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ILLUMINATING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

FROM AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE:

INSIGHTS FROM A QUALITATIVE STUDY

WITH DAGARA COMMUNITIES

OF LAWRA DISTRICT, GHANA

BY

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CHAPTER TWO

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND A TRANSDISCIPLINARY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

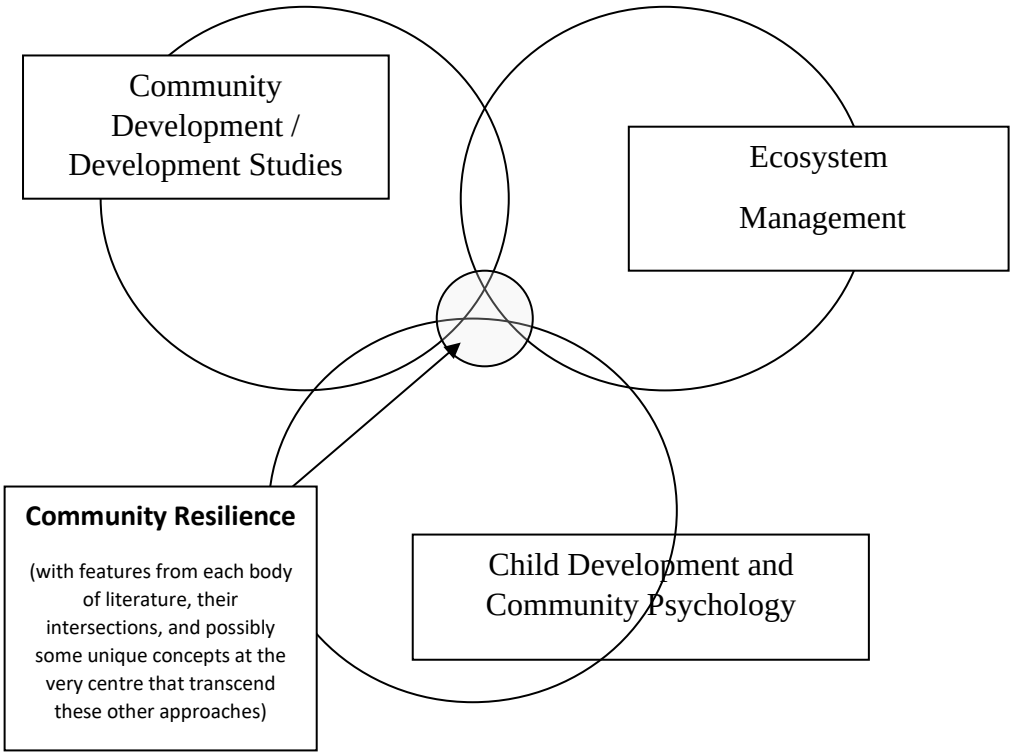
2.0 Introduction

This chapter guides the reader into the academic and professional literature related to community resilience. Learnings from this literature influenced the framing of the questions for this study, as well as the understandings and interpretations articulated by myself and Dagara colleagues later. Exploring the literature broadened perspectives on resilience and community resilience, and provided insights into the various direct impacts, subtle influences, and unconscious biases that are always part of the co-creation of knowledge.

As I explored the literature on resilience and community resilience I discovered there was a body of scholarly work to be digested, but that it was fragmented and had roots in multiple disciplinary traditions. I found people writing in the literature who had been developing ideas around community resilience in isolation from each other in three different streams: (1) child development and community psychology, (2) ecosystem management and (3) community development / development studies.

Figure 2.1 diagrammatically represents these streams of literature. Each is complex and has its own history and ongoing discourse. Within each area are sub-disciplines with a deep knowledge and evidence base in their own right, and each area is linked to broader "basic" disciplines (e.g., biology, geology, philosophy, psychology, sociology) that have well-established systems of epistemology and ontology (Miller, 1997: 3).

Figure 2.1 A Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary View of Community Resilience



Source: Author, 2017

Each of the three streams is vast and complex. There are overlaps between them, yet each also has its own disciplinary boundaries and core assumptions. These boundaries can be the creative spaces that help in the understanding of phenomena in the world. Rodgers, Booth, and Eveline (2003) outline how the politics of disciplinary advantage can hinder dealing with the challenges of our times and advocate for challenging the hegemony of disciplinary work.

"Community resilience" is a complex, holistic phenomenon, any effort to understand it can not only be in the context of a particular disciplinary perspective. Multidisciplinary views that add understandings from two or more disciplines together are valuable. Interdisciplinary views that look where disciplines intersect and adopt the epistemology of one discipline to either accept or reject insights from another discipline can provide useful learning. These

approaches, however, are still limited (Holistic Education Network, 2006; Miller, 1997; Nicolescu, 1997). In a holistic view, "the sum is greater than the parts" and the non-disciplinary or undisciplined space between and beyond disciplines where, as Capra (1983:14) notes, "paradox, mystery and contradictions are embraced" may be where insights about phenomena will ultimately be learned. Therefore, a focus on the phenomena, in this case "community resilience" from a transdisciplinary perspective, will allow learning from, within, and beyond disciplinary boundaries. As Miller (1997: 4) points out:

> Transdisciplinary approaches involve articulated conceptual frameworks which claim to transcend the narrow scope of disciplinary world views and metaphorically encompass the several parts of the material field which are handled separately by the individualized specialized disciplines. These overarching thought models are holistic in intent.

This means, as Figure 2.1 illustrates, community resilience can be understood by learning from individual and sub-disciplines, from their intersections, and from the spaces in-between by specifically focusing on the phenomena itself. In this chapter, I will start by exploring resilience and community resilience from the three disciplinary perspectives and then will come back to seek a transdisciplinary conceptualization of community resilience to take forward into this study.

2.1 Community Resilience: a Review of the Literature

This review of the academic and professional literature is divided into four sections: personal and collective resilience as a psychological concept, Socio-ecological resilience as an ecosystem concept, community resilience from a community development / development studies perspective and community resilience in the African context.

2.1.1 Personal and Collective Resilience As A Psychological Concept

One stream of literature related to community resilience is community psychology and community health. Both of these are specific sub-disciplines that spring from an understanding that an exclusive, individually-focused, bio-physiological interpretation of health is severely limiting. Both concepts have much to offer to an understanding of community resilience. The community psychology perspective evolves out of child psychology and development. Community health is part of the broader discipline of public health.

2.1.1.1 Learning about individual resilience: child psychology and development.

Resilience is first encountered in the broad fields of psychology and health in the special area of child development. A major concept in child development (the sense that children develop in predictable stages in their formative years) is that of "at-risk" children, and it is out of this concept that the construct of resilience grew in the early 1980's (Allen, 2006). Children are considered at risk, for example, during warfare or natural disasters. There may be individual pathways to development, but psychological research uses "at risk" to characterize persons with limited personal, health, social, or cultural resources. Risk factors (both biological and social) are influences that alter the resources available for development, and these factors often translate into psychological dysfunction. Resilience, on the other hand, was first conceptualized as normal development *in spite* of the presence of numerous risk factors. Impetus for the study of resilience was work such as that by Werner and Smith (1982), Garmezy (1985), and Rutter (1987) that found that numerous children identified as at-risk, actually developed normally in the context of adversity. Early interpretations saw resilient children as "superkids" who possessed some unique trait or personality characteristic. More recently, however, resilience has been shown to be a fairly common phenomenon (Masten, 2001).

Strength focus. Even if resilience is ordinary, it is still significant because it has helped turn around many of the deficit-focused models of children growing up in adversity (i.e., problems to be fixed) and has helped to overcome many negative assumptions (i.e., they are bad because they grew up in a bad neighbourhood). This strength focus is one of the major defining features of resilience. It helps separate the concept from much of the pathologizing of the medical system, psychology, and child development (Masten, 2001; Waller, 2001). As Ungar (2005: 6) states, "when we investigate what makes someone strong instead of what causes weakness we are more likely to identify that which bolsters health". Hope and optimism (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and an understanding of consciousness and how mastery over one's thoughts and mind shape one's reality (Kelley, 2003; Mills, 2001) are strengths that can lead to well-being.

Yet, a strength focus can also have its drawbacks. If certain individuals are identified as surviving and even thriving, in spite of being "at risk", popular media and policy makers can revert to blame the victim mentality, perhaps thinking if one individual could overcome risks, everyone should be able to do so. This attitude often covers a blindness to, and an unwillingness to deal with structural issues that may be at the root of the risks in the first place. It can even, more sinisterly, hide a proactive stance in the dominant culture to get anyone who is different to conform. Ungar (2005:13) cites Martineau, who argues that "obscured behind the well-meaning intentions of teaching resilience is a call for disadvantaged children and youth to conform to behavioral norms of the dominant society".

Interactive process of change. As work around the conceptualization of resilience evolved, the issues of the context and of environmental factors have become more prominent. Whereas in much of the early literature resilience was seen as a personal trait, it is now recognized as a process, or an outcome of successful adaptation. It has both individual and

environmental elements and captures the complex interaction of a young person with their environment (Luthar, Cicchetti, Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001; Waller, 2001). This eco-systemic model is described by Waller (2001: 290):

> Eco-systemic: a way of thinking and organizing knowledge that emphasizes the interrelatedness and interdependency between individuals and social systems. ... human development does not happen in a vacuum but rather is the product of continuous transactions between individuals and the physical social class and cultural environments in which they grow.

This dynamic process of change and adaptation has three aspects: (a) the original risk / asset environment, (b) the mechanisms of response, and (c) the outcomes.

Risk and assets. Risk is usually perceived in one of two ways: as a significant life event that triggers disorders (i.e., natural disasters, death of a family member) or chronic adversity (i.e., poverty, violence, structural inequities, marginalization, and discrimination due to gender, race, sexual orientation, ability). Research has determined that risks are usually cumulative and persuasive (one factor may have little influence on a young person, but each additional factor usually has multiple affects not simply additive affects). Boyden and Mann (2000: 12) argue:

> Of those children who suffer serious or prolonged psychological distress in conflict zones, a significant portion have not experienced a major misfortune, but less dramatic circumstances that are more deleterious or unfulfilling than catastrophic. Sometimes the most devastating situations are those involving insidious hardships and deprivations, such as constant humiliation, social isolation or poverty related to loss of livelihood sources and long term unemployment.

Mechanisms of response and adaptation. Masten (2001) has shown that most research on resilience as a dynamic developmental process has either used a variable focused approach, utilizing statistical analysis, or a person-focused approach of primarily longitudinal studies. Variable-focused studies identify individual or environmental factors which predict positive or

negative outcomes for children. The outcomes themselves are captured as other variables such as school completion or intelligence quotient (IQ) tests. More advanced studies use a mediation model where factors (which can be threats or assets) are mediated through adaptive systems or mechanisms. It is these mechanisms that are the most important.

> Very little evidence has emerged from these studies to indicate that severe adversity has major or lasting effects on adaptive behaviors in the environment unless important adaptive systems, such as cognition and parenting are compromised prior to or as a result of adversity. (Masten, 2001: 232)

Person-focused research studies look at patterns of adaptability as they naturally occur. In longitudinal studies youth are observed in their life context and, often 30 years or more later, their individual pathways of development are described. As Masten (2001: 233) explains:

> To date, much of the discussion of resilient pathways has drawn upon case examples of individuals…These anecdotes suggest that opportunities and choices at critical junctures play an important role in the life course of resilient individuals who find mentors, enter the military, find a new or deeper faith, marry healthy partners, leave deviant peer groups, or in other ways take action that has positive consequences for their life course.

Assumed in these approaches to resilience is that change and adaptation is inevitable and it is the opportunities and choices at critical junctures that determine whether a youth will be resilient or not.

Outcomes. The outcomes of a resilient process can be to promote competence as well as prevent or ameliorate symptoms and problems, enhance assets, reduce risks, and enhance a positive psychological makeup (Masten, 2001). Alternately, Richardson, Neiger, Dunn, Ross (1996) name the desired outcome as a bio-psycho-spiritual homeostasis—or balancing point. They demonstrate that sometimes a disruption can even be beneficial and can improve skills and abilities for the future.

Culture and context. Recent discussions in the literature have emphasized how resilience is cultural and context dependent (Blackstock & Trocme, 2005; Boyden & Mann, 2000; Ungar, 2005; Waller, 2001). Boyden and Mann (2000) challenge researchers to think about the importance of culture in the distinctions they draw between biomedicine and other models of mental well-being. They describe biomedicine as individual-focused; a system that scientifically separates the mental and physical, and identifies a child as a victim. The child's perspective is minimized. Other world views of mental health, however, are holistic, see inseparable links between mind and body and value an individual's connection to human, natural, and spiritual worlds. In this view, adversity, and well-being may be vulnerable to powerful social and supernatural agents. They propose that a child with such a perspective will have a profound effect on their experience of resilience and coping.

