Resilience to structural violence: An exploration of the multisystemic resources that enable youth hope

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Abstract

Youth in structurally violent environments emphasize hope when explaining their resilience. Even so, the multisystemic resources that enable hope (also over time) are relatively underreported for African young people. In response to this gap, we report a qualitative study that identified the hope-enabling resources that contributed to the resilience of two samples of African youth aged 15—24 and living in the township of eMbalenhle, South Africa. Using Draw-Write-Talk methodology, the 2017 sample (n=30; Mage = 18.6; 56% male youth) and 2018 sample (n=7; Mage = 18.4; 85% female youth) generated visual and narrative data of their experiences of hope enablers. A thematic analysis showed that a multisystemic mix of contextually relevant resources typically explained youth capacity for hope in the face of structural violence. Four resources informed this mix: personal strengths, faith-based beliefs, positive personal relationships, and tangible sources of inspiration. This contextually relevant mix, and its putative durability over time, has implications for how psychologists and policymakers support youth in structurally violent contexts to be hopefully resilient.

Keywords: African youth, hope, hope-enabling resources, multisystemic resilience, visual methods

The youth population in Africa is a fast-growing one (Kariba, 2020). This population is repeatedly exposed to stressors – including structural violence – that undermine health and wellbeing and jeopardise hope for a better future (Asante et al., 2022). One response to this reality has been interest in what supports young Africans to show resilience (i.e., demonstrate the capacity for positive outcomes despite exposure to adversity; Masten, 2014). Systematic reviews of resilience studies with youth living in sub-Saharan African countries show that hopeful agency – such as being future or goal oriented – is strongly associated with the resilience of African youth (Theron, 2023; Van Breda & Theron, 2018). Put differently, hope is a well-established pathway of resilience (Isaacs & Savahl, 2014).

Classical hope theory (e.g., Snyder, 2002) explains hope as a personal (i.e., cognitive and agentic) capacity. However, framing hope as a personal capacity only is problematic: it implies that the individual (and not the systems they are connected to) is the locus of positive adaptation (Mosley et al., 2020). Framing hope as a personal capacity is also not a good fit in contexts, like Africa, where interdependence is valued. Rather, as shown by Cherrington's study (2018) with a group of Sesotho-speaking children (aged 9 to 13) from a rural South African community, Afrocentric hope is a multilevel, culturally sensitive construct encompassing the personal, relational, contextual, and communal.

Like Afrocentric hope (Cherrington, 2018), multisystemic accounts of resilience discourage individual-focused explanations of positive adaptation to significant stress. Instead, from a multisystemic perspective, resilience is contingent on a combination of resources found in physiological, psychological, social, institutional, and environmental systems (Masten et al., 2021, 2023; Shevell & Denov, 2021; Ungar, 2018, 2021; Ungar

& Theron, 2020). For example, young Australians' resilience to COVID-19-related stress was informed by a multisystemic combination of resources that included secure employment, social interaction, hopeful meaning-making, and access to natural outdoor spaces (e.g., a garden) (Oswald et al., 2021). In South Africa, this multisystemic approach has framed studies of youth resilience to depression and showed that a combination of physical, psychological, social, and environmental resources distinguished young people with minimal symptoms of depression from those with elevated symptoms of depression (Theron, Höltge, & Ungar, 2023; Theron, Ungar, et al., 2023). However, to date no South African study has used a multisystemic resilience approach to explain the hope of South African youth. Given that hope is a well-established pathway of African youth resilience (Isaacs & Savahl, 2014; Theron, 2023; Van Breda & Theron, 2018), it is important to understand its multisystemic underpinnings.

In response to the aforementioned gap, we explored young people's lived experiences of what enables hope in a structurally violent community and interpreted their experience through the lens of multisystemic resilience. In so doing, we nudge psychologists, service providers, and policy makers away from neoliberal assumptions that hold young people personally responsible for transforming and/or resisting challenges (like hopelessness) to their wellbeing. Instead, by using a multisystemic approach we wish to direct attention to, and sustain facilitation of, hope-enabling resources in the systems that young people are connected to.

A multisystemic understanding of hope as a pathway of resilience in the face of structural violence

Structural violence, which is rooted in oppressive economic, social, political, legal and religious structures, perpetuates inequality and resource disparities that stymie young people's chances of reaching their full potential (Farmer, 2004; Farmer et al., 2006). Structural violence also stymies hope (Snyder, 2002), not least by discouraging personal aspiration and limiting family and community capacity to provide young people with aspiration-enabling resources. Nevertheless, there are accounts of young South Africans being hopeful despite their ongoing exposure to structural violence and other forms of injustice (Cherrington, 2018; Khumalo & Guse, 2022; Savahl et al., 2013).

