be an unwavering model, but it would be built and used as a component of the self that can grow, be modified and changed throughout a young person’s development towards adulthood. Although young people may encounter hardship and adversity at different times in their lives, there are times when these individuals will be more resilient and able to work through these challenges. There will also be those times when they will give in to their own vulnerabilities. Therefore, the development (and processes) of individual resilience in relation to social constructs will aide an individual’s survival in the face of their adversity.

By using critical and creative thinking strategies, the learning environment is highlighting the transformative abilities of learning and thinking. In allowing for the enculturation of a thinking culture, the learning environment is embedding tools and thinking strategies within young people, which then can be accessed beyond the structured learning experience. In highlighting the main areas of Tishman, Perkins and Jay’s book, *The Thinking Classroom*, the essential components that make up this enculturation include; building a language of thinking, developing thinking dispositions, metacognitive development, strategic spirit (attitude), higher-ordered thinking/knowledge and transference. Each of these components aides in the development of building norms, not solely for the learning environment, but also for the learner/thinker. In building common norms for the group and also the individual, the tools utilized in developing and supporting the thinking environment aide in developing and supporting the specific needs of the learner/thinker. Although these needs may reside within the learning environment, the tools that are utilized allow for not only academic advancement, but also for healthy social and developmental advancement as well.

The processes that are utilized as part of critical and creative thinking allow young people an opportunity to identify their own thinking processes and strategies and allow the learning to grow with the learner. It also fosters patterns of thinking, cultivates “cognitive resourcefulness” (Tishman, Perkins and Jay, 1995, p. 69), recognizes the importance of strategic thinking, the involvement in a discipline and also how to then transfer this learning to other areas of learning and living. Therefore, the mechanism for fostering critical and creative thought, and ultimately resiliency in young people, must include building a culture and environment that promotes meaningful participation. This includes:

- Developing a language/culture that belongs to the community. The development of this culture should challenge the group to go beyond superficial levels of thought by helping the group and the individuals to generate questions and encouraging inquiry beyond their own perspectives.
- Offering opportunities to develop the tone, culture and learning for the group and also for individual needs.

- Allowing for the ownership of the process to be in the hands of the young people. Giving them the opportunity to ask questions, follow their own interests and explore their own ideas.
- Giving them the opportunities to work both autonomously and also in peer groups that “think” and share together.
- Building opportunities for individual and group reflection and assessment of work and also who they are within the work.
- Nurturing an environment in which each young person knows that he/she is accepted and understood as an individual but also as a part of a caring and supportive environment.

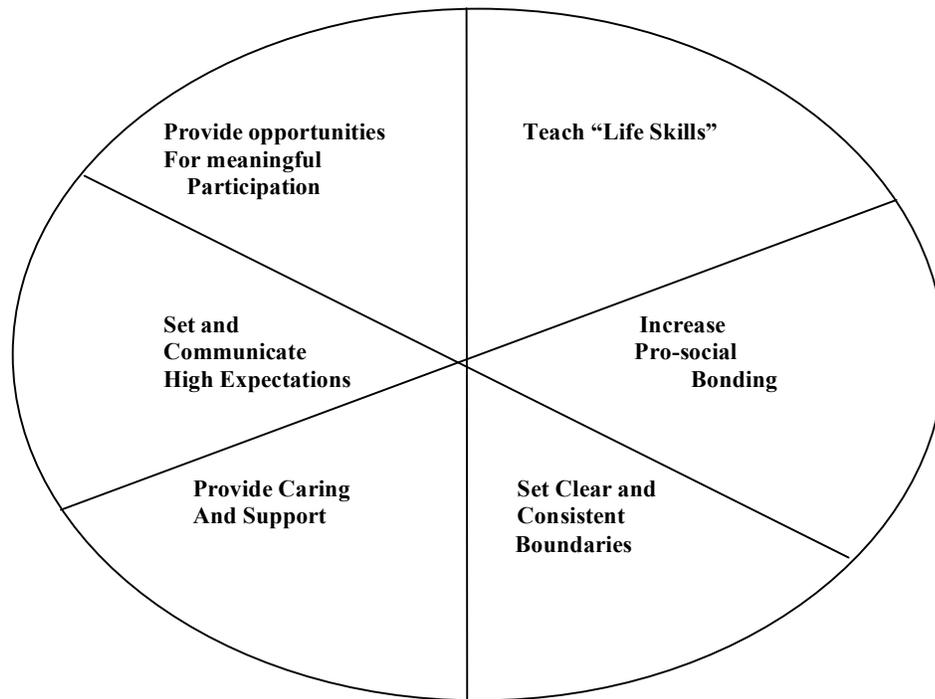
In connecting this idea of enculturation with Sagor’s model of resiliency-building which includes the competencies he feels can be telling signs of whether a young person possesses resilient correlative qualities (i.e. competence: feeling successful; belonging: feeling valued; usefulness: feeling needed; potency: feeling empowered; optimism: feeling encouraged and hopeful). Based on my review of the literature, I believe that these competencies have a direct correlation with the development of the thinking environment. Therefore, as youth development professionals, if we want our young people to develop from their experiences as independent, empowered, focused, involved and competent young adults, we must understand how the development of thinking strategies can support not only competency-building, but also capacity-building as well. Furthermore, youth development professionals should be aware of the intentional connections that can be created when the outcomes are aligned with processes that can develop and support those measurements:

