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Searching for Tomorrow—South Sudanese Women Reconstructing Resilience through Photovoice

Erin Pearce[1] · **Kathleen McMurray**[2] · **Christine A. Walsh**[2] · **Linda Malek**[3]

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Abstract Constricted definitions of resiliency have limited application to refugees who typically negotiate complex interpersonal, intercultural, historical, and geopolitical factors in order to overcome the challenges of flight, exile, forced migration, and resettlement. Researchers were approached by eight South Sudanese refugee women resettled in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, who were interested in exploring alternative notions of resilience through reflection, dialogue, and action. Participatory action research methodology was chosen to co-create knowledge as an alternative to Western-centric resiliency discourse. This approach prioritizes under-represented voices through democratic co-participation, reflecting the lived experiences of refugees through collaborative research strategies and maximizes the capacity of this minority population to meaningfully contribute to the academic discourse. Using Photovoice, a technique that employs still photography and text captions, participants used aesthetic expression to deconstruct and reconstruct notions of resilience. Six, monthly 3-h focus groups were conducted on topics pertaining to resilience during which still images were reviewed. Adopting a grounded theory approach, line-by-line coding and thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts were completed in order to respond to the research question. Faith and spirituality, circles of support, and the global community were the key overarching themes describing participants' resilience process which enabled participants to survive their past foster support in the present and harness hope for the future. At each stage, supporting and protective factors and threats undermining resiliency were identified. In conclusion, recommendations for an enhanced

✉ Christine A. Walsh
cwalsh@ucalgary.ca

[1] Kinbrace Community Society, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

[2] Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

[3] Community Activist Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

conceptualization of resilience were made for resettlement service providers and those engaging with refugee populations.

Keywords South Sudanese refugee women · Resilience · Participatory action research · Photovoice

Introduction

While the term "refugee" is increasingly blurred by alternative migratory labels that have surfaced due to significant increases in global migration (Zetter 2007), by convention, refugees are persons who endure and flee persecution in their home country to resettle abroad (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2010). The refugee experience has been the focus of attention by researchers in order to better facilitate the migration and resettlement processes, and mitigate stressors that could further expose refugees to adversity. Early research on this phenomenon, however, focused almost exclusively on trauma, spurred on by the 1990s "discovery of trauma" (Summerfield 1999, p. 1451) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in survivors of the Bosnian, Croatian, and Rwandan crises. Framed within the medical context, researchers have assessed the effects of trauma on cognitive functioning, applied diagnostic criteria for PTSD to refugee populations, and estimated the prevalence of the disorder among refugee populations worldwide (Fazel et al. 2005; Pottie et al. 2011; Steel et al. 2009). Recently, critiques of the trauma discourse have surfaced in response to the over-emphasis on trauma and the medicalization of refugee experiences, which are founded on Western cultural values and ideology. Further, emphasis on the trauma focus risks diminished attention to cultural identity and provided an inadequate examination of the social, political, cultural, and historical contexts of the refugees (Marlowe 2010). The trauma label not only carries the potential to misrepresent refugees, but it also creates a social subordination, which further oppresses refugee populations when they are denied employment prospects or housing based on perceptions that they are "traumatized" and subsequently deemed as "high risk" (Doná 2010; Marlowe 2010).

As a corrective to the trauma critique, research has moved from the deficit model to an investigation of factors that contribute to resilience—the process of overcoming hardship (Mohaupt 2009). Although definitions of resilience vary, they usually refer to positive adaption to particular stressors (Pulvirenti and Mason 2011) and typically include "exposure to risk or adverse circumstance and outcomes within or above the expected range" (Mohaupt 2009, p. 65). Research on the resiliency of refugees emphasizes that it is a process rather than an individual trait. As Fraser et al. (1999) note, resiliency:

> …should not be viewed as one person's heroic or tenacious efforts to overcome disadvantage. Rather it must be viewed ecologically. Individual attributes that produce resilience under one set of environmental conditions may not produce resilience under another set of environmental conditions. Resilience emerges from a heterogeneity of individual and environmental influences that conspire to produce exceptional performance in the face of significant threat (p. 138).