Ungar et al (2006) argue strongly for considering resilience to be primarily contextual and that the concept must go beyond "beating the odds". They think of resilience as interactional, pluralistic, ecological and cultural – and specifically influenced by nature, and the challenges faced. Positive adaptation is achieved when individuals negotiate for resources in culturally meaningful ways – according to gender, race and ethnicity – that enable them to overcome difficulties. The focus here, however, is still primarily on individual resilience.

2.1.1.2 Learning about collective resilience: community psychology and community health. The term community resilience is beginning to be used in the community psychology literature. In situations where violence is being experienced as a risk factor, for example, in low socio-economic neighbourhoods of South Africa (Ahmed, Seedat, Van Niekerk, Bulbulia, 2004), with American-Latino and Mexican youth (Clauss-Ehlers & Levi, 2002), and in Lebanon (Kimhi & Shamai, 2004), researchers are collecting evidence that demonstrates how factors outside the individual build individual and community resilience.

The focus in these studies is not on how individuals respond to adversity, but how communities as a whole respond. Ahmed et al. (2004) describe how certain factors such as neighbourhood cohesion and community hope were found to support resilience in different communities, while other factors such as leadership and business ownership influenced different communities in complex and sometimes opposite ways. Clauss-Ehlers and Levi (2002) discuss context vulnerability that affects a community as a whole, and cultural-community values (extended family, respect for elders, the value of relationships as interactions) that buffer the impact of context vulnerability. Kimhi and Shamai (2004: 449) discuss how the perception of the community as resilient helps individual ability to resist stressors. They argue "helping communities to create a narrative that focuses on past success in coping with stressors, as well as seeking strength to cope with them in the present, may lead to increased perceived community resilience". Sonn and Fisher (1998: 461) describe research with coloured South African and Anglo-Indians and how they use resistance and "alternative activity settings" to integrate with the dominant culture while maintaining and reproducing tradition and their own "life world". Tse and Liew (2004) describe work with Asian minority communities in New Zealand and how a sense of belonging, sense of community, self-help, and family support aid in resilience. Clauss-Ehlers (2010: 324) speaks of cultural resilience, "how cultural background (cultural values, languages, customs, norms) helps individuals and communities overcome adversity". Her research has shown positive emotions about one's culture, ethnicity and gender contribute to resilience. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the context of someone else's worldview – what they value and who they want to become. According to her work, ethnic identity leads to more resilience: there is benefit to learning history, traditions, and customs, being active in social groups, talking to others about identity, and participating in cultural practices.

Kulig and her colleagues (1996, 2000, 2008, 2013) were one of the first groups to begin looking at the resilience of communities. Their work led to the recognition that some important factors that support resilience are: 1) pride and sense of belonging, and 2) the interactions in community as a collective unit. When this "sense of community" is strong it leads to community action, and ultimately to resilience. Seccombe (2002) argued that we should not only look at personal coping, but that structural issues must also be investigated. She recommended the inquiry should go beyond just beating the odds, to "changing the odds", and in her context this could only be done with a change in national economic policy. Other structural threats include: 1) systemic discrimination, 2) Eurocentric values (e.g. an exploitative ecological psyche and spiritual and cultural belief systems imposed on people of other cultural backgrounds).

The process of adaptation for collective resilience therefore demands solidarity and cohesion to resist oppression (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). This solidarity and cohesion is often the 'soul' of a community. Some researchers call this 'cultural resilience' and insist that pride and revitalization of language, values and world view help to overcome adversity (Clauss-Ehlers, 2002). There is a caution, however, that these outcomes of revitalization can be romanticized, and truly rejecting the dominant system will only be achieved with radical social change that goes beyond resilience.

Fleming and Ledogar (2008) have added to the discussion by looking at resilience specifically in the context of indigenous people. They found that one of the major threats to indigenous communities was having their relational world view (that has physical, mental, and spiritual components) marginalized, and a systematic privileging of economic issues over environmental issues. This threat was the root cause of much trauma and grief. The process of adaptation is to strengthen cultural heritage to promote broad resilience of indigenous

people. Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum (2008), in consolidating and synthesizing much research, take the discussion of collective resilience further. They write about community resilience as including community competence, problem solving, taking collective actions and decisions, and showing collective efficacy. They insist we must get beyond seeing threats as acute onset emergencies only, and must recognize chronic conditions, and put the cultural context, at the center of resilience discussions. It is often structural and systemic issues that lead to dysfunction. They acknowledge the importance of bonding, a sense of trust, belonging, and place attachment as all leading to people under threat becoming stronger and transforming situations for the future.

Community health is part of the much broader public health discipline and is closely associated with the social determinants of health, primary health care, and population health. A critical component of the primary health care model articulated by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1978 was participation and decision making by communities in the planning of interventions to protect, prevent and promote their health (Fletcher, 1995). One particular element of this broad discipline that is of relevance for this discussion of community resilience is an understanding of "community" as an essential determinant of health. Much evidence has shown that "the community's formal and informal networks and support systems, community norms and cultural nuances, and community institutions, politics and belief systems" all help determine health (Hamilton & Bhatti, 1996).

Within the framework of the 1986 Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion much has been done to create the conditions for communities to achieve their own sense of well-being and to promote community health (Hamilton & Bhatti, 1996). This framework informed Kulig's (1996, 2004, 2008, 2013) work over the past 15 years on community resilience, which has focused on resilience at a community level by adding insights from the community health

perspective. Researchers have also worked in Australia with impoverished and indigenous communities and argue for a structural analysis of the context of dis-empowered communities as the only way to capture the issues of power, access to resources, and injustice that are the underlying causes of ill health in these communities (Larson & Saggers, 2002).

This first stream of literature has much to offer an understanding of community resilience, however, there were other scholars doing synergistic work at the same time in other fields so it is important to look at two other streams of literature.

2.1.2 Socio-Ecological Resilience As An Ecosystem Concept

One other stream of literature that is very relevant to concepts of resilience and community resilience is ecological systems. This literature reaches from ecology to natural resource management and disaster management and bridges to rural sociology. At the risk of oversimplifying this field, its defining characteristic is the study of ecosystems, sometimes over long time scales and including all living things within them, *and* the study of people who live their lives in close connection with an ecosystem such as a landscape or seascape.

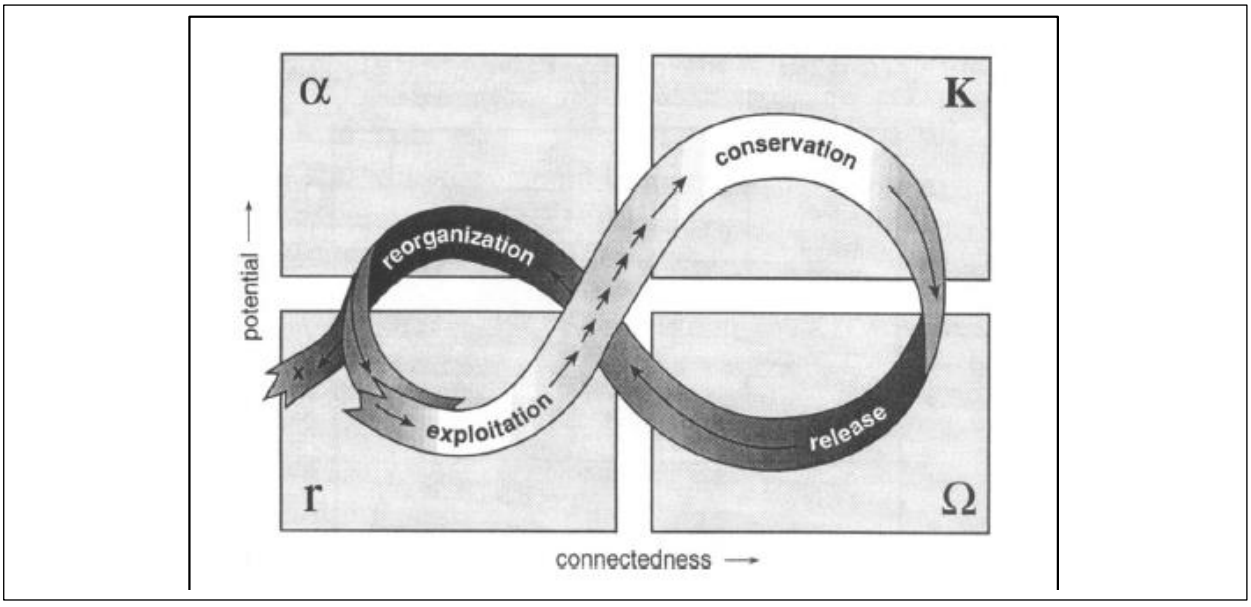
2.1.2.1 Learning from ecological resilience. Some of the key contributions from this literature are about resilience itself, ecological systems, people within those environmental systems, socio-ecological resilience, and socio-ecological resilience and climate change.

Resilience. The ecological concept of resilience started from researchers studying nature, and observing how natural systems respond to stress and crisis. Holling (1973), an influential author from this perspective, originally defined the concept of resilience as the ability of a system to return to equilibrium after undergoing stress. Early adopters of this concept developed a kind of mathematical engineering approach to resilience for maintaining equilibrium within ecosystems. Holling's ongoing research in the field of natural resource

management showed, however, that we cannot command and control natural systems based on reductionist science, but must learn to understand them and observe natural systems over long periods of time and on multiple scales. This approach to ecological resilience became more sophisticated over time and had a major influence on conservation science.

Systems. Ultimately Holling and others' observations in the field led to the articulation of 'panarchy' (Gunderson and Holling 2002; Holling 2001) which envisioned resilience linked to adaptive cycles and systems of growth, accumulation, restructuring and renewal as illustrated in the diagram below. All four of these periods are important within adaptive cycles. There can be long periods of slow accumulation from exploitation to conservation, followed by short periods of innovation, release, and creative destruction leading to renewal in all systems as illustrated in Figure 2.2. Knowing where the system is, within these cycles of adaptation, is important. Adaptation does not always happen slowly, but sometimes there are dramatic shifts when an ecosystem reaches a particular threshold. This can result in a regime shift in which the ecosystem continues, but there is a different combination of species.

Figure 2.2 Socio-ecological Perspective on Resilient Systems.



Source: Reproduced from Holling, 2001: 394.

It is also important to always consider systems as "nested hierarchies" and at multiple spatial and temporal scales (at least three) to understand how these cycles work. Any system can only be understood if we consider the systems above and below it (i.e. Understanding an apple, a tree and a forest as three independent, but connected living systems). To know where we may be in these loops of 30 – 50 years or more (Olsson, Gunderson, Carpenter, Ryan, Lebel, Folke & Holling 2006) is about understanding transformation, not about incremental changes in efficiencies.

Holling and Meffe (1996: 330) stated emphatically that command and control natural resource management is a pathology and causes a loss of resilience in systems:

> When the range of natural variation in a system is reduced the system loses resilience. That is a system in which natural levels of variation have been reduced through command and control activities will be less resilient than an unaltered system when subsequently faced with external perturbations either of a natural (storms, fires, floods) or human induced (social or institutional) origin. We believe this principle applies beyond ecosystems and is particularly relevant at the intersection of ecological, social and economic systems.

Understanding the complexity of systems and cycles in these ways thus became essential in resilience thinking.

Broader concerns: ecosystems and people. During the same time frame that Holling's work evolved, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (1981) introduced the terms *endowment* (owned assets and personal capacities) and *entitlement* (relationships through which one gains access to food) based on his work in analyzing famine. These concepts influenced extensive work on vulnerability, recovery, and coping skills related to famine, and on understanding how rural people interact with their environment not only as an ecosystem, but as social, economic, and political systems as well. Chambers' (1983) work on rural poverty recognized people's links

to their ecosystems and also identified factors of deprivation and disadvantage (poverty, social inferiority, isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, seasonality, powerlessness, and humiliation). He demonstrated how complicated people's lives are in rural areas (Chambers, 1995).

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) addressed issues at a global scale and commented on the relationships between the human world and the environment that sustains it (WCED, 1987). They noted the profound environmental degradation taking place at the hands of human beings and defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Chapter 2, Section I). The environment was seen as "natural capital" that must be maintained or renewed, and sustainability was broadly interpreted to be a process of economic, political, and social change that does not necessarily include growth, industrial development, and the exploitation of natural resources. The Bruntland Commission gave much impetus to those working in ecology and conservation, and fueled the environmental movement.

These seminal works (WCED, 1987; Chambers, 1983, 1995; Sen, 1981) contributed to the growth of the concept of "sustainable rural livelihoods." The Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex has been instrumental in the articulation of this concept. Scoones (1998: 5) provides their definition of livelihood:

> A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base.

