

**International Resilience Project
Research Forum II
Pathways to Resilience**

**Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
June 14-15 2005**

Summary Report of IRP Research Forum II Proceedings

Michael Ungar, PhD.
Associate Professor
School of School Work, Dalhousie University
6414 Coburg Road, Halifax, N.S.
Canada B3H 2A7
Phone: (902) 494-3445
Fax: (902) 494-6709
Michael.Ungar@dal.ca

*This project was made possible through a grant from the Social Sciences and
Humanities Research Council of Canada, Research Development Initiative*

Table of Contents

1.0 Our Purpose and Goals	5
2.0 IRP Team Members & Sites	7
3.0 Additional IRP Meeting Participants	11
4.0 Research Forum II Design Overview.....	11
4.1 The IRP Research Forum II sought the following outcomes.....	11
4.2 Forum Structure and Process.....	11
4.3 Session I/“What have we experienced?”.....	12
4.4 Session II/“What have we learned and how can we improve?”... 	12
4.5 Session III/“Where should we/could we go from here?”	12
5.0 Session 1: “What have we experienced?”	
Story telling and personal reflection on lessons, challenges, highlights	
and questions in our fieldwork.....	12
5.1 Challenges.....	13
5.2 Highlights.....	15
5.3 Lessons.....	16
5.4 Meaningful Research Moment(s).....	17
6.0 Session II: “What have we learned and how can we improve?”	
A Dialogue on Methodology: Lessons, pitfalls and moving	
forward.....	18
6.1 Successes.....	20
6.2 Approaches & Methods.....	21
6.3 Lessons & Recommendations.....	23
6.4 Other findings on methodology.....	26

7.0 Session III: “What’s Next? Where should we/could we go from here?”

Visions and next steps: Revisiting Who, What and How?.....28

- 7.1 Who do We Study.....29**
- 7.2 How do We Study.....30**
- 7.3 What do We Study.....31**

8.0 Conclusion32

Summary

This report summarizes discussions by members of the International Resilience Project in Halifax, June 14-15, 2005. This meeting brought to a close a three-year pilot study of resilience in 14 sites globally. The meetings provided members of the research team and invited observers an opportunity to review the methodology used by the IRP and to design a second phase of the work.



1.0 Our Purpose and Goals

At the beginning of the International Resilience Project in 2003, we noted that despite the growing body of research on risk and resilience, definitional ambiguity of the terms risk factors, protective mechanisms, vulnerability, and resilience, resulted in a large and inconsistent set of variables being used to study the trajectories through the life of children and youth growing up under adversity. We stated our overall goal to be to address these methodological and contextual challenges, and summarized this purpose in our Summary Report on Year One Activities and the First Halifax Meeting, 2003¹.

At the onset of the project, we stated, "We hypothesize that in order to overcome the arbitrariness in the choice of outcomes associated with resilience and to produce contextually-sensitive research methods and tools for its study, a methodologically diverse interdisciplinary global community of researchers, service providers, and participants/advisers (both elders and youth) is needed."

At the first forum, in March 2003, the research design and team process were developed from the following questions:

- Who do we study?
- What domains do we study?
- What are the best qualitative and quantitative methods for studying health phenomena?
- What are the ethical issues related to this research?
- What are the constraints and opportunities we are likely to encounter during this research?
- What is our team approach and what are our working group guidelines?

To tackle our hypothesis and to begin to develop our methodology, we assembled an international team of culturally and methodologically diverse investigators in anticipation of successfully addressing the shortcomings we identified in the academic literature and study of resilience.

To date, the IRP, led by Dr. Michael Ungar at the School of Social Work, Dalhousie University, now successfully consists of a diverse team of community and university based researchers, clinicians, service providers and child advocates from twenty-five communities around the world studying resilience in high-risk youth populations facing war, violence, cultural disintegration, structural inequalities and mental health challenges (see 2.0 IRP Team Members &

¹ Copies of this report are available upon request by contacting School of School Work, Dalhousie University 6414 Coburg Road, Halifax, N.S. Canada B3H 2A7 Phone: (902) 494-3445 Fax: (902) 494-6709

Participants). The IRP uses a unique cross-cultural approach that employs both quantitative and qualitative research methods to study youth from around the world, and examine individual, interpersonal, family, community and cultural factors associated with building resilience. The project currently includes representatives from Halifax, Winnipeg, and the Innu of Labrador in Canada, as well as colleagues from South Florida in the United States. Also collaborating on this project are researchers, community workers and child advocates from Palestine, Israel, Colombia, The Gambia, Tanzania, Russia, Hong Kong, South Africa, and India.

As stated previously, the initial IRP team meeting in Halifax, 2003 provided the opportunity to articulate the impetus for our research, building consensus around methodological approaches, sites and challenges, as articulated in the accompanying report. Building on this momentum, the IRP hosted a second meeting entitled The International Resilience Project Research Forum II, on June 14 and 15, 2005. The International Resilience Project Research Forum II offered the IRP team an opportunity to pause and reflect on the experiences, stories, lessons and trajectory of our research project to date across our international sites in an inclusive spirit of sharing and learning from one another as we move forward in the research endeavor.

Specifically, IRP team members assembled in Halifax, Nova Scotia to attend a 2-day workshop where collaborators, site researchers and field workers presented and discussed findings from the pilot research. A key goal was to critique and adapt the methodology for future use, and to develop plans for the dissemination of results. This supported a main goal of the IRP, which is to enhance the research capacity of each community organization at all partnering research sites. This includes developing the capacity of research assistants at each site by providing training and limited economic support, and enhancing cross-cultural interaction, mutual learning and collaboration – something the feedback from our IRP Research Forum suggests we successfully achieved among the attending participants.

Moreover, the workshop allowed the IRP investigators to develop future strategic, collaborative initiatives that aim to expose the vulnerabilities and strengths of resilient children and youth globally, while accounting for the social and cultural context in which this resilience occurs. The intensive workshop primarily focused on IRP research methodologies, training, international collaboration regarding development issues, and implementation of on-the-ground research practices.

Our essential questions were:

- What have we experienced?
- What have we learned?

- How can we improve?
- What is important to carry forward?
- Where should/could we go from here and how?

The 2-day forum was designed to be interactive, engaging, and appreciative in nature, with a combination of reflective group exercises and conversation. The Research Forum II was facilitated by Paula Knowles, a professional group facilitator and program designer/facilitator/researcher for HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, Halifax, Nova Scotia (www.heartwood.ns.ca).

2.0 IRP Team Members & Sites

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Michael Ungar is both a Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist with experience working directly with children and adults in mental health and correctional settings. Now an Associate Professor at the School of Social Work, Dalhousie University, he continues to supervise and consult extensively with front-line staff and professional therapists. He has conducted many workshops on resilience-related treatment and research in Canada, the United States and overseas and is actively involved with, or leading several research projects related to, children's well-being.