Critiques of the resiliency theory in refugee studies have been promulgated. Socio-cultural constructions of adversity, labels of positive or maladaptation and the factors

that deem individuals as "resilient" impose Western epistemological views on refugee populations and dramatically influence mainstream perceptions of refugees and resettlement service provision. Resilience research from this stance has emphasized an individual's ability to independently thrive and contribute to society within which positive adaption is equated with a person's capacity to embody capitalist values such as independence from the state and financial self-sufficiency (Pulvirenti and Mason 2011). Critics argue that hegemonic Western notions of resilience need to be deconstructed, accommodating cultural variances within resilience discourse. This, they suggest, calls for broader, subjective notions of positive adaption and the acknowledgment of the complex intersections of interpersonal, political, intercultural, and socio-economic factors (Brough et al. 2013), that construct the definition of resilience and the process that contributes to the manifestation of "resilient" behavior.

A growing body of research asserts cultural variance in concepts of resilience. For example, Spitzer (2007) examined the extent to which Chilean, Somali, and Chinese migrants to Canada ($n = 33$) display resilience through constructing their lives amidst significant forces of oppression. Ungar's (2008) study of international youth ($n = 1500$) found cultural and contextual factors contributed to resilience and he suggested that the extent to which resilience is realized in a youth's life depends on the culture and context within which they reside. Bottrell (2009) examined resilience from the perspective of marginalized youth ($n = 12$) in Australia and the construction of resilience within social inequality and social processes specific to youth.

While researchers are moving to broaden the epistemological understanding of resilience within a multi-dimensional context, few studies have employed methodologies which prioritize experiences of refugees in ways that enhance their capacity to meaningfully contribute to academic discourse.

The aim of this study is to broaden the collective understanding of resilience by examining the South Sudanese-Canadian refugee women's construction of resilience through Photovoice methods and to reflect on the corresponding practice implications that emerge as a result.

Sudanese Refugees: Political Context

Since the early slave trade, Sudan has had a history tainted by ethnic divide and domination. The Northern region (known as the "Arab North") has always possessed majority of the regions power and resources, while the Southern region (or the "Christian South") has remained politically, militarily, and economically oppressed (Natsios 2012; Dowden 2008). In 1955, civil war broke out between the North and South over these longstanding issues. This lasted for almost 20 years, before relaxing into a brief 11-year period of peace which was abruptly halted by a second civil war in 1983 (Deng 2001). In 2005, a Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) was signed between the North and South which welcomed political resolution to warring regions but neglected underlying inequalities and ethnic tensions (Jauhari 2010). Sudan's two civil wars have been identified as some of the longest and most ravaging wars ever fought on African soil (Synder 1999). Heavy socio-economic, political, and environmental consequences have led to the country becoming one of the largest refugee-producing countries in Northeast Africa (Abusharaf 1998), with still large numbers fleeing today (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). In 2011, a

national referendum was held in Sudan to determine if its southern region would become an independent state (Nield 2011). This was a monumental moment for the Sudanese people as it signified the pinnacle of years of civil war and unrest. With new emerging ethnic tensions arising with the onset of the independence of South Sudan, it is likely that North and South Sudan will continue with high migration trends into the future (Jauhari 2010). This holds important implications for future host countries and their ability to integrate Sudanese refugees aptly into new environments in a culturally relevant way.

Methods

Participatory Action Research

While researchers are moving to broaden the epistemological understanding of resilience within a multi-dimensional context, the notion of refugee agency still undermines the current body of research. Current methodological approaches over-emphasize Western values and reinforce the marginalization of refugees, thus limiting their ability to voice their experiences and restricting their capacity to meaningfully contribute to academic discourse. To mitigate the extent to which refugee voices are undermined in the Western-centric methodological processes, we adopted Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods. PAR is rooted in the emancipatory movements of Latin America and popular education writings of Brazilian educator Paolo Freire (2000). According to Freire (2000) a situation where individuals are prevented from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence; "to alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into objects" (p. 85).

Altpeter et al. (1999) define PAR as a "collective project joining researchers and actors, that produces knowledge emerging from practice and knowledge and sent back to it, in an interactive and progressive relation" (p. 32). PAR diverges from positivist and empirical forms of research in which researchers alone possess all the knowledge and authority (Brydon-Miller 1997). It encourages participants and researchers, as co-researchers, to jointly agree on the goals and purpose of the research, collaborate to determine the nature of data collection methods and analysis, and synthesize the results in cooperation (Pyrch 2001). Within a PAR process, "communities of inquiry and action evolve and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers" (Reason and Bradbury 2008, p. 1). In this way, PAR minimizes the power differential between professional researchers and community experts and asserts that experiential knowledge is a valid form of expertise (Altpeter et al. 1999). The end goal of the PAR research is to affect social change. Co-researchers, therefore, must collectively adopt a commitment to the identification and implementation of solutions that pertain to the issues reflected in the research.

