19

Resilience Humanitarianism and Peacebuilding

Catherine Panter-Brick

Introduction

In the fields of resilience humanitarianism and peacebuilding, the systemic transformation of political, economic, and social systems is a pressing, present-day agenda. How do we build the foundations for more resilient systems in response to complex, protracted crises? How do we link together individual, social, and structural resilience to achieve sustained changes across generations? In this chapter, I provide three examples of systems-level thinking on resilience that have structured the architecture of the humanitarian and peacebuilding agenda: efforts to strengthen the social compacts between state and civil society in contexts of fragility, conflict, and global refugee displacement; efforts to link violence prevention and social cohesion to household food security and biopsychosocial health; and efforts to globally build cultures of peace by calling attention to the science of early child development. In doing so, I note three issues with resilience-building approaches with respect to theory, measurement, and intervention. First, there are challenges to strengthening structural and social resilience in ways that achieve a systems-level theory of change. Second, there is a need for operationalizing the parameters and pathways of resilience in ways that link the individual and collective dimensions of human experience. Third, contextual analyses require careful cultural grounding and an understanding of the political economy of resilience to make research, policy, and practice more contextually relevant.

Structural and Social Resilience

Let us start with examples of efforts to build structural and social resilience to evaluate conceptual frameworks that make resilience-building at the level of states and society an explicit

Catherine Panter-Brick, *Resilience Humanitarianism and Peacebuilding* In: *Multisystemic Resilience*. Edited by: Michael Ungar, Oxford University Press (2021). © Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190095888.003.0020

intervention goal. In international policy circles, resilience has emerged as a key concept for guiding systems-level intervention in fragile and conflict-affected states. A lens on resilience provides a way of theorizing and explaining why some states have "the ability to *withstand* shocks and stressors, while others tip into spirals of fragility and violence" (van Metre & Calder, 2016, p. 2). Many think-tank institutions thus specifically focus on the drivers of state fragility and resilience to understand the tipping points that lead some societies to cycles of electoral violence, sectarian violence, or violent extremism. They look to new approaches to mitigate state fragility and to build *systems-level resilience* and violence prevention. Such approaches support interventions that mediate the space between society and state, through institutional reforms and social programs that engage with social expectations and strengthen social compacts.

Resilience in the Social Compact

One good example of a systems-level approach is detailed in the *Fragility and Resilience* policy brief (van Metre, 2016), written by a study group working on issues of international peace and U.S. strategic interests at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Center for a New American Security, and the United States Institute of Peace. This policy brief defines resilience as "the ability of a state and society to absorb, adapt, and transform in response to a shock or long-term stressor" (van Metre, 2016, p. 1). Given the goal of transformational interventions for sustainable, positive institutional changes in conflict-affected states, the brief sees resilience as a practice, in policy, of tapping into the existing capacities of the state and civil society to address the forces of fragility. It highlights that "a central feature of resilience is a strong social compact between the state and society on their respective and mutual roles and responsibilities" (van Metre, 2016, p. 1). The essence of this compact are the interactions between state and civil society—the formal and informal mechanisms that can ensure confidence and stability during crises. A social compact sets the conditions for social relations, trusted frameworks, and group collaborations that can act "as an immune system, or resilience, to internal and external stress and shock" (van Metre, 2016, p. 1).

In international circles, new policy approaches to mitigate state fragility thus encourage a focus on social cohesion and local leadership, systematically learning from local actors how they might take collective action to adapt in the wake of crises. International policy experts look to resilience capacities in civil society organizations to engage with local partners who have demonstrated a capacity for agency and collective action. In Kenya, for example, they have analyzed the ways local communities resist the rise of violent extremism in their midst and, in Iraq, how they were able to withstand sectarian violence: what turned local communities away from violence was the action of community businesses and community associations, organizing themselves to effect change (van Metre, 2016). Civil society is seen as a key stakeholder for the effective prevention of violence and extremism—to the extent that international actors have changed their funding paradigm to specifically bolster the role of civic institutions, such as labor organizations, to redirect grievances in ways that strengthen state–society relations and make local governments more accountable (Erdberg & Moix, 2019).

Contextual Analyses

Mercy Corps is one of the international nongovernmental organizations, which has adopted an explicit focus on resilience in complex crises. In contexts of poverty, conflict, and disaster, its mandate is to partner with local people to put bold ideas into action, helping to overcome adversity and build stronger communities (www.mercycorps.org). Mercy Corps emphasizes the importance of contextual analysis to identify "what gets in the way" of building resilience at scale. In one if its report—*Cracking the Code*—it offers the kind of analysis that showcases the lessons learnt in building multi-system interventions (those bridging both development and humanitarian needs) in conflict-affected countries (Mercy Corps, 2015).

