

A critical review of South African child and youth resilience studies, 2009-2017

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In contexts of high levels of structural disadvantage, such as South Africa, resilience among children and youth becomes increasingly important to buffer children and youth from the negative effects of adversity. This article reports on a systematic review of research conducted in South Africa over the period 2009 to 2017 on the resilience of children and youth (ages 0 to 24) from the perspectives of young people themselves. It serves as a follow-up and refinement of an earlier publication in 2010. A total of 61 journal articles are reviewed. Four categories of social-ecological resilience-enablers emerge from these study, viz. personal, relational, structural and spiritual/cultural. Most of the resilience-enablers identified in these studies are in the personal and relational domains. Various reasons for this finding are discussed, and emerging recommendations for service professionals (particularly social worker and educational psychologists) and youth resilience researchers are advanced.

Keywords: resilience; social ecological; protective resources; young people; systematic review; South Africa

1. Introduction

Research internationally highlights the vulnerability of youth (France, 2016), with high rates of unemployment following the global economic crisis of 2007. Children, similarly, face high levels of adversity, particularly in war-torn regions of the world (Cummings, Merrilees, Taylor, & Mondri, 2016) and through child trafficking (West, 2016). Children and youth in South Africa, also, are highly vulnerable. In 2017, South African youth (aged 15-24) had the highest rate of youth unemployment globally – 57.4% (World Data Bank, 2018b). Child poverty in South Africa, while halved over the period 2003 to 2014, remains at 30% – almost a third of children are unable to afford a minimum balanced diet (Hall & Budlender, 2016). Large numbers of South African children are orphans – in 2014, 13% of children were single orphans and a further 3% were double orphans (Hall & Sambu, 2016).

The capacity of South Africa to deal effectively with these challenges is hampered by the country's socioeconomic profile. In 2017, children (ages 0-14) made up about a third of the South African population and youth (ages 15-34) an additional third (StatsSA, 2017a). With the high youth unemployment rate, this means that a large proportion of the population is unable to contribute financially to their households. These young people require financial support from adults and, in many cases, the state. Furthermore, South Africa has exceptionally high levels of income inequality, evidenced by the 2014 Gini coefficient of 63.0% – the highest inequality globally from 2011 to 2017 (World Data Bank, 2018a). Together, these data suggest an imbalance between need and supply: there is a great need for support among a majority of the population, but inadequate resources available to meet this need. Consequently, there is great concern about the well-being and development of South African children and youth.

In such conditions, an interest emerges in how some children and youth manage to develop normatively or demonstrate better-than-expected competence – in short, to do well. Researchers are curious to understand how some young people navigate through these adversities and establish themselves as young adults, in education, employment and family life. This capacity to do well, despite adverse conditions, is referred to as 'resilience' (Theron & Theron, 2010), and the processes and/or resources that enable resilient outcomes are termed 'resilience-enablers'. Van Breda (2018a: 4) thus defines resilience as: "The multilevel processes that systems engage in to obtain better-than-expected outcomes in the face or wake of adversity". This definition supports our adoption of a social ecological approach to resilience. This approach, which views resilience of individuals as emanating from a range of systems in the individual's social environment, is favoured by authoritative resilience scholars (Cicchetti, 2013; Masten, 2018; Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013; Ungar, 2012).

Increasingly, researchers are interested not only in understanding the resilience processes that facilitate better life outcomes, but also in translating this understanding into practice to improve people's lives (Masten, 2017). There is thus a growing concern among resilience researchers to generate insights that are relevant to service professionals, such as social workers and educational psychologists, equipping them with knowledge that can be used to mobilise children and youth's resilience processes in adverse contexts.

In 2010, Theron and Theron systematically reviewed South African research on youth resilience over the period 1990 to 2008. Their review of 23 peer-reviewed journal articles identified resilience processes, relevant to South African young people, located in the self, family, community and culture. They also found that few studies located resilience at the intersection between youth and their social environments and that studies paid little attention to the cultural expressions of resilience.

The aim of this paper is to update Theron and Theron's (2010) review, by analysing South African research published in the nine years from 2009 to 2017. Our focus is on the views of vulnerable children and youth (aged 0 to 24 years) regarding what enables them to obtain better-than-expected outcomes in the face or wake of adversity. In addition, and in response to the transformational agenda of resilience work (Masten, 2017), we aim to extend the focus of the original review by distilling implications for service professionals, particularly our own practice professions of social work and educational psychology.

2. Resilience theory and practice

Resilience theory emerges as a response to the observation that, despite adverse conditions, where many people experience a deterioration in psychosocial functioning, some individuals manage to recover or maintain a 'good' level of functioning. It asks what it is about those individuals (or indeed any other system) that enables them to recover, when others do not. Thus Masten (2014b: 10) defines resilience as "The capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development". Here the three elements of resilience theory are seen: adverse conditions, successful adaptation and capacity or processes (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

Along with the growing interest in resilience processes, there is an emerging critique of resilience. Authors like Garrett (2016), Harrison (2013) and Joseph (2013) are concerned about the highly individualising approach of much resilience research, which internalises resilience processes. They express concern that this makes individuals responsible for their well-being, thus potentially blaming those who do not cope and exonerating the macro system of society from its responsibility to deal with adverse social conditions. For example, it can be argued that studying the resilience of

a child growing up in poverty implies that the child is responsible for dealing with the effects of the macro structural forces that impinge on her or his life, and diverts attention away from these forces, instead of critiquing and dealing with them. This masking of structural social dynamics at the expense of the individual has led some authors to argue that resilience theory has been co-opted by neo-liberalism (Garrett, 2016; Joseph, 2013), thereby absolving the state and society of its responsibility.

There has in recent years, however, been a shift in thinking among many resilience researchers in light of such critiques (Van Breda, 2018a). Ungar (2012), for example, has shown that the social ecology explains more about individuals' resilient outcomes than internal factors. He also notes that many of the resilience processes previously constructed as individual are, in fact, relational or social. Some authors (Van Breda & Dickens, 2017) have drawn on the person-in-environment framework to argue that resilience processes lie primarily in the interactions between people and their social environments, and others have emphasised resilience as a complex interplay between genetic, psychological, relational and environmental factors (Liu, Reed, & Girard, 2017; Masten, 2007; Rutter, 2007). In addition, some authors (Hart et al., 2016) have given considerable attention to resilience as a social justice issue, so as not just to 'overcome the odds' but also to 'change the odds'. There is, in short, a growing movement in resilience research away from individualising resilience to recognising the highly interactional nature of resilience within the social environment.

