Resilience in a Cross-Cultural Perspective:

How resilience is generated in different cultures.

By Assoc. Prof. Arve Gunnestad

Queen Maud's College, Trondheim, Norway

Abstract

In this study I will explore how resilience is related to culture. Do different cultures generate resilience in different ways? As a background I present a model of resilience developed from a review of a number of studies as well as my own research. This model shows how the various protective factors can be divided into three main groups, and how different combinations of these factors develop resilience through some basic psychological processes. Based on a dynamic definition of culture, the article presents examples of three different cultures and how they generate resilience.

The article then briefly discusses four issues in relation to resilience and culture:

    1. Protective factors – universal or contextual,
    2. Different ways of creating resilience,
    3. Resilience and vulnerability from culture,
    4. Minority and majority cultures, biculturalism and resilience.

In the discussion the article make comparisons between Southern African culture and Norwegian culture. Lastly, the article highlights some possible educational implications of the study.

Keywords: processes in resilience, protective factors, vulnerability, Latino Youth, North American Indian First Nation, educational implications.

1.0 Introduction: Resilience, protective factors and processes

1.1 The concept of resilience

The concept of *"resilience"* comes from physics and describes a quality of a material to regain its original shape after being bent, compressed or stretched. With regard to children, it can be defined as a child's ability to regain his/her shape after going through crises or adversities, the ability to cope and do well in life in spite of having had to face a number of difficulties. Research has shown that some children who grow up with a number of risk factors do not do well later in life, while others seem to be able to develop and live well in spite of all the risks to which they were exposed as children. In resilience research we are trying to find out what helps children to cope and develop normally in abnormal circumstances.

1.2 Protective factors and processes in resilience

Based on a review of several studies on resilience in children (Werner and Smith 1992; Rutter (1990); Grotberg 1995; Kumpfer (1999), Masten 2001, Gjærum, Grøholt and Sommershild 1998), as well as my own cross-cultural study of resilience among children in Southern Africa and Norway, I have identified a number of protective factors that promote resilience in children. Protective factors are factors within the child, in the child's environment and the interaction between these factors that give the child strength, skills and motivation to cope in difficult situations and to re-establish normal life. Intellect, physical robustness and emotional stability may be seen as the raw material for resilience.

The interaction of these mostly inborn qualities with the network around the child, the culture and the many practical situations decides how much resilience a child will develop.

Different studies have come up with different ways of grouping the protective factors. The classic study of Werner and Smith (1992) operates with 1. Protective factors within the individual, 2. Protective factors within the family and 3. Protective factors within the community. In this categorisation the social support is both in group 2 and 3 while the existential support seems not so much in focus. Kumpfer presents a number of resilience factors which he groups in 1) External Environmental Risk and Protective Factors and 2) Internal Self Resilinecy Factors. In the first group she mentions the external factors of family, neighbourhood, school and peer group but emphasises mostly the risk factors. The second group she subdivides into the following subgroups: Spirituality, Cognitive Competency, Emotional stability, Behavioral/Social skills and Physical wellbeing. Grothberg (1995) devides the sources of resilience in 1) I have (external support), 2) I am (the child's internal strength such as feelings, attutudes, values and faith) and 3) I can (interpersonal skills such as communication, problem solving, management of feelings and temperament, social relationships). Grotberg's categorisations make sense, but the labels "I have", "I am" and "I can" are not so clear as to what elements belong to each category.

In categorizing the many protective factors I have tried to find labels that are basic and natural in relation to what belongs together, and at the same time labels that are clear in terms of content. I have grouped the factors in three categories:

> 1. Network factors – external support
>
> 2. Abilities and skills - internal support
>
> 3. Meaning, values and faith – existential support.

Network factors are elements of external support from people such as family, friends, neighbours, teachers etc. I do not want to separate support from family from support from other people as they sometimes come in to substitute close family when necessary. The second group – Abilities and skills - represents the inner strength partly from inborn qualities and partly from learned skills making use of these qualities.

Abilities are qualities that are largely innate, such as physical and mental strength, temperament and emotional stability, intellect and appearance. *Skills* include communication skills, social and emotional skills that make a child able to explain him-/ herself, understand others, solve problems and make friends, as well as practical skills in making or doing things, and skills in art, sports, schoolwork etc. that make a child feel good about him-/herself and able to help others. Certain skills are acquired when a child has had to face challenges earlier in life, so-called strengthening challenges (Vanistendael 1995).

Meaning, values and faith are the existential support a child has from his / her understanding, from values and attitudes and from his/her faith. Even if researchers group protective factors differently, interestingly there seems to be a consensus about what are the most important protective factors (Masten and Coatsworth 1998; Grotberg 1995; and Kumpfer 1999).

Culture is what is infiltrated in all the three main categories. Culture affect the way we form networks and the importance we assign to them. Culture decides what skills and activities that are appreciated. More than anything culture is part of the third group of protective factors as meaning, values and faith are vital expressions of culture. Se chapter 2 on culture.

The three different groups of protective factors *operate together in different ways* according to the situation and the person involved. In a situation where a child loses one of her parents, we might find that network and meaning become the most important factors, while in a case of abuse, communication skills - together with courage (values) - will be important. A child, who is able to ask

for help and has the courage to do so, will be more resilient than a child without these skills and values.

The protective factors affect each other. With regard to the network factors, people in the network become models for positive behaviour and contribute to the child's development of interests and skills. Network may also strongly influence the values children adhere to because children will identify themselves with the values of the people they love. At the same time, Meaning, values and faith will have an effect as motivational factors for the activities the child involves itself in and hence the skills the child develops. Values and faith will also influence the choice of people with whom the child interacts.

After grouping the protective factors, I found it interesting to combine this with the thinking of M. Rutter who has pointed out the importance of the processes behind resilience. It is not enough to identify protective factors, because these do not create resilience in all cases. Resilience is created when these factors initiate certain processes in the individual. Rutter identifies three such processes. (Rutter 1990). Firstly, they create resilience by *building a positive self- image*. The abilities and skills of children make them feel good about themselves when they become aware of these skills. The values and the faith a child holds and the people he/she feels connected to are all important parts in a self- image. The child may think "I am good at sports and schoolwork; I am an honest, friendly person who would like to grow up and help others". This type of self-image will motivate the child to make a greater effort to behave accordingly and thus contribute to resilience.

Secondly, the protective factors may create resilience by *reducing the effect of the risk factors*. Having a grandmother who cares and whom the child can trust may reduce the negative effects of growing up in a chaotic home. Thirdly, protective factors can also be effective by *breaking a negative circle and opening up new opportunities for the child*. If the parents of a child are unemployed, and dropped out of school at an early age, that could affect the child in that he/she does not expect to get a good education and a job, that he/she loses hope and expectations for the future and does not try hard at school. However, if the family is active in a church or a sports club, the child may find friends with parents who have jobs and can provide information and serve as models for what the child can hope and strive for, and in that way open up new opportunities.

In many of the resilience studies the focus is the ability of *children* to cope and do well in spite of adversities. It seems obvious that the protective factors are built up from beginning of life and throughout childhood and youth. By birth Network and inborn qualities seems to be the dominant factors while through early childhood to youth Interpersonal skills as well as existential support is established through the child's interaction with people and situations in his or her environment. The process of resilience is, however, a life long process of developing abilities to face difficult situations and solve problems. In this study focus will mainly be on children, but some of the examples will even be of how culture contributes to resilience on a later stage.