In Lebanon, for example, contextual analyses sought to identify who were the first responders on the front lines of a refugee crisis—these are often municipalities, which is why there should be no missed opportunities for working with cities and local government to strengthen their capacities to accommodate to large influxes of urban refugees. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the main challenges to sustainability and transformation were: working against the grain of humanitarian systems of international assistance, characterized by the need for speed which precluded robust analyses of the drivers of conflict; a priority given to internally displaced populations rather than host communities also affected by conflict; and the lack of funding to address the root causes of vulnerability, such as intercommunal violence and competition over land and other scarce resources (Mercy Corps, 2015). In Uganda, building resilience continued to "elude development practitioners and their programs" (Mercy Corps, 2015, p. 35)—it was not anchored into national and regional government planning and short-term economic gains were not translated into social stability. The report concluded, "Building resilience requires we design interventions across multiple systems" (p. 42), at economic, social, political, and ecological levels and that we transform the architecture of humanitarian systems, such that responses to protracted conflict are transformative and sustained, rather than achieved within humanitarian silos.

Systems-Level Responses

Indeed, the *Fragility and Resilience* Policy Brief argued:

> Resilience brings the entire political-societal system into focus and moves interventions away from discrete conflict problems and project-based responses. The key question becomes what intervention or accumulation of interventions will tip the conflict system to a nonviolent system that is improving over time, which requires a systems-level, not a project-level, theory of change. (van Metre, 2016, p. 3)

This theory of change adopts systems-level interventions to achieve synergistic (greater than the sum) impacts through strengthening the interactions between international organizations, state policies, and civil society action. In simpler terms, "resilience is the maintenance of the social contract and the ability to reconcile citizen and state expectations in the midst of sudden change or long-term stressors" (van Metre & Calder, 2016, p. 19).

This emphasis on a social and structural resilience is also seen in international migration policy in response to the global refugee crisis, the most significant crisis to challenge social, economic, and political systems since the Second World War. We see renewed international efforts to establish and strengthen social compacts to set out a comprehensive refugee response framework. This includes the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Orderly Migration, the first intergovernmentally negotiated agreement on migration (United Nations, 2018), and the Global Compact on Refugees, endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018 to strengthen the international response and increase the sharing of responsibilities in protracted refugee situations. The existing architecture of international assistance and humanitarian aid has to be rethought entirely: persistent, protracted crises demand concerted, sustainable solutions. There are pressing demands to expand the basic, classic humanitarian mandate: to move beyond saving lives and alleviating suffering, by addressing the “right to have rights” with respect to education, work, and citizenship, and by working toward peace and social cohesion. Business and civic society organizations are also called upon to make long-term investments in refugee employment and education, as worldwide, the number of forcibly displaced people has risen to over 70 million and the global refugee crisis has been linked to political failures to prevent conflict, promote tolerance, and lay the foundations for lasting peace (Grandi, 2019; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018). Such international and community-level efforts require walking a fine line between diverse and contested political and social expectations, identifying local capacities and leadership, and strengthening social compacts between state and civil society to build multilevel, intersectoral agreements between international, state, and municipal institutions. Concerns for state fragility, financial responsibility, collective action, peacebuilding, and human dignity here come to the fore.

Challenges

Approaches to building resilience in sociopolitical systems are not without criticisms. They can be code for *disengagement*, leaving local institutions to take local action without support and investment. The everyday reality of humanitarian action is that partnerships with local institutions, while key, are difficult to sustain and build equitably, given that humanitarian responses remain highly structured around project-level deliverables, funded with short-timeframes, and respond to priorities that remain set by donors and delivered by implementing organizations. The existing system of international assistance is built on a “largely unidirectional process that is a far cry from the systemic approach” and never adds up to “peace writ large,” or from a resilience perspective, a systemic transformation from conflict to social cohesion (Van Metre, 2016, pp. 3-4). While experts currently emphasize conceptual approaches that encompass notions of a humanitarian ecosystem (rather than a humanitarian system) and calls for humanitarian action that builds stronger bridges with development assistance and peacebuilding (Hilhorst, 2018), there is hardly any specific guidance provided with respect to building long-term, equitable partnerships.