In addition to personal strengths (e.g., capacity for hopeful agency), sociocultural resources are associated with young South Africans'capacity to be hopefully future oriented despite significant structural challenges (e.g., leaving care; being exposed to neighbourhood violence; being food insecure) (Bond & van Breda, 2018; Cherrington, 2018; Hills et al., 2016; Isaacs & Savahl, 2014; Theron & van Rensburg, 2018; van Breda & Dickens, 2017). Supportive relationships (e.g., with family, friend, and teachers) and faith-based supports (e.g., faith-inspired beliefs andbelonging to a faith-based community) are prominent sociocultural resources. In comparison, institutional supports (e.g., enabling NGOs or schools) and environmental resources (e.g., safe recreational spaces and places) are less commonly reported. Exceptions include Hills et al.'s (2016) study with street-connected youth from Durban that underscored the importance of hopeful future dreams to resilience and how opportunities for recreation or sport informed such hope. Likewise, studies with young

people in resource-constrained communities showed that educational opportunities (including access to supportive others at school) contributed to young people's capacity to be hopefully oriented to the future (Bireda & Pillay, 2018; Theron & van Rensburg, 2018), as did access to healthcare (Cherrington, 2018). A single South African study (i.e., Cherrington, 2018) linked children's hopefulness to community togetherness and collective striving for a better future.

Of the abovementioned studies, only two were not cross-sectional (i.e., Theron & van Rensburg, 2018; van Breda & Dickens, 2017). They engaged study participants at two points in time, with the second time being 12 months (Van Breda & Dickens, 2017) and 24 months later (Theron & Van Rensburg, 2018). In so doing, these studies considered which resources apparently retained protective value over time. The resilience literature cautions against assumptions of resource longevity, given that resilience "is dynamic and emergent, changing with experience and multisystem interactions" (Masten et al., 2023, p. 2110). Given the flux associated with adolescence and related potential for adolescents to encounter diverse risks and resources (Sawyer et al., 2018), understanding which hope-enabling resources have protective longevity can direct intervention agendas (i.e., support mental health practitioners and other service providers to prioritise those supports that young people experience as enabling over time).

Study objectives

South Africa continues to be one of the most inequitable societies on earth (Francis & Webster, 2019). This reality places young people exposed to structural violence and related resource inequities at high risk for hopelessness (Guse & Shaw, 2018; Mosavel et al., 2015), simultaneously lowering their self-efficacy and self-esteem

(Casale et al., 2019; Harrison et al., 2021). Knowing which resources enable young Africans' capacity for hope should support mental health practitioners and service providers to protect the well-being of Africa's growing youth population. Following a multisystemic understanding of resilience (Masten et al., 2021, 2023; Shevell & Denov, 2021; Ungar, 2018, 2021; Ungar & Theron, 2020), protecting the well-being of African youth requires attention to a diverse range of resources. While a multisystemic resilience approach affirms that resilience draws on individual strengths, it directs attention to additional resources found in socio-cultural systems (e.g., caring families, supportive peers or faith-based communities), institutional systems (e.g., accessible health supports or opportunities for education or employment), and built and natural ecologies (e.g., climate-proof housing or green spaces). To this end, the study that we report explored the resources to which youth living in a structurally violent community attribute their capacity to hope and used a multisystemic understanding of resilience to make meaning of the resources youth self-reported.

Additionally, because the resources that enable resilience are changeable, depending on young people's experiences and how the systems they are connected to interact (Masten et al., 2023), we were curious about the stability of the hope-enabling resources young people reported. To this end, we aimed to involve participants at two points in time and compare the reports of those young people who participated at both points in time. Prioritising the availability and accessibility of resources that repeatedly animate young people's hope is likely to optimise young people's capacity for resilience (Ungar & Theron, 2020).

Methods

We utilized an exploratory qualitative research approach to understand the hope-associated resilience pathways of a 2017 and 2018 sample of eMbalenhle youth. Following Swedberg (2020), an exploratory approach was considered appropriate, given the dearth of studies investigating the multisystemic underpinnings of hope as a pathway of youth resilience in South Africa. Given our interest in participants' insights and lived experiences (that is, in their 'truth'; Bleiker et al., 2019, p.4), our study was informed by a social interpretivist stance.

Reflexivity

We (the authors) acknowledge that our positioning as early career and more seasoned scholars, with varying experience of privilege and prior knowledge of resilience theory, played into our study. Understanding that this positioning could influence how easily participants engaged in the data collection activities, we chose active or supportive empirical roles accordingly. Relatedly, we were mindful that our identities and experience could shape the meaning we made of participants' experiences. While only one of us had grown up in a township, we shared extensive professional and/or research-related interaction with youth from structurally violent communities. This lived experience sensitised us to the myriad obstacles to hope, but also to youth capacity for hopeful resilience. Because we were mindful that our identities and experience could influence data analyses, we proceeded cautiously and iteratively.

The Context

The exploratory study we report formed part of the Resilient Youth in Stressed Environments (RYSE) study. RYSE explored the patterns of resilience among youth in

Canadian and South African communities stressed by economic volatility and related risks (Authors, 2021). Living in stressed environments places individuals at a higher risk of hopelessness and mental health problems (Mosavel et al., 2015). Given the under-representation of African young people in risk and resilience studies (Rother et al., 2021; Theron et al., 2022), this article focuses on the insights of the young Africans living in eMbalenhle, South Africa.

eMbalenhle is a densely populated, structurally violent township in the Gert Sibande Municipality District of Mpumalanga Province. Like other structurally violent communities (Tomlinson et al., 2020), eMbalenhle exposes young people to multiple risks. These include limited education and employment opportunities, poor service delivery, high crime rates, communicable disease, and the daily emission of chemicals from adjacent oil and gas industries and coal-fired plants (Ungar et al., 2021; Sibisi & Vlavianos, 2020). The latter industries attract large numbers of migrant workers and so eMbalenhle is also characterised by migrancy and low levels of social cohesion.

