



Towards an African definition of resilience: a rural South African community's view of resilient youth

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Background
- Problem statement and aim of the study
- Study design
 - Data generation & Data analysis
- Findings
- Discussion
- Way forward

BACKGROUND

- Part of the Pathways to Resilience Research Project (PTR);
- PTR is led by M. Ungar (PhD) and colleagues (Dalhousie University-Hallifax-Canada);
- PTR is a series of international studies partnering countries that include: Canada, China, Colombia, New Zealand and South Africa,
- Goal of PTR- understanding the formal and informal service use patterns among youth in challenging circumstances and the influence both have on positive developmental outcomes.

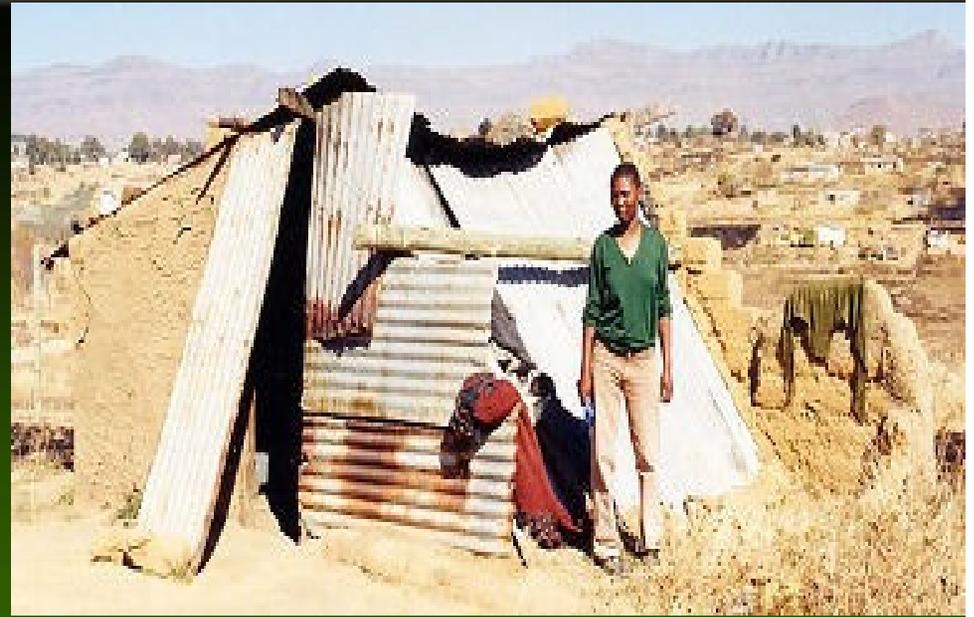
SOUTH AFRICAN SITES

Free State Province-
Qwa Qwa and
Bethlehem



CONTEXTUAL RISKS

- poverty,
- unemployment,
- ineffective schools,
- crime,
- HIV & AIDS,
- child-headed households,
- migrant labour,
- poor infrastructure,
- teenage pregnancy, etc



- Resilience is broadly understood to mean ‘positive adaptation in the face of adversity’ (Schoon & Bynner, 2003, p. 21),
- PTR explores local citizen’s understanding of resilience instead of imposing an a priori conceptualisation;
- Therefore we are reporting the findings of a series of studies that explored local South African citizens’ understanding of the term, resilience,

PROBLEM STATEMENT

What does a resilient young person look like according to adults residing in the chosen research sites?

AIM OF OUR STUDY

To engage local adults residing in the research sites in order to explore their understanding of a resilient youth.



STUDY DESIGN

- Qualitative exploratory study;
- We pursued a Grounded Theory Approach;
- Collected data through interaction with Advisory Panel ;
- AP provides guidance on methodology, ethics and dissemination strategies
- Theoretical sampling;
- Rooted in the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2009);

DATA GENERATION & ANALYSIS

- Focus group discussions with AP;
- Narratives: accounts of AP members' perceptions of what encouraged resilience in one youth they knew or worked with;
- Draw-and-tell conversations (Driessnack, 2002);

FINDINGS

- The analysis yielded a nascent answer to how resilient youths can be described
- For example, a resilient local youth is one who:
 - demonstrated a **resilient personality** (flexibility, being solution-focused, determination, assertiveness and good communication skills);
 - had **active support systems**;
 - had the **capacity to accept** current challenges;
 - made **educational progress**;
 - had the **capacity to dream**; and
 - exhibited **value-driven behavior**
- A few examples follow

AN ACTIVE SUPPORT SYSTEM

APM 7 felt that social support provided opportunities and places

“...where children and youth meet to do activities which keeps them away from wrong-doings and where recreational activities are done to nurture their talents and where there is a soup kitchen which provide daily meals for children in need.”

MADE EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

APM 9 acknowledged role of educational progress and school engagement:

“Through the help of different things that was around her, she was able to bounce back ...and then she could attend university ... All these assisted her in recovering.”

CAPACITY TO ACCEPT CURRENT CHALLENGES

“These resilient ones, they show acceptance of what is happening” (APM 1).

“....but it’ is not apathy: instead it is accepting the situation for now, and doing something to better things over time” (APM 7)

HAD THE CAPACITY TO DREAM

APM 4 wrote about a 14 year old who fell pregnant :

“...but she could not think of or agree to quitting school and fought her way back. She took the child to the boyfriend’s mother to care for during the week ... Still words were hurled at her from all corners of the streets, to pull her down and crush her ...But, she continued to school: she dreamed to be the only educated child in the family ...”

DISCUSSION

Multiple South African and international studies have reported:

- traits and skills consistent with a resilient personality.
- that supportive relationships buoy resilience.
- scholastic achievement characterises resilience
- the protective role of the capacity to dream,
- the protective role of religion: African youth are socialised to be both religious and respectful of cultural values (Ramphele, 2002);
- inclination to disregard emotional pain and to focus on what to do to remain competent noted by Theron and Malindi (2010);

- No mention of bond or relationship to a significant or caring adult, or of cohesive primary family bonds,
- There was no prescription related to the form that support should take,
- Acceptance could not be located in previous studies of resilience,
- The mix of resources that the AP associated with local youth resilience was noteworthy,
- Personal strengths, support, value adherence and educational progress were coloured by Africentric culture and sociocultural context;

THE WAY FORWARD-MAIN LESSONS

- A priori conceptualisations of resilience can be flawed;
- Continued exploration of resilience as a culturally and contextually sensitive construct.
- Ask urban AP affected by enculturation to conceptualise local youth-resilience;
- Invite local youths to describe resilient peers and compare their descriptions with the current understanding of resilience;
- Engage Africans in a participatory process to generate theories of African youth resilience

CONT...

- Invite the AP and resilient youth to comment on how the six facets of resilience identified by AP members encourage resilience;
- The AP's description needs to be interrogated further since it does not explain the process of youth resilience.

MUCHAS GRACIAS
THANK YOU VERY MUCH