The dangers of disengagement are increasingly evident in debates around international migration. Here the special status of refugees, who cross state boundaries and have rights to protection, gets buried in generalized debates about state security, sovereignty, and the

nonrights of people engaged in mixed forms of migration (Hilhorst, 2018). This situation severely tests the principles, practices, and policies *of classic humanitarianism* (whereby intervention is predicated on emergency responses to crisis, driven by the moral imperative of humanitarian principles). By contrast, *resilience humanitarianism* favors interventions that will work to support states and local services, driven by contextual and pragmatic analyses of local capacities and leadership. "A major question is how the aid game will evolve in resilience humanitarianism that still walks a fine line between support and abandonment" (Hilhorst, 2018, p. 47). Specifically, Hilhorst (2018) cautioned that as refugees rapidly become indistinguishable from the urban poor, with no "linkages to the formal parts of society—nor as wage earners, nor as consumers and not as politically significant members of an electorate," there is "a real risk that the politics of resilience towards refugees turns instead into a politics of abandonment" (p. 40). And in rendering crises-affected populations responsible for their own survival and governance, the humanitarian ecosystem often operates on ill-tested assumptions.

Pathways to Systemic Resilience: Wealth, Health, and Peace

So how do we build the foundations for more resilient social, economic, and political systems? Where should we start? Is it best to build wealth to raise communities out of poverty, or best to focus on the health and well-being of individuals affected by loss or trauma, or best to promote peace, security, and stability at institutional levels? And how do we link together structural, social, and individual resilience to foster livelihoods, well-being, and peacebuilding? These are important, strategic decisions, which often prove conceptually and logistically tricky in the context of humanitarian crises.

Linking Peace to Wealth and Food Security

A lens on resilience provides a useful framework with which to connect the dots between the humanitarian needs (e.g., security) and development needs (e.g., livelihoods) of conflict-affected populations. For example, building resilience is now a primary development aim in the Horn of Africa, where recurrent droughts gravely affect household food insecurity, competition over resources, and ethnic conflict. Here systemic-thinking can be found in resilience-based approaches that foster, synergistically, the goals of improving precarious livelihoods through peacebuilding initiatives.

A proof-of-concept example is found in research investigating how peacebuilding efforts might contribute to drought resilience among pastoralist groups in the region (Mercy Corps, 2015). A two-pronged focus on the management of conflict (peacebuilding) and the management of food insecurity (resilience to drought) proved useful research to inform policy recommendations for populations experiencing persistent vulnerability to climate- and market-related shocks. An explicit theory of change examined two different pathways of intervention: the first was at the level of social cohesion (strengthening community-level safety nets, for example, such that community members help each other out during times of

stress), and the second was at the level of institutional environments (enabling influential leaders to reach consensus-based agreements for access to resources, where groups habitually conflict). These two pathways to drought resilience were examined over time with data on intraethnic and interethnic disputes, household-level reports of food insecurity, and social norms pertaining to conflict and conflict resolution. The case study supported the conclusion that building resilience through peacebuilding efforts could support food security goals (Mercy Corps, 2015).

Similarly, building economic resilience through financial inclusion is also an explicit priority for many businesses and policymakers to help low-income households prepare for shocks in ways that encourage them to hold insurance, accumulate precautionary savings, and access social protection. But financial products such as consumer credit, money transfers, and insurance payouts are not often specifically designed as part of a climate change response program or as part of a regional resilience strategy for migrant populations (Moore, Niazi, Rouse, & Kramer, 2019). And there is little evidence of the long-term impacts of health financing in fragile and conflict-affected settings, which aspire to achieve financial protection, equity in access, and efficiency in resource allocation (Bertone, Jowett, Dale, & Witter, 2019).

Linking Peace to Biopsychosocial Health

An important example of systemic efforts to improve health and sustain peace, through resilience, comes from international and regional responses to the wars in Syria and Iraq. Insufficient or ineffective interventions have grave consequences, especially for children and adolescents: with exposure to violence, profound stress can negatively affect decision-making, social behaviors, learning abilities, and even future earning capacities. Much of the work undertaken on behalf of conflict-affected children emphasizes either the profound consequences of toxic stress in the wake of war and forced displacement (Save The Children, 2017) or a counternarrative of refugee resilience and agency in moving life forward (Underwood, 2018). What matters, over and above a tug-of-war between the dominant paradigms of refugee risk and resilience, is to put people—not projects—at the heart of humanitarian responses. This entails a different definition of success in humanitarian work: not just meeting short-term goals of project efficacy with respect to protection, health, or education, but building sustained partnerships to improve the life chances of individuals and social cohesion in their communities.