Participants

Following ethical clearance from the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee and Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, University of Pretoria (UP17/05/01), the RYSE Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) and gatekeepers (e.g., adults serving eMbalenhle youth) recruited eligible participants, using flyers and word-of-mouth. Youth (aged 15 to 24 years), with a functional knowledge of the English language, and living in eMbalenhle were eligible. In 2017, 30 participants (Age range: 15-23; *M*age=18.6; 56% self-identified as male) fitting the eligibility criteria volunteered to participate. Following informed consent procedures, adult participants signed consent forms; minors assented in writing and their caregivers consented. All

participants self-identified as African, most spoke isiZulu and English, and some Sesotho or isiXhosa and English.

Given our interest in the constancy (or not) of the resources that enabled participants' hope, we invited the same youth to participate again in 2018. As is common in longitudinal studies (Cockcroft et al., 2019), most (n = 26) were unavailable (e.g., they had relocated, or their contact details had changed). Only four youth (Happy, Kezner, Minky and Prexious; *M*age: 18.5) were available to participate again. Following Cockcroft et al. (2019), we invited additional participants, using the same recruitment methods and eligibility criteria. Three more volunteered resulting in a 2018 sample of seven (Age range: 18-21; *M*age=18.4 years; 85% self-identified as female). All self-identified as African and spoke isiZulu and English.

Data Collection

At both timepoints, a team of post-graduate psychology students (2017, *n*=4; 2018, *n*=2) used the Draw-Write-Tell (DWT) method (see Mitchell et al., 2011) to generate data. DWT is a multi-method approach that includes a participant-generated image (the drawing), a written explanation of the drawing, and a group discussion about how the various drawings and explanations support a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (Angell et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2011). The quality of the participant-generated drawings is unimportant; researchers are interested in the visual content (i.e., what participants draw and not how [well] participants draw; Mitchell et al., 2011).

Following training in the DWT method, the students invited participants to make drawings that showed what, in their experience, facilitated hope, followed by brief written explanations of what their drawings meant. They used the following brief: "How

do you see (understand) hope; what makes your hope strong(er)? Please draw this. When you are done, write a short explanation of what your drawing means". Working in small groups, and following focus group methodology (Nyumba et al., 2018), the students then spoke with the participants about the meaning of their drawings. In so doing, the interpretation of the visual data was less vulnerable to researcher bias (Angell et al., 2015). The discussions, which were in English, were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants specified how their drawings and explanations should be identified (e.g., by a pseudonym or their first name). In summary, the individual drawings and explanations captured participants' personal lived experience; the group discussions supported deeper exploration of those experiences and provided an opportunity to discern commonalities and differences among group members.

Data Analysis

The 2017 and 2018 data, comprising photographs of the drawings and explanations and the transcripts of the discussions, were analysed separately. Starting with the 2018 data, we familiarised ourselves with the data and identified visual and narrative content that answered our research question (i.e., What facilitates hope-associated pathways of resilience for youth living in eMbalenhle?) Following Braun and Clarke (2006), we then generated labels for the identified data that paraphrased apparent answers to the research question, before grouping similar codes into provisional thematic answers. For example, we coded visual and narrative content about encouraging parents, siblings, or extended family as 'encouraging family animates hope'; we grouped all codes relating to people who encouraged hope as 'positive personal relationships animate hope'. Using consensus discussions (Saldana, 2009), we agreed on four thematic codes, before applying them to the 2017 data. The thematic

codes were hope is animated by faith-based supports; positive personal relationships; agency and self-efficacy, and tangible sources of inspiration (e.g., institutions representing opportunities for education or employment, inspiring books, or sunshine and green spaces).

Using a multisystemic lens (Ungar & Theron, 2020), we considered which systems were implicit in the thematically coded data. In keeping with this multisystemic approach, we were particularly attentive to self-driven versus systemically co-facilitated pathways of hope. To support a trustworthy analysis, we engaged with the YAC and invited them to comment on the identified thematic codes and themes. They confirmed them, but pointed out that positive relationships were typically limited to family or peers who could be trusted (rather than all family or peers).

Finally, to understand the consistency over time of the identified hope-enabling resources, we compared the responses of the four participants who participated in 2017 and 2018. We were attentive to similarities and differences over time.

Results

We identified a central theme: 'a resource mix informs hope', with three sub-themes: positive personal relationships; faith-based supports, and tangible sources of inspiration. The accounts of the four participants who explained the roots of their hope in 2017 and 2018 pointed to the aforementioned mix being constant over time. We could not discern gendered patterns in the resource mix (i.e., we did not identify a resource mix that distinguished the accounts of young men versus young women in our study). We also identified an outlier: a minority of participants reported hope as solely driven by themselves. We detail the theme, its subthemes, and the outlier next.

A resource mix informs hope

As presaged by multisystemic accounts of resilience (Masten et al., 2021, 2023; Ungar, 2018, 2021; Ungar & Theron, 2020) and Cherrington's (2018) Afrocentric framework of hope, most participants reported a mix of resources when explaining hope. While this mix acknowledged personal strengths (e.g., the capacity to persevere or a powerful identity), participants' drawings and explanations (written and verbal) clarified that these personal resources were only one part of a bigger combination of resources. The other parts of the combination invariably included relational, socio-cultural, institutional and/or ecological resources that complemented or fuelled their personal capacity for hope (see Figures 1 and 2). For instance, Precious (18-year-old; female) explained that "a lot of things" enabled her to hope, including "talking about hopeful things … I read a lot – that gives me hope because I can be whatever I want to be just sitting in my living room … me – I'm in control of my own future … other people are there to help as well". In other words, like Precious, most young people did not see hope as a do-it-yourself-job.

