Invited Paper

The Protective Factors Framework: A Key to Programming for Benefits and Evaluating for Results

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Abstract: The single most important challenge confronting the park and recreation field is to reposition itself. This requires both real repositioning (changing what is done) and psychological repositioning (changing the understanding of others about what is done). The At-Risk Youth Recreation Consortium project funded by the National Recreation and Park Association is designed to contribute to both repositioning strategies. Using a protective factors model, project team members have designed a Protective Factors Scale. Initially, its function was to determine the outcomes of recreation programs for at-risk youth, but this role expanded to include guidance for developing program goals, the design and structure of specific program elements to achieve these goals, and the use of relevant sub-scales from the Protective Factors Scale to measure program outcomes. The article describes development of the Protective Factors Scale; the application of protective factor principles to developing programming for at-risk youth; and implications of the approach for the park and recreation field.

Keywords: protective factors, resilience, at-risk youth, repositioning, parks and recreation

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Introduction

It has been suggested that the single most important challenge confronting the park and recreation field is to reposition itself (Crompton & Witt, 1997). Positioning refers to the place that parks and recreation occupies in the minds of elected officials and the general public, relative to their perception of other services which are the field’s competitors for public tax dollars. The field’s present position, which has existed in the minds of stakeholders for several decades, is that parks and recreation are relatively discretionary non-essential services. This position resulted from
the field’s drift away from its social mission which was the *raison d’etre* of the park and recreation movement in its early decades. The drift was accelerated by a number of factors including: the oil embargoes of the 1970s and early 1980s; the tax revolt of the late 1970s and 1980s; the economic downturn in the early 1980s, which was the worst since the 1930s; the erosion of central city tax bases as industry moved out; and the expansion of the federal deficit so interest payments increased from 9.9% of federal outlays in 1970 to 22% in 1995, effectively squeezing out federal aid for many social programs (Crompton, 1998, in press). These factors all contributed to agencies cutting resource allocations to social programs, and concentrating their more limited resources on keeping facilities open and on offering programs which were self-sufficient. Sessoms (1993) observed:

By becoming good managers, park and recreation professionals may have done themselves and their systems a disservice. They were more concerned about how they were to perform than why the performance was necessary. This is not an indictment of the need to be effective managers, rather an expression of the times when technique and procedures seemingly were more important than reasons for service. (p. 8)

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the external political forces which demanded fiscal constraint and that agencies should “do more with less,” were supplemented by other voices articulating a new demand “to do something about” juvenile crime and delinquency. As high profile incidents involving young people grew exponentially in this period, more political attention was directed at this issue.

Addressing the challenges of at-risk youth was the issue which provided a major impetus to the evolution of the park and recreation field in its formative years, and it has now provided an opportunity to reposition. The field’s *sine qua non* is that it performs a necessary service for the community at large, beyond responding to the demands of particular user groups. The youth issue offers an opportunity for the field to reposition so it is perceived not as a discretionary non-essential service, but rather as contributing to alleviating a critical problem confronting policy makers who are responsible for allocating tax funds.

Indicative of the repositioning effort is the publication of *Beyond Fun and Games* (National Recreation and Park Association, 1994) and *Recreation Programs that Work for At-Risk Youth* (Witt & Crompton, 1996). The intent of these publications was to highlight the responsiveness and capacity of PARDS in addressing the youth at-risk issue. These efforts grew out of, or were coincident to, the national colloquium (Fort Worth, Texas, 1995) on recreation for at-risk youth sponsored by the American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration, NRPA, the Fort Worth Park and Community Services Department, and Texas A&M University. This colloquium led to 10 regional colloquia and numerous sessions at state confer-
ences where discussion focused on approaches and programs being used by park and recreation departments to address some of the serious issues facing children and youth.

