

# The Concept of Resiliency: Theoretical Lessons from Community Research

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Resiliency is a concept for which both its appeal and frustration comes from the elasticity of its meaning. While the idea of resiliency commonly has been found in the areas of human development and psychopathology, there is now an increased interest in extending its application. For example, community resiliency is increasingly a central element in public health policies and programs. In what follows, we strive to identify some central theoretical issues that arise when the concept of resiliency is applied to communities. Our purpose is to work through these issues in a way that clarifies the concept by bringing together useful, though otherwise disparate, strands from the research literature. A first guiding principle has been the notion that if a concept is used to mean too many things, it in effect has correspondingly less meaning and usefulness. A second guiding principle has been an interest in being able to use the concept in discussions concerned with social interventions and societal critique. We see resiliency as a fundamental human potential which is both enabled and constrained by the social contexts people construct and within which they carry out their daily lives. Thus our concern is normative as well as analytic, in the sense that we want to have a theoretical framework which can facilitate efforts to develop communities in a way that enhances the knowledgeable agency of persons living and working within them.

After reviewing the main tendencies in the literature, our discussion moves into two main sections. We first provide an analytic summary of the findings from a case study involving a resource-based community in western Canada (Kulig, 1996). The Crowsnest Pass has undergone rapid social and economic changes against the backdrop of historical natural and man-made crises. It is thus a productive site for exploring the ebb and flow of community resiliency. We use this empirical context, along with our prior understanding of communities, as a central basis for setting out several propositions that taken together constitute a provisional theoretical frame-

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work. In our view, this framework represents a more useful way to conceptualize resiliency beyond that of discrete individuals. Our concern in this paper is primarily how to conceptualize resiliency rather than to explain it, because we see the latter as ultimately dependent on the former.

In brief, the propositions comprising our framework are as follows:

- The concept of resiliency in the context of communities needs to be grounded in a notion of human agency, understood in the sense of the capacity for meaningful, intentional action.
- Human agency implies both responsive and teleological orientations, thus it is useful to conceptualize resiliency, personal and collective, in terms of both recovery and efficacy.
- Individuals and collectivities are resilient in a first sense insofar as they act in such a way as to recover from what they define as negative physical or social events.
- Individuals and collectivities are resilient in a second sense insofar as they act to transform their physical and social environments to mitigate against such events in the future.
- The distinction between individual and community resiliency is parallel to the distinction between individual and collective action, this being a relational notion distinct from merely the aggregation of individual resilience as well as from the structural endurance within communities.
- While it is possible to conceptualize social structures as being resilient in a crude sense, it is not theoretically useful to do so.
- Individual and collective resiliency is enabled as well as constrained by both physical conditions and social structures, the latter involving social networks, local political economy, and practiced meaning systems.
- Capacity building in the context of community development can be understood as the process of enhancing personal and collective resiliency through the critique and transformation of social structures.

### APPROACHES TO RESILIENCY

Resiliency has been studied most extensively in children living in adverse conditions. For example, Felsman and Vaillant (1987) addressed this topic among children over a forty-year period, and Werner (1989) studied adverse life conditions and resiliency among children over a thirty-two-year period.

These two early studies, and others since, have sought to understand resiliency or the ability to bounce back from adversity, from a developmental and psychopathology perspective. A rudimentary definition of resiliency is that it is "the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or sustained life stress" (Werner, 1984 cited in Rhoads, 1994; p. 51). More recently, resiliency has been referred to as both a process (Bernard, 1996; Richardson et al., 1990) and an outcome of adversity (Fine, 1991). It has, therefore, also been defined as "a process of interaction between individuals and environmental circumstances that promote resiliency" (Richardson et al., 1990: 33). Resiliency has also been seen as providing opportunities to change traumas into triumph (Fine, 1991) as shown through numerous examples in the literature (Cohler, 1991). Some authors believe that the emphasis needs to be changed to focus on coping strategies to adverse conditions throughout the life span thereby understanding the positive coping behaviors of individuals, while de-emphasizing the practice of viewing human development as a linear event and only emphasizing those individuals who exhibit problematic behaviors (Antonovsky, 1996; Cohler, 1991; Rhoads, 1994).