Among the Co-Investigators involved in this work are:

Dr. Victor Thiessen, past holder of several large SSHRC grants, is also the Academic Director of the Atlantic Regional Data Centre that provides access to all StatsCanada data, including the NLSCY. **Dr. Ann Cameron** at the University of British Columbia, a senior developmental psychologist with extensive experience in international multi-site research, holds research funding related to cultural investigations of early childhood resilience, adolescent bio-psychosocial stress reactivity and cross-cultural methods for investigating adolescent resilience. **Dr. Janice Graham**, holder of a Canada Research Chair in Bioethics has expertise in the area of medical anthropology and multi-media ethnographic methods. **Dr. Normand Carrey**, research scientist and psychiatrist at Dalhousie University and the IWK Health Centre has a longstanding interest in resilience and the links between genetic and environmental factors related to children's well-being. He currently holds multi-year funding from CIHR. Finally, **Dr. Maria Cheung** is currently the Applicant for a CIDA \$3,000,000 6-year Tier I Training and Community Development Project in Rural China focused on women's rights. Dr. Cheung brings to the team extensive international experience conducting research with vulnerable populations across cultures and managing multi-million dollar international projects. **Dr. Zahava Solomon** is Professor of Psychiatric Epidemiology and Social Work at Tel-Aviv University and Head of the Adler

Research Center for Child Welfare and Protection. Her work on trauma stress related to war and the Holocaust is world-renowned. She is the author of five books and over 250 scholarly publications. **Dr. Jane Gilgun** is Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota who specializes in qualitative methods and studies of violent individuals. She has published numerous books on qualitative methods, more than 100 articles and chapters, and is recognized as one of North America's foremost qualitative family and youth researchers. **Dr. Roger Boothroyd**, Professor in the Department of Mental Health Law and Policy at the University of South Florida, has a background in educational psychology and is a co-principal investigator on grants from the NIH and SAMHSA.

Canadian Site Researchers include:

British Columbia: Dr. Ann Cameron (UBC), Dr. Clyde Hertzman (UBC)
Alberta: Dr. David Este and Bruce MacLaurin (UoCalgary)
Manitoba: Dr. Maria Cheung and Kathryn Levine (UoManitoba)
Ontario: Dr. Eli Teram (WLU)
Quebec: Dr. Nancy Heath (McGill), Dr. Natalie Trépanier (UoMontréal)
Nova Scotia and Sheshatshiu, Labrador (Northern Site): Chief Anastasia Qupee (Sheshatshiu), Dr. Michael Ungar (Dal), Dr. Tara Callaghan (St.FX), Dr. Mark Asbridge (Dal), Dr. John LeBlanc (Dal), Dr. Pat McGrath (Dal).

Affiliate Canadian Sites include:

Saskatchewan: Dr. Les Samuelson (UoSask)
New Brunswick: Dr. Elizabeth Sloat (UNB)
PEI: Dr. Vianne Timmons (UPEI)
NFLD: Dr. Ken Barter (Memorial)

International Site Researchers include:

Colombia: Dr. Luis Duque (UoAntioquia)
Tanzania: Dr. Fausta Philip and Dr. Sylvia Kaaya (Muhimbili)
Hong Kong and Mainland China: Dr. Waiman Kwong, Dr. Tak Yan Lee (City UoHK), Dr. Wenxin Zhang (Shandong Teacher's University), Tian Guoxiu (Capital Normal University)
Russia: Dr. Alexander Makhnach and Dr. Anna Laktionova (Russian Academy of Sciences)
India: Dr. Neerja Sharma (UoDelhi), Dr. Jerry Kulung (Don Bosco), Dr. Irene Salam-Singh (Manipur University)
Palestine: Hania Bitar (PYALARA), Dr. van Teeffelen (Arab Educational Institute), Dr. Musleh Kader (Bethlehem University)
South Africa: Dr. Johann Mouton (UoStellenbosch)

Affiliate International Sites include:

United States: Dr. Mary Armstrong (USF), Dr. Tom Nochajski (UoBuffalo), Dr. Laura Abrams (UCLA)

Ireland: Dr. Niall McElwee (Athlone Institute of Tech.)

Israel: Dr. Zahava Solomon (UoTel Aviv)

Gambia: Burris Devaney (NS-Gambia Association)(in collaboration with Dalhousie University)

Brazil: Dr. Silvia Koller (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul)

Among the International Collaborators involved in this work are:

Dr. Richard Lerner is the Bergstrom Chair in Applied Developmental Science at Tufts University. He is the author or editor of 45 books and more than 300 scholarly articles and chapters. Dr. Lerner is best known for his research into human development and contextual change, and is a frequent contributor to policy discussions about youth internationally. **Dr. Hamilton McCubbin** is Professor at the Center on the Family at the University of Hawaii and Director of the Institute for the Study of Resilience in Families. He is the author or editor of 16 books and over 100 scholarly publications related to family resilience. Dr. McCubbin also brings considerable management experience having just served as CEO of the 6 billion dollar Kamehameha Schools trust for indigenous Hawaiians. **Dr. Michael Greenacre**, Professor at the University of Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain, is a world-renowned specialist in correspondence analysis, with four books and thirty scholarly publications on the topic. He is also an internationally recognized teacher of quantitative methods. **Dr. Wayne Hammond**, of Resiliency Canada, brings to the research his extensive Canadian experience developing resilience research tools that have been used with over 25,000 youth nationally across different cultural communities.

In addition, we are fortunate to have several **Project Supporters** who have loaned their expertise to our Research Initiatives:

Dr. Francoise Baylis, a Tier I Canada Research Chair holder and an internationally renowned ethicist at Dalhousie's Department of Bioethics. **Judi Fairholm**, originator of the Canadian Red Cross' RespectED violence prevention programs who has been recognized globally for her work; **Peter Dudding**, Executive Director of the Child Welfare League of Canada, a long-time advocate of children's rights to care and safety; **Cindy Blackstock**, ED of the First

Nations Child and Family Caring Society and co-Director of the Center of Excellence for Child Welfare; and **Senator Landon Pearson**, Advisor on Children's Rights to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Other Canadian and International community stakeholders include:

