

Resilience in Minorities

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Abstract

In this study we compare the situation of two minorities, the San people of Botswana and the Travellers in Norway. We want to explore how their way of life, their culture, travelling then want to show how knowledge of resilience and protective factors can be important for the survival and development of minority cultures in general and for the life and education of children in particular.

Keywords: resilience, indigenous people, minorities, San people, Travellers, cross-cultural, comparative education

Introduction

A minority can be defined as a group of people with some cultural, social, religious, linguistic or physical characteristics that identify them as different from the majority of people in the area where they live. There are some 5000 ethnic groups in the world, and more than 200 countries have a significant minority ethnic or religious group. In many cases, belonging to a minority has meant discrimination and less access to essential services such as health, education and protection (Phinney and Rotheram 1987). Almost 900 million people belong to groups that experience disadvantage as a result of their identity (The State of the World's Children 2006). In most cases, indigenous people are conceptualized as minorities (Suzman 2001). They have many characteristics in common with minorities, but they also have some distinctive traits. They insist on their right to a separate culture linked to a particular territory and their history. On the whole, they have maintained their own language, culture and social organization (Kipuri 2006).

The San people and the Travellers – background

The San people are an indigenous minority that is believed to have existed for more than 30,000 years. Now existing in smaller and scattered groups, they are found in South Africa, Namibia and in much smaller groups in other countries in the Southern Region of Africa (Suzman, 2001). Botswana has the largest number of San people in the region, with numbers of up to 50,000 (Le Roux, 1999).

Until recently the San people were known for their hunting and gathering lifestyle. For many centuries they moved from one place to another in search of what the land can provide in order to survive. Traditionally, they have lived mostly in the Kalahari Desert and on its fringes.

"We used to walk for 30-40 kilometres. My experience is to gather food every day. There was never any rest; we had to gather all the time. Today there is no place to gather. I live in one place now, and I am just at home looking after the children. In the old days we used to take the children with us when we gathered" (San, woman 62).

The Travellers are claimed by most historians to have originated from India, and to have settled in Norway in the 15th century (St.meld. nr.15, 2000-2001, Gotaas, 2000). Of late they are recognized as a national minority in Norway. The Travellers were known as small-scale sellers and craftsmen. They travelled round the country, bringing news, songs and music, offering their goods and taking on different jobs as craftsmen. They bought and sold goods and mended watches. Many worked as tinsmiths making drip-mouldings for houses, and different utensils for the kitchen such as knives, boxes and saucepans. The horse was important to the Travellers. Having a horse meant property and money. Travellers bought and sold horses, and would often buy a sick horse, nurse it back to health and sell it for profit. The horse was also important for travelling until in 1951 Travellers were forbidden to own and use horses. "We cried when they took our horses away horse", say many of the old people.

Ever since the Travellers came to Norway they have faced problems and have been persecuted and looked down upon. The Norwegian authorities have used a very harsh assimilation policy towards the Travellers in order to make them "proper" Norwegians, stopping them from travelling, and denying them their own family, language and culture. This tragic history has made the Travellers a group with many challenges and problems even in modern society.

The Travellers and the Roma people may have some common roots far back in history, but in Norway they are two separate groups with different languages and distinctive cultural features and they do not mix. Both have acquired the status of national minority groups in Norway. The population of Roma is large in Europe, but there are only about 500 Roma in Norway, while the Travellers number between 5, 000 to 10,000. The Travellers in Norway are a more mixed group than the Roma, and over the last 20 years mixed marriage between Travellers and other Norwegians has become more common. The Travellers are also more integrated into Norwegian society than the Roma are. Nonetheless, they still face problems of less education, a culture that is vanishing and the experience of not being fully accepted into Norwegian society.

The Roma people have faced great problems in Europe. This is why 11 countries have joined a programme called "The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015". The aim of the programme is to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of the Roma within a regional framework. Norway is not involved in this programme, but has its own.

On 13 September 2007 the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was accepted by 143 members of the UN General Assembly. Even though a declaration is not binding for UN member states, it is an important milestone in the fight for international recognition of the needs and rights of indigenous people.

Method

In order to collect information we have used interviews with two minority groups, the San people in Botswana and the Travellers in Norway. We also used observations and literature

reviews. Our method of interviewing has included different types of conversation, from the informal to the formal. The interviews among the Travellers were carried out over a period of four years. We interviewed 18 women and 14 men aged between 25 – 90 years. Many of the persons have been interviewed several times. The formal interviews of the San people were carried out only once, but there have been informal meetings over a period of three years. We interviewed 8 women and 6 men. Some of the interviews took place in a group setting. The reason is that both the Travellers and San people prefer being in groups where they have relatives and close friends around them. There was always one person in the groups who spoke on behalf of the others, but who would consult the group members on certain questions. We interviewed people with and without education, those who work for different organisations, pre- and primary school teachers and parents. Our aim was to gather the Travellers and the San people's own stories and reflections on their lives with particular focus on their travelling, culture, family life, education and language. People were interviewed in different situations; in the informal context, sitting in a car, a caravan, a kitchen, a dining room, out in the open, under a tree, or in a more formal situation. All the interviews have been recorded. All the informants consented to participate and they were guaranteed anonymity.

Anne-Mari Larsen interviewed all the Travellers together with Anna Gustavsen from the Travellers' organisation. Gustavsen has opened the door to other Travellers. She contacted the informants, talked to them and explained the purpose of the project. Gustavsen's participation in the interviews has been of great importance because of her knowledge of the people and their culture. The informants felt safe and reported that it was easier to talk because of her presence. Anne-Mari Larsen and Stella Nguluka interviewed the San together with Xhwaa Qubi and Xhoma Qhomatca, both San people. They also helped with translation and guidance in understanding certain San cultural perceptions. Nguluka, Qubi and Qhomatca have opened the door to the San (Larsen & Nguluka, 2007).