Resiliency has usually been conceptualized in opposition to vulnerability or an "individuals' susceptibility to a negative outcome" (Werner, 1990: 97). Protective factors are seen as mechanisms by which an individual counters the vulnerability and risk factors or those hazards that increase the potential of a negative outcome (Werner, 1990). Available research provides ample information about the protective and at-risk factors of individuals throughout the life span (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1990). A number of characteristics of resiliency in individuals have included the possessing an active approach to problem-solving, perceiving experiences constructively, gaining others positive attention and having faith to maintain a positive outlook on life (Werner, 1984 cited in Rhoads, 1994). Self-understanding has also been intricately linked to the process of resiliency since it adds to the positive adaptation of the individuals (Beardslee, 1989). Strategies, interventions and programs have been developed to assist individuals, such as school children, families at risk and different cultural groups to become more resilient (Barbarin, 1993; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Linqanti, 1992; Patterson, 1995). It is from this work that speculation has been made that to create or enhance resilient individuals and families will automatically lead to resilient communities. As this paper indicates, such suppositions downplay the complexity of understanding resiliency at the community level as shall be discussed below.

The literature on community resiliency is not well developed, but there are some articles based on studies that are useful for understanding this concept. For example, the study of household reaction to famine in Sudan in the 1980s found that vulnerability to famine was not simply dependent upon impoverishment, but also on the result of the influence of socioeconomic and political factors and their influence on support systems (Pyle, 1992). In this instance, asset wealth was not seen as enhancing the ability to resist the effects of the famine because those groups with more survival strategies were more frequently able to stay in their villages and ward off the famine. Another study that focused on the reaction to drought in Ethiopia interestingly enough found the group that was politically weak had the motivation, knowledge and resourcefulness to successfully survive the drought (Turton & Turton, 1984). Elsass speculated that for a community to survive, it must "keep the chaos of the larger society outside" (1992: 177); the characteristics noted above would ensure that this would occur. The Appalachian region has undergone a number of studies that have focused on issues such as community change movements (Cable, 1993; Carawan & Carawan, 1993) which illustrate aspects of resiliency — power, collectivity, empowerment and unity. The study of community members' reactions to the Buffalo Creek flood indicated the loss of communality and trust among community members, examples of which can be seen as a breakdown of community resiliency. Resistance has also been studied in the Appalachian areas with the anti-strip mining movements being interpreted as the people's connection to the land (Fisher, 1993).

Other available frameworks are worth examining regarding their relationship to community resiliency. For example, English and Hicks (1992) developed a systems-in-transition paradigm to explain evolutionary changes in the community system: that is, over time when a stress is felt, interaction occurs between the internal and external environment through the system's permeable border. The authors contend that internal conflicts can occur when there are competing values, goals or ideas. Other useful information that may be applicable to resiliency is the ranking scales for community participation that include elements such as having leadership, organization, resource mobilization and management which are similar to characteristics of resilient communities (Labonte, 1993). Furthermore, Mangham et al. (1995) have noted factors that contribute to the resiliency of a community include community participation, mutual support and collectivity in meeting challenges.

Literature from the fields of community capacity, sustainability and competence is potentially useful. Community capacity emphasizes the capacity, skills and assets of community members and the opportunities for

them to use these aspects in problem-solving (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The underlying philosophy emphasizes the strengths or assets of a community rather than the needs or problems. Consequently, a community-assets map is completed that includes information about local institutions (schools, businesses, libraries), citizens' associations (churches, cultural groups) and gifts of individuals (income, youth, elderly) to begin the process of community mobilization and development. The results of the assets map is combined with the community development process to allow for the necessary conditions for which a community can continue to strengthen its resources and decrease the problems which it faces. The simplicity of the community-assets map may however, underestimate the complexity of the community itself.

Community sustainability also shares some of these same philosophical underpinnings, including the emphasis on community involvement to meet needs. The five major themes of action for building sustainable communities include working toward self-reliance, harmonizing with nature, attaining community control, meeting individual needs, and building a community culture. A further emphasis is on the community gaining the ability to rely more on internal physical resources and human capabilities rather than being dependent upon external development in meeting the community's needs. Infrastructure support also needs to be available to ensure that control rests with the community members with a de-emphasis on the accumulation of material wealth (Nozick, 1992).