There are three strategies agencies can pursue to reposition (Crompton, 1998, in press; Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993). They are not mutually exclusive. Rather, all three should be embraced simultaneously. The first strategy is real repositioning, which means that an agency changes what it does. This is likely to involve changing the design and structure of its program offerings, as well as changing the types of programs that are offered. Second is competitive repositioning, which means altering stakeholders' beliefs about what an agency's competitors do. This strategy is outside the scope of this paper. Psychological repositioning is the third strategy. This means altering stakeholders’ beliefs about what an agency currently does. Godbey (1993) suggested that parks and recreation has a labelling problem. Agencies are labelled based on the means used—recreation—rather than on the ends they aspire to achieve, e.g., contributing to alleviation of social problems. In the past two decades, emphasis was on providing the means, while the ends were forgotten. Psychological repositioning involves bringing outcomes to the forefront, so that when the words recreation and parks are mentioned people immediately think of desired outcomes or benefits.

In the past few years (1994-97), the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the National Recreation Foundation (NRF) have funded two major research projects. Their goals are to better document the impact of park and recreation programs on at-risk youth, and to improve the quality and relevance of programs being offered to youth. These projects are central components of the park and recreation field’s effort to reposition. The first project is being undertaken by a consortium (The At-Risk Youth Recreation Consortium) of eight universities (Arizona State University West, Clemson University, Northern Iowa University, Penn State University, San Francisco State University, Texas A&M University, University of Georgia, and University of Illinois), and some 15 cities which are working together to conduct evaluations of the effectiveness of recreation programs for at-risk youth (Witt & Crompton, 1996). If the results are positive, then PARDs may find the information useful in budget debates at the Federal, state, and local levels. This project is also identifying “best practices” and disseminating this information widely throughout the park and recreation field. Texas A&M provides administrative management for this project.

The second project (Allen & McGovern, 1997), headed by a team from Clemson University, is aimed at improving programming procedures so that PARDs are able to better conceptualize, develop, deliver, and provide meaningful evidence that programs which are being offered do make a real difference in participants’ lives and in communities. The approach they are pilot testing with demonstration projects in five different locations, each with a different type of target population, was named Benefits-Based
Management (BBM) by Dr. Bev Driver and it builds on his life-long work to bring an outcome oriented approach to recreation program development. Much of Driver's pioneering work was undertaken in Federal natural resource agencies (e.g., the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management). The team at Clemson University is assessing the efficacy of using many of the BBM concepts in other types of delivery systems in the park and recreation field. They are using education-based activity (lesson) planning principles and a management by objectives approach to train professionals to rethink their programming practices in a more purposive manner.

The Protective Factors Scale

Conceptual Background

The two NRPA/NRF projects are interrelated to some extent, since both the At-Risk Youth Recreation Consortium and the BBM project are using the Protective Factors Scale developed by members of the Texas A&M project team (Witt, Baker, & Scott, 1996) as one of their main evaluation tools. Based on the concepts of risk, resilience, and protective factors, the Texas A&M University team has adapted Jessor's (1991) Adolescent Risk Behavior model and the work of other researchers in this area as a basis for elucidating goals which park and recreation professionals should pursue in youth development efforts.

The principle underlying the protective factors concept can be illustrated by analogy. In winter, many people live under conditions that lead some of them to get the flu. These individuals may become debilitated from being out in the cold, or from stressful conditions in their lives; may fail to get enough exercise because of being confined indoors; and perhaps may fail to eat a nutritious diet. All of these factors stress the immune system. The risk of catching the flu also is increased by the number of people with whom there is contact. However, getting a flu vaccination may result in avoidance of the illness or in a less debilitating case of it. Lifestyle, habits, and the surrounding environment put people at risk, but the flu vaccination provides a degree of protection that results in avoidance or reduction in the incidence of risk. Those who have this protection and are not inflicted by the flu under conditions of exposure to risk, are said to be resilient.