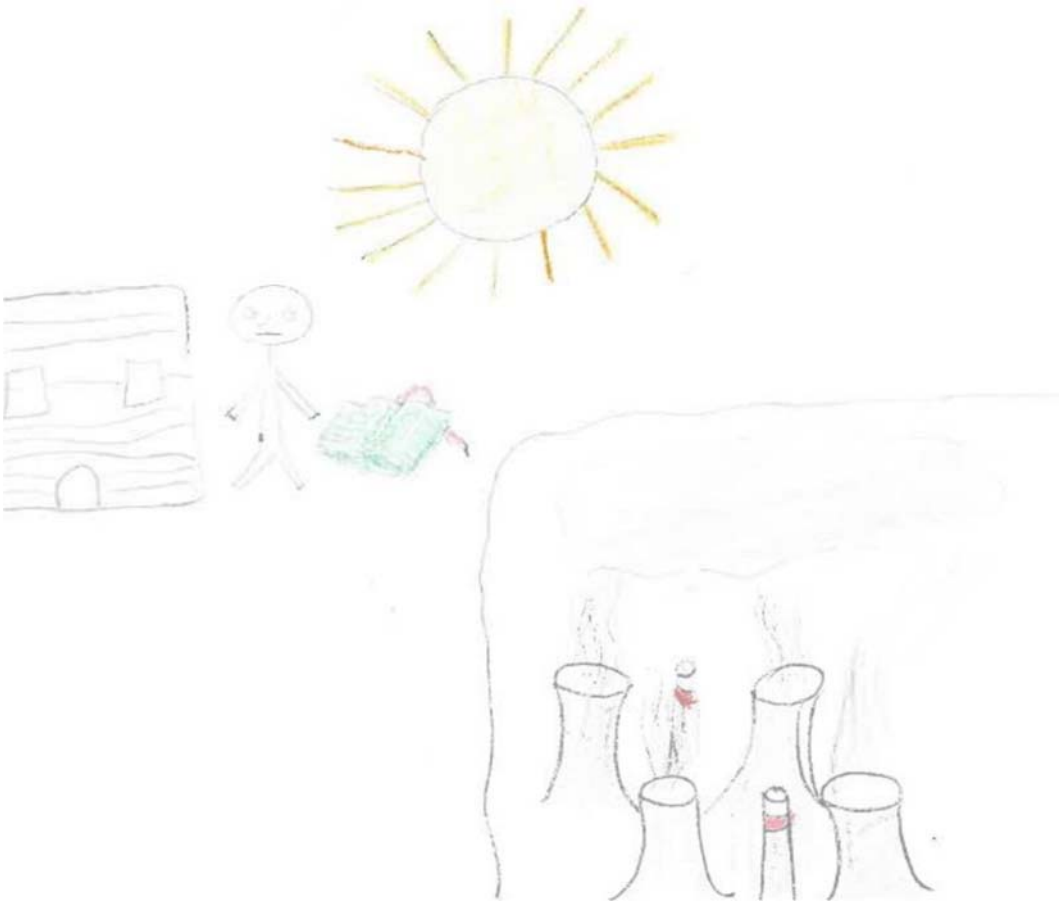

Figure 1. Danny's drawing shows a resource mix of personal, ecological, and institutional resources; Danny is 23 years old and male.

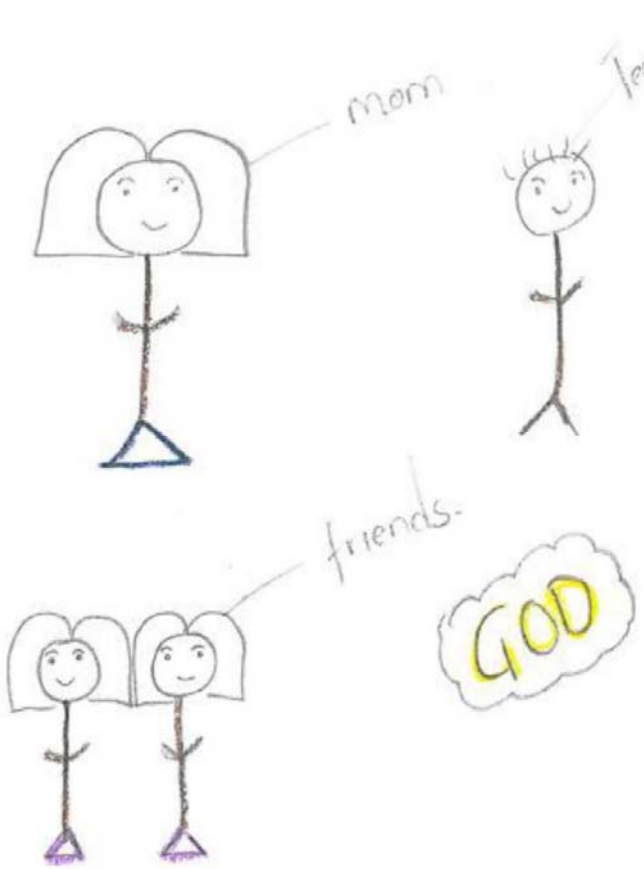

Figure 2. Rainbow's drawing shows a mix of relational and faith-based supports; Rainbow is 18 years old and female.