Nova Scotia, Canada: IWK Health Center; CHOICES, Addiction Prevention and Treatment Services, Capital Health, Dartmouth; Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, Group homes; Soccer Nova Scotia; Metro Immigrant Services Association; YMCA Newcomer Youth Services; Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Project; Department of Bioethics, Dalhousie University. *Labrador, Canada:* Sheshatshiu Innu Band Council, Sheshatshiu, Labrador. *Manitoba, Canada:* Macdonald Youth Services; The Prairie Consortium for Child Welfare; Child and Family Services General Authority; First Nations of Northern Manitoba and Family Services Authority; Metis Child and Family Services Authority; Winnipeg Regional Health Authority; Winnipeg School Division. *British Columbia, Canada:* School District No. 39, District Learning Services, Vancouver. *Alberta, Canada:* Calgary Immigrant Aid Society; Wood's Homes. *New Brunswick, Canada:* Learning Disabilities Association of New Brunswick. *North-West Territories:* Tlicho Community Services Agency. *Prince Edward Island, Canada:* Prince Edward Island Association for Community Living. *Quebec, Canada:* Commission Scolaire de Montréal; Commission scolaire de Laval; Service regional de soutien et d'expertise-TC Montréal. *Saskatchewan, Canada:* Children's Advocate Office. *Ontario, Canada:* United Way of Greater Toronto. *National:* American and Canadian Academies of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; The Canadian Injury Prevention Association; The Sparrow Lake Alliance; The Child Welfare League of Canada; The Center of Excellence for Child Welfare; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada; the Dellcrest Hincks Center; Resiliency Canada. *International:* Don Bosco Youth and Educational Services, Imphal, India; The Nova Scotia-Gambia Association, Canada and The Gambia; Protect Children's Rights Trust, Tanzania; PYALARA (Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation), East Jerusalem and Gaza, Palestine; Centro Educativo Fe Y Alegría Santa Rita, Colombia; Institución Educativa Federico Sierra Arango, Colombia; Institución Educativa Antonio Derka, Colombia; The Boy's and Girl's Association of Hong Kong; Feidmeannacht na Seirbhís Sláinte, Ireland; The Social Shelter for Children and Adolescents Municipal Institution, Russia; The Na Snezhnoy Centre for Psychological and Pedagogical Rehabilitation and Correction, Russia; The Administration of Specialized General Education No.10 for children with deviant behavior, Russia; Masibambane Delft Youth Projects, South Africa; Muhimbili National Hospital, Tanzania; Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences, Tanzania.

3.0 Additional IRP Meeting Participants

In addition to the International Resilience Project Team Members who attended the IRP Forum II, several local, national and international delegates also participated in the workshops. Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funding enabled us to bring several of the IRP research site co-coordinators to the IRP Forum II, including Fr. George Menampampil, India, Dr. Irene Salam-Singh, India, Fr. Jerry Thomas-Kulang, India, Dr. Quinton Adams, South Africa, Dr. Philip Fausta, Tanzania (IRP researcher), Mr. Osama Damo, Palestine, Ms. Hania Bitar, Palestine, Dr. Alexander Makhnach, Russia and Dr. Anna Laktionova, Russia. Several conference presenters not involved with the IRP were also sponsored by CIDA to attend the IRP Forum II, including Dr. Sangeeta Bhatia, India, Alejandra Garcia Morillo, Argentina, Professor Ritha Ramphal, South Africa, Dr. Blanche Pretorius, South Africa, Dr. Rashid Ahmed, South Africa, Dr. Suresh Kumar Tiwari, Nepal, Bishnu H. Bhatta, Nepal, Dr. Tian Guoxiu, Beijing, Martha Llanos Zuloaga, Peru, and Beatriz Caicedo Velásquez, Colombia. Other conference delegates also attended the meetings, including: Niloo Zand (Canadian Red Cross), Canada, Odin Hjemdal, Norway, and Brigid David, England. The IRP Forum II volunteers, included Amy Druker, Canada, Rian Lougheed-Smith, Canada, Rhonda Brophy, Canada, Rose Couch, Canada, Trevor Beaton, Canada, Edie Lloyd, Canada, Cathy Campbell, Canada, Mark Cameron, Canada, Kathy Didkowsky, Canada, Joann Doran, Canada, Rachel Flett, Canada, Andrea Gregus, Canada, Emily Gregus, Canada, Patricia Mugridge, Canada, Dhanushka Nanayakkara, Canada, Patricia Mugridge, Canada, Christina Zagenelli, Canada, Rosemary Trevors, Canada, Mary Sweatman, Canada, and Erin Reynolds, Canada. Other IRP Forum II attendees included conference coordinators Sarah Janes, Canada, David Fletcher, Canada and Marley Parker, Canada.

4.0 Research Forum II Design Overview

4.1 The IRP Research Forum II sought the following outcomes:

- To review and reflect on research experiences to date
- To discuss what we have learned to date
- To learn lessons and recommendations in moving forward
- To generate ideas and discussion on how we can improve
- To gain a better understanding of where we should go next

4.2 Forum Structure and Process The forum consisted of a three-stage process to achieve the above outcomes over three separate sessions. The sessions welcomed participants' stories and reflections from their unique

research experiences in this pilot project through a flexible meeting structure consisting of small group discussions and summary. The process emphasized dialogue, discussion and interaction among team members in order to create a common energy among the team and its immediate goals of disseminating methodological issues, concerns and experiences.

4.3 Session 1/“What have we experienced?” Here the emphasis was on jump-starting discussions around the research to date and getting a chance to hear about some of the research-taking place internationally. Selected international sites were asked to present their research and reflect on lessons, challenges, and highlights. Presenters were also asked to reflect on one meaningful research moment. This session helpfully introduced many of the core themes for the remainder of the sessions and provided all participants an opportunity to learn about each other’s experiences.

4.4 Session II/“What have we learned and how can we improve?” The second component of the forum focused on creating an open dialogue among team members after having had the chance to listen to some of the different international research experiences in the field. The session was modeled after a ‘world café’ where the group split up into smaller conversations to discuss successes, effective approaches and methods, lessons learned, and potentially consider recommendations for the future. The second part of the session attempted to more fully engage and articulate which topics/actions would require attention during the forum.

Though it was difficult to come to any overall consensus, a number of important issues came to the surface and the session generated a relatively cohesive range of issues and topics that were of concern to the research team.

4.5 Session III/“What’s Next? Where should we/could we go from here?” The final session gave participants time to consider the next steps in our research. In groups, participants were asked to consider who, what and how we study resilience both now and in the future given the progress of the pilot study. Rather than intending to reach definitive answers, this session allowed participants to brainstorm on possibilities, directions and ideas for future research. The session was based on a popular Canadian song “If I had a million dollars” which offers a list of things one might consider doing if “I were rich”.

5.0 Session 1: “What have we experienced?”

Given the overall goal of the IRP to address the methodological shortcomings and gaps in research approaches around the concept of resilience, coupled with the demand to break new ground in the collaborative use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study, the IRP pilot study provided a distinctive

opportunity to push for and produce new research designs of resilience. The creation of the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM), coupled with the continued creation of an IRP Research Manual, represents a significant development to that end and the 2005 forum offered a timely venue to air concerns, questions and successes of the CYRM as quantitative survey tool.