Photovoice

In this study, we used Photovoice: a visual participatory research tool developed by Wang and Burris (1997). Photovoice uses images taken by participants to identify significant community issues (Carlson et al. 2006). Orginally, Photovoice stemmed

from several areas of critical theory. Education for critical consciousness, mainly Friere's work (2000), inspired the idea that a visual image can challenge individuals to think critically about their community and the political and social forces within it (Wang and Burris 1997, p. 370). Feminist theory brought enlightenment to the notion of male bias within participatory research and illustrated how this shaped its methodology. Wang and Burris were careful to distinguish Photovoice from Documentary Photography; however, they credit this also as key formulating body of literature (Wang and Burris, 1997).

As a practice based in the production of knowledge, Photovoice has three main goals: (1) to enable people to record and reflect on their community's strengths and concerns; (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs; and (3) to reach policymakers (Wang and Burris, 1997). Photovoice methodology has specific application to populations who have limited literacy or language skills (such as refugee or immigrant populations), giving those under-represented in literature opportunities to express their voices (Hergenrather et al. 2009; Kwan and Walsh, 2013). In Harris, Spark, and Chi Watts (2015) study of African women in Australia, they found that participants reported several facets of social exclusion in an educational setting. Language and conceptual knowledge were a few of the named challenges. Photovoice offers a remedy for access issues and exclusionary factors that may be inherent in traditional research methodologies.

Photovoice is participant centered at its core; it empowers participants both directly, through advocacy, and indirectly through the leadership roles they assume. Acknowledging their position as expert within the research context, participants have full control over which photographs will be chosen or included and which stories will be shared and discussed (Carlson et al. 2006). Photovoice rests on the assumption that images teach what participants perceive as significant and allow them to define their concerns and priorities (Hergenrather et al. 2009).

Participants

A small group of South Sudanese refugee women approached the second author of the study, in her role as a community worker, seeking an opportunity to share their experiences of migration to the broader Canadian public. The group wanted to mitigate feelings of disconnection and isolation, through expressing their individual and collective manifestations of strength, as reflected in their migration journeys. They expressed that in the process of sharing their stories of overcoming hardship, they hoped to find meaningful ways to engage in Canadian society.

In response to this request, the authors of the study suggested they work together to develop a PAR project, in order to both establish a platform in which the stories of these South Sudanese women could be shared and understood, and to explore relevant community actions initiatives. After an initial orientation to the PAR process, participants worked with the authors of this study to develop a research topic and were introduced to the term resilience. Together, it was agreed that by pursuing a research project that reflected their own cultural understandings of resilience, participants would be able to provide a nuanced perspective on their journeys to Canada, articulate their process of overcoming hardship, and meaningfully contribute to research and practice devoted to refugee populations.

To investigate this question, we formed a co-researcher team comprised of a university-based researcher, two MSW graduate students and eight South Sudanese refugee women: co-researchers from the Panaruu-Dinka tribe in South Sudan. "Panaruu-Dinka is one of the Dinka clans situated in oil rich Unity state dominated by the Nuer ethnic and it shares some cultural ties and beliefs with other Dinkas across Southern Sudan" (Dan Baguoot 2010, para. 2). All eight woman fled South Sudan in the midst of, or shortly following the second civil war. Some were only children at the time, who, after fleeing grew up in the bush or refugee camps, while others were older with families and children of their own.

The women entered Canada through the Federal Refugee Sponsorship Program (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012) and had been living in Canada from 3–13 years at the time of the study. The women were currently residing in Calgary, Alberta. According to 2011 estimates, Calgary is the fourth largest city in Canada with the fourth highest immigrant population, representing approximately 26.2 % of the total population (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration 2014). The immigrant population in Calgary—and throughout Canada—is growing and will continue to grow, projected to reach almost half a million by 2020 (University of Calgary, n.d). In 2012, 2788 individuals were classified humanitarian population defined as "temporary residents who are primarily refugee claimants but also includes other foreign nationals allowed to remain in Canada on humanitarian or compassionate grounds under 'special considerations'" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, p. 62).

The women ranged in age from 25-68 years and four were employed at least part-time. One woman who was literate in both English and Dinka served as the interpreter and translator for the study; all other women co-researchers were illiterate in both languages and were not able to communicate in English. This study attempts to account for the historical factors of war and conflict in the context of the women's individual stories and personal experiences in determining resilience.