Based on my previous studies, the following model of my understanding of development of resilience was developed:

Model of Development of Resilience:

Protective factors:

Network factors	Abilities and skills	Meaning, values and faith
At least one safe attachment. The Family Friends The larger network Community institutions.	Physical attributes. Appearance, intellect, Temperament Practical skills Social skills To be of help to somebody. Strength from earlier experiences/challenges	Sense of coherence Meaning Values such as: Hope, love, honesty, friendship, solidarity Faith, fellowship, prayer

...operate through the following processes:

1. Establishing and maintaining a positive self-image
2. Reducing the effect of risk factors
3. Reducing or cutting negative chain reactions and opening up for new opportunities
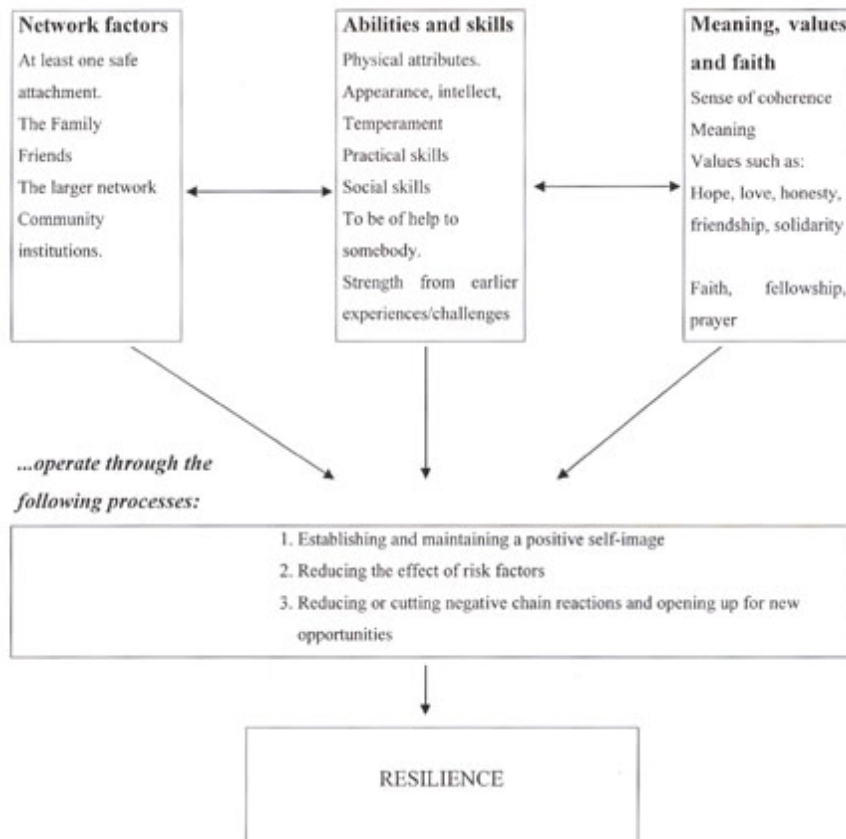
RESILIENCE

Fig. 1: Model of development of resilience (adapted from Gunnestad 2003).

2.0 Resilience in different cultures

2.1 Culture and cultural change and cultural comparisons

The crucial question in this article is: How does culture affect resilience? Do different cultures generate resilience in different ways? In this article the concept of "culture" is applied in a wide sense. Culture is the way we meet and greet, the way we work and celebrate, what we eat and how we eat it, the way we relate to each other and the way we solve our differences.

A traditional Norwegian definition of culture is like this:

> The sum of experience and insight that through the times are laid down in faith, common practice, art and poetry, science and technology and in institutions. (Folkeskolekomiteen 1963:113. Authors translation).

This definition can be said to represent an essentialist understanding of culture. It emphasises that culture is condensed human experience and insight; it is a set of values, ideas and norms that are expressed in vital cultural categories. This set of ideas is what the primary schools according to this definition should try to transfer to the next generation. The process-oriented understanding of culture puts greater emphasis on the dynamic aspect of culture. Sally Engle Merry explains it in this way:

> This is a concept of culture that allows for agency and contestation in situations with multiple and contradictory cultural logics and systems of meaning. These conceptions move us away from seeing cultures as homogeneous entities to imagining them as arenas

of contest among competing cultural logics, in which variously situated actors seize and appropriate cultural practices. The location of culture is no longer a fixed geographical space, but is constituted in multiple locations reflecting the movement of peoples, capital and symbolic systems (Merry 2001:45).

Here, Merry points out how culture is a dynamic and changing field, a contest where different values, ideas, ways of living etc. compete to take the lead.

Hylland Eriksen seems to try to mediate between the two views when he says:

> Culture is what makes communication possible; consequently culture is the patterns of thinking, habits and experiences that human beings share and that make it possible to understand each other (Hylland Eriksen 2001:60, author's translation).

Hylland Eriksen continues to point out that the essentialist definition is rooted in history and tradition as an important part of a culture; culture as related to the concept of roots. Culture is fellowship in fate and history; it is the condensed wisdom of previous generations. It is our heritage.

The second definition is concentrated on the present tense and the opportunities for mutual understanding. It underlines that culture is dynamic and changing, and it is directed more towards the future than the past. The past cannot, according to this view, guide us in future choices; a new age deserves new solutions.

A full understanding of culture and cultural processes requires both the historic-traditional and the dynamic perspective. Culture comprises the values, norms, rules and ways of life that we get from the generations before us *and* how every new generation interprets and adapts these to their own lives and society.

Cultural processes are very diverse. Some cultural expressions we have frozen at a certain point in time in order to keep them as they are, to keep track of history. Examples are our national dresses and our folk fairytales that have been written down. The folk fairytales were an oral tradition that went from one generation to the next, changing with society. When the famous Norwegian folklorists Asbjørnsen and Moe went round farms collecting these stories and had them printed in the 19th century, they froze the stories in the form they had at that time. As such they have also obtained a place in Norwegian culture.

Other parts of our culture are being transformed or developed through encounters with other cultures and through technical developments. An example here is a Norwegian band called "Transjoik". They use Sami folk music in modern forms such as jazz or rock with modern instruments such as synthesizers and percussion instruments (Adresseavisen 18.06.2004). It is a way of developing and thereby retaining the old Sami music tradition. It has become popular among young people. In the same way, the Norwegian language is developing to accommodate new areas of knowledge, as well as influences from other languages. We are inventing new words like "e-post" for e-mail and also taking words from other languages and spelling them in a Norwegian way, hence "ketsjup" for ketchup.

Some elements of culture are being abandoned because of new understanding. For example, in Norway, corporal punishment was very common 50 years ago. Today it is not even legal. Our understanding of what constitutes good upbringing has changed.

Culture is built on the needs people have and the experiences and insights they hold. In the old days in Norway, fish had to be dried or salted so that it could be stored. Nowadays, freezing technology has developed and become more common, but we still keep the drying and salting because we like the special quality it gives the fish. However, freezing has taken over much of the production because it keeps the product very fresh. Another example relates to the kingdom of Norway. Norway has long historical traditions as a kingdom, and we are very proud of our king and his family. Traditionally it was only the first-born son of the king who could succeed to the throne. As our understanding of

equality of men and women has developed, we had recently to change the law so that the first-born child of the king will now inherit the throne, regardless of gender.

In some cultures polygamy or circumcision of girls is still practiced, and it is defended as part of the culture. One question may be if these practices are in accordance with our view of men and women today.

It seems that the changes in culture are accelerating (Klausen 1995). The globalisation process with increased interaction between different parts of the world, new communication technologies, modern media and conflicts resulting in an increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers could be some of the causes of this. Films, videos, news and advertisements from all over the world are available at the touch of a button. Multinational businesses influence the goods available, the films we see, current fashions, the music that sells etc. One may ask what role we as individuals can play in relation to keeping culture, or accepting changes in our culture and way of living. Forces beyond our control are having a heavy influence.

In a world with a lot of interaction, movement of people and cultural change, it is important to understand the role of culture in the well-being and survival of people. More especially, this is important for teachers dealing with children who are in the process of accepting and recreating their own culture.

As mentioned above culture is interrelated with all the main three groups of protective factors, but more explicit in the group of Meaning, values and faith. Ting-Moomey (1999)views culture as an iceberg were we see only the uppermost layers of cultural artefacts such as fashion, music and behaviour. The deeper layers under the surface like beliefs, norms and values are not so easily seen. To understand a culture however, we need to go beyond the cultural expressions and find the underlying values and norms that drives people's thinking and behaving. In seeing how resilience is generated in different cultures we will need to try to explore the values, thinking and cultural meanings of different expressions and ways of living. We will now take examples of three cultures.