Resiliency Measurement:	Critical and Creative Thinking Strategy:
Competence	Building habits of mind
Belonging	Building a language of thinking
Usefulness	Metacognition, Transference
Potency	Strategic Thinking (strategic spirit)
Optimism	Transference

By developing and examining correlations between the measurement of resilience and thinking strategies, youth development professionals are encouraging interdisciplinary learning environments that understand that “how” one learns is as important as “what” one learns. To be both resilient and a critical and creative thinker, individuals must understand how they connect thinking strategies to their own methods of problem-solving, decision-making and reflective processes within themselves. They must understand and develop their own perspective-building by how they work through adversity and therefore how they use their critical and creative abilities. In understanding that thinking strategies can enhance and support resiliency-building, is in of itself an important tool in persisting in the face of adversity. One example of utilizing critical and creative thinking strategies to foster enculturation and therefore qualities of resiliency is the utilization of the method of problem-based learning (PBL). As part of the profile of the resilient child (i.e. social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and future), learners and thinkers who have the ability to develop their own concept of “change,” that is, how to modify, change or improve a situation and therefore

learn from that situation, are those who are more apt to persist than those who do not recognize how to affect change. The utilization of the problem-based learning approach allows learners to recognize the problem-solvers within themselves. It allows them to evaluate and assess the process as not only individually but also as part of a cooperative process. It also allows those learners and thinkers an opportunity to reflect on how this learning and thinking can be utilized beyond the “problem” at hand. In developing these problem-solving abilities, strategies such as PBL encourage the development of skills which include “the ability to think abstractly, reflectively and flexibly” (Bernard, 1991, p.5). By using the ten-step method of PBL, learners/thinkers are immersed in a culture of thinking which allows them to facilitate their own learning and decide on their course of action. Although teachers are part of the process, their role is that of a resource, facilitator and in many ways, a co-inquirer along with the other learners. This process of learning and thinking puts the responsibility of learning, assessing and taking action, into the hands of the learners/thinkers in the learning environment. Each individual/thinking group must identify and construct a “messy” or “ill-defined” problem, work to generate questions, categorize and prioritize the many facets of the problem, research, analyze results, generate solutions/recommendations, assess their work and also themselves within the work and discuss/communicate these results with a larger community (Greenwald, 2000, pp. 31-32).