Both Cortrell (1976 cited in Eng, Salmon & Mullan, 1992) and George Herbert Mead are credited with developing community competence as a concept (Cortrell, 1980 cited in Goepfinger, Lassiter and Wilcox, 1982). Community competence has been defined as a process by which groups, communities and aggregates work together to identify problems and needs of the community. This process includes agreeing on goals and priorities and implementing specific strategies to meet the identified problems and needs (Cortrell, 1980 cited in Goepfinger, Lassiter & Wilcox, 1982). According to Cortrell (1976 cited in Shuster & Goepfinger, 1996), community competence includes eight essential elements: commitment, self-other awareness, articulateness, effective communication, conflict containment and accommodation, participation, management of relations with larger society, and machinery for facilitating participant interaction and decision-making. More recently, a ninth essential component — social support — has been forwarded (Eng & Parker, 1994). Other authors have defined community competence as "a self-sustaining process of community development" (Goepfinger et al., 1982: 464).

It is argued by some that community competence is the functioning, not of the individuals, but of the collectivity as a unit. However, we are cautioned about not assuming that a community of competent individuals results in a competent community because of the complexity of interaction and contradiction between elements within the community (Goepfinger et al., 1982). These same authors also believe that community health and community competence are interchangeable if community health is seen as a process by which health capabilities and action are involved. There is agreement that improving community competence is as important as improving health because being competent implies that barriers to good health can be addressed (Eng et al., 1992). In addition, other authors have hypothesized that being competent and negotiating for resources to cope with one problem increases the skills of the community and its ability to further cope with other problems. Iscoe sees a competent community as one that "utilizes, develops, or otherwise obtains resources", but then explains that, "the competent community or, more specifically, persons and groups in the competent community have a repertoire of possibilities and alternatives" (Iscoe, 1974: 609). The latter illustrates, as Goepfinger et al. (1982) note, the inaccurate assumptions about the reciprocal relationships between competent individuals and communities.

Studies have been conducted about community residents' perceptions of community functioning (Goepfinger and Baglioni, 1985). One study was based on the original eight dimensions of community competency and, despite the promising results, concluded by pointing to the challenges in differentiating between individual and community competence. In more recent work by Eng and Parker, changes in community competence were noted by the community residents involved in the study. For these authors, community competence has been defined as "the capacity of a community to assess and generate the conditions required to demand or execute change" (1994: 203). This definition is consistent with the framework we wish to articulate here.

### THE CROWSNEST PASS: A COMMUNITY STUDY

The Crowsnest Pass, located in southwestern Alberta, is a community of approximately 7,000 residents and was historically a mining region. A number of immigrants arrived in the early 1900s to mine coal and limestone and settled in a series of six towns; now, only five (Coleman, Blairmore, Frank, Bellevue and Hillcrest) have survived to varying degrees. In 1979, these five towns, and a larger geographic area, were amalgamated into the

municipality of the Crowsnest Pass commonly called "The Pass." The system of government includes one mayor with a councilman representing each town or ward, and services such as the administration buildings in Coleman, and the only swimming pool and library in Blairmore which is also the major shopping area.

The Pass has survived many disasters including the Frank Slide in 1903 that resulted in the loss of about 70 lives when the town of Frank was buried. Other disasters include the devastating floods of the 1930s and the relatively frequent wind storms that have in the past destroyed trailer homes and businesses. Coal mine tragedies have also occurred resulting in the loss of life or injury, and sometimes inability of the individual(s) to work again. The Hillcrest mine disaster in 1914 which resulted in the death of 189 men stands as the worst mine disaster in Canada. Although coal mining was a dangerous and precarious business, the residents were able to depend upon a surge of interest in the coal in the area during the 1960s and early 1970s. During this time period the majority of the coal was shipped to Japan. The fall of the coal industry began in the 1970s and eventually led to the closure of the mines on the Alberta side. Coal mines have always existed just across the British Columbia border, 15 kilometers west of Coleman, in abandoned towns such as Michel and Natal and in newly formed towns such as Sparwood and Elkford. Eventually more and more residents from the Pass commuted daily to the mines across the British Columbia border. For coal miners this resulted in higher wages and many more benefits. This heyday of the coal mining industry did not last. The development of coal mines in other parts of Alberta, the loss of coal contracts at the British Columbia mines and a recent long and bitter lockout have resulted in far fewer being employed in the coal mining industry. Although coal mining has always been the main industry, other types of employment exist in the Pass including small scale logging and ranching, a gas plant, and positions within the local education, health and retail services.