One of the key elements in this definition is natural resource-based sustainability, i.e., "the ability of a system to maintain productivity when subject to disturbing forces whether a stress (a small, regular, predictable disturbance with a cumulative effect) or a shock (a large infrequent unpredictable disturbance with immediate impact)" (Scoones, 1998: 6). Davies (1996: 25) examined adaptable livelihoods in the Sahel region of Africa and defined resilience as "ease and rapidity of a system's recovery from stress" and sensitivity as "the degree to which a given land system undergoes changes due to natural forces, following human interference". She made the effort to distinguish between systems based on natural resources and those based on livelihoods. For Davies (1996: 28) "livelihood systems are not based on some natural equilibrium, but are a function of how humans interact with environmental, socio-economic and political factors in order to subsist". These elements within sustainable livelihoods were adapted from parallel work being done in ecosystems, and was the forerunner of socio-ecological resilience.

Also, during this time period, Berkes (1999) was taking some of Holling's concepts and broadening them from a purely scientific ecology perspective to a stronger socio-ecological perspective inclusive of ethical, social and spiritual aspects. He recognized in taking a systems-view, human beings are still part of the system. Therefore, human beings relationship with the land and the broader ecosystem; how the ecosystem is managed and cared for; as well as the kinds of ceremonies performed are important. Berkes and Folke (1998) stated that human systems are unique as compared to other ecosystems with living species because humans have the abilities of foresight, intention, communication and technology. Others recommended an analysis of the range of formal and informal institutional factors that influence sustainable livelihood outcomes (McAslan, 2002; Scoones, 1998), and linkages to human rights and identity (Redclift, 2002). These are referred to as social and human capital, and, combined with

natural and economic capital, are the assets that one must have some access and control over for a sustainable livelihood (Sconnes, 1998).

Adger, in a very influential paper, uses a case study of conservation management of mangroves in northern Vietnam to illustrate the importance of both social resilience (which was compromised by a change in property rights that decreased cooperative management) and ecological resilience (seen as the ability of fish stocks to recover following major impacts on their ecosystem). Adger (2000: 354) concludes "resilience depends on the diversity of the ecosystem as well as the institutional rules which govern the social systems". He commented on the critical social components of exclusion, marginalization, social capital and the question of resilience versus vulnerability, and maintained an appreciation of the ecosystems approach developed from observing natural systems.

Disaster management is another field that contributed to resilience thinking in the decades on either side of 2000. Disaster management, (Blaike, 2002, Cernea, 2002, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, 2004) is concerned with people's responses to disturbances in their natural environment such as earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, and drought and human-made issues such as war, displacement, and other emergencies. Blaike (2002), for example, wrote on the "crunch factor" wherein people experience a crunch between root causes, dynamic pressures, unsafe conditions and natural environmental hazards. Root causes include unequal assets, population growth, migration, debt crisis, and environmental degradation. Dynamic pressures include such issues as class, gender, and ethnicity; unsafe conditions are determined by low preparedness, poor health, and livelihood disruption. This is much more than an ecological understanding of resilience.

***Socio-Ecological Resilience*.** Gradually there was sufficient cross-fertilization and the concept of ecological resilience was broadened to socio-ecological resilience. Within this new

conceptualization institutional governance was considered essential because there were often conflicts over resource use. Berkes and Folke (1998), argue that in ecosystems it is important not to use a reductionist approach to these conflicts but rather to appreciate the need to flow with nature and learn from knowledge of the ecological system. Their fundamental lessons were to learn to live with uncertainty, nurture diversity, combine knowledges, and self-organize. Berkes later found the breakdown of traditional authority during times of rapid technological and socioeconomic change, that led communities to integrate into non-local economic systems, also leads to instability, and potentially less resilience (Berkes and Sexias, 2005). Jones, Ludi and Levine (2010) contributed to this dialogue with ideas around decision making, governance, fostering innovation and experimentation, and considering the structure of institutions.

Other research building on this socio-ecological perspective reminds us to celebrate diversity and ecological variability, and recognize the value of ecosystem services that have slow variables and tight feedback loops, and that are organized modularly, so they can stand on their own when necessary. Redundancy in a system is positive, because if one element of a system fails, other elements provide the needed services (Walker and Salt, 2006). This systems approach also means we have to recognize the inadequacy of efficiency-driven models, and include fairness, equity and humility, as we consider resilience. Walker and Salt (2012) reminded us to understand resilience can be happening on different scales, at different times (nested hierarchies), and to be appreciative of self-organizing, thresholds and adaptive cycles, as part of adaptation and transformation processes.

In a socio-ecological systems approach, we put ourselves in danger whenever we try to emphasize the social over the ecological or vice versa. Miller, Osbahr, Boyd, Thomalla, Bharwani, Ziervogel & Rockstrom (2010) emphasize both the processes and dynamics of the

system, and the actors and agency within the system as part of ecosystem stewardship and a way of looking at governance. They considered the ecological/biophysical system on one side, and the social political system on the other. They added to the ecological systems understanding the importance of world views, values, culture and agency. Adger had made this point earlier:

> The philosophical basis of managing the environment is determined by world-views of nature where people managing resources conceive of the environment as either benign, balanced or, indeed, resilient and able to reorganize itself. (Adger, 2000: 350).

Thomas, Twyman, Osbahr and Hewitson (2007) give a specific example that people's world view and perceptions of things like risk vary, with people often not viewing themselves as victims.

> For all of these coping and adapting strategies, however, what stood out was that farmers were not victims. As the authors state, "rather than being trapped in perennial cycles of destitution and impoverishment at the mercy of climate events, our data illustrate that rural farmers in Africa recognize even subtle changes in climate parameters, and take steps to respond to these changes" (Thomas, Twyman and Osbahr, Hewitson, 2007: 318).

These perceptions and strategies of farmers must be appreciated, whereas re-victimizing people using fear, which some disaster management approaches emphasizing preparation seem to do, reduces resilience.

Socio-ecological resilience and climate change. Many scholars and practitioners working in the environment and development sectors have been writing about socio-ecological resilience and climate change (Osbahr, Twyman, Adger, Thomas, 2008; Pettengell, 2010; Van Der Geest, 2004; Wongtschowski, Verburg, Waters-Bayer, 2009). Much of this work provides advice on appropriate technical interventions in specific landscapes (Van Der Geest, 2004) or utilizes a sophisticated macro-analysis of global policy and governance issues. Community

level leadership for climate change adaptation and transformation is often neglected. Pelling's work (2011) is significant in terms of socio-political governance and climate change because he questions the values that drive inequities. Pelling argues that climate adaptation is not technical, but the result of choices that have been made that prioritize economy over ecology and culture. According to his analysis, the problem is not climate change, but the power asymmetries in the world and the multiple risks this brings to well-being. He challenges the notion of resilience, as a bounce back to equilibrium, because maintaining the status quo in an unjust system may suppress the deeper changes that are necessary. Resilience thinking may silence the social learning that is really necessary so people don't only survive, but actually work to making systems more just. Pelling argues we have to go beyond resilience to think about transitions, a process of incremental change, and transformation which is more radical. This analysis forces us to think about socio-ecological resilience differently. Pelling's point is to achieve the deeper changes necessary, we need solidarity and collective actions that fundamentally change our consciousness in regards to our relationship with ecology.

More recently, Berkes and Ross (2013) have attempted to bring the streams of socio-ecological resilience and individual psychological resilience together. From the socio-ecological side they see systems thinking, unpredictable change, cycles of renewal and disturbance, and the important role of learning institutions. From developmental psychology and community psychology, they appreciate the value in recognizing people have strengths, that there are strengths in collective processes, and therefore it is important to reaffirm the values and behaviors that bond communities and cultures. This greater focus at the community level beyond the individual, and at a different scale then the global socio-ecological system, can also be informed by the third stream of literature.

2.1.3 Community Resilience As A Community Development/Development Studies Concept

The third stream of disciplinary literature related to community resilience is community development, and international development studies. Community development came to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s and has continued to be a powerful way for organizing for social change. Development studies, as an academic discipline, grew out of sociology and political science during the 1980s and 1990s and has now reached maturity (Fletcher, 1993). Both community development and development studies – one at the meso or group level and one stretching beyond to the macro level – have in recent years entered the discourse on community resilience.

2.1.3.1 Learning from community development. Within the community development literature, terms such as community organizing, people-centered and participatory development, community economic development and social action are common. These terms have roots in work such as the Antigonish Movement (Coady, 1945), Frierian Conscientization (Friere, 1970), Highlander (Gaventa & Horton, 1981), small is beautiful (Schumacher, 1973), Ujamaa (Nyerere, 1973), and organizing (Alinsky, 1971).

There are various theories and approaches within this literature on understanding community and community change (Welton, 1991). Bopp and Bopp (2001) for example, identify seven approaches to community development: liberation, therapeutic, issues organizing, community organization, economic development, cultural-spiritual, and ecological systems. Checkoway (1995) and Weil and Gamble (2002) distinguish slightly different lists of strategies for community change and practice. For Fletcher (1993) and Korten (1990), the various approaches can be put on a continuum from approaches that emphasize material-centred growth, to approaches that emphasize people-centered transformation. What is

common in all the approaches is that emphasis is the meso or group level. Neither the micro, individual level issues, nor the macro, societal level issues are the focus. The micro and macro level issues impact on community, but the meso level of community is the unit for focus and analysis. It is the issues, problems, and capacities at the group level and the process of change experienced and / or initiated by groups that demand attention. As I have articulated elsewhere:

> Community development is a process in which groups of people work together to understand and to transform themselves and change external factors that influence their lives, in order to achieve their vision of a healthy and sustainable future. The goal of community development is the continual strengthening and valuing of a people-centered process in order to enable individuals and groups to live in harmony with each other and the world. (Fletcher, 1993: 12)

In relation to community resilience, this stream of literature is significant because it offers much to the understanding of community processes and responses to change. Much literature in this stream addresses variations of a process that includes the following steps: identify problems, investigate human and material needs, locate resources and assets, analyze local and global power structures, explore options for change, make collective decisions and strategic plans based on problems/needs and resources/assets, implement interventions, monitor progress, reflect on successes and obstacles, and begin the process again from a new place.

Asset-based. The processes named above vary from a strong problem orientation to a relatively more recent asset focus (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). The asset focus is an empowering one as it encourages people to look at the assets or resources they have – whether those are physical, environmental, financial, social, - and look for opportunities for change based on those assets rather than beginning with a problem orientation. This asset orientation was taken forward by Department for International Development (DFID) with their influential sustainable livelihood framework. This approach is empowering and inspiring because it unleashes positive energy for change, rather than asking community people to always focus

their energy on naming, unpacking and analyzing problems, which can build a sense of negativity. Kretzman and McKnight (1993) focus on finding and mobilizing community assets. Their work is significant in making the connections to the concept of community resilience because it is their efforts that motivated individuals to focus on community development as a strength-based approach to change rather than just a problem-solving approach based on local resources that happened to be available. Mathie and Cunningham (2003, 2005, 2009) have also done extensive work in this area and developed mechanisms to apply this thinking to global south contexts.

Social Capital. A significant element connected to the literature on community development is social capital. Woolcock (1998) was one of the first researchers to write on the importance of social capital inclusive of trust, reciprocity, fairness, cooperation, and responding to situations using, community capacity, community vitality and community resilience. His work used a dominant Eurocentric lens, and saw social capital as purely transactional relationships; he had no space for power-within that influences relationship, but nevertheless his work had an important impact. Social capital, and the importance of groups, organizations, neighbourhoods and networks was popularized in Putnam's (2000) book, *Bowling Alone*. He describes the root of problems experienced in late twentieth century America being a result of the breakdown of community.

Social capital studies blossomed in the 2000s (Ledogar, Fleming, 2008; Lochner, Kawachi, Kennedy, 1999; McAslan, 2002; Mignone, O'Neil, 2005) as people looked at how the relations between people in communities, and nurturing those relations and groups, was a strength for change. Ideas grew with social capital becoming subdivided into bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Bonding social capital is what makes people identify with, and feel part of a community. Bridging social capital is the relationships between people and groups

within a community. Linking social capital is the relations between groups in one community with those in another community or at regional, national or international levels. In looking at social capital community planners also made the distinction between associations, membership groups, and institutions (more structured often hierarchical, technocratic or bureaucratic groups) that would support community change.

Agency. Also, important in this literature is a focus on agency: the initiative of individual community people and communities themselves to take action and engage in change. This community-driven approach shifts the decision making in community development from outsiders, 'experts', or government technocrats, to community people themselves. Community development is not just located in a community, or decided in consultation with a community, but is actually controlled by communities through their own power of agency. This participatory approach grew, particularly with practitioners on the ground, over the past 40 years based on the influential work of Chambers (1983), Pretty et al (1995), Uphoff (1986) and numerous others. It has been adopted, or some would say co-opted, by the World Bank (Bhatnagar & Williams, 1992) and others, but putting it into practice continues to be a challenge.