In response to the Syria and Iraq crises, several nongovernmental organizations thus joined forces to launch the No Lost Generation initiative, a platform for multiple donors to fund a number of child- and youth-focused interventions. This initiative was strategic at two main levels: it focused on adolescence, a key time for protecting the next generation and building its future, and it served both refugee and host communities to build trust and social cohesion. Following calls to strengthen the evidence base on health impacts in humanitarian crises, a research consortium of Western and Jordanian institutions evaluated one such program: a brief (eight-week-long) psychosocial intervention of structured, group-based activities for 8- to 15-year-olds, implemented by Mercy Corps in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. Key elements of this program, known as Advancing Adolescents, were common to other psychosocial interventions, including group-based sessions to build technical, vocational,

and socioemotional skills, under the supervision of trained local community volunteers. The program emphasized stress management, trusting social relationships, and personal goal achievement.

This brief intervention aimed to alleviate profound stress, strengthen resilience and learning skills, and build social cohesion, thus explicitly linking individual health with social peacebuilding outcomes: three levels of intervention (protection of children and youth in safe spaces; skills-building; relationships with mentors and peers) would lead to changes in to three measurable outcomes (reducing profound stress, building resilience, and fostering social cohesion through refugee–host community interactions) and three longer-term potential outcomes for individual and collective life (risk behavior reduction, educational and economic attainment, social stability). To evaluate this theory of change, the research consortium evaluated biopsychosocial health outcomes (the impacts of stress alleviation on the body, the mind, the brain, and sociality), conducting a randomized controlled trial with both Syrian refugees and Jordanian peers, with mixed methods that included stress biomarkers, psychometric assessment of mental health, experimental tests of cognitive function, and reports of community-level cohesion (Panter-Brick, Eggerman, Ager, Hadfield, & Dajani, 2020; Panter-Brick, Kurtz, & Dajani, 2018). Youth who participated in the Advancing Adolescents program showed significant changes in levels of hair cortisol, a useful biomarker of chronic physiological stress, and improvements in mental health and feelings of insecurity—benefits indicating a pathway to recovery, sustained over the period of one year (Dajani, Hadfield, van Uum, Greff, & Panter-Brick, 2018; Panter-Brick et al., 2017). More unexpectedly, given the stated goals to boost resilience, there were no changes in levels of resilience for program participants, relative to their peers. While a brief, structured intervention could significantly improve mental health and alleviate feelings of profound stress and insecurity, boosting the resilience levels of conflict-affected youth would need more than individual-level approaches; it would need interventions that targeted not only psychosocial health, but also family-level and society-level environments.

One methodological challenge of this impact evaluation was to operationalize the relevant dimensions of human experience in conflict-affected settings. This required meaningful measurement of stress, trauma, insecurity, resilience, and social cohesion, and necessitated developing culturally relevant, yet brief and valid metrics that nongovernmental organizations could then use at scale. Specifically, the research consortium developed the Arabic-language Child Youth Resilience Measure (Panter-Brick et al., 2017), for use in both Syrian refugee and Jordanian host populations, to assess young people's resilience—a word locally translated to *muruuna* (lit: "flexibility"). This metric built upon previous cross-cultural work (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011) to measure the extent to which children and adolescents feel strong as individuals, in their relationships with others, and in their community. The challenge, in the field, was contextual relevance to achieve face validity, construct validity, and psychometric reliability. Specifically, the Child Youth Resilience Measure scores the extent to which respondents agree with pre-specified statements that characterize individual, relational, and cultural dimensions of resilience. Several items of the original, English-language scale needed specific attention. Statements regarding "having fun with friends," "enjoying one's traditions," and "feeling proud as citizens" were modified, as refugees pointed out that

"fun" and "enjoyment" were inapplicable to their current circumstances and that some families had no citizenship status in Jordan. A statement such as "My parents watch me closely," which meant to convey close caregiving, had negative connotations, as it implied, for girls, a form of surveillance. The statement "I am proud of my traditions" could be asking whether refugees felt more Syrians than they did Jordanians (Panter-Brick et al., 2017). These nuances show the importance of fine-grained analyses of language and cultural meanings, namely, the vocabulary that expresses facets of lived experience.

