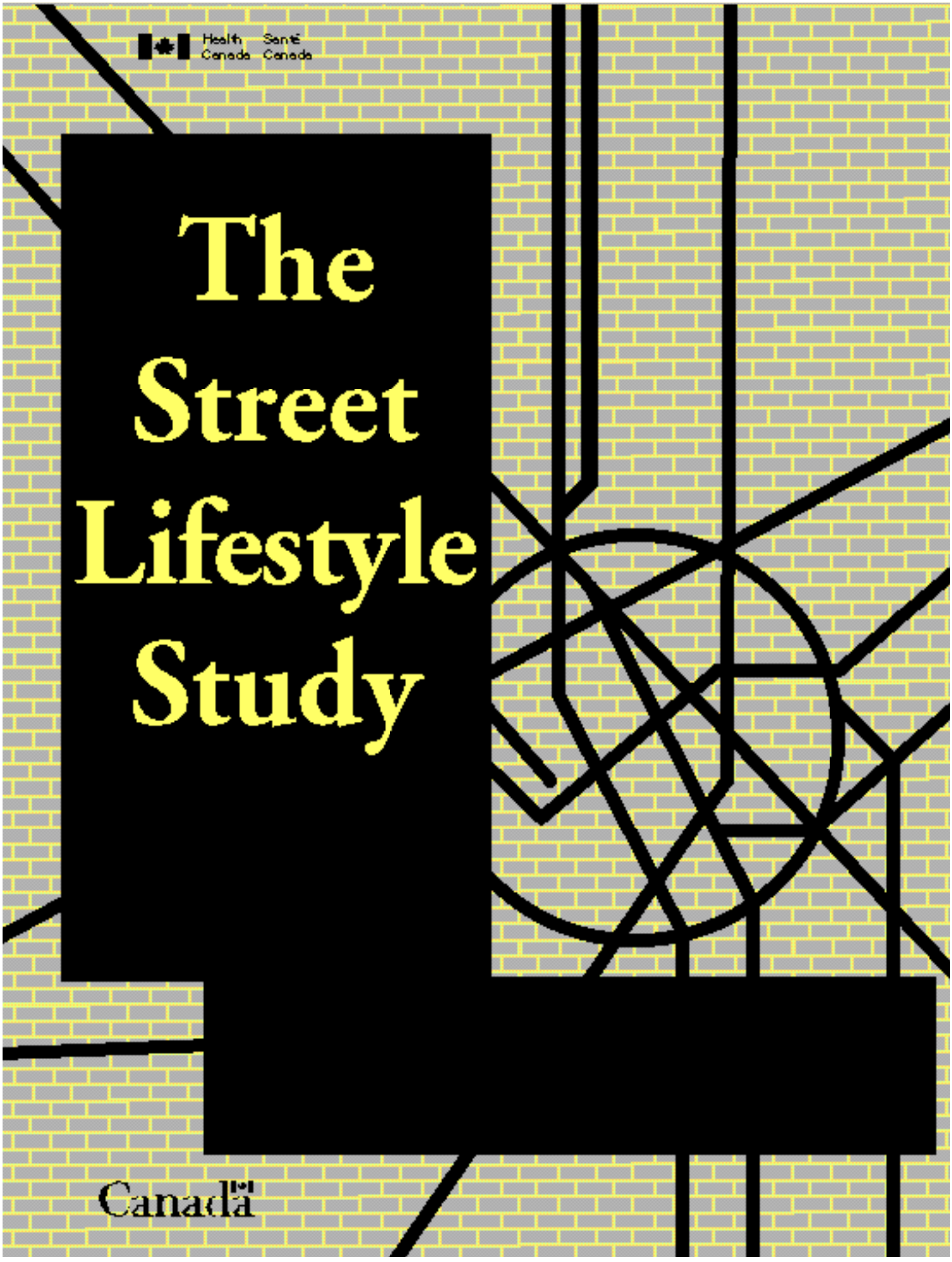
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canada's drug strategy

The Street Lifestyle Study

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Health Canada

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Dedication

There are certain rare individuals who possess the ability to inspire and energize the people around them. Dick Weiler was one of those exceptional individuals. For over 30 years, he worked tirelessly to promote the cause of social justice. Both as a community volunteer and in his professional life, Dick expressed his steadfast commitment to building a better, more caring and more humane society. Whether this involved his work in literacy, social development, crime prevention or youth at risk, he celebrated his belief in people and his optimism for the future.

Dick Weiler passed away in July 1995, shortly after this project was completed. Those of us who had the good fortune of knowing and working with him will always be inspired by his indomitable spirit. This report is dedicated to him in the hope that it reflects, in some small way, the values and beliefs he held so dear.

T.C., March, 1996

Acknowledgments

A special thanks is due to the many young people who shared intimate details about themselves with us. Their willingness to answer difficult questions in a thoughtful and candid way helped us to better understand them and their experiences. It is hoped that the knowledge they shared will assist in the development of better ways of responding to youth at risk.

A special thanks as well to the youth serving agencies and their staffs who worked so diligently on our behalf. They made us feel welcome and allowed us to share the benefits of their considerable experience working with young people. This report is much richer because of their participation.

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a research project designed to examine the antecedents to street involvement and to identify prevention strategies aimed at young people who are at risk of going to the street. The study also examined factors that keep young people on the street and factors that may represent barriers to leaving the street. Intervention strategies for assisting young people in getting off the street and factors that facilitate the transition to mainstream society were also considered.

The primary target population for this study was out-of-the-mainstream youth (Anderson 1993). A major characteristic of this segment of the high-risk youth population is involvement in the street lifestyle. This involvement can include participation in illegal activities, alcohol and other drug use, participation in high-risk sexual activities, and facing the hazards of living in marginal circumstances.

Research sites were identified in each of the five federal regions, including the Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairie and Pacific regions. Major agencies providing services to street youth in each of the sites participated in the project. Seventy young people identified by the participating agencies were interviewed for this study. Selection criteria for participants included being between 14 and 24 years of age, having lived on the street for a period of at least one year, having been extensively involved in the street lifestyle and having been off the street and in a stable living situation for at least one year.

The results of this study indicate that street youth are a heterogeneous group. They come to the street by a variety of paths. They have different experiences reflecting their different personal characteristics and backgrounds. Whether in the pre-street, on-street or transition stage, some are able to meet the challenges they face. Others, however, are less able to deal effectively with such challenges. In some cases, the street is seen by these young people as the safest place to be, and going to the street represents the only viable alternative to an abusive and dangerous home situation.

Many of the respondents described their family situations prior to going to the street as intolerable. They reported conflict at home ranging from arguing and fighting to cases involving psychological, physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Antecedent risk factors also included poor self-image, involvement with delinquent peers, personal contact with the police and negative school experiences.

The respondents identified a number of common characteristics of street life when they were asked about the factors that kept them on the street. Their answers suggested that the freedom that comes with living on the street gives them a sense of power and self-determination. The respondents also noted the importance of being accepted and having friends who would "look out for them." Finally, the attraction of the street involves participating in what these young people regard as an exciting lifestyle, in which money and access to alcohol and other drugs are important. These same factors were mentioned as barriers that make it difficult to leave the street.

Factors related to making a successful transition off the street included a decent place to live, a decent job and access to appropriate services. Access to supportive individuals, increasing feelings of self-esteem and working with a supportive social organization were also mentioned as important to a successful transition.

The findings presented in this study suggest that opportunities exist for positive intervention with some of these young people prior to their going to the street, while they are on the street and as they are making the transition off the street. Many respondents emphasized the need for outreach workers to be patient and consistent in their contacts with street youth. They said it was important that agency staff keep offering to help and not give up on them. They indicated that young people need to be motivated to make the decision to leave the street and that various circumstances or factors, such as a crisis or disillusionment with this way of life, could foster such motivation. Once the decision to leave the street is made, it is important that appropriate services are available.

Finally, it is important to consider the social needs of these young people once they have made the transition to mainstream society. One of the strong attractions of the street is the acceptance provided by street friends and street families. If social isolation and not fitting in leads young people to the street, these same factors may lead people back to the street after they have made the transition. Being sensitive to a wide range of needs includes taking into consideration the need for these young people to fit in socially once they have started the transition to the mainstream.

I. Introduction

During the past decade, increasing attention has been paid to the numerous challenges facing young people in Canada. In particular, high-risk segments of the youth population, such as runaways and street youth, have been the focus of ongoing research and program initiatives. Health Canada has been actively involved with this high-risk group through various activities undertaken as part of Canada's Drug Strategy and other departmental efforts. The Department has used the term "out-of-the-mainstream youth" to refer to these young people (see Anderson 1993). The current project was designed to contribute to departmental knowledge by seeking a greater understanding of the factors that can prevent young people from going to the street or assist them in making the transition back to mainstream society. These factors include both the antecedent risk factors associated with the adoption of the street lifestyle and the factors that are related to leaving this way of life.

Canadian researchers have described various aspects of the street youth and runaways population (Anderson 1993; Brannigan and Caputo 1993; Caputo, Weiler and Kelly 1994; Fisher 1992; Kufeldt 1991; Kufeldt and Burrows 1994; Kufeldt and Nimmo 1987; Kufeldt and Perry 1989; Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 1990). Many of these studies provide descriptions of the demographic characteristics of this population, such as the number of young people on the street, their age and their gender.

Estimates of the size of the Canadian street youth population vary widely. One study suggests that there are approximately 150,000 runaways in Canada (Radford et al. 1989). This compares to figures released by the Coalition of Youth Work Professionals that puts the upper limit of street youth in Toronto under the age of 24 at about 5,000 persons. By contrast, the Evergreen Drop-in Centre, an agency working extensively with street youth in Toronto, suggests that there are 12,000 young people living on the street in the city (McCullagh and Greco 1990).

Many of the difficulties encountered in doing research on this elusive group of young people are brought into focus when attempting to describe the age of the street youth population (see Brannigan and Caputo 1993). These difficulties include developing an appropriate definition, deciding whom to include in this definition, gaining access to them to carry out the research and deciding where to establish the upper and lower age limits of those defined as street youth. In most Canadian studies, the lower age of youth on the street has been placed at 12, while the upper age limit has been set at 24 (McCullagh and Greco 1990; Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 1990). In many cases, these limits reflect legally defined limits or ages identified in the mandates of youth-serving agencies working with the target population.

Many of these studies also report on the numbers of males and females on the street. Most common estimates indicate that there are more males than females on the street, but this cannot be definitely verified. However, there are indications that, compared to males, females on the street are more likely to be located at the lower end of the age range (Janus et al. 1987; Kufeldt et al. 1988; Smart et al. 1990; Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 1990).