At the same time, given the current research underway at IRP sites and collaborative sites internationally, the IRP pilot study is helping to provide a rich qualitative pool of data that will inform future resilience studies, while producing a unique research protocol and set of (methodological) instruments of interest internationally.

In this session (Session 1), a variety of participants, researchers and collaborators told their research stories to groups, with an emphasis on personal reflection and exchanges about lessons learned, challenges, highlights and 'meaningful research moments'. It was also a chance to tackle any lingering methodological questions or doubts. The session provided a narrative space for participants to dialogue about their research experiences. Experiences and stories from India, Hong Kong, Russia, South Africa, Tanzania, Halifax, South Florida, and Israel formed the core of the discussions.

Record of Discussion and Summary

5.1 Challenges

- **Methodological Challenges Investigating the Concept of 'Resilience'**

A common challenge across many research sites was the dual challenges of reading/literacy and conceptualizing resilience for local youth and populations.

Some international sites found that the word "resilience" was foreign to research participants and it held no local equivalent in their language. Sites were resourceful in developing strategies to explain the term resilience. In India, for example, the researcher explained the concept in relation to how well the youth cope and survive by living 'normal' lives in such a chaotic and violent environment. However, a paradox of the youth's resilience is that concepts of resilience can also carry negative features, since survival and coping can also depend upon violence and criminal activity.

It was also discovered that the term resilience can have conflicting meanings. This occurred, for example, around the notions of 'sexual liberation.' While in the west resilience could mean sexual liberation, in the east, this kind of 'resilience', for example in Hong Kong, could be considered deviant. Indeed, the idea of

'resilience' across cultures is difficult to grapple with – a theme expressed by many meeting attendees. One solution suggested to this problem is to develop different, culturally sensitive, versions of the concept and introduce them to the research sites locally for assessment.

Methodologically, there was consensus that the CYRM questionnaire was well framed overall. One participant posed that in the next phase its conceptual scope could be widened, and that each site should have the liberty to rephrase or simplify questions while ensuring that the original meaning of the question remained cohesive enough for comparison. To ensure the success of this kind of flexible methodology, and to gain a clear and consistent understanding of methods across sites, it was proposed that a short, centralized training session be held for researchers and be incorporated into the next phase of field research.

- **Methodological Challenges Around Culture and Local Challenges**

A problem found across some sites (in Hong Kong and Russia, for example) was the translation of the questionnaire, which is rooted in linguistic, cultural and local differences, thereby creating potential problems in validation.

Additionally, and as many participants noted, the context of different sites is very important and there is a need to account for the wider socio-economic and state capacities that impact the local research context.

For instance, in South Africa working on resilience through the school system means working in gang territory which creates its own challenges for a study of resilience. Quite differently, in Tanzania, as young children continue to leave rural homes for urban cities, it is a challenge to access this population for research due to their mobility and poverty. Interestingly, mobility also poses a challenge in the South Florida site; poverty and the high impact of natural disasters in the area often creates routine displacement of low-income families.

Many traditional cultures are also seeing an ever-growing influence of western values and this is exposing cleavages within social and familial webs. For example, with competitive pressures rising for employment and economic success, youth are leaving home earlier and families are not as tightly knit as in previous generations. In Hong Kong, young people are moving out from their (nuclear) families and it is now more difficult for youth to learn strategies of how older generations coped and survived hardships. At the same time, the Russian site noted how youth from many different backgrounds and experiences could relate to one another and observed that youth learn from young and old, east and west, which hints at the dynamic nature of resilience across borders and time.

Conversely, as the Halifax site made clear, in the west, issues and research around resilience necessarily implicates government, state and non-state actors since they play key roles in terms of funding initiatives, social services, legal intervention, and the provision of infrastructure in support of resilience.

- **Methodological Challenges Around Research Ethics and Intervention**

Another key challenge and concern recognized by participants centered on interventions and the ethics of research obligations to their subjects.

At one site, it was suggested that for participating subjects, researchers could give back to the community by offering referral to services. The second phase of research could then introduce a program of targeted interventions for research participants who require it by “working with the vast network” of community-based organizations in the region.

The Russian site concluded that not only is there a need to discover those factors which contribute to resilience, but that we must also examine ways to show the youth the best avenues to achieve resilience.

5.2 Highlights

- **Working with Diversity and Youth**

Many researchers reported that the highlight methodologically was working with youth and people from many different backgrounds who were struggling to succeed and lead healthy and happy lives.

- **Gaining Access**

Across many sites (Halifax, Winnipeg, South Africa, South Florida, for instance) the willingness of participants to partake in research was a highlight, along with the important roles community members played in facilitating research and gaining access for researchers to the youth participants. In South Africa a research highlight came through access; a community worker and former gangster helped researchers gain access to gangs by negotiating their participation. Notably, gang members were largely receptive to the project and many community workers now feel a sense of ownership with the resilience project – “it’s their project.”

- **Empowering Research**

Another highlight across sites (South Africa, Tanzania, for example) was the recognition that there was a real willingness by subjects to participate in this kind of research. In Israel, as part of a class project studying resilience, student interviewers followed up their interviews talking to interviewees who indicated that it was a “positive” experience to be able to assist a student, and that the mere exercise of being asked/interviewed about their own experiences was empowering. In South Africa, one participant indicated that the methodological highlight of her participatory action research experience was the realization that ‘community can teach,’ giving voice to people to tell their stories to make an impact in their everyday lives.

In sum, there was a consensus that there was a general willingness and enthusiasm evident on the part of youth globally to participate in the research and share their stories and experiences. This was explained by participants at the meeting as part of a sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, and stubborn sense of optimism and hope by youth who routinely face difficult and dangerous challenges in their everyday lives.

5.3 Lessons Learned

- **Importance of the ‘Local’ and Community**

In India, the lesson learned was that the goal of the research is to heal locally; to find that place within one’s self where there is joy and collectively improve on one’s weaknesses by capitalizing on one’s strengths: resilience – competence, character, connection, and caring. Similarly, in South Africa the lesson learned was to keep the research community-based and that a spirit of optimism to tackle struggles endured even in extraordinarily trying circumstances. The Halifax site also reinforced the importance of community to the research methodology, since it was felt important to work with researchers and children to facilitate the research and bring them together, particularly with respect to quantitative research where the administration of questionnaires and surveys present a great challenge to some participants.

- **Learning from Others**

In Hong Kong, the lesson was that we need to learn from a diversity of people and must not rely solely on our own experiences to assess resilience. This means learning from both elders and youth. Through the research at this site, it was found that traditional values might help in the face of poor social supports and infrastructure. Both the Halifax and Russian site point to the importance of support groups or a ‘significant’ other of some kind as a concrete tool in youth

resilience. To the extent that the research itself was congruent with this value, it was more or less successful.