2.2 Latino youth

Stutman, Baruch, Grotberg and Rathore (2002:38) have done an interesting study of resilience in Latino youth. Latino youth means Spanish-speaking young people in the USA, many of them coming from Central and South America. They are a minority of about 13% (35 million people) of the total population in the USA. Stutman et al. revised a number of studies on Latino youth. They found that most of the studies seemed to use a deficit or disease-oriented model of research which tended to give a too negative picture of this large population, most of whom are living healthy and successful lives. It also tends to overlook the elements these people have in their culture that could have been used to foster resilience. The so-called disease-oriented approach will also easily stigmatise children from poor families for example, and produce self-fulfilling prophesies: these children must develop problems as they grow up because of all the risk factors in their environment.

Stutman et al. found the following values to be central in the culture of Latino people in the USA: loyalty and attachment to family, collectivism, respect for authority and warmth in interpersonal relationships.

It is easy to see that these values are somewhat different from the main values in the larger North American society, even if that society is big, variable and consists of a conglomerate of sub-cultures. In modern capitalist society, individualism, competition and lack of respect for authorities seem to be dominant. Nonetheless, the above-mentioned values in the Latino culture have strengths that can be of great value for the resilience of their young people even within US society. Many studies show that a strong family relationship encourages Latino youth to stay away from high-risk behaviour. Positive family relationships seem to have an important effect on youth from different cultures, but since this is stronger in the Latino culture, parental involvement appears to keep Latino youths off the path of delinquency more often than it does for African-American or non-Hispanic white youths.

On the other hand we can see that if a family is experiencing problems like violence, substance abuse etc. this in turn will lead to less parental authority, lowered self-esteem, less psychological well-being and lower academic aspirations in Latino youth. This indicates that a cultural factor that is no longer working may lead to increased vulnerability.

This is not the place to discuss all the aspects of Latino culture and resilience, and thus we will present just a few examples for comparison with other cultures, and for our understanding of the different ways in which culture and resilience affect each other. The question we need to consider is how teachers and parents can make use of such values for increased resilience in Latino youths.

2.3 North American Indian First Nation

Another quite different minority group in the USA is the North American Indian First Nation. In spite of the fact that there are 554 federally recognized tribes in the USA alone, and almost as many in Canada, Iris HeavyRunner (University of Minnesota) and Joann Sebastian Morris (1997) claim that there is a shared core of values, beliefs and behaviour between all these groups. They list 10 of these shared values: spirituality, childrearing and extended family, veneration of age/wisdom/tradition, respect for nature, generosity and sharing, cooperation and group harmony, autonomy and respect for others, composure and patience, relativity of time and non-verbal communication. HeavyRunner and Morris comment on these values and their relationship to resilience in the following way:

> Our culture is rich with ways to teach children the world view philosophy or the good way of life. These include using our traditional language, ceremonies, dances, blood/clan systems, music/arts, medicine, foods' clothing, and more. Our children's cultural strength or resilience can also be fostered by the oral tradition of storytelling. Children learn to listen with patience and respect. Our stories can be told over and over: they are developmental. At every step we learn something new. In essence we grow up with our stories. They are protective factors that convey culturally specific high expectations, caring, support and opportunities for participation.

> The traditional Indian family unit is the extended family. Each child has an abundance of blood and clan relatives to share the responsibility of childrearing. Elders hand down tribal legends, history and traditions and, therefore, are treated with tremendous respect. Our belief in the sacredness of all creation causes us to view ourselves as caretakers of the natural realm. Recognizing the connection with others, emphasis is placed on sharing material possessions. In our world view, it is more important to be a good person than to acquire material goods. Natural cooperation among group members takes precedence over competition. Harmony within the group is all-important. Balance and harmony are maintained by not imposing on an individual's rights or beliefs. Being quiet and still is not uncomfortable to Indian people. We are comfortable with silence and talking for the sake of talking was not our way. Time is viewed as flowing and always with us. We learn to follow nature's rhythm (1997:3).

Here, we can see how the Indian First Nation values are interlinked and adapted to their traditional way of living. They lived from hunting and gathering from nature. Their spirituality taught them to respect and care for all creation – man, animal and plants. If one hunted a great beast, it belonged to the whole extended family. Cooperation and sharing was important in order to keep the balance in how much they could take out from the animal world. Sharing, cooperation and harmony gave them strength to survive and to live in harmony with each other and nature. The Indians avoided over taxation of the nature. It seems obvious that there is a lot of wisdom and strength in this cultural cluster. These traditions and values made them able to adjust and live well with their natural surroundings in olden times.

G. Brent Agnell (2000) illustrates vital parts of Indian culture in *the way they name their children*. In some tribes they combine the name of an animal with an admirable feat or skill with the hope that this will empower and protect the individual. In her article, Brent Agnell introduces a colleague from an

Indian background who had been given the name "Search for Harmony" and the nickname of "Little Turtle". "Search for Harmony" emphasises a vital value in Indian culture: living in peace and harmony with people and nature. The nickname of "Little Turtle" also developed a lot of meaning that was felt as guidance and support as the child grew up as a minority child in a somewhat discriminating majority culture. A turtle has a hard shell, and that became a symbol of the necessity for her to develop a tough outer shell to survive and cope in a non-native world. The turtle has the habit of withdrawal rather than confrontation when attacked. The girl also learned from her father and other family members that she should avoid confrontation with the majority culture. Rather withdraw and wait until the worst danger was over. Try to keep harmony. Just as the turtle can move both on land and in water, she also had to learn to manoeuvre in two cultures: the Indian culture and that of the majority. Her nickname became a synthesis of personal, familial and cultural experience that allowed her to make sense out of her experiences and behaviour. The name contributed to the development of a resilient self-concept, which served as an important protective factor for her living in a cross-cultural context.

We see how the Indian First Nation culture had qualities that helped Indians to survive and live well from the nature. We also see how the same culture could offer understanding and strength to be able to handle living in a changed environment. We will come back to that when we look at biculturalism.

2.4 African examples

Edith Grotberg has made an interesting study of Sudanese child-rearing practices (Grotberg 1992). One specific trait that she found was that Sudanese children were expected to solve their differences without involving their parents. Parents often did not want to be bothered by their children's concerns, and they reacted to their children's problem with discipline, indifference or expectations that children should solve their problems themselves.

The same ideas may also be present in Norwegian society when it comes to minor conflicts among children. In more serious cases, however, e.g. in cases of bullying, Norwegian parents and teachers will generally expect children to report and involve the adults.

This can serve as an example of how different cultural values may tap different resiliencies. In the Sudanese culture, if a boy is repeatedly bullied by a bigger one, the smaller boy may seek support from classmates and friends. They will confront the bigger boy, who then may stop. In this way, the smaller boy would learn about how to solve a problem through friendship, cooperation and communication strengths. In Norway the child could have talked to the parents or the teacher. The teacher would bring the issue up in the class. What behaviour can we not tolerate? What should we do when such things happen? The child would also be strengthened if he was brave enough to bring up the issue and was included in the discussions and in solving the problem. The example shows how both cultures made use of the protective factor of network to solve the problem, but they used different parts of the network according to cultural norms. This example of two ways of solving the same problem in the Sudan and Norway is somewhat exaggerated. You will definitely find both ways both in the Sudan and Norway, and you will find cases in both countries where such cases are not solved in a good way. However it appears that one way is more prevalent among Sudanese children while the other might be more typical among Norwegian children.

In my study of resilience in Southern Africa and Norway, I have also seen how resilience is generated in different ways and from different sources in the African context compared to the Norwegian context. *In situations of death in near family* (parents, grandparents), network seems to be an important protective factor both in Norway and Southern Africa. In the Norwegian cases, close family members play an important role. A student who lost her mother in a car accident when she was only five years old tells this about what helped her:

> A loving and caring father who understood. Grandparents, aunts and uncles who were there for us, friends of the family and people in the community. Mother's sister and brother in law came to stay with us the first half year after the accident. (N3).