The process of PBL not only allows the learner to work through the action steps of a scientific process, it also allows thinkers an opportunity to be immersed in their own process. The strength of PBL is that it allows thinkers to learn how they think, express who they are, how they tackle challenges/obstacles and how they can decide on and work individually and also together, in completing a task or finding a solution to a problem. The PBL approach can have a strong impact on how and why a young person can identify how they think, approach an authentic problem and therefore, how they identify a problem-solving strategy. The PBL approach develops the learning environment into a forum in which thinkers have opportunities to solve problems, build competencies with the individual learners and also offer authentic connections to real-world learning. These lessons in real-world competency-building are integral components of also building resiliency in our young people. If we look to the *Resiliency Wheel*, which is a tool that offers six elements of protection that correlate with and also encourage resiliency-building in a learning environment, it is evident that approaches such as PBL, can play a role in helping to lay the foundation of resiliency-building. Problem-based learning encourages learners and thinkers to develop opportunities for meaningful participation, to build dispositions, transfer tangible “life skills” and also offers support and encouragement to the group and the individual process:



(Henderson and Milstein, The Resiliency Wheel, 1996, pp. 21-31)

The *Resiliency Wheel* offers practitioners an approach to identify how they interact with young people and also how intentional they are in thinking about the needs of the young people with whom they are working. Approaches such as PBL, whether learning is focused in the classroom or in an alternative learning and enrichment environment, is a practical tool that can allow not only for knowledge-building, but also for the higher cognitive abilities that can then be transferred and reflected upon in other learning and living environments.

Also in thinking further about the link of critical and creative thinking to resiliency, researchers have also identified key areas within learning and thinking that are foundations for whether a young person is moving towards building a resilient core. These areas include:

- Language acquisition and reading
- Capacity to plan
- Self-efficacy
- Self-understanding
- Formal Operational Thinking

(Davis, 1999, pp. 19-21)

In developing a culture of thinking that includes a language that is intentional to the work that is being developed, identifying and reflecting on the role that each thinker plays and also how this information can be developed for not only the work at hand but also for future connections within and outside of the learning environment, are essential components that develop the critical and creative thinker as well as a foundation for resiliency. By developing a thinking culture/community that offers young people an opportunity to not only develop cognitive skills, but also encourages certain attributes and dispositions, this culture/community allows young people an opportunity to persist when facing many challenges or moments of adversity.

This process-based approach offers learners/thinkers opportunities that enable them to think beyond the subject matter and to also reflect on who they are within the process. When critical and creative thinking strategies are utilized, a thinking environment is created and the learning is transformed into “living.” In order for resiliency to be encouraged and supported through critical and creative thinking, it must be utilized in an interdisciplinary approach so as to create a seamless transition from who they are as learners and thinkers and how they can use their higher-ordered thought process to develop beyond the classroom or community-based program. Furthermore, this interdisciplinary approach must be supported and linked to all supportive networks (i.e. family, school and community) that focus on youth development.

How Can Community-based Organizations Help Support and Build Resiliency Through the Critical and Creative Processes?

“Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of caring and support at the community level is the availability of resources necessary for healthy human development; health care, housing, education, job training, employment and recreation” (Bernard, 1991 p. 18).

As I stated earlier, the development of the whole, young person is contingent upon the supportive networks within the school, family and community. Therefore, in thinking about the importance of community connections and the impact that community-based organizations can have on young people, CBOs can have a strong impact on how learners and thinkers connect with and thrive within their community. CBOs have the ability to support and encourage young people in a variety of ways, as well as different stages and levels of developmental need. This multi-level, developmental process is dependent upon, and must highlight the connections cultivated in the life of that young person, both relational and also through perspective-building. Also, these connections, which in many instances can be both resource-based and skill-based, must encourage growth and identify the importance of partnerships and relationships throughout the young person’s life. Although the school environment can offer many opportunities for authentic learning and support, community-based organizations (CBOs) can play a unique role in fostering life-long learning and capacity-building in young people. CBOs have an opportunity to impact young people by offering “real-life” connections to learning and living. CBOs have the ability to nurture young people in many ways and areas that the school community may not always be able to support or provide. The main focus of CBOs is the development of the individual, as the “self,” as well as a collaborative partner and participant. CBOs encourage interconnected learning on many different levels, and link

this learning to other areas beyond the organization. Many CBOS are within the communities and neighborhoods in which they serve, therefore, many young people who utilize these organizations do so of their own volition and through both peer and adult-based relationships. CBOs have a wonderful opportunity to connect young people with their community. This connection offers them both formal and informal opportunities to engage in not only capacity-building but also competency-building for the individual and also for the community.

