

THE CENTRE FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND WELLBEING WOULD LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO



MOBILITIES, TRANSITIONS AND RESILIENCE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

SHIFTING GROUND: DIVERSIFYING CONTEXTS AND PATHWAYS TO COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Over the past decade, global research has increasingly focused on the role of families, communities and institutions in generating and supporting individual and community resilience. This agenda takes us beyond earlier debates around the importance of nature and nurture for individuals overcoming adversity by recognising multiple meanings and pathways to resilience; the significance of social, educational, cultural and political contexts, and the dynamic relationships within and across these contexts. Convened by CCDW's program on *Mobilities, Transitions and Resilience*, this Symposium explores community-based resilience strengths, challenges and contexts that may have been overlooked or under-investigated by earlier resilience frameworks.

The Symposium's five papers adopt a range of conceptual and methodological approaches to examining resilience in diverse communities in a variety of educational and socio-cultural contexts. **Dr Laurie Chapin** (College of Arts) speaks on the role of mentors and resilience for secondary school students from divorced families and the link to positive educational goals, while **Dr Gwen Gilmore** (College of Education) examines the role of student communities, university systems and pedagogies in relational resilience for prospective students who fail to meet university entrance scores and enrol in an alternative diploma program. **Prof. Michele Grossman** (Centre for Cultural Diversity and Wellbeing) takes an assets-based approach to identifying and harnessing both culturally specific and cross-cutting elements of 'resilience capital' in countering violent extremism across four ethno-culturally diverse Australian communities. Similarly, social capital theory informs **Dr Charles Mphande's** (College of Arts) analysis of informal networks that generate resilience in emerging African communities in the context of the sub-optimal political climate around humanitarian immigration. In a related vein, **Dr Dorothy Bottrell** (College of Education) explores the relationship of resilience and responsibility in the accounts of African young leaders, framed within a political ecology of resilience.

Prof. Marie Brennan's (College of Education) role as discussant following the presentations will serve as a springboard for dialogue and inform the final versions of each paper, which are being presented at the [Pathways to Resilience III: Beyond Nature vs. Nurture](#) Conference, 16-19 June 2015, Resilience Research Centre, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada.

Date: Tuesday, 5 May 2015

Time: 2.00pm to 4.00pm

Venue: Victoria University @ Metro West, 138 Nicholson Street, Footscray 3011

RSVP: 1 May 2015 for catering purposes: Polly Probert, Polly.Probert@vu.edu.au

Abstracts

Dr Laurie Chapin & Mehtap Cigdem (presented by Laurie Chapin)

'Mentor Support and University Aspirations and Expectations: Youth from Divorced and Non-Divorced Families'

This study investigated overall resilience measured by the Child and Youth Resilience Measure – 28 (CYRM-28; Resilience Research Centre, 2008), mentor support, and university aspirations and expectations with a focus on youth from divorced families. Participants included 176 Australian youth aged between 13 and 18 years in year levels 8 to 12. Overall, it was found that youth from divorced families ($N = 57$) had significantly lower resilience levels than youth from two-parent families ($N = 121$). There was also a stronger relationship between mentors and resilience for youth from divorced families. Furthermore, a similar proportion of youth from divorced families and two-parent families reported having high university aspirations and university expectations. Only resilience was identified as a significant predictor for both university aspirations and university expectations whilst the number of mentors and family structure was not. The most important finding was the significantly lower resilience levels for youth from divorced families when compared to youth from two-parent families. Therefore, it can be suggested that youth from divorced families may require additional resources in order to enhance their overall resilience and contribute to positive development of youth while preventing and inhibiting negative outcomes in the future.

Dr Gwen Gilmore and Dr Marcelle Cacciatolo (presented by Gwen Gilmore)

'The role of relational resilience in building academic pathways for students: Interdisciplinary case studies from Melbourne, Australia'

This paper examines relational resilience after Jordan (2012) who argues for a move beyond individual responsibility for 'resilience' to examine the relational dynamic processes and interconnections of individuals with their community. We explore here the experience of prospective students who fail to meet university entrance scores and enrol in an alternative diploma program at an Australian university. Student communities include families, the staff and innovative groups based experiences of curriculum and pedagogy. These students' cases reveal capacities to make strategic choices that support agency for academic success as well as the multi-dimensional and contextual processes that are negotiated in context. The case studies draw attention to higher education factors that can either inhibit or encourage students' capacity to deal with day to day opportunities and challenges that university life brings. Findings highlight how university systems and teaching can fuel resilience for learners who come from a range of diverse backgrounds.