To provide a richer understanding of the non-personal supports in the resource mix, each is detailed separately next.

Positive personal relationships

Having positive personal relationships with other people helped participants to be hopeful about the future. As captured in the drawing (see Figure 3) by Thuso (17-year-old; male), others offered a support base that scaffolded young people's hope when obstacles threatened their future dreams. In particular, others' encouragement and

advice sustained hopeful agency: “My friends, family, and pastor… they help me build my confidence and self-esteem…they tell me not to give up on my dreams, and I don’t. I keep pushing forward” (Siyabonga, 18-year-old; male).

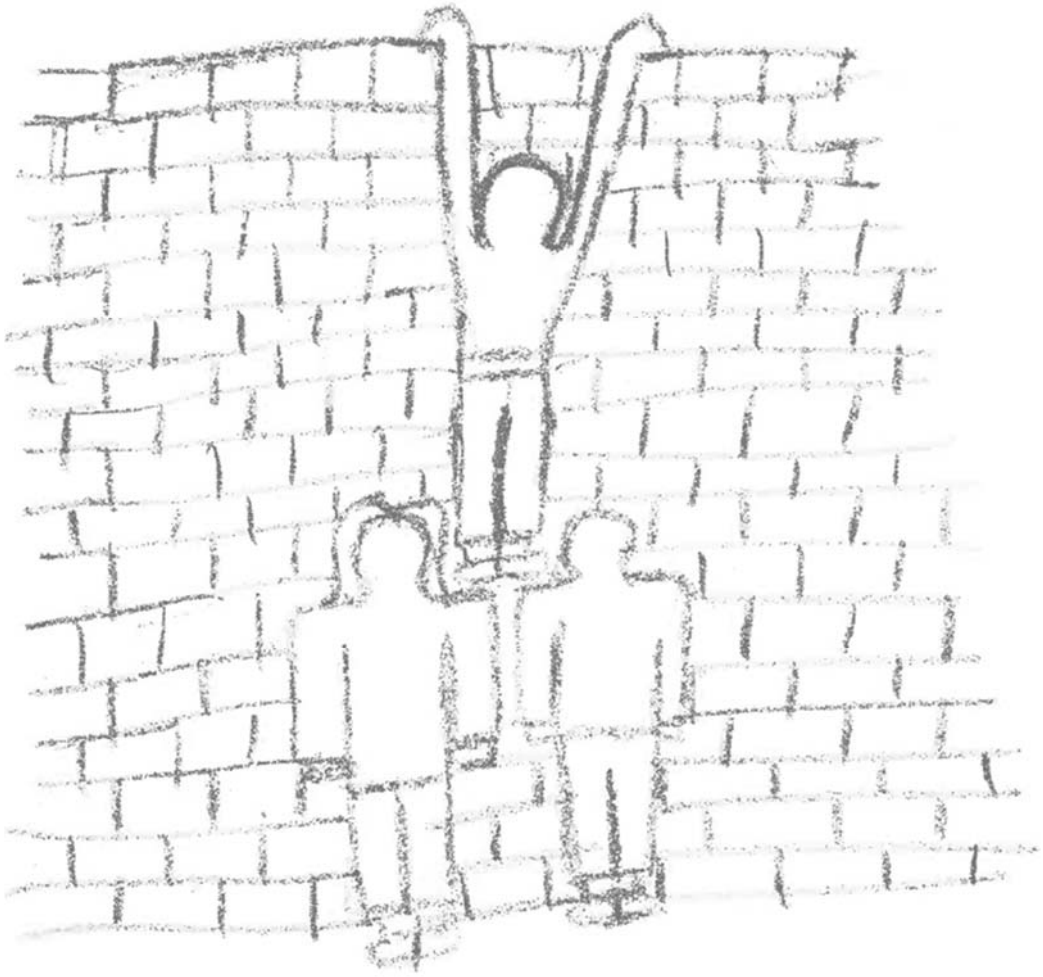

Figure 3. Thuso’s drawing showing the scaffolding value of supportive, trustworthy others.

However, young people were outspoken about the importance of being judicious about which others they turned to for support. For instance, Zenande (17-year-old; male), Sammy (18-year-old; male) and Blessed (19-year-old; female) reflected that not everyone could be trusted to be encouraging: “You can’t just blame it on a specific people (Blessed). It’s society (Sammy). It’s people who accepted failure and now they

try to influence us to also fail and not achieve goals (Zenande)". Similarly, Thuso (17-year-old; male) said, "There are those who are there to actually just break you down [and] there are those who build you up from the ruins that you are in … and help you reach your dreams".

Supportive, encouraging, non-judgemental family members were especially prominent in young people's accounts of hope-enabling relationships. Rainbow (18-year-old; female) related: "My mom … she makes my hope stronger. Like if I feel discouraged … I tell her everything and she'll be there for me; she'll tell me that I can do it. And yes, I can. I know I can, and I will." Likewise, Tshepo (19-year-old; male) explained, "My family makes my hope stronger because they always encourage me to look forward to my future. And, they always tell me that I have a bright future ahead of me." Family members whose life histories modelled resilience also galvanised hopeful agency and determination. In this regard, Lunga (19-year-old; female) said: "My dad makes my hope go stronger because he grew up in a family where they had no money, but he went to school and made things possible. If he can make things possible without money, I can also make things possible".