Both the San and the Travellers are suspicious of people outside their own group, especially if they represent school, or the authorities. They wonder who are you, what you want, whether this is another abuse of their group or will they actually benefit? Many felt anxious about talking to us, but felt more secure when we came with one of their own people. Interviewing takes time. If the weather was good, the Travellers might suddenly travel or move. When we arrived, some of them told us they had decided not to talk to us, because their family did not like it, and others said "It hurts so much. I just want to cry, it is better not to talk". Nevertheless, we did manage to get some very important information.

Arve Gunnestad has carried out a project entitled "Resilience - a cross-cultural study of the ability to cope, protective factors and supportive processes among children in Southern Africa and Norway". In this project, he collected stories from students from Zambia, Swaziland and Norway about a crisis in their childhood and what helped them to cope and get through the problems. He also analysed a number of international studies on resilience (Rutter 1990, Antonovsky 2000, Werner and Smith 1992). He was then able to identify a number of different protective factors. These are factors within the child or in its environment that reduce the effect of risk factors and / or strengthen the child's ability to overcome the difficulties. In his study Gunnestad grouped the protective factors in three groups. These factors were

- 1) Network factors – external support
- 2) Abilities and skills – the children's own resources

3) Meaning, values and faith – existential and cultural support (Gunnestad 2003 and 2006). After presenting some data on the situation of the San people and the Travellers, we want to look at how the theory of resilience can be useful in understanding and improving their situation.

A comparison of some cultural features between the San and the Travellers

Travelling

Living mostly as craftsmen and salesmen, Travellers have always moved from place to place, but would often stay for a night or so with relatives, in tents, or on farms they found on their way. Both men and women sold goods at the doors, but this was mainly women's work. They often sold the goods the men had made, but they also sold articles they had bought in large quantities. Sometimes they took money, at other times they exchanged goods for food (Gotaas, 2000).

For the Travellers, travelling was a necessity in order to earn their living, but it was also a life-style and a culture. As soon as the winter gave way to spring, many of them started feeling restless and wanted to start travelling and selling.

"Life has no meaning without travelling. If I couldn't travel I couldn't live. It is difficult to explain, but you just have to travel, to meet relatives and friends, see new places, find work and feel free"(Traveller, woman 32 years).

Travelling is important in the Travellers' culture and they give the three following reasons: they travel in order to have the feeling of being free, leaving time behind and deciding themselves where and when to go. Some say they travel to keep in touch with their family and other relatives. They also travel to get work and income.

As hunters and gatherers, the San people naturally had to move around within a certain area in order to find game as well as fruit, berries, leaves and roots for food and medicine. They had to move according to the seasons, and mobility was also necessary for the regeneration of the environment. It was important for sustainability to harvest with understanding (Kipuri 2006). The migration of the San people made it easier for other tribes to settle on their best lands when they were away.

"We had a base where we lived and we travelled around to look for food. My grandfather looked for animals and plants. If someone found food they would call the rest of us so we also could gather" (San).

The travelling life style seems to have met with little understanding from the authorities in both Norway and in Botswana. In Norway, the authorities tried to stop the Travellers from travelling and to make them settle down, put their children into school and assimilate them into mainstream Norwegian society. The Travellers have also been persecuted, laws have been made to try to control their lifestyle, and children have been taken from their parents and put into foster families to grow up in a "proper" Norwegian family without travelling. They were prevented from practising their culture, speaking their language, singing their songs, and discouraged from keeping in touch with relatives or other Travellers. Many of the Travellers never had the opportunity to have an education.

In Botswana, many San communities have been moved from their traditional ancestral territories in the central Kalahari Desert because of the establishment of game parks. The authorities have tried to settle them in villages where their traditional skills in hunting and gathering are not applicable.

Culture

Both the Travellers and the San people display a richness of talent, traditional knowledge and fulfilment in their cultural expressions. For instance, both groups find expression through songs, music and art to be among their most valuable accomplishments. The Travellers have a heritage of traditional songs and music that were used whenever they met. They also had different types of handicrafts that they made to sell. Similarly, the San people's dance festivals and art are now world-famous and make a remarkable contribution to the nation's cultural heritage.

"We were good singers and sang lively songs when we were happy, but suddenly we could sing a sad song and then we all sat crying. It was the emotions in the songs that took us into different moods. We expressed happiness, sorrow and pain in our songs, and I am sure it was a good therapy for everyone," (Traveller, man 61).

"Song and dance is very important to us. We sing to make people well and we dance. The women sing and clap the rhythm, and the men dance, but women can dance and make people well too. We dance and sing after a good hunt" (San, woman 32).

Both these groups seem to display a deep interest in story-telling. They both describe the practice of sitting around the fire in the evenings and telling stories. This was not just a form of evening recreation: the content of the stories was aimed at teaching good behaviour, surviving danger and procuring food. The San stories would also touch on where animals had been seen grazing, or where to find wild berries, leaves and fruit and how to get them; the Travellers' stories would recount the day's happenings and reveal information about possible places to sell goods, expected and acceptable conduct to get a good price and where it might be possible to stay overnight.

San culture relates to hunting and gathering. The San hunter has specialised knowledge of where to find game in different seasons, he knows how to interpret tracks to see if the animal is male or female, young or old, weak or strong and he can tell if there were other animals and how old the track is. The San gatherer also has specialist knowledge of where and how to find fruit, roots, leaves and berries. Another field is the production of arts and crafts. The production include jewellery, tools and household items using materials such as ostrich eggshells, leather, wood, dried fruits and tree bark. This requires knowledge and access to materials as well as artistic talent (Kxao Moses et al. 2006).