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to the study commencing, ethics approval was granted by the institutional ethics review board. All co-researchers provided written informed consent (through translation) and granted permission to use their names and photographs for the purposes of the study. Co-researchers were provided with cameras to use for the duration of the study. Over a 6-month period, researchers held six, 3-hour focus groups on topics pertaining to resilience. Focus groups were co-facilitated by the two lead authors who did not speak Dinka and a co-researcher who was fluent in both languages, who provided simultaneous translation and cultural interpretation. Specific areas of inquiry, suffering, survival, support, and hope, were generated by women co-researchers and deemed relevant to express their collective experiences of the resilience process. Although each participant was given a camera to use as is typical in the Photovoice process (Wang and Burris, 1997), participants chose to use only one camera for all pictures and collectively planned and photographed images that captured and reflected common experiences pertaining to each of the selected topics. Thus images and captions are not attributed to a specific co-researcher. Photographs and their corresponding topic were then discussed in focus group sessions. All discussions were audio-recorded, translated

into English by the co-researcher and transcribed. Adopting a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1990), two researchers independently completed line-by-line coding and categorized themes in response to the research question. Subsequently, the researchers collaborated to interrogate the transcripts further and to develop consensus regarding key preliminary themes and interpretations, which were then shared with co-researchers in a focus group meeting during which additional feedback and alternative interpretations were sought.

Findings

The Resilience Process

The women's process of resilience (Fig. 1) is sustained by three key factors: faith and spirituality, circles of support, and global community. Each of these factors impacts the journey of resilience across vast experience including surviving the past, supporting the present, and hoping for the future. Surviving the past, co-researchers articulated, is the process of moving through adverse circumstances pervasive to the women's displacement and histories of war and violence. Supporting the present represents women's ongoing effort to engage in their immediate circumstances and navigate present adversities and newfound pleasures associated with resettling in Canada. Hoping for the future represents the women's capacity to cultivate an optimistic expectation for

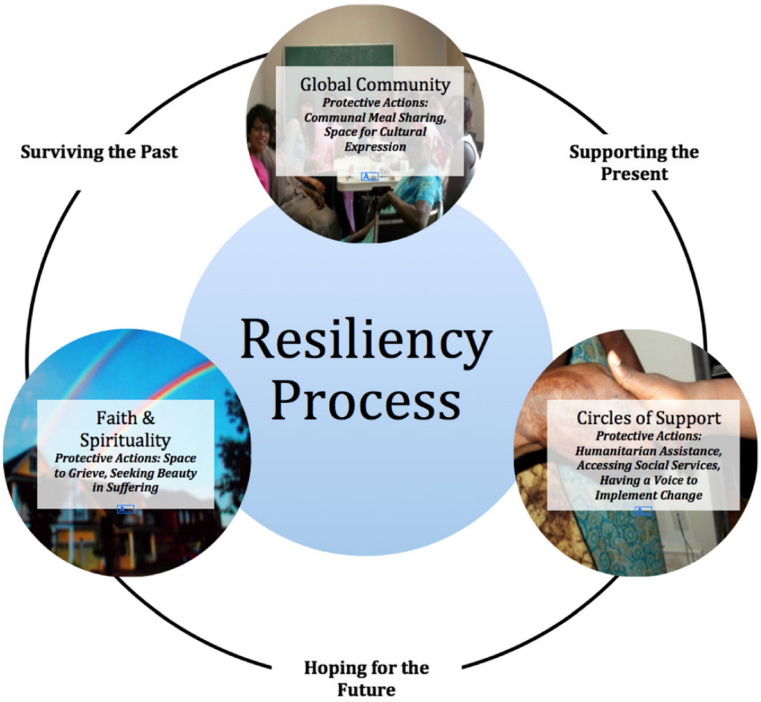

Fig. 1 The resiliency process

life. The resiliency process is thus not linear; it is depicted as an iterative, circular process in which resiliency factors and protective actions facilitate an ongoing negotiation of past, present, and future life.

The following section outlines each of the three overarching factors in the resiliency process: faith and spirituality, circles of support, and global community. Each of these resiliency factors is defined and understood through a number of protective actions that function as the building blocks of each resilience factor. We draw upon images, captions, illustrative quotes from the transcripts and supporting material from the literature to explicate these factors.

Faith and Spirituality

The participants articulated that faith and the connection to their Christian beliefs, represented by image of a double rainbow (Fig. 2), was a constant source of solace and meaning-making in times of suffering. The image of the rainbow was chosen to reflect the providence of God. Rainbows are associated with rain, which, according to co-researchers, is a gift from the heavens that counters drought. Rainbows are a symbol of life, productivity of the lands, and the commitment of God to foster goodness and sustenance on earth.