Faith-based supports

Belief in a spiritual being strengthened some participants' hope that they could manage any hardship and confidence in a better future. In this regard, Brute (16-year-old; male) said, "I believe I can do anything, like hustle or just try hard to be the person I want to be, but without God I cannot succeed. So, God is hope to me". Likewise, Carol (18-year-old; female) commented: "God's love keeps me going. And the quote from what I'm saying that is in Jeremiah 29:11. It says, 'For I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster'". Faith-based practices

(e.g., engaging in prayer) supplemented this belief. For instance, Minky (20-year-old; female) said, “Going to church and praying about things makes me hope bigger … makes me think that everything is possible and if I pray and just wait for the time for it, it will happen”.

Tangible sources of inspiration

Many participants referred to tangible sources of inspiration and how this supported them to be hopeful. Typically, these concrete sources of inspiration were structural resources and institutions in their immediate community that symbolised opportunity (e.g., schools and industry), elements in the natural environment that symbolised (new) life and energy (e.g., sunshine and trees), and/or books (e.g., personal diaries and novels) that motivated hopeful agency. Seeing these symbols prompted hope. For instance, Happy (18-year-old; female) said, “Hope to me, it represents life and a better future. So, when I see a tree… it’s a symbol that I’ll live again…the tree represents life and a better future”. Relatedly, the drawings that included these sources of inspiration often included a path, road, or a key, along with explanations of hope for an improved future (e.g., the drawing [Figure 4] by Philasande [17-year-old; female]; her written explanation of this drawing was: “For me, education is hope because education can open so many doors”).

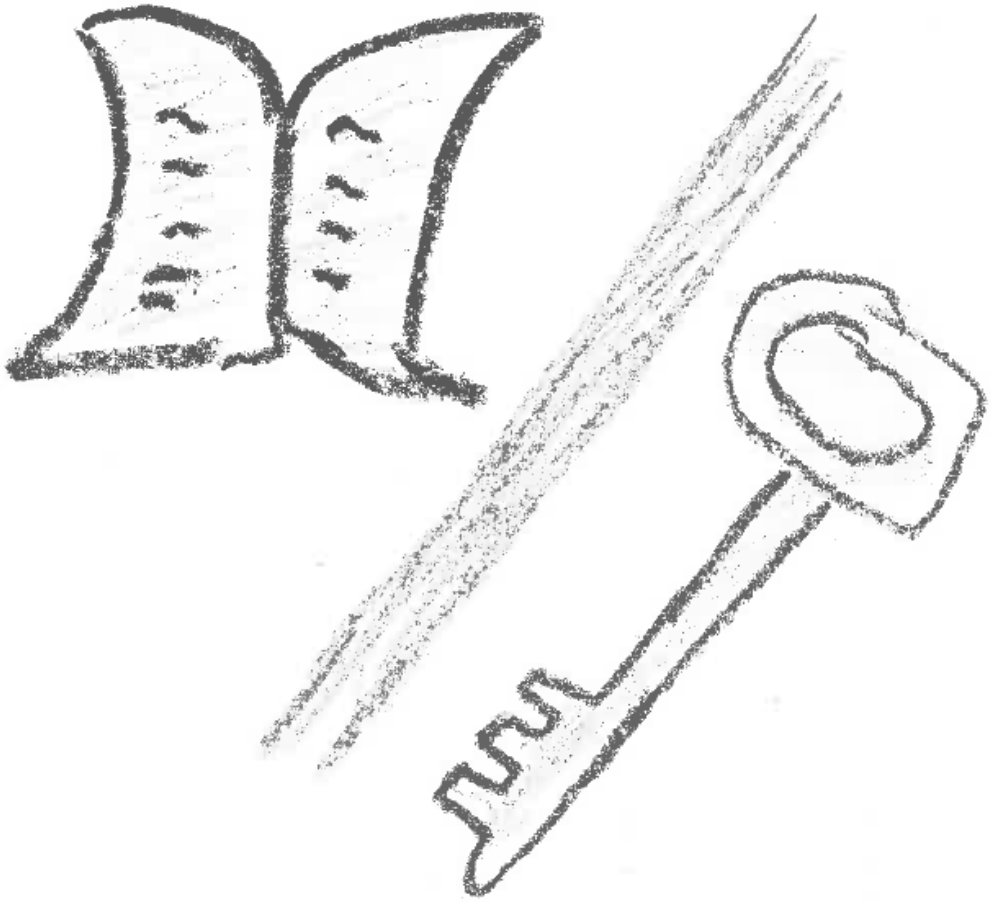

Figure 4. Philasande's drawing symbolising educational opportunities as key to a better future.

Many participant drawings and/or explanations showed that local industry (specifically SASOL) was a tangible source of inspiration. For example, Blessed (19-year-old; female) commented: If SASOL was not here, there would not be any hope." Although there was acknowledgement of industry-associated drawbacks (e.g., pollution), young people thought these were outweighed by the education and employment opportunities that industry provided, as well as their contributions to community infrastructure. For instance, Zenande (17-year-old; male) explained his

drawing as follows: “I drew SASOL and a young person learning. Hope to me is having faith. Without looking at the fact that SASOL is polluting us, it’s having faith that we will have a better future because it [SASOL] provides for us. The sun [in his drawing] represents a bright future. SASOL is making a brighter future for us; that’s hope”.