The same situation applies to youth who are exposed to multiple risk circumstances in their homes, schools, or communities. Some of them avoid the deviant behaviors exhibited by peers who grow up in the same environment. This realization has resulted in growing interest in "protective factors" that are operative in the lives of "resilient" youth, which enable them to avoid the negative consequences of multiple risk environments. Protective factors are those facets which impinge on an individual's life space that moderate and/or mitigate the impact of risk on subsequent behavior and development (Jessor, 1991). Resiliency has been defined as a pattern of successful adaptation following exposure to biological and
psychosocial risk factors and/or stressful life events (Public/Private Ventures, 1994). Protective factors and resilience help at-risk children and youth avoid behaviors that compromise health and normal growth, and help them achieve economic self-sufficiency, positive and responsible family and social relationships, and good citizenship (Jessor, 1991; Masten & Garmezy, 1985). The protective factors approach shifts attention from identifying the risks to which children are exposed, to focusing on the protective mechanisms and processes of negotiating risk situations (Rutter, 1990).

Figure 1 provides a simplified view of Jessor's framework for understanding adolescent risk behavior. Column A delineates some of the risk conditions to which youth may be exposed through their biological background, social environment, personality and behavior. Through exposure to these risk factors, the individual is "at-risk of" undertaking one or more risk behaviors (Column B), which in turn can lead to some of the health or life compromising outcomes listed in Column C.

Figure 2 displays the role of protective factors in mediating, insulating and buffering against the risk factors (Rutter, 1985, p. 600). Protective factors include such elements as youth knowing there is at least one adult who supports their positive development; the existence of places for youth to spend free time in a positive, productive environment; opportunities for youth to learn how to work together in a group and how to constructively resolve conflicts; and the opportunity to be around other youth who are demonstrating positive conventional behavior.

Developing protective factors is central to promoting positive youth development in risk environments. PARDs clearly have the potential to structure and design programs to facilitate many of these protective factors as outcomes. A recent study by Gambone and Arbreton (1997) identified seven program elements that PARDs and other youth serving agencies should use as part of a youth development approach which focuses on enhancing the resilience of youth. These elements were: opportunities that enable youth to develop a sense of safety; challenging and interesting activities; settings and experiences that help youth develop a sense of belonging; social support from adults; opportunities for youth input and decision making; opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills; and opportunities for youth to undertake volunteer and community service activities.

Most youth serving agencies increasingly are defining their mission in terms of the potential of their programs for increasing the level of protective factors. Federal juvenile justice programs are also defining outcomes of their efforts in terms of the ability of programs to supply the structural elements necessary to develop these protective factors, as well as by the extent to which they decrease such risk behaviors as dropping out of school or using drugs.

The Texas A&M team has been working with the protective factors model to formulate guidelines for organizing programs so they optimally
### Figure 1

**The Relationship Between Risk Factors, Risk Behavior, and Health/Life Compromising Outcomes**

(Adapted from the Adolescent Risk Behavior Model, Jessor, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(A) Risk Behaviors</th>
<th>(B) Risk Factors</th>
<th>(C) Health/Life Compromising Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Illicit Drug Use</td>
<td>School Failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegitimate Opportunity</td>
<td>Drunk Driving</td>
<td>Legal Trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models for Deviant Behavior</td>
<td>Tobacco Use</td>
<td>Low Work Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Perceived Life Chance</td>
<td>Delinquency</td>
<td>Unemployability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>Disease/Illness</td>
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<td>Risk Taking Propensity</td>
<td>Unprotected Sex</td>
<td>Early Childbearing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor School Work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latchkey situations (due single parent families or two wage earner families)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Depression/Suicide</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Amotivation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 2

**The Mediating Role of Protective Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
<th>Risk Behaviors</th>
<th>Health/Life Compromising Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested &amp; Caring Adults</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Resources</td>
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<td>School and Club Involvement</td>
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<td>High Control Against Deviant Behavior</td>
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<td>Models for Conventional Behavior</td>
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<td>Positive Attitudes Toward the Future</td>
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<td>Value on Achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to Work with Others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to Work Out Conflicts</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Church Attendance</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cohesive Family</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
impact youth, and to develop a means for measuring outcomes from participation in programs that utilize protective factor principles. Part of that effort led to the development of the *Protective Factors Scale* (Witt, Baker, & Scott, 1996). The goal of this instrument is to determine the extent to which programs are successful in strengthening protective factors. The instrument is being used in the evaluation work being conducted by the At-Risk Youth Recreation Consortium (Witt & Crompton, 1997), as well as in the various projects being undertaken by the BBM project team (Allen & McGovern, 1997).