The participants identified that their belief in the omniscience of deity countered the subsequent frailty of humankind. This belief allowed them to accept the atrocities of the past and present as well as the unknowns of the future:

> We put God's hope first; then follow it by our definition. For example, when there is a big wind outside, we never know what will happen in the next minutes. But if we believe in God, we know that he knows much more than humans.

In this way, resilience was fostered by acknowledging the power of God to intercede and provide. Their firm belief that a higher power provides for them, facilitated peace of mind, and gratitude to deity in the face of suffering. Contrary to individualistic

Fig. 2 Faith and spirituality

notions of resilience that is founded on a notion of independent individual agency, these women described that complete dependence on God and an inherent acknowledgement human fragility was what allowed them to thrive. This involved centering themselves on the goodness of the divine and distancing themselves from notions of human agency, which, in turn, allowed them to withstand repeated exposure to violence and suffering.

The participants identified two specific protective actions in their development of faith and spirituality: space to grieve and seeking beauty in suffering. Space to grieve was defined by having both reprieve from adversity and a physical space to mourn such as a grave or church. This notion is reflected in the image entitled, No space to cry for the lost (Fig. 3), wherein participants capture the gift of the ritual of lament. In this image women honor the death of a relative through prayerful expression of sorrow at a gravesite. Space to grieve is portrayed by co-researchers as a cathartic emotional release, in which a purge of emotion allows one to honor the lost, express the extent of the suffering endured and carry forward:

> When we think of all this [suffering] it give us emotional feeling of staying it out.

Participants described that in the process of acknowledging the emotions of loss collectively, one can begin to see the providence of God:

> The unity you see among us here is the togetherness that we share in the community too. To break from our sad we spend our time together to share good time to have a break from stressful moments.

These spaces to grieve are spiritual in nature where God is understood as present. By naming the grief in the presence of God, they are able to find within themselves, space to honor God's good presence in their lives and thus find strength to continue.

Co-researchers also identified that seeking beauty in suffering was crucial to the development of the resiliency factor faith and spirituality. Participants explained that

Fig. 3 No space to cry for the lost

this strategy was a means to acknowledge the presence of divine goodness, an avenue by which they derive meaning and redemption even in dark circumstance. As one woman explains:

> First we put God's hope first because according to our faith, everything good comes from God, be it love, protection, blessing, kindness.

In the photograph representing the process of seeking beauty (Fig. 4), co-researchers describe discarded weeds, "growing beautiful even out of darkness," a representation of their capacity to discern goodness, to renounce the futility of suffering and to grow and move through immediate hardships. They referred to themselves as being determined to grow, like weeds, which, even when plucked, continue to rise from the earth. By seeking beauty, they choose to acknowledge that there is divine beauty in everything and that God will continue to cultivate that beauty in themselves and others. Resilience is rooted in the knowledge that goodness and beauty is a divine "weed," and will always rise from the earth.

Circles of Support

According to participants, circles of support represents a continuous cycle of giving and receiving, a mutual reciprocity that promotes resiliency throughout all stages of life. Depicted as an image of hands held together (Fig. 5), each individual in a process of mutual support is both giving and receiving and is sustained in connection to another.

One women explains the circles of support:

> We like to support other people not to be paid back. We feel partial to help when we feel well supported or we have something of excess…to us we have a heart of support, but best of all we don't care about what we have or don't have. At least we can share the little we've got until another person joins in. We call it a circle of support because it goes around and around.

Fig. 4 Weeds

Fig. 5 Circles of support

In this view, resiliency is built on the iterative process of both accepting and offering respite that is in continuous motion. Again diverging from resiliency notions that are conceptualized by individual independence, the women assert that the realization of interdependency, and the actualization of reciprocity facilitates resiliency across all life stages. In this view the notion of resiliency is not the manifestation in material excess but rather the opposite. It is the action of taking care of one another through the sharing of resources.

Humanitarian assistance, accessing social services and space for cultural expressions were named as protective factors in building circles of support. Humanitarian assistance refers to the presence of aid agencies such as the United Nations, the Red Cross, and other non governmental organizations that were involved in supporting the displaced in refugee camps which facilitated participants capacity to then care for others. In the image, The support cue (Fig. 6), women line up to receive ration cards from an aid provider and are greeted with a line of mutual support from each other and from

Fig. 6 The support cue

humanitarian relief organizations. The following example of humanitarian assistance and its role in the cycle of support was offered by one study participant:

> The UNHCR went ahead and dug boreholes for clean drinking water, distributed kitchen utensils and blankets, mats, water containers, distributed firewood for cooking and gave us food based on normal routines in a month. And from there it went ahead to create security for us to be safe by hiring police to protect us either from crime, kidnapping, murder or other forms of abuse and neglect. In this process of support we could help ourselves first, then when we were responsible enough we could extend our help to other people.