Although schools can offer the same type of capacity-building, CBOs do not have the same structured competencies that they must fulfill as formally as do the schools. CBOs have more freedom to develop young people as growing young adults, both intellectually and socially. They can offer a supportive environment, peer and adult relationships that are positive and nurturing, an opportunity to build perspective and engage with others, a sense of future and belonging and also an opportunity for service. At the center of many CBOs that work with young people is the focus on human development and how this unfolds for each young person involved in the program. Resiliency is at the heart of the work of CBOs, therefore they must utilize the strategies that help to make this work much more intentional and profitable for the young people who utilize the services that are offered through these organizations.

If we are focused on building “competent communities” (Bernard, 1991, p.18), we must recognize the tools that our young people need, not only when they are active members within our organizations, but also when they enter the community as active, young adults. Although there are many young people who may utilize organizations and youth centers for recreation alone, there is a large population who utilize the centers for what they are not receiving in other areas of their lives. Therefore, how do we, as youth development professionals, encourage and engage these young people to develop not only as part of the community, but also as individuals within the community? One of the ways that CBOs can offer support to these young people is developing “social networks” (Bernard, 1991, p. 19), that is, an opportunity to identify how each component of a young person’s life is interconnected and that the three areas of a young person’s life (i.e. school, family and community), should not be experienced in a vacuum. The role of CBOs is to develop young people as social, intellectual and emotional beings. In order to do this, connections must be made beyond the confines of the organization, and it must include thinking strategies that enable young people to look beyond accepted norms and to then make these connections for themselves.

In developing these young people for who they are as individuals, and also for the potential that they possess, CBOs have the opportunity to involve young people in meaningful participation that allows them to connect with others, offers them control and allows them to set the tone of the environment and the work in which they are involved. Young people, and especially adolescents, need to feel empowered by their environment and the community in which they are a part. If they do not have the opportunity to have ownership of who they are within the process, their commitment to the program and their own empowerment will not be strong. In thinking back to Sagor’s model of competence, belonging, usefulness, potency and optimism (CBUPO), if these components are not integral aspects of programs and/or experiences offered to young people, these learners will not feel connected, useful or empowered to make the learning their own. Also,

without this enculturation, these young people will not identify and/or commit to the process of developing a sense of purpose and future. Furthermore, young people need to be supported and encouraged to not only develop who they are as thinkers and problem-solvers, but must also have opportunities to develop a perspective that allows them to be flexible and innovative in how they interact and persist in an ever-changing world. By helping young people understand that resiliency is not a static process, youth development professionals have the opportunity to support and develop inner strength and malleability in these young people. Also, in supporting and encouraging this inner strength and malleability, youth development professionals within CBOs also have the opportunity to connect with the young people as “natural mentors,” (Davis, 1999, pp. 37-38) that is, mentors who are connected with the young people of the community, the community-at-large and who are also committed to sharing and supporting how to build connections beyond the youth serving agency. These caring adults offer a supportive environment and a stable and committed relationship that allow the young people to identify with and develop their future and the supportive networks they need to persist. Also, by developing these supportive relationships, the work of CBOs in developing critical and creative thinkers to then support human development becomes a seamless connection for the young people. If they have close, committed relationships with natural mentors, the work and disposition-building has real-life connections because it is being encouraged and supported through real-life relationships and connections to the community. The work of CBOs is an important bridge to real-world knowledge-building and therefore has a strong connection to developing and fostering resiliency in many young people who may not receive such focused support in other areas of their lives.

