

Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology 11

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Linda C. Theron
Linda Liebenberg
Michael Ungar *Editors*

Youth Resilience and Culture

Commonalities and Complexities

 Springer

Youth Resilience and Culture

Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology

Volume 11

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The aim of the Cross Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology book series is to spread a universal and culture-fair perspective on good life promotion. The series will advance a deeper understanding of the cross-cultural differences in well-being conceptualization. A deeper understanding can affect psychological theories, interventions and social policies in various domains, from health to education, from work to leisure. Books in the series will investigate such issues as enhanced mobility of people across nations, ethnic conflicts and the challenges faced by traditional communities due to the pervasive spreading of modernization trends. New instruments and models will be proposed to identify the crucial components of well-being in the process of acculturation. This series will also explore dimensions and components of happiness that are currently overlooked because happiness research is grounded in the Western tradition, and these dimensions do not belong to the Western cultural frame of mind and values.

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ISSN 2210-5417

ISBN 978-94-017-9414-5

DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9415-2

Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg New York London

ISSN 2210-5425 (electronic)

ISBN 978-94-017-9415-2 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014955442

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Printed on acid-free paper

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Preface

Culture is perhaps the most neglected topic in the study of risk and resilience. (Feldman & Masalha, 2007, p. 2)

In 1955 Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith began their longitudinal study of children from diverse cultural ancestries, born in America's western-most state, namely Kauai. In many ways, their related 1982 publication, 'Vulnerable but invincible: A longitudinal study of resilient children and youth', galvanised resilience research in the social sciences. Despite the field's roots in a multi-cultural context, the irony of resilience research is that for the next two decades it would be dominated by a focus on minority world contexts, and informed by minority world perspectives.

By the twenty-first century an increasing number of authors began voicing their critique of the field's narrow investigation of children's constructive adjustment to adversity. Esteemed resilience scholars (see, for example, Boyden, 2003; Cicchetti, 2010; Masten, 2011, 2014; Masten & Wright, 2010; Panter-Brick & Eggerman, 2012; Ungar, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013; Wright, Masten, & Narayan, 2013; Zautra, Hall, & Murray, 2010) emphasized that until researchers and theorists account for the complex relationship between resilience and culture, explanations of why some individuals prevail in the face of adversity would remain incomplete.

This edited volume is in many ways a response to this critique. It comes literally 10 years after the Resilience Research Centre (RRC) hosted in 2005, the first international conference that focused on cross-cultural understandings of resilience. At this conference, the RRC and its network of resilience-focused researchers from all five continents showed that resilience processes are not culturally neutral. In the intervening years, work emerging from the RRC has continued to foreground the cultural relevance of resilience processes. Studies such as Ungar's International Resilience Project (IRP), an 11-country, 14-site exploration into cross-cultural understandings of resilience, changed how resilience was conceptualised and measured (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). This is seen, most notably, in the development of Ungar's Social Ecology of Resilience Theory (2008, 2011). It also spurred the Pathways to Resilience Research Project (led by Ungar, and funded by the Social

Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the International Development Research Centre of Canada, and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment in New Zealand). This mixed methods study investigated the pathways youth travel through formal services and informal supports as they navigate complex and challenging contexts. It has paid close attention to how these various resources support youth resilience processes in the culturally diverse contexts of Canada, China, Colombia, New Zealand, and South Africa, and how these processes are impacted by culture. Its findings echo the theme of the 2005 RRC conference: culture is a heavily nuanced construct and begs much greater consideration in investigations of resilience processes.

The complex import of culture to resilience is underscored by the consideration of other researchers. For example, some researchers are increasingly considering how acculturation processes influence the resilience of highly mobile youth in European and American countries (see, for example, Masten, Liebkind, & Hernandez, 2012); and/or how culturally salient values inform (i.e., promote and/or restrain) resilience processes of youth in Afghanistan (Panter-Brick & Eggerman, 2012); and/or the need to account for how African youths' resilience processes are informed by traditional African culture, rather than in ways that echo Eurocentric theories of resilience (Theron, 2012; Theron & Donald, 2013; Theron, Theron, & Malindi, 2013). Other researchers (e.g. Brown & Tylka, 2011; Neblett et al., 2008) have begun to document how cultural practices (such as racial socialisation) support youth resilience in race-conscious contexts such as America.

Despite this mounting interest in the role of culture in resilience processes no book has been published that focuses exclusively on resilience and culture. *Youth Resilience and Culture: Commonalities and Complexities* addresses this gap. It brings together emerging discussions of the ways in which culture shapes resilience, the theories that inform these various studies, and important considerations that should be borne in mind as researchers continue to investigate resilience. The volume is divided into four parts, reflecting these components.

Part I addresses the central constructs underpinning any theorising about resilience and culture, namely resilience, culture, the complexity inherent to each, and how this is magnified when research accounts for both. In **Chap. 1, Margaret Wright and Ann Masten** review the concepts and lexicon central to resilience, outline several models that facilitate investigation of resilience processes, and briefly synthesise what the last five decades of resilience research reveal about why and how some young people adjust well to potentially disruptive circumstances and events. Their authoritative synthesis flags how culture has, traditionally, been given short shrift in investigations of resilience. In **Chap. 2, Linda C. Theron and Linda Liebenberg** review understandings of culture and comment on the variable ways in which macro- and micro-cultural contexts promote cultural guidelines for everyday living. They conclude that classical views of culture have limited utility for explaining the complexity of how culture matters for resilience, and suggest, therefore, that culture be understood as socially-constructed and socially-shared ways-of-being-and -doing. In **Chap. 3, Michael Ungar** challenges simplistic understandings of either culture or resilience, and draws attention to the diversity

of protective processes and positive adaptation. In this process he reviews the seven tensions – highlighted by the initial International Resilience Project (2003–2005) – that continue to be reflected in emerging research findings. He explains that youths need to resolve these tensions in meaningful collaboration with their social ecologies and highlights how dominant culture, and resistance to dominant culture, informs resilience processes in complex ways.

Part II comprises ten chapters that illustrate the many different ways in which culture and resilience processes intertwine to facilitate and/or hinder youths' positive adjustment to a variety of risks (including poverty, sexual abuse, orphan-status, racism, marginalisation, physical disability, violence, etc.). Importantly, these chapters do not report systematic, cross-cultural work which typically aggregates large-scale study results to offer cultural stereotypes that can be widely generalised. Instead, each of these chapters draws on previously documented research, or current/on-going research, to demonstrate which culturally relevant resources (e.g., worldviews, parenting practices), values, and goals impact youths' resilience processes and how this occurs in variable ways. In doing so, these ten chapters show how cultural resources can sometimes be allied to, or obscured by, ethnicity, race, and religion. In short, each of these chapters provides deeper understanding of the unique, and often complex, ways in which micro- and/or macro-cultural influences sculpt resilience processes. It is our hope that these understandings will prompt follow-up, systematic, robust research that tests their generalizability.

Beginning the part with an African focus, **Linda C. Theron and Nareadi Phasha** (Chap. 4) report two instrumental case studies of black South African youths, who were placed at risk by their social ecologies, to illustrate how traditional African culture (i.e., *Ubuntu* values and practices) underscored, but also complicated, their resilience processes. This is followed by **Elias Mpofu, Nancy Ruhode, Magen Mhaka-Mutepfa, James January, and John Mapfumo's** report in Chap. 5 on an exploratory survey with 18 Zimbabwean youth that shows how traditional, extended family systems mostly facilitate resilience processes when Zimbabwean youth are orphaned.

Moving across to the South Pacific, **Jackie Sanders and Robyn Munford** (Chap. 6) report the varied resilience processes of 605 Māori, Pacific and Pākehā youth and explain how these youths' cultural allegiances shape their resilience processes and related outcomes.

Entering the Northern hemisphere, **Guoxiu Tian and Xiyang Wang** (Chap. 7) report how the Chinese cultural emphasis on human interrelatedness provided 220 at-risk youths with nuclear and extended family support, as well as support from 'sworn brothers/sisters' and *tongxiang*, that mostly facilitated these youths' resilience processes.

Next, **Linda Liebenberg, Janice Ikeda, and Michele Wood** (Chap. 8) move the focus to North America where they unpack the ways in which the land/place-based culture of the Inuit supports positive outcomes for youth living in remote coastal communities of Labrador within the Land Claim area of the Nunatsiavut Government. In Chap. 9 **David Dupree, Tirzah Spencer, and Margaret Beale Spencer** draw on relevant studies of African American youths and integrate

Spencer's (1995) phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST) to illustrate that racial socialisation promotes resilience through positive racial identity and less internalisation of racism. In contrast, **Patrick Russell, Linda Liebenberg, and Michael Ungar** (Chap. 10) explore the ways in which the invisibility created by belonging to dominant cultural groups can hamper the resilience processes of youth, with white youth in Atlantic Canada presented as an example. In Chap. 11, **Elizabeth Moore and Donna Mertens** draw on studies framed by transformative theory (Mertens, 2009) to illustrate how a micro-culture of pride, mentorship, and advocacy along with a macro-culture that advocates for inclusive, quality education for the Deaf, supports resilience processes in Deaf American youth in general, and Deaf American youth of colour in particular. **Shelly Whitman and Linda Liebenberg** (Chap. 12) then explore the ways in which conflicting cultures can both undermine and promote the adaptive processes of former child soldiers moving as refugees from conflict-contexts in sub-Saharan Africa to new homes in a Canadian context, echoing many of the themes highlighted in Chap. 4.