Similarly, accessing social services is also a means through which the women engage in circles of support. Access to social services is portrayed in the image entitled, Knock, knock…who's there? (Fig. 7). In this picture the participants are shown as going door-to-door, inquiring and responding to the needs of community members. For these women, the government of Canada and its social support services have been an integral part of their survival in Canada:

> But when we arrive here things turned the other way round- we got settlement workers or counselors to orient us on how to settle here in Canada. For example taking us to bank, showing us how to take public transit, grocery shopping, budgeting, health service, showing us newcomer centers, family centers, how to apply government housing, registration of our children to schools, daycare and after school program, how to find job and help with filling application form, writing resume, preparation for job interview. Our life looked totally different from what we expected.

Co-researchers in the study clarified that social services, which facilitated them to provide care for their children, were particularly important in contributing to the circle of support and ultimately to the resilience process. Both humanitarian

Fig. 7 Knock, knock. who's there?

assistance and access to social services have been the means by which participants could take care of their community. Resources offered by government agencies are shared among the community through knowledge sharing and resource distribution. Those who receive social assistance, divide the resources among community members. In return, the government agencies, which give resources, receive the gift of supported community, in which residents equally protect the needs of the vulnerable.

Participants clarified that having a voice to make change also fosters the resiliency factor: circles of support. The image, Being heard (Fig. 8), depicts a women speaking into a microphone, asserting her knowledge and expertise and her power to promote change. The women's suffering is thus transformed into the ability to mitigate suffering for others in future. The co-researchers' capacity to voice stories, articulate the hardships and offer solutions to cope with displacement and resettlement, while expressing future dreams and aspirations becomes the means by which they articulate change is made. In explaining this relationship, one woman offers, "the fact that our voice is being heard, we now have hope that our stories as women will be heard, not only in our community but, by many other communities as well."

The ability to influence change ultimately cultivates the women's ability to take care of others; particularly those who still are suffering in Sudan. Storytelling promotes the reciprocal gift of listening and talking. It is the primary tool in which the community can honor the generous gifts that have been given, expose the needs of their community, and mobilize hope that the circles of support will reach out to reduce the suffering of those in need.

Global Community

A global community (Fig. 9), as identified by woman co-researchers, is one, which celebrates the dignity in humanness and sets out to protect it, and is thus committed to

Fig. 8 Being heard

Fig. 9 A global community

building resilience across communities, cultures and nations. It is the shedding of the barriers to connection by acknowledging collective and mutual humanity. For these participants, a global community countered the notion of cultural displacement and allowed them to belong in a space between two cultures. An absence of belonging destabilized their capacity to be in relationship and connection and served as a cultural threat in the resiliency process. The feelings of a lack of belonging, identity, and growing isolation, resulted in the women becoming entrapped in a place they call "the center of nowhere," which, in turn, diminishes their capacity to engage in the iterative processing of past, present and future.

Global community requires then to integrate into Canadian society while establishing and re-establishing of connections to their community in Sudan. The ability to maintain local and global communities was described as being dependent on social engagement and the extent to which relationships can be established and fostered across boarders and cultures:

> Support means to us, bringing connection between countries. Cross continental support … shows us unity and willingness of good heart to support those who are in need. That builds our nation and our hope. To us, to join everybody is to be saying no more that I am from Africa, from Canada, or from Australia. Because what we see now is that people are people and our differences matter less because if we look on our differences then we are excluding others.

Communal meal sharing was identified by study participants as a protective action that contributed to their sense of global community, which, in turn, heightened participants' capacity. Engaging the cultural tradition of communal meal sharing is vital to the preservation of refugee women's spirit. In the image, Happy meal, (Fig. 10) the women share that in order "to break from our sad, we spend our time together to share

Fig. 10 Happy meal

good time to have a break from stressful moments." Maintaining local and global connection was evident in the sharing of foods from different cultural contexts; over the process of eating new and different cultural dishes, an understanding is formed between members of different cultural groups. Resilience is built on a mutual transformation that occurs in the process of cultural exposure, storytelling over a meal, and the collective satiation of hunger.