The family

Both the Travellers and the San people have lived simple lives with little emphasis on the acquisition of material goods. One very important element is family life. There are striking

similarities in the family relationships of these two groups. Both groups often express the importance of family and relations. They feel more secure, loved and appreciated by their own families and tend to feel more relaxed and trusting towards their own kind. Both the Travellers and the San people say "It is as if we live in two worlds; one when we are free and can be ourselves with our family and relatives; one when we have to pretend to be someone else when we are out in society". Both groups share a strong tendency to display very close and strong family affiliations and a preference for their own kind.

"Family is important, very important. Because you can choose friends, but you cannot choose who your mother is or who your sister is. So family is important. No matter how bad they are, or how they treated you, they are still important" (San, man 33).

"We survived in the old days because we had our family around us. That was the security. It is when we have our family around we can completely relax and be ourselves. We have friends who are not Travellers, but we keep a distance. It happens automatically. Sometimes I try not to, but I can't. I say to myself; you must believe in people and what they say. But again and again I experience that they are not to be trusted" (Traveller, woman 52).

Interdependency and the readiness to share the food gathered and other survival ethics were clearly portrayed amongst the San people who were usually found in small communities of up to 30 people. In the past, when one harvested from "Mother Nature", the bounty was gladly shared with the rest of the community. In the same way that the food was shared, information about where the food was found was also freely distributed for everyone's benefit. In much the same way, the Travellers have displayed the same strong sense of shared experience, food and possessions. If the father obtained work somewhere in the country, the whole family would always move and join him, and ideally many families would travel together.

"What I remember best is the loyalty and solidarity among us. If one of us earned a lot or got a lot of food one day, he or she would share with the rest of us. We didn't save or put money in the bank. We used what we had and were satisfied with little" (Traveller, woman 76).

"We always lived many of us together. The whole family was there. We would always share when we found food. If one family had food and one did not have, we shared. We never picked all the food, but saved it and told the others were to find food" (San, woman 71).

The possible reason for these tight family relationships displayed by these two groups can be ascribed to the need observed amongst most minorities of any kind to seek cohesion, strength, and loyalty towards one another, against the prejudices and discrimination they incur as isolated members in a wider society. They find the wholeness and identity they seek in their own families and kind.

Education

Traditionally, the San people and the Travellers have had no need for formal education, as conceptualized in modern terms. Children acquired their indigenous knowledge through their constant interaction with both the adult world and the physical environment around them

(Batibo, 2005). They learnt what they needed to know from their parents, older siblings and from the rest of the community. Education took place in the everyday activities of adults, sometimes in small groups and sometimes as one-to-one interaction. There was no element of competition and nobody could fail. There was no corporal punishment because it was unnecessary. Education was completely relevant for social cohesion and survival (Le Roux 2004).

Both groups have access to adequate educational opportunities, one in a developed country like Norway, the other in Botswana with a fairly generous educational provision in comparison with other African states. Unfortunately for both groups, very few have attained high levels of education. Several studies and experiences amongst the San people show that whenever their children enrolled in a school, they would leave at various stages of their education as soon as they met a crisis they could not deal with. The evidence also shows, for the most part, that the first two or three years of the San child's school life have been traumatic (Le Roux 1999). The children often run away from school. The fact that most of these children never went back to school is borne out by the low levels of education amongst this group of people.

"I ran away from school because the bigger boys bothered us. I could not feel safe in school. My parents lived far away. I could not understand what the teacher said, and I had no one to ask" (San, man 34).

We find similarities in the Travellers group. Their travelling culture was never accepted and the school authorities did not draw up special programmes to meet their needs.

"I didn't know any Travellers who had an education. Our life didn't include a formal education, and we thought we were not able to have one. Most of us have experienced school as a pain. It was a place none of us wanted to be. At the schools we were Travellers, if we learnt anything we learnt it, and if we did not learn, it did not matter. If we travelled it was better, and if we came back late in autumn, we came. We experienced this as an attitude of indifference on the part of the teacher" (Traveller, woman 64).

The Travellers have sent their children to school, but only a few have completed their education. Due to their travelling, the children attended a large number of different schools for a few weeks at a time, possibly for only 3 – 4 years in total. The children faced problems of being new in the class, not knowing the other children or the teachers, the methods of teaching were different and the dialects spoken at the school differed from their own. They were often mocked for being Travellers, and parents would take their children out of school because they did not want to see them suffer.

With this background we can understand the situation of both groups and why they have suffered similar kinds of problems with school. For example, it was expected that both groups should adjust to the majority culture's demands and learn the mainstream languages and adapt; but neither group felt any obligation to do so. In the case of the San, the authorities sent big trucks to collect the San children and take them to school. They were put into schools where neither the teachers nor the staff at the hostels spoke their language. There was no communication between school and home, and the children were often beaten because they did not understand and they did not behave as the teachers expected them to do.

"The Government sends a truck to the farm and takes the children to the school and they are there till the end of the term. There is no link between the teacher, the boarding and the parents" (San, man 34).

"I have been to school, but I did not learn much. If one of us didn't understand there was no one to help us. Instead they called us names and said crows and other birds learnt better than we did. There were many people staying in my home, but none of them had been to school, so they could not help" (Traveller, 55).