Based on my review of the community development literature, however, "community resilience" is a term that is used infrequently. One of the rare places where the term is used is in the publication, *The Community Resilience Manual*, in which Colussi (2000) takes a strong community economic development approach. In this Manual, developed in the context of work in rural communities in the North American context, Colussi (2000) provides 23 elements that are considered necessary for a resilient community. Breton (2001) uses the term *neighborhood resilience* to describe similar issues in more urban settings (still in a "developed world / global north" context). Stewart, Reid, Jackson, Buckles, Edgar, Mangham & Tilley (1996) also use

the term community resilience in their investigation of the responses of communities to the downturn in local economies (e.g. the closing of a fish plant or a manufacturing facility) that caused unemployment and changed the way people made their livelihoods. Others in the community development stream use the terms *community vitality* (Grigsby, 2001), *community capacity* (Jackson, Cleverly, Poland, Burman, Edwards, & Robertson, 2003), *sustainable communities* (Bopp & Bopp, 2001), and *healthy communities* (Wolff, 2003).

More recently authors such as Magis (2010) have begun to use the term community resilience. She builds on the entrenched community development ideas such as assets and social capital, and reemphasizes the importance of agency and the role communities must play in their own resilience. She makes the point that what is unique about resilience thinking is that people are living in times of change, unpredictability and surprise, and must be able to express their agency within that context. Magis extends the idea of resilience from just bouncing back, maintaining equilibrium, to the actual transformation of natural systems and community management systems. Her work also touches on the concept of thresholds and communities being pushed to thresholds where they may not be able to continue in their same form in the future, but can be pushed into another state of being.

Magis (2010) makes effort to distinguish community resilience from community capacity, and popular asset-based community development approaches. Although she highlights many similarities, she argues that the distinction is that community resilience focuses specifically and exclusively on community systems in the context of change whether in responding to, or attempting to influence social, environmental and economic change. Community capacity is a broader, more general community development approach.

Systems thinking for community resilience. Wilding (2011) wrote a highly accessible book on community resilience for the Carnegie Trust in the United Kingdom. The work

focused on the European context and work around transition towns, alternative energy, and sustainable livelihoods. It has a strong asset-based focus and extends community resilience thinking to systems. Wilding (2011: 27) states that:

> Community resilience builds both strength and flexibility. … civil society plays a vital role examining the values underpinning local visions of 'community resilience'… Assets (strengths-based) approaches are core to resilience building. … The disciplines of systems thinking and social capital underpin resilience thinking, stressing the importance of feedback (trust & learning), diversity (don't put all your eggs in one basket) and modularity (localized infrastructure) resilience [is] complex, dynamic, unpredictable and likely to confound 'command and control' mindsets.

He drew on extensive research and proposes that resilience is the opposite of efficiency, often one of the mantras of our modern world. Lietar in Wilding (2011: 21) argues:

> In general, a system's resilience is enhanced by more diversity and more connections, because there are more channels to fall back on in times of trouble or change. Efficiency, on the other hand, increases through streamlining, which usually means reducing diversity and connectivity… Because both are indispensable for long-term sustainability and health, the healthiest flow systems are those that maintain an optimal balance between these two opposing pulls".

Wilding (2011:59) also introduces a resilience compass for measuring the outcome of a community's resilience and describes 'break through' resilience across four dimensions of personal, cultural, economic and inter-community collaboration.

> Personal resilience is an active process of feeling in control of life, getting fit, and being positively engaged in community life. … Local economies can steward their own energy, water, money, housing, food and other resources. … Creativity, fun and a strong and inclusive sense of identity, belonging and place are at the heart of cultural resilience.

Common in many of these approaches is the emphasis on people-centered social action, understanding group power relations and an emphasis on agency of the community.

2.1.3.2 Learning From Development Studies. International Development Studies (IDS) is an interdisciplinary academic discipline that has informed the work in developing countries

for the past 50 years. IDS has focused on macro level change led by government and multilateral aid agencies, and has also always had a rich alternative tradition of promoting participatory, community level change, although implementation has not always lived up to the rhetoric. Since 2000 ideas of resilience and community resilience have become prominent in the IDS discourse. Unfortunately, the concept of resilience has evolved for the most part into a technical, apolitical programming approach.

Technical apolitical resilience? Bene et al (2012), for example, argue that in recent years resilience has become the new buzz word in development practice, and has replaced poverty, as the overarching concept. They do not see this as a good thing. Resilience is positive in that we look at systemic issues and change across scales, but it is problematic in their view, because it does not usually consider issues of power and agency. If one of the fundamental purposes of development is striving towards a just and equitable society, they argue, resilience on its own is lacking. They state resilience is actually dangerous because, "it could move us back to technical, apolitical approaches with social justice and transformative dimensions lost" (Bene et al, 2012: 14). The humanitarian news agency IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Network, 2012) agrees power, equity and agency are often left out of the current operationalizing of resilience and root causes are often neglected.

There is lots of evidence of this weakening of the resilience concept. The Montpellier Panel (2012) for example, emphasizes the need for a "bounce back" to previous growth for resilient markets, resilient agriculture, and resilient people. The panel's report emphasizes the political leadership needed for this return to a previous development trajectory, but does not question the fundamental underlying assumptions of this trajectory, and the fact that people were getting left behind as disparities in the world increase.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2013), as a multilateral technical agency, promotes resilient food systems and disaster risk reduction through governance, early warning, prevention, preparation and mitigation, but has limited consideration of community agency in systems.

Figure 2.3 Useful Technical but Apolitical Actions Suggested by FAO

Examples of Technologies, Practices & Approaches for Building Resilient Livelihoods		
Agriculture	**Livestock**	**Fisheries**
Crop diversification Appropriate crop selection (drought/saline/flood tolerant) Intercropping Crop breeding Conservation agriculture Adjustment of cropping calendars Seed systems Terracing Post-harvest management (storage, food drying, food processing) Livelihood diversification Crop insurance Integrated pest management Urban gardening	Proofing of storage facilities Livestock shelters Strategic animal fodder reserves Fodder conservation Resilient animal breeding Vaccination to reduce or prevent the spread of animal disease Grazing and pasture resource management Strengthening pest management systems to cope with threats Biosecurity in animal production systems Agro-silvopastoral systems	Implementation of the Code of Conduct for responsible fisheries Fisheries, aquaculture, vessel and infrastructure insurance Safety in the design, construction and equipment for fishing vessels Aquaculture biosecurity measures to reduce or prevent the spread of fish disease
Natural Resources Management		
Water	**Land**	**Forests**
Rainwater harvesting, conservation and storage to improve capture and utilization of rainfall Water reserves to buffer drought Efficient irrigation such as drip and furrow irrigation that use less water and reduce water loss Management of fragile catchment areas Capture of floods or recharge of groundwater for use in dry season	Restoration of degraded lands Land use and territorial planning Sustainable wetland management Land and soil management Field or network drainage to minimize flood impact Appropriate energy sources and technologies to reduce pressure on land Secure natural resource tenure rights	Integrated fire management Forest pests prevention Agro-forestry Afforestation/reforestation Preventive silviculture Prescribed burning Fire breaks Improved cook stoves and alternatives to wood energy to reduce deforestation

Source: Reproduced from FAO, 2013: 54.

Figure 2.3 reproduced above from FAO, provides examples of technologies and practices for building resilient livelihoods. It is a useful list, but is problematic because it does not deal with power or structural issues or the agency central to so many others conceptualizations of community resilience.

Frankenberger (2012), writing a piece for the United States Agency for International Development, spoke of technical capacity combined with great importance of political will to promote a healthy ecosystem. Much of his emphasis is on government capacity, and misses the idea of community, and community decision making. He promotes an exogenous approach to community resilience within a paradigm of social and economic growth. The importance of ecological systems concepts such as biodiversity and transformational change where community itself, as an entity worth sustaining, is left out in Frankenberger's work.

Crane (2010) challenges this thinking. He feels resilience is too mechanistic and materially-centered and privileges both the economic and the ecological spheres, without really considering social, cultural and community aspects. He argues that cultural resilience also needs to be considered or marginalized cultural groups will get pushed over their thresholds and could cease to exist. He poses the provocative question, "is it possible for the ecological and material components of a system to be resilient, while at the same time a cultural group within it is pushed over a threshold to a new state in which the most valued practices and beliefs become untenable, irrevocably transforming the culture itself (Crane, 2010: 19).

Crane (2010) supports an appreciation of biocultural values, ideology and world views into resilience thinking. These views are supported by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2010) that speaks of bio-cultural heritage, as an essential element of resilience that cannot be neglected. Through their program work they support the role of bio-cultural community protocols, asset and benefit sharing, free prior and informed

consent and improvements in value-chain work as parts of community resilience. Others who have shared their views include Pilgrim, Samson, Pretty (2009) who cautions us that a disconnect from nature can be harmful and we need community-driven pride in identity to nurture beliefs, meanings and worldviews. This form of resilience calls for a revitalization of culture and the connection to land.

Others, such as Gubbels (2011), agree with the need for good governance, but also put forward a mainly technical approach. While considering child malnutrition in the Sahel, he respects the changes communities can make for themselves, but his work privileges macro-level government, international NGO analysis that prescribes strategies that communities should be taught to use. Other big players in the development field are promoting resilience in their titles (i.e. IFRCRC, 2004; Hsu, Du Guerny, Marco, 2011 (for UNDP); World Bank, 2013), however, none of these has a real focus on community agency, or consider the analysis from a community development perspective.

Resilience of community systems within global systems. Looking at community resilience within the discourse of development studies forces us to consider community systems within global socio-political contexts. Bene, Wood, Newsham & Davies (2012) for example, argues we have to think about community and not just what a system has (such as in the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) sustainable development five capitals) but also what a system does (processes) and how they are influenced by power. He quotes Levine:

> Understanding adaptive capacity [resilience], therefore, requires that we also recognize the importance of intangible processes such as decision-making and governance, the fostering of innovation and experimentation, and the exploitation of new opportunities and the structure of institutions and entitlements. This means 'moving away from simply looking at what a system has that enables it to adapt, to recognizing what a system does that enables it to adapt' (Levine et al, 2011: 5 cited in Bene 2012: 28)

Bene et al's (2012:20) thorough literature review identified a number of characteristics of a resilient system:

> …diversity of groups performing different functions, effective decentralized government, acceptance of uncertainty and change, preparedness to live with uncertainties, build redundancies, non-equilibrium, continual learning, cross scalar and networks, community cohesion, community voice and ownership over natural resources, social and economic equity, social values, acknowledged structures (p.20)

His work suggests important learnings about strategies to protect, prevent, promote, and transform communities. He discusses the importance of understanding three ways to deal with change: absorptive coping, adaptive capacity, and transformative.

Wilson (2012) reminds us, however, that resilience thinking will not be easy to put into practice in the world of today. He makes a strong critique of global capitalism and cites many problems being experienced that are a result of human-made disturbances such as mismanaged ecology; the breakdown of socio-political, economic, and global systems; and the loss of cultural values. He emphasizes, social memory, transitions, and transitional corridors or pathways that people can make decisions within. On the issue of social memory, Wilson shows how community learning and tradition, if rediscovered, can contribute to community resilience. He states,

> Social memory implies that knowledge, experience and accumulated wisdom are passed on from generation to generation and from actor to actor within a community (and beyond). Any community system will be at its specific starting point in a transition precisely because of the history of decision-making trajectories preceding that starting point. … Human systems … are anticipatory. In these systems, social memory is a crucial transitional element and may lead to a learning and adjustment phase, based on past experience, that streamlines transition pathways (Wilson, 2012: 80).

His power analysis of the factors for and against the possibilities for community's own agency in regard to resilience are important, and sobering. The unstated connotation in Wilson's (2012) work that social memory is often negative in terms of communities being able to draw upon it to deal with the challenges of today and this may be disempowering. Many indigenous people would argue for a celebration and valuing of that social memory, as an end in itself, in harmony with their own world views.

In describing what he calls transitional corridors, resilience and community pathways, Wilson (2012) introduces the idea of communities occupying the space between weak and strong economic, social and environmental capital. Within this space, there is a pathway that a community moves through over time, and that has a survival threshold. Within the transitional corridor there can be some differences, but the community is able to make decisions within those parameters to deal with stresses and shocks and maintain the integrity of the community. He advocates for the importance of community agency, but demonstrates this agency has its limitations and structural lock-ins that are a form of invisible power that limit the parameters within which a community can maneuvered. He outlines macro structural influences within systems thinking and tradeoffs between social, economic and environmental capital.