The photograph entitled, The straddle (Fig. 11), symbolizes the continuous effort required to maintain community both locally and abroad. The picture depicts a woman attempting to transition into a new culture. She struggles with one foot in each culture and rests on the support of friend to maintain balance. This picture, co-researchers explain, displays the struggle to move from one culture to another and emphasizes that connection to people who our rooted in the new culture serves as important stability for newcomers. As one woman characterizes this experience, "We have a lot of things we

Fig. 11 The straddle

need to survive. One is connection. We don't have connections with a lot of people, what we know is the police only."

A space for cultural expression was also identified by study participants as a protective action contributing to their sense of global community. The women suggested the space for cultural expression, such as a Sudanese community center, would facilitate the preservation of faith rituals, language, family values and Sudanese social conventions. It would, co-researchers suggest, provide opportunities to assert tradition, ancestry and heritage within the contexts of new realities; thus, serving as a bridge to mitigating the challenges associated with the physical and cultural displacement of resettlement. The image, *Cultivation* (Fig. 12), represents: "A farmer who plants her or his crops when the rainy season starts. The farmer is hopeful that soon his plantation will grow and that he will have successful harvest." Space for cultural expression, women note, would plant the seeds for resilience in the future fostering a bridge between their Sudanese culture and the Canadian context.

The main threat endangering hope for the future was the concern regarding the loss of cultural identity for future generations. As culture, language and faith is intrinsically woven into refugee women's journey of suffering and resiliency; the absence of cultural preservation threatens to decontextualize their experiences, mute their voice and the voices of their children, and inhibit their ability to affect future change. Women in the study explicated how future generations who required to:

> … copy our family values and grow up to be responsible and God fearing adult… to do their best in their lifetime, and with the mutual love we share among our children and families… give us hope of something better in the future.

A lack of cultural identity for future generations fails to honor their pasts, threatens children's ability to contribute to future change and minimizes resiliency for forthcoming generations.

Fig. 12 Cultivation

A Diverging Model of Resilience

According to resiliency theory and it's conceptualization in Western epistemological views of adaptation, refugees are seen to have positive adaption, or resilience, if they progress forward, divorcing themselves from past trauma or hardship. This is often viewed as a linear and sequential process that carries certain expectations. In Harris et al. (2015) work with South Sudanese populations in Australia, they highlight Ahmed's (2010) example of "happiness" as being one of these expectations. They argue throughout their research that "embracing multiple ways of knowing, both for migrant and host cultural groups" (p. 1227) is the only way to avoid perpetuating the "acculturation narrative" (p.1228). The model of resilience that emerges from our study draws upon and further expands this concept.

Current understandings of the process of resilience need to be re-evaluated. In this study, participants pointed to resilience as an iterative process in which the past, present, and future is repeatedly re-examined and re-imagined to find new meanings and strengths. Unlike past conceptions, resilience in this way emerges not as linear process in which moving forward is a primary goal, but one that can be cyclical: reverberating back and forth, cultivating new and richer understandings.

In incorporating multiple ways of knowing that represent values beyond the Western emphasis on individual independence, resilience may be recognized as a mutually transformative process that is nurtured while embedded in community. This understanding of resilience credits community members, not just the individual, as givers and receivers—negotiating and supporting the process. As a result, capitalist notions of success and progress (mainly material worth) no longer define resilience, but instead, can be traded for relational connection.

It is important in the adaptation of the resilience model that the challenge of straddling two cultures and histories be recognized. The value that is usually placed on conforming to one while discarding the other must be abandoned itself. Space to engage multiple narratives and sources of identity need to be seen as a strength. Harris et al. (2015) refer to "reductive scripts" (p. 1228) as a way of describing the identity constraints that many migrants feel. The pressure that may be felt to conform to one way of life stifles growth and reflection instead of encouraging it. Therefore, room needs to be made for cultural pride, family/community celebration (Harris et al. 2015), and multiple sources of identity and belonging. This will only aid in the resilience process and the world's interpretation of it.

Action

Maintaining fidelity to the principles of PAR, the findings of this study were used to promote a variety of actions taken with the goal of affecting social change. The participants were eager to identify ways to contribute to building resilience in the broader community and thus three action priorities were identified to foster resilience in the broader Dinka Panaruu community in Calgary and abroad: Create a space for cultural expression in Calgary; Care for Panaruu Community in Sudan; and Maintaining the integrity of the family unit in Calgary.