Prof. Michele Grossman

'You need to show you care": cultural diversity and community resilience against violent extremism'

This paper considers several key findings from a recent Australian study (Grossman and Tahiri 2014) investigating the role of cultural diversity in the context of resilience to violent extremism. Traditionally, counter-terrorism prevention and recovery has focused largely on community risks and vulnerabilities (Grossman, 2014; Weine and Ahmed, 2012). By contrast, our study adopts an asset-based approach (Mohaupt 2009) that looks to both older and newer multi-faith Australian ethno-cultural communities to identify elements of cultural identities, values, practices and beliefs that enable them to withstand and reject violence as a solution to social and political grievances and concerns. Based on qualitative data from more than 80 Lebanese-, Indonesian-, Somali- and South/Sudanese-Australian participants, key cross-cutting elements of 'resilience capital' both within and across cultures in the context of violent extremism emerged from the data. However, some culturally specific strategies for managing the uptake of violent extremism in communities, including complex dynamics of shame, social belonging and status, suggest that these can simultaneously strengthen *and* erode cultural and community resilience. The findings also emphasise the close relationship between the general capacity of resilient communities to be strong and well and maintaining resilience against violent extremism in particular.

Dr Charles Mphande

'Linking or delinking: Resilience and social capital in an unfriendly environment for emerging African communities in Australia'

This paper investigates how informal networks enable the bonding function of social capital within emerging Sudanese and Horn of African communities in the context of Australian society's continuing environment of racism and misunderstanding towards African-Australians. . Framed by social ecology (Bottrell and Armstrong 2012), and critical

discourse theories (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002) we examine multi-layering of informal networks as a means of maximisation of in-group resources against the hostile backdrop of the Howard Government's focus on the perceived integrative deficits of Sudanese (African) humanitarian immigrants. Given the unwelcome environment the Howard Government created for these recent immigrants (Dhanji 2009), the paper adopts the view that community resilience by in-group bonding, as opposed to linking with wider Australian society, was a selective, strategic and practical means of survival that bypassed formal community, government and non-governmental organisations as largely irrelevant. We focus especially on examining government's interpretations of such phenomena as failure to integrate, a position that led to limiting African humanitarian immigration. The paper further discusses the vibrancy and effectiveness of informal networks and argues for the promise they offer for addressing needs and challenges of emerging communities.

Dr Dorothy Bottrell

'Responsibility, resilience and youth leadership in emerging African communities of Melbourne'

This paper presents findings from a study conducted with young leaders of emerging African communities in Melbourne. Framed within a political ecology approach (Bottrell & Armstrong 2012), individual and community resilience are understood as interdependent with the policies, public discourses and socially inclusive and exclusive practices that impact emerging communities. Young African Australians in Melbourne have been negatively represented in the commentaries of mainstream media and politicians. In these public discourses they have been cast as disengaged, criminal or "at-risk" and as needing to be made responsible. Despite the common experience of racism, stereotyping, policing and violence that are barriers to acculturation, sense of belonging and participation in the broader Australian community (Refugee Council of Australia 2009), these young leaders maintain a positive outlook, aspire to personal success and contribute to their community's development. The paper discusses how young people understand their *chosen* responsibilities in terms of roles, relationships and goals. In contrast to the discourse of responsibilisation, young leaders' accounts elaborate the close interrelationship of responsibilities and resilience.

Biographical notes for presenters

Laurie A. Chapin, PhD, lectures in Psychology at Victoria University. Her research interests include studying resilience of vulnerable youth with a focus on cultural factors. Previous research interests were with Mexican boys and positive educational outcomes. Since moving to Australia in 2011 she has turned to the study of the resilience of local youth in metropolitan Melbourne.

Gwen Gilmore lectures in Education at Victoria University and holds a number of Arts and Education degrees, including an Educational Doctorate that reflects on inclusive education and professionalism. Her current areas of research interest consider transition pedagogies and resilience from institutional standpoints in first year teacher education, literacy concepts for diversity, student voice in disciplinary (exclusionary situations) and using cultural historical theories to clarify 'boundaries', relational pedagogies and points of mediation in pre-service teacher education.

Michele Grossman, PhD, is Professor of Cultural Studies and Director of the Centre for Cultural Diversity and Wellbeing, Victoria University. Her research interests focus on policing and cultural diversity; countering violent extremism in communities; the cultural dimensions of community resilience to violent extremism; and narrative and counter-narrative in violent extremist and terrorist messaging in both online and offline contexts.

Charles Mphande, PhD, is Senior Lecturer in International and Community Development at Victoria University. Charles' research interests involve civil society organisations overseas in social mobilisation and in matters of HIV/AIDS, quality education and life skills education, as well as research among emerging African communities in Victoria on matters of communication for the former Victorian Multicultural Commission. He is currently working on community informal networks among emerging communities.

Dorothy Bottrell, PhD, is Senior Lecturer, Social Pedagogy in the College of Education at Victoria University. Her research has focused on young people's resilience in contexts of marginalisation.