The Canadian research documents various aspects of the experiences of street youth and the street lifestyle. McCullagh and Greco (1990), for example, describe the involvement of Toronto street youth in various illegal activities, including prostitution, theft, robbery, shoplifting, drug dealing and panhandling. The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (1990) also reports that street youth have extensive contacts with the police. This study indicates that street youth are involved in prostitution, drug dealing, theft, robbery, joy riding, shoplifting, forgery and fraud. The issue of street youth involvement in delinquent and criminal activities was also explored in a study by McCarthy (1990), who found that the Toronto street youth he studied participated in serious theft, narcotics trafficking and prostitution. This research was followed up by a study by McCarthy and Hagan (1991), which examined factors related to street youth involvement with the police.

Canadian research on street youth has also addressed the health risks associated with the street lifestyle. For example, a number of studies have focused on street youth and their exposure to the threat presented by AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (Radford et al. 1989). Other research has examined the use of alcohol and other drugs by street youth (McCullagh and Greco 1990; Smart et al. 1990; Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 1990). This research has identified the abuse of alcohol and other drugs by those involved in the street lifestyle.

As this brief review shows, there is a sizable body of research available on the characteristics and experiences of street youth. Little research, however, has taken a comprehensive perspective on (1) the antecedent risk factors that lead youth to adopt the street lifestyle, (2) the factors involved in making the transition off the streets and (3) the implications of antecedents and transition factors for developing effective intervention strategies.

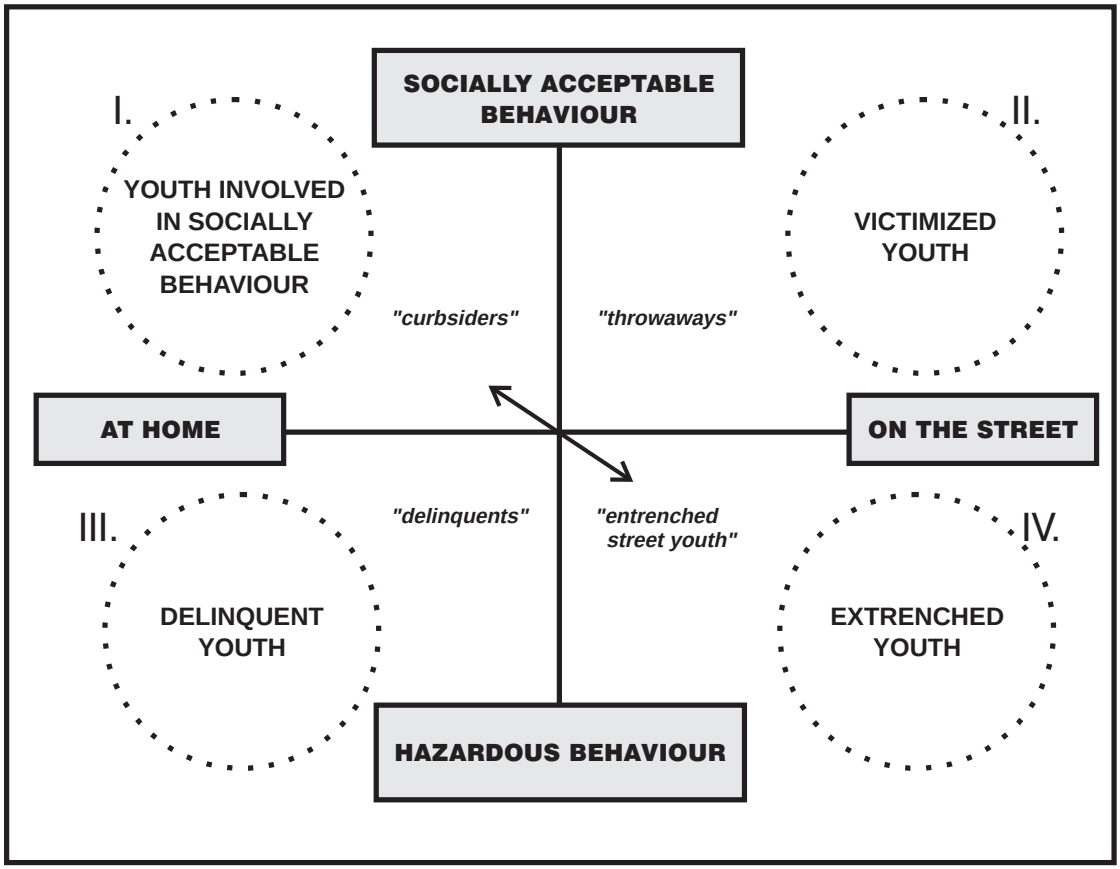
This report presents the results of a research project designed to examine the antecedents to street involvement and to identify prevention strategies aimed at young people who are at risk of going to the street. The study also examined factors that keep young people on the street and factors that may represent barriers to young people attempting to leave the street. Intervention strategies for assisting young people in getting off the street were also considered.

It should be noted that while youth who adopt the street lifestyle have varying degrees of resiliency, this study does not focus on resiliency per se. High or low resiliency may influence how readily and effectively a youth can make the transition off the street when motivated to make this change. The transition may take much longer and barriers may be much more difficult to surmount for a youth who has a low level of resiliency than for one who has a high level of resiliency.

2. Who Are the Out-of-the-Mainstream Youth?

The primary target population for this study was out-of-the-mainstream youth. Brannigan and Caputo (1993) have developed a model that is useful in identifying the characteristics of this segment of the high-risk youth population (see Figure 1). Their model is based on the intersection of two continua: the first measures involvement in the street lifestyle; the second measures time spent on the street. Involvement in the street lifestyle can include participation in illegal activities such as stealing, shoplifting or breaking and entering. A major reason for involvement in such activities is to acquire the resources needed to meet basic needs while living on the street. In addition, participation in the street lifestyle involves alcohol and other drug use, participating in high-risk sexual activities and facing the hazards of living in marginal circumstances. These hazards include violence and other threats to a person's physical and emotional well-being that arise from the living conditions experienced on the street.

Figure 1.
A Model for Understanding Runaways and Street Youth



The meaning of "mainstream society" reflects the assumptions underlying the continua described above. While no specific lifestyle or practice is associated with the mainstream, the concept does imply participation in socially acceptable behaviour and the avoidance of activities that are deemed unacceptable or illegal. For most young people, acceptable behaviour includes meeting the social expectations of going to school or having a job. It does not include living by one's wits on the street or being involved in high-risk alcohol use, other drug use or the sex trade. The concept further implies some degree of social stability and continuity in living arrangements. Most young people are expected to live under parental authority (or under the guidance of another responsible adult, such as a guardian) until such time as they embark on a career and can support themselves. In making this statement, it is recognized that, while not specifically under parental authority, some youth in their late teens or early 20s must continue to rely on parental financial support for post-secondary education or because current economic conditions mean that they cannot obtain employment. Again, no specific definition of "the mainstream" is provided. Nonetheless, the notion of "mainstream" as it is being used here implies that a certain degree of social stability and continuity exists in one's living arrangements.

Brannigan and Caputo (1993) conceptualize the target population as being on a continuum ranging from "curbsiders" at one end to "entrenched street youth" at the other. Curbsiders are young people who spend a considerable amount of time on the street and who participate in various activities associated with street life. Entrenched street youth are young people who live in extremely marginal situations and are extensively involved in the street lifestyle. These two groups differ in that curbsiders usually have a home connection while entrenched street youth do not (Anderson 1993).

This continuum suggests that, contrary to existing stereotypes, so-called street youth are not a homogeneous group. Instead, they come from a variety of backgrounds with a range of personal qualities, needs and experiences. These high-risk youth are exposed to different risk factors predisposing them to becoming involved in the various hazards associated with street life. The young people on the street have varying skills and resources. Some are more resilient than others and are better able to deal with the challenges they meet.

The nature and extent of involvement in street life also varies for young people at different points along the continuum. For example, while some curbsiders may be marginally involved in some of the various activities associated with street life, most entrenched street youth have extensive involvement in most if not all of these risky and dangerous practices. This variation has important implications for service providers, given the potential diversity in the needs of different members of such a heterogeneous group.

As previously noted, this study was concerned with two types of interventions: (1) those possible before young people go to the street and (2) those that are appropriate for assisting young people in exiting the street and making the transition to mainstream society. Little is currently known about what can be done to prevent street involvement. Various prevention strategies were considered in this study, including ones related to individual needs, family circumstances and school experiences.

Similarly, little is currently known about what can assist young people in making the transition to mainstream society. Questions were asked in this study about the types of services needed by street youth to assist them in making this transition. These transition services differ in significant ways from other services available to young people on the street, such as crisis intervention or maintenance services. Crisis intervention services provide for the immediate and pressing needs of street youth; they include such things as emergency medical care and some mental health services. Maintenance services, in comparison, meet the ongoing needs for such necessities as food, shelter and clothing. Both of these types of services differ from transition services, which are designed to assist street youth who have made the decision and have the motivation to leave the street. Transition services include substance abuse counselling, other personal counselling, life skills training, employment preparation programs, educational upgrading and other related services.

As noted above, questions of both preventive interventions and transition interventions were addressed in this study. Throughout, the researchers bore in mind that the target population is not homogeneous but reflects significant variations in personal resiliency and in the nature and extent of participation in the street lifestyle, which, in turn, indicate a variety of service needs.

3. What We Did: Methodology

Two primary research questions were addressed by this project: (1) What are the antecedent risk factors that lead young people to adopt the street lifestyle? (2) What are the factors that influence young people making the transition off the street? The implications of both the antecedent and the transition factors were assessed in the context of developing appropriate and effective intervention strategies.

The study design included the use of in-depth interviews with young people who had made a successful transition off the street. These individuals were asked to reflect upon their experiences prior to going to the street, while on the street and during the transition off the street. They were queried as to what, if anything, could have prevented them from going to the street in the first place. They were also asked what could have eventually facilitated their achieving social stability.

A potential research site was identified in each of the five federal regions including the Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairie and British Columbia regions. The selection of potential sites was made in consultation with representatives from Health Canada, key informants in each region and the research team's prior knowledge of communities in each region. Potential sites were identified on the basis of their having sizable street youth populations. Key informants were then consulted to assist in identifying the major agencies providing services to street youth in each of the potential sites. These agencies were contacted about their interest in participating in this project. Agencies were invited to participate if they had access to the target population, interest in the study and the capability of meeting the study requirements.

The research design was based on the selection of a convenience sample by staff in agencies that work with the target population. A convenience sample represented the most viable way of gaining access to a sufficiently large number of individuals who met the eligibility criteria established for inclusion in the study and who were willing to participate. While a convenience sample is not representative of all street youth in any given community who have made a successful transition off the street, the exploratory nature of this study justified such a sampling strategy as both practical and appropriate.