In Israel the research demonstrated the importance of linkages in the possibility of creating informal networks of support between researchers and their subjects.

- **Willingness to Share**

A common lesson across research sites, and rooted methodologically, was that there is a power in carrying out this kind of research. For instance, in Russia it was found that there was a power inherent in being a part of the interviews. Many wanted to share their values or positive coping experiences and express a sense of altruism to help others through their participation.

This willingness to share also speaks to the power in the image and spirit of resilience and the exercise of talking, telling and showing people different sides of resilience across all the sites – a key task undertaken by our researchers.

- **Importance of Human Resources in Getting Data**

In Israel, a key lesson learned was that obstacles to scarce data collection resources can be, at least partially, overcome through human resources, and mobilizing energy and good will.

This lesson recognizes the inherent challenges around conducting and carrying-out research in the field. There will always be institutional impediments from accessing some members of the community, restrictions imposed by ethics boards, and the many financial burdens that complicate and/or inhibit research. It was felt that these obstacles must not limit our resolve or desire to conduct research and assist youth and families.

5.4 Meaningful Research Moment

- **Optimism and Spirit of Survival**

Though meaningful research moments varied from site to site, all site representatives held a preoccupation with hope and optimism in common, coupled with admiration for the resilience found among youth who live in incredibly dangerous, impoverished and difficult life circumstances.

As representatives from the India site noted, despite violence and bloodshed the youth do not generally turn to depression or suicide but somehow manage to bounce back. In Florida, despite deep poverty and fading hope, participants,

some of whom were teenaged mothers, talked about 'being a good parent' and wanting to distance themselves from dependency and welfare.

- **Making Linkages and Connections**

Other meaningful research moments occurred when the project became linked with others interested in resilience. In South Africa, a key meaningful moment was attracting the interest of the provincial government in the Cape Town project.

For others, the meaningful research moments came through face-to-face contact when carrying out the methodology, whether quantitative or qualitative. In this respect, it's worth noting that regardless of method, both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the methodology of the IRP required research team members to connect to and consider those in the study. In Tanzania, researchers found it 'therapeutic' to talk about the meaningful and relevant topics to the research participants, and listen to their stories of resilience first-hand. Similarly, in Florida, the willingness of people to share the intimate portraits of their lives stood out as meaningful.

All of these 'moments' attest to the power and need to continually move beyond the merely academic questions in our methodology to engage real people's lives. In Israel, students who carried out research felt 'connected,' 'validated,' and 'empowered.' It was suggested that we perhaps should consider including and documenting in the research process those moments when we make a difference in someone's life, including the lives of the researchers themselves. As one research forum participant noted, the point is that the sharing of real-life narratives in a study of resilience makes a difference to those involved. In a similar vein, another of the research forum's participant contended that people who participate in this kind of research can actively bring forward a foundation for peace and inclusion through the sharing with others of stories about the different pathways to resilience youth follow.

6.0 Session II: "What have we learned and how can we improve?"

Inevitably, when confronted, every researcher tends to retreat to their own individual biases and judgments when it comes to methodology. Indeed, academic journals are filled with disagreements and contentious analyses of research methodologies. The field of resilience has not escaped the often polemical and arbitrary divide of qualitative and quantitative methodology. It is for this reason that this mixed methods study has been ground-breaking. It is the first known iterative, multinational attempt to design research that addresses the challenges of comparing resilience related data across diverse international

cultural and environmental contexts, while at the same time attempting to cooperatively bridge research design and methodologies. Our belief is that because of the manner in which this research has proceeded, the resulting research design is successfully addressing the shortcomings identified in resilience research and is producing a unique research protocol and set of instruments that can be employed across research sites around the globe.

Additionally, our contention is that studies of resilience have shown that narrow understandings of resilience as exemplified in the bulk of the literature currently available may not be capturing the scope of variability in how children growing up in high-risk environments and their caregivers, both formal and informal, adapt to the exigencies of survival in different cultures and across different contexts. Our explicit approach as a research team has been to critically deconstruct through our process the ethnocentric barriers that confound results, and embrace diversity through the research design.

In this session (II), the objective was to provide an opportunity to open a dialogue among all participants to assess our experiences to date, our successes, to review approaches and methods, evaluate lessons and recommendations, and discuss any other methodological concerns or recommendations thus far. The idea, therefore, was to provide an open dialogue venue where all of the research stakeholders had an opportunity to discuss and present their thoughts on the relevance of the methods and pilot study findings to the context of at-risk youth in their communities. In this respect, other key goals included the opportunity to critically assess the effectiveness and shortcomings of the new methods, identify refinements to the methodology, discuss the practical and theoretical implications of the findings from the pilot study and establish a plan for the further development of instruments/protocols.

Participants in this session broke off into groups for discussion, and then reconvened to report the findings from their discussions. Participants were asked to create conversations about listening, engaging, reflecting and questioning – looking for those spaces that provide further inspiration and energy to go ahead. As a discussion strategy, participants were asked to try and incorporate the elements of a ‘great conversation’ into these conversations. Dr. Ungar, Dr. Liebenberg and Prof. Brown concluded by summarizing tentative findings after more general discussion.

Record of Discussion and Summary

6.1 The Success of the Methodology

- **Reaching Participants and Learning**

For many researchers, the success of the research was rooted in making connections to participants and learning what is important to making their everyday lives both happier and healthier. This was premised on the ability of researchers across sites to connect with participants to the extent that they eventually felt comfortable and safe enough to openly discuss their lives; a source of pride and satisfaction for many researchers. Successes in the Winnipeg site, for example, included researchers being invited to come back to the Aboriginal community and building a collaborative relationship – this potentially suggests a paradigm shift in aboriginal research.

Participants listed a range of successes of the research methodology including: learning from youth living in family violence; the importance of protection from violence and harm; the importance of the stability and safety of mothers; learning from elders and their hardships due to issues like immigration; and better understanding the beliefs and practices of other cultures.

Many of the successes cited revolve around learning more about people, and this can only be achieved through building rapport and making firm and meaningful connections to those involved with the study. In this way, and as one researcher observed, research can serve as an entry point into communities where you can then try and make a difference. One participant noted that they were often asked, “Will you come back again?”

- **The Mixed Methods Approach**

Participants agreed that the mixed methods approach has so far been a success and that the data being generated is both valuable and complimentary to one another. One group made the observation that any methodology carries with it inherent problems or limitations but that choices must be made as no single method is ‘perfect’. The key to the resilience project has been a flexible approach to using and assessing methodology and this has been a positive development.

Some participants did raise the point that integrating data can sometimes be a problem if the ‘hard’ quantitative data gets centre stage as the more ‘objective’ and ‘reliable’ data.

- **Networking**

The opportunity to build and expand networks with communities, youth and leaders in the communities was also cited as a success thus far. In Winnipeg, for example, the success of the research depended closely upon building contacts at the site, and people coming to know one another and work together.