Both the San and the Travellers preferred to be with children from their own group. If there were no others from their group at the school they felt insecure, had no friends and the result was often that they ran away after just a short period of time. A few efforts initiated mostly by non-governmental and charitable organisations have emerged in recent years attempting to mitigate this situation. One example is the service offered by Bokamoso Trust (Kuru Family of Organisations), an umbrella organisation for the development of the San people. Having assessed the prevailing situation, an emergency solution for the specific needs in a specific place was strategized. The first preschool was established in 1980 in a San-dominated area in Western Botswana. A special curriculum with a mother-tongue approach in early learning delivered by teachers from the child's community was seen as a friendlier transition to ease the child into formal learning. One of the main aims for starting a preschool for San children was to try to reduce the San children's dropout rate in primary school through a culturally-sensitive quality education. The rationale was that a preschool foundation would give the children knowledge of their own community and the way of life. From the strength of their own cultural background, the children would have a chance to know the national culture and gain a glimpse into the outside world before joining primary school. The programmes in preschools are informal and less strict and the children would be introduced to the Botswana culture by a trained teacher. Research among the San people (Le Roux, 1995, Motshabi, 2003) show that the children who attend these preschools stay longer at school, they get to know the culture, learn routines and also learn the national language.

Travellers have no tradition of sending their children to preschools. Afraid of leaving such small children to the care of others, they want to protect them because of what they fear society might do to them. But during the last 10 years, the tide seems to have turned somewhat, and some Travellers have started to send their children to preschool. No research has been done regarding Travellers' experiences with preschools, but parents interviewed indicate that their children have benefited a great deal from this experience, especially socially (Larsen et al. 2007).

Although there are few San and few Travellers with high levels of education, some display great pride in this achievement; and others, surprisingly do not. However, there are those who have a high level of education but choose to hide their ethnic identity.

Language

Norwegian is the language used by the Travellers, but they also have their own language, Romani. Romani is not a written language and children were not allowed to speak it at school. At home they spoke Romani, and it was difficult for them to understand why they were

forbidden to use it in school. Due to the lack of education in the Romani language and the stringent restrictions imposed by society in former days, few Travellers today are able to speak the Romani language properly.

In Botswana, the language barrier is vast, because the San linguistic system is very divergent from that of most Bantu languages. The languages spoken by San people are very different from those of other language groups found in the region. However only Setswana and English are used as mediums of instruction in primary schools. Although the revised national policy of Botswana advocates the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction for the first three years of a child's primary school life (Botswana 1974), in practice this is not happening yet. As a result, San children struggle with the challenge of a new language when they enter the new learning environment at school, which is often discouraging because they have difficulties expressing themselves. Nothing the child knows or wants to know matters when there is a language barrier, and integration into the main ethnic group becomes difficult.

"We had problems in primary school. We did not know their language, and the teachers did not know my language. Teachers did not have to learn our language. We had to learn their language. Setswana was the medium of instruction. Those from Kaglahadi knew Setswana and could interpret for us. Teacher used them.

Three, four years we had problems. Then in the fifth year they introduced English and it made the problem even" (San, man 34).

For a small group of San people called the Naro, a language development programme is proving effective, particularly in adult literacy. In this programme some parts of the New Testament have been translated, and a grammar book and dictionary are now also available. The aim is to create ways to help people become literate in their mother tongue as a step towards learning Setswana, English and other languages (KFO, 2006). If the policy of a mother tongue is enforced in primary school there would be source materials for the Naro-speaking groups of San people to use. The Bokamoso Early Childhood Training Programme uses a lot of Naro materials in capacity-building in Naro-speaking areas. This is especially evident in the theme books that the training programme provides for teachers.

Resilience in minorities

We have seen that the San people and the Travellers as minorities in Botswana and Norway historically have been suppressed and marginalized and as a result have faced many difficulties in their lives. Resilience is a concept borrowed from the area of physics, where it refers to the ability of a material to regain its initial shape after being stretched, pressed or twisted. In relation to children or human beings in general it refers to the ability to get through and cope in difficult situations, or to regain strength and a normal way of living after experiencing hardships and crises (Masten 2001).

Risk factors

International research has identified a number of risk factors in children's lives as they grow up. These include: alcoholism in the family, abuse, poverty, lack of education among parents, unemployment, mental illness, physical illness, divorce, death of close family member etc. (Werner and Smith 1992). If one makes a study of those young people who are not

succeeding - those who are drug addicts, without a job or education, involved in criminal activities or socially maladjusted - one will find that most of them have been exposed to several such risk factors in their lives during childhood. They can often tell of a rough and sad childhood. On the other hand longitudinal studies have shown that even among those who have grown up with four or more such risk factors in their home or close environment, 30-40 % are coping and developing well as young people and young adults (Werner and Smith 1992, Grotberg 2003).

Protective factors

In this section we want to discuss how protective factors have given strength or in the future even more may generate strength for these minority groups. As mentioned before, we have grouped the protective factors in three groups: 1) Network factors, 2) Abilities and skills, and 3) Meaning values and faith.

Network factors

In most studies of resilience, *the network* – the social support - comes out as one of the strongest and most important protective factors. Network factors include family, relatives, friends, workmates, neighbours, members of organisations etc. with whom one interacts on a regular basis. Among those children who have coped and managed well in spite of many hardships in their families, almost all have had at least one other person to relate to, to have fellowship with and feel that they belong together. Human beings are social beings. We need other people in order to cope and thrive.

Network emerges in this study in the aspect of strong *family cohesion*. Among both the Travellers and the San, the extended family is very closely knit. They meet and celebrate together, they share experiences and goods, and they enjoy each other's fellowship. This factor has been vital for them in order to survive both physically and socially. They have shared the little they have had of food, money and goods. If someone had something, he would share it with others who did not have anything. The family also provided social and practical support for each other in a society that in earlier years had been quite harsh.