Each of the participating agencies was asked to select a sample of 10 to 15 former street youth. Agency staff were instructed to examine agency files and identify potential subjects on the basis of predetermined eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria included the following requirements:

- Potential subjects had to have been previously living on the street and integrally involved in the street lifestyle for at least one year.
- They had to have been off the street and in a stable living situation for at least one year.
- They had to be between 14 and 29 years of age.

It should also be noted that approximately equal numbers of male and female subjects were sought in the sample selection process.

Once agency staff had identified a pool of potential subjects from their files, they contacted these individuals and administered a one-page questionnaire to confirm that the potential subjects met the eligibility criteria. If the potential subjects did meet the criteria, they were asked if they were interested in participating in the study and informed that a nominal fee of $15 was available for completing an interview. Agency staff worked with a member of the research team to develop a list of subjects to be invited to participate. These individuals were contacted by agency staff, who scheduled interviews.

An interview schedule was constructed consisting of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. It was designed to address the two basic research questions previously mentioned and was pre-tested with both young people and service providers. Debriefing sessions were held with subjects during the pre-test phase, and suggestions made at that time were incorporated into the final instrument (see Appendix).

The authors of this report administered the final interview schedule to the people who met the eligibility criteria for inclusion in this study. Interviews were conducted in the offices of the host agencies at each of the five study sites. Each interview took about one to one and a half hours to complete. Answers were recorded verbatim during the interview sessions. After the interviews, the interviewers debriefed each participant, discussing the project and its purpose. This debriefing provided an opportunity to further explore issues of concern in this study.

The authors of this report also conducted informal interviews with staff members in the participating agencies. Issues arising from the interviews were explored with agency staff. Key ideas were tested, including patterns that were beginning to appear in the data, such as the variations that exist in the street youth population and the different paths that young people take in going to the street. Agency staff were also asked to consider issues related to the experience that street youth have in making the transition to mainstream society. Specific information was sought about the possible interventions that might prevent young people from going to the street. As well, agency staff were questioned about factors that keep young people on the street, factors that represent potential barriers to exiting the street and factors that contribute to a successful transition from the street.

Seventy interviews were completed for this study: 19 in Halifax, 12 in Montréal, 15 in Ottawa, 13 in Calgary and 11 in Vancouver. An equal number of male (35) and female (35) respondents were interviewed. The age of the respondents ranged from 16 to 31. Although the 31-year-old respondent was outside the target age group, it was decided to include her on the basis of her extensive knowledge of the street and her experience in making the transition to the mainstream. The average age of the respondents was 21.6 years; their median age was 21.

3.1 Study Limitations

The study has a number of limitations, which are related mainly to the challenges encountered in deriving and gaining access to the desired sample of the target population. For example, the actual size of the street youth population nationally or in particular cities is unknown. Further, organizations that work directly with these young people—the youth serving agencies—often have no data on the numbers and identities of youth who have successfully made the transition off the street over, say, a one-year period. Consequently, an exhaustive list of the target population needed to select a random sample was not available. Moreover, even if such an exhaustive list could have been developed, gaining access to these individuals would still have posed a problem given that they are very mobile and that they may be reluctant to discuss their past.

A related limitation of this study is the small sample size. The exploratory nature of the study and the resources available to undertake the project influenced our determination of sample size. Additionally, however, the sample size was affected by the number of individuals who fit the study's eligibility criteria and who were known to the participating youth-serving agencies. In many instances, participating agencies exhausted their pool of potential subjects to meet our request of identifying 10 to 15 suitable individuals. In some communities, subjects had to be garnered from two agencies working with street youth to achieve the requisite sample.

The lack of a random sample and the small sample size limit our ability to generalize from the study findings. However, a number of factors suggest that the sample is representative of the young people in Canada who have made a successful transition off the street. First, the research team is familiar with the target population and its characteristics, having conducted quite a number of research projects focusing on this population. Second, specific requests were made of agency staff to identify subjects who were representative of their client population. While having agency staff identify respondents introduced the potential for sampling bias, there are few other practical means available to identify and contact subjects who meet the eligibility criteria established for this study. Steps taken during the sampling process were intended to minimize systematic bias and to ensure that the sample was as representative of the target population as possible. Given these procedures, we are fairly confident that the study results do reflect the experiences of young people who have made the transition off the street.

4. Experiences Before Going to the Street

The first major research goal of this study was to examine the risk factors in the environments of the target population to ascertain the importance of various antecedent risk factors to going to the street. To explore these antecedents, the respondents were asked about their personal backgrounds, home situations and experiences at school prior to going to the street. Their responses to these questions were then linked to their decision to go to the street, their experiences on the street and their experiences in making the transition off the street.

4.1 Pre-Street Self-Image

Respondents were asked a series of questions exploring the perceptions they had of themselves prior to going to the street. The responses revealed that 20 (28.6%) of the 70 respondents answering this question had very positive self-images before adopting the street lifestyle. What follows is a typical positive response:

> *I guess I was full of life. I enjoyed learning. ... [I] felt pretty good about myself.*

By contrast, 50 of the respondents (71.4%) had a very negative self-image prior to going to the street. Here are examples of what some of them said:

> *I didn't like myself very much. I was contemplating suicide. I played with knives. I liked to hurt myself. [My] drug use was increasing.*

> *I felt horrible. I hated myself. I felt stupid. I hated my body; I hated my looks. I looked inside and I was disgusted. I never felt accepted.*

Respondents were asked about their interactions with others. Twenty six (37.7%) of the 69 respondents answering identified themselves as loners, while 43 (61.4%) considered themselves to be part of a group of friends. While some of the young people who identified themselves as loners were very self-confident, what we observed was a category of loners who had low self-esteem. This variable was dichotomized on the basis of positive or negative expressions of self-esteem.

The respondents were also asked about the groups they identified with prior to going to the street. These groups ranged from very negative, street-involved groups such as "druggies" or "hookers" to mainstream groups such as "preppies" or "average" youth. Here, again, we dichotomized this variable according to positive or negative group affiliation.

A composite variable measuring self-image was constructed by combining responses on the following items: (1) how the respondents felt about themselves, (2) whether they identified themselves as loners and (3) which groups they identified with. The frequency distribution for this composite variable indicated that 20 of the 60 (33.3%) respondents who answered this question had a positive pre-street self-image, while 40 (66.6%) had a negative pre-street self-image. Ten respondents had missing information on one or more of the three variables and were not included in measuring this variable. This composite measure of self-image was used in subsequent analyses undertaken in this study.

4.2 Pre-Street Family Experience

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their family experiences prior to going to the street. Several patterns emerged during the interviews. To begin with, 13 (19.1%) of the 68 respondents who answered this question indicated that things were fine at home before they went to the street. For example, one respondent said,

> *Everything was great at home. [I] had grown up in a small town. ... [I] felt it was boring and would like to find the world.*

Another said,

> *When I think about it now, it was pretty normal, a pretty good living situation.*

An additional 7 respondents (10.0%) reported that either a lack of resources or parental neglect marked their experiences at home. An example of this type of response is as follows:

> *It was really hard on my mom. My mom had enough to deal with. Welfare made her leave two jobs to go on $400 a month, so there wasn't much food in the house.*

Two types of family conflict were noted. The first focused on conflict arising from a rejection of familial values by the young person involved. The conflict in this case consisted of arguing (e.g., arguing over a curfew) but did not involve physical abuse. A total of 27 (39.7%) of the respondents reported having this type of family experience. A second type of more serious conflictual family situation was reported by 21 (30.9%) of the respondents. In these cases, the young people experienced identifiable harm, which included verbal, physical or sexual abuse or some combination of these. Many of these young people described their family situations as intolerable. In these cases, the street was seen as a viable alternative to remaining at home, as indicated by the following responses:

> *My dad used to hit me a lot. Basically punch me first then ask questions later. [There was] lots of conflict between kids and parents.*

> *I wanted to get away from her because the abuse was so bad. ... A few times I wanted to kill her. There was a lot of resentment and hate.*

When asked if circumstances at home affected their decision to go to the street, 55 (78.6%) of the 70 respondents indicated that it had affected their decision to leave.

4.3 Pre-Street Involvement with Street and Delinquent Peers

Other antecedent risk factors associated with going to the street were examined, including (1) involvement with delinquent peers and (2) personal contact with the police. The findings indicate that 45 (64.3%) of the 70 respondents were involved with delinquent peers prior to going to the street. When asked about their own experiences, 32 (46.4%) of the 69 respondents who answered this question reported personal contact with the police prior to going to the street. The reasons for involvement with the police varied: 19 (59.3%) respondents were involved in property crime such as shoplifting or break and enter, 7 (21.8%) were involved in assaults, and 6 (18.6%) gave other reasons. Finally, 41 (58.6%) of the 70 respondents indicated that they had had a connection with someone with street experience prior to going to the street. This may have made their decision to go to the street much easier than if they had not had this type of contact.

4.4 Pre-Street School Experience

One factor that has been reported consistently in the literature on youth at risk is the impact of their school experience. In this study, subjects were asked to describe their overall experience in school. This included identifying what they considered to be the most positive and the most negative things about school. As well, respondents were asked about their academic performance and the impact that home life may have had on their overall school experience.

The interviews revealed that many of the young people had negative experiences at school. When asked to describe their overall experiences at school 17 (24.6%) of the 69 respondents who answered this question said their experiences were positive, while 52 (75.4%) said they were negative. The following quotations are examples of some of the answers given in response to this question.

> *I hated school. I didn't feel accepted. I wasn't treated as a person. No one cared to look at me, just at how I dressed. They looked at us and said, "There's a loser." ... Having peers and teachers treat me like a worthless piece of shit ... I was always about a C+ student but I just got through 8, 9 and 10.*
>
> *Bad. ... [I was] picked on all the time. Most of the time because of the way I dressed. I was always really quiet. I was different. I never fit in.*
>
> *[I] had no friends. [I] didn't fit in. [It was] really cliquey .*
>
> *I changed schools a lot and never really felt I belonged. I never fit into any of the cliques. The people I clicked with at my last high school were the ones I went downtown with.*

I was an honours student. ... My marks were more to impress my parents than for my own benefit.

My grades were not that good, a C average. ... It wasn't [just what was going on at home], it was two bad things. I'd go to school and be scared at school and I'd go home and I'd be scared [there].

Feelings of isolation and not fitting in or bonding with the school environment were common among the respondents who had negative experiences, as the quotations demonstrate. For these respondents, fitting in meant being accepted by other students, being accepted by teachers and feeling a part of the learning process in such a way that the subjects being taught had some relevance and interest for them.

Interestingly, 31 (44.3%) of the 70 respondents reported positive academic performances, while 39 (55.7%) said they had a poor academic record. The large number of respondents who reported doing well academically contradicts the commonly held stereotype that street youth are essentially school failures. However, when asked if they had ever dropped out of school, the majority—that is, 64 (91.4%) of 70—indicated that they had.