Scale Content

Figure 3 lists the 10 sub-scale areas included in the *Protective Factors Scale*. Four questions are included for each sub-scale area. Two different scale formats have been developed. Version A is designed for use in situations where a pre-post program evaluation strategy is being applied. In this case, each of the questions would be answered using a seven point (“Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”) answer format. This approach involves measuring participant scores before and after the program, and is the preferred way to ascertain program impact. On the other hand, there are circumstances where before and after measures cannot be undertaken. To accommodate this situation, Version B was developed and it asks respondents to rate the extent to which program participation has decreased, not impacted, or has increased their protective factors. Scale items in the two versions are identical in scope, but are worded differently to accommodate the intended use of the scale (Figure 3).

Development of the Protective Factors Scale

A number of steps were undertaken in development of the *Protective Factors Scale* (Witt, Baker, & Scott, 1996). A review of the protective factors literature yielded four general categories of protective factors, together with potential sub-scale areas associated with each category. Categories and examples of the sub-scale areas follow:

(1) **social environment**, e.g., neighborhood resources; and interested and caring adults (Grossman, et. al., 1992; Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993);

(2) **perceived environment**, e.g., models for conventional behavior; sense of acceptance/belonging; acceptance of authority (Jessor, 1991; Lerner, 1995);

(3) **personality**, e.g., positive attitude about the future (Grossman, et. al., 1992; Wyman, Cowen, Work, & Kerley, 1993); self-esteem (Cowen, Work, & Wyman 1992; Radke-Yarrow & Brown, 1993); physical fitness
### Figure 3
**Protective Factors Scale Subareas, Formats, and Questions**
*(Witt, Baker, & Scott, 1996)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale Area</th>
<th>Version A: Pre/Post-Program Question Format</th>
<th>Version B: Post-Program Only Question Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Neighborhood Resources: Knowledge of and interest in utilizing neighborhood recreation opportunities, including organized and informal programs and opportunities. | *I know lots of safe places to play/hangout*  
*I know lots of activities to do in my community*  
*I am interested in participating in programs in my community*  
*I am interested in programs that take place after school* | *my knowledge of safe places to play/hangout*  
*my knowledge of other community activities*  
*my interest in participating in programs in my community*  
*my interest in programs that take place after school* |
| Interested and Caring Adults: The perception that there are adults who care about and are interested in teens, and who are available to help teens when they have problems. | *There are adults who are interested in me*  
*I can turn to adults for help*  
*There are adults who will look out for me*  
*Adults are willing to help me with my problems* | *my understanding that there are adults who are interested in me*  
*my understanding that I can turn to adults for help*  
*my understanding that there are adults who will look out for me*  
*my understanding that adults are willing to help me with my problems* |
| Sense of Acceptance and Belonging: The perception of being liked and accepted by other teens and/or family members. | *I am able to get along with friends*  
*There are other children who like me*  
*I am an O.K. person*  
*I am wanted by the people around me* | *my ability to get along with friends*  
*my understanding that there are other children who like me*  
*my knowledge that I am an O.K. person*  
*my understanding that I am wanted by the people around me* |
| High Controls Against Deviant Behavior: The understanding that it is important and necessary to stay out of trouble and obey the rules. | *I must stay out of trouble*  
*I must obey the rules*  
*I will be punished if I break the rules*  
*I must follow the rules if I want to participate* | *my understanding that I must stay out of trouble*  
*my understanding that I must obey the rules*  
*my understanding that I will be punished if I break the rules*  
*my understanding that I must follow the rules if I want to participate* |
| Models for Conventional Behavior: Respect for and appreciation of teens, adults, and institutions who model or reinforce appropriate behavior. | *I respect authority figures*  
*I respect adults*  
*I respect people in charge*  
*I respect children who stay out of trouble* | *my respect for authority figures*  
*my respect for adults*  
*my respect for people in charge*  
*my respect for children who stay out of trouble* |
| Positive Attitude Toward the Future/Future Expectations: Perception of oneself as having a positive future including the willingness to set and work to achieve goals, the willingness to be spontaneous and creative, and the understanding that one has some control over the outcome of daily events. | "I am creative"  
"I can set goals"  
"I can deal with problems that might come up in the future"  
"I like to try new things" | "my ability to be creative"  
"my ability to set goals"  
"my ability to deal with problems that might come up in the future"  
"my ability to try new things" |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Value on Achievement: Interest in and understanding of the importance of doing well in school. Also includes the general idea of being successful and trying to do one's best in any area of involvement. | "I can succeed in life"  
"It is important for me to always do my best"  
"It is important for me to do well at school"  
"It is important for me to stay in school" | "my understanding that I can succeed in life"  
"my understanding of the importance of doing my best"  
"my interest in doing well at school"  
"my interest in staying in school" |
| Ability to Work with Others: Understanding the importance of and having the ability to get along with other teens, be cooperative, and be a good member of a team or group. | "I try to treat other children with respect"  
"Teamwork is important"  
"Cooperation is important"  
"All players need a chance to play" | "my ability to treat other children with respect"  
"my understanding of the importance of teamwork"  
"my understanding of the importance of cooperation"  
"my understanding that all players need a chance to play" |
| Ability to Workout Conflicts: The ability to deal in a positive manner with problems that arise with other teens. | "I try to solve problems in a positive manner"  
"I try to control my anger"  
"I try to listen to the opinions of others"  
"I can settle arguments without fighting" | "my ability to solve problems in a positive manner"  
"my ability to control my anger"  
"my ability to listen to the opinions of others"  
"my ability to settle arguments without fighting" |
| Liking/Perceived Competence: The degree to which one likes to do a particular activity and feels that he/she has the skills to participate successfully. | "I want to keep playing [this activity]"  
"I want to improve my skills [in this activity]"  
"I am interested in [this activity]"  
"I like [this activity]" | "my desire to keep playing [this activity]"  
"my desire to improve my skills [in this activity]"  
"my interest in [this activity]"  
"my liking of [this activity]" |