The weakness in this factor has been that the fact that these minorities have been isolated to a large extent, and they belong to quite small groups that give few opportunities for diverse development. Even though the San people number about 50,000 in Botswana, they are spread across different areas and are also divided into different language groups that do not understand each other's language. The isolation of the Travellers may to a large extent come from the way that the Norwegian authorities in the past tried to stop them from travelling and showed little respect for their lifestyle and culture. This has made them sceptical about the majority of institutions and the Norwegian society. With the San too, linguistic and cultural differences have created a barrier to contact. If the Travellers and the San had also had a relationship with groups outside their own, this would have made the network factor even stronger and thereby able to generate more strength for the development of their culture and lifestyle. This isolation is often compounded by the lack of adequate participation and representation in forums where major political and other decisions are made, often resulting in misconceptions and misapplication in assessments made about minority groups.

Abilities and skills

The second group of protective factors is *abilities and skills* – people's own resources. Here we can think of many types of skills, for example; vocational skills like making kitchen utensils, tinsmith work, watch repair etc. that were typical among the Travellers, or hunting skills using home-made weapons and poison from nature, or skills and knowledge about herbs, leaves, berries and roots for food and medicine among the San. We can think of culturally-related skills such as songs, music and dances, storytelling, artwork in drawing, painting and carving, handicrafts like goldsmith work and basketry, etc. which are quite rich in both cultures. Other important skills are intellectual skills such as giftedness in schoolwork among children or conservation skills among adults.

Skills and abilities give strength to people because they give them the ability to care for themselves and to make their own living, which is vital for the sense of human dignity. They build a positive self-image by giving people the feeling that they are able, useful and good at making something or performing something that people need and like. Both the Travellers and the San had many skills in their culture.

The problem has been that modern society has developed in a way that has made some of their skills outdated, for example through the cheap mass production of kitchen utensils, watches and other things; furthermore, some types of vocational skills have now been professionalized requiring a licence to practice them. In many cases, the San have been moved out of their traditional hunting and gathering areas as these have been taken over for farmland or game parks.

In addition, mainstream societies have strongly vetoed hunting and gathering as genuine or sustainable livelihoods. As a result most of the San people's vocational skills in hunting, gathering and living from the nature have been impossible to carry out.

When your vocational skills can no longer give you a reasonable income or enough food, you need to look for other skills. Relevant skills for earning money in modern society are to a large extent dependent on education. Education is weak in these groups because of travelling and because their culture and lifestyle were not included in the education system and often they did not feel welcome. So in many cases Travellers and San have descended into poverty or become dependent on public welfare benefits. Alcohol abuse has also been a problem for both groups as has been observed in other minorities around the world, e.g. the Aborigines and the American Indians. This is very detrimental to a person's self-image and feeling of human dignity. We can see the effect of this in many marginalized minority groups. Many of them become depressed and feel destitute, and this may result in emotional and social problems such as abuse of alcohol, crime, lack of motivation etc.

Meaning, values and faith

The third group of protective factors is meaning, values and faith, i.e. existential support. If people can see a *meaning* in their lives, if they see that they have a mission or something they want to acquire, and they see how they can reach towards such a goal, this can provide a strong motivation to carry on (Antonovsky 2000, Frankl 2000). Furthermore, *values* are like a compass: if a person has sound internalised values, they can guide him or her to avoid a lot of problems, and to live a good life. Also, *religion* can give people hope because they believe that God is there for them, that they are not alone, and that they can talk to God in prayer. Christian fellowship and intercession are other elements that have proved to give support and protection (Torbjørnsen et al. 2000).

This third group of protective factors has also been under pressure in the case of the Travellers and the San people. As shown above, many of their traditional vocational activities have become outdated or have been hindered by restrictions, and new areas have only developed to a very small extent due to lack of education. In many cases, the cultural activities that could have been a source of identity, a feeling of worth, motivation and income, may also have stagnated. People still remember and can perform some of the lively and creative activities that were so vibrant 50 or 100 years ago, but some of them have been forgotten, and the activities have not developed as much as the vibrant development of different types of music, dance, art and handicraft in the culture around them. This also affects the sense of meaning and coherence in life. Life may appear without meaning, and feelings of depression can easily creep in.

We have seen that all the three main groups of protective factors have been somewhat negatively affected among Travellers and San people. Their networks have to a large extent been limited to their own group which has dwindled in number over the years due to the hardship of life and assimilation into mainstream society. Many of their skills have not followed the development of the wider society and are now outdated. Poverty, external pressure and depression have also reduced the use and further development of traditional cultural activities, which are so vital for identity, sense of meaning and coherence and mental well-being.

How protective factors can be activated

We now want to look at how protective factors within the minorities themselves, in their culture and in their environment, can be further activated to create resilience and development among these groups.

Abilities and skills - and education

Abilities and skills form a vital protective factor as they make people able to fend for themselves, to feel good about themselves and also to be appreciated by others. If you can make something other people need, or perform something they like, it may give you an income and it can make you an attractive friend (network). In modern society, school and education seem to be one of the important ways to gaining access to various areas of society.

As mentioned above, the Bokamoso Educational Trust has started preschools in San villages. They have also started to train teachers from the San people who better can understand the San culture and San children (Nguluka 2005). These preschools emphasize San culture and language, but they also introduce Setswana, knowledge of the wider society and experience about how to learn in a school setting. In this way the San children are more confident when they start school, and they cope better with learning and with interaction with their Setswana-speaking classmates. This has increased the number of San children who succeed in primary school. However, only a few have made it to higher education.

Development of culturally-relevant curricula for San people in preschools is a pioneer work and a step in the right direction. The lack of culturally-relevant curricula in education in Botswana and other Southern African countries has contributed to the San's loss of cultural identity and self-esteem, and also to less interest in participating in education (Kxao Moses Oma and Axel Thoma 2006). It is, however, important that this development in preschools is followed up in relation to curriculum development for primary and secondary schools. Even

at these levels, minority cultures should be included in the ordinary curriculum for all children to show that minorities are respected as full partners in a democratic society. These views are strongly supported by the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous people which says that indigenous peoples "have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information" (article 15).