The respondents were asked to identify what they considered to be the most positive thing about their school experience. A range of responses was given, including 23 (32.9%) of the 70 respondents who identified friends as the most positive aspect, 12 (17.1%) who liked a particular subject, 10 (14.3%) who enjoyed the learning experience, 8 (11.4%) who said a particular teacher was the most positive thing, 7 (10.0%) who referred to participation in sports or gym class and 3 (4.3%) who said feeling safe was the most positive thing about school. Only 7 (10.0%) respondents stated that nothing about their school experience was positive.

Responses about the most negative thing about school were much more consistent. The most frequent response was not getting along with peers, teachers or both. This response was given by 38 (56.7%) of the 67 respondents who answered this question. In addition, 20 (29.9%) reported that they felt isolated at school. Only 3 (4.5%) of the respondents said that everything about school was negative, and the remaining 6 (9.0%) gave other responses. Taken together, not getting along with teachers and peers and feeling isolated accounted for 86.6% of the responses.

4.5 Preventing Adoption of the Street Lifestyle

The findings on antecedent risk factors discussed above suggest several possibilities for preventive interventions prior to street involvement. When asked if anything could have prevented them from going to the street, 44 (62.8%) of the 70 respondents said that some support could have helped, while 26 (37.1%) said that nothing would have made a difference. Access to appropriate services was identified as a need, as was personal support from a caring adult or peer. Twenty-one (47.8%) of the 44 respondents who said something could have helped stated that they could have benefited from counselling for personal

problems, substance abuse, anger management or life skills training. The following is typical of these responses:

> *A place where kids can go to crash and get food—where there's counselling staff to talk to you and talk to your parents. Sometimes it's not okay to go back home. [You need] a middle ground. A place where it is not social services. ... It also depends on the counsellors. You need the best—it's really bad when they're there for the money and not because they really care.*

An additional 19 (43.2%) stated that interventions directed at families could have helped. This included family counselling aimed at resolving or ameliorating existing family problems. One young person gave the following response:

> *I knew there was something I wanted. I think there should be some intervention in the home. Yeah, you'd be sent to a psychiatrist and be safe for a while, but when you leave you're going home to the same thing. More family counselling. Just to know my mom showed up—that was a sign of hope right there.*

Only 4 respondents (9.0%) said that financial resources could have prevented them from going to the street. This is illustrated by the following quotation:

> *If I would have been more financially stable, I probably wouldn't have gone to the streets.*

The findings outlined above show that young people who go to the street are not a homogeneous group. They differ in self-image as well as in their family and school experiences prior to going to the street. We looked for patterns in the relationships between these antecedent risk variables and the factors that could have prevented them from going to the street. First, we compared the experiences of male and female respondents on antecedent risk variables (see tables 1a and 1b).

Table 1a shows the results of a comparison of male and female respondents on measures of pre-street self-image. Males had more negative pre-street self-images than females, although this was found to be a weak and positive relationship with a phi* of .18. Twenty (69.0%) of the 29 males versus 16 (51.6%) of the 31 females had negative pre-street self-images. As previously noted, pre-street self-image was not calculated for the 10 respondents who did not answer one or more of the three questions used in computing this composite variable.

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* Statistical significance is not reported here since this was not a random sample. Instead, the phi statistic is used, which gives an approximation of the percentage of variance being explained. Phi measures the strength of the association of the relationship based on the chi square statistic. Cramer's V is used when dealing with tables larger than two by two because it takes into account the number of rows and columns. The phi statistic is given when a two-by-two table is used.

Table 1b presents data on the relationship between gender and pre-street family experience. This relationship was found to be moderate and positive with a phi of .23. Responses to the pre-street family experience question were dichotomized on the basis of whether the respondents reported that things had been fine at home versus reporting that there had been serious problems at home. In this case, 15 (44.1%) of 34 males and 8 (22.9%) of 35 females said that things were fine at home. Conversely, 19 (55.9%) of 34 males and 27 (77.1%) of 35 females reported experiencing serious problems at home.

Table 1a.
Gender by Pre-Street Self-Image

	Male N=29	**Female N=31**
Positive pre-street self-image	9 31.0%	15 48.4%
Negative pre-street self-image	20 69.0%	16 51.6%
	100%	100%

N = 60 ***Missing data = 10*** ***Phi = .18***

Table 1b.
Gender by Pre-Street Family Experience

	Male N=34	**Female N=35**
Things were fine	15 44.1%	8 22.9%
Serious problems existed	19 55.9%	27 77.1%
	100%	100%

N = 69 ***Missing data = 1*** ***Phi = .23***

The serious problems identified ranged from those related to parental substance abuse, to being physically, sexually or verbally abused, to being ignored or neglected. The following quotations illustrate some of the serious problems experienced by these young people at home prior to going to the street:

> *Dysfunctional. ... My father's an alcoholic. My mother is an abuser—mentally and physically. I had it very hard when I was growing up.*
>
> *My dad used to hit me a lot. Basically punch me first then ask questions later. Lots of conflict between kids and parents.*
>
> *Iffy. ... Just not getting along with my stepdad. My mother had a choice of picking him or us. She picked him, but we were allowed to live there. It was really uncomfortable. Fighting and arguing all the time.*
>
> *My mother was never home. She was working nights. She was waitressing. She was an alcoholic. [She was always] screaming at us, constantly putting us down.*

Next we compared the responses given by males and females on how their home experiences influenced their decisions to go to the street (Table 1c). A moderate positive relationship was found with a Cramer's V of .36. The results show that 7 (20.6%) of the 34 males but only 3 (8.6%) of the 35 females wanted to get out on their own. Also, 16 (47.1%) of the 34 males compared to 21 (60.0%) of the 35 females reported intolerable family situations. Such situations were the most important factor influencing the decisions of both males and females to go to the street.

Table 1c.
Gender by How Pre-Street Family
Experience Influenced Decision to Go to the Street

	Male N=34	**Female N=35**
Got out on my own	7 20.6%	3 8.6%
It was intolerable	16 47.1%	21 60.0%
Other	3 8.8%	5 14.3%
Didn't affect decision	8 23.5%	6 17.1%
	100%	100%

N = 69 ***Missing data = 1*** ***Cramer's V = .36***

We then compared responses to questions on pre-street self-image, family experience and school experience to responses concerning what could have kept these young people from going to the street (see tables 2a, 2b and 2c).

A weak positive relationship exists between pre-street self-image and factors that could have kept these young people from going to the street (Table 2a). The findings produced a Cramer's V of .15. There was little difference in the responses of young people with positive pre-street self-images compared to those with negative pre-street self-images about what could have prevented them from going to the street. For example, while 8 (23.5%) of the 34 respondents with positive pre-street self-images said that help for themselves could have been beneficial, 12 (33.3%) of the 36 respondents with negative pre-street self-images said the same thing. The percentages for the "help for family" and "nothing could have helped" categories also showed little difference. This is contrary to what might have been expected. Young people with a negative pre-street self-image might have been expected to say that nothing could have helped. Conversely, young people with positive pre-street self-images might have been expected to have said the opposite.

Table 2a.
Pre-Street Self-Image by What Could Have Kept Young Person from Going to the Street

	Positive pre-street self-image N=24	**Negative pre-street self-image N=36**
Help for self	8 33.3%	12 33.3%
Help for family	7 29.2%	11 30.5%
Nothing could help	9 37.5%	13 36.1%
	100%	100%

N = 60 ***Missing data = 10*** ***Cramer's V = .15***

Table 2b.
Pre-Street Family Experience by What Could Have Kept Young Person from Going to the Street

	Things were fine N=23	**Serious problems N=46**
Help for self	10 43.5%	11 23.9%
Help for family	8 34.7%	14 30.4%
Nothing could help	5 21.7%	21 45.7%
	100%	100%

N = 69 ***Missing data = 1*** ***Cramer's V = .44***

Table 2c.
Pre-Street School Experience by What Could Have Kept Young Person from Going to the Street

	Positive experience N=15	**Mixed experience N=17**	**Negative experience N=37**
Help for self	7 46.7%	4 23.5%	10 27.0%
Help for family	4 26.7%	6 35.2%	12 32.4%
Nothing could help	4 26.7%	7 41.2%	15 40.5%
	100%	100%	100%

N = 69 ***Missing data = 1*** ***Cramer's V = .16***

The relationship between pre-street family experiences and what could have prevented the respondents from going to the street is depicted in Table 2b. This relationship was strong and positive, resulting in a Cramer's V of .44. It could be anticipated that the young people stating that things were fine at home would be more likely to identify the need for personal help. This is exactly what we found. Young people from families where "things were fine" were more likely to identify help for themselves as a factor that could have prevented them from going to the street. In this case, 10 (43.5%) of the 23 respondents who reported things being fine at home also said that personal help could have prevented them from going to the street. Conversely, 14 (30.4%) of the 46 respondents who reported serious problems at home also stated that help for the family could have prevented them from going to the street. Interestingly, 26 (37.6%) of 69 respondents reported that nothing would have helped. This was the largest response category for this question and suggested that the street may have been seen by these young people as the only viable option available to them at the time.

Finally, a weak positive relationship was found between pre-street school experience and factors that could have prevented the respondents from going to the street (Table 2c). This relationship produced a Cramer's V of .16. Respondents with mixed or negative school experiences were more likely to say that nothing could have made a difference. In this case, 7 (41.2%) of the 17 respondents with mixed experiences and 15 (40.5%) of the 37 respondents with negative experiences compared to only 4 (26.6%) of the 15 respondents with positive school experiences said nothing could have helped. Interestingly, more respondents with positive school experiences said that personal help might have prevented them from going to the street. Seven (46.7%) of the 15 respondents with positive school experiences said personal help could have prevented them from going to the street versus only 4 (23.5%) of the 17 respondents with mixed school experiences and 10 of the 37 (27.0%) with negative school experiences. This may indicate that having appropriate support to complement their positive experiences might have prevented these young people from going to the street.

5. Experiences on the Street

Just as the young people who go to the street differ in their personal backgrounds and characteristics, so also do their experiences on the street vary according to the nature and extent of their involvement in the street lifestyle. The respondents were asked a series of questions designed to explore their experiences on the street. First, we asked about their self-image while on the street. A total of 36 (52.2%) of the 70 respondents reported having a negative self-image while they were on the street, whereas 24 (34.8%) indicated that they had a positive self-image during this time. Nine (12.8%) gave other responses. One person did not answer this question.