In thinking about the focus of CBOs, I chose two local organizations that foster resiliency-building within their young people. These organizations are *Crossroads for Kids*, located in Duxbury, MA and *Artists for Humanity*, in South Boston. Both organizations, that focus on the specific developmental needs and interests of their participants, offer intentional support to young people in order to help them excel as leaders and creative minds within their communities. The organization, *Crossroads for Kids*, works with adolescents that have been referred and nominated by other youth serving agencies. Their program is dedicated to offering a safe and caring community that builds trust and healthy relationships within the program and beyond. The program offers intense summer experiences, while at the same time offering social and service events throughout the school year to enable the young people to stay connected and focused on the work they have committed to for the five summers of secondary school. The hope is that each young person leaves the program stronger, focused and with a sense of purpose that they then can share with their own community.

Artists for Humanity is a program that offers opportunities for young people to come together through the arts. Its mission is to bridge economic, racial and social divisions by providing underserved youth the keys to sufficiency through paid employment in the arts. It is a program that celebrates the artistic endeavors that these young people undertake each day while also involving them in meaningful participation through hands-on projects in creativity, business, teamwork, artistic expression and entrepreneurial experience.

Both programs provide supportive opportunities for adolescents that offer consistent boundaries, teach life skills, set high expectations and allow for positive and collaborative peer socialization. The involvement that these organizations offer their young people is embedded in thinking strategies that enable the learners/thinkers to look beyond themselves, utilize higher-ordered thinking while problem-solving or making decisions, allowing them to analyze and reflect on their own ideas and/or work to identify how they can go beyond set norms or their own constraints. These two organizations exemplify how CBOS can work to build critical and creative thinkers that put the young people on the road to positive human development. By building critical and creative thinkers in a non-traditional, community-based learning setting, the work that these young people are immersed in becomes much more real and fluid for “who” they are, how it can relate back to their own lives and how they can change, modify and/or improve areas of their own lives and/or community. By allowing these young people to become immersed in their own experience and metacognitive abilities, programs and organizations such as these are developing mechanisms and processes that allows for the development of capacity-building and resiliency.

Within my own program, the Frisoli Youth Center, in Cambridge, MA, teens are supported and encouraged on many different levels which is dependent upon a young person’s commitment to the program and also on the needs of that individual. The program provides programming and support on three different levels; year-long internships in which teens commit to a year of work focused on community-building, professional and personal development, social responsibility, civic engagement and “mentorships” (i.e. within the Leaders in Action Internship Program, teens design, develop and implement events for the Cambridge Community and also work as mentors with other young people who could one day be a part of the internship program). We also offer shorter enrichment programs that may be four or six week programs in which they can develop college preparatory and/or job readiness skills and enrichment-based skills. The final form of direct service that we offer to the teens in our program is a level of recreation and social development in which the teens can participate in sports leagues, utilize the center for social and personal development and also social interactions. Our program offers non-traditional, learning experiences and opportunities for individual investment, community-building and life skill acquisition. However, although resiliency-building through critical and creative thinking are integral components of what we do, I am always wondering how I can make this work in a more intentional way to help develop our young people into stronger conduits of resiliency. Furthermore, I also wonder how to offer support that is developed and encouraged within our youth serving agency that could then transfer, compliment, reinforce and enhance classroom learning and the supportive network of the family structure. By engaging young people in their community through practices as stated in the previous programs, CBOs have an opportunity to develop and encourage the individual, by investing in that young person on a different level than that of school or family. Furthermore, the focus of CBOs within these youth serving agencies would then support, encourage, connect to and enhance other areas of their lives. Therefore, how do we as youth developmental professionals help to provide opportunities that allow young people to foster their identity, autonomy and provide opportunities to practice transference (i.e. building thinking communities) beyond our programs?

How Can CBOs Work Toward Strengthening Their Own Techniques in Building Resiliency Through Thinking Strategies?