(Cowen, et. al., 1992); value on achievement, variety of skills, talents, or goals, communication skills, conflict resolution/coping (Cowen, et. al., 1992; Felsman & Vaillant, 1987); and

(4) behavior, e.g., positive use of free time; involvement in school and voluntary clubs (Jessor, 1991, Vandell, et. al., 1995).

The initial list of 17 sub-scale areas was reduced to 10 after discussions with recreation professionals of program goals and expected outcomes associated with a variety of recreation programs (e.g., youth sports programs, after-school programs, teen clubs, and art programs). The discussions with practitioners indicated that a final instrument needed to be sufficiently short so that it would not deter staff or youth participants from using it. Thus, sub-scale areas that were not seen as being common to almost all types of PARD programs and those that were deemed to be lower priority were eliminated. After reviewing the congruence of goals and protective factors which these professionals were seeking to foster, the development team was confident that the sub-scale areas selected for inclusion would be representative of program goals across a wide variety of settings and age groups.

Definitions were developed for each of the ten sub-scales and shared with five additional recreation professionals and three academic colleagues. They reviewed the original 17 sub-scale areas and provided feedback that confirmed the usefulness and potential applicability of the ten which were selected. They also provided feedback about the clarity of the sub-scale area definitions which were incorporated into the developed statements.

Next, a pool of items was developed for each of the ten identified sub-scale areas. The initial pool contained between 8 and 15 items for each of them. The list was reduced by selecting the best worded and most divergent items in each sub-scale group. The selection was done by project team members and by six recreation professionals who had primary responsibilities for different recreation program areas.

Three Texas A&M graduate students who had not been involved in the scale development process to that point were asked to review each sub-scale definition, and then to place each of the draft items, which were randomly presented to them, into one of the 10 sub-scale categories. After this process was completed, discussions were held with the reviewers to ascertain their rationale for placing items in categories that differed from the categorization scheme postulated by the scale developers. Finally, the four to six items in each sub-scale area on which there was most agreement were selected. The sorting and discussion processes were repeated with another group of three graduate students. Only a few additional adjustments in placement of items or wording were necessary in the second round of item validation.