This concern for the interactional and environment factors that enable resilience has, in addition, led to growing interest in the application of resilience processes by service professionals. To date, resilience work has followed a transformational agenda which has included translating empirical evidence into practitioner guidelines and/or intervention programmes (Masten, 2014b). For example, South African researchers drew on local understandings of youth resilience to develop the Khazimula intervention (Theron, 2018). This intervention was taken up by service providers, teachers, and youth leaders across South Africa and used to champion the resilience of young people challenged by structural disadvantage (Theron, 2017b).

Whilst the transformational agenda is important, the usefulness of transforming evidence into resilience-focused interventions can be hampered when the demand for interventions exceeds the supply. For example, in South Africa (as in other economically-developing contexts) there are too few service professionals to adequately serve the large numbers of children and youth who are vulnerable. This curtails the capacity and opportunity to implement evidence-informed interventions (Theron & Theron, 2014). Moreover, resilience-enabling interventions developed in the Global North do not necessarily translate well into the African context due to culture differences. Similarly, given the dynamism of the resilience process, interventions developed in a

rural Global South context will not necessarily be equally effective in urban Global South contexts. One mitigating response to the aforementioned is to acquaint service professionals with broad evidence-informed pathways of child and youth resilience. These professionals can be encouraged to use this knowledge, in collaboration with the communities they serve, to effect everyday changes (such as encouragement of warm caregiving) that are likely to bolster child and youth resilience (Theron, 2016a).

3. Methodology

The research question informing our systematic literature review was: *From 2009-2017, what do South African children and youth (aged 0-24) say enables them to achieve better-than-expected outcomes in the face or wake of adversity?*

We conducted a systematic literature search of South African resilience research over the period 2009 to 2017 (see Fig. 1). We considered only academic journal articles, because we knew there was a large body of such literature and wanted to draw only on peer-reviewed work.

Two sources of literature were searched: (1) several electronic databases, viz. EBSCOHost's Academic Search Complete, Africa-Wide Information, Family & Society Studies Worldwide, Humanities Source and PsycARTICLES; Gale's Academic Onefile and Psychological Collection; Oxford Journals Online; Project Muse; SAePublications (a collection of South African peer-reviewed journals); Sage Journals Online; and ScienceDirect; and (2) a list of 274 South African journals accredited by the national Department of Higher Education and Training.

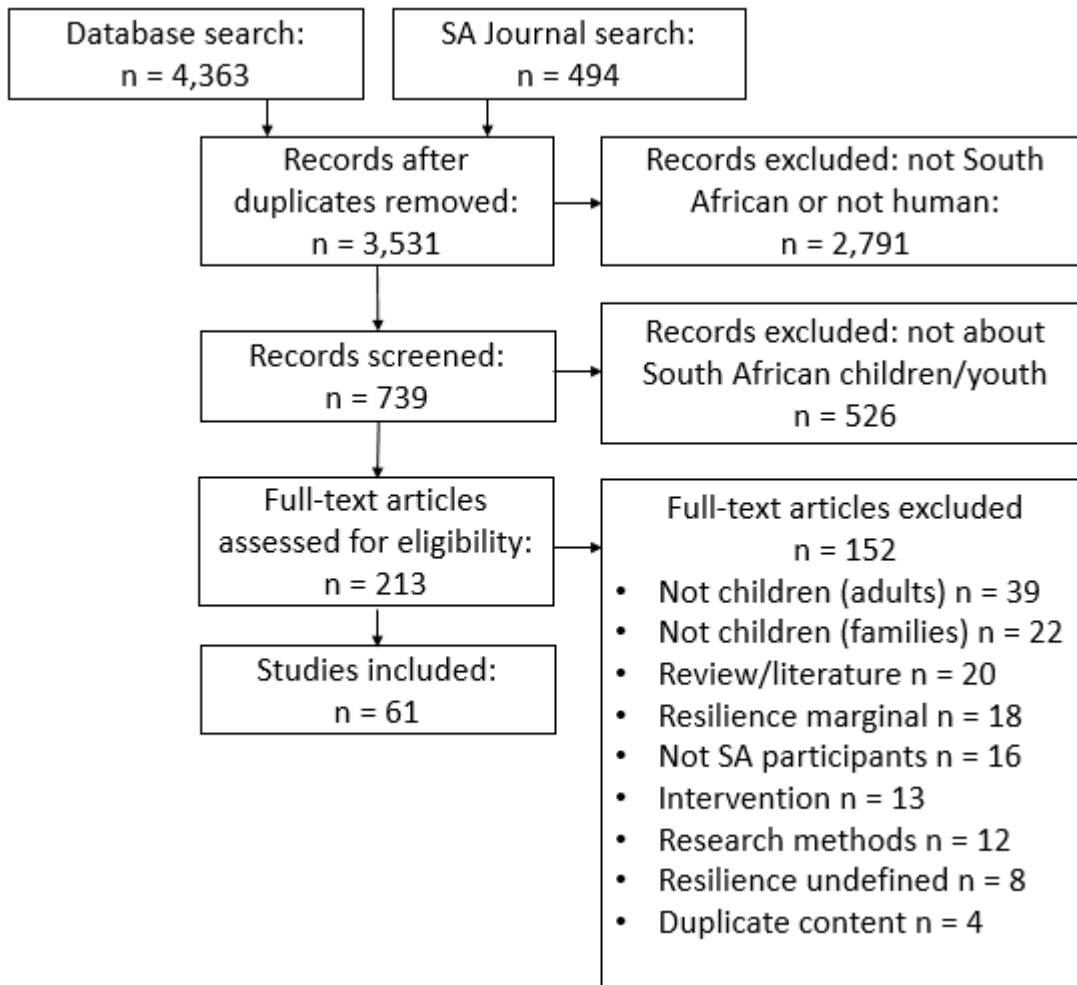


Fig. 1. Systematic review process

The first source was searched for ‘resilien*’ and ‘South Africa’ in the title, keywords and abstract (though some databases also included full text), and a publication date specifier (2009-2017). The second source was searched through a manual inspection of tables of contents. Articles were included if they contained the word ‘resilien*’ (i.e. resilient, resilience, resiliency) anywhere in the title, keywords or abstract and concerned humans (rather than machines, buildings, animals, climate, etc.). This search yielded 4,857 articles: 4,363 from the first source and 494 from the second.

The abstracts of these articles were screened to remove duplicates and articles that did not address the resilience of human beings. This reduced the collection to 739 texts written by or about South Africans on the resilience of humans, which were loaded into EndNote (a digital library).

These were further filtered using EndNote search tools to include only those with ‘resilien*’ and ‘child*’, ‘youth’, ‘young’ or ‘adolescen*’ in the title or abstract. This reduced the collection to 213 texts.