Seeing SASOL and the infrastructure it had provided reminded young people of opportunities and encouraged them to believe that their hoped-for future selves were a real possibility. For instance, Danny (23-year-old; male) said, “When I see a SASOL industry, I know that one day I will have a wonderful job; I will earn an awesome salary. So, every time when I see SASOL, I get hope that my future will be well”. Quzpha (15-year-old; male) said, “Hope is the light at the end of the tunnel when everything around you is dark. I get hope from education and the sponsorship from SASOL. SASOL sponsors education and helps us with infrastructure.” Likewise, Joyce (23-year-old; female) said: “SASOL provides funding for us for education … that also helps us with job opportunities … it also has provided us with infrastructures, like clinics and libraries, and so I see hope”.

Resource mix durability

The accounts of the four participants who explained the genesis of their hope in 2017 and 2018 showed that the resource mix of personal resources (hope-enabling values, self-efficacy), supportive relationships (mostly family), faith-based supports, and/or tangible sources of inspiration was constant. Most reported the same sources of inspiration. At both time points, Kezner (17-year-old at Time 1/2017; male) accentuated education and related resources (e.g., industry-facilitated bursaries), Happy (18-year-old at Time 1/2017; female) drew and explained waking up and seeing the sunlight as a symbol of renewed opportunity to make dreams come true, and Precious (18-year-old at

Time 1/2017; female)was inspired by expressive media (books, music, her diary). However, in 2018, Minky (20-year-old at Time 1/2017; female) included a new source of inspiration: government funding earmarked for young women. Referring to her dream of wanting to be a pig farmer, she said, “I really do want to go to university, but knowing the situation at home it’s impossible … NSFAS is very difficult and you don’t get the funding immediately … because of the delay with NSFAS, they had to cancel [university] registration … what made my hope stronger was hearing the deputy president saying that they will fund young females who would like to do farming”. This addition was a reminder that the pathways of resilience (hope in the case of our study) are “dynamic and emergent, changing with experience and multisystem interactions” (Masten et al., 2023, p. 2110).

Outlier: Hope is a solo endeavour

In comparison with the preceding theme that showed that hope was rooted in a mix of resources (including personal capacity), a small number of participants reported only personal strengths or accentuated their personal drive when accounting for hope. Put differently, their accounts suggested that hope was a do-it-yourself job. This emphasis on the self fits with the prominence of personal cognition in classic hope theory (Snyder, 2002), as well as with the tendency of many sub-Saharan African youth to subscribe resilience to themselves (Theron, 2023; van Breda & Theron, 2018).

In instances where participants understood hope as a solo endeavour, their drawings typically included a single human figure or face and the related explanations foregrounded self-efficacy and/or personal values that encouraged agency that would bring about positive change. For example, Khomotso (18-year-old; female) drew herself with the remnants of a chain (see Figure 5) and added the words “meditation, focus,

determination and self-belief". She explained that the chain represented the many hardships she faced, but that "what makes my hope strong is these values that I have within myself; I have the strength to break the chain".

Figure 5. Khomotso's drawing of her self-fuelled hope.

Self-efficacy was also prominent in participants' self-focused accounts of hope and foregrounded a belief in their personal ability to manage challenges and confidence in their dreams for a better future. Occasionally, young people implied that believing in themselves was a form of resistance to others' doubt in their capacity. As illustrated in the excerpts that follow, this helped them to persevere in the face of adversity and sustained future orientation:

> This is what makes my hope get strong … having self-confidence and being motivated, you know where you want to go … even if someone can come and tell me that this you cannot do because he or she thinks that it is impossible. But, if I say I can do it, I will (Busi, 19-year-old young woman)
>
> I know what I want, and to get there I have to work for myself and not anyone else...I believe in myself, and I know there are some people who believe in me. So, those who don't, I choose to shut them out of my life (Andy, 20-year-old young woman)

Discussion

To redress the limited understanding of the multisystemic resources that animate hope (as a pathway of resilience) among young Africans challenged by structural violence, we draw on qualitative work with 30 young people (*M*age=18.6) and 7 young people (*M*age=18.4) living in eMbalenhle township in 2017 and 2018, respectively. While hope is a well-known pathway of African child and youth resilience (Isaacs & Savahl, 2014; Theron, 2023; Van Breda & Theron, 2018), too little attention has been given to the multisystemic nature of resources associated with hope. The danger of this oversight is its potential to further assumptions that hope is personally driven, as posited by classical hope theory (Snyder, 2002) and early studies of resilience (Masten, 2014). Such assumptions allow societies and the adults who are meant to serve youth well (including mental health practitioners) to place the onus on young people challenged by structural violence to be hopefully resilient, rather than work with young people to redress inequities and make the systemic resources necessary for resilience available to them.