Bringing the part to a close, with continued attention to the complexity of cultural influences, **Wendy Kliever and Roberto Meijia** (Chap. 13) report a mixed methods study with 310 Colombian youth living in the city of Itagui to document how a culture of violence and the culture of specific *comunas* both supported and obstructed resilience processes.

Part III foregrounds the methodological complexities of researching how resilience and culture interlink, and how this impacts the ways in which youth respond to circumstances and events that threaten their wellbeing in ways that promote positive outcomes. To this end, in Chap. 14, **Jia He and Fons Van de Vijver** use their extensive knowledge of quantitative cross-cultural methods to review construct, method, and item bias that are potentiated in resilience research across multiple cultures, and the corresponding levels of equivalence in cross-cultural comparisons. Using examples from relevant studies, they overview the approaches developed in quantitative studies and how these apply to qualitative studies, before commenting on how best to combine qualitative and quantitative evidence in the study of resilience and culture. **Linda Liebenberg and Linda C. Theron** (Chap. 15) then argue for greater critical consideration when integrating innovative methodologies into resilience-focused qualitative research. In particular, they make a case for culturally-sensitive choices of inventive, qualitative approaches. Using examples from the Pathways to Resilience study, they highlight the value of culturally-congruent, visual, participatory approaches to access the taken-for-granted in person-environment interactions, and the ways in which this enhances understanding of how culture shapes resilience processes. **"Lali" McCubbin and Jennifer Moniz** (Chap. 16) round this part on research off by drawing attention to the criticality of the ethical principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility in studies that explore resilience, particularly when researchers and participants do not share cultural roots, and/or when resilience studies are conducted in marginalised communities. They conclude that in the absence of respectful, relevant, reciprocal, and responsible research, studies will yield

superficial and/or inaccurate understandings of how culture sways resilience, potentially furthering the marginalising effects of oppressive structures.

Part IV consists of a single, compelling chapter authored by **Catherine Panter-Brick**. In this concluding chapter, Catherine flags the dangers of researching how culture impacts resilience in simplistic, reductionist, or categorical ways. She urges future, methodologically robust, multi-systems research that takes a ‘fine-grained’ approach to culture, especially if resilience is to be understood as a complex, normative concept, and if the differential nature of functional outcomes, and the pathways to them, are to be meaningfully grasped. Importantly, naive or romanticized interpretations of the ways in which culture impacts resilience are derided. Accordingly, the concluding chapter underscores the way in which this collection provides an opportunity to pause and take stock of the progress, or lack thereof, made in explorations of how culture informs resilience. Importantly, while this chapter brings the volume to a summative close, it also points the way forward for future research efforts, thereby positioning this publication as a stepping stone on the path to systematically explaining why and how culture shapes resilience processes.

In summary, this book does not offer exhaustive explanations or illustrations of how culture and resilience processes interact to facilitate positive outcomes (or not). For example, no chapter explicitly addresses how youth, who are confronted by several contrasting and/or shifting cultural paradigms, navigate and negotiate such realities. Nor does any chapter speak of youth resistance to dominant or disruptive cultures and how such resistance informs resilience processes. Likewise, comment on gene X culture interactions is absent. Nevertheless, *Youth Resilience and Culture: Commonalities and Complexities* is a first and important step to sensitising researchers and practitioners in the field of resilience to the magnitude of culture in explanations of resilience processes and subsequent translation of such understandings into culturally-congruent interventions. In short, the central message of this book is that non-stereotypical, critical appreciation of the culture, and often conflicting systems in which youth find themselves, and those with which they affiliate, is pivotal to comprehending why particular resilience processes matter for particular youth in a particular life-world at a particular point in time. Grasping such particularity demands on-going, sensitive research into why and how culture matters for resilience.

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Acknowledgements

The chapters in this book were double blind peer-reviewed. In this regard, we gratefully acknowledge the support of the following scholars:

Dr. Rashid Ahmed
Prof. Dr. Dorothy Bottrell
Prof. Dr. Ann Cameron
Prof. Dr. Kate Cockcroft
Prof. Dr. Lynne Cohen
Prof. Dr. Maurice Elias
Prof. Dr. David Este
Prof. Dr. Robbie Gilligan
Prof. Dr. Toby Jenkins
Prof. Dr. Itumuleng Khumalo
Prof. Dr. Ty Lee
Prof. Dr. Han Lili
Prof. Dr. Angus Macfarlane
Prof. Dr. Ruth Mampane
Prof. Dr. Kobus Maree
Prof. Dr. Robynn Munford
Mr. Joel Reyes
Prof. Dr. Ian Rothmann
Prof. Dr. Jackie Sanders
Dr. Vanessa Sherman
Prof. Dr. Deo Strümpfer
Dr. Deborah Stienstra
Prof. Dr. Tinie Theron
Prof. Dr. Madine Vanderplaat
Prof. Dr. Marié Wissing

Furthermore, Prof. Dr. Catherine Panter-Brick and two of her Ph.D. students, Divya Balaji and Aalyia Sadruddin, critically reviewed the contents of this book. The editors gratefully acknowledge their astute insights.

Contents

Part I The Complex Interactions of Resilience and Culture

- 1 Pathways to Resilience in Context** 3
Margaret O'Dougherty Wright and Ann S. Masten
- 2 Understanding Cultural Contexts and Their Relationship to
Resilience Processes** 23
Linda C. Theron and Linda Liebenberg
- 3 Resilience and Culture: The Diversity of Protective Processes and
Positive Adaptation** 37
Michael Ungar

Part II Illustrative (Case) Studies: Youth Resilience and Culture

- 4 Cultural Pathways to Resilience: Opportunities and Obstacles as
Recalled by Black South African Students** 51
Linda C. Theron and Nareadi Phasha
- 5 Resilience Among Zimbabwean Youths with Orphanhood** 67
Elias Mpofu, Nancy Ruhode, Magen Mhaka-Mutepfa, James January,
and John Mapfumo
- 6 The Interaction Between Culture, Resilience, Risks and Outcomes:
A New Zealand Study** 81
Jackie Sanders and Robyn Munford
- 7 Cultural Pathways to Resilience: Informal Social Support of
At-Risk Youth in China** 93
Guoxiu Tian and Xiying Wang

8	“It’s Just Part of My Culture”: Understanding Language and Land in the Resilience Processes of Aboriginal Youth	105
	Linda Liebenberg, Janice Ikeda, and Michele Wood	
9	Stigma, Stereotypes and Resilience Identities: The Relationship Between Identity Processes and Resilience Processes Among Black American Adolescents	117
	David Dupree, Tirzah R. Spencer, and Margaret Beale Spencer	
10	White Out: The Invisibility of White North American Culture and Resilience Processes	131
	Patrick Russell, Linda Liebenberg, and Michael Ungar	
11	Deaf Culture and Youth Resilience in Diverse American Communities	143
	Elizabeth A. Moore and Donna M. Mertens	
12	Barriers to Resilience Processes: Understanding the Experiences and Challenges of Former Child Soldiers Integrating into Canadian Society	157
	Shelly Whitman and Linda Liebenberg	
13	Effects of Microcultural Environments of Violence on Resilient Responses Among Adolescents and Young Adults in the City of Itagui, Colombia	171
	Wendy Kliever, Roberto Mejia, and Yolanda Torres	
Part III Researching Resilience Across Cultures		
14	The Value of Keeping an Open Eye for Methodological Issues in Research on Resilience and Culture	189
	Jia He and Fons J.R. Van de Vijver	
15	Innovative Qualitative Explorations of Culture and Resilience	203
	Linda Liebenberg and Linda C. Theron	
16	Ethical Principles in Resilience Research: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility	217
	Laurie “Lali” D. McCubbin and Jennifer Moniz	
Part IV Conclusion		
17	Culture and Resilience: Next Steps for Theory and Practice	233
	Catherine Panter-Brick	
	Index	245

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Part I
The Complex Interactions of Resilience
and Culture

Chapter 1

Pathways to Resilience in Context

Margaret O'Dougherty Wright and Ann S. Masten

Following their parents' contentious divorce, a 3 year old African American girl and her 4 year old brother traveled alone by train to live with their paternal grandmother in Arkansas. Four years later their father arrived without warning and moved the children to live with their biological mother, who now resided in Missouri. At the age of eight, the child was brutally raped by her mother's boyfriend. He was soon murdered, most likely by the child's uncles. In the aftermath of this trauma, the child became mute for almost 5 years and was sent back to live with her grandmother. Following recovery of her speech, she was sent again to live with her mother, who now resided in California. By age 17 she had become pregnant, and began a precipitous slide into poverty and criminal activities, while also working as a cook and waitress to provide for her young son. As a young adult, she struggled to raise her son without training or an advanced education. Given her exposure to a multitude of psychosocial risks and struggles to adapt during her early life, one would not have predicted that she would someday become a world-renowned writer, poet, performer, and influential voice in the American Civil Rights Movement. This is the early life story of Maya Angelou.