The respondents were asked a series of questions intended to assess their participation in various aspects of the street lifestyle. Sixty-seven (95.7%) of the 70 respondents indicated that they had used alcohol or other drugs while on the street. When asked if they had changed their style of dress while on the street, 44 (62.9%) said that they had done so. Thirty-six (51.4%) reported using a street name, and 28 (40.0%) said that they had gotten a tattoo while on the street. We asked the respondents if they carried a pager while on the street, because this can be indicative of involvement in such activities as prostitution or selling drugs; 15 (21.4%) reported they had carried a pager.

These variables were combined to form a composite measure of degree of street involvement. This procedure resulted in 23 (32.8%) of the 70 respondents being classified as having had a relatively high level of entrenchment in the street lifestyle, and 47 (67.1%) being identified as having had a lower level of entrenchment. This composite variable was used in a further analysis of the impact of entrenchment on the transition from the street and on the attainment of social stability.

Next, we examined the relationship between self-image while on the street and two other variables: self-image before going to the street and the level of entrenchment in the street lifestyle (see tables 3a and 3b).

Table 3a presents data on the relationship between pre-street self-image and self-image while on the street. This relationship was weak and positive with a phi of .17. Fifteen (68.2%) of the 22 respondents with a positive self-image before going to the street had a negative self-image on the street. This suggests that their self-image suffered due to their experiences on the street. Conversely, 15 (48.4%) of the 31 respondents with a negative self-image prior to going to the street reported a positive self-image on the street. These findings may be related to the acceptance experienced by these young people once they got to the street. Feelings of not fitting in to mainstream society and of being marginal were common among these young people. Having friends on the street who accepted and understood them may have resulted in the positive on-street self-images they reported. In addition, the positive on-street self-image may reflect their feeling of escape from an overall negative experience prior to adopting the street lifestyle.

Table 3a.
Pre-Street Self-Image by Image on the Street

	Positive pre-street self-image N = 22	**Negative pre-street self-image N = 31**
Positive on-street self-image	7 31.8%	15 48.4%
Negative on-street self-image	15 68.2%	16 51.6%
	100%	100%

N = 53 ***Missing data = 17*** ***Phi = .17***

Data on the relationship between self-image while on the street and level of entrenchment is presented in Table 3b. Nine (36.0%) of the 25 respondents who had positive self-images on the street had higher levels of entrenchment compared to 11 (29.7%) of the 37 respondents who had negative self-images while on the street. As indicated, there was no clear relationship between self-image while on the street and level of entrenchment.

Table 3b.
Self-Image on the Street by Level of Entrenchment

	Positive on-street self-image N = 25	**Negative on-street self-image N = 37**
Higher level of entrenchment	9 36.0%	11 29.7%
Lower level of entrenchment	16 64.0%	26 70.3%
	100%	100%

N = 62 ***Missing data = 8*** ***Phi = .07***

5.1 Factors That Keep Young People on the Street

When asked about the factors that kept them on the street, the respondents identified a number of common characteristics of street life that accounted for their continuing in this lifestyle. A frequency distribution of these factors is presented in Table 4. For 27 (38.6%) of the 70 respondents, the freedom they experienced there kept them on the street, 18 (25.7%) mentioned that friendships were a factor, and 17 (24.3%) were attracted to the money they could get on the street. These were the three largest response categories for this question. The remaining 8 (11.4%) respondents gave other answers.

Table 4.
A Frequency Distribution of
Factors Keeping Young People on the Street

Factor	Number	Percent
Freedom	27	38.6
Friendships	18	25.7
Money	17	24.3
Drugs	5	7.1
Fear	3	4.3
Totals	70	100.0%

N= 70

Typical responses to this question were as follows:

> *It's free. That is the ultimate adolescent freedom. There are no rules. ... You can do drugs whenever you want, sleep wherever you want and choose who you will hang out with. There's no schedule you have to follow.*
>
> *'Cause it was a rush—the challenge—living on the edge—it was cool. It was the "in thing" to do. You can do what you want, whenever you want. You don't have no rules.*
>
> *You start to feel that that's where you're supposed to be. That's what they keep telling you. You're overwhelmed by the drugs. The people you're there with are in the same situation. You form really strong bonds with them. You love them.*

These answers suggest that the freedom these young people experience while living on the street gives them feelings of power and self-determination. They decide what they will do and when they will do it. This personal power is an important factor in accounting for what

keeps them on the street. The respondents also noted the importance of being accepted and having friends who "look out for them." Finally, the attraction of the street includes participating in what they regard as an exciting lifestyle, in which money and access to alcohol and other drugs are important factors. All of these represent powerful inducements to remaining on the street. Moreover, these positive assessments of the street experience were constantly reinforced by their street peers.

5.2 Factors That Represent Barriers to Leaving the Street

Many of the factors that keep young people on the street also represent barriers to their leaving the street. Both freedom and power made the street attractive to young people who had experienced neither in the past. The money and excitement associated with street life also represented barriers to leaving this way of life.

When asked, "What was the hardest thing about leaving the street," 43 (67.2%) of the 64 respondents identified breaking with the street way of life as the biggest obstacle they had to contend with. A further 12 (18.8%) mentioned taking control of their lives while 9 (14.1%) stated that obtaining and accepting help was the hardest thing about leaving the street. Some typical responses to this question are presented here:

> *Picking up the responsibility again. Money, booze, friends ... it's a big one. You meet these guys on the street ... you're there for each other. If you want to make a clean break you've got to quit hangin' with these guys 'cause they'll bring you back. You have to make a clean break ... and that's tough.*

> *Forgetting ... trying to forget, leaving behind what was a part of your life for so many years. You have to leave the people and situation. You can take the people from the street, but you can't take the street out of the people.*

Fitting in and being accepted is important to young people who report being isolated and not fitting in at school. Knowing they can make it on the street represents another significant barrier to those unsure of what awaits them if they should leave that way of life. In effect, they are worried that if they make it off the street, they will not be able or know how to meet the requirements of mainstream society. This "fear of success" (i.e., fear of making a clean break from the street lifestyle) is basically a fear of change and of the unknown. It is related to feeling unable to take charge of or exercise control over one's life. Participating agency staff suggested that this was related to the feelings these young people have of not being able to live up to the anticipated ever-increasing expectations and demands placed on them. This pressure was the result of both their personal expectations and the expectations of significant others. The perceived lack of skills needed to make it in mainstream society represents another aspect of this feeling and an important barrier to leaving the street. The following quotations illustrate these feelings:

> *I didn't know where I was going to go. I didn't know what I was going to do and I definitely didn't want to be left alone.*

Changing lifestyle ... making new friends and leaving the old ones and having a job that was half decent and promising with a half decent future.

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of various factors in making the transition off the street on a five-point scale, with 5 being very important and 1 being not very important (see Table 5).

Table 5.
The Importance of Various Factors in Making the Transition to Mainstream Society

	Having a decent job N=69	**Having a decent place to live N=70**	**Having access to appropriate services N=67**
Very important	28 (40.6%)	43 (61.4%)	32 (47.8%)
Important	17 (24.6%)	16 (22.9%)	13 (19.4%)
Neutral	16 (23.2%)	9 12.9%	11 (16.4%)
Not important	5 (7.2)	2 (2.9%)	4 (6.0%)
Not very important	3 (4.3)%	0	7 (10.4%)

Missing data 1; 0; 3

When asked to rate the importance of having a decent job in getting off the street, 28 (40.6%) of 69 respondents rated it as a 5 (very important) and 17 (24.6%) rated it as a 4 (important). Similarly, 43 (61.4%) of the 70 respondents rated having a decent place to live as a 5 (very important), and 16 (22.9%) rated it as a 4 (important). Finally, 32 (47.8%) of 67 respondents rated having access to appropriate services as a 5 (very important), and 13 (19.4%) rated it as a 4 (important). Having a decent place to live, a decent job and access to appropriate services definitely facilitates the transition to mainstream society. Conversely, therefore, the absence of these resources may represent a significant barrier to making a successful transition from the street.

The respondents were asked to identify other factors that they felt were important to making a successful transition off the street. A frequency distribution of these factors is presented in Table 6. Having access to supportive individuals was identified as being important by 27

(39.7%) of the 68 respondents answering this question. Personal factors or attributes were mentioned by 18 (26.5%) respondents. This included such things as increasing their feelings of self-esteem or just believing in themselves. Working with a supportive social organization was noted by 13 (19.1%) of the respondents. Ten (14.7%) respondents did not identify any other factors, apart from a place to live and a decent job, as being important, and two did not answer this question.

Table 6.
A Frequency Distribution of Other Factors Identified as Important for the Transition to Mainstream Society

Factor	Number	Percent
Having access to supportive individuals	27	39.7
Personal factors (self-esteem)	18	26.5
Having contact with a supportive organization	13	19.1
Other	10	14.7
Totals	68	100.0%

N= 68 ***Missing data = 2***

The following quotations are examples of the answers given to this question:

> *Having someone to believe in me. Maybe if you're real lucky you'll have that person love you and care for you ... like you never have.*
>
> *Some counsellors ... there were some that looked beyond what I was. The group of friends I started hanging around with.*
>
> *I got help trying to deal with my alcohol. I got help finding the resources I needed. I had plain old-fashioned support.*
>
> *Help came from [agency] staff who had been on the street themselves.*
>
> *It was a gradual process ... through support of group home staff. In the end they were there. It was unconditional acceptance.*
>
> *An organization had a mobile unit ... that helped me to get social assistance so that I could get an apartment.*

The van ... it was a private organization.

These responses suggest that not having access to supportive individuals and not being connected with a supportive social organization represent significant barriers for young people trying to make the transition off the street.

5.3 Opportunities for Leaving the Street

Despite both the powerful inducements to remain on the street and the barriers to making a break with this way of life, agency staff indicated that there were a range of opportunities for young people to leave the street. We were told that, in general, young people were more receptive to offers of assistance during the first or second week of their involvement in the street lifestyle than when they had been there for a longer time. During this initial period, young people may be ready to accept help because they are unsure of whether they can handle the lifestyle and they may have serious doubts about participating in the activities associated with living on the street. They may also be afraid of what is happening to them in adopting this way of life.

Interventions during the initial stage of street involvement should focus on providing these young people with an opportunity to make a connection with a supportive individual or relevant agency. Once trust has been established, ways of addressing the difficulties that led these young people to the street can be considered and dealt with. This may include strategies such as reconciliation with families or securing alternative living arrangements (e.g., independent living situations or supervised residences).

According to agency staff, there is little opportunity for intervention after this initial period on the street unless the young person is motivated to change her or his lifestyle. The excitement and freedom provided by the street and the other attractions of street life can be very strong. The street subculture reinforces a positive assessment of street life. Motivation for leaving the street after an initial period spent in this way of life may be very low. It may be months or years, if ever, before a youth is motivated and decides to leave the street. Agency staff noted that an individual's motivation for leaving the street was the crucial factor in making a successful transition.