While in the Norwegian case the network mostly contributed emotional support, the network seems to offer broader support in Southern Africa. Support can include food, paying school fees, sometimes staying with a relative, prayers and emotional support. This illustrates that the resilience from different cultures develops according to the needs in that particular society. In Norway a public social security system has been developed, and there is little need for support in form of food or payment of school fees. The main loss is the loss of a caring father or mother; therefore the support in that situation will be mainly emotional.

A Zambian girl who lost a brother when she was 12 explains how she was shocked and very sad, since she did not know that death could take loved ones. Years after the incident, she still mourns him and feels the loss. It was as if a dark cloud settled over the family. She describes what helped her in this way:

> First and foremost I would like to say a million thanks to all who used to stay around mom's place. They helped us a lot by preparing meals. The next people I will thank are dad's workmates for providing transport for us and other people who joined in the mourning of our brother. It was very hard for us to cope up with life without him. But we were comforted by the people who congregate with mum. They helped us by giving us an example which is found in the Bible and it's about Lazarus. They said that Lazarus was resurrected from the dead. Since Jesus Christ is the life and anyone exercising faith in him, even though dies, he will come to life. They continued saying we have to throw our budden to Jehovah God because he is the owner of life. I'm sure he is waiting for that day to come when all those who are in the memorial tombs will hear Jesus's voice and come out. Hope to see him in paradise. I even dream of flying with brother in the beautiful world. (Z23).

Here we can see a broad network contributing different types of support: neighbours helping with food, workmates with transport and church members with emotional and spiritual support. The religious support is another interesting component in my study. Among the Norwegian reports of adversities in childhood, only a few (2-3 out of 30) refer to religious support while in the Southern African sample it is the most common reference. This reflects may be that in Norway, for many people religion appears to belong to a private sphere they do not discuss openly. Repstad (1996) estimates that up to 70% of Norwegians believe in God without attending church. In Southern Africa, on the other hand, religion is part of everyday life and is integrated in the culture. The church seems to be a strong and well working network which plays an important role. It seems that where religion is part of life and culture, it also generates resilience.

The examples above illustrate how the culture over a long period of time has developed ways of behaviour that generate resilience within that setting. Culture can be said to be a way of living facing the challenges in a certain environment with certain climate, certain natural and practical conditions.

3.0 Discussion

In the following I want to elaborate on and discuss some issues concerning resilience and culture, based mainly on my own research and experience from Southern Africa and Norway, and with reference to the experiences described in the section above (2.0).

3.1 Protective factors –universal or contextual?

An important question here is: – are the protective factors universal? Are they the same and do they work in the same way in rural Norway and in urban Swaziland? This question of universal dispositions in all human beings making them think and act in similar ways across cultural borders has been discussed for years. Hylland Eriksen (2001) holds that anthropologists seem to have exaggerated the differences between societies and neglected the very substantial commonalities that hold humanity together. Åke Daun (1999) discusses the question of what universal biological – psychological predispositions that can explain culturally based behaviour. He presents three categories:

1. Basic physical characteristics, including size and other qualities of the body.
2. Primary or physical needs, e.g. need for food, drink, rest, getting rid of waste, sex
3. Secondary or psychogenic needs. Here he refers to a comprehensive list of needs build on Henry A. Murray's presentation from 1938. Some of these are the need to acquire (money, things), to collect, repair or care for, need for order, need to organize and construct, need for achievement and recognition, need to avoid violation, mistakes, blame, the need for affiliation, the need to defend, to dominate, to be aggressive, to nurture, to play, to know (science) etc.

Daun comments on the different categories which Murray uses. He misses that Murray includes art, rites and the supernatural. He maintains that these can be seen to relate to the need for order, to understand and express. Man uses art and religion to express strong feelings and a search for meaning.

Klausen (1995) also discusses cultural universals. He is more restrained and maintains that there are only a few cultural elements that can be seen as universal across all cultures. With relevance to our study he mentions four basic needs:

the need for energy,

the need to procreate,

the need to protect life and

the need to know something about life and death.

With regard to ethics he indicates a binding care for closest relatives and a cognitive dimension of right and wrong.

I find some support both in Klausen's and Daun's discussions for my three descriptive categories being to some extent universal. *Network* is important for human beings all around the world. We are social beings. We need to belong to somebody and mean something to somebody. This category links up with the basic need to procreate and protect life, as well as the binding care for close relatives in Klausen's article, and to physical needs and affiliation needs by Daun. People are born with different *abilities and disabilities* that they have to make the best out of. *Skills* are important for survival in all societies. This category is related to the need for energy and to protect life (Klausen) and to need for acquisition, achievement and play (Daun). Man's *search for meaning* in life is universal. We want to have a purpose in life. We want to understand ourselves and our lives. All people need some values, norms and rules to guide them, their ways of interaction and living. Klausen here points out that the need to know something about life and death and about right and wrong seems universal. This also relates also to the need for order and meaning expressed by Daun.

3.2 Different ways of creating resilience

Having said that the main categories are universal, *their relative importance, the way they are expressed and the way they work to create resilience may differ greatly between cultures.* In some cultures individual freedom and achievement have a high value, and competition is encouraged, while in others fellowship and cooperation count more. In some cultures theoretical skills are valued, in others practical or artistic skills are important. For some, the meaning of life is to honour God, for others it is about helping the clan or tribe and for others it is realising their own full potential. We also need to keep *the dynamic concept of culture* in mind: *that individual cultures are changing, and the importance and meaning of different cultural aspects is changing with time.*

The different elements in a culture contribute to resilience according to how important that specific factor is in each culture. Let me give an example: family is an important protective factor both in Southern Africa and Norway. However, what we mean by family or what part of family that is involved, may differ. In Southern Africa *the extended family concept* implies that mother and father, grandparents, uncles and aunts all are called parents and all have an important role to play in the

upbringing of a child. If the biological parents cannot afford clothing for their children, they can ask any of the other "parents" to provide clothes as a natural thing, because they are also parents. Uncles and aunts may punish their nephews and nieces if they do wrong; it is their duty because they are also their children. A child may stay with any of these relatives for some years if they are better off or live closer to a good school.

A Zambian student in my cross-cultural study gives an example of this. She tells about an event when her parents quarrelled, and her father beat up and chased her mother way. After a few days her uncle, aunt and grandmother came to negotiate with them to unite again. After some negotiations with both parties, they succeeded in bringing the family together again. In the Zambian culture marriage is highly valued and involves the families on both sides to a large extent. This created the resilience that was able to bring the parties together again. Resilience was in this case drawn from the protective factor of Network and of Meaning, values and faith.

In Norway it is the nuclear family comprising mother, father and children that is most important, but in many cases grandparents also give a lot of practical support if the young people live close to them e.g. in babysitting and caring for the grandchildren. In Norway also other family constellations have come into being, such as one-parent families and step-parents, step-grandparents and half siblings etc as a result of divorce and remarriage. This development may have contributed to a weaker attachment within the greater family network, but then may be a closer attachment between the child and the biological parents. Even if family represents an important protective factor in Norway, the parents and the extended family seem to have more emphasis in Southern Africa. In an example of family problem like mentioned above in Norway, one would not so often get involvement from extended family members, and more often the situation would end with divorce.

In Norway, individualism is a central value for many, and the emphasis in childrearing is more on the parents supporting the child making his/her own choices and standing on its own feet, while in Southern Africa the advice and opinion of parents and the rest of the extended family are more important even for young people, e.g. in choice of education, work etc. Even in Latino culture and Indian First Nation culture it seems that the unity and fellowship in the family is playing a more vital role.

According to this example, the resilience of Norwegian children would come from having parents who support the children in their choices and in their will and ability to stand up for their choices. The resilience of Southern African children may come from having talked things through in the family and arrived at a solution that the family as a unit can accept and support.

At the same time we need to also see *the complexity of this area*. There are subcultures and individual differences within all nations. For example, one might say that hospitality is a value in the Norwegian society, yet you will find that there are people who rarely invite people outside their own family while others invite colleagues or visitors on a large scale.