Angelou's memoirs provide rich insights into factors that may have facilitated her recovery and remarkable turnaround later in life (Angelou, 1970, 1974, 1981). She credits a teacher with helping her to speak again, igniting her extraordinary love for books, and encouraging her to observe and write about the world around her. Other salient compensatory and protective factors that stand out in her memoirs are the steady presence and guidance of her grandmother who provided financial stability during economically perilous times and modeled incredible strength of character and resolve in dealing with numerous experiences with racism and

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discrimination. The love of her brother, vitality and support of her mother, and opportunities within the African American community to participate actively in the struggle for civil rights likely fostered her resilience as well. And, of course, Angelou also brought to these interactions the power of intellect, creativity, performing skills, a vibrant personality, and indomitable spirit.

Compelling case histories of resilience, like that of Angelou and many others, have inspired pioneering research to understand the processes that account for the capacity to recover and thrive following extremely difficult life circumstances. When researchers began to follow “at risk” children into adolescence and adulthood, they observed dramatic variations in adjustment, including cases of unexpectedly consistent positive development, or, as in the example of Maya Angelou, evidence for dramatic turnarounds later in life. Early groundbreaking studies of children facing a variety of stressful life events and psychosocial adversities (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1982) led to decades of research as investigators across the globe set out to understand the phenomenon of resilience in diverse contexts. Theory and research on the role of culture in resilience was neglected in the early decades, but now is burgeoning (Masten, 2014b; Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013; Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013).

In this chapter, we overview key resilience concepts and terminology, delineate various models examining resilience processes, and highlight very briefly what has been learned over the past half century about pathways to resilience. Resilience is conceptualized within a dynamic, embedded, ecological systems framework, encompassing interactions across multiple levels, from the level of genes to person, family, community, and cultural group (Cicchetti, 2013; Wright, Masten, & Narayan, 2013).

1.1 What Is Resilience?

The terms ‘resilience’ or ‘resilient’ are now widely recognized and familiar to many in the lay public. These terms are often used by doctors, therapists, policy makers, teachers, academics, and the popular press to refer to individuals who “bounce back” after significant stress and adversity. Despite its popularity, however, the “deceptively simple construct of resilience” (Kaplan, 2005, p. 39) has been the topic of many definitional debates and its utility as an explanatory construct has been questioned. Resilience derives from the Latin verb ‘resilire’, meaning to leap or spring back; to rebound, recoil. It was first introduced into the scholarly literature in 1818, when Thomas Tredgold used the term to describe a property of timber, and to explain why some types of wood were able to accommodate a sudden and severe load without breaking (cited in McAslan, 2010). Forty years later, Mallet (cited in McAslan, 2010) developed a way to measure the ‘modulus of resilience’ to assess the ability of materials to withstand severe conditions. After many years of productive usage in engineering and physics, the term was adopted by ecologists and

developmental scientists as a metaphor for the capacity of a dynamic system (e.g., a rain forest, a family, a community) to respond to challenges and threats, survive, and continue to prosper (Gunderson & Holling, 2002; Masten & Obradović, 2008).

1.2 Key Concepts and Terminology

Although definitional issues continue to be the subject of some debate, there is broad consensus on key concepts. (Masten, 2014b, p. 10) has defined *resilience* as “The capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development”. This definition is intentionally broad and scalable across system levels and disciplines. However, it requires further delineation in the context of application, to define the meaning of “capacity” or “adapt successfully” or “significant challenges.” Research on resilience requires conceptual and operational definitions of these components, and culture plays many roles in how resilience is defined.

Definitions of resilience always consider both the nature of the threat to adaptation and the quality of adaptation following threat exposure. Threats to adaptation are typically conceptualized by a variety of terms such as *risk*, *adversity*, and *stressful life events*. Positive adaptation is also defined and assessed in a variety of ways, including absence of psychopathology, success in age-salient *developmental tasks*, subjective well-being, and relational *competence* (see Table 1.1 for our definition of key terms).

It is critical to remember that risk is a probabilistic term. It signifies an elevated probability of a negative outcome for members of a designated risk group, but it does not indicate the precise nature of the threat to an individual or differentiate which individuals in the risk group will demonstrate a negative outcome. Risk is often multifaceted and risk factors frequently co-occur in the lives of individuals. As a result, investigators often have focused on assessments of *cumulative risk* (Evans, Li, & Sepanski Whipple, 2013; Obradović, Shaffer, & Masten, 2012). Risk categories, such as “parents divorced,” include children with widely varying experiences of pre- and post-divorce interparental conflict, family violence, economic strain, and life disruptions known to affect the well-being of children. At the same time, individual children experience even the same events differently as a function of their age, gender, development, and many other individual differences in biological, psychological, and social function. A closer analysis of divorce effects often reveals that consideration of cumulative risk, together with individual differences, provides clearer insights into the processes impacting long term adjustment among children of divorced parents (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999; Kelly & Emery, 2003).

There is now a substantial body of research documenting that outcomes generally worsen, and resilience becomes less likely, as risk factors pile up and persist (Evans et al., 2013; Obradović et al., 2012). As a result, contemporary resilience research usually considers risk from a cumulative and contextual perspective,

Table 1.1 Definition of key terms

Resilience: The capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to significant disturbances and continue or recover to healthy function or development.
Risk Factor: A variable associated with an elevated probability of a negative outcome for a group of individuals
Cumulative Risk: The summation of all risk factors that the individual has experienced or an index of the overall severity of adversity experienced; this can include multiple separate risk events or repeated occurrences of the same risk factor
Stress: The condition or experience of an imbalance in demands impinging on a person and the actual or perceived resources available to meet those challenges, disrupting the quality of functioning at some level
Stressful or adverse life events or conditions: Experiences that typically lead to stress responses in individuals
Adversity: Stressful life experiences that threaten adaptation or development
Promotive Factors (assets, resources): Measurable characteristics of individuals associated with better adaptation (for a designated outcome) in both high and low risk conditions; variables with equally beneficial effects regardless of risk level; correlates of positive adaptation
Protective Factors: Measurable characteristics of individuals associated with positive outcomes particularly in the context of high risk or adversity; a favorable moderator of risk or adversity
Cumulative Protection: The presence of multiple protective factors or influences in an individual's life
Differential susceptibility (sensitivity to context): Individual differences in reactivity or sensitivity to experience, associated with moderating effects of experience on individual function or development; such moderators may be associated with good reactions to positive environments and poor responses to negative environments
Developmental Tasks: Psychosocial milestones or accomplishments expected of members in a given society or culture in different age periods; these milestones often represent criteria by which individual development can be evaluated within the culture
Competence: The adaptive use of personal or contextual resources to attain age-appropriate developmental tasks

acknowledging that there will be dose-response gradients that reflect multiple risks piling up in the lives of individuals. For example, greater risk is presumably posed to individuals who experience an acute new adversity in the midst of ongoing poverty, war, or maltreatment than there would be for a similar, but isolated, acute adverse experience (Masten & Narayan, 2012). Past research on risk gradients has provided ample documentation of the adaptive difficulties that ensue with exposure to increasing levels of stress and cumulative risk exposure (Adler & Ostrove, 1999; Cicchetti, Rogosch, Lynch, & Holt, 1993; Pine, Costello, & Masten, 2005). Finally, it should also be noted that typically as risk gradients rise, assets and/or resources decline. This reflects the fact that risk factors and resources are often inversely related to each other and in some cases (e.g., low and high SES, poor and effective parenting) reflect opposite ends of the same continuum.

Positive adaptation can be defined at the level of the individual, family, community or other systems. In research on individual human resilience, the criteria for evaluating positive adaptation are often based on normative expectations for behavior or development in the context of age, culture, community, society, and

history. These expectations are often called developmental tasks (McCormick, Kuo, & Masten, 2011; Wright et al., 2013). Some developmental tasks, such as learning to walk or talk or care for children, are universal; some are common in contemporary societies, such as attending school and learning to read; and others vary by geography or culture, such as learning to fish or meditate or perform traditional songs or dances. Sometimes adaptive success is defined negatively, in terms of the absence of problems, but that is usually in the context of research on risk for particular disorders or symptoms, when the goal of the research is preventing the problem.

Issues regarding defining and measuring the criteria for successful adaptation in research on resilience have received considerable attention in resilience science over the years. Different decisions about criteria and measures made it difficult to compare findings in systematic meta-analytic studies, while at the same time diverse studies often revealed similar conclusions about important predictors of resilience.