The respondents were asked to identify what made them decide to leave the street. A frequency distribution of the responses to this question is presented in Table 7 (next page). Experiencing a critical event was the largest response category to this question; it was identified by 32 (45.7%) of the 70 respondents. The following quotations describe examples of such critical events:

My boyfriend killed himself and all I wanted to do was do coke. ... Then I met someone who saw through the exterior [tracks]. [He] had total confidence in me and he knew I could do it and he didn't even want to have sex with me.

Getting busted. You start getting a first-hand look at the downside of what's out there.

I lost everything. I was deeply in love. The man I loved I lost. I didn't want to live like that any more. I was selling everything I owned for drugs. Also, I was charged and I was going to court and I was scared.

I ran away from my pimp. He tried to shoot me. I came to hide here at [the agency]. I had to run for my life.

As these examples indicate, critical events included the death of a significant other, being arrested, being faced with imprisonment and being threatened with physical harm by pimps or others on the street.

Table 7.
A Frequency Distribution of Factors
Influencing the Decision to Leave the Street

Factor	Number	Percent
Critical event	32	45.7
Disillusionment	24	34.3
Bottomed out	8	11.4
Fear	3	4.3
Taking on responsibility	3	4.3

N=70

The second largest category of responses to the question about what influenced these young people to leave the street referred to disillusionment with life on the street. Such disillusionment was noted by 24 (34.3%) of the respondents. These feelings often grew and developed gradually and should not be regarded as crises per se. A further 8 (11.4%) stated that they had "hit bottom." This included having a serious problem with alcohol and/or other drugs and realizing that they had little of meaning or value left in their lives. The following quotations illustrate some of the factors described above:

I was tired of being caught in a circle. Get up, go out and make a bit of money, go to the bar, do a bit of acid. Tired of all the misconceptions of what life was like.

Well, when someone threatens you—the judge says if you don't stay off the street you'll be put in jail—I didn't want to go to jail. ... And the alcohol and drugs weren't working anymore.

Getting high too much. I done a lot of acid. The last time I done acid I was too high, too much pressure and I figured there has to be a way out of this.

[I] just got sick of it. It was old news and my self-esteem was smaller than a speck of dirt. ... [I was] getting thrown in and out of treatment centres. My mom was absolutely convinced that we were schizophrenic, and druggies and things like that.

Respondents were asked how they knew they were ready to leave the street. A feeling of disillusionment was the largest response category for this question, being identified by 51 (73.9%) of the 69 respondents answering this question. Twelve (17.4%) mentioned that they had a feeling of foreboding about the future, while 6 (8.6%) said they had a fear of some specific consequence. Examples of these answers are provided here:

I just realized I wanted to do something with my life. I wanted to go somewhere. I was a loser and I needed to improve somehow.

Something was just telling me to get off the streets. It was really getting rough out there.

I thought I'd be dead if I didn't.

I hit bottom. I was losing friends more than ever. ... I had nothing.

6. Experiences Getting off the Street

The findings discussed thus far indicate that there are differences in what various segments of the street youth population experience. In this section, we explore how these differences affected what youth experienced in getting off the street.

First, we asked respondents if they had tried to get off the street more than once; 43 (62.3%) of the 69 who responded answered affirmatively. Various factors were mentioned in response to the question about what caused them to return to the street lifestyle. A frequency distribution of these factors is presented in Table 8. The largest response category identified was not being able to cope with the demands of and lifestyle adjustments required by life in mainstream society. Of the 42 respondents answering the question, 13 (30.9%) indicated such adjustment problems. An additional 8 (19.0%) respondents said that a lack of money made them return to the street.

Table 8.
A Frequency Distribution of Factors Related to Returning to the Street

Factor	Number	Percent
Could not cope	13	30.9
Lack of money	8	19.0
Lack of decent housing	6	14.3
Lack of services	6	14.3
Alcohol or other drugs	4	9.5
Other	5	7.2

N=42 Missing data = 1
(Note: 26 had not returned to the street.)

Respondents were asked if anything could have gotten them to leave the street sooner. In response to this question, 36 (51.4%) said yes and 34 (48.6%) said no. This response pattern seems to confirm the view expressed by agency staff that this transition will not occur unless youth are motivated to leave the street. This lack of motivation may have been the key reason why so many respondents felt that "nothing could have gotten them off the street sooner."

Those who said that something could have gotten them off the street sooner were asked what could have achieved this. Eleven (30.6%) of the 36 respondents said agency support (e.g., counselling) could have gotten them off the street sooner. Personal factors (e.g., self-confidence and self-esteem) were identified by 7 (19.4%) of these respondents. Four (11.1%) of the respondents noted that if life on the street had not met their needs so well, they would have been motivated to leave the street sooner. This included having easy access to such things as food, shelter, health care and opportunities for excitement. Fourteen (38.9%) respondents gave other answers to this question.

6.1 Getting Help to Get off the Street

We asked the respondents what they did when they first left the street. The most common response was that they sought professional help (e.g., counselling). This was noted by 26 (37.1%) of the 70 respondents answering this question. Getting a job or educational upgrading was identified by 16 (22.9%) respondents, 13 (18.6%) said that they went home, and 10 (14.3%) said that they got their own place to live.

The respondents were asked if they got help in getting off the street and 49 (70.0%) replied affirmatively. Of these, 26 (53.1%) said that they got professional help (e.g., counselling); 16 (32.7%) said that they had received personal support from agency staff, friends and family; and 7 (14.2%) gave other answers. When asked where they got this help, the majority of the respondents—that is, 31 (63.2%) of 49—indicated they had received help from agency staff or professional counsellors. Only 8 (16.3%) said that the help was received from friends. Ten (20.4%) respondents said that their families helped.

We wanted to determine if the decision to get help was related in any way to a person's self-image while on the street or to their level of entrenchment in the street lifestyle. Data on these relationships are shown in tables 9a and 9b.

As indicated in Table 9a, respondents with a negative self-image while on the street appeared to be more likely to seek help to get off the street: 25 (67.7%) of the 37 respondents with negative street images sought help, compared to 14 (56.0%) of the 25 respondents with positive street self-images. This produced a weak negative relationship with a phi of – .12.

The data in Table 9b reveal that respondents who had lower levels of entrenchment were only slightly more likely to seek assistance in getting off the street than respondents with higher levels of entrenchment: 30 (63.8%) of the 47 respondents with a lower level of entrenchment sought help, compared to 13 (56.5%) of the 23 respondents with a higher level of entrenchment. In this case, there was no clear relationship between level of entrenchment and the probability of seeking help to get off the street.

Table 9a.
Self-Image on the Street by Getting Help to Get off the Street

	Positive street self-image N = 25	**Negative street self-image N = 37**
Did get help getting off the street	14 56.0%	25 67.6%
Did not get help getting off the street	11 44.0%	12 32.4%
	100%	100%

N = 62 ***Missing data = 8*** ***Phi = -.12***

Table 9b.
Level of Entrenchment by Getting Help to Get off the Street

	Higher level of entrenchment N = 23	**Lower level of entrenchment N = 47**
Did get help getting off the street	13 56.5%	30 63.8%
Did not get help getting off the street	10 43.5%	17 36.2%
	100%	100%

N = 70 ***Missing data = 0*** ***Phi = -.07***

6.2 Experiencing the Change

The respondents were asked a series of questions focusing on what they experienced after they left the street. For example, they were asked to describe how they felt about themselves after they had changed their way of life. In this regard, 64 (91.4%) of 70 respondents said they felt positive about themselves after they made the change. This reflected a considerable improvement in their self-esteem when compared with how they felt about themselves while on the street. The following quotations provide some examples of this difference:

> *I'm important, I'm special, I'm really a good person. I love myself very much.*
>
> *Because I have a grasp on life now, I don't have to feel ashamed of who I am or what I've become. I know I am the #1 person.*
>
> *Positive. ... [I] feel pretty good 'cause I'm doing really well, getting good feedback and I have a plan for my future.*
>
> *I look at myself as "I know I can do it" rather than "I can't do it." I feel independent. I feel like I'm a good man. Just a good image.*

Only 6 (8.5%) respondents indicated that their attitudes had either remained the same or had become more negative since leaving the street.

With regard to their attitude change, 62 (88.6%) of 70 respondents said that they had experienced a positive attitude change since they left the street. They were then asked in what way their attitude had changed. In response to this question, 41 (66.1%) of the 62 reporting a positive change stated that they were now more open and tolerant in that they had become more giving rather than just receiving in relationships. As well, they had become less prejudiced and more open to compromise. A further 21 (33.8%) of the respondents indicated that they had adopted a more positive attitude toward life. Some of these responses are presented below:

> *It's more positive. I'm not scared or negative. I'm not afraid anymore.*
>
> *I don't have the attitude that the world is out to get me anymore. I'm more willing to listen to authority now. I'm much more positive now. I have a better outlook than before.*
>
> *I'm growing up. I realize that you just have to accept where you are at all times in your life and just be willing to grow and learn.*
>
> *I just don't take for granted things that are important and things that I have like family and friends and people that care about you. I found that I was always a taker and now I'm more of a giver than a taker.*
>
> *I don't think everything is impossible anymore.*
>
> *I have more self-confidence and I'm more open and social.*

I make more compromises because I am realistic.

Respondents were asked if their appearance had changed since leaving the street. Fifty-six (80.0%) of 70 said that it had changed and that they looked more "normal" in appearance now than when they were on the street.

6.3 Achieving Goals and Looking to the Future

An important part of leaving the street is breaking with the street lifestyle. One aspect of this break involves setting and achieving what are recognized as the goals of people in mainstream society. The respondents were asked what goals they had when they first left the street. Getting a job or educational training was mentioned by 42 (60.0%) of 70 respondents. Personal growth (e.g., increased self-confidence and self-reliance) was referred to by 19 (27.1%) respondents. Nine (12.8%) respondents gave other answers.

Next the respondents were asked if their goals had changed after being off the street for an extended period of time. Forty-three of the 65 (66.2%) respondents answering this question said that their goals had changed. For 38 (88.3%) of the respondents who had experienced this change, their goals had become more practical and they wanted more out of life. Only 5 (11.6%) said that their values had not changed since they left the street. Most were now less concerned about themselves and more concerned about those around them. When asked how well they had done in achieving their goals, 34 (48.6%) of the 70 respondents referred to success in improving their personal attributes (e.g., increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence). Twenty-four (34.3%) said that they had achieved their job-related goals. The remaining 12 (17.1%) respondents indicated that they had failed to achieve their goals. In summary, 58 (82.9%) of 70 respondents reported success in achieving their goals.