Linking Peace to Early Childhood Development

Can systemic resilience-building approaches even be fostered at a global level to achieve lasting change? At the United Nations, several states have called for a U.N. resolution on the culture of peace, as a way of achieving lasting global security, with the General Assembly proclaiming 2001–2010 as the *International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World*. A culture of peace posits that the traditional ways of addressing conflict—mediation, humanitarian intervention, and diplomacy—are insufficient: building peace requires widespread societal change, a shift toward peaceful values and behavior, the elimination of social inequality, and the promotion of tolerance and solidarity. But how to link this global resolution with social change at ground level? A think-tank group of scholars and practitioners called attention to early child development and family-based interventions as ways to permeate not just individual homes, but entire communities, providing a bottom–up approach to create cumulative change in societies.

This group asked: Do the ways we raise children have implications for reducing violence and promoting peace in society (Leckman, Panter-Brick, & Saleh, 2014)? It reviewed the science on early child development that shows that the early years of human life are instrumental for laying out a foundation for healthy adulthood. Evolutionary biology teaches us that the biobehavioral systems associated with social bonds shape many of the behaviors and dispositions that pertain to trust, cooperation, empathy, or violence: caregiver–infant attachment, socioemotional stimulation in childhood, and early life skills have important and demonstrable implications for the developing brain, in terms of structure and function, while violence and socioemotional deprivation can have profound negative impacts on child and adolescent health and development. Economic modeling has shown that, in terms of dollars saved for every dollar spent on interventions over the life course, from in utero to early adulthood, investments in early childhood enrichment programs provide the greatest potential economic and human returns (Heckman, 2006). Because early life experiences are built into our bodies, in ways that affect the developing brain, the cardiovascular and immune systems, and metabolic regulatory controls (Garner & Shonkoff, 2012), childhood adversities and childhood enrichment programs can have multiple, synergistic effects on development, behavior, and sociality over the life course. This scientific evidence argues for a clear entry point in building a culture of peace: to begin with children and their families to provide foundational support for early child development.

The *ecology of peace* framework is helpful for conceptualizing how families, in their roles as caregivers, are instrumental in connecting biology, behavior, and society: they help connect the developing brain to socioemotional competencies, the developing child to the

family and parenting across generations, and family-level interactions to social cohesion in the community. Families are an essential starting point for raising children with a disposition to peace: children who grow up with a disposition to act and think in ways that show empathy, maintain harmonious relationships, and promote the notions of nonviolence, equity, and social justice (Leckman et al., 2014). Importantly, group-based interventions can bring together families across ethnic or social divides, improving social cohesion as the same time as they build communication skills and nonviolent parenting. This was noted in Turkey during the implementation of a parenting enrichment program initiated by a nongovernmental organization with institutional state support. Society-wide interventions can then be layered onto these foundations, as seen in conflict-settings such as Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, and South Africa, where media initiatives and school-based interventions to promote peace education built upon family-level initiatives of violence prevention; the sustainability of change, however, remains very challenging (Abu-Nimer & Nasser, 2014; Christie et al., 2014; Leckman et al., 2014). Strong funding investments are needed for measurable progress toward systemic change. For example, in 2018, the MacArthur Foundation funded a remarkable partnership between the International Rescue Committee and Sesame Street to create *Ahlan SimSim* for war-affected children in the Middle East region, effectively supporting the largest early childhood intervention program in the history of humanitarian responses.

Early childhood development as a pathway to peace also asserts that family-level interventions will have transgenerational consequences. Children raised with a disposition to peace will raise their own children with parenting skills, social competencies, and the social, political, economic, and legal expectations of nonviolence and global citizenship. Just as violence and trauma can cascade across generations, so can peace and competencies cascade from one generation to the next. The concept of resilience is here helpful, allowing us to focus attention on the developmental and cultural leverage points that allow for transformative change (Leckman et al., 2014). This is one reason why the research on parenting and caregiving has blossomed in the fields of humanitarian interventions and peacebuilding. To give one striking example, the Luxembourg Peace prize was awarded in 2019 to Promundo, an international organization with initiatives focused on creating a world free from violence by engaging fathers in issues directly related to caregiving, non-violence, and gender equity.