As studies of resilience spread across cultures and situations, the complexity of defining positive adaptation became more evident. Studies of acculturation highlighted differences in the developmental task expectations for young immigrants navigating sometimes conflicting expectations at home and at school (see Masten, Liebkind, & Hernandez, 2012, and Telzer & Fuligni, 2009). Efforts to apply measures developed in one cultural context to study adaptive behavior in a very different context proved inappropriate or invalid in many instances, while developing new, context-specific measures was a daunting task. Qualitative studies in different cultures expanded and enriched the scope of possible criteria, while also posing more challenges for cross-contextual research (see Ungar, 2012). Some situations also challenged the meaning of successful adaptation, such as when youth voluntarily become involved in popular uprisings against perceived oppression in areas of prolonged political conflict (see Barber, 2009).

The “capacity for adapting” is typically described in terms of general resources associated with positive adaptation under most circumstances (also called assets and promotive influences) and protective factors or processes, which refer to adaptive capacities that play a special role when risk or adversity is high (Masten, 2014b; Wright et al., 2013). Resilience investigators were searching for understanding of “what makes a difference?” to account for the striking variability in adaptive outcomes among individuals confronting what seemed to be similar adversities. Many of the factors widely associated with resilience in children, for example, were well-established predictors of success in multiple domains of child development at any level of risk, such as good cognitive skills and effective parents. But evidence also accrued that there were some factors that played a larger role when the level of threat was high and others that only mattered in particular emergencies, like an automobile airbag, the fire department, or specific antibodies. Parents could play both kinds of roles, normal caregiver and emergency responder. It also became clear that the same attribute of a child or environment could function as protective in one regard and a liability in another situation. A highly inhibited child, for example, might be more susceptible to social stressors and anxiety

responses but protected from getting into dangerous situations and responding with aggression. More recently, there is growing attention to individual differences in sensitivity to experience that result in better adaptation in favorable environments and worse adaptation in unfavorable environments (Belsky & Pluess, 2009; Boyce & Ellis, 2005). These person-in-context effects are discussed further below.

Promotive and protective influences are not always well-differentiated for methodological reasons. When only a high-risk sample is studied, for example, it is not clear whether the correlates of resilience are promotive or protective influences, or both. Ignoring the distinction in order to summarize findings in the literature over the years, reviewers have observed remarkable consistency in the correlates or predictors of positive adaptation, defined in a variety of ways, under diverse conditions of adversity, also defined in a variety of ways (e.g., Luthar, 2006; Wright et al., 2013). Masten (2001, 2004) described the commonly observed correlates of resilience for young people as “the short list,” positing that these frequently reported factors linked to resilience (e.g., good cognitive abilities, a close relationship to sensitive and responsive caregivers, socioeconomic advantages, and effective schools) represent fundamental adaptive systems both within and outside the individual. These systems reflect both biological and sociocultural evolutionary processes that support human development under many conditions. One of the lessons learned from this body of research is that most individuals who manifest resilience do not possess mysterious, unique, or exclusive qualities. Rather, they have been able to draw from common resources of adaptive capacity, within the person, their relationships, and their connections to other systems. Table 1.2 highlights some of these bio-psycho-social-cultural adaptive systems and processes.

As the definition of resilience became more systems oriented and consequently, more dynamic, the capacity for resilience also was conceptualized in terms of interacting systems, congruent with relational developmental systems theory (Overton, 2013; Zelazo, 2013). In dynamic, open systems, the behavior of the individual system is influenced by many interactions inside the individual system and with other systems. As a result, human individual adaptation and development emerges from the interplay of many systems and the capacity for adaptive responses to a challenge will also depend on other systems. In other words, human capacity for adaptive responses to challenges is distributed across interacting systems, including adaptive systems within the person and embedded in relationships and connections to other systems, in the family, community, and culture (Masten, 2014b).

Table 1.2 Examples of bio-psycho-social-cultural systems and processes potentially implicated in fostering resilience for children and families

Within the individual
Genetic moderators and epigenetic processes
Positive physical health and immune function
Adaptive self-regulation system (physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral)
Adequacy of stress response systems
Strong cognitive and problem-solving abilities
Agency and an effective mastery motivation system
Adaptive temperament and personality
Within the family
Close attachment relationships
Positive extended family and kinship ties
Cohesiveness, structure, and support within the family
Effectiveness of parenting in the cultural context
Family rituals, values, and beliefs
Financial stability
Within the community
Safety of the physical environment
Affordable housing
Effective education system
Peer friendships with positive values and norms
Presence of religious and spiritual communities
Good public health care and social services
Employment opportunities
Adequate access to emergency (police, fire, medical) and legal services
Access to recreational facilities
Within the culture and society
Belief systems that give life meaning and purpose
Protective child policies (child labor, child health and welfare policies)
Socioeconomic policies and health of local and national economy
Availability and adequacy of emergency response systems
Access to material resources
Human rights; Adequacy of general laws and legal systems for protection of citizens
Prevention of and protection from oppression and political violence
Global relationships with international community
Peaceful political situation and some degree of national security

1.3 Key Issue: Is Resilience an Individual Trait or a Dynamic Multi-determined Process?

One area of enduring debate in resilience theory over the years was whether resilience should be viewed as a trait or as a dynamic process (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013; Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2013; Rutter, 1979). This controversy

stemmed in part from the challenge of judging the status of a dynamic developing system in a meaningful way with respect to a specific point in time. Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) argued persuasively that a living system, by its very nature, is characterized by “dynamic process that is influenced by neural and psychological self-organization, as well as transactions between the ecological context and the developing organism” (p. 776).

The focus on resilience as a trait has been more common in adult than child literature, where resilience has sometimes been characterized as a personality characteristic that offers protection against life stress and adversity. However, there is little evidence to support a singular, broad trait of resilience and a considerable downside to this notion (Masten, 2013, 2014b; Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013; Wright et al., 2013). Many individual and contextual factors have been linked to resilience and, as noted above, the same characteristic can pose as vulnerability in one context and protection in a different context. Moreover, many of the processes associated with resilience (like a close relationship or community support) are not “in” the person. The notion of resilience as a trait also carries a high risk of blaming the victim when an individual does not manifest resilience in a difficult situation. As Garbarino remarked, following decades of research with high risk inner city youth: “Being unable to protect oneself against the accumulation of risk factors does not constitute moral turpitude. Some environments are too much for anyone” (2005, p. xiii). We need to be vigilant in guarding against such judgments. Even characteristics commonly linked to resilience (e.g., good problem-solving skills) do not provide absolute buffers to stressful life events; there are situations so hostile and threatening, such as prolonged deprivation and maltreatment, that no child would be expected to develop well (Cicchetti, 2013).

Developmental scholars have described resilience in terms of adaptive, developmental process promoting positive adjustment (e.g., Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993). In a dynamic, systems model of development, all adaptive behavior and development itself arise from continual interactions of systems within the individual and also the interaction of the individual with the environment, including other people and other systems (e.g., physical ecology, educational systems, and employment resources). Given the interplay among many embedded, interacting systems in contributing to the adaptation of individuals, it may be most accurate to say that resilience involves many processes and the capacity for resilience is distributed across interacting systems (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 provides an overview of some of the many bio-psycho-social-cultural systems and processes potentially implicated in fostering resilience. To illustrate, the capacity of a child to deal with adversity is likely to depend on the child’s own capabilities for regulating emotion and stress, the child’s cognitive abilities, the capabilities of an effective caregiver watching out for the child, and resources available to the child directly or indirectly through the family or the community and culture. How well the caregiver handles the situation is likely to depend on how well the family is functioning and supports available to the family, including routine and emergency services in the community, and cultural beliefs and practices. Families and communities transmit cultural practices that may promote

resilience in children in addition to providing support during times of needs. Both the social and the physical ecologies of child development contribute to resilience (Wachs & Rahman, 2013).

An individual's adaptation is also dynamic and can change over time. Consequently, the same individual may show maladaptive functioning at one point in time and resilience later in development or vice versa, depending on recent exposure to stress and the broader context of resources in his or her life. An individual person might also be resilient with respect to some kinds of stressors and not others, and a person might be resilient with respect to some adaptive outcomes, but not others (e.g., work competence but not relational competence) (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Masten & Wright, 2010; Rutter, 2007). Such complexity highlights the importance of adopting an ecological, transactional approach to understanding resilience (Cicchetti, 2013; Cowen & Durlak, 2000; Ungar, 2012; Ungar et al., 2013). Research informed by a transactional perspective underscores the importance of studying processes across multiple interconnected bio-psycho-social-cultural domains that can change over time, with changes in one domain of functioning potentially cascading to affect other domains (Masten & Cicchetti, 2010). Since adversity, challenges, and opportunities can occur at any point in development, with consequences that potentially alter development over the immediate and/or the long term, a lifespan developmental perspective is essential for a full understanding of resilience.