In many sites, researchers found that youth were excited by the knowledge that other youth from around the world were also participating in the research. One forum participant argued that key to the methodology is building collaborative relationships because resilience researchers and participants. It was also thought important to consider how research has helped strengthen community relationships.

6.2 Issues Around Approaches and Methods

- **Confidentiality**

At one site, a participant noted that among all key tools and research strategies the most important was the guarantee of and clear articulation of confidentiality. Additionally, research subjects were given the opportunity to censor parts of taped interviews.

- **Translation**

Some researchers found that focusing on the main topics was difficult because people have different understandings of resilience and are carrying around varying definitions/conceptualizations.

Translating the questionnaire (CYRM) was considered a 'waste of time' by one participant in an urban site. However, another team member argued that translating the questionnaire was a must for many sites, particularly in rural sites. It was concluded that it is perhaps important to know researchers in the community to assess issues of translation, if possible.

For one team member, most interesting were the qualitative questions, and related issues of translation and understanding. The person reported that many times there weren't the words to conceptualize what researchers wanted to say or ask. It was overwhelming at times, reported another forum participant. A methodological issue that arose from this discussion was the challenge the research presented to assess commonalities across research sites, without losing the richness of the data rooted in the local and particular circumstances of each research site.

- **Qualitative vs. Quantitative**

There were concerns by some participants of the methodology used by different disciplines and who should study resilience (i.e. psychologists and anthropologists might have different methods and different understandings of resilience).

One team member emphasized the importance of qualitative work, and the necessity of developing tools to access strength and resilience. It was thought that qualitative methods inform while quantitative guide. Some researchers believed that the qualitative dimension provided a more client driven process where the researcher was closely linked to the consumer/client, rather than the research being “about the researcher”. Another participant noted that qualitative study is appropriate to this study because it allowed researchers to get to know what is happening at the community/individual level through narratives.

Another challenge was to continue to combine quantitative and qualitative methods throughout the research process. According to one forum participant, the quantitative measure needs to ‘get specific’; there is a need to use it to look for basic answers before allowing it to move on to broader questions. The goal would be to have the questionnaire create a better fusion or mix between the specific and general.

Also, as one research forum participant pointed out, it is important to let the client determine the most appropriate methodology and it is essential that we focus on the needs of participants first and what they think is important, rather than only focusing or considering what researchers think is important to study.

In trying to operationalize the term ‘resilience’, we can question whether it is even possible or desirable to have one single measurement. Of course, quantitative measurements are often easier and more presentable to funding agencies, media, publications, etc. However, forum participants agreed that a sole focus on quantitative measurement would limit the empirical scope of inquiry, and lose a richness of data that includes narratives, story telling, life experiences, etc. Therefore, it was felt there is a definite need to incorporate better use of narratives in the research addressing questions around youth resilience (parents, youth, elders, a mix?) and the larger community as a whole.

In the South Florida research, for example, it was found that the qualitative research acted as a useful ‘catalyst’ to help capture the voices of young girls under study. By simply listening, the hopes, challenges and strengths of the girls were brought forward.

- **Methodological 'Pitfalls'**

Not surprisingly, it was noted by many that cost is a real research obstacle.

Another concern raised was that in studying youth, a possible problem that may crop up is if youth exaggerate what is being experienced – there is a crucial need for a check and balance in assessing the data being uncovered by the methodology. At the same time, one research forum participant noted an often-missing 'personal engagement' by researchers when they carry out their research, and of the need to engage youth on 'their own level.' Connecting with youth and building rapport may better position researchers to access and be aware of exaggerations or dishonesty by youth involved in their studies.

One forum member found the use of cameras extremely helpful in engaging youth in the research and reported that the youth felt 'engrossed' and 'empowered' (they were given cameras to take pictures of their lives over a 3-4 week period). Similarly, the use of drawings as qualitative research was found to be useful as a data collection tool at another site. Another group also indicated that flexible and creative approaches can help solve ethical issues in research (participatory action-research; longitudinal studies where you stay in touch, honorariums to elders and youth).

Another ethical pitfall consistently raised was regarding the responsibility to help the youth after completing the research. Several participants felt very strongly that it was essential that those people who provide our research data must have 'their empowerment nourished' through help from team members. It was felt important to provide feedback to communities, systems and institutions with recommendations for change. Team members have an obligation to provide feedback to participants; make it understandable; and to collect addresses to keep in touch. This was a common concern for many participants and was raised during different sessions throughout the research forum.

6.3 Lessons and Recommendations

- **Access and Trust**

One participant recalled that their participant recruitment snowballed and networking was essential to this development (again being involved in the community and making relationships with people was cited as an essential step in the research process).

Inevitably, there were some problems getting into agencies and with forming trust. One person observed that even though they worked with at risk children before, credibility was a problem and created an obstacle to getting the 'good

stuff'. As she had to be accompanied by someone else, as an 'outsider', she heard the comment that "we had a great conversation after you left." Rapport, trust, outsider/insider dynamics are again key then to an international study of this nature, noted one participant.

- **Safety**

Across some sites, the primary concern was for the safety of the participants, particularly in relation to the gangs and street life and the possibility of a participant being beat up or harmed for participating in the research (e.g. being seen to be in collusion with 'authorities'). These concerns have to be thought out and addressed by researchers and project supervisors. In Manipur, India, for example, a community based ethics board was used and notably participants were welcomed to approach the board. This proved to be a successful approach to take as not a single participant complained at any point in the research process.

Another lesson learned is that there is an inherent danger in qualitative research because of the political and cultural climate in some regions. For example, research subjects may talk openly about opposing government, which creates an uncomfortable or problematic record of data for the researcher. Incentives in carrying out research have also created a problem because of the attraction of un-targeted participants to the research who participate only for their own gain. Other dangers in research are that the institutional context can constrain valuable research; consent processes can silence participants; demanding signatures can stop research (protecting the researcher but not the youth).

Another lesson included the realization that it is important to develop a profound respect for the autonomy of youth – they do not have to answer, or repeat themselves; paradoxically this respect often builds trust in the relationship.

- **Questionnaire Length and Flexibility**

Another lesson put forward in the conversations was that the questionnaire was too long, which can lead to a lack of motivation to respond truthfully when completing it. Some people would even leave after signing the consent form because the process just sounded too complicated. The verbal explanation, in retrospect, could be shortened.

In the Russian site, there was a need to adopt and make changes to the questionnaire to adapt it to the Russian experience. For example, the questions related to social issues should be refined. Again, cross-cultural sensitivity to methodology is important. One participant noted that resilience in some contexts

is a conservative concept, so there is an inherent need for flexibility and adaptability for research taking place in the field.