We scrutinised the full text of each of these articles to filter against the following criteria, viz. that the text must:

1. Define resilience social ecologically, i.e. it must recognize, explicitly or implicitly, that there are social determinants of resilience, even if this is not a major focus of the definition.
2. Provide evidence that there is socio-structural, trauma-based or biopsychosocial adversity among the participants, even if this is implied rather than measured or assessed.
3. Provide descriptors or measures of positive or better-than-expected functional outcomes, even if only implied.
4. Provide empirical, child- or youth-generated descriptors or measures of resilience-enablers (i.e. protective resources or processes that enable better-than-expected outcomes).
5. Study South African children (aged 0-18) and youth (aged 15 to 24) (van Rensburg, Theron, & Rothmann, 2015). If the study also includes older adults, at least half of the participants must be in the 0 to 24 age group.
6. Not be an intervention study, e.g. an evaluation of a resilience-building programme, or a systematic review of literature or synthesis of already-published studies.
7. Not present the same study presented in another publication without adding new insights about resilience-enablers.

As shown in Figure 1, the main reasons for excluding articles was that participants were not South African children or youth. Other articles were not empirical (e.g., they focused on intervention or research methodology). No filtering was done on methodological design, thus the review includes qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies. This round of detailed screening resulted in a final collection of 61 texts (see Table 1).

We scrutinised the articles to identify resilience-enablers that were linked to better-than-expected outcomes. Following authoritative resilience researchers' preference for social ecological (or systemic) approaches to resilience (e.g., Masten, 2001, 2014a, 2018; Rutter, 2012, 2013; Ungar, 2011, 2012, 2018), these were grouped with the social-ecological perspective in mind, resulting in four domains of resilience, ordered from micro to macro: personal, relational, structural and spiritual/cultural. Our interpretation of the data was informed by the frequency with which resilience-enablers were reported, in line with a content analysis approach to qualitative data (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013).

Following Saldaña (2009), we worked collaboratively throughout the process, checking and critiquing each other's work, to eliminate potential bias and increase trustworthiness. We each did the thematic analysis on half the articles, then exchanged work to verify each other's analysis, and met to debate points of disagreement or uncertainty.

4. Findings

4.1 Overview of South African child and youth resilience studies, 2009-2017

Table 1 provides the profile of the 61 articles reviewed in this study. For each article, the research design is stated, the sample is described according to size, racial profile and age, and the main adversity of the participants is mentioned.

Table 1

Profile of South African child and youth resilience studies, 2009-2017.

| Study | Design | Sample | Adversity |
|---|--|--|--|
| (Bachman DeSilva et al., 2012) | Quantitative Longitudinal | 157 orphans & 480 non-orphans, isiZulu-speaking, ages 9-15 | Orphanhood |
| (Bhana et al., 2016) | Quantitative Survey | 177 caregiver-child dyads, isiZulu-speaking, ages 9-14 | Living with HIV |
| (Botha & van den Berg, 2016) | Quantitative Survey | 366 learners, black, mean age 13.9 | Trauma exposure |
| (Brittian, Lewin, & Norris, 2013) | Qualitative Interviews | 55 youth, black, age 18 | Structural disadvantage (poverty, unemployment) |
| (Burman, Aphane, & Mtapuri, 2017) | Qualitative Interviews and focus group | 36 women, predominantly African community, ages 18-25 | Rural community High prevalence of HIV |
| (Choe, Zimmerman, & Devnarain, 2012) | Quantitative Survey | 424 adolescents, Zulu, grades 8-12 | Exposure to violence |
| (Collishaw, Gardner, Lawrence Aber, & Cluver, 2016) | Quantitative Longitudinal | 290 Aids-orphans, 163 other orphans, 202 non-orphans, 97% isiXhosa-speaking, mean age 13.5 at baseline | Orphanhood |
| (Cortina et al., 2016) | Quantitative Survey | 1025 children, rural area of Mpumanga province, ages 10-12 | Structural disadvantage (poverty, high HIV prevalence) |
| (Cramm, Lorenzo, & Nieboer, 2014) | Quantitative Survey | 120 disabled and 177 matched non-disabled youth, Eastern and Northern Cape provinces, ages 18-35 (mean 25.7) | Disability |
| (Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2013) | Qualitative Case study | 4 children, White Afrikaans-speaking, ages 14-16 | Parental divorce, both parents remarried |
| (Ebersöhn et al., 2012) | Qualitative Visual methods | 11 children, African-language speakers, ages 5-6 | Maternal HIV |
| (Ebersöhn, Eloff, Finestone, Grobler, & Moen, 2015) | Mixed methods | 19 children, African-language speakers, ages 5-6 | Maternal HIV |
| (Ebersöhn, Nel, & Loots, 2017) | Qualitative Visual methods | 25 children, SiSwati-speaking, grade 9 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Fielding-Miller, Dunkle, & Murdock, 2015) | Qualitative Interviews & focus group | 20 youth, siSwati-speakers, ages 18-25 | Food insecurity and judged by community to be vulnerable |

| Study | Design | Sample | Adversity |
|--|---|---|--|
| (George & Moolman, 2017) | Quantitative Survey | 495 adolescents, racially diverse, mean age 14 | Suicidal ideation |
| (George, 2017) | Quantitative Survey | 981 adolescents, racially diverse, mean age 16 | Suicidal ideation |
| (Goliath & Pretorius, 2016) | Qualitative Interviews or written narrative | 10 drug-users and 29 non-users, from an historically marginalised community, ages 16-18 | Drug use |
| (Hage & Pillay, 2017) | Qualitative Interviews | 7 boys, African, ages 12-14 | Child-headed households |
| (Hall & Theron, 2016a) | Qualitative Case study | 24 adolescents with disability, racially diverse (13 African), ages 12-19 | Intellectual disability |
| (Hall & Theron, 2016b) | Qualitative Case study | 24 adolescents with disability, racially diverse, ages 12-19 | Intellectual disability |
| (Hills, Meyer-Weitz, & Kwaku Oppong, 2016) | Qualitative Interpretive phenomenology | 10 adolescents, 8 African and 2 Coloured, ages 14-18 | Street-involved |
| (Hlatshwayo & Vally, 2014) | Qualitative | 120 refugees and asylum seekers, some of whom were children or youth. | Refugees and asylum seekers |
| (Jefferis & Theron, 2017) | Qualitative Visual methods | 28 girls, Sesotho-speaking, ages 13-19 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Kumpulainen et al., 2016) | Qualitative Case study | 1 South African child (compared with 1 Finnish child), Setswana-speaking, age 7 | Structural disadvantage and transition into school |
| (Lau & van Niekerk, 2011) | Qualitative Narrative | 6 adolescents, African-language speakers, ages 13-24 | Burn survivors |
| (Lethale & Pillay, 2013) | Qualitative phenomenology | 4 adolescents, Black township community, ages 14-18 | Child-headed household |
| (Liebenberg et al., 2016) | Quantitative Survey | 728 adolescents, race not specified, ages 13-19 (mean 16.3) | Structural disadvantage |
| (Malindi & Machenjedge, 2012) | Qualitative Focus group | 17 boys, isiZulu-/Sesotho-speaking, ages 11-17 | Street-involved |
| (Malindi & Theron, 2010) | Qualitative Interviews and focus group | 20 boys, isiZulu-/Sesotho-speaking, ages 10-17 | Street-involved |
| (Malindi, 2014) | Qualitative Visual methods | 30 girls, African, ages 17-20 | Street-involved |
| (Mampane & Boucher, 2011) | Qualitative Focus group | 16 adolescents, Black, ages 14-16 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Mampane, 2014) | Quantitative Survey | 291 adolescents, Black, ages 14-16 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Mohangi, Ebersöhn, & Eloff, 2011) | Qualitative Case study | 9 children, race not specified, ages 11-15 | Residential care HIV positive |
| (Mosavel, Ahmed, Ports, & Simon, 2015) | Qualitative Focus groups | 112 adolescents, black, grades 8-10 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Myburgh, Moolla, & Poggenpoel, 2015) | Qualitative Visual methods & phenomenology | 14 boys, race not specified, ages 8-17 | Street-involved |
| (Odendaal & Moletsane, 2011) | Qualitative Case study | 1 girl, Sesotho-speaking, age 7 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Odendaal, Brink, & Theron, 2011) | Qualitative Visual methods | 6 adolescents, Black, ages 14-16 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Ogina, 2012) | Qualitative Case study | 12 orphans, race not specified, ages 14-17 | Orphanhood |
| (Phasha, 2010) | Qualitative Case study | 3 female youth, African, ages 16-23 | Child sexual abuse |