In thinking back to the *Resiliency Wheel*, each component of the wheel can be encouraged and supported by critical and creative thinking strategies (as indicated in the chart to follow):

Interdisciplinary Approach in Building Resiliency Through Thinking Strategies

Characteristics of Resiliency	Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies
Teach “Life Skills”	<p>Transference: perspective building, adaptability, flexibility, sense of purpose</p> <p>Higher-ordered thinking: problem-solving, inquiry-based design, conflict resolution,</p> <p>Metacognition: sense of self (thinking about one’s thinking)</p> <p>Habits of Mind: building a sense of self, life-long attributes</p>
Increase Pro-social Bonding	<p>Enculturation: developing own culture, purpose, positive language skills</p> <p>Higher-ordered thinking: problem-solving, conflict resolution,</p> <p>Metacognition: sense of self, cooperative learning</p>
Set Clear and Consistent Boundaries	<p>Enculturation: developing a thinking culture and rules/boundaries for thinking together</p> <p>Dispositional Growth: adaptable, flexible, fluent ideas and how they connect with the group</p>
Provide Opportunities for Meaningful Participation	<p>Metacognition: reflect and assess participation-moving beyond own comfort, intentionality</p> <p>Higher-ordered thinking: taking on new challenges, developing new strategies and action plans, opportunities for original and innovative work</p> <p>Dispositional Growth: intentionality</p> <p>Transference: sense of future, efficacy</p>
Set and Communicate High Expectations	<p>Enculturation and dispositional growth: developing a thinking language and guidelines, intentionality</p> <p>Strategic Spirit: meets/confronts challenges, motivation, independence, goal setting, prioritizing, intentionality</p> <p>Transference: sense of purpose and future</p>
Provide Caring and Support	<p>Enculturation: development and inclusiveness of a community</p> <p>Strategic Spirit: opportunities for building/fostering motivation</p> <p>Metacognitive opportunities: reflective process as a part of the group and as an individual</p>

If we align the idea of resiliency-building with thinking strategies that could encourage and promote thinking, self-discovery, empathy, autonomy, efficacy and transference, CBOs could work towards the development of the whole, young person.

As CBOs work towards understanding the importance of utilizing critical and creative thinking strategies in their work with adolescents, they must highlight how they work to identify and develop their own resiliency-building techniques so to assess their work with adolescents. In utilizing work by researchers such as Richard Sagor (Sagor, 1996, pp. 38-

43), Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein (Henderson and Milstein, 1996, pp.21-58) who developed methods of assessing and evaluating resiliency-building in schools, these resiliency assessments and inventories could then be modified to focus on the work of CBOs in order to identify, gauge and assess the level of resiliency-building in young people and the techniques that CBOs are utilizing to develop resiliency-building. I will modify the tools/strategies that they created in order to develop an assessment inventory that could be used by CBOs and other youth serving agencies. This tool will be used in order to measure the amount of resiliency-building that already exists in CBOs and how to change, modify and/or improve the work that they are doing. In developing this CBO Resiliency Inventory, the following questions will be underlying the inventory, What strategies could be utilized to form thinking communities and therefore the critical and creative thinking individual? What changes could then be made to daily routines in order to support the development and connection of a thinking culture and resilient young people?

As part of the resiliency inventory, each CBO must brainstorm and examine the organizational practices that they feel make up their program (i.e. are programs student-led, are the staff involved in professional development for positive youth development, is there meaningful participation, is there authentic assessment, are there opportunities for service?) Once the organization/program has identified the organizational practices, they would then identify critical and creative thinking strategies that are used and reinforced. Once these two columns are completed, the program/CBO would then identify what resiliency traits were reinforced by each of the organizational practices (Competence, Belonging, Usefulness, Potency, Optimism: CBUPO). As the group assessed the work of the program, they would then identify areas where their work was strong and also identify where their work needed improvement. They would gauge this work by assigning a number to each category (“1” would be a part of our program, but rarely utilized, whereas “5” would be something that is embedded in our daily program). This assessment could then be modified into a reflective tool for the staff and program use to gauge the work of particular programs within the CBOs and furthermore, used to develop a rubric for staff and supervisors to assess and evaluate their own work with critical and creative thinking strategies.

The following chart is an example of a **Resiliency Inventory** that would be completed by a youth serving agency. (A clean copy of the **Resiliency Inventory** is available on Page 18.)