- **Community Research**

There was general agreement on the recommendation to build community resilience into the project, and to understand better how interventions work. Also, participants agreed that there is an inherent bias in the research in terms of individual resilience. In aboriginal Manitoba, team members were told, there are many homes with trouble in some form but often the healing is holistic, not individual, and relies on the community spirit. For example, elders speaking to youth about their shame and mistakes is a strong resilience-building strategy, but would be ignored if one were to solely focus on individual resilience. In another example, one team member asked colleagues to consider why they save just for one's own children's future; a "selfish altruism" of looking after one's own family may be common in the dominant culture, but other cultures, members of the research team noted, maintain a more community-based sense of resilience where the community looks out for all youth.

One group discussion formed around the need to recognize that the more vulnerable the population under study, the more sensitive the issues. It is important to recognize your position of power and privilege related to youth.

One of the most important lessons, according to the research forum participants, is to engage and work with the entire community or as large a segment of the community as possible if one is to understand patterns of survival. One team member cautioned others to remember that in some instances, community role models can be suicide bombers, gang members, or criminals. Another example is that in an Aboriginal community, a role model may be a person who leaves to become successful. This highlights the need for as many connections to the community under study as possible, to break through 'stereotypes' of success and open up the possibility to understand how success and resilience is experienced within the community.

For one group, recommendations included focusing on community and group resilience along with the sources for that resilience. This would include examining the institutional practices that provide hope. Others lessons/recommendations included: involve youth workers to carry out the research; use multiple ways of documenting research (i.e. multi-media to make it more tangible – 'human' language); look at more than just findings; demonstrate flexibility in the research process and ethical responsibility; ensure the research is iterative, with researchers returning to the communities to determine its relevance; maintain a website to communicate (access has been a problem for some); focus more

attention to how to bridge gaps between generations, particularly in cultures with substantial intergenerational disruptions (e.g. Russia).

- **Qualitative Methodology Issues**

Another methodological lesson learned from the field was to always be clear; be up front about expectations and responsibilities and don't blur boundaries when conducting research. Researchers were encouraged to sensitively deal with the paradox of developing trust with youth who may want care and support, while maintaining the confidentiality of those systematically oppressed by the same institutions that they may need to be referred to for treatment or (legal) care.

Qualitative interviews helped to bolster youth's outward confidence (and avoid their initial reluctance) such that they were able to open up and think more thoughtfully about the questions being posed.

Again, the issue of what happens after the interview(s) was a concern. A key issue here is that once a researcher/academic shows an interest in these youth who have essentially no support, many feelings come pouring out, which creates an obligation that many times researchers were ill-equipped to deal with either personally or professionally. Participants in the research forum wondered how these ethical issues might be addressed across the project and solutions incorporated into its processes? Another group again expressed a common concern about opening 'someone up' and then leaving that person behind after the completion of the research, particularly given the desire by members of the research team to help create support systems and a healthier life for the youth participants.

6.4 Other Findings on Methodology to Date

Cross-cultural research can be problematic as concepts like resilience may be western concepts; some cultures do not have a term for resilience, which raises methodological concerns around what approach to its study works. Some team members also expressed concerns about using western approaches to identify western constructs, 'finding' them in non-western cultures.

Topics that potentially need further discussion include:

- Childcare protection: who are the children being neglected and who need assistance.
- Cultural differences and different definitions of neglect.
- A need for focusing more broadly on the general population and resilience, rather than an exclusive focus on high at-risk populations.
- How do you measure or 'look into' a community and weigh that against the risk of isolating a community, or attempt to observe them as if

separate from other communities? Is there a danger here of harming those we seek to help, particularly given that at risk or already marginalized communities may benefit from integration and inclusion into broader community arenas?

In South Africa, for example, the country is in social and political transition. Likewise, research is becoming more democratic and inclusive. Prior to democratization, all research was focused on elite groups and their experiences, along with their tools and research techniques. Indigenous research is now being encouraged and it is part of a more general move of inclusiveness' and the need for action-centered research in South Africa. Again, this highlights the importance of accounting for the broader social and cultural dynamics at play when researching resilience. For instance, in India and other places, where risk-taking behavior and poverty run high, it is very often dangerous for youth to speak to or been seen with researchers. One strategy is to use the 'snowball' method and find participants through word of mouth. One colleague from India has found that authorities were helpful as they were keen to assist a foreigner.

Research categories need to be discussed in more detail. Two key questions include: How could we discuss generalizations regarding resilience? And how could we start working at the community level to get at the definitions and meaning of community and familial resilience?

There was a consensus that there was a need to discuss what the benefits to the community might be – because interviewee exhaustion is real and at a certain point subjects may question (why?) more interviews without seeing a point or any real output from their time, thoughtfulness, feelings, goodwill, etc.

One forum participant suggested that communication could be improved to ensure everyone is aware of the changes/growth and challenges of the study, though the Halifax team noted that the hope was the this dialogue and engagement of research issues would have been undertaken at an earlier date than the research forum. That said, there is a need for better communication between sites and a desire for mechanisms that allow team members to share information and stories. Use of conference calls every 6-8 months is potentially an option, or context regarding each site could be shared through devices such as the website, newsletters, Listserv. etc.). To this end, one idea floated was that a different site could be chosen to be highlighted each month. The portrait could be kept simple (1-2 pages) with notes on fun things to do, ideas for travel, and maybe even real-time conversations through the web site. It might also be important to let other relevant groups and people know the project is going on and get them interested.

Potentially, there will be a film made about the IRP experience and we are currently looking at funding for this project.

In the next phase of the study, more collaboration around how research is to be conducted could be beneficial. This could include site coordinators and researchers coming to Halifax for a common training session.

It was also noted by the Halifax team that because this was a pilot project, it was 'piggy-backing' on many other research initiatives. A newsletter might be a great student project that would help keep the team linked together and everyone aware of each other's activities.

One group expressed a dire need for more stories from around the world to show that resilience is culturally specific and not just a western idea. The same team members felt that quantitative research was essential if the research was to affect public policy, and that qualitative research can't work without being informed by the quantitative work.

7.0 Session III: "What's Next? Where should we go from here?"

2005-2006. In the coming year, the team will be active finalizing applications for further funding to continue the project and disseminate results from the first phase of research. There is expressed interest by members of the team to edit a book that addresses methodological issues in the study of resilience and what was learned from the cross-cultural study of the construct. The content of the book is to be compiled from the recently held International Pathways to Resilience Conference (June 17-19th, Halifax) and presentations and papers developed collaboratively during the project; we also anticipate publishing a contextually sensitive set of research protocols and our measure highlighting the novel approach we used that integrated qualitative and quantitative methods.