There is still a long way to go, but many NGOs and the San themselves are working to improve their situation and their rights. The Working group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) is one of the positive developments for effective engagement of the San in the regional developmental processes. WIMSA was established in 1996, as a platform for the San people to air their views and effectively exchange information and experiences from their communities. It has the mandate of broad themes that address the developmental issues of the San people in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, particularly in the following areas: assisting the San to gain political recognition; improving access to financial, human and natural resources; fostering human rights awareness and providing legal assistance and developing networks among the San and internationally. The goal is to foster San empowerment through individual, community and national mechanisms, through education and training, heritage and culture, capacity-building in various skills, and support in issues such as HIV/AIDS. WIMSA relies mostly on donor funding for its sustainability, (WIMSA, 2005).

An interesting example of the San people's struggle for their rights was a long-running court case to get back their ancestral lands in the Kalahari Desert from the Government. The San people won the case and were granted the right to settle in that portion of the land (Botswana Guardian, 2006, The Voice 2006). This is also in line with the UN Declaration on Indigenous People which states that they have "the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise acquired" (Article 26). However, the crucial issue is not just to win the case, but to win the opinion of the Botswana people and gain a general understanding of the right to the territory and their own way of living.

The Traveller project in Norway has aimed to make Travellers' history and culture more visible and respected as a part of national culture in Norway. Children in Norwegian primary schools should now be able to tell about the history and life of the national minority groups in Norway. These include Travellers, Jews, Skogfins (people of Finnish descent living in the south-eastern part of the country), Kvens (people of Finnish descent living in the North) and Roma/Gypsies (Kunnskapsløftet, 2006). The new Framework Plan for the Preschool also says that all children shall learn about the different national cultures in Norway (Framework Plan 2006). The Travellers' project also aims to make it easier for Travellers' children to keep in touch with their schools during the periods when they travel (spring, summer and autumn). This is done by providing them with an internet link to their teachers so that they can do their homework and get feedback from their teachers even when they are travelling. They can also keep in touch with their classmates by e-mailing them, sending pictures and getting messages back. The project is led by A-M Larsen and is supported by the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training (Larsen 2007).

Education is a key to access in society. For instance, if the Travellers took the opportunity to develop and formalize their skills in their traditional areas such as making tin goods, watch repair, blacksmith's work, carpentry etc., they might easily reclaim their position of

excellence in these and other related areas. Travelling is becoming a part of many professions these days, and this might also be a possibility for Travellers. In the same way it could be possible for San people to find work where they are able to use their own culture, e.g. in wildlife conservation, tourism and environment conservation etc. However, it is vital to emphasise that the San and the Travellers should be left to decide which jobs they wish to take or to develop. Two or three generation back, Norwegians tended to be farmers and fishermen, but due to developments in society nowadays only 3-5 % of them have these occupations. In the same way we should not expect that people from minority or indigenous groups should all stick to their traditional vocations. They need to have the chance to develop their traditional vocations as well as choosing new skills and vocations. The UN Declaration also underlines the principle of self determination (Article 3 and 4), and the right to "engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities" (Article 20).

Language and culture – meaning, values and faith

A crucial issue in relation to minorities is the question of *mother tongue and majority language*. Language is closely related to culture and ethnic identity. There are many examples around the world of majority groups trying to subdue the language and culture of a minority in order to control them and assimilate them into the dominant nation. On the other hand, there are minority groups that have struggled to keep their language and culture and that have thus isolated themselves from the majority culture and society. Phinney and Rotheram (1987) have gone through several studies from the USA, and they conclude that individuals who either "underacculturate or overacculturate do not have the flexibility to cope with their entire cultural milieu" (p. 285). This is supported by a study by Stutman (2002) who summarized a number of studies which indicate that those who manage to learn the culture and language of the majority well and at the same time keep their own language and culture, do better both in education and life than those who abandon their own language and culture in order to become fully assimilated *or* those who just try to keep their own culture and language without involving themselves with the other culture (Stutman 2002).

The Norwegian language has never been a problem for the Travellers; they have known it and used it as they travelled around selling their goods. However, because Romani has never been a written language, and fewer and fewer people are using it, there is a fear that it may disappear.

The Travellers' organisation in Norway has recently started a project, with financial support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, to try and keep, develop and make Romani a written language. A small booklet with stories (Larsen, 2006) is currently being translated into Romani, and the aim is to be able to use the stories in pre- and primary schools. Having books in Romani is important for the Travellers' identity. The San people speak different languages, and until recently these were not written languages. Most San people used to speak only their own language. This made it difficult for them to get involved in the wider society, and also to defend their rights in Botswana. Many now see the importance of learning widely-spoken languages such as Setswana and English, but they also acknowledge the value of maintaining their identity through their mother tongue.

Bi-culturalism (including bi-lingualism) requires that a person is able to move in two cultures, speak the languages, know the norms, rules and appropriate behaviour and why people behave the way they do. Development of bi-culturalism will presuppose mutual respect and understanding between representatives of the cultures, so that a person is free to move in the

other culture *without having to hide or abandon his or her own cultural identity*. A Traveller or a San person should not have to hide his identity in order to get a good job or be elected chairman of an organisation in his country, and both should feel proud and free as San or Travellers.