Resilience as an Everyday Practice

Efforts to identify pathways to systemic resilience need to be carefully grounded in behavior, culture, history, and politics. For communities living in contexts of poverty, insecurity, and violence, resilience is an everyday practice, one that requires active steps to achieve goals and orient behaviors. Much of the cross-cultural work on resilience to date has highlighted an experiential dimension of resilience, embedded in the lived experience of social suffering. In reflecting on cross-cultural resilience, for example, Mendenhall and Kim (2019) cited important research among the Inuit, who talk of *niriunniq*, or hope as a life-giving force (Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marchall, Phillip, & Williamson, 2011), and research among Tibetan Buddhists, who practice *lojong*, or mind-training, to cultivate compassion for others and be accepting

of lifelong suffering (Lewis, 2018). However, resilience is also agency and action—it can be transformative of social and political systems. To have power as an analytical construct, the narrative of resilience needs to move beyond the narrative of social suffering in contexts of social oppression and structural violence (Panter-Brick, 2014). It draws attention to the practices that help transform society. For example, resilience can be expressed in a practice of solidarity, as in the communal support of "holding hands" (*nguyu*) that proved critical to the reintegration of formal child soldiers in Rwanda (Betancourt et al., 2011). We are not, however, to equate the practice of resilience with passive coping and relative imperviousness: for example, rather than develop resilience against the oppressive forces of racism or sexism, people might fight to see racism and gender discrimination eliminated. We must also be mindful that culturally scripted strategies of resilience can turn to vengeance or violence, rather than to empathy, peace, and nonviolence. Indeed, there can be a dark side to resilience, one that is usually overlooked in theorizing and operationalizing this construct.

Cross-cultural research demands a careful normative understanding of resilience as an everyday practice, one that reflects specific world views and orients personal and collective behaviors. Why is an emphasis on everyday practice important? It avoids sidelining key aspects of the lives of local, regional, and international communities. For example, international humanitarian efforts have often adopted a largely positivist, secular approach, one that pays attention to culture without much analytical depth and one that pays very little attention to faith-based responses: religion is often "left outside the humanitarianism frame of legitimacy" (Ager & Ager, 2015, p. 49). What we have learnt, however, from local actors is that faith and culturally scripted moral values cannot be sidelined in humanitarian responses. Faith is often an integral part of how individuals and communities rise to the challenges of adversity (Marie, Hannigan, & Jones, 2018), while moral choices loom large in efforts to make sense of life when confronting danger and uncertainty (Kleinman, 2006). These normative dimensions are one reason why cross-cultural measurement of resilience can be difficult (Mendenhall & Kim, 2019), and why sophisticated models of resilience, resistance, or coping tend to be limited to mapping functional outcomes (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013; Masten, 2011; Masten & Narayan, 2012). Paying attention to both the normative and functional dimensions of resilience is one of the better ways to help improve the relevance of theory, methods, and interventions.

The Political Economy of Resilience

Importantly, a lens on resilience as an everyday practice helps to identify synergies for taking action at the political and economic level. For example, work in Afghanistan has illustrated a remarkable example of social suffering, collective resilience, and policy implications. After decades of war, Afghans could articulate a forceful message about the need for multilevel resource provision. For Afghan families, there is no health without mental health, no mental health without family unity, no family unity without work, dignity, and a functioning economy, and no functioning economy without good governance (Ager, Annan, & Panter-Brick, 2014; Eggerman & Panter-Brick, 2010). Working systemically across sectors of health,

the economy, and political governance is thereby the difference between surviving in misery and flourishing in dignity. What emerges here is an analysis of the political economy of resilience: where people are trapped in poverty, insecurity, or violence, our conceptual frames need to go well beyond a focus on individual-level functional outcomes (i.e., coping), to focus—at social, economic, legal, and political levels—on institutional power and community agency.

A political economy of resilience strives for critical analyses of the power dynamics and structural contexts that orient agency, transformation, or stasis. It gives us a political understanding—more than a functional understanding—of the trade-offs that are made in terms of personal lives, social goals, and policy interventions. It builds upon earlier work, focused on socioecological analyses of resources or transactional analyses of agency (Panter-Brick, 2014; Ungar, 2012), pushing us to ask more complex questions, including: how, when, and for whom does resilience-building work, in what contexts, over what time frame, at what scale, under which testable assumptions, and involving which actors and sectors? Pathways to systemic resilience are essential to social and political transformation: they describe how nations actively build themselves anew, after decades of neoliberal policies that transformed all levels of cultural, political, and economic life (Hall & Lamont, 2013). They are defined by political ideology and socioeconomic realities. For example, in Palestine, the notion of *sumud* (holding steadfast to the land) guides personal and collective understandings of resilience as everyday resistance against violent occupation (Marie et al., 2018), fueling survival tactics and goals for social justice.