Given the challenges facing the Pass, both historically and in the present, we felt it would a useful site in which to examine the dynamics of resiliency at the community level. This is not to say that the Pass was a completely resilient community, but rather it was and continues to be a context in which community resiliency, as well as the factors affecting it, come into explicit play. Both individual and focus group interviews were held to answer the research question. In total, 40 individual interviews were conducted with individuals who represented different age groups, different genders and different towns. A total of 11 focus group interviews were held with community service groups and agencies. Altogether 114 residents were

interviewed either individually or within a group. We used an interview schedule developed by the Atlantic Canada Health Promotion Centre, modified as necessary to suit the Pass.

In what follows, we describe the contemporary features of the Pass that have emerged from the historical circumstances. The description is organized loosely around the three dimensions of the community: political-economic conditions, social networks, and ways of understanding. For reasons that will become clearer in the theoretical section, we want to emphasize that these dimensions must be seen as being in a continuous state of interplay. Furthermore, we want to underscore the notion that in themselves these dimensions cannot be seen as being either positive or negative in their relation to community resilience. Indeed, one of our central arguments is that such structural features of communities are both enabling and constraining of resiliency. The key is to understand how the interplay between these features within given communities leads to a net enhancement or negation of the collective capacity to be resilient.

The principal challenges experienced by residents of the Pass centre around the lack of diversity in the economy leading to limited employment opportunities for all age groups. Similar to other agrarian and resource-based communities in Canada (Center for the New West, 1991; Stokowski, 1992), maintaining an economic base is the greatest issue facing the Pass. The residents must strive to balance the need for economic development through industry and residential developments for tourists and retirees, while maintaining the physical beauty of the area and preventing the depletion of resources or amount of available space for future generations (Blisard, 1992; Stokowski, 1992). Repeatedly people noted how the Pass has become a bedroom community for the mining industry in southeastern British Columbia, approximately an hour away. The relatively recent mine lockout has left a number of men without employment. This situation, combined with the current down-sizing in the health care field, has increased unemployment among particular groups of people. There are a number of concerns about the youth as they are seen as the group most effected by the lack of diversity in the local economy.

But there are also political challenges facing the Pass. Much of the discussion in the interviews centered around the process through which decisions are made in the Pass. In general those interviewed thought the Pass lacked a vision for the future with specific goals and ideas of how to arrive at that vision. There was also a sense that too much planning in the Pass moves from the top to the bottom with no, or limited, community involvement. There are opportunities for involvement, for example, the



residents can attend council meetings, but the numbers attending depend upon the issue. Some felt that residents need to become more responsible for the future of the Pass and become more involved planning for their future rather than waiting for the elected officials to move ahead. In particular, there is recognition by residents that outside forces, namely the push for more tourism and development, are occurring without adequate planning. Much discussion in the interviews was about the increase of tourism in the Pass and the potential it has to diversify the economy. While many residents are not supportive of such economic changes, it is widely acknowledged that tourists are beginning to arrive throughout the year. Yet, despite some consensus that the community should prepare for the inevitable, there has been a lack of political will to enter into a comprehensive planning process.

One political event in particular continues to be salient in the Pass. To this day the administrative amalgamation of the towns continues to polarize many residents. Community residents were attached to their own town, and the change to the larger municipality is one that seems to have required a sometimes emotional adjustment of identity. The individuals who were interviewed either said that amalgamation was a "thorn in their side" or something that was desirable for the community at large. To a real extent, the community is not one community because each town has retained its separate identity. This is seen by some residents as an obstacle for future development. A factor that may affect this division is that school children now attend all grades together. This will provide less reinforcement for the idea that the Pass is a series of small towns. For the moment, however, the issue remains a source of doubt for some about broad-based political efficacy in the Pass. When amalgamation was introduced there were no community meetings or involvement of the local residents to assist them with the adjustment. This top down approach reinforced the residents' beliefs that they have little power or say in the decisions that affect their lives.

Arguably, the effective leadership in the Pass lies not with the elected officials but with individuals who link several social networks, routinely pay attention to what needs to be dealt with, and bring people together to develop a solution. There are also a large number of service groups and organizations that serve important functions in the Pass. Many individuals participate in several different service groups and organizations, and hence a number of the same individuals are involved in different initiatives. These individuals provide a central mechanism for community problem-solving through the multiple social networks of the Pass. Through such formal and informal associations residents in the Pass are able to recognize problems and determine solutions that are appropriate for their situation.