Bi-cultural competence appears to increase people's flexibility and promote their ability to function in two cultures (Phinney and Rotheram 1987). From this it seems that bi-culturalism may be a promising alternative for minority groups. It is necessary for them to know the majority language and culture in order to gain access to education, jobs and many other sectors of society. At the same time, it is vital to retain one's mother tongue and culture in order to retain one's cultural identity and support from one's own group. Bi-culturalism can give an advantage to others since one can move in two cultures, take advantage of the best in each of them and also be able to utilise elements of one culture in another. For example, an educated San person can use his unique knowledge of plants, seeds, and animals when he works as a tourist guide in Kalahari, and he can use his knowledge of the wider society when he wants to organize his own people to fight for their rights.

Culture is a factor that is related to all the main groups of protective factors. To a large extent culture comes under *Meaning, values and faith* as it covers the rules, norms, ideas of right and wrong, good and evil, beautiful and ugly; it includes what we believe is important and what is meaningful. Culture is expressed in a number of *skills* like dances, songs and music, in the production of food and goods, in games and sports. Culture goes with *network*: how we meet and greet, how we interact and live. Culture can only be expressed when people are together.

Culture is at the core of the personality of a person and a group of people. It is the integrating element in our personality. Culture is what binds our experiences, our ideas, our faith and attitudes together. If the culture is taken away from a group of people, the identity and their strength diminishes or disappears at the same time. Depression, emptiness and alcohol might move in and take pre-eminence. Some people seem to think that a minority that is bereft of its own culture should immediately assimilate the values, rules, norms, ideas and lifestyle that the majority has developed through generations. This is not the case. The result will rather be a suppressed culture and a cultural vacuum. Fear and resentment can also hinder cultural exchange between groups in a country (Gunnestad 2006).

A common culture can give strength and motivation to people because they enjoy the way they live together, the way they interact, learn new things and develop better ways to solve problems. A culture may also be like a prison. If a group is small, with few resources and is isolated from the surrounding society, its culture may stagnate. In such a situation there may probably be nobody to develop new ideas, new ways of expression and new products. The resources are just enough to repeat what has always been done. One may find oneself living in a museum, existing on memories of the past.

However, culture is a living and changing process. New elements are always being added and something is always left behind (Gunnestad 2006). This dynamic process is based on people's experiences and the human, material and spiritual resources that are available. Minority groups that feel marginalized and threatened by the majority are in danger of simply trying to keep the culture as it is.

Positive cultural development may come when there is interaction within greater cultural groups and between different cultural groups. Then people will be exposed to different

cultural expressions, and some of these expressions may be seen as useful in a new setting if they are transformed as the people themselves see fit. We can relate to culture and cultural development in three different ways:

1. Freeze and retain - by keeping it just as it is, like a museum.
2. Develop to retain - by allowing changes and new elements to integrate into it and thereby make it still relevant and interesting.
3. Leave and discharge - by taking away something that no longer seems relevant (Gunnestad 2004).

All these processes should work in unison in order for the process to be positive.

The people themselves should play a leading role in developing their own culture and way of life. This has been one of the main mistakes with many of the projects aimed at improving the lives of minorities, e.g. the Remote Area Development Programme (Nthomang 2004). Projects have been done for the people without consulting them. The ILO Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal people (Convention 169) expresses the right of indigenous people to exercise control over their institutions, ways of life and economic development. It also recognises their need to maintain and develop their identities and languages, and their rights to ownership of the land they traditionally occupied. It will be important to work with the minorities and to let them have the front seat in their own development if it is to succeed. This is also in line with UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples, Article 23.

Art has been used in Botswana to strengthen the San identity. In a bid to support the San people in development, the Kuru Trusts started to supply San artists with a place to paint and the equipment for painting. This has resulted in a number of paintings with extraordinary, fascinating motives and use of colours. The San paintings have been exhibited in London, New York, Tokyo and other places around the world, and have won great recognition. This has contributed to an attraction and appreciation of the situation of the San people as well as to pride and positive self-image amongst young San people. The UN Declaration also emphasises that indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes... "artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature" (Article 11).

As mentioned earlier, parts of San culture could be developed for use in modern society in Botswana. However, this requires San people who know both languages and cultures, and can communicate across different cultures.

Network

Network is a resource that has been of great importance to both Travellers and San people. The strong cooperation and cohesion within the extended family groups have enabled them to survive under very difficult circumstances. The importance of network for resilience is also underlined by Herman (1992). She refers to a number of studies of soldiers with experience of combat and women who have experienced rape. She maintains that a supportive response from other people may mitigate the impact of the trauma. "In the aftermath of traumatic life events, survivors are highly vulnerable. Their sense of self has been shattered. That sense can be rebuilt only as it was built initially, in connection with others" (p. 61). To have a trusting

relationship with at least one person is part of the healing. But she goes on to underline that even the community plays an important role:

"Sharing the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world. In this process, the survivor seeks assistance not only from those closest to her but also from the wider community. The response of the community has a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of the trauma. Restoration of the breach between the traumatized person and the community depends first upon public acknowledgement of the traumatic event and second, upon some form of community action" (p. 70).

This also applies to minority people who have a history of traumatic persecution and suppression, as we found with the Travellers and the San. If they are allowed to share their history of suffering and struggling, if the harm is publicly recognized and society takes some steps towards assigning responsibility for the abuse, this can be an important step towards rebuilding order and justice, and an important element in the healing process. We saw this in Norway in 1998 when the government offered an apology to the Travellers for the treatment they had received from society throughout history. The government also took action. They recognized Travellers as a national minority, established a museum for Travellers' history and culture and established a fund for Travellers' issues. It is interesting to see that similar things are happening in other countries, e.g. in 2008 the Australian prime minister apologised to the Aborigines. Such actions can contribute to restoration of self-esteem and equality within the minority groups, and thus to increased resilience.