How do CBOs develop learning/thinking environments that support mental habits that encourage resiliency? (Example of a completed chart)

Resiliency Inventory for CBOs

Organization/Instructional Practices	Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies Used and Reinforced	Resiliency-building Traits Reinforced (CBUPO)	Rate the Effectiveness of Your Organization's Programs (1-5) (1, needs improvement 5, embedded in our daily program)	
Skills Developed and Mastered	Enculturation and dispositional growth: developing a thinking language and guidelines, intentionality Strategic Spirit: meets/confronts challenges, motivation, independence, goal setting, prioritizing, intentionality Transference: sense of purpose and future	Competence	Rate (1-5)	What improvements can be made?
			3	More involvement of participants in developing program, on-going reflection throughout program
Student-led Programming	Metacognition: reflect and assess participation intentionality Higher-ordered thinking Dispositional Growth: intentionality Transference: sense of future, efficacy	Potency, Usefulness	5	No apparent improvements needed at this time, will re-evaluate as needed
Caseloads and advisee groups	Enculturation: development and inclusiveness of a community Strategic Spirit: opportunities for building/fostering motivation Metacognitive opportunities: reflective process as a part of the group and as an individual	Belonging	4	Develop checklist of mentor/mentee relationship guidelines, develop opportunities for advisee groups to build meaningful participation (i.e. events, activities, incentive programs)
Authentic Assessments (Staff and Youth)	Metacognition (reflective and evaluative practices) Strategic planning Problem Solving	Competence	3	Develop evaluation/rubric with staff and involve staff in the program evaluation process
Professional Development for Staff to offer positive youth development	Enculturation: developing a thinking culture Dispositional Growth: how they connect with the group	Competence	2	Offer on-going trainings series, one-on-one check ins and reflective tools to develop staff as "natural mentors"

Setting High Programmatic Expectations	<p>Metacognition: reflect and assess participation-moving beyond own comfort, intentionality</p> <p>Higher-ordered thinking: taking on new challenges, developing new strategies and action plans, opportunities for original and innovative work</p> <p>Dispositional Growth: intentionality</p> <p>Transference: sense of future, efficacy</p>		4	
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How do CBOs develop learning/thinking environments that support mental habits that encourage resiliency?

Resiliency Inventory for CBOs

Organization/Instructional Practices	Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies Used and Reinforced	Resiliency-building Traits Reinforced (CBUPO)	Rate the Effectiveness of Your Organization's Programs (1-5) (1, needs improvement 5, embedded in our daily program)	
			Rate (1-5)	What improvements can be made?

Once the CBO has identified the areas that are strong within the program, as well as those areas that need modifications or improvements, the organization can move forward and design a staff inventory of how they can incorporate specific areas of thinking strategies that will become building blocks of resiliency. This staff inventory can then be used as an on-going evaluative tool that is used by supervisors and direct service staff to evaluate and assess the work that is being focused on within the program (see the example on the next page and a clean copy can be found on the Page 21):

Competencies Inventory: Identify the tools that each program/project utilizes to reinforce the thinking strategy and how it fits within one or more of the protective factors towards building resiliency. (Example of Chart)

Project/Program: _____

Staff: _____

Thinking Strategies Reinforced:	Competence	Belonging	Usefulness	Potency	Optimism
Developing a thinking culture: How is the group developing the culture?		Group is working together to decide “working agreements”	Group is starting to use the language (vocabulary) of the program on their own in regular discussions and reflections	Individuals are the “point people” for certain activities throughout the day	
Dispositional Thought- How are habits being reinforced?	Goals of the day/program are reviewed at the beginning and end of program time		“Point people” (young people) for projects are keeping sub-committees on task: understand importance of role	Reinforcement from staff and point-people: the work completed	
Strategic Spirit- What attitudes are being developed?	Group is devising an action plan and strategy to move forward	Group/individuals are identifying the “gifts” of the group and how they can accomplish certain tasks		Group is identifying the importance of a timeline is sticking to daily/weekly priorities	
Metacognition- How is reflection incorporated into the program?		Individuals reflect on their involvement in the program-what is my role? How have I impacted the process?			Group is measuring +/^ of past work and how they can infuse these lessons with upcoming projects
Higher-Ordered Thinking- What tools are they utilizing?	Group is asking/brainstorming questions to identify any gaps in their planning		Group has identified problem-solving strategies to utilize if initial plan does not work		
Transference- How are they relating this information to real-world applications?	Group is focused on the importance of their work beyond the program		Asking questions: How can this work/my work affect others in the community?		Group is making connections with projects that could be developed at school

Competencies Inventory: Identify the tools that each program/project utilizes to reinforce the thinking strategy and how it fits within one or more of the protective factors towards building resiliency.