As a final step, the project team selected four items to represent each sub-scale area. The sub-scale definitions and scale items were then shared with the same three academic colleagues who had earlier reviewed the sub-
scale areas and definitions. They were asked to rate the clarity of each sub-scale definition, and whether items were appropriately worded and placed under the appropriate sub-scale. A few wording suggestions were made, but no item deletions or additions were suggested. Based on these various processes, the project team believed that the scale had face and content validity (Lachenmeyer, 1973).

**Scale Utility**

The completed prototype instrument has been used in several studies both by the A&M project team, other consortium members, and the BBM project team. Initial reliability and validity data are promising. The BBM team reported results from two separate studies (Allen & McGovern, 1997), in which the sub-scales showed differences between groups that received specialized programming designed to increase their protective factors compared to control groups which did not receive the programming. This suggested the scale had concurrent validity (Lachenmeyer, 1973). The A&M project team found the scales to be effective outcome measures in studies of after-school programs in Dallas (Witt, 1997a), and in the Totally Cool, Totally Art Program, and the Non-Traditional Program with which the team was involved in Austin (Witt, 1997b & c). In these latter studies, the sub-scales showed positive results in situations where the team anticipated programming would produce positive changes in protective factors, and showed no impact in situations where the team predicted no changes would occur because programs were not designed and structured to increase protective factors (i.e., discriminant validity; Lachenmeyer, 1973).

**Implications of the Protective Factors Model for Developing Recreation Programs**

In addition to facilitating evaluation, the protective factors model provides a starting point for the development of recreation programs. For example, several Austin Park and Recreation Department (APARD) programs, which are part of the department’s overall Social Fabric Initiative, have embraced specific protective factor related program goals, developed specific program elements to achieve these goals, and then utilized relevant sub-scales of the Protective Factors Scale to measure outcomes. An art program developed by the APARD’s Dougherty Arts Center offers a good example of this process in action.

*The Totally Cool, Totally Art Program*

The Totally Cool, Totally Art program (TCTA) was initiated in fall 1996, and is on-going. Through the program, visual arts classes were offered to teens twice a week (Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday) at nine APARD recreation centers. Each session lasted four weeks, and there were six sessions at each site, each featuring a different art medium.

Objectives of the program included providing teens with a safe place to participate in constructive activities and thereby developing a sense of
belonging (Figure 4, Column A). The program was designed to increase teens' art knowledge and skills, and their interest in art as a possible career field. Other objectives were to increase teens' trust and respect for other teens and authority figures, increase teens' ability to work cooperatively and communicate effectively in a group setting, and use art as a medium to stimulate meaningful relationships with adult mentors (both artists and teen leaders).

At each site, the TCTA program began at approximately 4:30 P.M. with a one hour tutoring program or other activity organized by the teen leader at the host center. From 5:30-7:30 P.M., a class in a particular art medium was offered by a practicing artist with the assistance of the teen leader. Participants signed up for as many sessions as they wished. The target group size at each site was 8 to 20 participants. For some of the sessions (clayimation and computer animation) where specialized equipment or facilities were required, teens were transported to the Dougherty Arts Center for that portion of the program. At the end of the program, an Open House was held at which the teens' art work was displayed, and family, friends, and the public were invited to attend.

During the first year of the program, Texas A&M was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of it, which included program workload (participation), efficiency (cost per participant hour), quality (participants' ratings of the quality of selected elements of the program, e.g., program leaders, facilities, etc.), and effectiveness (the degree to which program goals were achieved). The Protective Factors Scale was an important element in the effectiveness portion of the evaluation (Witt, 1997c).