Many critiques of resilience (Bene et al, 2012; Crane, 2010; Wilson, 2012) are turning away from the term resilience in favor of transitions or transformations. They acknowledge there has been a cooptation of resilience as a technical, apolitical term relegated to maintaining the status-quo. Their ideas of transformations resonate with what is written in the ecosystem literature about regime shifts and they advocate for the need, or inevitability, of this kind of a radical change in community and societal systems for well-being to be achieved. Bene et al (2012: 22), for example paraphrases O'Brien (2011)

> These shifts may include a combination of technological innovations, institutional reforms, behavioral shifts and cultural changes; they often involve the questioning of values, the challenging of assumptions, and the capacity to closely examine fixed beliefs, identities and stereotypes"

This comprehensive view of transformations, that are not only economic and political, but environmental, social, values, and worldview based, are inspiring and resonate with some of the endogenous development philosophical perspectives I have claimed for this work. It is important for community resilience to emphasize people's own agency to make better and more informed choices, based on their world views and analysis of the current context, and then to execute their own plans.

Bene et al's (2012) work challenges us to think about resilience within a particular framework. The framework is a matrix with short to long term objectives on one axis and the possible outcomes on another axis. The objectives are known as "3P-T" and include protection (policies and instruments to protect vulnerable people), prevention (polices or safety nets to reduce vulnerability to specific hazards), promotion (policies and interventions to enhance income, capabilities and resilience) and transformation (to address concerns of social justice and exclusion through promoting rights or redressing discrimination). The outcomes are known as "3D" and are on a continuum of resilience from stability (coping, rehabilitating), to flexibility (adapting, incremental adjustment), to change (transformational responses) Bene et al, 2012: TABLE 8.1). The continuum of resilience is particularly provocative because in it he identifies a range of good and bad resilience. This prescriptive and top down model starting at the macro level, raises issues to consider in exploring community resilience further.

2.1.4 Community Resilience in the African Context

The three streams of literature reviewed above emerge from distinct disciplinary perspectives. Those perspectives frame the literature on community resilience. In addition, a

growing body of work about and by African and indigenous peoples, knowledges, sciences and ways of being are re-emerging and finding their way into discourses related to community resilience. This scholarship provides unique perspectives on community resilience from the lived experiences of indigenous people in different parts of the African continent with variations based on gender, generations and personalities. In this section I focus on some of these contributions to the literature as a way of privileging an indigenous African perspective. I acknowledge there is great diversity within the African continent and with indigenous people around the world, and there is a risk of essentializing African and indigenous experience. One can perpetuate colonizing mindsets if one describes African or indigenous experience as a generalized "other" defined by their location as outside the mainstream of western research and its hegemony. However, because of the indigenous approach I bring to this work, and the fact that the focus of this research became an exploration of community resilience within one group, the Dagara community in Ghana, it is important to conceptualize community resilience with the African and indigenous focused academic literature. This focused review helped to identify the relevance of community resilience in a context differently than the disciplinary literature previously cited. This helped begin my own decolonizing approach – to privilege the African and indigenous literature on community resilience over the "other" main stream literature to honor the contextual legitimacy and relevance of the African and indigenous focused scholars.

2.1.4.1 Stories of Survival. The academic literature that conceptualizes and demonstrates the relevance of community resilience in the African and indigenous context comes from various perspectives. Many researchers are writing about resilience, community resilience, or coping strategies in the context of food security, disaster management and ecosystem change on the African continent. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR, 2006: 2) for example, is advocating for a paradigm shift in Africa from disaster

response to comprehensive disaster reduction. They argue that, "building community resilience requires joint commitment and concerted actions from NGOs working in different areas of development and humanitarian affairs". Olsson (1993) challenges the belief that environmental change is a disaster in Africa and shows that poverty is the ultimate cause of land degradation. He demonstrates how the interactions of different subsystems, both human and environmental, influence the resilience of communities in dryland socio-economic systems. Adams, Cekan and Sauerborn (1998: 263) do not use the term community resilience, but explain the importance of household coping strategies in rural West Africa. They state there is, "A growing realization that development efforts might be more sustainable and constructive if they were sensitive to the origins, dynamics and differential experience of rural adversity, and supportive of what communities and households do themselves to minimize risk and cope with crisis".

Adams, Cekan and Sauerborn's (1998: 265) work, based on independent research in different parts of West Africa, verifies the relevance of community resilience. Their work emphasizes both the inter and the intra-household dynamics that can critically influence the nature and consequences of coping. Successful coping is defined as "overcoming adversity without endangering long term objectives such as livelihood security". They go on to describe catalysts for coping such as droughts, crop infestation, civil unrest, structural adjustment programs and household issues such as indebtedness or illness that challenge a household or community – much like risk factors in the resilience literature. Adams, Cekan and Sauerborn (1998: 266) advise to "consider the type, severity, timing and duration of catalyst(s) involved". Their description of the exogenous and endogenous catalysts and strategies for coping with change, such as the power relations between gender and generations in a household, provide much inspiration for exploring the dynamics of community resilience in the African context.

Nel (2006: 103) writes in relation to community resilience from a frame of indigenous knowledge in South Africa: "Local communities, together with their knowledge systems, have always been adaptable, reshaping survival strategies and fostering social and environmental healthiness…the rich history of Africa reveals communities evolving and in flux, with an inherent strength to change and to face new circumstances".

He acknowledges what we can learn from African communities and their knowledges, rather than what we (as outsiders) might want to teach them. Based on their work in Tanzania, Enfors and Gordon (2007: 682) argue that dryland agro-ecosystems are primarily a social endeavor not an ecological system, and that resilience is eroding, and can be rebuilt, by looking at "human values, market forces and policy decisions". They see hope for improved community resilience in increasing local and global awareness of the problem, the availability of practical technical solutions, and the willingness for political action through dialogue and renewed local institutions for management.

Freudenberger, Carney and Lebbie (1997) explain the case of *tongo* – an indigenous conservation strategy in the Gambia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. *Tongo* is a resource management strategy that defines and enforces rules to seasonally regulate access to vegetation, fruit and palm trees, sacred forests, wildlife, fishing areas and even drinking water. *Tongo* was also used in resistance to colonial administration by establishing a cartel to increase the price of groundnuts. It is an example of an indigenous practice that supports community resilience.

These examples highlight both the adversity faced by communities and ecosystems on the African continent and the learning that can be gained by looking at how communities address these issues to build and maintain community resilience. Each of these examples locates rural African communities as groups struggling to survive in a harsh environment, yet with endogenous strategies and tools to manage in this situation.

Additional stories of survival contribute new perspectives. Bacho (2005), for example, alludes to a symbolic and mythic understanding of ethnicity and how this understanding combined with socio-economic and political pressures has led to conflicts over resources. His point is that livelihood issues are not environmental issues with technical solutions, but are related to historical and political processes. He argues that mutual distrust and low cooperative spirit can be a bigger blockage to community survival, and resilience, than the agro-ecological environment. His work has an interesting link to the political, psychological and ideological aspects of community resilience in the African and indigenous context. Apusigah (2002), Ntsoane (2005) and Masoga (2005) all provide insights risks, highlighting, colonialism, racism, discrimination, conflicted identity, and patriarchy. Ntosane (2005: 106) describes the challenges of working with African university students, who are detribalized and mentally colonized, and in getting them to appreciate and privilege their indigenousness. He sees this as priority in order to deal with the challenges on the African continent today and articulates the need to begin by, "recovering from the shock of colonialism, undergo a thorough mental decolonization, and (by) employing perspective from the pre-colonial past, rediscover a sense of direction in our present predicament". Masoga (2005: 29) articulates the challenge of identity during this time of dramatic change in the 21st century and outlines the need for Africans to "reconstruct their lives and the African continent so that we can contribute to the shaping of the global village". Masoga (2005: 22) is also asking Africans to "utilize accumulated indigenous knowledge to create a quality of life and a livable environment for both human and other forms of life". He uses the example of *diturpa*, a form of Africanized military band music, which helped people wrestle with their African identity in the face of apartheid challenges and colonial experiences and enabled communities to express resistance and resilience. Apusigah (2002) outlines how reconstruction efforts in Ghana failed to confront systemic forms of discrimination inherent in patriarchal culture and paternalistic development,

and argues for the privileging and supporting of women for change, moving from a deficit, problem-oriented model to a credit or strength-based model. This example demonstrates an African contextualized community resilience. Although not based on work in Africa, Fleming and Ledogar (2008: 7) describe a, "growing interest in resilience as a feature of entire communities and cultural groups". Their work with aboriginal communities describes resilience as an evolving concept that starts from a recognition of individual factors, adds a list of cultural factors such as spirituality, traditional language, and healing, and emphasizes perceived discrimination and historical trauma as part of the context of many aboriginal communities. They quote Healey's work (2006) as pointing the direction for conceptualizing community resilience for the future: [Community resilience is the] capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctness" (Fleming and Ledogar, 2008: 10).

2.1.4.2 A historical and holistic conceptualization of resilience. An indigenous African understanding of community resilience draws on the ecosystem definition of resilience and puts it in a context that is historical, political, ideological, cultural and psychological. It approaches a holistic understanding of community resilience that will be appropriate in the African context. Millar (2004) and Bagah (1995) advocate this holistic understanding as they describe the Dagara cosmovision that combines spirit, material and social worlds. Any conception of community resilience in the African context must not only acknowledge, but privilege this perspective. This stance is not to return to the past and indigenous ways as a kind of romanticism, but to rebuild community, and recreate ways of being, and responding to change, that are indigenous African that can co-exist with the challenges of the 21st century and go beyond the adoption of traditional agricultural or healing practices (Millar, 2004).

Researchers working in other parts of the world with people trying to maintain the best of indigenous and traditional ways argue for a similar perspective (Norberg-Hodge, 2009).

Lothe and Heggen (2003) remind us of the need for community resilience to be inclusive of aspects of individual resilience with their study of childhood experiences of famine in Ethiopia. Their findings reaffirm the importance of faith, hope and spirituality as protective factors in individual resilience that others have demonstrated (Algado et al, 1997; James, 2004; McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005). Lothe and Heggen (2003: 320) also extend the understanding of resilience when they talk about the particular importance of family bonds, personal history and connection to an ethnic group and native village – resilience is intricately linked with community: "Hope, religion, personal history and roots may be more important factors in the total concept of resilience in the Horn of Africa than what has been previously described in the resilience literature". Jones' work (2007: 127) with African-American children also highlights formal and informal kinship and spirituality as predictive factors for resilience. He specifically draws on the central African concept of *ntu* "which highlights the interrelatedness between the intrinsic and the extrinsic factors involved in one's ability to respond to the problems of daily living". *Ntu* is based on the principles of harmony, interconnectedness, authenticity and balance. Chandler and Lalonde (1998, 2004) who have done extensive work with First Nations communities in Canada speak of cultural continuity and cultural resilience as a resource for fostering healthy youth development and emphasize the need to build cultural resilience as an end in itself for the good of communities. Their work in First Nations communities showed that in communities with land claims, self-determination, control over education and health care, revitalization of indigenous languages and the existence of cultural facilities, rates of teen suicide were much lower (practically zero) than when compared to other First Nations communities. Chandler & Lalonde (1998: 192) conclude that, "communities that have taken

active steps to preserve and rehabilitate their own cultures are shown to be those in which youth suicide rates are dramatically lower". Their interpretation of this phenomenon aligned with cultural continuity and cultural resilience has much for African communities who suffer from the mental colonization described earlier.

Apusigah (2007: 1) writes about the need for endogenous development, and for African communities to "shape our own pathways in a critical manner" to deal with the challenges of today. She sees development from within drawing on indigenous knowledge essential for African communities to heal from and overcome the reality of being "culturally alienated and detribalized people". Apusigah (2006) also reconnects us with the gender dimension of an Africanized conceptualization of community resilience. She writes about the matri-force as the maternal value and spirit that keeps body and soul of family and community together in the African context and demonstrates how this value and its components and practices of preserving, sharing, renewing, recreating, and extending nature and culture is needed for sustainable development. Values, for her, are the critical element that has enabled rural African communities, through women, to be resilient for generations. Apusigah (2008) shares specifically the concept of *tullum* which she describes as the living wisdom Gurunsi and Dagara women possess for dealing with challenges. She articulates these challenges as stemming from domination, patriarchy, food insecurity and colonialism, yet describes how her foremothers contested domination and exclusion and used their own agency through thrift, savings and anticipating the future to deal with these challenges. She advocates for revitalizing *tullum* for food security, women's empowerment, values education and resource conservation. She hypothesized that *tullum* was the indigenous, gendered conception of community resilience appropriate for northern Ghana. (Personal conversations with Apusigah, 2008)

In contrast to the evolving mainstream literature on community resilience the perspective one gains from the privileged African and indigenous literature highlights discussions of cultural identity and power, and has a stronger element of resistance built into the community resilience conceptualization. This conceptualization will need to be considered in moving this study forward.