| Study | Design | Sample | Adversity |
|--|--|---|---|
| (Pienaar, Swanepoel, Van Rensburg, & Heunis, 2011) | Qualitative Interviews | 8 children, race not specified, ages 9-13 | Orphanhood Residential care |
| (Scorgie et al., 2017) | Qualitative Community mapping and interviews | 59 adolescents, race not specified, ages 15-19 | Structural disadvantage, community violence |
| (Sharer, Cluver, Shields, & Ahearn, 2016) | Quantitative Survey | 1380 children, race not specified, ages 10-20 (mean 15) | Orphanhood HIV in family |
| (Smit, Wood, & Neethling, 2015) | Qualitative Visual methods | 13 adolescents, race not specified, ages 18-22 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Soji, Pretorius, & Bak, 2015) | Qualitative Multiple methods | 6 families, isiXhosa-speaking, ages not specified | Child-headed households |
| (Theron & Dunn, 2010) | Qualitative Interviews | 10 adolescents, White Afrikaans-speaking, ages 14-18 | Parental divorce |
| (Theron & Theron, 2013) | Qualitative Narrative | 14 students, black, 7 students were ages 19-24 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Theron & Theron, 2014) | Qualitative Narrative | 16 students, black, 8 students were ages 19-24 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Theron et al., 2011) | Qualitative Visual | 2 adolescents, Sesotho-speaking, ages 14 & 16 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Theron, 2013) | Qualitative Narrative | 1 youth, black, age 24 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Theron, 2016c) | Mixed methods | 181 adolescents, African, mean age 16 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Theron, 2017a) | Qualitative Visual methods | 385 adolescents, African, ages 11-18 (and 284 adults) | Structural disadvantage |
| (Theron, Liebenberg, & Malindi, 2014) | Mixed methods | 951 adolescents, Sesotho-speaking, ages 13-19 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Van Breda & Dickens, 2017) | Quantitative Longitudinal | 52 youth, racially diverse, ages 16-21 | Residential care Leaving care |
| (Van Breda, 2015) | Qualitative Grounded theory | 9 youth, racially diverse, ages 19-23 | Transitioning out of residential care |
| (Van Breda, 2017a) | Quantitative Survey | 575 children, racially diverse, ages 13-21 | Diverse sample. Most with structural disadvantage, some in residential care |
| (Van Breda, 2017b) | Quantitative Survey | 232 youth, 93% African, undergraduate university students | Multifaceted psychosocial adversities during first year of university |
| (van Rensburg, Theron, & Ungar, 2017) | Quantitative Survey | 1137 children, 98% African, ages 12-19 | Structural disadvantage |
| (van Rensburg, Theron, Rothmann, & Kitching, 2013) | Quantitative Survey | 1209 adolescents, 98% Sesotho-speaking, ages 12-19 | Structural disadvantage |
| (Wild, Flisher, & Robertson, 2013) | Quantitative Survey | 159 orphans, isiXhosa-speaking, ages 10-19 (mean 15) | Orphanhood |
| (Woollett, Cluver, Hatcher, & Brahmhatt, 2016) | Qualitative Interviews | 25 adolescents, race not specified, ages 13-19 | HIV positive |
| (Zulu & Munro, 2017) | Qualitative Interviews | 2 women, black, ages 23 & 25 | Father-absence |

Table 1 illustrates that South African research on the resilience of children and youth from 2009 to 2017 has focused on a wide range of adverse contexts that place young people at risk. Most prominent among these (explicit in 22 of the articles) is structural disadvantage, which includes

poverty and living in rural or township communities that are typically under-resourced with social, health and educational services. Structural disadvantage, however, underlies most of the adversities specified in the reviewed articles. Other adversities include: HIV, orphanhood, street-involvement, residential care, disability, child-headed households, violence, suicidal ideation and parental divorce. Individual articles address: burn survivors, child sexual abuse, drug use, father-absence, refugees or trauma.

Two thirds of the articles (40 out of 61) are based on qualitative research, 18 on quantitative research and three on mixed-methods research. This is a significant change from the previous review of 1990 to 2008 research by Theron and Theron (2010), where nine studies were quantitative, seven mixed-methods and only five qualitative.

A wide range of qualitative designs were utilised including: case study, narrative, phenomenology and grounded theory. Various data collection methods were utilised, including: individual interviewing, visual methods (such as write-and-draw, sand tray and Mmogo^{TR} clay modelling), projective methods (Rorschach), focus groups and community mapping. Sample sizes for qualitative research range from one to 385 participants, with a mean of 30 participants. All but three studies had fewer than 60 participants. Most studies were of individuals, but a handful studied families or caregiver-child dyads.

Of the 18 quantitative studies, 15 used a cross-sectional survey design, while only three used a longitudinal design. Two of the longitudinal studies had two data points, a year apart in one study and four years apart in the other, while a third study had three data points, with approximately one year between each. Sample sizes for quantitative research ranged from 52 to 1380 participants, with a mean of 574 participants. Four studies exceeded 1000 participants and an additional four exceeded 500.