Figure 4 summarizes the program objectives, brief statements of program elements used to achieve the objectives, and the sub-scales of the Protective Factors Scale relevant to measuring program outcomes (Ciccarelli & Pineda, 1997). Other effectiveness measures used in the evaluation process are also noted in the figure. Development of this matrix helped program supervisors, teen leaders, and artists better communicate what they were trying to accomplish through the program, better relate program activities to program goals, and ultimately to see the relevance of particular evaluation strategies. The process kept the program leaders clearly focused on program outcomes. The Texas A&M team is working with APARD in applying this model to program planning and evaluation of several other teen programs. This approach supplies feedback information to APARD staff about the effectiveness of their programming efforts, and it helps funders (in this case the Austin City Council) evaluate the effectiveness of their investment in these programs.

**Concluding Comments**

Four years ago, at the beginning of our work in evaluating at-risk youth programs, all efforts were directed toward measuring outcomes. However, it quickly became obvious that outcomes were dependent on program design and structure. Scott, Witt and Foss (1996) noted, "As recreation
professionals know too well, some programs are better than others” (p. 44). The reasons why some programs were successful in enhancing protective factors and reinforcing resiliency while others were not, were explained by their structure and design.

As work on the project has progressed, most of the effort by the research team has shifted from evaluating the outcomes, to working with leaders before programs are offered to ascertain the outcome objectives. Once desired outcomes have been specified, the programs and structures are designed in such a way that participation in them is likely to lead to the desired outcomes. This is the process described in Figure 4.

In most communities, the parks and recreation agency has the best distribution system available for addressing youth issues. However, in many cases at this time, the recreation programs being offered through that distribution system are inadequate. Too often, there is a belief by elected officials that providing resources for an after-school program, for example, means opening a facility and hiring minimum wage, part-time employees to “baby-sit” the youth and the facility. The end result is likely to contribute little towards building protective factors and creating resiliency.

This inadequacy is partially a function of lack of resources, but it is also partially the result of professionals failing to recognize and articulate to decision makers the business they are in. Almost two decades ago, Howard and Crompton (1980), in their discussion of what business we are in, observed:

“People expend their money and time resources with the expectation of receiving benefits, not the delivered services themselves. People do not buy programs or services, they buy the expectation of benefits. Programs themselves are not marketable. Only their benefits have a value to client groups. The physical service or program is simply a vehicle for the user benefit it conveys...This leads to the significant proposition that the offering of one particular program rather than another may not always be critically important. Rather, it may be the presentation and structuring of a program or service in such a way that this diverse range of benefits may accrue through participation which is important.” (p. 311)

The business we are in when serving youth is defined by the Protective Factors Scale. Selection of the sub-areas that are deemed to be desirable outcomes, guides and directs how a specific program will be designed and structured.