2.2 A Transdisciplinary Conceptual Framework of Community Resilience

In this section, I synthesize and locate synergies between the three streams of disciplinary literature that inform community resilience, and claim the spaces between and beyond these disciplines, including the indigenous African perspective, to articulate a transdisciplinary concept of community resilience. This framework is then utilized as a starting point for this research study of community resilience with people of Dagara communities in Ghana. From a transdisciplinary perspective, community resilience is concerned with three major dimensions: an environment of risk or disturbance, processes of and capacities for response, and successful outcomes. In the following sections, I discuss each of these dimensions, drawing from the literature identified. Prior to this, however, it is necessary to rearticulate the understanding of community used here. This is necessary because community is a major defining feature of the transdisciplinary perspective on *community* resilience, and often the concept is taken for granted, when it is of fundamental importance.

2.2.1 Sense of Community

In section 1.2.3.1, I presented a definition of community as "any groupings of human beings who enter into a sustained relationship with each other for the purpose of improving themselves and the world within which they live". A rural community in northern Nigeria fits

this definition, as does a social justice interest community in Halifax, Canada or the Iranian community in Great Britain. These communities are heterogeneous, and recognize there is some purpose or benefit for them to stay in association. Their *sense of community* is the defining characteristic, people *belong* to a community that they feel some affinity towards. There are conflicts and different perspectives within community, but when faced with a threat, a community is able to work through its differences (or put them on hold) and, to varying degrees, work together to respond to the threat (Bopp & Bopp, 2001; Peck, 1987).

Sense of community also means that there is some feeling of ownership for the community and people recognize their place in the community contributes to making the whole greater than the sum of its parts. There is also a belief in the agency of the community, that the community, as a collective entity, can rally together for mutual benefit and take actions to transform their world (Kulig, 2000).

This entity called community is dynamic, constantly changing and vibrating with life, which can either be considered by the community itself to be healthy energy or dysfunctional energy. As Peck (1987: 70) states, "there is no community [per se], only healthy and unhealthy communities". The expression of this community life is through the culture of the larger society of which the community is a part and is in constant interaction, both consciously and unconsciously, with the context.

Culture and spirituality influence the community and are in turn constructed by the community and the network of other communities and societal forces. Nothing happens that is not mediated through culture (Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2005). Context includes the social, political, administrative, environmental and economic spheres, and the historical and ideological spheres within which the community is embedded (Bopp and Bopp, 2001). Community cannot be separated from its context. It is this complex entity of community that

encounters a threat and responds—ideally with a positive outcome—that is the study of "community resilience."

Beyond community, culture, society, and context is the intimate relationship a community has with its ecosystem and all the other living beings within that ecosystem (Macy, 2000). For rural peoples, living off the land and sea, this relationship is quite visible. For other communities in urban landscapes, or as communities of interest or identity, the relationship is less direct. The relationship with our local, regional and global ecosystem is real for everyone, however, and must be considered (Berkes, 1999; Chapin, Carpenter, Kofinas, Folke, 2010). In these times of climate change it is especially true that all communities realize their resilience will be caught up in their relationship with their ecosystems, and resilience can only be achieved if those relationships are sustainable. Temporal and geographic scales are important to consider when thinking of the relationship with the ecosystem, including past, present and future and a scale from individuals to the planetary community (Holling, 2001).

Related to sense of community, and the relationship with the ecosystem, are the endowments a community has, or its natural and physical assets. *Endowments* (Sen, 1981) are the natural assets including natural resources, or the environment that the community has access to and some control over for sustaining their livelihoods. For rural communities, this is often considered fertile land for agriculture or forestry, the sea for fishing, or a resource such as iron ore for mining. For an urban community, this aspect may be proximity to a manufacturing plant, or can include issues such as air quality among others. Physical assets are also an important element of community resilience (Colussi, 2000). Particularly for those working in a disaster context, physical capacity is important for resilience. Housing for shelter, roads for transportation, and communications all enable a community to bounce back and respond to stresses in positive ways. Some authors highlight additional physical factors such

as well-lit streets, clean air, and boundaries (Breton, 2001). Information technology resources, are emphasized by some as essential infrastructural elements for resilience (Grigsby, 2001).

Physical assets, infrastructure, also needs to be considered in the context of communities of interest, or communities that are not confined within geographic boundaries. These communities will still possess some form of physical assets that will support the functioning of the community. This might include sites on social media as utilized by many global social movements or, a box of files, a mailing list, and a regular meeting place (Coover et al, 1985).

2.2.2 An Environment of Risk or Disturbance for Communities

Embedded in the definition of community given above is the notion that the community has either suffered a particular acute disturbance, and /or is living in an environment of chronic risk and vulnerability. From the streams of literature reviewed earlier it is possible to identify three categories of risk and disturbance.

2.2.2.1 Major acute disturbance. The first category is that of disturbance, or perturbation, as it is named in the natural resource literature (Berkes & Folke, 1998), or hazard, as it is articulated in the disaster literature (Paton & Johnson, 2001). An example of this is a phenomenon such as a flood or hurricane. Equally as relevant are human-made disturbances such as war, or the closing of a resource industry or a manufacturing plant in a community when it is the predominant employer, or the establishment of laws that institute marginalization in a community (such as the imposition of apartheid in South Africa), or the sudden cut of funding to homeless shelters (Clauss-Ehlers & Levi, 2002; Kulig, 1996; Sonn & Fisher, 1998; Wolff, 2003). The work of the Red Cross is often focused on issues of natural disasters or situations of conflict. Work with the Community Economic Development model of resilience

often looks at a crisis situations where a major employer shuts down in a rural community and how the community responds to that crisis (Colussi, 2000; Stehlik, 2000). Often the word 'shock' or 'disaster', is used to identify a situation where people envision a community responding in a resilient fashion. Work done by Folke et al. (2002:54) in preparation for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2002 was interesting in reframing the concept of 'shock' to "surprises and unpredictability".

One of the challenges in conceptualizing community resilience is how to identify the scale of different acute disturbances. A forest fire in an upper middle class neighbourhood in California may or may not be as significant a disturbance as having electricity supply shut off for four months at a rural community in Nigeria. It's important to contextualize this complexity in the study of resilience.

From an ecosystem perspective, a shock can entail a sudden regime shift within an ecosystem, where the combination of species, land and water shift so dramatically that they are no longer recognizable (Holling, 2001). He would argue the original ecosystem in this situation was not resilient, because it was unable to return to a state of balance. There are challenges in using this kind of an approach, however, as it is unclear where boundaries should be delineated between ecosystems. Similarly, from a development studies perspective a sudden policy announcement, concerning migration or refugees for example, can cause real upheaval in communities affected by that policy. These various acute disturbances therefore are one concern in the environment of risk.

2.2.2.2 Chronic oppressive conditions. Poverty; environmental degradation; oppression; alienation; marginalization due to race, ethnicity, or culture; neocolonialism; globalization; cultural genocide; erosion of livelihoods; violence; religious intolerance; and social exclusion due to gender, sexual orientation, or ability are all realities for communities in

both the majority and the minority world (Blackstock & Trocme, 2005; IFRCRC, 2004; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2005; Seccombe, 2002; Werner and Sanders, 1997). Researchers working with marginalized and excluded groups have focused on "successful adaptation to oppressive systems" as a definition of resilience (Sonn & Fisher, 1998: 458) and others have identified a chronic inhospitable environment for communities as being a major limiting factor to resilient communities (Wolff, 2003).

When oppressions are listed as in the sentence above, it can be overwhelming in community and they enter the tricky ground of ranking or comparing oppressions in order to make strategic choices. Community members need to communicate and engage with one another to maintain healthy community which demands a feeling of solidarity (i.e., my liberation is wrapped up in yours) and an understanding of power and how it is expressed. Issues of equity, justice, race and gender are major dimensions of power influencing individuals within communities and communities within societies. The kind of deep social transformation work that must be done in this area is challenging and often considered outside the scope of one community. Yet arguments are made in the literature that it is precisely within communities where efforts need to be made to initiate these changes (Bopp & Bopp, 2001). For example, Wolff (2003: 104) refers to one successful initiative from the United States and argues:

> Healthy communities is not just about projects … programs …. or policies. Healthy communities is about power. Unless we change the way power is distributed in this country, so that people in communities have the power to change the conditions of their lives … we will never have sustainable change.

Humanity in the 21st century must tackle the issue of disenfranchised people and communities and nations of the world (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2005). A process of conscientization as advocated originally by Friere (1970), may be one approach for doing this. Interrogating the privilege of the powerful and work at the societal, structural, and policy levels

are essential. However, work at these levels does not replace what needs to be done with communities to help them be resilient within their own context. This does not mean an acceptance of the larger issues as the status quo, but is suggested as a strategic direction—to get healthy oneself and gather strength, power, and resources as one strategizes to work on those bigger issues. Sonn and Fisher (1998: 467) describe how these integral processes were critical in the struggle against Apartheid and state, "the interdependence, positive attachments, and togetherness were influenced by what people had in common—Apartheid oppression".

Of significance here is the pervasive nature of oppression and powerlessness for many communities in the world. Chambers (1983), from a sustainable development stance, captures some of this in describing the deprivation trap. This "trap" of risk shows the intricately linked issues of poverty, isolation, powerlessness, physical weakness, and other factors that compromise community livelihoods. In their report to the World Conference on Disaster, Folke et al. (2002: 34) point out how the process of threats and chronic oppressions is a cumulative one, much like the risk chains described in the child development literature: "the process is a cumulative one, in which sequences of shocks and stresses punctuate the trends, and the inability to replenish coping resources propels a region and its people to increasing criticality".

Climate change, can be considered a chronic oppressive condition for some communities (Pettengell, 2010), as it is slow, but relentless unfolding increases peoples' vulnerability and they often feel unable to do anything to change the root cause.

2.2.2.3 Internal disturbances, fractures and loss of diversity. As noted above, communities are heterogeneous. Therefore, as well as dealing as a collective entity and negotiating through acute threats and chronic conditions external to the community, a major consideration for any community is disturbances within its own defined boundaries. Communities are made up of people. Disturbances within communities can thus manifest

themselves as stress or conflict between genders, race, ethnicity, generations, people of different sexual or political orientations, or clashing personalities. Activities to deal with outside threats can divide communities and cause fractures where power accumulates to one group and is taken away from another. Groups within communities can choose to deal with threats in a particular way, such as acculturation versus resistance, and this can damage other community capacities (Tse & Liew, 2004). Communities, when not threatened from outside, can become insular and lethargic and can then lose the ability to respond in the future. They can lose hope and the motivation for change. Communities can subscribe to a sense of lowest-common-denominator and be unsupportive of individual or group efforts within the community to transform (Bopp & Bopp, 2001). They can move towards 'homogeneity' and become more vulnerable because of their lack of diversity. These internal dynamics of community are critical to consider in understanding resilience. In the ecology field, biodiversity has been identified as a positive predictor of resilience: the greater the biodiversity, the greater the potential for resilience. These ideas are being applied to community systems as well (Adger, 2000).

2.2.2.4 Combined Risks. Both crisis situations and chronic situations need to be investigated if one truly wants to understand the dynamics of community resilience. There is a danger that dealing with a crisis situation in a certain way might alleviate immediate needs for a community, but if there are underlying chronic issues the same stressors that exacerbated a crisis before will likely reoccur and therefore dealing with the underlying issues is important (Kulig, 2000; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2005, Ungar, 2005). In disaster management literature, it has been demonstrated that it is the combination of a hazard (or environmental perturbation) *plus* human vulnerability (conditions of livelihood based on control and access to resources) that will lead to a disaster. Neither the disturbance alone nor the chronic conditions alone will lead to disaster. The realization arising from this finding is that a unique

set of chronic and crisis conditions will exist in each, and every community, and that communities are expected to respond. How a community responds will depend on both the severity and the duration of the stressful conditions. How well, how resiliently, the community responds depends on the environment of risks and endowments and will also be dependent on a set of capacities and processes. The purpose of the next section is to lay out the relationship among the processes and capacities known to influence resilience in a community.