Volunteerism is a common activity. It was reported that people tended to volunteer regardless of their age, gender or ethnic background. The significance of volunteers, however, may be waning. In earlier decades, volunteers contributed to the community by building the arenas and other public buildings, as well as helping neighbors build their homes or garages. Now, many services have become formalized and a dependence has developed on formal organizations providing them. Moreover, the differences in shift work have influenced the opportunity for community involvement. Historically, miners worked five days a week on three rotating shifts but now there is an adoption of a four days on, four days off scheme for twelve hour stretches. This throws work schedules out of alignment with many organized opportunities for community involvement. Similarly, as women have increasingly entered the workforce their ability to participate as fully in the community has been compromised.

With respect to social support systems, there are limited services and personnel in the Pass to help people who are experiencing such problems as addictions and family violence. When support services are available there is uneasiness among residents about going for such help, because in a small community with numerous relations and friends, privacy and confidentiality are hard to maintain — a negative aspect of strong informal social networks. Nevertheless, mutual aid was seen in interviews as a way of using social networks to deal with some of the challenges facing the community. Service clubs, religious organizations and formal agencies were seen as ways by which others in need could be helped. For example, in times of tragedy, such as deaths, unexpected and serious illnesses, and loss of property due to natural disasters, people helped one another out through food donations, holding benefit dances, or in the recent flood, sandbagging the rising waters. There was a recognition of two things by those interviewed: we are all vulnerable and we are all interdependent. A history of mine tragedies has likely reinforced this idea. What happened to one miner and his family could easily happen to another, and within a small community that made interdependence among residents absolutely necessary.

Integration across ethnic-based and other social networks was frequently mentioned as a character the Pass. The history of the Pass brought together people from a variety of countries — these people created ties with those around them despite the differences in language and beliefs. The Pass has a number of cultural groups which built their own halls and created their own associations to preserve cultural traditions. It would not be fair to say, however, that all groups have lived in harmony. Subtle prejudice has always been in evidence, for example, particular areas being seen as "lower class"

because of the ethnic group(s) that lived there. There are other indications that social integration is in danger of decreasing. Those who were interviewed pointed to a variety of reasons. On the economic side is the disruptive shift work schedule of the miners as already noted. On the cultural side are suggestions that values around work, family support and community responsibility are threatened by other changes in the demographic composition of the Pass.

### WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING

The "increase of outsiders" is an issue framed by residents that underscores the importance of taking into account local ways of understanding when conducting community studies. Terms such as "outsiders", "imports", "newcomers", and "new people" were frequently mentioned by both relatively new residents and long-standing Pass residents who were interviewed. It was frequently noted that it could take over 30 years to be accepted as a Pass resident. The outsiders include younger families but also a number of individuals who are retiring in the Pass or who are building homes now for their future retirement, not an uncommon occurrence as noted in other rural communities (Halseth, 1993). The influx of "outsiders", along with tourism, has the greatest potential to alter the Pass on a permanent basis because the "outsiders" arrive with possibly different ways of understanding owing to a lack of a shared history with the long-term Pass residents. The identification with the individual towns is difficult to relinquish for some Pass residents; but those who settled in this community more recently see their home as the Pass overall.

Long-standing residents who were interviewed perceive themselves collectively as being open and welcoming to others. They indicate it is important for "outsiders" to willingly "join in" and be involved in their community. An underlying implication was that only a particular kind of "outsider" will find the doors open to integrate successfully into Pass social networks. Some outsiders are accepted because they have values comparable with long-term residents, are adaptable to the situation, and have skills, not necessarily work-related, that can benefit the community. Indeed, some "outsiders" have become very involved in the Pass and have become leaders in different organizations. Some people, relatively new to the Pass, paint a somewhat different picture. They feel that long-standing residents are not accustomed to working at building up local customers for their businesses and simply expect the residents to support them. One person went on to say that single parent families who originate in the Pass have a

great deal of support, but those from out of town do not. Some described the Pass as a closed community which is not welcoming to them. Other "outsiders," particularly those who have been in the Pass for a number of years, have similar perspectives to the long-standing Pass residents.