The design and structure of programs constitute real repositioning. This has to precede psychological repositioning. That is, communicating positive outcomes to stakeholders is unlikely to be possible, unless the programs have been designed to produce those desired benefits. One of the dangers inherent in reporting results from the NRPA/NRF projects, is that the findings will be inappropriately generalized. For example, the initial positive findings emerging from the TCTA program should not be viewed as evidence that all arts programs of this type will lead to enhanced youth resilience. The TCTA program is successful because the staff have invested
### Figure 4
**Totally Cool, Totally Art Program Goals, Program Content, and Outcome Evaluation Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Means for Achieving Objectives</th>
<th>Means for Measuring Objectives</th>
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| Safe Places/Sense of Belonging: To increase teens' sense of belonging, and teens' feeling that they have safe, positive, and creative environments in which to participate during available free time. | a) create positive, supportive art class and mentoring environment.  
b) provide environment that respects the creativity and ability of each participant.  
c) provide opportunities for teens to be responsible and making positive choices through their participation in art activities. | Protective Factor sub-scales:  
Neighborhood Resources  
Interested and Caring Adults  
Sense of Acceptance and Belonging  
Other effectiveness measures:  
Repeat attendance, and willingness to recruit other teens to join the program |
| New Experiences: To provide opportunities for new experiences in order to increase participants' knowledge, skills and possible interest in art as a career field. | a) provide opportunities for youth to be exposed to and participate in a variety of art mediums.  
b) provide professional artists and quality arts supplies and equipment for teens to enable and gain an appreciation for and skills in the visual arts.  
c) provide opportunities for teens to expand their imagination, creativity and self-confidence through their involvement in art activities.  
d) provide teens with information about other community arts opportunities and possible career choices for people who are interested in the arts (e.g., resource lists, field trips, guest speakers, planning other arts activities). | Protective Factor sub-scales:  
Neighborhood Resources  
Value on Achievement  
Positive Attitude Toward the Future  
Perceived Competence in Art  
Other effectiveness measures:  
Rating of "Overall, my experience in the program was..." |
| Respect/Trust: To increase teens' trust and respect for other teens, adult mentors, artists, and other authority figures. | a) provide opportunities for youth to interact with adult role models (e.g., center staff, artists, and other adults) who keep their word and create a supportive learning atmosphere.  
b) utilize both recreation center teen leaders and artists as collaborative program leaders so teens can benefit both from contact with different artists while maintaining consistent contact over time with center teen leaders.  
c) provide opportunities for youth to interact with other teens in an environment that encourages respect and trust.  
d) provide opportunities for teens to create and strengthen friendships with other teens.  
e) provide opportunities for teens to learn responsible behavior through care and use of art supplies and equipment and through following curriculum directions and rules.  
f) provide opportunities for teens to act responsibly in the storage and protection of their own and other's art work. | Protective Factor Sub-scales:  
Ability to Work with Others  
Ability to Workout Conflicts  
Models for Conventional Behavior  
Interested and Caring Adults  
High Controls Against Deviant Behavior  
Other effectiveness measures:  
Ratings of:  
Knowledge, teaching ability, and preparation of teen center leaders and artists  
Impact of program on ability to care for art supplies and equipment, care for my own art work and art work of others, and respect the artistic and creative choices of others |
| **Team Work/Communication:** To increase teens' ability to work cooperatively with other teens and communicate effectively in a group. | a) encourage opportunities for teens to share ideas, supplies, and other resources and to resolve problems and conflicts through collaborative efforts.  
   b) provide opportunities for teens to improve their ability to communicate and gain feedback about their ideas, thoughts, emotions, and experiences through their art work.  
   c) provide opportunities for teens to learn about the activities and involvements of other program participants through program newsletters.  
   d) provide opportunities to gain knowledge about and better understand cultural diversity through discussion of art from various cultures and historical periods. | **Protective Factor sub-scales:**  
   Ability to Workout Conflicts  
   Ability to Work with Others  
   High Controls Against Deviant Behavior |
| **Art Education:** To increase teen's ability to make creative and positive choices through self-expression. | a) provide an opportunity for teens to learn new or strengthen existing visual arts education concepts and skills.  
   b) provide opportunities for teens to make creative choices about the content and product of their own artistic endeavors.  
   c) provide opportunities to discuss and analyze the criteria and decision making processes used to select art work for exhibition at the open house.  
   d) provide opportunities for teens to gain recognition and increase their pride in their accomplishments through exhibiting selective art work at the culminating open house event.  
   e) provide experiences through the arts that relate to math, history, language, etc. and thereby increase interest in school. | **Protective Factor sub-scales:**  
   Positive Attitude Toward the Future  
   Perceived Art Competence  
   Other effectiveness measures, ratings of:  
   Impact of program on ability to use imagination, share ideas with others, finish projects that start |
considerable thought, effort, and resources into structuring the program so the desired benefits emerge. In addition, what the staff has learned from the initial evaluation of the project is being used to undertake revisions to further enhance program impact in succeeding years.

It is fallacious and misleading for agencies to cite benefits documented elsewhere as evidence that their own programs will automatically produce similar benefits. Evidence of benefits in one context is indicative only of a program’s potential in a different context. That potential will not be realized if the program is not consciously structured to produce the desired outcomes.

In this regard, publications such as Benefits Catalogs provide a useful service in raising awareness of the potential of park and recreation programs. They may provide the impetus needed for agencies to acquire the resources necessary to engage in real repositioning of their services. However, it is important to emphasize to elected officials that these benefits accrue only if sufficient resources in staff, facilities, and equipment are made available. Simply, offering programs at the level of “fun and games” is unlikely to yield the desired benefits.

References