The majority of studies were conducted with youth (13-24 years). Eleven studies focused exclusively on young (or emerging) adults, aged from 18 to 18-24 years. Thirteen focused primarily on adolescents (sometimes extending up into early adulthood), aged from 13 to 14-24 years. Eleven studies focused on primary and high school children, with ages ranging from 8-12 to 12-20 years. Finally, only four studies focused on younger children, aged 5-7 years.

Race has, for many generations in South Africa, been used as a criterion for exclusion and oppression. Despite South Africa's transition to a non-racial democracy in 1994, race remains a salient construct, both because inequality continues to run along racial (and gender) lines, and because of the country's commitment to promoting racial equity. For these reasons, race remains an important demographic in South African research. Most of the studies (42 of the 61) were conducted with (variously defined) black, African or African-language speaking participants, or participants from a predominantly black community. Seven studies had samples that were racially

diverse, though many of these were predominantly black. Two studies were conducted with white participants. Nine studies did not specify the racial profile of participants.

4.2 Content analysis of South African child and youth resilience studies, 2009-2017

The resilience-enabling factors of the 61 articles were content analysed in light of the social ecological approach to resilience (Ungar, 2012). This generated four salient layers of the social ecology, viz. the child or youth, relationships, structures, and spirituality and culture. Key resilience-enablers within each of these layers are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of the results of the content analysis.

| Social ecological layer | Resilience-enabling resource or process | Detail about resource or process | Studies |
|--|---|---|---|
| Personal resilience-enablers (reported by 47 studies) | Agency (21 studies) | E.g., Taking action which potentiates / facilitates constructive outcomes or resolves problems; expressing emotion and/or needs; self-care; being goal-directed | (Bhana et al., 2016; Botha & van den Berg, 2016; Burman et al., 2017; Ebersöhn et al., 2015; Ebersöhn et al., 2012; George, 2017; Hage & Pillay, 2017; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Malindi, 2014; Malindi & Theron, 2010; Mosavel et al., 2015; Ogina, 2012; Phasha, 2010; Pienaar et al., 2011; Scorgie et al., 2017; Smit et al., 2015; Soji et al., 2015; Theron, 2013; Theron & Dunn, 2010; van Rensburg et al., 2013; Woollett et al., 2016) |
| | Adaptive meaning making (20 studies) | E.g., resignation / acceptance; cognitively transforming challenges into opportunities; positive interpretation of present/future; hopefulness | (Bhana et al., 2016; Botha & van den Berg, 2016; Cortina et al., 2016; Ebersöhn et al., 2015; George & Moolman, 2017; Lau & van Niekerk, 2011; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Odendaal et al., 2011; Ogina, 2012; Phasha, 2010; Pienaar et al., 2011; Smit et al., 2015; Soji et al., 2015; Theron, 2016c; Theron & Dunn, 2010; Van Breda, 2015, 2017b; Van Breda & Dickens, 2017; Woollett et al., 2016; Zulu & Munro, 2017) |
| | Dispositional qualities (19 studies) | E.g., altruism; cheerfulness; empathy; gratitude; grit; introspection; intelligence; maturity; morality; humour; responsiveness | (George, 2017; Goliath & Pretorius, 2016; Hall & Theron, 2016b; Hills et al., 2016; Lau & van Niekerk, 2011; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Malindi & Theron, 2010; Mampane, 2014; Mohangi et al., 2011; Mosavel et al., 2015; Myburgh et al., 2015; Odendaal & Moletsane, 2011; Pienaar et al., 2011; Theron, 2017a; Theron & Theron, 2013; Van Breda, 2015, |

| Social ecological layer | Resilience-enabling resource or process | Detail about resource or process | Studies |
|--|---|--|--|
| | | | 2017b; Woollett et al., 2016; Zulu & Munro, 2017) |
| | Commitment to education & having educational aspirations (14 studies) | E.g., valuing education; aspiring toward completing a tertiary qualification; believing that education leverages future employment and/or well-being | (Fielding-Miller et al., 2015; Hage & Pillay, 2017; Hlatshwayo & Vally, 2014; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Mampane, 2014; Mosavel et al., 2015; Odendaal & Moletsane, 2011; Phasha, 2010; Pienaar et al., 2011; Theron, 2016c, 2017a; Theron & Dunn, 2010; Theron & Theron, 2013; Van Breda, 2017a) |
| | Self-regulation (12 studies) | E.g., adjustment of behaviour and/or emotion; wishful thinking and/or disengagement from reality; avoidance of negative emotion / self-distraction | (Bhana et al., 2016; Ebersöhn et al., 2012; Goliath & Pretorius, 2016; Hills et al., 2016; Kumpulainen et al., 2016; Mohangi et al., 2011; Ogina, 2012; Soji et al., 2015; Theron, 2013; Theron & Dunn, 2010; Van Breda, 2017a; Woollett et al., 2016) |
| | High self-esteem (10 studies) | E.g., acknowledging personal competence; confidence in own ability; sense of powerful identity; self-liking | (Bhana et al., 2016; George, 2017; George & Moolman, 2017; Kumpulainen et al., 2016; Mampane, 2014; Ogina, 2012; Pienaar et al., 2011; Theron & Theron, 2014; Van Breda, 2017b; Woollett et al., 2016) |
| | Physical characteristics (4 studies) | E.g., good health; male sex; physical strength | (Bachman DeSilva et al., 2012; Collishaw et al., 2016; Hills et al., 2016; Wild et al., 2013) |
| Relational resilience-enablers (reported by 46 studies) | Affective support (32 studies) | E.g., experiences of acceptance, belonging, being valued, care | (Bachman DeSilva et al., 2012; Botha & van den Berg, 2016; Brittian et al., 2013; Choe et al., 2012; Collishaw et al., 2016; Ebersöhn et al., 2017; Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2013; George, 2017; George & Moolman, 2017; Hall & Theron, 2016a; Jefferis & Theron, 2017; Lau & van Niekerk, 2011; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Malindi, 2014; Malindi & Machenjedge, 2012; Mampane, 2014; Mohangi et al., 2011; Odendaal & Moletsane, 2011; Ogina, 2012; Phasha, 2010; Sharer et al., 2016; Soji et al., 2015; Theron, 2013, 2016c; Theron et al., 2011; Theron & Dunn, 2010; Van Breda, 2015, 2017a, 2017b; Van Breda & Dickens, 2017; Wild et al., 2013; Zulu & Munro, 2017) |
| | Opportunities for growth and development (23 studies) | E.g., behavioural and emotional regulation; communication of high expectations; learning; acquisition of values; sharing humour, fun, and/or play; identity development; transmission of cultural heritage | (Bachman DeSilva et al., 2012; Bhana et al., 2016; Botha & van den Berg, 2016; Choe et al., 2012; Ebersöhn et al., 2012; Goliath & Pretorius, 2016; Hage & Pillay, 2017; Hall & Theron, 2016a, 2016b; Hills et al., 2016; Jefferis & Theron, 2017; Kumpulainen et al., 2016; Lau & van Niekerk, 2011; Liebenberg et al., 2016; |