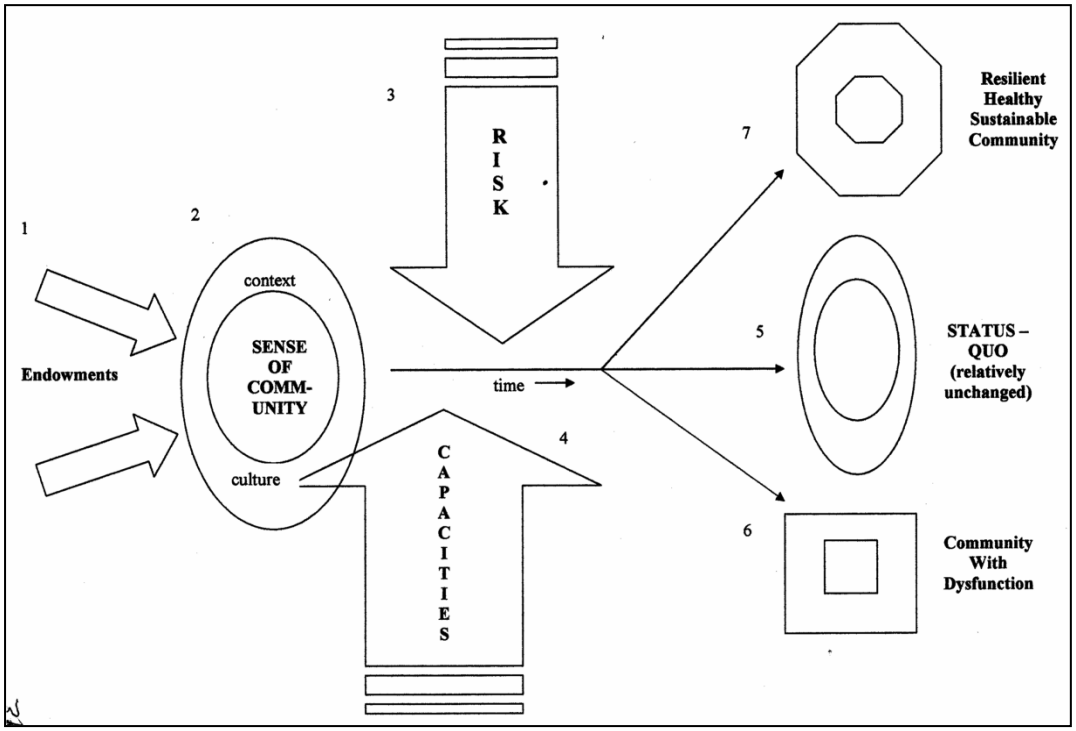
2.2.3 Processes of, and Capacities for Response

When a community is confronted with a disturbance it can either respond positively or negatively. How the community responds, what resources it draws upon, and the processes it uses to interact with the disturbance and its impacts, are capacities for community resilience.

Processes of Community Resilience. Elaborate models of different processes of resilience exist in all three streams of disciplinary literature, and each have their own strengths and weaknesses, and are linked to their own disciplinary discourse. Additional field research and interaction with communities who have experienced resilience is needed to ground a model of community resilience and make it trustworthy, as well as culturally and contextually relevant. Figure 2.4 is a model of community resilience that is a synthesis adapted from three models from work of Kulig (2000), Sonn & Fisher (1998) and Richardson et al. (1996).

In this model, the process of resilience is seen primarily as the community's interaction with the threat or risk in a way that moves it to a positive outcome (to be discussed in a later section below) wherein the community is more resilient, healthy, and sustainable relative to what it was before. The community's interaction processes draw on capacities within the community.

Figure 2.2 A Model of Community Resilience.



Source: Author, 2017 adapted from Kulig (2000), Richardson et al (1996) and Sonn & Fisher (1998).

Table 2.1 Key to Figure 2.4

1. A community has certain **endowments** (natural and physical capital), and is intimately tied to its ecosystem. The community is not really a community, however, until it identifies itself as such and has a "sense of community".
2. This **sense of community** is constantly being defined and redefined, or constructed, within the historical, ideological, social and political context and this process is mediated by the culture – which determines certain actions of the community and is in turn determined by the actions of the community.
3. When the community encounters a **risk or disturbance** (i.e. a natural disaster, a systemic oppression or internal conflict), its "life" as it moves through time, will be altered.
4. The community needs to call on certain capacities in order to respond to the risk or disturbance. These **capacities are brought to interact with the risk forces over time** to create a new state of being. The capacities can only act through the culture and context which is also dynamic. These capacities work at multiple levels within the community and between the community and the external system. These interactions may also affect the original natural and physical capacities of the community. The **process of interaction and negotiation will lead to** either 5, 6 or 7.
5. This is a situation where the community remains relatively **unchanged**.
6. This is a situation where the community experiences some long-term **dysfunction** lived through either by certain individuals within the community, between groups within the community and / or between the community and the larger environment. Capacities are also compromised so that in the future the community may be more likely to enter dysfunction again.
7. This is a situation where the **community actually grows**, develops and becomes stronger as a result of its interactions with adversity.

Source: Author, 2017.

This model would fit with Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000: 543), who state that "resilience refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity. Their argument is, to define resilience processes and factors as 'protective-stabilizing', 'protective enhancing', 'protective but reactive', 'vulnerable-stable' and 'vulnerable and reactive', in order to improve the validity and measurable impact of resilience work. These are noteworthy efforts that stem from a variable-based research approach and a quantitative statistical analysis of resilience in young people.

As Masten (2001) has argued, however, other models of resilience come from a different research tradition (longitudinal studies) and do not necessarily work to prioritize, limit, and isolate risk, moderating, and protective factors based on an assumption of particular trajectories of growth. Just as there are multiple pathways for individual growth, there are multiple pathways for community development and change; efforts to understand and describe the qualitative experiences of particular communities will provide insights that would not be gained from larger correlational studies that do not always account for the subtle realities of the dynamic influences of culture and context.

Sonn and Fisher's (1998) model uses a combined framework for understanding intercultural contact and responses to oppression and provides a different set of insights. Their work with cultural ethnic groups focuses on a process that sees groups coming into contact in a particular social, political, and historical context. These groups interact and respond to these chronic relationships through mediating structures in a variety of ways, and then develop certain outcomes for the community. Sonn and Fisher (1998: 460) label these outcomes as: negative (internalization, loss of culture, deculturation, dysfunction, pathology), recovery (revitalization, reconstruction and reinvention) and positive (resilience, consciousness and well-being). Their model also has much to offer the understanding of community resilience,

and conscientious effort will be needed to make the processes and outcomes uncomplicated to increase their usefulness in guiding community interventions to boost resilience in the field.

In the environmental study of complex adaptive systems, Folke et al. (2002: 20) contend, “The process includes an acceptance of uncertainty and change, the nurturing of diversity, and the knowledge and learning from dynamic interplay”. Their findings from observing biological communities undergo change is that adaptation takes place through chaos, and one system is likely to be replaced by a dramatic transformation in the entire system before a return to a state of harmony and balance. Not just an individual species adapts, but a totally different bio-ecological system emerges at a much more complex level. Important to this perspective is that the process of resilience, i.e., responding to adversity, can also build capacities that will enable a community to be more resilient in the future (Paton & Johnson, 2001). Sometimes these outcomes can be surprising and fulfill multiple objectives as found in Folke et al. (2002). They also make the argument that this process is ongoing and that adaptive management in social systems must recognize institutional learning, value collective memory, and continually revisit and change as the knowledge of each dynamic system advances. Building capacity to learn and adapt is essential to resilience. Folke et al. (2002: 8) also reason that trying to control the process of change can actually reduce the successful outcomes of a community and actually promote collapse rather than resilience. They emphasize this fact when they state that, “Management that uses rigid control mechanisms to harden the condition of social-ecological systems can erode resilience and promote collapse”.

Kulig’s (2000) influence on the model of community resilience processes presented here is that resilience can also be seen as proactive. This is valuable to consider, but may return the discourse on community resilience to more mainstream community development. Kulig (2000: 374) has described community resilience, as the “ability of a community to respond to

adversity and in doing so reach a higher level of functioning, such as increased health status". She has articulated a model of a community resilient process that starts with interactions as a collective unit. These interactions may be the responses to outside influences such as new ideas, an economic downturn, or a natural disaster such as a flood. The community then responds through expressions of a sense of community, which are dependent on a sense of belonging, leadership, community cohesiveness and togetherness and the existence of community networks.

Some descriptions of the community resilience process are simply stated as problem solving approaches, as responding to change (Grigsby, 2001), as *negotiation* or as *rights based approaches and entitlements*. To determine how these processes fit with the emerging understanding of community resilience requires an investigation of how a community, interacting through their culture with their surrounding context and with an environment of risk, negotiate between different players with different sources of power. It would not be a simple step-by-step process. Diverse entitlements will mean relationships within the community and between the community, and the "outside" will have to be worked through continuously. In the world of the 21st century, communities have the right, and need to be able to express the right, to be free from the chronic oppressive forces outlined above. Given the complexity of explicating community processes, however, there is value in focusing on building upon capacities that exist within a community first, and then recognizing the inherent political dimension of negotiation within each of these capabilities. There is also the opportunity for altering the environmental conditions that led to the crisis or stressor in the first place. This form of prevention, however, is challenging (IFRCRC, 2004). Other processes discussed in the literature are processes of coping, mitigation, adaptation, revitalization, transitions or transformations (Davies, 1996; FAO, 2013; Paton and Johnston, 2001; Wilson,

2012). All of these are important, and can be captured in the model as ways in which a community works through its environment of risk, drawing on its sense of community and endowments, and its multiple capacities, to achieve a particular outcome.

Holling's work (2001) deserves mention here because it introduces the sophisticated concepts of exploitation, accumulation, conservation, creative destruction and renewal as parts of the process of ecological resilience. These concepts are worthy, and will be utilized in the analysis and conclusions of this research.

2.2.3.2 Capacities for Community Resilience. Significant work related to community resilience uses the language of capacity or asset building (Colussi, 2000; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993; Mathie & Cunningham, 2009). I have chosen to use the language of capacities while recognizing it has drawbacks. *Capital*, a term frequently used (i.e., social capital, human capital, etc.) has a stagnant connotation to it and also carries the sense that it exists as a commodity, can be invested, and can be exploited. For some, it might also carry the hidden ideological baggage of capitalism and a neo-liberal, globalization agenda. Other terminology such as *abilities* or *characteristics* make one think of individual traits, which does capture the dynamic of agency, and hopefully makes it easy for people to see how these things can be learned. I have chosen the term *capacities* because I think it can refer to both individual and collective capacities, and as a resource available to be used, and as a process. As well, collective or community capacities, emphasizes the agency of the community.

Social Capacity. The social capacities of a community have significant influence on a community's resilience (Grigsby, 2001; Henderson, Benard, Sharp-Light, 1999; IFRCRC, 2004; Jackson et al., 2003, Putnam, 2000; Walsh, 2002). Social capacity, more commonly known as social capital, is the network of groups, organizations, and relationships within a

society. It has a vast and growing literature and is being used frequently both in the North and the South (Alwang, Siegel, Jorgensen, 2001; Putnam, 2000).

Extensive work on social capital/capacity looks at both the horizontal relationships in a society, and the vertical associations that can exist. Sources of social capacity include families, communities, firms, civil society, public sector, ethnicity, and gender. Social capacity is also seen as an enabling social and political environment and is valued as collective social networks (who people know) and norms of reciprocity. Social capacity enables information flows, collective action, and solidarity (Putnam, 2000). Often, however, analysis of social capacity is on a society-wide basis and I argue here for looking at it locally within a community context.

A valuable way to understand social capacity in the context of community resilience is to look first inside the community and then outside the community. Inside a community, groups work together to develop their potential and to respond to stresses and shocks. It is the effective collaboration of these groups that strengthen resilience (Folke et al., 2002). The engagement and empowerment of citizens to work together as acquaintances, as functional groups, or as kinship groups all enhance resilience (Breton, 2001, Stehlik, 2000; Wolff, 2003). The emotional connections between these groups are also important. Trust and solidarity develop between groups of people sharing tasks and this links to enhancement in human and psychological capital which is discussed below. These networks and relationships are sometimes referred to as stress moderators (Sonn & Fisher, 1998).

Development organizations that support livelihoods and the economic aspects of community are particularly important and often an appropriate entry point (Colussi, 2000; Stehlik, 2000; Wolff, 2003). Equally important are the networks and relationships within a community that value and honor diversity. Valuing and supporting equitable participation,

nurturing diversity, learning from its interplay, developing fairness, and eliminating workplace discrimination are all organizational aspects that support resilience (Bopp & Bopp, 2001; Folke et al., 2002; Grigsby, 2001; Paton & Johnson, 2001; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2005).

A healthy economy is also an essential aspect of social capacity. For example, this means employers from outside a community that employ people locally are networked within the community and respect what is going on. As well, they are both horizontally and vertically integrated to decrease the dependency of the community on the outside and maintain a positive relationship. Diversity of the economy also supports this (Colussi, 2000; Grigsby, 2001). Colussi (2000) also describes the importance of financial capital, positive image of the community in the media, justice, and safety.

In the context of community resilience, social capacity outside the community refers to networks of support and alliances, human services, the policy environment, and the nature of the economic environment. Networks of support and alliances are groups and organizations outside the community that are still morally supporting what may be going on inside the community. These alliances of support from outside the community are significant, and global social movements have benefited from these in recent years as did the world wide anti-apartheid campaigns for South Africa. The role of government human service organizations deserves special attention (Breton, 2001, Stehlik, 2000; Ungar, 2004). Wolff (2003) insists that the services they deliver must be based on issues that emerge in communities. Policies can set conditions that strengthen both social and physical capacities or they can be obstacles that limit a community's ability to respond. This is another significant issue for attention (Breton, 2001; Colussi, 2000).