1.4 Models of Resilience

Three types of resilience models are discussed here: person-focused, variable-focused, and hybrid models. These models guided the strategies for assessment and analyses that operationalized and tested ideas about the connections among risks, adaptive function, and other factors that might play a role in resilience.

1.4.1 *Person-Focused Models*

Person-focused models, initially inspired by compelling case studies, have the individual person as their primary focus of analysis. There are a variety of different person-focused approaches, including qualitative and quantitative approaches which differ in their emphasis on inductive versus deductive reasoning, respectively. Quantitative research focuses specifically on a context of validation whereas qualitative research focuses on a context of discovery (Sullivan, 1998). In variable-based quantitative research, there is a tendency to generalize from aggregate group data to individual cases, converting the numbers into a narrative to explain how a developmental process occurs. In contrast, qualitative methods work directly from narratives and are better able to preserve the specific meanings that an individual

attributes to his or her experiences and actions. Thus, qualitative methods are particularly well-suited to discovering and understanding the subjective experience of individuals encountering highly stressful life conditions and capturing the complexity of their social context (Sullivan, 1998; Wright, Fopma-Loy, & Oberle, 2012).

Quantitative studies have two basic forms. One approach involves classification of high-risk individuals into groups according to the quality of their adaptation, followed by comparisons on variables that may account for the differences in outcome. A classic example is provided by widely-cited findings from the Kauai study by Werner and Smith (1982, 1992, 2001). These investigators identified a subgroup of resilient young people and compared them to their less successful high-risk peers of similar background. This type of model classifies individuals as either resilient or not and subsequent analyses attempt to determine the moderating and mediating factors that differentiate these groups of individuals. This model has been extended to include comparisons across four groups differing in exposure to risk, including a resilient subgroup (high risk, high adaptation), a vulnerable group (high risk, low adaptation), a competent low risk group (high adaptation, minimal exposure to risk or adversity) and a maladaptive subgroup that has not been exposed to a high level of risk and is functioning poorly. Research utilizing all four groups has typically reported a lower frequency of people in the low-risk maladaptive category, reflecting perhaps the overall bias in human development towards adaptive outcomes and/or the exclusion of some highly vulnerable participants from participation in research studies (Masten et al., 1999).

Recent person-focused approaches have utilized latent growth modeling in an effort to explore resilient pathways over time. These models will be discussed subsequently as hybrid models because of their ability to capture both the variability in individual growth curves over time as well as between-person and between-group differences in developmental trajectories.

1.4.2 Variable-Focused Models: Testing Promotive, Protective, Mediating, and Preventive Effects

In variable-focused models, multivariate statistics are employed to test different kinds of effects, representing hypotheses about the ways in which risks, resources, and potential mediators or moderators of risk may contribute to adaptive outcomes. The statistical tests, in effect, are evaluating the likelihood of a functional relation among the variables, although causal effects cannot be determined. Direct effects of a variable on an outcome, reflecting main effects, suggest factors that may function as risk or promotive factors. Some variables (e.g., maltreatment) have generally negative consequences (defining a risk factor or adversity) and some variables (e.g., a good sense of humor) have generally positive consequences. Many other

variables reflect a bidirectional continuum that is generally related to adjustment (e.g., quality of parenting or intellectual ability).

It is also possible to test for mediating effects of adversity or risk on some outcomes via an indirect effect of the purported mediator. A classic example is the hypothesis that adversity harms children by undermining the quality of parenting available. Economic strain, for example, affects the parents (e.g., they become depressed or fight more with each other), which in turn degrades the quality of their parenting, which then affects the child. Conger and colleagues (Conger & Conger, 2002; Conger, Rueter, & Conger, 2000) have tested this kind of indirect effect in their family stress model, showing for example, that the Iowa farm crisis may have had such effects on adolescents, mediated by parenting quality.

Investigators often test moderating effects as well, where a potential moderator is believed to alter the possible impact of risk or adversity on the outcome of interest. Statistically, these effects reflect significant interactions of the risk variable with the moderating variable in predicting the outcome of interest. Moderating effects have been described in terms of protective effects, vulnerability, and differential susceptibility or sensitivity to context. These distinctions reflect judgments about the nature of the effects in relation to what is normative or expected at a given level of adversity and the nature of the moderating variable (see Masten, 2013). Protective factors are associated with better than expected outcomes at high levels of risk and vulnerability factors are associated with worse than expected outcomes under high risk conditions. Sometimes the same variable can function as a promotive and protective factor, as noted above. In this case, a main effect and an interaction effect would be expected. Differential susceptibility, or sensitivity to context effects, discussed above and also below in the next section reflect a different kind of moderator. When risk is high, this kind of moderating variable shows a vulnerability pattern, but when risk is low (the context is favorable), the same variable shows a promotive pattern. In other words, the effect depends on the context.

Recently there has been great interest in models that examine differential reactivity to context. These models explore the possibility that some children are more reactive than others to both negative (risk-promoting) and positive (development-enhancing) environmental conditions. This enhanced sensitivity increases developmental responsiveness or reactivity to the environment (Belsky, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & van IJzendoorn, 2007; Belsky & Pluess, 2009; Boyce & Ellis, 2005; Ellis & Boyce, 2011). That is, the particular characteristics of a child that might make him or her disproportionately vulnerable to stress might also make the child more likely to benefit from contextual support and resources (e.g., responsive to protective factors). As so aptly put in the title of the seminal article by Belsky and colleagues (2007, p. 300), the influence of a differential susceptibility variable depends on the context, “for better or for worse.” This concept underscores a point made early in the resilience field that it is the function of an attribute in a given context that matters, which can vary depending on the situation (Rutter, 1987; Masten, 2013). For example, infant and toddler negative emotionality and difficult temperament have been explored as potential differential

susceptibility factors. Supporting this hypothesis, Pluess and Belsky (2009) found that children with difficult temperaments displayed more behavioral problems when raised in low quality environments, but fewer behavior problems when the quality of the rearing environment was high than did children with easy temperaments, who did not differ as dramatically based on the rearing environment. The findings in this area highlight the importance of examining not only the person but also the context to understand what leads to both vulnerability and resilience.

Transactional and cascade models reflect another variation on variable-focused models that have received considerable attention in recent years. These models often apply structural equation modeling or path analysis to test more complex patterns of interaction over time among multiple latent constructs or measured variables. In a seminal 1968 review, Bell drew attention to bidirectional effects, highlighting the importance of reciprocal influences in parent-child and other social relationships. His review highlighted that children were not passive recipients of their parents' socialization practices, but rather played an active role in both eliciting and altering their social experience. Following this critical review, Sameroff and Chandler (1975) proposed a transactional model that proposed that the child's development was the result of continuous, dynamic interactions of the child with the experiences provided in his or her environment.

Recent models have extended earlier formulations by drawing attention to mediating mechanisms and cascading effects across key developmental periods (e.g., Dodge, Greenberg, Malone, & The Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2008; Masten & Cicchetti, 2010) and incorporating multilevel approaches to studying resilience (Cicchetti, 2013). One of the most empirically well-supported applications of the transactional model, highlighting the importance of reciprocal influences, explored the development of antisocial and aggressive behavior in youth. Patterson (1982) delineated a coercion model, whereby initial interactions between a parent(s) who lacked skill in discipline and a mildly noncompliant, temperamentally difficult child set in motion a gradual escalation of parent-child conflict, typically resulting in the parents using increasingly harsh discipline techniques in an attempt to gain control over their child. These harsh discipline practices often served to escalate the child's noncompliant behaviors, rather than reduce them. This sets in motion a coercive cycle that can result in a child who is even more difficult to discipline, and increasingly more noncompliant, hostile and aggressive, taxing the parents' coping even further. There have been many empirical confirmations of this theory over the years, highlighting reciprocal patterns of negative interchanges resulting in later problems with aggression and antisocial behavior (Eddy, Leve, & Fagot, 2001; Pardini, 2008; Patterson, 2002). The findings have significantly informed treatment approaches aimed at breaking these coercive interactions between parents and children and promoting more adaptive long-term outcomes (Brestan & Eyberg, 1998; Pardini, 2008; Patterson, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2010).

1.4.3 Pathways and Trajectories: Hybrid Models

Recent advances in the mixed modeling of change over time within and across individuals (e.g., growth and trajectories; see Grimm, Ram, & Hamagami, 2011; Nagin, 2005) have yielded hybrid models that combine features of person-focused and variable-focused models (Masten, 2013). Pathway models focus on identifying different developmental trajectories and provide an opportunity to explore turning points in individuals' lives that might promote resilience as well as setbacks that might impede positive adaptation. Longitudinal data are required for such analyses and allows for the examination of within person changes and between person differences over time which can provide valuable information on processes that serve to produce stability or change in adjustment.