| Social ecological layer | Resilience-enabling resource or process | Detail about resource or process | Studies |
|--|--|--|---|
| | | | Malindi & Theron, 2010; Pienaar et al., 2011; Smit et al., 2015; Soji et al., 2015; Theron, 2016c, 2017a; Theron & Theron, 2013, 2014; Wild et al., 2013) |
| | Instrumental support (8 studies) | E.g., provision of food and shelter; protection from harm | (Brittian et al., 2013; Ebersöhn et al., 2012; Hills et al., 2016; Malindi & Machenjedge, 2012; Malindi & Theron, 2010; Sharer et al., 2016; Theron, 2016c; Theron & Theron, 2014) |
| Structural resilience-enablers (reported by 29 studies) | Financial wellbeing (13 studies) | E.g., food security; smaller household size and fewer children in the household; access to transport; availability of material resources; access to microloans and other poverty alleviation strategies; youth employment; education level of caregivers | (Bachman DeSilva et al., 2012; Bhana et al., 2016; Collishaw et al., 2016; Cramm et al., 2014; Ebersöhn et al., 2015; Ebersöhn et al., 2017; Kumpulainen et al., 2016; Mosavel et al., 2015; Odendaal & Moletsane, 2011; Theron, 2016c; Theron & Theron, 2014; Van Breda, 2017b; Van Breda & Dickens, 2017) |
| | Community facilities and services (10 studies) | E.g., availability of community facilities for sports, activities and other community gatherings; social service organisations; access to therapeutic services; enabling NGOs | (Hall & Theron, 2016a; Hills et al., 2016; Hlatshwayo & Vally, 2014; Malindi, 2014; Mosavel et al., 2015; Theron, 2017a; Theron & Dunn, 2010; Van Breda, 2017a; Van Breda & Dickens, 2017; van Rensburg et al., 2013) |
| | Community safety (10 studies) | E.g., community regulation (including strict laws); safe spaces to walk and play | (Collishaw et al., 2016; Ebersöhn et al., 2015; Malindi & Machenjedge, 2012; Mampane & Bouwer, 2011; Mosavel et al., 2015; Pienaar et al., 2011; Scorgie et al., 2017; Van Breda, 2017a; Van Breda & Dickens, 2017; Wild et al., 2013) |
| | The school system (8 studies) | E.g., schools that: are well-functioning; offer quality education; teach life-skills; respect children's rights, diversity, and agency; promote social justice; have high expectations of students; offer learning support; limit bullying | (Botha & van den Berg, 2016; Collishaw et al., 2016; Hall & Theron, 2016a; Liebenberg et al., 2016; Malindi & Machenjedge, 2012; Mampane & Bouwer, 2011; Theron, 2017a; Theron et al., 2014) |
| | Spiritual beliefs (14 studies) | E.g., spiritual beliefs bring comfort; spiritual beliefs support positive meaning-making; spiritual beliefs promise protection; spiritual beliefs offer guidance; spiritual beliefs promote connectedness | (Brittian et al., 2013; Ebersöhn et al., 2017; George & Moolman, 2017; Hills et al., 2016; Lau & van Niekerk, 2011; Malindi, 2014; Malindi & Theron, 2010; Mohangi et al., 2011; Pienaar et al., 2011; Smit et al., 2015; Theron, 2013; Theron & Dunn, 2010; Theron & Theron, 2013; Van Breda, 2017a) |
| Spiritual and cultural resilience-enablers (reported by 21 studies) | Cultural values (8 studies) | E.g., interdependence; Ubuntu; spirituality | (Hage & Pillay, 2017; Kumpulainen et al., 2016; Malindi & Theron, 2010; Odendaal et al., 2011; Soji et al., 2015; Theron, 2017a; Theron & Theron, 2013; van Rensburg et al., 2017) |

| Social ecological layer | Resilience-enabling resource or process | Detail about resource or process | Studies |
|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|
| | Cultural practices (2 studies) | E.g., ancestral practices; rites of passage | (Soji et al., 2015; Theron, 2016c) |

Our scrutiny of Table 2 suggested three patterns. First, personal and/or relational resilience-enablers were more frequently reported than structural or spiritual and cultural ones. Second, affective support was the most oft-reported resilience-enabling resource. Third, reports of interacting resilience-enablers were rare. We detail these patterns next.

4.2.1 Personal and/or relational resilience-enablers are more prevalent than structural or spiritual and cultural ones

The vast majority of studies reported personal and/or relational resources (57 of the 61 studies). Just over three quarters of the studies (i.e., 47 studies) associated personal resources with the resilience of vulnerable South African children and youth. A similar proportion of studies (i.e., 46 studies) associated relational resources with the resilience of vulnerable South African children and youth. Nearly two thirds of these studies (i.e., 36 of the 57 studies) reported both personal and relational resources. Except for physical characteristics, which were reported in studies of orphans or street-connected youth only, the reported personal and relational resources recurred across a variety of risks, from exposure to trauma-potentiating incidents (e.g., violent crime) to chronic structural adversity. Predictably, the studies which reported commitment to education and/or education aspirations (as personal resource) and/or supportive teachers (as relational resource) drew on the insights of participants who attended school (regularly or erratically).

A much lower percentage of studies reported structural or cultural and spiritual resources. Just under half (i.e., 29 studies) associated structural resources (i.e., non-relational resources that are available in the social environment) with the resilience of vulnerable South African children and youth. Just under half of these studies (i.e., 13 of the 29 studies) considered financial well-being to be pivotal to resilience, but community facilities and services, community safety, and/or the school system were also reported.

Only a third of the included studies (i.e., 21 studies) associated spiritual and cultural resources with the resilience of vulnerable South African children and youth. Spiritual resources comprised Christian and/or traditional African spiritual beliefs (such as the belief in benevolent ancestral connections). Cultural resources were reported only by studies that included black South African children and youth. They included traditional practices (e.g., ancestral ceremonies, gender-specific rites of passage) and/or values that were endorsed and enacted by the language-sharing

group with which the child/youth associated (e.g., Sesotho-speakers or isiXhosa-speakers). In the main, even though the primary language of these groups varied, they all encouraged allegiance to the quintessentially African values of respectful interdependence (often referred to as *Ubuntu*). The latter inspires a culture of caring reciprocity (Theron & Phasha, 2015).