Part of the meaning system that people used to relate themselves to the Pass included a notable "sense of belonging" (Brown, 1997; 1994). The sense was manifest, for example, in feeling part of the community because one is recognized when walking down the street. (People say though that there are more "new people" now, and hence, when they go out, they are less likely to know all the people they meet.) There is an identifiable sense of pride in being from the Pass, and being able to refer to individuals from the Pass who are recognized for some accomplishment. And, to a large extent, it would seem that people in the Pass share similar value systems. Values such as the work ethic are based on common past experiences: for most a hard life of working in mines and living with limited financial resources and formal services. A concern mentioned more than once is that the "outsiders" arrive with different values and with no understanding of local history. Consequently, there is some anxiety among long-standing residents that "outsiders" will change the Pass, and potentially in negative ways. At the same time, "outsiders" are seen by some as being important in facilitating the necessary changes in the community, such as encouragement of tourism.

Pass residents understood their region as being different from the surrounding area, particularly the nearby farming communities. This was associated with the isolation from the provincial government and other residents in the province that Pass residents experienced. The interviews with residents also showed that they feel a connection to the land; that is, the land has special meaning for them. In the past, ownership of land was tied to status and success, particularly for those individuals who arrived from Europe and had limited opportunities for acquiring it. In the early settlement days of the Pass, the mining ventures and small scale logging were not viewed so blatantly as "taking from the land" or using the land for individual need, but simply as a means of survival. However, now there is some evidence that the land is being seen more as a commodity, or something to gain from, compared to the past. Recent large scale logging and other ventures, such as creation of acreages, are examples referred to by residents. It is also an issue that has caused considerable disagreement between people, and relates to forthcoming major economic changes in the region.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In view of the complexity exhibited in even this limited case study, we want to propose a recasting of the concept of resiliency in the context of communities. To begin with, the concept in our view needs to be grounded in a notion of human agency, understood in the sense of the capacity for meaningful, intentional action. It is of course possible to conceptualize resiliency in much more basic terms as the capacity of something or someone to bounce back from some challenge. For the most part, resiliency studies at the individual level have been concerned with such adaptive behaviors. Individuals are thought to "bounce back" after traumas when they engage in patterns of behavior that indicate they are able to carry on with a more or less healthy life. But this approach is far from adequate when trying to extend the concept to understanding persons explicitly in the context of communities, or in some sense to the communities themselves. In doing so, we strip out the sense in which humans act in ways that are simply responsive; much of our everyday activity has a teleological dimension. Thanks to the properties of language people can routinely imagine how things might be and do things to bring those conditions about. Thus, action in the fullest sense implies an interpretation of the world and an intervention into its workings.

To say that people are resilient is to say something about how they engage in social action, that is, in conduct that is meaningful and intentional. To "bounce back" in this richer sense implies the ability of people to act, to intervene in their own lives, and not merely to cope, despite factors that limit such action. Coping is what people do in the absence of choice (Gerrard, 1990), and people who cope are less resilient and more controllable. Conversely, people or communities which activate their choices would tend to be more healthy and more resilient. In our contemporary society there are many structures and norms that encourage people to be "copers" or "survivors" rather than "choosers" or "agents." But for individuals to be healthy, they need to move from becoming survivors to being agents. We see this impetus to act among the residents of the Pass, even though it is clearly limited as well as enabled by local political-economic conditions, social networks, and ways of understanding.

Because human agency implies both responsive and teleological orientations, it is useful to conceptualize resiliency, personal and collective, in terms of both relatively immediate reaction and longer-term efficacy. An issue amidst of resiliency work at both the individual and collective levels is the question of whether resiliency ought to be conceptualized as merely a matter

of responding to an immediate situation. There is good reason to take a view of resiliency that includes two aspects, without losing the distinction between the two. The first aspect is reactive, that is the immediate response to what has happened. The potential second phase of the response is proactive, and as such efficacy potentially becomes enveloped in this phase of the resiliency response. In other words, people might not only cope with a specific crisis, they might also take actions to eventually mitigate or remove the structural basis for such crises, e.g., poverty. The proactive phase can also be understood as capacity building or capacity eroding depending on how persons respond, or what they do to reduce their vulnerability. It links our understanding of resiliency to the idea of human efficacy. In other words, to be resilient includes the notion that an individual or community is not merely returning to homeostasis, but is able to move beyond that situation and grow or move forward. This was evident in the Pass with the concern over political structures for decision-making, and more generally in the common recognition that planning was needed.