Together we will continue to investigate the culturally and contextually varied ways resilience is understood and good outcomes achieved by children faced with adversities such as poverty, war, violence, drugs, the illness of a parent, family or community dislocation and cultural disintegration. Equally important, we are working to better understand and apply methods of culturally sensitive research with at-risk children and families. Finally, we will not only break ground on how to transfer our collective findings back to each community and between communities internationally, we will also seed action to make our research applicable to those who intervene and those who make policy.

As a team we will also continue to apply for funding nationally and internationally to carry out a full study of resilience in these ten sites employing the revised

methodological tools and procedures. At this juncture, it is worth reminding ourselves that the funding body in Canada only funded two meetings and the formation of a methodology. Significantly, team members involved in the project graciously volunteered time to gather data. The IRP has therefore been able to present groundbreaking findings (forthcoming). Every site will receive a site report and will assist in data analysis.

After a discussion about the possible funding scenarios and future directions for the project, the team broke off into groups and we were asked to revisit a set of questions we attempted to tackle in our Halifax meeting in March, 2003: who do we study; what do we study; and how do we do our study? From these discussions, we developed a comprehensive framework for our methodology and a tentative design for a second phase of research.

Record of Discussion and Summary

7.1 Who do We Study?

One group of team members observed that we must consider a deeper focus versus an expanding focus depending upon the research site in question. Flexibility is key to the overall project but though youth is the focus we should consider the many other populations who might become part of this research (adults, younger children, etc.).

Additionally, alongside flexibility and the richness of diverse research sites, we need to keep an eye attuned to commonalities across sites. This dualism has to be managed continuously. Also it is important to remain flexible in regard to how youth are matched (or not matched) by age across sites, as there are different social/psychological factors that affect maturation (e.g. shorter childhoods and longer adolescent transition periods).

One consideration in this respect might be to include youths' voices in the design of the project, enabling them to have a greater participation among the sites, along with the analyses of the findings. At the same time, there is age specific issues with adolescents and measurement techniques must be appropriate (i.e. culturally validated and developmentally appropriate).

When we focused on who is participating in the study, the list was familiar and included immigrant youth, victims of violence, youth who have experienced structural/ethnic dislocation (colonization, current wars) or divorce and other family problems. Geographically, we also identified rural and urban as distinct research categories and one person suggested we could potentially look at multi-cultural families as well. Other answers to this question included studying: Mentors, legal guardians, teachers, peers, youth aged 12-21.

From the research to date, it is clear that resilience is not only an individual concept and practice but operates at the community level too. Some team members wondered if it were possible to conduct a pilot study to look at this. Other methodological issues to think about were gender, race, and class and consider how they interact with resilience.

There was also a recognition that in the next phases of research there is a need to go beyond interviewing, to the more concrete: observing young people as they experience resilience and identifying the sources of that resilience (individual, familial, community, cultural and structural contexts).

7.2 How do We Study?

One key research issue methodologically was the number of sites included in the study. Many team members felt that a key criteria or justification for expanding sites was if possibilities for reciprocity were present. There should also be the potential to build capacity in communities and agencies with Canadian funding supporting interventions.

There could potentially be a firmer conceptual link between each Canadian site and others domestically and abroad.

Criteria:

Ensure sampling of diverse cultures:

1st choice – the number of sites within a country may or may not be expanded or consolidated based on the site's capacity (are researchers willing and able to sample more cultures?)

2nd choice – Expand the research to new countries

In assessing whether to expand the project or not, one team member argued that it is essential 'not to bite off more than we can chew'. For instance, if the team chose to explore resilience longitudinally, the question was raised whether we would see meaningful change over a 2-3 year period? Some team members thought not. And yet, a longer longitudinally study might overtax the resources of the project.

Other ideas suggested included looking at resilience temporally by speaking with elders who could reflect back on their lives.

Also, we might consider implications for intervention, and the need to know more about “markers of resilience.” There was some discussion about the social vs. genetic components of such a study.

Finally, the word culture in the research needs to be more carefully used. The study needs to differentiate groups within a culture more and identify different racial groups better. What is a resilience factor in one context may not be relevant to another.

In summary, there is a need to focus on:

- Building site capacity and reciprocity
- Including in the study persons of influence for youth
- Integrating the analyses of the data into the work done at each site
- Identify partners locally early on who can help with documentation and dissemination.

Regardless of the design, the commitment by team members is long-term. The goal is to expand, go deeper, build capacity and reciprocity and to continue to try to include youth. A related goal is to continue to work on better mechanisms of communication and get more findings back to the community faster, and get more youth involved in the data analysis.

How might this work? By sites developing their own intervention programs and sites doing their own analysis. Support for these activities could come through the clustering of sites and by providing training for researchers.

Sites themselves (rather than the core team in Halifax) might be able to increase their own collaborations nationally.

- Share methodologies
- Explore locally relevant ways of documenting phenomena related to resilience and share these techniques and findings regionally, and across disciplines
- Build a clearinghouse for knowledge transfer
- Have local conferences and workshops that may draw resources from the Halifax hub, but focuses on local issues: local dissemination.

7.3 What do We Study?

Summary:

- 1) The context – thick description of young people’s lives and their context in each site.
- 2) Topics decided by country and culture
- 3) Variability of definitions of core constructs is encouraged
- 4) Access to services – knowledge of, eligibility, barriers, rights to, etc.

- 5) Gender, race, class, etc.
- 6) If victims, examine causes of their victimization
- 7) Attitudes (towards context) (e.g. recognize gender philosophy within each research context)

One group suggested there is a need to identify target groups in each site and invite them to be part of the process so they will be invested in the 'product.' Doing so would influence dissemination, and make the research more action oriented.

Some team members suggested that what we study is risk assessment and protective factors, and that we cannot do one without the other.

In considering what we study, there was a strong desire to explore the richness the data through cross-site comparisons – maximizing the benefits of the multi-site nature of the project, asking what is resilience and what are the determinants of resilience in different contexts.

Some other team members asked who is supporting the resilience team? What are the resources, and how can we ensure each site builds capacity. There was consensus that there is a greater need for contact with site researchers (field workers, for example), and help in areas such as training on interviewing. A key question we might consider is if a source of support exists in a local community, how can the project sustain and support that organization or individual?

Another consideration is to study "Positive deviance" – what are the factors that pull even "deviant" families forward in their survival? This approach would avoid a focus on deficits. There is also the need to move toward development of interventions.

8.0 Conclusion

The IRP team continues to work together and actively seek funding to continue the program of research already well underway. A number of publications are either now available, in press or under review that will share findings from the research. Site reports are expected to be returned to community stakeholders in late fall, 2005.

Overall, the team is optimistic that the momentum from the first phase of the work will be sustainable. It is a rare opportunity for so many people from such diverse backgrounds to meet and discuss health-related phenomena, breaking ground conceptually and methodologically, while trying to build international consensus. The team looks forward to its next chance to meet!