4.2.2 Overall, affective support is the most prevalent resilience-enabling process

Affective support was reported by half of the included studies (i.e., 32 of the 61 studies). In comparison, the next most prominent resilience-enabling process (viz., relational resources that potentiate the opportunity for growth and development) was reported by just over a third of all studies (i.e., 23 studies). Typically, affective support enabled experiences of belonging and care, which allowed children and youth to feel that they were valuable and valued.

Affective support was facilitated by a broad network of people, variously called a “supportive social ecology” (Hall & Theron, 2016b: 52), a “supportive collective” (Kumpulainen et al., 2016: 127), or “circles of care” (Soji et al., 2015: 124). This network included immediate family (e.g., parents/caregivers or siblings), extended family (e.g., grandparents), community-members (e.g., best friends, peers, neighbours, religious leaders), professionals (e.g., teachers, social workers), and even strangers (see van Breda, 2015). Most prominent among supportive relationships were friends, parents and/or caregivers, and teachers. With regard to teachers, we drew a subtle distinction between relational and structural resources. For example, we considered teachers providing good quality education and implementing a policy of respect for diversity to be a structural resource, because this is a formal part of their job and the education system. In comparison, we considered teachers who establish warm and encouraging relationships with learners, often in a maternal way, to be a relational resource, because this is built into the teacher-learner relationship rather than a teacher’s job-description.

Only one study clarified that the initiative for supportive relationships was taken by teachers who reached out to adolescent girls (Jefferis & Theron, 2017). Similarly, only one study reported that having a larger number of relationships was resilience-enabling (Cramm et al., 2014). Worryingly, a number of studies lamented the scarcity of community- and school-based social service organisations and associated limited opportunities for children and youth to form relationships with service providers (Hlatshwayo & Vally, 2014; Malindi, 2014; Mosavel et al., 2015; Theron, 2017a).

4.2.3 Reports of interacting resilience-enablers are rare

Of the 61 studies, only four explicitly associated resilience with South African young people’s capacity to interact with (i.e., utilise) resources. Interestingly, such interaction was

reported in studies with adolescent or emerging adult participants only. Mampane (2014) reported that the adolescents in her study had the capacity to make good use of the resources which they identified as potentially enabling. Similarly, Theron and Theron (2014) reported that the adolescents in their studies acknowledged their teachers' efforts to support them and responded positively to teacher overtures. Van Breda and Dickens (2017) found that the capacity of young care-leavers to work collaboratively in teams/groups, which they explicitly labelled as an interactional resilience process, contributed to their personal, relational and environmental outcomes a year after leaving care. Finally, Van Breda (2015) reported that young adult care-leavers interacted constructively with their environment. This included actively appraising the risks and resources in their social ecology and networking with others who could facilitate achievement of the goals to which these young adults were aspiring.

5. Limitations

This review is limited first by its consideration only of peer-reviewed journal articles. Grey literature (Godin, Stapleton, Kirkpatrick, Hanning, & Leatherdale, 2015), which includes masters and doctoral theses and unpublished research reports, can be an important source of information for a systematic review. Its exclusion may have resulted in a loss of data on additional resilience processes. Second, although our focus on young people's accounts of resilience was purposeful, given the lack of attention to young people's insights into the resilience process (Liebenberg & Theron, 2015), this choice eclipsed adult insights and their potential to deepen and/or nuance the synthesis findings. Third, the study is limited by our lack of access to the data collection tools used in these studies. As a result, it is not possible to determine to what extent the foregrounded or understated resilience-enablers are due to method or to their actual presence or absence.

6. Discussion

Our aim with this paper was to provide an updated synthesis of the extant understandings of South African children and youth's views on what enables their resilience by reviewing relevant 2009-2017 peer-reviewed journal articles. In particular, we were interested in using this synthesis to distil implications for service professionals, particularly our own professions of social work and educational psychology, and for resilience-focused researchers. To suggest take-home lessons, we first need to interpret the results of the updated synthesis.

Essentially, from the perspective of young people themselves, the resources that matter most often for their resilience are personal and relational. In comparison, structural and cultural resources

were less frequently reported, while interactional resources were infrequently noted. In the previous synthesis of studies that accounted for the resilience of South African children and youth, Theron and Theron (2010) lamented that culture was marginalised. They attributed this phenomenon to resilience theory's historic inattention to the sociocultural determinants of resilience. It is possible that this repeated finding implies that cultural and structural resources are not salient for the resilience of South African children and youth, and that the resources that matter most really are personal and relational.

There are, however, alternative explanations for the continued dominance of personal and relational resources in studies of the resilience of South African young people. First, the continued preponderance of personal and relational resources which we report in this updated synthesis could be explained by the fact that young people's own individual strengths and relational supports are a palpable part of their everyday experience and therefore more readily recognisable to them. By contrast, structural or cultural resources may be relatively invisible, providing an indirect foundation from which personal and relational resources are experienced. Thus, this finding, emanating as it is from the direct accounts of (mostly) children and adolescents, may be a reflection of the relatively near horizon of young people. Although child-directed explanations of resilience are valued and valuable (Li, Bottrell, & Armstrong, 2017; Liebenberg & Theron, 2015), adult perspectives have the potential to contribute additional meaningful insights, including ones that are not limited to what is proximal. For instance, the adult participants in the study by Bhana et al. (2016) drew attention to the relationship between caregiver well-being and caregiver capacity to champion the resilience of those they cared for. Thus, in the interests of fuller understandings of resilience, both child and adult explanations of resilience are ideally needed (Theron, 2017a).

Second, as per current criticisms of theorists' and practitioners' neo-liberal-like overemphasis on personal and familial resilience-enablers, rather than broader systemic ones (e.g. Garrett, 2016), young people's apparent emphasis on personal and relational resources could reflect the paucity of structural and broader sociocultural resilience-enablers. Given the lived reality of most participants in the included studies (i.e., children and youth who are challenged by structural disadvantage, see Table 1) it is plausible that participants had limited experience of structural resilience-enablers. Third, the under-reporting of structural resources could be an artefact of South Africa's sub-optimal and often haphazard implementation of enabling policies, as indicated, for example, in the case of young people transitioning out of care (Bond, 2018; Van Breda & Dickens, 2016).