Increased contact between a minority and other groups in a society may multiply the effect and strength of the network factor. A broader network will give access to more information, more support, more markets, more jobs, more fellowship and more cultural exchange. We have seen this in relation to the Travellers in Norway. Through a religious revival in the 1980s, a large group of Travellers was converted and joined the Pentecostal church. This strengthened the factors of *Meaning, values and faith* and *Network*. They became part of local assemblies where they joined other believers. Their network increased, and hence their involvement with society. Their value system of love and sharing in the family was fertilized by the Christian values of love for one's neighbours and help for the needy. Many of the newly converted Travellers had been addicted to alcohol, and after they were helped to stop drinking, they involved themselves in helping other Norwegians with alcohol problems. This involvement resulted in opening of some 15 centres all over Norway for alcoholics, and there many hundreds of alcoholics, both Travellers and other Norwegians, are being helped towards a new life. This work has received a great deal of attention and support in the Norwegian society. The interesting thing here is that the leader of this movement, known as "Evangeliesenteret", Ludvik Karlsen, was never ashamed of being a Traveller (Karlsen 1996, Øverby 1998). He even published a dictionary of the Travellers' language (Romanifolkets ordbok, 1993). He became a highly respected person in society, a very popular preacher in many denominations, and when he died he was even buried at the state's expense. This illustrates how the resources of meaning, values and faith, combined with an extended network, can generate incredible strengths.

Another example of how the network factors can be used is to establish cooperation with organisations for indigenous people and minorities in different countries. Due to a lack of material and financial resources, as well as lack of knowledge of how to organize and

advocate for indigenous people, there has been little networking among various indigenous groups in Africa (Kipuri 2006). Networking with different minorities and indigenous people within Africa and also between groups from different continents could represent a huge step forward. To know that there are so many minorities /indigenous people and to exchange experiences of how to promote their culture and rights can provide inspiration and new ideas on how to approach the wider society and how to achieve a break-through in different fields (Borchgrevink 2004, Nthomang 2004). A good example here is the cooperation between the Sami Council in Norway and The First People of Kalahari. Emerging networks of Indigenous to Indigenous collaboration is promising (Saugestad 2005). Another example is an initiative for networking recently taken by the Kellogg Foundation, USA, to organize exchange visits between some of the indigenous minorities in Southern Africa and the Native American Indians. The objective is to foster knowledge-sharing, skills exchange and coalition-building across the indigenous communities of Southern Africa and North America. This effort, entitled *The Answers Lie Within*, (Nguluka, 2007) intends its primary outcome to be a sustained, long-term future partnership for co-creating wealth between the two continents, through cultural arts and crafts.

A stronger involvement in the wider society increases the *danger of the minority being assimilated* by the majority. This is one of the reasons why many indigenous groups have been afraid to send their children to mainstream preschools and schools. They fear that the schools will just be a tool to assimilate their children into the majority culture and alienate them from their own cultural identity. Le Roux discusses this in an article and questions whether Early Childhood Education programmes emphasizing mother tongue and culture may just be a vehicle for socializing minority group children into mainstream society (Le Roux 2004).

On the other hand, isolation may not be an alternative in the long run. The minorities will then easily be left behind while the rest of the world develops through an increased interaction across cultural and national borders. The bi-cultural and bi-lingual alternative, however, requires a deliberate emphasise on their own culture, being very aware about what to keep, how to take care of it and develop it, and what one may let go. Involvement in this process will be a great challenge for the minorities. It will be important even for the wider society to support the process financially and through different projects that safeguard and develop the cultures of minorities. It will demand an adjustment, not only on the part of the minority, but also on the part of mainstream education to include minority culture as part of the total culture of the country. Minority cultures should not be viewed as a problem, but as a resource in the society. As the world becomes smaller, with increased international relations, development of mutual respect and tolerance is crucial. Living with different cultures in our countries may even help us to work better in the international society.

Conclusion

We have seen in this article that there are similarities in being a minority even in countries as far apart from each other as Botswana and Norway. We have seen that in both groups children have had less education because of their travelling. At the same time we see that the society in both countries has neglected the minorities and their culture and has not helped them to get an education that corresponds with their way of life.

We have also seen that there are protective factors that can be utilized more effectively to strengthen the ability to survive and live well as a minority in a wider society. This implies

building on people's own strengths, making use of vital parts of their culture and allowing it to develop through contact with other cultures. The strong family networks could be enlarged through contact with minorities in other countries, as well as contact with friendly groups such as churches, human rights organisations, sports clubs, choirs and other humanitarian associations. Recognition and support from society plays a vital role in the recovery from a traumatic history and further development as a valued group in society.

Preschools and primary schools can be made accessible to minority children by adopting a bi-cultural approach. A bi-cultural approach will imply that the minorities are given resources and opportunities to use their own culture as a starting point for learning about the majority culture as well, and that both minority and majority groups need to know about each other's culture in order to fight suppression and discrimination and develop real democratic attitudes.

Bi-culturalism will open the way for education for minorities, developing their own skills and learning new ones. This again will open the way to a lot of opportunities when it comes to activities, vocations and participation in society.

Cultural activities, values and faith are central elements in the development of the identity of a person. They can give a feeling of identity, a sense of meaning and a source of positive self-esteem that is so vital for not giving in when one faces a host of challenges in life's daily struggle.

The protective factors in network, abilities and skills and meaning, values and faith need to be studied in greater detail and utilized more in order to improve the situation for the minorities and the relation between minorities and majorities. The newly-adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is an important tool in the work for the situation of Indigenous and minority groups. The minorities themselves should have the front seat in developing their own life style and culture, but this important work needs support from the wider society both financially and when it comes to organisational and professional know-how.

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