The link between the two phases of the process is in part contingent upon a learning process in the community that includes the residents' knowledge of their own history, their ability to transform how they understand things, and their ability to develop better or different strategies. Potentially this process can be facilitated, aided or augmented by the efforts or work of researchers, community development specialists or health practitioners. This implies a much broader approach to the application and study of resiliency. It would require us to look at the responses of persons over a part of their life course, and at the ways in which groups of people organize to take preventative measures in their families and communities. In the Pass we saw segments of the community profoundly shaped in the way they could see themselves and their future by the common life experiences, as well as by layers of historical events.

Building on the above, we can now define resiliency more explicitly by saying that individuals and collectivities are resilient in a first sense insofar as they act in such a way as to recover in the short-term from what they define as negative physical or social events. These events include not only discrete episodes but also more subtle or progressive occurrences. It is important here to acknowledge that people may be understood as being resilient to one specific kind of event, while not to others. In the Pass resiliency in this first sense was exhibited in the ways community members were able to mobilize themselves to contend with floods and other crisis events. Individuals and collectivities are resilient in the second sense insofar as they act to transform their physical and social environments to mitigate against such events in the

future. This is certainly a mode of resiliency that residents of the Pass are striving to realize in their efforts to anticipate, adapt, and perhaps transform their economic and political environment.

The use of the concept becomes more complicated when we attempt to extend it beyond the individual level. Imagine we say to you that one community is more or less resilient than another one. If we are no longer talking about the resilience of discrete individuals in those communities, then what are we actually talking about? In what sense can we speak sensibly of a family or a community "bouncing back"? There are three issues relevant to research and practice at stake here: how can we make a clear and useful distinction between individual and collective resiliency? This is a necessity, otherwise we confuse two phenomena that to some extent might operate independently. In just what specific sense can a social organization be resilient and how do these two levels implicate each other?

To suggest that community resilience automatically flows out of individuals being resilient might be taken to suggest that community is defined as an aggregate of individuals. In other words, a community is the sum of its parts or a sum of the individuals who live in or are members of it. Community resiliency would then flow from resilient individuals. But is a community only an aggregate of individuals or is it necessary to also account for the way in which the community is organized? Defining community and community resiliency as beginning and ending with the individual seems too narrow an understanding of these concepts. Community needs to be minimally viewed as a dynamic interactive set of relations between given individuals. The fundamental centrality of social networks in the Pass underscores the point that people in communities are resilient together, not merely in similar ways.

We see the distinction between individual and community resiliency as being parallel to the distinction between individual and collective action. It is important to note that community resiliency in this sense is a relational notion distinct from merely the aggregation of individual resilience, and from the endurance of social structures within communities. For us, community resiliency refers to the capacity of community members to engage in projects of coordinated action within the context of their community despite events and structures that constrain such projects. In other words, community resiliency is tied to the notion of people interacting as social groups proper, and not merely as an aggregate defined by the analyst or practitioner. It is of course important to emphasize that communities are often fragmented within themselves, requiring analysis to focus also on the power dynamics that occur between subgroups comprising larger collectivities. It

was obvious that the Pass, even though a relatively small community, had a number of key divisions, at least in terms of how resident groups had come to define themselves and others.

While it is possible to conceptualize social structures as being resilient in some crude sense, we do not see it as theoretically useful to do so. This is primarily because our framework builds on the premise of linking resiliency to human agency, and social structures cannot properly be thought of as having this quality. Moreover, it is analytically useful to differentiate between the resiliency of community members and the situational factors which condition this capacity. This distinction in turn is essential for engaging in a critical assessment of communities, and for informing strategies of intervention. Nonetheless, a structural perspective is still necessary in our view for comprehending the dynamics of resiliency. We would say that resiliency is enabled as well as constrained by both physical conditions and social structures. The latter can be understood in more concrete terms as local political-economic conditions, social networks, and ways of understanding. Each of these analytic dimensions was useful in organizing our description of the Pass.