Conclusion

Resilience is a key construct animating research and policy approaches to achieve systemic changes in the wake of crises. Seeking to achieve transformative, sustainable changes, the fields of resilience humanitarianism and peacebuilding have examined pathways to resilience in areas of violence prevention, food security, stress alleviation, child development, and social cohesion. In a sense, these approaches strive to develop three-dimensional views on resilience (linking wealth, health, and peace), moving away from a one-dimensional view on resilience as the ability to thrive or the absence of negative health outcomes.

Working toward systems-level resilience necessitates a simultaneous strengthening of structural, social, and individual resilience. This demands a careful normative understanding of the everyday practice and the political economy of resilience, which for crisis-affected communities, is rooted in agency, resistance, and transformation. It also necessitates conceptual clarity, meaningful measurement, and the cultural grounding of scalable interventions. What matters now is for research, policy, and practice to steer away from the three “sins” of resilience work: being conceptually hazy, methodologically lame, and empirically light (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013). I argue that critical analyses of moral, political, social, and historical contexts are essential to guard us against superficial views of resilience, against a politics of abandonment toward the people who are caught in the forks of humanitarian crises, and against a politics of laissez-faire that expects all coping to be done at an individual

level without much strengthening of resources at a social and structural level. Critical analyses help us test our normative assumptions, identify the critical turning points for systemic transformation, and establish sustained partnerships for effective action.

Key Messages

1. In international policy circles, resilience-building approaches emphasize theories of change based on a social compact between state and society. They make partnerships with local actors the key to pressing global issues such as violence prevention.
2. Good examples of resilience-building interventions in humanitarian crises are those that foster wealth, health, and peace to reach synergistic impacts on livelihoods, well-being, and social cohesion.
3. Resilience is an everyday practice for crises-affected communities and can be transformative of social and political systems. Achieving systemic change requires working on the political economy of resilience, social action, and structural transformation.
4. Resilience-building approaches demand careful work with respect to theory, measurement, and intervention.

References

Abu-Nimer, M., & Nasser, I. (2014). Linking peacebuilding and child development: A basic framework. In J. Leckman, C. Panter-Brick, & R. Salah (Eds.), *Pathways to peace: The transformative power of children and families* (pp. 323–337). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ager, A., & Ager, J. (2015). *Faith, secularism, and humanitarian engagement: Finding the role of religion in the support of displaced communities*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ager, A., Annan, J., & Panter-Brick, C. (2014). *Resilience: From conceptualization to effective intervention—Policy brief for Humanitarian and Development Agencies*. The Conflict, Resilience, and Health Program, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Bertone, M., Jowett, M., Dale, E., & Witter, S. (2019). Health financing in fragile and conflict-affected settings: What do we know, seven years on? *Social Science & Medicine*, *232*, 209–219. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.04.019

Betancourt, T. S., Meyers-Ohki, S., Stulac, S. N., Barrera, A. E., Mushashi, C., & Beardslee, W. R. (2011). Nothing can defeat combined hands (Abashize hamwe ntakibananira): Protective processes and resilience in Rwandan children and families affected by HIV/AIDS. *Social Science & Medicine*, *73*(5), 693–701. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.06.053

Bonanno, G., & Diminich, E. (2013). Positive adjustment to adversity: Trajectories of minimal-impact resilience and emergent resilience. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *54*(4), 378–401. doi:10.1111/jcpp.12021

Christie, D., Panter-Brick, C., Behrman, J., Cochrane, J., Dawes, A., Goth, K., . . . Tomlinson, M. (2014). Healthy human development as a path to peace. In J. Leckman, C. Panter-Brick, & R. Salah (Eds.), *Pathways to peace: The transformative power of children and families* (pp. 273–302). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Dajani, R., Hadfield, K., van Uum, S., Greff, M., & Panter-Brick, C. (2018). Hair cortisol concentrations in war-affected adolescents: A prospective intervention trial. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, *89*, 138–146. doi:10.1016/j.psyneuen.2017.12.012

Eggerman, M., & Panter-Brick, C. (2010). Suffering, hope, and entrapment: Resilience and cultural values in Afghanistan. *Social Science & Medicine*, *71*, 71–83. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.03.023

Erdberg, L., & Moix, B. (2019). *How civil society can help prevent violence and extremism—And what the international community can do to support it*. Analysis, Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, United States Institute of Peace.

Garner, A. S., & Shonkoff, J. P. (2012). Early childhood adversity, toxic stress, and the role of the pediatrician: Translating developmental science into lifelong health. *Pediatrics*, *129*(1), e224–e231. doi:10.1542/peds.2011-2662

Grandi, F. (2019). *A world of pain in three stories: This is the refugee crisis today*. World Economic Forum.