Personal factors preventing goal achievement included a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. These types of factors were identified by 33 (51.6%) of the 64 respondents who answered this question. Non-personal factors that stood in the way of real achievement—including insufficient finances, unemployment and no decent place to live—were mentioned by 24 (37.5%) respondents. The remaining 7 (17.1%) respondents said that there was nothing preventing them from achieving their goals.

Respondents were asked what they would like to be doing in 10 years. Fifty-nine (85.5%) of the 69 respondents replied that they would like a good job; 6 (8.7%) mentioned getting their credentials upgraded. Only 4 (5.8%) referred to wanting to get married and have children. When asked what they thought they would actually be doing 10 years from now, 51 (72.9%) of the 70 respondents stated that they thought they would have a good job, 10 (14.3%) said that they would have upgraded credentials or would be proceeding toward that goal, and 5 (7.1%) said that by then they would have a family. This demonstrates the high levels of aspiration and self-confidence these young people have about achieving their future goals.

6.4 Looking Back at Getting off the Street

We were interested in discovering what relationships, if any, exist between self-image, level of entrenchment in street life and the factors these respondents identified as the biggest challenge in trying to get off the street. These relationships are presented in tables 10a and 10b.

As indicated in Table 10a, there is no appreciable difference between respondents with a positive on-street self-image and those with a negative on-street self-image and what they considered to be the biggest challenges facing young people trying to leave this way of life. Nine (37.5%) of the 24 respondents with a positive street self-image identified breaking with the street lifestyle as their biggest challenge. Similarly, 13 (35.1%) of the 37 respondents with a negative street self-image gave the same response. The comparability of these percentages indicates that no specific relationship exists between these variables.

A similar situation was found with respondents who stated that gaining access to needed support was the biggest challenge facing youth trying to get off the street. In this case, 15 (62.5%) of the 24 respondents with a positive street self-image and 24 (64.8%) of the 37 respondents with a negative street self-image identified finding support as the biggest challenge. Again, the similarity of these percentages indicates that no clear relationship exists between self-image and finding support to make a transition from the street. It should be noted, however, that regardless of self-image, breaking with street life and finding support constituted the biggest challenges identified.

Table 10a.
Self-Image on the Street by the Biggest Challenge Facing Young People Getting off the Street

	Positive street self-image N = 24	**Negative street self-image N = 37**
Breaking with street life	9 37.5%	13 35.1%
Finding support	15 62.5%	24 64.9%
	100%	100%

N = 61 ***Missing data = 9*** ***Phi = .02***

Table 10b depicts data on the relationship between level of entrenchment in street life and factors representing the biggest challenge facing young people trying to get off the street. This produced a weak, positive relationship with a phi of .11.

Table 10b.
Level of Entrenchment by the Biggest Challenge Facing Young People Getting off the Street

	Higher level of entrenchment N = 23	**Lower level of entrenchment N = 46**
Breaking with street life	10 43.5%	15 32.6%
Finding support	13 56.5%	31 67.4%
	100%	100%

N = 69 ***Missing data = 1*** ***Phi = .11***

Ten (43.5%) of the 23 respondents with higher levels of entrenchment compared to 15 (32.6%) of the 46 respondents with lower levels of entrenchment identified breaking with street life as the biggest challenge they had to face. Additionally, 13 (56.5%) of the 23 respondents with higher levels of entrenchment compared to 31 (67.4%) of the 46 respondents with lower levels of entrenchment identified finding support as the biggest challenge they experienced. The data in this table also show that finding support was clearly the biggest challenge, regardless of level of entrenchment while on the street. This has important implications for social service agencies and others with respect to the need to provide support to this population.

7. Conclusions

The findings presented in this report were the result of an exploratory study of the antecedent risk factors that lead young people to adopt the street lifestyle and the factors that influenced them in making the transition off the streets. The study also examined what these antecedent transition factors indicated about what was needed to develop effective intervention strategies to support an individual in the transition process. As previously noted, the study has a number of limitations related primarily to sample size and mode of sample selection. In particular, the absence of exhaustive lists of former street youth made the use of a convenience sample the only practical way of proceeding. While this limits our ability to generalize from study findings, we are reasonably confident that the results are representative of the experiences of most former street youth while they were involved in the street lifestyle.

The results of this study indicate that street youth are a very heterogeneous group. They come to the street by a variety of paths. They have different experiences reflecting their different personal characteristics and backgrounds. Whether in the pre-street, on-street or transition stage, some youth are very resilient and able to meet the challenges they face. Others, however, are less resilient and less able to deal effectively with such challenges. It is important to note that the level of resiliency does not necessarily predict whether an individual is more or less likely to end up on the street. In some cases, the street is seen by these young people as the safest place to be, and going to the street represents the only viable alternative to an abusive and dangerous home situation. Resiliency does play a role, however, in how these young people deal with the various challenges they encounter while they are on the street and particularly when they are in the process of making a break with the street lifestyle.

The findings presented in this study suggest that opportunities exist for positive intervention with some of these young people prior to their going to the street. These interventions should address the personal needs of the young people and, in particular, their feelings of isolation and marginalization. Adolescence can be a period of awkwardness and anxiety for young people, and many find it difficult to fit in. Many former street youth who were interviewed in this study reported having had this experience. Strategies that provide an opportunity for young people to participate in socially appropriate activities and to feel part of the life around them could be beneficial at this stage of psychosocial development.

Opportunities for positive interventions have two separate aspects. The first reflects the need to identify children and adolescents who appear to be at risk of going to the street. The second refers to making an appropriate intervention in the relevant risk environment, which should involve one or more of the personal, family and school domains of their lives. Risk factors in all three domains need to be considered, as all are important and interrelated. Assessing risks in this way could indicate needed interventions that could be taken before young people go to the street. For instance, it is evident that problems related to family situations are most likely to be detected by teachers or other school personnel as a result of observed behavioural problems or poor academic

performance. If school personnel detect this kind of problem, an effective intervention requires a referral to a professional who can assess the problem and determine whether it is related to personal, family or school factors. An appropriate intervention strategy can then be designed based on this assessment. The intervention might include personal counselling, family counselling or both and, possibly, some type of intervention in the school itself.

The school represents a major institution in the lives of all young people. This seems to be especially true for high-risk youth. In this regard, the key finding was the alienation from the school system reported by many participants in the study. This was expressed by the respondents in a variety of ways. Many of these young people said they did not fit in and had no bond with the school. Others said they found the environment at school to be overly regimented and very controlling. Academic subjects were described as irrelevant to what was going on in their lives or simply uninteresting. The lack of integration or fitting in reported by many of the respondents in this study indicates the need for relevant interventions and methods of implementing these interventions in the school setting. Again, it is important to note that improving academic performance may not be a key concern, because many of these young people performed well academically. Interventions should include a specific focus on the social integration of these youth. School officials could use this information to design strategies to significantly reduce the alienation experienced by high-risk youth and thus to reduce the likelihood that some will drop out and go to the street.

Thus far, we have discussed potential intervention strategies involving formal services or programs. The respondents also indicated that supportive individuals who are not necessarily professionals could have been helpful either in preventing them from going to the street in the first place or in making the transition to mainstream society. The loneliness and isolation reported by many of these young people attest to the need for contact and bonding with individuals who care about them. These individuals could include teachers, staff in youth-serving agencies or other young people. Appropriate support provided at crucial times may often be the most effective resource in meeting the needs of this high-risk population. This includes support from teachers when they recognize that students are having problems, as well as from individuals and agencies working with high-risk youth. To be effective, support must be readily accessible, trusted by the young people and offered when needed.

The results of this study strongly suggest that the stereotypes that currently exist about street youth need to be dispelled. These young people represent a heterogeneous population with very different personal characteristics, experiences and needs. This disparity has important implications for service providers. Interventions and services need to be designed with these differences in mind, as they point to the need for a range of service responses. Moreover, the school setting represents a key focus of intervention with children and youth in preventing the adoption of the street lifestyle. It is the setting in which relevant antecedent risk factors can be identified. It also has the potential to provide the best informed and most immediate response to the needs of the high-risk youth in addressing the risk factors identified. There should be consultation with the school system on how it can best serve the role referred to above.

The data suggest that important opportunities exist during the early stage of street involvement. Once the entrenchment process has begun, however, the hold that the street environment and lifestyle have on these young people is hard to break. Many youth emphasized the need for outreach workers to be patient and consistent in their contacts with street youth. They said it was important that agency staff keep offering to help and not give up on them. They indicated that young people need to be motivated to make the decision to leave the street. Further, it is evident that various circumstances or factors can foster such motivation (e.g., disillusionment, a crisis, etc.). Once the decision to leave the street is made, it is important that appropriate services are available to support and enable the youth to begin to take the relevant steps.

One of the interesting findings of this study is the suggestion that critical events may trigger the desire to leave the street. In some cases, a brush with the law (e.g., being jailed) may be such a trigger. Unfortunately, while such events may provide an impetus to leave the street, they may also be a negative reinforcement in maintaining the street lifestyle. Ongoing contact with the criminal justice system may solidify a negative self-image and result in even further entrenchment in this way of life. Perhaps if an appropriate intervention could be made at the time of first involvement with the criminal justice system, these young people might acquire the impetus needed to make the transition off the street sooner.

Another concern is that mainstream services or traditional service agencies often do not serve these young people well. In some cases, mainstream services represent a barrier to these young people and may hinder their successful transition off the street. Appropriate job skills training or educational upgrading may not be available or provided in a manner that is socially or culturally appropriate. Many services or programs have long waiting lists. Mainstream services often require formal appointments, and referral linkages between agencies often function poorly, making it difficult for these youth to obtain needed services. Decent and affordable housing may not be available. Often, the very rules and regulations that govern social assistance make it impossible for young people to make a successful transition, because they do not provide sufficient financial resources to obtain suitable housing and meet other basic needs. For example, some young people pointed out that they lacked the personal resources required for job interviews, including such things as appropriate clothes and bus or taxi fare. In summary, both financial and non-financial needs exist, and these needs are often related.

Finally, it is important to consider the social needs of these young people once they have made the transition to mainstream society. One of the strong attractions of the street is the acceptance provided by street friends and street families. If social isolation and not fitting in lead young people to the street, these same factors may lead them back to the street and thus to experience failure in making the transition. Being sensitive to a wide range of needs includes taking into consideration the need for these young people to fit in socially once they have started the transition to the mainstream. While programs may attend to the need for skills or various forms of counselling during the transition process, social needs may not get the same attention. Appropriate peer helper initiatives or other means of forming good social relationships may be just as important as meeting needs for counselling or acquiring relevant skills.