The sense in which we use the notions of enabling and constraining here is rather more complex than the seemingly parallel distinction between risk and protective factors found elsewhere in the resiliency literature. The idea that some factors enhance resiliency and others limit it is too simplistic when applied to actual communities. Rather we would suggest, following Giddens (1984), that all the above structural features of communities are inherently both enabling and constraining. Political-economic conditions no doubt enabled economic development in the Pass, but also served to constrain the effectiveness of decision-making and to reproduce certain hierarchies within and between communities. Social networks enabled a wide range of important interaction within the Pass, including the provision of mutual aid, and even served as a surrogate for the apparently ineffective official political system. But, at the same, these same strong networks perhaps limited ways of understanding in a manner that marginalized "outsiders" and left individuals cautious about seeking needed social support through familiar ties. In the Pass shared ways of understanding and common values enabled the people collectively to elicit the kind of responses demanded in times of crisis. Yet the commitment to one system of understanding the community of the Pass potentially closes off other ways of understanding, ways that might be needed in order to contend with the complex changes that will certainly threaten the status quo of the Pass over the next decade.



It is not so much that some community structures manifest themselves as risk factors and others as protective factors, but that there is a constant dynamic ongoing between the enabling and constraining qualities of each structural component in any given community. The resilience of community members then can be understood as occurring in the balance between the enabling and constraining aspects of these structures. Moreover, in a more resilient community, members will have greater capacity to work toward shifting the overall balance away from a state of being relatively constrained to being relatively enabled. That the Pass continues to flourish suggests that on balance the Pass is a relatively resilient community, although time will tell whether its capacity will be sufficient for the major changes yet to come.

From a critical community development perspective, capacity building can be understood as a program of enhancing personal and collective resiliency through the critique and transformation of social structures. As such, capacity building involves working to enhance resiliency in terms of both reactive (short-term) and proactive (longer-term) responsiveness. Capacity is a configuration of structural characteristics of a community, and the linkages between these things: the social networks, the economic and political conditions, and the local ways of understanding. The latter include strategies to deal with certain kinds of events, a historical understanding of who that community and its residents are, how people in the community have responded in the past to certain events, and a moral or spiritual assessment of the world and the community. This interpretative framework plays a very important role in the ability of a community to respond in a resilient manner to events. Further, all of the characteristics are open to transformation, depending on the reflexivity of the individual or community residents collectively. Our research in the Pass attempted to feed analytic insights back to the residents, thereby making our project part of their community experience and consequently as a potential basis for a more informed consideration of the future.

## CONCLUSION

The above framework suggests some things about a program of research concerned with community resiliency. It is not so essential to decide whether a given community is resilient, as it is to understand how that community works toward or away from being more or less resilient. This implies a focus on the kind of dynamics discussed in this paper. This has practical as well as theoretical implications, as understanding the dynamics of a community would be a prerequisite to intervention or facilitation. Further, community

resiliency research should be fundamentally longitudinal, that is, it is important to look at any given community over time, including a historical perspective. Community resiliency research should also be comparative in the sense that researchers should look at the similarities and differences across multiple communities. In order to make the search of patterns in similarities and differences possible, it is necessary to make the analysis comparable. Comparability might be achieved by focusing on common kinds of events challenging communities. It is crucial to avoid making overarching statements about events being either good or bad as the interests of various sub-groups in the community would have to be taken into account first. Studies need to be done in context, or ethnographically, and quite necessarily involve both qualitative and quantitative strategies. Rural communities are particularly appropriate for such studies because of their size and what would appear on the surface to be a stubborn ability to survive despite circumstances and external pressures to the contrary. For example, resource-dependent communities which have been studied in reference to social change (Machlis, Force & Balice, 1990) or examined with social organization frameworks (Branch, Hooper & Albrecht, 1985) would be particularly important to consider when studying community resiliency.

This paper has focused on developing a theoretical framework within which community resiliency can be more effectively understood and studied. The research that was presented is a case example that demonstrates the need to examine community resiliency beyond the boundaries of the risk and protective factor framework. Such studies are useful attempts to address the inner workings of communities, a step necessary in understanding rural communities that frequently face the issue of survival. An approach of this kind facilitates analysis by showing how persons together interpret their situations, and themselves within those situations, as part of the process of strategic collective action. It thus requires that we contextualize research on resiliency, and directs us to a critical examination of the structural factors towards and through which persons engage collectively in human agency. This in turn means that an approach to resiliency can be tied to an interest in social change. If resiliency is defined as something that has moral import, then we have a basis against which we might assess the forces that limit the capacity of persons to be agents, and not merely survivors.

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