Prior theory and research have identified at least four distinct patterns of positive functioning following acute or chronic life stressors (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013; Masten & Obradović, 2008; Masten & Wright, 2010; Norris, Tracy, & Galea, 2009). *Stress resistance* refers to a pattern in which the individual seems relatively undisturbed by the adversity encountered. In this pattern the individual is able to maintain reasonably steady and positive adaptive behavior even in the presence of ongoing threats. An example would be a child who demonstrates good functioning in all age-salient developmental tasks despite growing up in a poor family in a dangerous neighborhood, or living with a parent who struggles with substance abuse or depression. A second pattern is indicated by a trajectory in which the individual may experience some initial negative reaction following the experience of a stressful life event or an adversity, but then returns (rebounds) to pre-event functioning. This can be referred to as a *recovery pattern* which can vary considerably in terms of speed of recovery. Typically the time frame for recovery of normal function is short, reflecting the capacity to rebound fairly quickly. In other breakdown and recovery trajectories an individual's prior adaptive functioning declines significantly following the experience of adversity but does return to his or her pre-event level of functioning at a later time. This pattern is often expected to occur in situations of severe or chronic adversity or sudden catastrophe. Such conditions represent stressors that are so challenging that maintaining good adaptation is not expected. For example, when a severe natural disaster has occurred, recovery is expected after the threat has diminished and the community's living conditions have improved. Similarly, a child who is subjected to severe ongoing abuse or neglect is not expected to function well until there has been improvement in his or her caretaking environment. Recovery may be gradual, or it can be significantly delayed, particularly if the adversity continues. Consequently, if the evaluation of an individual's resilience occurs within a short time frame following a disaster or in the midst of chronic adversity, a later-recovering individual would not be identified as resilient at that time, but might be subsequently if the cohort was followed over time. Similarly, in the case of an individual who appeared to regroup quickly but then later fell apart, the identification of resilience for that person would depend on the timing of the assessment of resilience. *Normalization* (termed

emergent resilience by Bonanno & Diminich, 2013) describes a trajectory that occurs when a child begins life in an adverse rearing environment (such as an orphanage where neglect is present) and then the child's situation improves (e.g., through adoption into a loving home). Following a positive change in the environmental conditions, a child may show accelerated development and bio-psycho-social changes that result in movement towards a normal developmental trajectory (Beckett et al., 2006; Rutter and the English and Romanian Adoptees Study Team, 1998). Finally, *transformational or growth patterns* refer to trajectories where an individual's adaptive functioning actually improves in significant ways in the aftermath of trauma or adversity. This type of pattern has also been described as post-traumatic growth (Linley & Joseph, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Rutter (2012) also refers to this pattern of response to adversity or trauma as a 'steeling' effect, in which the individual is actually strengthened by his or her encounter with the stressful or traumatic experience. This type of response fits well with challenge models of accounting for resilience. We view *all* of these patterns as examples of resilience trajectories which differ predominantly in the time frame for recovery and degree of initial disruption of functioning following the experience of trauma or adversity.

Empirical studies of these trajectories are now emerging in the resilience literature. One study by Norris and colleagues explored resilient trajectories in adults following an acute, severe stressor (Norris et al., 2009). They utilized longitudinal data to examine the ability of adults to cope with two different types of extreme stress, severe floods and mudslides in Mexico in 1999 and the terrorist attacks in New York City (NYC) on September 11, 2001. Semi-parametric group-based modeling was utilized to identify trajectories of posttraumatic stress symptoms across 3 follow-up points spanning approximately 24 months post disaster and 30 months following the terrorist attack. Overall the combined prevalence for a resilient outcome (stress resistance and recovery trajectory patterns) was very high in both Mexico (78 %) and NYC (72 %). A delayed dysfunction group only emerged in NYC (14.3 %) but chronic dysfunction was evident in both Mexico (22 %) and NYC (13 %). A relapsing/remitting pattern of symptoms was not seen in either location following either of these stressors (Norris et al., 2009). Overall, the study provided strong longitudinal support for resilience in the overwhelming majority of adults exposed to an acute severe disaster and a life threatening situation.

Several studies of trajectories in young people also have been published. These include trajectories of recovery in child soldiers (Betancourt, McBain, Newnham, & Brennan, 2013), children post-Hurricane Andrew (La Greca et al., 2013), and adolescent girls following a devastating earthquake in China (Luo et al., 2012). In all cases, repeated measures were collected over time and then analyzed using a mixed models statistical strategy to capture distinct group trajectories of intra-individual change. The Betancourt group studied levels of internalizing symptoms over time, while La Greca and colleagues studied post-traumatic symptoms. Both studies found stress resistant and recovering patterns, as well as stable, maladaptive trajectories, and also that the majority of individuals showed resilience over time.

Luo et al. analyzed patterns of change in adolescent females over time in cortisol levels, a biomarker of stress found in hair, which were related to exposure, time, and the presence of post-traumatic stress disorder.

1.5 The Importance of an Ecological Perspective in Resilience Science

During recent years, with the profound shift to a multilevel, dynamic systems model of risk and resilience, there is a new emphasis on the processes embedded in contexts of human life and particularly in cultural processes. Identification of multiple levels within a person's ecology that impact resilience enhances the possibility of targeting a variety of contexts in which to intervene in order to reduce risk, increase resources, and strengthen protective systems. Such an ecologically informed perspective may be critical in maximizing resilient outcomes.

Sociocultural systems provide individuals, often in the context of families and communities, with systems of belief, ways of living and coping with the common vicissitudes of life, and many other practices and pooled cultural knowledge that collectively serve to support positive adaptation under normal circumstances and resilience in very difficult situations (Harkness & Super, 2012). These adaptive traditions and knowledge are transmitted across generations, selected and honed through cultural evolution. Families and cultural institutions are often assigned the task of training the next generation in these cultural beliefs and practices. Although these traditions and belief systems have been studied and documented for generations by anthropologists, there has been relatively limited focus in resilience science on cultural protective factors and processes until relatively recently. Some early reviewers emphasized that context was important (e.g., Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 1990), individual scholars called for more sociocultural focus (e.g., Ogbu, 1981), and there was specific research on resilience in particular cultural settings (e.g., LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck, 2006). However, systematic efforts to study cultural processes in resilience were rare.

With efforts in the twenty-first century to broaden the study of resilience, increase international collaborations, and conduct multi-national studies, there are finally signs of a true renaissance in resilience research with serious attention, at last, to cultural context (Masten, 2014b). This transformation owes a considerable debt to scholars around the world concerned with global crises who share an objective of informing policy or practice designed to promote resilience in diverse contexts. These scholars include a network of investigators focused on the social ecology of resilience (see Ungar et al., 2013), as well as researchers focused on the potential of immigrant youth (see Masten et al., 2012). International investigators who study disaster and political violence with the goal of promoting preparedness, recovery, or peace have played a key role in this globalization wave (for overviews, see Masten, Narayan, Silverman, & Osofsky, *in press*; Tol, Song, & Jordans, 2013).

International humanitarian and economic agencies, including UNICEF and the World Bank, also have provided both leadership and funding for a more diverse and global portfolio of research on resilience (e.g., Britto, Engle, & Super, 2013; Lundberg & Wuerml, 2012).

As a result of these international efforts, motivated in many cases by global threats to human development, research on resilience in diverse contexts is growing rapidly. Concomitantly, the definition, measures, methods, findings, and issues in resilience literatures in multiple disciplines are changing to reflect the evidence, challenges, and refinements indicated by this body of new work. Enriched and broadened knowledge on resilience over the lifespan in different cultural contexts holds the promise of elucidating both universal and unique adaptive processes and smarter strategies for fostering resilience in context. The chapters in this volume offer a preview of what can be accomplished.

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Chapter 2

Understanding Cultural Contexts and Their Relationship to Resilience Processes

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Social-ecological systems are neither culturally neutral (Smith, Bond, & Kagitcibasi, 2006) nor do they operate at single levels. Instead, they operate at multiple levels that span local contexts and broader global ones (Wright, Masten, & Narayan, 2013). It is, therefore, understood that conceptualisations of resilience, along with the mechanisms that support competent adjustments to adversity, are relative to, and shaped by, the often intersecting cultures that define social ecologies (Masten, 2013; Ungar, 2011; see also Chaps. 1 and 3 of this book).

In this chapter, we consider some of the ways in which both macro- and micro-cultural contexts promote cultural guidelines for everyday living. These processes include, but are not limited to, cultural scripts, national identities, and broad value systems. We then comment critically on the limitations implicit in these processes for explaining resilience processes. Finally we consider how individuals' active navigation of the various cultural contexts they traverse, and critical engagement with their cultural heritage and capital, support a co-constructed process that impacts resilience. This chapter will not, however, explain the complex theories of how cultural allegiances are acquired, how culture shapes learning, comment on how culture and biology are intertwined, or how culture is measured (see, amongst others, Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003; Hofstede, 1980; Lee, 2010; Pagel, 2012). And, while touched on briefly, it also does not explore in detail how

This chapter refers to findings generated by the Pathways to Resilience Project, South Africa. The authors gratefully acknowledge this project's funding by the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada.