In order to create a space for cultural expression, participants and researchers collaborated to ascertain a community partner that was willing to provide free ongoing space for weekly South Sudanese community engagement. Also a partnership was established with a local church that offered a location for ongoing cultural expression. In meeting this goal for the longer-term, members of the South Sudanese community with the aid of the community partners are in the process of investigating funding opportunities to establish a South Sudanese Cultural Centre where native language classes, cultural-specific arts classes, community meetings, and fundraisers can occur.

Action ideas pertaining to the care of their community in South Sudan largely pertained to fundraising. As their resiliency is directly built on their capacity to take care of others, participants asserted that financial resources were desperately needed to maintain medical and educational facilities in their home village, Panrieng. While a variety of activities were discussed, participants determined to host an event to display research findings and publish and sell photobooks and calendars with their photographs to raise funds to send to Panrieng.

Finally, to address present threats to resilience associated with family separation and child apprehension, participants expressed an ongoing need to connect with local social service agencies to develop relationships with child welfare agencies and establish opportunities for mutual education that could potentiate family unification in Panaruu Dinka Calgary communities. Participants were connected with a child welfare professional of Dinka descent in order to facilitate greater community and communication across the Panaruu Dinka and child welfare agency.

Practice Implications

Findings from the study have direct practice implications. Resettlement service providers should engage in practices that acknowledge the breadth of factors that formulate conceptions of resilience across life stages, experiences, cultures and languages. Practitioners must interrogate their own pre-conceptions of resilience that influence and inform expectations throughout the integration process. Policies and practices within resettlement services need to align with this enriched understanding of the resiliency process for refugees.

The study demonstrated that underrepresented voices have exceptional capacity to articulate their individual epistemological frameworks and identify the resiliency processes. This suggests that individual members of refugee populations can define their own needs rather than be serviced on assumptions inferred by organizations or service providers. Support services therefore need to be tailored to promote the individual and collective processes of resilience. Similarly, avenues for supporting and connecting to clients' pasts need to be forged, for it is through connecting and sense-making of the past, that refuge populations are able to survive the present and develop hope for the future. Additionally, practitioners must acknowledge and preserve, to the extent that it is possible, the enduring bonds that exist to refugees' homeland, people and culture. Western notions of "moving on" or "leaving the past behind" must be re-evaluated, in light of these research findings. Practical resources such as tele-communication networks offered within organizations, or providing spaces for cultural practices, among others, could be used to this end.

By giving refugees opportunity to define their own resiliency processes, service providers would undoubtedly increase the ability of services to meet individual needs, as well as empowering refugees by acknowledging their expertise and providing opportunities for them to share their stories with the end goal of affecting social change.

Limitations

This particular study was limited to understanding the resiliency process among a small group of Panaru Dinka refugee women population in Calgary, Canada. Future research could determine if these constructs have a broader application to diverse sub-populations of refugees. While the small sample size and the nature of participant's specific geopolitical, intra-personal, ethnic, and cultural contexts may compromise the generalizability of the findings, the findings of this study broaden the scope of resiliency research, expand the construction of resilience to include non-Western and minority voices and experiences, and accommodate the complex interpersonal, inter-cultural, historical, and geopolitical factors that contribute to refugee resilience.

This study is unique because it accesses a minority population of non-English speakers and gives opportunity for these under-represented voices to communicate notions of resilience in their mother tongue. The participatory research process allowed ideas to evolve without the imposition of the values embedded within the constraints of the English lexicon. However, while focus groups occurred in Dinka, the translation that occurred during transcription by a professional may have imposed a degree of subjectivity and the restrictions embedded in the English language.

Conclusion

An expanded conceptualization of the resiliency process for refugees, acknowledges a staged approach to resilience dependent of the phase of disposition and resettlement. This conceptualization identifies at each stage, factors which promote and threaten resiliency. Findings from this research study suggest that underrepresented voices have significant expertise that can contribute to an enriched theory of resiliency. Further research is necessary to examine the applicability of this model of resiliency to other minority, non-Western populations. In doing this research, gathering seldom heard, marginalized voices is critical in order to fully expand the notion of refugee resilience across cultures and experiences. By engaging diverse populations who have exceptional experiential knowledge, contextualized and comprehensive knowledge base can be produced. This information is necessary to inform policies and practice for service provision and supports for refugees in the future.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards Prior to the study commencing, ethics approval was granted by the institutional ethics review board. All co-researchers provided written informed consent (through translation) and granted permission to use their names and photographs for the purposes of the study.

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