As presaged by multisystemic resilience theorising (Masten et al., 2021, 2023; Shevell & Denov, 2021; Ungar, 2018, 2021; Ungar & Theron, 2020) and the Afrocentric framework of hope (Cherrington, 2018), most participants' accounts showed that a multisystemic mix of resources buoyed youth hope in the face of structural violence. In addition to personal strengths (like self-efficacy and enabling values), young people's hope was rooted in supportive relationships with trustworthy, encouraging others; faith-based supports, and/or tangible sources of inspiration that were mostly found at the level of the community (e.g., infrastructure and resources that furthered opportunities for education and employment) and natural ecology (e.g., trees or sunshine connoting hope). The relational and faith-based resources informing this mix fit with prior South African studies of hope and resilience that reported personal, social, and faith-based supports (Bond & van Breda, 2018; Cherrington, 2018; Hills et al., 2016; Isaacs & Savahl, 2014; Theron & van Rensburg, 2018; van Breda & Dickens, 2017). They also fit with traditional African valuing of interdependence and spirituality (Cherrington, 2018; Van Breda & Theron, 2018), thereby reminding psychologists to be attentive to the cultural relevance of hope-enabling resources. The resources at the level of the community and natural ecology extend what was previously understood about what animates hope among youth exposed to structural violence. Industry is added as a valuable member of "a hopeful, connected community" (Cherrington, 2018, p. 509). Likewise, while the "immediate context" (Cherrington, 2018, p. 504) has been linked to hope, previous South African studies have not explicated outdoor spaces (especially sunlit ones with trees) as part of a hope-enabling context.

Taken together, the multisystemic mix reported by young people in our study cues psychologists working with youth in structurally violent contexts like eMbalenhle

to foster a blend of personal and non-personal (i.e., relational, sociocultural, industry and natural environment) resources, thereby discouraging the perpetuation of personal responsibility for resilience and hope (Mosley et al., 2020). Given the resource inequities of such contexts, psychologists will need to advocate for the non-personal resources at multiple system levels to be made available and accessible to youth. Additionally, the reported resource mix reminds psychologists that developmental, situational, and cultural realities are likely to play into the detail of the resources that support young people to be hopefully resilient. For instance, the emphasis on industry (rather than community organisations, as in Cherrington's 2018 study with children) could be an artefact of developmental stage. From a developmental perspective, education and employment opportunities – and the role-players that facilitate them – are likely to be more salient to adolescents and young adults than community organisations. The high youth unemployment rate, which is pronounced in structurally inequitable communities like eMbalenhle, could have further amplified that salience. Similarly, the situational reality of eMbalenhle (i.e., high crime rates, large numbers of migrant workers, and low social cohesion; Ungar et al., 2021) likely played into youth emphasis on *trustworthy* others when recounting the hope-enabling value of relationships. Being mindful of such dynamics should disabuse psychologists of generic or ones-size-fits-all understandings of which resources inform a multisystemic resource mix. Ultimately, to optimally enable resilience, psychologists need to consider which mix of resources enables hope for which youth in which context, also over time (Ungar & Theron, 2020).

Regarding our interest in what enabled youth hope over time in the context of eMbalenhle, the reiteration of the resource mix by the youth who participated in both 2017 and 2018 tentatively suggests that this mix was durable. This putative durability

would fit with the two prior South African studies that have reported that the same resources enable youth capacity for hopeful resilience over time (Theron & Van Rensburg, 2018; Van Breda & Dickens, 2017). However, given the miniscule size of this iterative sample (*n*=4), as well as some experience-related variability (as anticipated by Masten et al., 2203) in the sources of inspiration reported by this sample, a longitudinal study with a substantive sample is required to confirm the understanding that the same resources continue to support youth hope over time.

Although there was some exclusive emphasis on personal agency and self-efficacy, which fit earlier person-focused accounts of resilience (Masten, 2014) and hope (Snyder, 2002), this was not a common response. Even though it was uncommon, it suggests that psychologists and other service providers must psychoeducate young people, their families, and communities about the multisystemic nature of pathways of resilience, including hope. Such psychoeducation would need to explain that self-reliance is often a default response when families, communities, and the government do not make the social, cultural, and ecological resources necessary for hope available to young people (Van Breda & Theron, 2018).

Limitations

While our study has contributed rare insight into the multisystemic resource mix that supported South African youth from a structurally violent community to be hopefully resilient, it is not without limitations. We worked with two samples, rather than the same sample over time. This was necessitated by attrition, which was not obviated by well-documented strategies to limit attrition, a common phenomenon in longitudinal studies (Cockcroft et al., 2019). Whereas the two samples were similar in age and still allowed insight into the resources that youth from the same community

associated with hope, having only four participants at both time points meant that we could extrapolate only tentative understandings of the durability of participants' resource mix. Additionally, had we purposefully sampled for equal numbers of young men and women, we might well have discerned gendered patterns in the resource mix that young people reported. Finally, although the six post-graduate psychology students were trained to facilitate the DWT method uniformly, it is possible that they probed differently during the discussion with participants and that this could have influenced the data generated.

Conclusion

In a country like South Africa, with its substantial youth population and ongoing inequality (Francis & Webster, 2019), co-produced hope is an important pathway of youth resilience. As our study showed, in structurally violent communities interacting systems co-produce youth hope by providing a relational, sociocultural, institutional, and ecological resource mix that buttresses youth self-efficacy and youth agency. To operationalise and sustain that mix, psychologists will need to work with young people to identify its developmentally and contextually relevant detail and advocate for its systemic facilitation.

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Author contributions

All authors contributed to the conceptualisation of this article, as well as the master's study that informed the data reported in this article. BN generated the data and led the

analyses, with input from LT and SH. BN wrote the first draft of the article, with input from LT and SH. LT led the revisions, with input from BN and SH.

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