Another example is how to be able to communicate your concerns to higher authorities in the society in which you live. In Swaziland, the king has the final word in every matter in which he chooses to be involved. Otherwise his Ministers are in charge. Political parties are not allowed. It can be difficult for poor people, and especially for women to be heard if they have any complaints. Yet traditionally there was a way. An old Swazi tradition is to sing the king's praise. The singer should be dressed in Swazi attire and sing in the traditional style. Some time ago, when the king came to officially open the Swazi Plaza Commercial Centre, an elderly woman took this opportunity to contact him. When the king went around and passed the stall of Mrs. Elizabeth Mbuli LaKunene she stepped out and sang the king's praises, but she also sang about the E 60 million National Development Fund for poverty alleviation that was not working. The Times of Swaziland reported:

> She caught the attention of His Majesty by her eloquent recital of the King's praises in an unrehearsed voice and in the process registering the nations disappointment that the E 60 million fund has not started helping Swazis.

His Majesty's attention was drawn to Kunene who never stopped and shouted for the king to take notice, which he did while he was still touring the wares that were on display. The king smiled as the woman reported the snail's pace at which government is tackling the E60 million fund meant for poverty alleviation.

In his address during the official opening …His Majesty alluded to the woman's concern and said all funds that are not in operation should quickly do so and assist the Swazis….. (Times of Swaziland Nov. 3rd 2001).

The incidence received a lot of attention in the News, and the woman was later interviewed in the paper where she said "it was through pain and suffering that she became bold to address the king in public. She knew that was her only opportunity to talk to the king and she did it the traditional way" (Times Nov. 10th 2001). It was interesting to see that her strong message was accepted and taken on board because she made use of a way of communication that was culturally acceptable. Even in a patriarchal society with few democratic traditions, the culture had a way to give voice to the voiceless. The critical question here now is what those who really have the power are doing with such expressions afterwards. As many of these ways are disappearing in modern society, are new ways of democratic exchange developing? This woman used her good voice and poetic ability (abilities and skills) combined with the cultural strength (meaning, values and faith) to be able to get her message across. This old lady was resilient because she knew her culture and she had the necessary skills.

In Norwegian society there are other ways of getting through to the people in power. We have political parties, and we are free to involve in politics, to arrange strikes or meetings, to go to the media or to contact politicians and explain our case to them. In order to be able to make use of this culture, however, we also need information and training in how it works and how one can make use of it. To know the culture where you are living is a prerequisite for resilience both in Southern Africa and Norway.

3.3 Resilience and vulnerability from culture.

In the previous section, we saw examples of how different cultures have their strengths and can give strength to their people in different ways. Here we want to see how some cultural practises also can make people less resilient – that is more vulnerable. When we looked at the studies on Latino youth, we pointed out that *a dissolving culture* can lead to increased vulnerability; e.g. strong family cohesion may lead to increased problem for children if the parents are violent or abuse alcohol.

The following story from a Zambian student from my research on resilience in Southern Africa and Norway illustrates how culture can have both negative and positive effects on resilience. The girl writes about her father's death when she was 14 years old:

…It was believed that he was witched by his elder brother. It was like my father was invited to go and have a drink and this was local beer. So when he reached the place he found them drinking in a certain container and he was given a cup with some beer being separated from the main container. And then my father died of the stomach pains, he was unable to go to the toilet.

I felt very bad because no one was able to look after our family. We remained in a hunger situation.

How we come out of that bad situation. Some Good Samaritans from the Church of Christ came to see how we were staying and they started donating some food for our family. Then our first born brother started working with some piece works and he was the one who was supporting our education until we finished schools and we all started working in different jobs the three of us. So that's how we are keeping our mother where she stays in the village. (Z34).

The girl believed her father had been bewitched by her uncle ("father" in the African tradition). This must have created a lot of fear and bad feelings in the child in addition to the loss of her father and all the financial and practical problems his death created. The story is told in a short version – perhaps because of having to write in English - , it only says they were left without anybody to look after them and that they experienced hunger. *The witchcraft tradition* seems to be very much alive in the Southern African region, and it creates a lot of fear in both children and adults. People are afraid to confront injustice in their neighbourhood or even to report thieves to police because they are afraid of being bewitched by the culprit. In another story from the same material, a girl tells that she believed her father was bewitched when he fell sick with a swollen leg for nine years. She felt a great relief when her pastor counselled and prayed for her to take away her belief that her father had been bewitched (Z36).

Regional newspapers carry a number of powerful stories about how this tradition affects people, especially in rural communities. On one occasion, a priest in the Zionist church was expelled from his home in the KaGucuka area in Manzini with just 24 hours notice, allegedly because of witchcraft practices. A neighbour had fallen sick, and he had previously quarrelled with the priest about cattle. The priest was then the prime suspect for bewitching the man. The decision was taken by the Chiefs' Inner Council after they had consulted with a traditional healer. They had thrown dry bones to get the final confirmation of who was the culprit. This happened even though witchcraft hunts are illegal in Swaziland. The report goes on to say that "This is the second time in less that a month a priest has been implicated in witchcraft. Last month a priest and his wife were killed by a mob after they were suspected of practising witchcraft. The incident occurred at Mashobeni in the Northern Hhohho region" (Times of Swaziland 7th April 1997).

During my stay in Zambia and other countries in the region I found that people often referred to witchcraft to explain car accidents, sickness, deaths, earthquakes, floods, lightning with casualties and the like. A common belief is that there are no natural deaths or accidents: they always have a supernatural explanation. Often the surviving wife, a neighbour or somebody in the community is suspected of having bewitched the deceased, and the search for the witch creates a lot of confusion, fear and hatred.

This aspect of the culture makes the sick or the bereaved even more vulnerable and it is under debate in the region. A full-page feature article in Times of Swaziland (February 10, 2000) discusses the issue of witchcraft. It challenges the traditional healers to abstain from witchcraft and to speak against it publicly. The article concludes:

> "Swaziland must avoid a reputation as being home to witchcraft, and we must separate traditional beliefs that are the backbone of our culture and a source of pride from superstitions that lead to misery and death. "

This article is an illustration of the dynamics in culture. It is changing. The article advocates the need to sort out traditional culture and draw a line between beliefs with positive effects and those practices that lead to problems for people in a modern society. Witchcraft can be seen as a way the traditional society tried to get control over fortune, life, death and the unpredictable events of life. Development (e.g. in medicine) has given us more effective ways to control some aspects of our lives, but still life is in many ways unpredictable, and this can create uncertainty in different cultures.

Other parts of the tradition in the case above (Z 34) seem to have had a supportive effect. The *strong family cohesion* was a protective factor. When her elder brother got a job he supported his sisters' education, and then all of them supported their mother in the village. *Christianity* has become a vital part of the culture in Southern Africa, and there are many examples in my study showing that the Church represents both a network giving practical help and fellowship as well as spiritual help such as prayers, hope and meaning to people in difficult circumstances.

Another example from my material illustrates how *a cultural practice that is no longer so relevant* in a modern society can represent a possible increased vulnerability.

Dad's death in 1976 resulted into a lot of problems coming to surface. It was during this period that my dad's family grabbed all the property from us including my mothers clothes except for the three dress which they did not see when packing. The shoes (red) which Dad got for me in Britain before he died where grabbed and given to a cousin of mine, who now I do not know her whereabouts.

Since then, I guess I should say hell started from there. We are seven in the family and at that time we were all ready to get to school. But my mother was only a civil servant, who got K 40 000 per month when at school they needed K9000 for each of us… (Z18).

The story goes on about a number of financial hardships. The practice of the man's family coming to take things of value in the house when a man dies comes from the traditional society where the woman, when she was married, became part of the husband's family. The man's family had to pay *lobola* (bride price) for the wife who thereafter belonged to the man's family. When the husband died, the man's extended family was supposed to take care of the wife and the children by letting her stay with her in-laws or perhaps become a second or third wife to one of her husband's brothers. This meant security for the bereaved family in a traditional agricultural and hunting setting where it was hard for a lady to manage alone. In modern times, a wife may well not want to be "taken over" by a brother-in-law. She may have her own education and paid employment, and want to keep the children and continue living in the home. Yet the family still comes to take what they think belongs to their family. This tradition can be quite hard on the bereaved family members. Not only have they lost the main breadwinner of the family, but they also lose pots and pans, furniture and things of value that they could use for their daily life. We see here that a cultural practice that was originally intended to help the family has an opposite effect in a new situation. It leaves the family more vulnerable. This practice is still carried on in more countries in Southern Africa, but it is now under debate, e.g. a feature article in Times of Swaziland on "The painful story of the Swazi woman" (9.03.97).