Hall, P. A., & Lamont, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Social resilience in the neoliberal era*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Heckman, J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. *Science*, *312*(5782), 1900–1902. doi:10.1126/science.1128898

Hilhorst, D. (2018). Arenas. In T. Allen, A. Macdonald, & H. Radice (Eds.), *Humanitarianism: A dictionary of concepts* (pp. 30–51). Routledge: Taylor & Francis.

Kirmayer, L. J., Dandeneau, S., Marchall, E., Phillip, M. K., & Williamson, K. J. (2011). Rethinking resilience from Indigenous perspectives. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *56*(2), 84–91.

Kleinman, A. (2006). *What really matters: Living a moral life amidst uncertainty and danger*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Leckman, J., Panter-Brick, C., & Saleh, R. (2014). *Pathways to peace: The transformative power of children and families*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lewis, S. (2018). Resilience, agency, and everyday Lojong in the Tibetan Diaspora. *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *19*(2), 342–361. doi:10.1080/14639947.2018.1480153

Marie, M., Hannigan, B., & Jones, A. (2018). Social ecology of resilience and Sumud of Palestinians. *Health*, *22*(1), 20–35. doi:10.1177/1363459316677624

Masten, A. S. (2011). Resilience in children threatened by extreme adversity: Frameworks for research, practice, and translational synergy. *Development and Psychopathology*, *23*(2), 493–506. doi:10.1017/S0954579411000198

Masten, A. S., & Narayan, A. J. (2012). Child development in the context of disaster, war, and terrorism: Pathways of risk and resilience. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *63*, 227–257. doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100356

Mendenhall, E., & Kim, A. W. (2019). How to fail as scale: Reflections on a failed attempt to assess resilience. *Culture*, *Medicine and Psychiatry*, *43*, 315–325. doi:10.1007/s11013-018-9617-4

Mercy Corps. (2015). *Cracking the code: Enhancing emergency response & resilience in complex crises*. DR Congo, Lebanon, Syria, Uganda, Mercy Corps.

Moore, D., Niazi, Z., Rouse, R., & Kramer, B. (2019). *Building resilience through financial inclusion: A review of existing evidence and knowledge gaps*. Innovations for Poverty Action.

Panter-Brick, C. (2014). Health, risk, and resilience: Interdisciplinary concepts and applications. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *43*, 431–448. doi:10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-025944

Panter-Brick, C., Dajani, R., Eggerman, M., Hermosilla, S., Sancilio, A., & Ager, A. (2017). Insecurity, distress and mental health: Experimental and randomized controlled trials of a psychosocial intervention for youth affected by the Syrian crisis. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *59*(5), 523–541. doi:10.1111/jcpp.12832

Panter-Brick, C., Hadfield, K., Dajani, R., Eggerman, M., Ager, A., & Ungar, M. (2017). Resilience in context: A brief and culturally-grounded measure in Syrian refugees and Jordanian host-community adolescents. *Child Development*, *89*(5), 1803–1820. doi:10.1111/cdev.12868

Panter-Brick, C., Kurtz, J., & Dajani, R. (2018). What strong partnerships achieve: Innovations in research and practice. *Humanitarian Exchange*, *72*, 15–19.

Panter-Brick, C., & Leckman, J. F. (2013). Resilience in child development: Interconnected pathways to wellbeing. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *54*(4), 333–336. doi:10.1111/jcpp.12057

Save The Children. (2017). *Invisible wounds: The impact of six years of war on the mental health of Syria's children*. Retrieved from savethechildren.net.

Underwood, E. (2018). Lessons in resilience: In war zones and refugee camps, researchers are putting resilience interventions to the test. *Science*, *359*(6379), 976–979. doi:10.1126/science.aat4488

Ungar, M. (Ed.). (2012). *The social ecology of resilience: A handbook of theory and practice*. New York, NY: Springer.

Ungar, M., & Liebenberg, L. (2011). Assessing resilience across cultures using mixed methods: Construction of the child and youth resilience measure. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *5*(2), 126–149. doi:10.1177/1558689811400607

United Nations. (2018). *Social compact for migration and refugees*. United Nations.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018). *Global trends—Forced displacement in 2018*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author.

van Metre, L. (2016). *Fragility and resilience.* United States Institute of Peace. Fragility Study Group. Policy Brief No.2.

van Metre, L., & Calder, J. (2016). *Peacebuilding and resilience: How society respond to violence*. Peaceworks 119. United States Institute of Peace.