Project/Program: _____

Staff: _____

Thinking Strategies Reinforced:	Competence	Belonging	Usefulness	Potency	Optimism
Developing a thinking culture: how is the group developing the culture?					
Dispositional Thought- how are habits being reinforced?					
Strategic Spirit- what attitudes are being developed?					
Metacognition- how is reflection incorporated into the program?					
Higher-Ordered Thinking- what tools are they utilizing?					
Transference- how are they relating this information to real-world applications?					

By utilizing both the *Resiliency* and the *Competencies Inventories*, CBOs in the areas of overall programmatic goals and in the realm of direct service have an opportunity to gauge and assess the work that not only the young people are involved with and measure their commitment and “buy in” to the mission, but it also allows the CBOs to identify and name the work of the youth development professionals who engage in direct service with these youth each day. Each inventory and reflection component determines how intentional the work that is being completed is and how the young people and staff are engaged in developing the whole young person. By developing tools that can be utilized and embedded into programming, CBOs can assess how effective their program is, what changes or improvements they could identify and then implement and how each developing thinking strategy could lead to capacity-building and eventually tools to develop resiliency.

Although CBOs focus on fostering the whole adolescent or young person through the work that they are engaged in, the work of resiliency building is rarely named or discussed through competencies that are being developed and utilized. It is therefore important therefore to name how we develop our young people and discuss this capacity-building with them and include them in the process of their own resiliency building and their development as thinkers. Young people must be involved as active participants in their own knowledge-building, therefore, CBOs and youth development professionals must then help to develop and name the process so as to help the process and mechanisms of growth grow with the young people.

What Future Connections Could Be Made?

In thinking about how my work could be expanded, beyond supervisors and staff within CBOs and other youth serving agencies, I would like to develop an inventory with the young people who belong to and participate daily in our programs. This inventory would then give the young people another level of commitment to their own program, would allow them to gauge their own work and develop a stronger sense of their community, how they were involved in their community and how they could impact their community in other ways. An inventory created by the young people could also empower them to think about their own intentionality of the work in which they are involved and what lasting impacts their work could have on themselves and their community. Involving young people in the process is an integral component of ownership and transference. By involving young people in this process, youth development professionals are empowering them to take control of their own learning and living, and giving them control over their thinking, reasoning and how they move through the intricacies of their own lives.

The importance of developing young people as active participants in their own knowledge-building, not only as thinkers, but also as survivors, is an essential component in developing young people who have the abilities and dispositions to persist and grow through each phase of their lives. Therefore, it is important for CBOs, youth development professionals and also the young people who are engaged in programming, to highlight and understand the importance of building a working relationship between thinking strategies that support resiliency-building. Although resiliency-building through the promotion of protective factors does not guarantee

that an adolescent will be and remain resilient, CBOs must understand the unique role they play in the development of the young person. If these young people are given an opportunity to develop fundamental dispositions and habits of mind and know who they are as learners and thinkers through practical and real-life processes, the lessons they have gained will become a part of who they are and how they interact with the world around them. CBOs not only have an opportunity, but also a responsibility to engage and encourage young people to become invested, life-long learners and thinkers within their community. Without this focus on commitment to young people, their competencies and community-building, who will then help to build and be committed to the future of the communities with which we are a part? Therefore, we must continually ask ourselves: How do we offer young people experiences and structure opportunities in community-based organizations in order to build resiliency and also to strengthen our communities?

“Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it.”
(Helen Keller)

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