This also relates to the concept of culture as dynamic and changing. The story is an example of a cultural practice that has changed half way. The women are now having education, are working outside the home and have a more independent role in society especially in urban areas. The discussion about family "grabbing" shows that this culture is under pressure and may disappear after some time. Then the culture has rearranged itself according to changed conditions in the society, and thereby re-established strength and security for women: they can keep the home and belongings and look after the family after the death of the husband.

In the Norwegian sample, I have some examples that show lack of support for children after death in the immediate family. One of the stories goes thus:

When I was 5 years old, my younger sister died of cot death. She was 5 months old. My mother went into shock and shut out the whole world … She created an emotional distance between herself and her surroundings … My survival strategy was repression. … After these incidents I created my own "reality" where everything was only good and nice… I had no-one around me to help me to get through these events (N31 in my Norwegian sample).

Another story tells of how a girl lost her mother to cancer when she was 10 years old. Relatives thought she and her sisters of 17 and 14 years could stay with their elder sister who was then 20. She then lived in a house dominated by alcohol, parties and neglect. These are some examples that show that children are also vulnerable in a culture where people may assume that the social welfare system is in charge of children and that this is enough. Obviously, paid care can never fully replace care from family and friends. Modern welfare systems and families need to integrate this into their thinking.

3.4 Minority and majority cultures, biculturalism and resilience

Serious problems can arise when a majority tries to acculturate a minority to the majority culture by taking away or not recognizing important parts of the minority culture. This has happened in many

cases where the majority has forced its language, way of living, dress and other cultural expressions on the minority. In Norwegian society the situation of the Sami people and the Romany people are sad examples. The Romany – a type of travellers – did not want to settle in one place but chose to live by moving around with tents and later caravans, making certain things that they sold to the local people. They had their own special language they used between themselves, some distinctive forms of dress, their own way of singing, special handicrafts etc. (Gotaas 1999 and 2000). Their way of living was not accepted in Norwegian society and they were often chased away when they tried to pitch their tents on a field for some weeks. The Norwegian authorities tried to force them to settle and put their children into regular schools, but the children did not thrive in Norwegian schools, because their parents and their culture were not accepted and they were often looked down upon and even bullied. In other cases the authorities tried to take children from the parents for adoption as they considered that this way of life was not suitable for children. The Romany people have a long tale of discrimination and hardship in Norway. It is only the last 20 years that things have started to change. This sad story has many parallels with other minorities in other cultures.

Culture relates to the meaning of life of a group of people, it relates to how they live and work (skills), what they hold as right and important for them (values) and it also goes with faith and religion. Culture is a vital part of the identity. Identity is a central part of our personality; it may be seen as the core.

From the perspective of resilience, it can be seen that if you take the culture from a people, you take their identity, and hence their strength – the resilience factors. If people are stripped of what gives them strength, they become *vulnerable*, because they do not automatically gain those cultural strengths that the majority culture has acquired over generations.

Some of this was documented in the yearly meeting of "Network for Preschool Teacher Training and Preschool Development in Southern Africa" in Botswana 2004 when we learnt about the situation amongst the San people (le Roux 2004, Tanago 2004, Gunnestad 2004). The San people are traditional hunter-gatherers whose culture contains a great deal of specialised knowledge about hunting, about interpreting the behaviour and footprints of animals, about making hunting equipment, about harvesting nature's bounty etc. When many of them were moved out of their traditional area of living, and hunting and their way of living became restricted by the majority society, many people lost their identity and meaning in life. Their specialized skills and knowledge became useless and their culture of little relevance.

This may be why more minority groups, which have been exposed to harsh treatment and pressure from majority cultures may suffer from problems such as depression and alcoholism, e.g. Indian First Nation people in the USA, the San people in Southern Africa and the Aborigines in Australia.

How should minorities and minority cultures be regarded? Should minorities be kept separate in order not to loose their culture and thereby their strengths? This was part of our discussions in our yearly meeting of the Network for Preschool Teacher Training held in Botswana 2004 related to the situation of the San people in particular (Gunnestad 2004). This problem seems to be increasing in a world that is becoming smaller and with an increasing number of wars and ethnic antagonism, refugees and asylum seekers.

Stutman et al (2002) refer to a number of reports on resilience among immigrants and people from minority cultures. They claim that people who master the rules and norms of their new culture *without* abandoning their own language, values and social support seem more resilient than those who just keep their own culture and cannot adjust to their new culture *or* those who become highly acculturated. In more studies they found that *bicultural individuals were at lower risk* of substance abuse, other maladaptive behaviours, school difficulties and family conflicts. This was also illustrated with the American Indian "Little Turtle" who needed to know how to move both in water and on land (in two cultures). These positive effects of biculturalism in children were even stronger if their parents also were comfortable in both worlds. This last point is interesting, and it reminds us that when dealing with resilience and culture, we cannot just focus on children, we must focus on the

relationship between the generations, as culture is strongly related to what we receive from one generation and try to pass on to the next.

Biculturalism is when a person can move in two cultures, can speak the languages, know the behaviour and rules and know why people behave the way they do. Biculturalism can be obtained if there is a mutual respect between cultures so that a person is free to move in the other culture *without having to hide or abandon* his or her own culture. An Indian First Nation should feel safe and proud as an Indian in the American society, and a Romany should not have to hide his identity to get jobs, friends or be elected leader of an organisation in the majority group in Norway. Safe and good relationships are needed in both cultures.

Development of true biculturalism is, however, a complex issue. As we have discussed, culture is not an entity that you have or do not have. It is both dynamic and changing. Whenever representatives from one culture meet with representatives from another culture, they influence each other. Values, norms, ways of thinking, talking and acting will be influenced by contact with people who think, talk and act differently. Dahl (2001) maintains that culture is kept and changed continuously. What we think of as the Norwegian culture of today is actually a mixture of influences coming from different cultures around the world, through mass media, commercials, the entertainment industry, literature, music, tourism etc. Dahl uses the term "hybrid culture" for cultures of today because they will always be mixed up with influences from other cultures. Dahl writes that even if Norwegian culture consists of a mixture of cultural elements from other cultures because of the increasing interaction between people from different countries, maybe *the mixture* is still Norwegian. The main aim of biculturalism should be to be able to keep some of the cultural values and traditions of one's own people, as this is important for identity, and at the same time be able to know and make use of the majority culture which is important for daily life.

Second-generation immigrant children who live with parents who speak their mother tongue and try to keep the traditions of their culture at home while attending a preschool from the majority group will be able to develop biculturalism. Yet a question is: how will the minority culture look like after some more generations?

Stutman (2002) points out that most research on immigrant culture development and resilience has only been studied in first and second generations. More research on long term effects is needed.

4.0 Educational implications for working with children from different cultures.

I have worked with different cultures in Africa and Norway. My experience from Preschool Teacher Training in a number of countries in Southern Africa is that if one works *with the culture,* one will activate already existing resources and the teaching will have much better effect. A good example of this is *song, music and dance*. This has a strong tradition in the culture in southern Africa (Sæther 2002). Both children and adults are used to and love to sing and dance. I remember one of my South African students – a refugee from Apartheid South Africa - who received some good news from home when she was a student in Zambia. She danced almost the whole day. We were travelling on an educational trip that day. She danced while waiting for the bus, danced on the bus and danced as she left the bus.