8. Recommendations

The results of this study suggest that the youth service system as organized in many Canadian communities requires considerable adjustment if we are to be effective in preventing young people from going to the street and in supporting those who are on the street and trying to make the transition to the mainstream. Such an adjustment may include the following measures:

- **Developing a realistic appreciation among service providers of the diverse social and personal characteristics of street youth**

  Many agencies develop their service response on the basis of inappropriate stereotypes (e.g., "all street youth are running away from bad home situations"). The lack of individual planning, the tendency to assume that the target group is homogeneous and the provision of the same level of intervention to all youth may mean that some of these young people are being inappropriately and inadequately served by existing programs.

- **Recognizing that opportunities for intervening with these high-risk youth exist prior to their going to the street, while they are on the street and during their transition off the street, and that each of these periods requires a different service response**

  A range of services is required to take advantage of the different types of opportunities that exist for intervening with these high-risk youth. Recognizing these opportunities and responding appropriately require sensitivity to the specific needs these young people have before going to the street, while on the street and in trying to get off the street.

- **Understanding that services need to be accessible as well as socially and culturally relevant to be successful**

  Services need to be available at times and places that reflect the differences between conventional and street life patterns. Moreover, service providers need to recognize the impacts of the street culture—both positive and negative—in their efforts to develop a rapport with the young people they serve. They need to be patient with street youth and to realize that change can only occur when the individual is ready for it.

- **Recognizing the need for service providers to "connect" with the target population**

  Connection with these young people can be accomplished through street outreach that is sensitive to the needs of street youth. Limited resources and inadequate staff training mean that street outreach is often less effective than it needs to be. Further, these services must be open and non-judgmental if they are to be credible and gain the trust of street youth.

- **Acknowledging the key point that these young people will not be open to changing their way of life until they are ready to do so**

  Many agencies concerned with street youth assume that effective support will result in the young person choosing to leave the street. In reality, many street youth are satisfied, for the time being, with living on the street. For youth in this category, service providers should be patient and focus on meeting basic maintenance needs, such as food and shelter, while building trust. For youth who want to change and who seek assistance in making the transition off the street, focused interventions are required. These should be tailored to meet unique, individual needs. Further, such interventions should be implemented without delay and in a well-coordinated fashion when the need for them is detected.

- **Appreciating the importance of being accepted and fitting in**

  In many instances, services are organized around meeting tangible needs such as food and shelter or helping the young person to get a job. The social needs of these young people also have to be met. Interventions designed for this population should recognize that these young people need to feel that they fit in and are accepted. Opportunities should be provided wherever possible for them to participate in socially relevant and appropriate activities.

- **Understanding that supportive individuals can play a vital role in delivering relevant services to these young people**

  Young people can be influenced by an individual who provides consistent and caring support. This could be a teacher, outreach worker or staff member in a youth-serving agency. Attention should be paid to recognizing opportunities to make contact with these young people and to nurture these important relationships.

- **Fostering an awareness that schools have a key role to play in the development of comprehensive intervention strategies designed for this high-risk population**

  The school represents a major site for initiatives designed to prevent the adoption of the street lifestyle by responding to the needs of high-risk youth before they go to the street. The educational system affords unique opportunities to identify and meet the needs of these young people, whether their problems exist in the personal, family or school domain of their lives.

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Appendix:
Transitions Interview Schedule

TIME: ***Start***_____. ***End***_____ .***ID Number*** [ ] [ ] [ ]

	I. LET'S BEGIN WITH SOME GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU	
1	To start with, what is your date of birth? Month? _____ Year? _____	M Y [ ] [ ]
2	Are you _____ 1) Male ***or*** _____ 2) Female	[ ]
3	Who did you live with before going to the street the first time? _____ 1) Both natural parents _____ 2) Father alone _____ 3) Mother alone _____ 4) Father & friend/stepmother _____ 5) Mother & friend/stepfather _____ 6) Relatives (specify) _____ 7) Guardians _____ 8) Foster parents _____ 9) Adoptive parents _____ 10) Other _____	[ ]
4	How were things at home before you went to the street the first time?	[ ]
5	Did this affect your decision to leave? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
6	**If yes, ask**: How?	[ ]
7	What were the circumstances surrounding your decision to go to the street the first time?	[ ]
8	Can you tell me how you felt about **yourself** before going to the street the first time?	[ ]

9	Can you tell me what things were like at home before you went to the street **the most recent time**?	[ ]
10	Before you left home the most recent time, did you have any connections on the street? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
11	**If yes, ask**: Can you describe these connections?	[ ]
12	Before going to the street the first time, how would you have identified yourself? For example, were you _____ 1) a loner ***or*** _____ 2) part of a group of friends	[ ]
13	**If part of a group of friends, ask**: Can you describe this group of friends?	[ ]
14	Young people have a number of ways of classifying themselves according to fashion, dress, interests or music. How would you have classified yourself before leaving home the most recent time?	[ ]
15	What does it mean to be a (***their response to #14***)?	[ ]
16	What do you think society's image is of a (***their response to #14***)?	[ ]
17	Before leaving home, were any of your friends involved with the police? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
18	**If yes, ask**: What was the reason for their involvement with the police?	[ ]

19	Before you left home were you ever in trouble with the police? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
20	**If yes, ask**: What was the reason for your involvement with the police?	[ ]
21	How would you describe your experience at school before leaving home **the first time**?	[ ]
22	Can you describe the most positive thing about your school experience?	[ ]
23	Can you describe the most negative thing about your school experience?	[ ]
24	Can you tell me how you did in school in general?	[ ]
25	How was your experience at school affected by what was going on at home?	[ ]
26	Have you ever dropped out of school? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
27	**If yes, ask**: Why (***was there a critical event***)?	[ ]
	II. EXPERIENCES ON THE STREET	
28	So when you went to live on the street, you went because you (**base answer on previous information and probe if** ran away / thrown out / other, e.g., to get a job)?	[ ]
29	Did you get help when you first went to the street? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]

30	**If yes, ask**: What type of help did you get?	[ ]
31	**If yes, ask**: Who helped you?	[ ]
32	Looking back at it now could anything have kept you from going to the street? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
33	**If yes, ask**: What could have helped?	[ ]
34	What kinds of activities did you get involved in while living on the street? For example, did you get tattooed? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
35	Did you carry a pager or cellular phone? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
36	While on the street, were you using drugs? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
37	While on the street, did you change your style of dress? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
38	While on the street, did you have a street name? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
39	What image did you have of yourself while you were on the street? **Probe: negative or positive**	[ ]
40	What image do you think society has of young people living on the street?	[ ]

41	While on the street, did you ever have any involvement with the police? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
42	**If yes, ask**: What was the reason for this involvement?	[ ]
43	While on the street, did you ever have any involvement with social agencies (e.g., people trying to help street kids, like Children's Aid Society, Operation Go Home, etc.)? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
44	**If yes, ask**: What was the nature of this involvement? Would you say that these agencies were: _____ 1) really helpful ***or*** _____ 2) provided little help?	[ ]
45	Can you tell me why you feel this way?	[ ]
III. MOVING BACK TO MAINSTREAM		
46	What were the things about the street that kept you there?	[ ]
47	What made you decide to leave the street? **Probe: for critical event**	[ ]
48	Looking back at it now, was there anything that could have made you leave the street sooner? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
49	**If yes, ask**: What could have made you leave the street sooner?	[ ]
50	Did you try to get off the street more than once? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]

51	**If yes, ask**: What caused you to return to the street?	[ ]
52	How did you know you were ready to get off the street?	[ ]
53	What was the hardest thing about getting off the street?	[ ]
54	Once you decided to leave the street, what did you do to get back into the mainstream; that is, what actions did you take?	[ ]
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not very important and 5 being very important, how would you rate the following factors in making the transition back to the mainstream?		
55	Having a decent job	[ ]
56	Having a decent place to live	[ ]
57	Being in a program or working with a particular agency (which one?) _____	[ ]
58	Were any other factors important in helping you make the transition back to the mainstream? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
59	**If yes, ask**: Which one(s)?)	[ ]
60	Did you get any help getting off the street? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
61	**If yes, ask**: What type of help did you get?	[ ]
62	**If yes, ask**: Where (who) did this help come from?	[ ]

63	What kind of help did you get?	[ ]
64	What personal goals did you have when you decided to leave the street?	[ ]
65	Now that you've been off the street for some time, have your goals changed? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
66	**If yes, ask**: How have your goals changed?	[ ]
67	How have you done in achieving your goals?	[ ]
68	Could you explain why you say this?	[ ]
We would like to know what has helped to achieve your goals. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not very important and 5 is very important, how helpful would you say the following have been in helping you to achieve your goals?		
69	Having a decent job	[ ]
70	Having a decent place to live that is affordable	[ ]
71	Having access to personal services	[ ]
72	Knowing what services or resources were available	[ ]
73	Having supportive people around	[ ]
74	Having friends who understand	[ ]
75	Is there anything else that has helped you achieve your goals?	[ ]
76	What has prevented you from achieving your goals?	[ ]

77	Looking at it realistically, what would you like to be doing 10 years from now?	[ ]
78	Looking at it realistically, what do you think you will actually be doing 10 years from now?	[ ]
79	Do you ever think about going back to the street? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
80	**If yes, ask**: What are the attractions of going back to the street?	[ ]
81	Where did you live when you first got off the street? _____ 1) First place lived _____ 2) Second place lived _____ 3) Third place lived	[ ]
82	Where are you currently living? **Record up to last three places. Code # of months in each place**. 1) Current place _____How long? _____ 2) Second last place _____How long? _____ 3) Third last place _____How long? _____	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
83	Are you currently in school? _____ 1) Yes, full-time _____ 2) Yes, part-time _____ 3) No, not in school	[ ]
84	**If yes, ask**: How long have you been going to school? _____ (# of months)	[ ] [ ]
85	Are you currently working? _____ 1) Yes, full-time _____ 2) Yes, part-time _____ 3) No, not working	[ ]
86	**If yes, ask**: How long have you been working? _____ (# of months)	[ ] [ ]
87	How many close friends would you say you currently have? _____	[ ] [ ]
88	How many of these close friends are new friends? _____	[ ] [ ]
89	How many of these close friends are friends from the street? _____	[ ] [ ]
90	What do you do for leisure and recreation?	[ ]

91	Who do you spend your leisure or recreational time with?	[ ]
92	What image do you have of yourself now that you are off the street? **Probe: if positive or negative self-image**	[ ]
93	Why do you feel this way?	[ ]
94	Has your attitude changed since leaving the street? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
95	**If yes, ask**: How?	[ ]
96	Has your appearance changed since leaving the street? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
97	**If yes, ask**: How?	[ ]
98	Have you kept anything as a reminder of the time you spent on the street? _____ 1) Yes _____ 2) No	[ ]
99	**If yes, ask**: What have you kept?	[ ]
100	What would you say is the biggest challenge facing young people getting off the street today?	[ ]
101	Is there anything else you would like to tell us?	[ ]
That concludes the interview. Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions.		