A fourth explanation for the ostensible under-reporting of structural, cultural and interaction-based resources might lie in the researchers' focus and the methodologies employed. Certainly, quantitative studies presuppose the resilience resources included in research instruments

and these mostly respond to the hypotheses researchers are seeking to prove (van Rensburg et al., 2015). Similarly, the choice of qualitative research design could foreground particular findings. For example, van Breda's (2015) grounded theory approach could explain the subsequent emphasis on youth action and agency and eclipse the structural or cultural enablers of resilience. There are also nascent insights that qualitative researchers' choice of data collection activity might influence what account participants provide of the process of positive adjustment. For instance, in her retrospective contemplation of the methodology used in the Pathways to Resilience Study, South Africa, Theron (2016b) reflected that only culturally-sensitive visual methods, such as the Mmogo-method^{TR} which used materials that were salient to black African rural adolescents (i.e., beads, clay and grass sticks), elicited adolescent reports of the cultural beliefs and practices that enabled resilience. In comparison paper-and-pencil drawing activities elicited more mainstream resources, such as educational aspirations or parental support.

A fifth way of making meaning of the spontaneous under-reporting of cultural and structural resources relates to South Africa's history of colonialism and apartheid. Both these political forces worked hard to systematically denigrate black South Africans' sense of cultural pride and to erode structural enablers of resilience (Biko, 2004). Even though South Africa has been a democracy for almost a quarter of a century, many black South Africans have continued to experience stringent critiques of their blackness and of traditional African culture (McKaiser, 2012; Ramphele, 2012). Most black South Africans continue to be challenged by structural inequality (StatsSA, 2017b). A sense that white or western culture is somehow superior is not confined to only South Africa or other parts of Africa, but is noted globally (Russell, Liebenberg, & Ungar, 2015). Given the continued depreciation of black culture, South Africa's unrelenting structural violence and the fact that the majority of the young people who participated in the 2009-2017 studies of South African resilience self-identified as black or African or both, it is perhaps not surprising that cultural and structural resources were side-lined.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, the updated synthesis draws attention to the salience of affective support for the resilience of South African children and youth. Luthar (2006) asserted that relational resources, such as affective support, are the cornerstone of human resilience. Similarly, Masten (2014b) and Ungar et al. (2007) included close relationships, or being meaningfully connected to others, in their empirically-informed lists of key resilience-enablers.

7. Implications for service professionals

Practitioners who work with young people who are vulnerable would be well served to value, as well as facilitate/sustain, personal and relational enablers of resilience. As argued elsewhere (e.g. Kumpulainen et al., 2016; Van Breda, 2017a), practitioners need to understand

which personal and relational enablers have personal, contextual and cultural valence for the young people whose resilience they seek to champion. Put differently, although the personal and relational resources which are itemised in our synthesis are generic (Masten, 2014b; Werner, 2013), we advise practitioners to invite young people to indicate which of these apparently universal enablers would be most supportive of their resilience and whether these identified resources need to be facilitated, strengthened, or sustained.

Simultaneously, our synthesis provides evidence of structural, cultural, spiritual and interactional elements to child and youth resilience. These resilience-enablers are important too. Often, they underpin personal and/or relational resources. Ideally then, the practitioner's gaze must be longer, so to speak, than the young person's gaze, to acknowledge and appropriate resources that are beyond the horizons of young people. In doing so, the practitioner would be respectful of current understandings that the entire social ecology (i.e., the young person and his/her relational networks, sociocultural community and structural and political environments) is fundamental to youth resilience (Ungar, 2011, 2018) and implement a social justice lens in doing resilience work with vulnerable children and youth (Hart et al., 2016).

Ultimately though, practitioners need to be mindful of the "interconnections and interactions" (Masten, 2018: 15) between these resilience-enablers. As argued by Van Breda (2018b), although it is important to understand which resources are foundational to the resilience of young people, practitioners need to better understand how these resources interface. To facilitate resilience, practitioners would then leverage this interaction. Allied to this, Theron and Ungar (2018) have contended that the optimal enablement of resilience requires the practice community to better understand which interacting resources matter more/most for specific groups of young people at lower and higher levels of risk and to tailor their interventions accordingly. In prioritising interactions, practitioners would avoid the highly individualising approach of much resilience research and the concerns about resilience agendas serving neo-liberalism (Garrett, 2016).

Finally, support from helping professionals (e.g., social workers and educational psychologists) was uncommon in the accounts of the resilience of South African young people. In contrast, there was slightly more frequent acknowledgement of the value of services and of a well-regulated society, but there was also mention that widespread suffering seemed to be commonplace and that social justice was rare. Taken together, this points to an urgent need for practitioners not only to be more accessible to young people who are vulnerable, but also to advocate for policies and laws that will reduce the risks to young people (Hart et al., 2016).

8. Implications for ongoing youth resilience research

As noted earlier, our synthesis shows that Theron and Theron's (2010) concern that qualitative research was underutilised in studies of South African youth resilience has since been resolved. Although qualitative research enjoys mainstream recognition (Levitt et al., 2018) and will continue to benefit the study of resilience (not least because it affords a deeper understanding of the resilience process and rich insight into the cultural and contextual determinants of resilience), resilience-enabling practice would benefit from strategic, multi-level, mixed-methods research going forward.

We thus recommend that resilience researchers from diverse disciplines collaboratively conduct a series of resilience case-studies *across* specific contexts of risk and at multiple levels (e.g., at the level of the individual child, household, natural and built environment). While qualitative methods remain important, in the interest of a more holistic understanding of youth resilience we argue for mixed methods (i.e., supplementing innovative qualitative methods with sophisticated quantitative methods) and mixed perspectives (i.e., engaging both children and adults as participants).

Such a collective of case studies has the potential to scaffold compelling transdisciplinary theory that will better explain resilience as an interactive, contextually-sensitive process. Transdisciplinary theory has better potential to leverage resilience-enabling policy and practice initiatives and guide service delivery. Importantly, the conceptualisation of these case study series should include researchers, practitioners, vulnerable young people and key stakeholders from their social ecologies, as well as (local, regional and national) government representatives. Such co-produced, inclusive planning is likely to advance the uptake of subsequent results (Hart et al., 2016). Ideally, these case studies need to include repeat investigations over time. In the South African context, which is characterised by sociocultural flux (Ramphela, 2012), longitudinal research is particularly important to better understand how cultural values and practices enable (or constrain) resilience and the longevity (or not) of these influences. In the absence of longitudinal research, practitioners may well operationalise findings that no longer have sociocultural relevance and/or that are inappropriate for a specific developmental phase.

9. Conclusion

Children and youth in South Africa, like children and youth elsewhere, are vulnerable to multiple, apparently intractable adversities. Service professionals are responsible for supporting vulnerable young people to manage and/or overcome these adversities, but need evidence-informed

guidelines to do so optimally. Although it was limited to journal articles about South African children and youth, the synthesis reported in this article offers valuable evidence-informed knowledge that can be used by social work and educational psychology professionals globally to mobilise resilience processes. In addition, the synthesis prompts research and practitioner advocacy because, in the absence of initiatives to limit or halt the adversities that leave children and youth vulnerable, mobilising resilience processes will remain inadequate.

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