Song, music and dance are used in all situations in Southern Africa. There are songs for joy and sadness, for protest and anger, for birth and death, for work and feasts. As I mentioned earlier on, in Swaziland songs are used in front of the king both to praise him and inform him. In a similar way, songs can be used by women to tell their husbands that they are not satisfied with their treatment, the money they get or other issues. Traditionally women were not supposed to confront their husbands directly, but they could sing their protest when washing clothes or weeding the fields. Similarly, a young housemaid may not talk directly to criticize the mother of the house, but she may complain in the lullabies she is singing to the child: "your mother is away too much, she does not love you…" I experienced this at a graduation ceremony at the FEA Preschool Teacher Training College in Swaziland. The Minister of Education was the guest of honour. At one point the students were coming

in, dancing in traditional attire, singing a thank you to me for assisting in giving them preschool training. Then they went on to complain about what the government was doing for them, about low salaries, poor working conditions etc. The last part was for the Minister's ear. The students used their traditional cultural expressions to get their message through to the Minister.

When we give song, music and dance a place in education in Southern Africa, it is received with enthusiasm. It is appreciated by all age groups, by parents and by the society. Songs and dance can be used to learn about cultural traditions as well as language, maths, science etc. When we teach songs for learning to preschool teacher students, they will easily make use of them with children because it is part of their culture: Learning is important and singing is fun. When we move with the culture, we make use of the strength in the culture, and we make use of natural motivation (Gunnestad 2002; Sæther 2005).

Another example is the use of storytelling. Storytelling has a long and popular tradition in many Southern African societies (Larsen 2004 a and b). Parents and grandparents used to tell stories in the evenings around the fire. Children used to share the stories they know with each other. The skill of telling is a vital part of culture in Southern Africa. Equal important is it that the stories transfer central part of culture: history, ideas, morals and values in the African culture. Stories also went along with the fellowship and unity of the family.

When observing preschools in a number of countries in the region of Southern Africa, I found little storytelling and more formal instruction – the names of colours, shapes, letters and numbers, names of days of the week, months of the year etc. This was particularly the case in preschools with untrained staff. When we emphasised and taught about the value of stories from an educational point of view in the preschool teacher training, I observed a great change. Stories were told daily, with joy, enthusiasm and confidence. It seems that the teaching about storytelling had a considerable effect because it linked up with an already established cultural value (Gunnestad 2002).

This also applies to Bible stories in the Southern African region. Christianity is widely accepted, and while books are not very common in most homes, most people will have a Bible. The Bible stories have very much become a part of the culture in Southern Africa. Knowing the educational value of stories in general, and also of Bible stories, I have seen that teachers easily make use of them because they know them, and it feels natural to them.

Singing, dancing and telling stories are central parts of culture in Africa, both as ways of expression and behaviour, and by the content they transfer. These elements link up with all the main categories of protective factors. Songs, dances and stories are activities that bind people together in the network and strengthen the feeling of togetherness. They also represent skills that can make children feel happy and able, and contribute to their positive self image. I have seen the joy, energy and pride in the eyes of orphaned children when performing beautiful songs with dance. More than anything these cultural practises links up with "Meaning, values and faith" as they transmit the history, values and traditions of the people.

By including songs and storytelling we were also able to contribute to conserving values in the traditional culture. In modern Africa many people live in cities were there are few grannies around to tell stories around the fire after dark. But singing, dancing and storytelling are conquering a place in new cultural arenas in the modern society: preschools and preschool teacher training.

On the opposite side I have also seen that things that do not link up so easily with the culture take longer to come into use. One example from preschool teacher training is the importance of play and the role of teachers in children's play. Even though this is a vital part of preschool tradition that is very much emphasised in the training, one can often see that teachers tend to look at the free play period as a coffee break or time for them to prepare the next lesson. This could partly be because adults traditionally did not play with children, so this idea is new and needs a lot of practise and training before it really gets adopted. The less emphasis on play in preschools in Southern Africa could also be due to other reasons related to the role of the preschool in society and the situation of the children in

the family (see Gunnestad 2002).

When working with children from another cultural background, e.g. children of refugees or asylum seekers, it is important to *find out about their culture*: what is important to them, what do they value and appreciate, what are their interests and skills, what do they like and dislike. It is equally important to know what their parents feel, and what they think about the upbringing of their children and what goals they have for their children.

This might be a long process, where parents from a different culture may feel it difficult to express their views from the beginning. It may take long time. As teachers we must show that we respect parents and their culture, and that we want to be on their side for the best interests of their children. They may have other goals than we have, and some of their goals may be in conflict with our goals. For example, in Norway some Muslim parents might say they do not want their girls to go on to further education because they want them to be good housewives, and they do not want them to get to know Norwegian boys. Sometimes immigrants from a very different cultural background get a superficial impression of the values in the Norwegian culture. They interpret what they see through their own cultural spectacles, for example, when they see the way some Norwegian teenage girls are dressed, they may assume they are all whores waiting to be approached by any boy in the street. It is important in such cases to try to respect each other and to understand in greater depth what both cultures really mean and how they express it. There may be more common ground than one might expect, i.e. that none of the cultures actually want their daughters to have sex with numerous partners.

Many Muslim girls abstain from unwanted sex by dressing very modestly and staying indoors, many Norwegian girls by knowing how to say no to a man and knowing that you have a right to decide about your own body. Both ways offer protection. The Muslim girls here tap resilience from the protective factor of "Meaning, values and faith", while the Norwegian girls mainly from "Abilities and skills". However, if a girl from a strict Muslim background just adopts the Norwegian code of dress without also understanding the deeper values and skills that go with it, she will be more vulnerable.

When parents from Africa hear children in Norway calling their teachers by their first names, they take it as a clear sign of disrespect and they do not want that attitude in their children. However, by looking more carefully at the relationship between children and teachers in Norway and Southern Africa, one may find that there is respect in both cultures, but respect for adults is more emphasised in Southern Africa. In Norway, friendliness and care may be emphasised in this relationship to a greater extent than in Southern Africa. We can see that many of the same values are represented in Norway and Southern Africa, but sometimes they are not expressed in the same way in the two cultures, and they are given different priorities. When one has a deeper understanding of the codes and expressions of different cultures, it is easier to find out how and to what extent one can adapt, and how one can move and live in a bicultural way.

When we work *with* the culture we mobilise parental and other network support which are so important for the success of educational training. At the same time we make use of skills that are already there and that are wanted and appreciated. We then also work in accordance with the values and norms in the society and with elements that give meaning in life and are vital in their identity. Working with the culture is in this way related to all three sets of protective factors in my model – network factors, abilities and skills, and meaning, values and faith. Working with the culture releases a lot of strength from the culture.

The same applies to working with children. When we make use of stories, songs, dances or other elements from their own tradition, and let them perform them in the school, in parents meetings or other celebrations one can see the interest, joy and enthusiasm in their eyes and stature. To know that you are good at something, and that this belongs to your people are important parts of identity and self-esteem. Identity and self-esteem are central processes in resilience.

When working with children from different cultures in the same school, it is also be important to *find contact points between the cultures*. Religion could be one contact point. Christianity is the most

common religion in Africa South of Sahara, in South America and some countries in Asia. Many asylum seekers may have a Christian background and for them that may be a key to contact with people and culture in their new country.

Interests and hobbies. Some people have a special interest in sports. Football attracts a lot of interest worldwide. Boys in rural Tanzania ask me about the Norwegian player Solskjaer when I tell them that I am from Norway. An immigrant father who is good in football may train boys in the neighbourhood, and this common interest may start a friendship and mutual contact. The same is true of other sports. People who have a special interest and skills in music may join a choir, a band or a dance group. Others interested in cooking, art or film may also be advised where to find groups of people with similar interests. In this way they tap the resilience from the protective factor of "Abilities and skills".

Building network and friendships in preschool and outside is another vital method in working with children with different cultural backgrounds. The preschool may be the first place where a child from a minority or an immigrant child meets children from the majority culture. It will be important to build friendships and create trust and understanding of each other. Equally important is building network with the parents. The preschool may organize parents in groups with certain responsibilities within the preschool. The preschool could also help parents to connect with relevant organisations such as sport clubs, choirs, handicap organisations, churches etc. It is important to try to build friendship and social competence by starting with their interests and competencies, and in this way draw resilience from the Network factor.

From a resilience point of view, *building skills in children* is a good way of strengthening their self-image. As teachers we have often focused on children's misspellings and other mistakes. In the resilience approach, we want to start with children's strengths: what they know, are interested in and good at. We use the strengths as stepping stones to new areas: to make children aware of their own platform of coping and also their potential is important for their motivation to go on learning.