Human and psychological capacities. There are numerous human and psychological factors that are seen as contributors to resilience. Much of the literature on individual resilience

in the disciplines of psychology focus extensively on these factors, and most authors agree that it is always a composite of a number of different factors that contribute to resilience (Luthar, Cicchetti, Becker, 2000). In the context of community resilience, it is not simply the sum of individual capacities that give the human and psychological capacity of the community. If ten individuals in a community have a certain capacity, for example, by working together and cooperating through community networks and relationships, they may inspire others to bring forth similar or complimentary capacities and will be able to achieve much more than the original ten individuals could achieve on their own. From work in Trinidad, Desoran (2000) discovered cultivating psychological capacity and a new consciousness among both dominant and non-dominant groups helped to build a critical mass that radiated hope and inspired transformative change.

One of these capabilities is the issue of resistance, or challenging authority, which is reflected in the individual literature (Ungar, 2004). The argument is made that for many communities, a mobilizing and strengthening factor to their ability to respond is a sense of resistance and a desire to fight oppressive or dominating forces (Brown, 2000; Kulig, 2000; Sonn & Fisher, 1998; Stehlik, 2000). Efforts at problem solving and conflict resolution are also seen as significant elements of human and psychological capital. Collective problem solving is a skill set necessary for community resilience (Paton & Johnson, 2001) and an essential one in traditional community development approaches to change.

Human capacities in conflict management and resolution are essential for community resilience. Communities are not homogeneous and during times of stress (whether acute or chronic) communities must be able to draw on processes for resolving disagreements and more serious conflicts (Folke et al., 2002; Kulig, 2000; Wolff, 2003). As Peck (1987) states, a community cannot be resilient or healthy unless it can resolve conflicts.

Discipline and commitment to community change are also important, as are autonomy, independence, and creativity in a community pursuing wellness in response to surprising and unpredictable challenges. Discipline is needed to ensure collective actions are rigorously followed and ensure effectiveness. Independence is essential as it can foster leadership and develop role models of change. Autonomy, or self-determination is the factor that shows the greatest enhancer of resilience in some groups (Blackstock, 2005) and inspires the most vital communities (Grigsby, 2001). Creativity demands equal attention.

Focusing on these elements of human capacity in no way detracts from the importance given across all the literature to competence and leadership. The notion of competence is inclusive of both general and specialized knowledge and skills that need to be available for a community to bounce back from a particular shock or stressors. The availability or access to this knowledge and skill is important and communities appear to be more resilient where these skills are shared freely and openly, but also in a way that supports the livelihoods of community members.

> "We should build knowledge, incentives, and learning capabilities into institutions and organizations for managing the capacity of local, regional and global ecosystems to sustain human well-being in the face of complexity and change." (Folke et al., 2002: 16)

From a psychological standpoint, issues of self-confidence, efficacy, courage, and humor are often raised as contributors to individual resilience. This is also true at a community level.

Spiritual capacity. There is something beyond human and psychological capacity that deserves attention in any conceptual model of community resilience. In some cases this capacity is referred to as community spirit, the critical mass of factors that invigorates a community (Richardson, 1996). In other cases, traditional knowledge, beliefs, and practices

are respected for the unique insights and energy they can provide to communities (Folke et al., 2002), and in others, reference is made to mutual values and beliefs as being at the heart of community (Wolff, 2003). Spiritual capital is a dimension of community resilience that is getting more attention and recognition (Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, 2002; Desoran, 2000; do Rozario, 1997; Masten, 2001, Sonn & Fisher, 1998; Townsend, 1997; Wolff, 2003). In much work from an African and indigenous perspective, the spiritual sphere holds a prominent place in peoples' world views (Mbiti, 1969; Millar, 2012).

Specific community resilience studies (Algado et al., 1997; Thibeault, 2002; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2003) have shown that spirituality (a process of self-reflection, belief in metaphysical energy or a higher power), had a significant positive affect on the response of communities to threatening circumstances. In much of these authors' work with First Nations groups and environmental organizations, a connection to the "power" of nature is anecdotally reported as being a major contributor to resilience. Some authors disagree with this "divine" view of nature (Ungar, 2003), suggesting instead a connection with place and successfully negotiating challenges in local geography is important. Given the multiple references to spiritual capacity it deserves further attention in any field exploration of community resilience.

2.2.4 Outcomes of Community Processes of Response

In this conceptual framework, the environment of risk and disturbance has been discussed, as has the processes and capacities for response. Resilience is not expressed, however, unless there is a positive outcome. How is this determined? Can we even identify communities that have become stronger, healthier, more sustainable, and more resilient or communities that have fractured and become weaker, dysfunctional and more vulnerable? Is there benefit in labelling communities in this way? Does success, or a positive outcome, at one point of time predict future outcomes? These are all complex and contested issues. Seeing

community resilience only as a process, however, can be problematic and indicators or criteria for discerning what constitutes a positive resilient outcome of a response or adaptation process is important to this study.

From a systems viewpoint, and the extensive work on socio-ecological resilience, outcomes are never conclusive, but only a moment in time and space along a continuous cycle of change (Holling, 2001; Holling and Gunderson, 2000). Authors of child development literature, however, discuss outcomes and measurement in terms of the "normal trajectory" of growth. Given some of the arguments I made earlier in this paper, such a perspective does not translate well to community resilience. Kulig (2000) speaks of the higher functioning of community, yet this does not provide sufficient knowledge to understand resilience as an outcome. There are extensive discussions in the community health literature on what it means to be a "healthy" community. For example, balanced, stable, resolving a particular problem, are all ways to articulate well-being of a community.

Sonn and Fisher (1998) encourage the achievement of positive outcomes (e.g., resilience and wellbeing) by contrasting them with negative outcomes (e.g., internalization, dysfunction), and recovery outcomes (e.g., revitalization, reconstruction). Richardson et al. (1996) describe a resilient outcome as one that makes the community stronger than when before the disruption occurred. Bopp and Bopp (2001) propose 16 principles for recreating the world. Their principles include justice and interconnectedness and emphasize participation, spirit, and healing. In a powerful way they articulate what it means for a community to demonstrate resilience in the face of crisis and oppression. For them, a positive outcome, is to move towards the achievement of these stated principles.

Literature on quality of life, cultural revitalization, and resistance also provide guidance on what successful community outcomes might look like. Some of these empowering

orientations are in direct contrast to others who believe a successful community fits into the system as it exists. This issue of structural change can generate much debate because it forces people to think about power. Bene (2012), Crane (2010), Pelling (2011) and Wilson (2012), challenge us to consider this issue of structural and systemic transformations, not just resilience. In contrast, one element that is important and raises little controversy is that capacity-building takes place. Community members gaining more skills and knowledge can certainly add to community resilience. Which particular knowledge and skill provides this additionality to resilience, however, should probably be left to communities themselves.

Finally, we must consider sustainability. Some authors insist that more sustainable communities must go hand in hand with resilient communities. However, it is also important to realize that there is a temporal nature to community resilience. The ability to respond cannot just be confined to short term recovery, but must have a longer-term view (Kulig, 2000). From a sustainable development perspective it is essential to recognize that:

> Resilience focuses on variables that underlie the capacity of social-ecological systems to provide ecosystem services, whereas other indicators tend to concentrate on the current state of the system or service. Management that monitors, clarifies and redirects underlying, fundamental variables may succeed in building resilience, and thereby adaptive capacity. (Folke et al., 2002: 44)

One must also recognize that the resilience which can change a community might be identified as resilience at one specific time in one particular set of circumstances, then as times change, so do the circumstances; therefore, the set of capacities to respond will also be different. Resilience is shaped by the times.

These perplexing issues related to the outcomes of community resilience processes will inform the exploration, research, and analysis undertaken with Dagara communities. For the purposes of the research, outcomes are proposed as one of the following three scenarios:

- Resilient Community: Positive, community responds in a way that improves the well-being of the community; or Recovery, community revitalizes itself so people can regain a good quality of life.
- Status Quo: Community Unchanged: Protection, the community protects itself and its inhabitants as much as possible from suffering harm; or Vulnerable, the community attempts to respond in a way so the community and its inhabitants do not become more vulnerable.
- Dysfunctional Community: The community and its members fall into dysfunction, pathology, and experience a loss of culture and community.

2.2.5 Insights and Limitations.

In preparation for the research field work, this review of the literature expose several limitations in constructing a conceptual framework for community resilience. First, there is a Eurocentric orientation to much of the resilience literature. Not only is the literature produced, consumed, and based on research conducted primarily in countries of the minority world, but there is an unexpressed ontological framework that has gone uncontested. There is a great bias, especially in the psychologically-rooted literature, towards individual measures of wellness or pathology as opposed to the holistic or collective beliefs about wellness, which are much more common in other parts of the world. There is also a judgmental nature to much of the work, as opposed to a compassionate tone, that also raises particular biases. Individuals, systemic structures, or organizational systems are often blamed for the risks or disturbances, with little energy for compassion or mercy shown for those who suffer as a result. As well there is a lack of acceptance for the diversity of conditions experienced by different peoples in the world leading to devaluation of the role of values in certain world views.

Cultural relativism can be as problematic as a particular ethnocentric view. Discerning the truth of particular pathways to resilience for communities will ultimately lead to moralistic and value-laden territory. Accepting multiple truths is important, if we want to do justice to our existence as human beings. We cannot avoid discussions of values and universal values, and should explore relevant concepts such as meta patterns, implicate order, or spiritual truths. This discussion is relevant because the discourse on community resilience has "truth" intimately bound up with culture and context, which has to take a prominent place in the dialogue.

As described earlier some of the strong roots of the conceptualization of resilience are in child development. Ingrained in child development is a belief in a stage-by-stage pattern of 'normal' growth. In international development studies, there have been models depicting stages of economic growth as well (Rostow, 1960). These have been rejected in international development discourse. Vestiges of modernization and neo-colonialism remain, and globalization can be interpreted as a model that assumes a predetermined, appropriate path to development. Within development studies, authors overwhelmingly speak of self-defined development and unpredictable transformative change. It is ironic that resilience is entering discussions in international development discourse as a new strategy for change when there is little acknowledgement of the roots of the concept and some of its potentially negative baggage.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of societal forces, structural deficiencies, policy-related barriers, and obstacles to community well-being. It is important that these deficiencies are not just acknowledged, but that changing the structures becomes one of the priorities of our society. As Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2005) articulate and Secoombe (2002) demands, "changing the odds—not just beating the odds" is necessary. However, there is a danger in this approach in that it can cause communities to focus solely on the negative oppressive forces rather than nurturing the positive energy for change.

Resistance to disturbances from outside can be one positive form of change that can arise from a structural analysis, but it is culturally dependent and not appropriate to all world views. Also, a focus on the bigger issues of social justice carries the risk of disempowering communities if their new insights from doing a structural analysis become overwhelming and stifle their motivation for action and change. My personal experience has revealed the reality of both of these dangers in doing such analysis in communities. The power and uniqueness of the *community* resilience concept could be lost and the energy of the strength-based orientation could be dissipated if too much focus is put on transforming these pervasive societal structures. Yet, this transformation needs to occur. Communities also need to build their strategic resources to encourage this transformation by expressing their own resilience in the short term and confronting immediate problems directly. They can also build community resources and capacities that enhance social, just communities that can grow and become sustainable and thus, eventually replace the existing social order.

2.2.6 Summary: Proposing a Transdisciplinary Definition and Conceptual Framework.

In Figure 2.4, the dimensions of the community resilience framework drawn from the three streams of disciplinary literature and the indigenous African perspective are integrated into a model of community resilience. A detailed synopsis of the elements of this framework is provided in Appendix A. Additionally from the literature the following propositions for community resilience are offered as a starting point for further dialogue about community resilience.

- Community Resilience is the ability of a community to respond to an acute crisis and / or chronic stress in its environment in a positive way through processes that will

enhance its ability to respond positively in the future by (i) altering the environmental conditions that led to the crisis / stress, (ii) negotiating for change and support with / from the environment, and by (iii) building its own assets, capacities, and competencies.

- Communities are intimately tied to their ecological environments and need to respond to crises and stressors in ways that are sustainable.
- The environment the community interacts with is not only an ecological environment, but also a historical, political, economic, and ideological environment. This context can provide assets and capital for the community or it can provide risks and danger. All interaction between the community and the environment is mediated by a set of ever-changing values and practices which is the culture of the community.
- A community is a gathering of people that are bound together in some way, who relate to their environment as a collective entity (at least some of the time), and move through time and respond to changes in either a positive or a negative way. Their responses have social, economic, physical, human, psychological, and spiritual components.
- A community that faces an acute crisis and / or chronic stress and responds in a way that is constructive and enhances its ability to respond positively in the future is considered resilient. As such, community resilience is also the outcome of a process of responding to negative environmental influences in a positive way.