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culture intersects with resilience, or explain how culture matters for resilience, as this is foregrounded in the studies reported in Part II of this book.

2.1 What Is Culture?

Defining culture and understanding how it shapes the social ecologies of youths is not simple, given that culture is a construct that defies easy explanation (Chiu, 2013; Jahoda, 2012; Minkov, Blagoev, & Hofstede, 2013). Its history of changing – and somewhat controversial – definitions partly explains this difficulty (see Cole, 2007, 2008, or Jahoda, 2012, for reviews). Disciplinary allegiance (e.g., sociology, anthropology, cultural psychology, cross-cultural psychology, or evolutionary biology) further confounds how culture is defined (Smith et al., 2006). For example, cross-cultural psychologists, like Hofstede (1980), are likely to equate culture with values that can be measured, aggregated, and ascribed to whole nations, whereas Pagel (2012), an evolutionary biologist, equates culture with an innate capacity that advanced human survival. Culture is further associated with groups, or cultural communities, that range in size from dyads and small families, to entire nations (Rogoff, 2011; Smith et al., 2006). Culture is intertwined with race and ethnicity – and the identities these lead to – as well as distinct from them, and this adds to the difficulty of unravelling what culture is (Jenkins, 2013). Culture is sometimes considered destiny or something people are born into (for example, being born into a particular caste in India), but is more often understood as a socially constructed process (Rogoff, 2011). The mutable reality of culture – that is, its transformations within and across generations – along with cultural consistencies over time, is further complicating (Rogoff, 2011).

Given these complexities, we briefly review conventional components that inform and structure culture, before revisiting our understanding of culture in this chapter's conclusion. These classical views have limited utility for explaining how culture matters for resilience as explained more fully in the section on limitations.

2.1.1 *Conventional Understandings of Culture*

Endorsement of a shared culture is sometimes explained as a **national culture**. People from the same country are assumed to share cultural practices and values, and encouraged to live out these practices and values. Hofstede's (1980) study comparing IBM employees in over 70 nations is widely attributed as seminal to an understanding of culture-dependent differences and/or similarities across nations (Smith et al., 2006; Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). The underlying assumption is that, by virtue of membership in a specific country (or ecology), individuals are exposed to similar learning experiences (or ecological influences – see Greenfield et al., 2003) that encourage allegiance to similar ways-of-being and

-doing, or a “collective programming of the mind” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 13). By way of illustration, Hofstede (1980, p. 16) reported: “The existence of the American people as a phenomenon is one of the clearest illustrations of the force of learning: With a multitude of genetic roots, it shows collective programming which is striking to the non-American.”

In contrast, nations can, for various reasons, lack a definitive national culture. For example, a study conducted by Norris et al. (2008) with 2,082 South African youth, showed that participants were divided in their allegiance to, and understanding of, a South African culture. Youth who self-identified as being either Black or Coloured were more proudly South African and considered South African culture to be a collectivist one. By comparison, youth who self-identified as White or Indian reported weaker endorsement of their ‘South African-ness’, and associated themselves with individualistic values.

Implicit in this South African example is a tendency to define culture as **a set of (often nationally shared) values**. Cultural values include, but are not limited to, dimensions such as conservatism (Schwartz, 1994), tightness/looseness (as expressions of tolerance for deviance from societal norms – see Gelfand et al., 2011), industry (Minkov et al., 2013), and individualism/collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). These values are often used to describe national cultures and explain nations’ behaviours, although they also operate at the level of the individual and of microcultures (Chiu, Gelfand, Yamagishi, Shteynberg, & Wan, 2010; Hofstede, 1980).

Individualism versus collectivism is probably the most common approach to explaining culture as a set of national values (Bell, 2011; Greenfield et al., 2003; Harkness & Super, 2012). In the former, the individual is paramount, and directive of how communal onuses are negotiated. In the latter, the collective is emphasized, and given precedence in how obligations are negotiated (Oyserman et al., 2002). Among other processes, the independent or interdependent value systems of individualism and collectivism respectively shape family interactions and expectations (Carlo, Koller, Raffaelli, & de Guzman, 2007), parenting theories and styles (Greenfield et al., 2003), and educational aspirations (Tao & Hong, 2014).

At its most expansive, culture can be defined as global (Ungar et al., 2007). **Global culture** is considered dominant in that it transcends national boundaries in its universal influence. Dominant culture is most typically used with reference to western (a.k.a. American) or ‘Coca-Cola’ cultures (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997). Smith (2012), for example, explained how some Maori youths in New Zealand abandon adherence to Maori culture by assimilating the culture of American youth through dress, language, dance, music and even choice of role models. In this sense, dominant culture is a marker of cultural norms against which other cultures are measured (and often found wanting). When a culture is considered dominant, or, in Bourdieu’s (1986) words, has ‘capital’, its markers (knowledge, values, symbols, etc.) acquire status and are actively reproduced (Kington, 2001). For example, in the twentieth century, white, middle-class culture was often positioned as the norm, and aspired to, thereby furthering the marginalisation of lower-class or non-white

communities, and non-white youth in particular, as ‘other’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Fine, 1994).

Culture can also be localised or **associated with a specific group** and is then sometimes described as **micro-culture**. Cross-cultural research of resilience processes with 89 youths in 14 globally diverse sites found that youth considered local culture to consist of “all aspects of ethnic, family or community identification that were distinguished from aspects of global culture” (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 299). Returning to South Africa, this point can be illustrated with reference to ethnic cultures, such as that of the Sotho or Zulu people. Within these groups, dyads, families, or local communities could subscribe to a specific microculture with its own vernacular, ethos, and cultural scripts that determine expectations of members of the group (Neuliep, 2012). Kwaito provides a South African example of a microculture. Specifically, Kwaito is considered a musical and lifestyle culture of some, post-Apartheid black youth that emerged from South African black urban and historical cultural norms (Magubane, 2006).

Finally, when culture is associated with a specific group, this has conventionally been race-related. **Race** is a label typically imposed by bigoted societies – something by which people are categorised and often disregarded (Jenkins, 2013; also see Chap. 9, this volume). Being made explicitly aware of one’s race typically leads to heightened affiliation with that race group and its intersubjectively endorsed cultural scripts (Norris et al., 2008). This might explain why youths from dominant cultures (e.g., white youths in North American countries) who are mostly not easily disregarded because of their race are often unaware of their cultural ties (Grossman & Charmaraman, 2009; also see Chaps. 6 and 10, this volume).

2.2 Interactive Macro- and Microsystemic Cultural Contexts: Some Explanations of Process

There are numerous approaches to explaining how cultural contexts guide human development and behaviour (see Greenfield et al., 2003; Harkness & Super, 2012; Smith et al., 2006). One of these is to view culture as a powerful macrosystemic influence that shapes identities and value systems at global, national, and local levels, along with transactions at the micro-level of a social ecology. This view is premised in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory which views people as embedded in ecologies of interdependent micro- through to macrolevel systems. Despite this interdependence, however, the macrolevel is likely to ‘set the tone’ of the sub-systems nested within it (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Broadly interpreted, this would mean youth are members of a global social ecology with a dominant culture (Ungar et al., 2007). From this perspective, dominant global culture could, potentially, exert a powerful macrosystemic influence. Interpreted less broadly, the macro-context would be youths’ membership of nations and/or dominant (ethnic) groups with characteristic cultural scripts

(Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Either way, the culture of the macro-level (global/national) promotes norms, values, beliefs, and practices – often implicitly reflected in groups’ ethnotheories (e.g., of child development – Greenfield et al., 2003; Rogoff, 2011) – that can advance or constrain positive development at the micro-level (Levitt, 2012).

Macro-sociocultural influences shape the structure of microsystems (e.g., extended versus nuclear families), as well as microsystemic goals, morals, orientations, interactions, and socialisation patterns (Bell, 2011; Smith et al., 2006). The culture of the microsystem in turn shapes children’s development and behaviour, how resilience processes play out, and even how resilience is characterised. To illustrate, preliminary findings from the Pathways to Resilience Study, South Africa (see www.resilienceresearch.org) show that black youth from a traditional, rural South African community are likely to be considered resilient if they attach to a supportive network (not a nuclear family) and behave in ways that show respect for traditional, ancestral values endorsed by their rural community (Theron, Theron, & Malindi, 2013). In comparison, youth in more individualist urban settings are ordinarily considered resilient if they show increased autonomy and engagement in pathways that will lead to fiscal independence from both family and state (Lesko, 2001).