Culture is a resource in resilience. We need to know about culture and build on it to make children from different cultures resilient. For minorities and immigrant groups true biculturalism could be the best way of coping.

References:

Adresseavisa: *Joik på skolebenken*. Friday 18 June 2004:24. Trondheim, Norway

Agnell, G. Brent (2000). *Cultural Resilience in North American Indian first Nations: The Story of Little Turtle*. Critical Social Work, Vol. 1, no1.

Dahl, Ø. (2001). *Møter mellom mennesker. Interkulturell kommunikasjon*. Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk.

Daun, Å. (1999). *Det allmänmänneskliga och det kulturbundna*. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Prisma.

Folkeskolekomiteen 1963: Innstilling frå Folkeskolekomiteen av 1963: om lov om folkeskolen og om mellombils lov om 7-årig folkeskole og overgang til 9-årig folkeskole. Oslo: Kirke og undervisningsdepartementet.

Gjærum, B., Grøholt, B. & Sommershild, H. (ed. 1998). Mestring som mulighet i møte med barn, ungdom og foreldre. Oslo: Tano Aschehoug.

Gotaas, T. (1999). *Taterne i norsk folketradisjon*. Espa: Lokalhistorisk forlag..

Gotaas, (2000). *Taterne livskampen og eventyret*. Oslo: Andresen & Butenschøn.

Grotberg, E. (1995). *A guide to promoting resilience in children: strengthening the human spirit*. Den Haag: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Grotberg, E and Badri, G. (1992). Sudanese children in the family and culture. In: U.P. Gielen, L.L. Adler & N.A Milgrad (Eds.): *Psychology in International Perspective*. Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Gunnestad, Arve (2002a). Resiliens som tilnærming i arbeid med barn som trenger særskilt hjelp. In: Palma Sjøvik: *En barnehage for alle*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Gunnestad (2002b). Barnehagen i det sørlige Afrika. (kap. 2) in: *Førskolepedagogikk og barnehageutvikling i det sørlige Afrika*. Trondheim: Dronning Mauds Minne.

Gunnestad, Arve (2002c). Førskolepedagogikk og årsplanarbeid i det sørlige Afrika: utgangspunkt i lokal kultur og tilgjengelige ressurser. In: *Førskolepedagogikk og barnehageutvikling i det sørlige Afrika*. Trondheim: Dronning Mauds Minne.

Gunnestad, Arve (2003). Resilience – a new Approach to Children at Risk in Southern African Situation. In: Gunnestad, Arve (ed): *Children's rights in Early Childhood Education*. Report. Trondheim: Queen Maud's College.

Gunnestad, Arve (2004). *The Role of Culture in Early Childhood Education*. Report from the 6th Network Conference in Gantsi, Botswana. Trondheim: Queen Maud's College.

HeavyRunner (Blackfeet), Iris and Joann Sebastian Morris (Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa) (1997). *Traditional Native Culture and Resilience*. Centre for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, College of Education & Human Development, University of Minnesota. Volume 5, No. 1.

Hylland Eriksen, T. (2nd ed. 2001). *Small places, large issues. An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.

Hylland Eriksen, T. (2 utgave 2001). *Flerkulturell forståelse*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Johannessen, E. (2003). *Kan vi overføre kunnskap fra en kultur til en annen*. Barnehagefolk nr. 3/2003.

Klausen, Arne Martin (1992). *Kultur – mønster og kaos*. Oslo: Ad notam Gyldendal

Klausen, Arne Martin (1995). Det fellesmenneskelige og det kulturrelative – et sosialantropologisk perspektiv. I: Lars Østnor: *Mange religioner – én etikk?* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Kumpfer, K.L. (1999). Factors and processes contributing to resilience: The positive resilience framework. In Glantz, M. D. and Johnson, J.L. (Eds): *Resilience and development*: *Positive Life Adaptions*. pp 179-224. New York: Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Larsen, Anne-Mari (2004 a). Kwesuka sukela – once upon a time. How to use drama, play and theatre in storytelling. In A. Gunnestad: *The role of Culture in Early Childhood Education*. Trondheim: Queen Maud's College.

Larsen, Anne-Mari (2004 b). *Kwesuka sukela – once upon a time. How to use drama, play and theatre in storytelling*. Network for Preschool Teacher Training and Preschool Development in Southern Africa, Trondheim: Queen Maud's College.

Le Roux, Willemien (2004). Integration of Culture in Early Childcare and Education in Hunter-gatherer and Pastoralist Societies – Really Possible? In A. Gunnestad (ed. 2004): *The role of Culture in Early Childhood Education*. Trondheim: Queen Maud's College, Norway.

Masten, A.S. (2001). *Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development*. American Psychologist, 56 (3)

Masten, A.S. and Coatsworth, J.D. (1998). *The development of competence in favourable and unfavourable environments: Lessons from research on successful children.* American Psychologist 53 (2): 205-220.

Merry, Sally Engle (2001). Changing rights, changing culture. In: Cowan J.K., Dembour, M.B. & Wilson, R.A.:*Culture and Rights. Anthropological Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Repstad, P. (1996). Religiøst liv i det moderne Norge. Et sosiologisk kart. Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget.

Rutter, M (1990). Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms. In Rolf, J. Masten, A.S et al.: *Risk and Protective Factors in the Development of Psychopathology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stutman, S., Baruch, R., Grotberg, E. & Rathore, Z. (2002). *Resilience in Latino Youth.* Working Paper, Institute for Mental Health Initiatives. Washington DC: The George Washington University.

Sæther, Morten (2002). Musikkopplevelse og undervisning i det sørlige Afrika. In: Gunnestad: *Førskolepedagogikk og barnehageutvikling i det sørlige Afrika.* Trondheim: Dronning Mauds Minne.

Sæther, Morten. How to Teach Music with Preschool Children. In: Gunnestad (2005): *Early Education for all. Report from meeting in Network for Preschool Teacher Training and Preschool Development in Southern Africa, Zanzibar.* Trondheim: Dronning Mauds Minne.

Tanago, Moronga (2004). The Oral History of the San People in the Okavango Sub-district. In A. Gunnestad (ed. 2004): *The role of Culture in Early Childhood Education.* Trondheim: Queen Maud's College, Norway.

Times of Swaziland (March 9, 1997). *The painful story of the Swazi woman.* Page14-15.

Times of Swaziland (April 7, 1997). *Priest expelled for alleged witchcraft.* Page 1 and 36.

East African Standard (Monday 21. September 1998). *Where witches rule and leave locals trembling.*

Times of Swaziland (November 3, 2001). *They are sleeping on the job Your Majesty. In true Swazi tradition, a woman recited the king's praises…* page 6-7.

Times of Swaziland (November 10, 2001). *LaKunene the whistle-blower.*

Ting-Toomey, S. (1999). Communicating across Cultures. New York/London: The Guilford Press.

Vanistendael, Stefan (1995). Growth in the Muddle of Life. Resilience: Building on peoples strengths. Geneva: International Catholic Child Bureau.

About the author:

Born 21.01.51, married with 4 children.
Assoc. Prof. at Queen Maud's College of Early Childhood Education in Trondheim since 1994.
Director of Network for Preschool Teacher Training and Preschool Development in Southern Africa.
Involved as a consultant to preschool teacher trainings in more countries in Southern Africa for 10 years, and lived and worked in Africa for 3 more years.

Author of books/reports:
Gunnestad, Arve (2005 ed.): Early Education for All. Report from Network Conference. Trondheim: Queen Maud's College.
Gunnestad, Arve (2003). Didaktikk for førskolelærere , Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Arve Gunnestad (2003 ed.): Children's rights in Early Childhood Education in Africa and Norway. Report. Trondheim: Queen Maud's College.

Gunnestad, Arve (2002 ed). Førskolepedagogikk og barnehageutvikling i det sørlige Afrika. Trondheim: Queen Maud's College.

Arve Gunnestad (1994). Spesialpedagogisk læreplanarbeid. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

---