Constructive norms and practices shape micro-level transactions in ways that support youth to adapt well to their sociocultural life-worlds. As such, the stage is set for children to become well-functioning members of their sociocultural ecology (Bornstein, 2009). However, this mostly requires consensus within a group about the value of such norms, goals, beliefs, and practices (Chiu et al., 2010). Shared endorsement promotes an ‘intersubjective reality’ (Chiu et al., 2010, p. 483. Then, there is a sense of a common or ‘overarching value culture’ (Schwartz, 2014, p. 43). Put another way, intersubjectively connected individuals perceive a collective interpretation of their mutual life-world, which informs a cultural script that shapes their being and doing (Smith et al., 2006; Schwartz, 2014). As Jenkins (2013, p. 141) explained, intersubjective cultural scripts offer: “insight, understanding, and interpretation . . . it is not simply food, clothes, music, and religion – it is the answer to the questions: Why these clothes? Why this music? What is the purpose of religion?”

Guidelines for constructive adaptation, or survival, are implicit in the values and practices that cultural scripts promote (Bornstein, 2009; Jenkins, 2013). For example, a traditional African cultural script includes black African youths’ duty to kin, both in terms of their meeting the pro-social expectations of older kin, and being an example to younger/future kin. This duty to kin ideally nudges youth toward making constructive life choices. Theron and Theron (2013) reported that for some black South African youth pursuit of tertiary education was a way of fulfilling such duty. Commitment to tertiary education was prompted by cultural esteem of university degrees, partly because of South Africa’s political history of excluding black African students from universities, and partly because of tertiary education being associated with upward trajectories. Parents’, grandparents’, older siblings’, ancestors’, and teachers’ interactions with youth communicated an expectation that

youths make their families, communities, and the collective of black Africans proud by achieving a tertiary education. In this way youth would also be good role models to younger/future kin. This intersubjective endorsement of education as valuable influenced these youths' agency and shaped how they adjusted to hardship.

Micro and macro cultural-contextual influences potentially coalesce to form a heritage culture that shapes being and doing. However, when micro and macro cultural influences, or even global and national/ethnic cultural influences, are at loggerheads, the absence of intersubjective culture could complicate youths' adjustment to their life-worlds. For example, in post-Apartheid South Africa, many black families choose to send their children to schools in formerly white suburbs. Although this potentiates better education, it also privileges English above African languages and strengthens (Western) individualistic values above more traditionally African, collectivist ones (Ramphele, 2012). Thus many black youth have come to associate Western ways-of-being and education in English with success and affluence (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997). Many black youth without access to similar opportunities, and/or those committed to more traditional African micro-cultures (such as Kwaito), consider westernizing black youth to be turning their backs on their heritage culture. They often use the term 'coconut' to discriminate against black youth whom they regard as behaving like, and aspiring to be, white people (Rudwick, 2008; see also Williams, Aiyer, Durkee, & Tolan, 2013 for a similar process in the USA). 'Coconuts' are seen to espouse an alien cultural script.

Similarly, from her emic perspective as a Maori woman, Smith (2012) argues that the traditional Maori culture of indigenous youth in New Zealand is being undermined by the influence of global culture. Youth, and in particular, marginalised youths who are typically the focus of resilience research, must navigate the intersection of global and local culture. Because there are cultures within cultures, more-often-than-not this intersection is complicated by additional micro cultures to which youth may belong. Where these various cultures are disparate and contradictory – in other words, where intersubjective culture takes more than just one form – youth necessarily have to find ways of resolving these contradictions so as to successfully integrate the ways in which multiple cultural influences inform their lives into a coherent whole (Ungar et al., 2007).

2.3 Interactive Macro- and Microsystemic Cultural Contexts: Some Limitations for Explaining Resilience Processes

Understanding culture as intersecting, competing, or complementary macro- and microsystemic influences can explain how social ecologies are shaped in ways that support/hinder resilience processes. There are, however, limitations to such understandings. From a social ecological perspective, resilience is a process of adjusting well to hardships that involves decisive inputs from youth and their culturally-

oriented life-worlds (Masten, 2013; Ungar, 2011). Interpreting **heritage culture** as micro and/or macro contextual influences implies that youth and others are passive recipients of culture. Such a perspective undercuts the salience of human agency in processes of development and resilience (Gillespie, Howarth, & Cornish, 2012). It is probable that well-adjusted youths and their relational networks do not “mindlessly act on the implicit cultural scripts evolved from their interactions with the shared ecology” (Chiu et al., 2010, p. 483). Similarly, explaining **global culture** as a template, originating at macro-level, that informs proximal level transactions, does not account for heterogeneous responses to macro level scripts (Chiu et al., 2010). For example, traditionally African societies socialise children to be deeply spiritual and to respect ancestral practices. Ancestral rituals are considered supportive of resilience processes (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Denis, 2007). Despite the promotion of ancestral beliefs and practices as a template for successful living, some black Africans choose to disregard this as a pathway to resilience (Theron & Theron, 2013). In their response, they exercise agency and show that enactment of cultural heritage involves ‘selecting, editing and refashioning’ (Bornstein, 2009, p. 149).

As made apparent in Norris and colleagues’ 2008 study of ‘South African’ culture, descriptions of culture as **national** are also challenging. This is mostly because nations are comprised of multiple groupings, or sub-cultures, that coalesce around shared interpretations of common life-worlds which might or might not be compatible with that of the macro-culture (Gillespie et al., 2012). In addition to race (as in the South African study by Norris et al.), these could include groupings relating to profession, sexuality, social class, tribal affiliation, ethnicity, and so forth. Modern nations are also increasingly multi-cultural, given growing numbers of migrants (Masten, Liebkinder, & Hernandez, 2012). Depending on socio-political and socio-historical context, such sub-cultures could be marginalised and/or stereotyped and their cultural scripts neglected/disrespected in explanations of resilience processes (Bell, 2011; Jenkins, 2013; Smith et al., 2006).

Explaining culture as a **belief or value system** that is common to a culture-sharing group (at micro or macro level) is also risky if it offers a dichotomous and or rigid interpretation of values and beliefs (Greenfield et al., 2003; Omi, 2012; Oyserman et al., 2002). Most typically, contrasting values (such as independence and interdependence) co-exist along a continuum, and are prioritised differently. For example, in traditionally individualistic societies, children are taught to share. However, the emphasis on learning to share is typically less than in collectivist groups, where sharing is taken for granted (Greenfield et al., 2003). What’s more, culturally-esteemed values (e.g., interdependence) do not necessarily enable resilience processes consistently, or uniformly. Obligations to the collective (e.g., duty to the family), for example, are associated with resilience processes for a variety of reasons (see Cameron et al., 2013; Ferguson, Desir, & Bornstein, 2013; Theron & Theron, 2013). For example, Ferguson et al.’s (2013) study of the cultural orientation of early adolescents in rural Haiti from deprived circumstances reported a strong sense of youth obligation to the running and upkeep of their family home without any expectation of payment. This strong sense of duty directed adolescent

agency and protected them against despair at their deprivation. However, obligations to the collective can be obstructive of resilience processes if they are experienced as oppressive (Panter-Brick & Eggerman, 2012; Tao & Hong, 2014).

Lastly, value systems, like the cultures they are associated with, are **fluid**, as are people's allegiances to these systems. For example, there is a growing global trend towards individualistic values (Schwartz, 2014), often in association with increased wealth (Hofstede, Garibaldi de Hilal, Malvezzi, Tanure, & Vinken, 2010; Oyserman et al., 2002). Moreover, the power of an intersubjective, macro culture of values is likely to be less powerful than that of proximal, often co-existing, micro- cultural communities (e.g., families, organisations, ethnic groups, and religious bodies – see Schwartz, 2014).

In summary, using membership of a bounded culture-sharing group, be it national, ethnic, or socioeconomic, etc., in a rigid manner does not offer an understanding of culture that can usefully explain resilience processes. In Rogoff's (2011, p. 15) words:

Culture is often treated as a set of static ethnic “boxes” – such as Latino, African American, Asian – that individuals “belong in”. And they can belong in only one box. All people “in” an ethnic box are assumed to be alike in an enduring and essentially in-born fashion. This is a rigid form of predestination.

Implicit in such categorisation, are deficit approaches to culture that foster stereotypical explanations of vulnerability and resilience processes (Gillespie et al., 2012), as is routinely seen in some studies of African American and Latino males (Williams et al., 2013). Similarly, bounded groups (such as Americans or Muslims) are often cast as incompatible, limiting exploration of how multicultural contexts support resilience processes (Sirin & Gupta, 2012). Compartmentalising cultural membership also obscures within-group processes that threaten resilience. For example, American Chinese adolescents report being made vulnerable by alienation from non-Chinese peers, but also Chinese peers (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). Cultural adherence can therefore serve as a protective component of resilience, or can jeopardise resilience processes, underscoring the importance of researchers and practitioners giving careful consideration to the role of culture in resilience processes. Explaining resilience processes in terms of allegiances to broad culturally-dependent value systems, without interrogating the complexities and dynamics of such value systems, would be at best superficial and at worst, marginalising and harmful. Just as Collins (1999) has urged feminist researchers to account for the complexity of the matrix of domination within which women live, so too should resilience researchers account for the matrix of cultural experiences.