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Resolving Inner Cultural Conflicts toward Education in Pastoral East Africa: A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

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Keywords

Pastoralists, Semi - nomadic, Vulnerable Children, Education, Resiliency, Grounded Theory, Tanzania, East Africa

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Resolving Inner Cultural Conflicts toward Education in Pastoral East Africa: A Grounded Theory Study

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The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explain the perceptions of semi-nomadic pastoralists in East Africa, who self-identified as having the characteristics of the most vulnerable, and who were educationally successful. This study identified motivating factors that contributed to resiliency while in the pursuit of an education. Findings suggest that even though students from this background utilize these motivating factors they are still faced with inner cultural tensions that can be insurmountable. Emergent theory suggests that inner cultural conflicts toward education are resolved when push/pull factors were combined with a sense of something beyond themselves, allowing for transcultural migration. Keywords: Pastoralists, Semi-nomadic, Vulnerable Children, Education, Resiliency, Grounded Theory, Tanzania, East Africa

Pastoralists in East Africa have many different mother tongues. Their cultures are unique having developed independently for many generations. These are proud people. When some outsiders speak of education for rural tribes they convey the impression that this civilizing influence will make pastoralists better people. However, education is seen by some as a threat to traditional culture. The history of this region repeatedly speaks of domination by industrialized states and the use of education to both improve lives as well as train a labor force for exploitation. In spite of the latter, some see education as a means of moving toward a better life, an improved life. They see it as a natural extension of a progressive people, necessary to maintain a desirable place in this world. The problem addressed by this study was that, as Kratli (2001) reports, inadequate attention has been directed toward education and other development activities as they apply to specific community context. We were intrigued by this context that included perceptions of education held by pastoralists as well as the barriers they faced.

As researchers, we were, of course, aware of the arguments. Our interests led us to study the thoughts of those pastoralists who had made a commitment to being educated. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explain the perceptions of semi-nomadic pastoralists in East Africa who self-identified as having the characteristics of the most vulnerable and who were educationally successful. Perhaps this research will be useful for individuals or organizations interested in education in East Africa, especially if interested in how to best support those struggling to be educationally successful.

We began our study with an interest in the barriers the most vulnerable students faced and how they overcame those barriers. Why were they so radically determined to be successful students, while most of their peers were not? Slowly, as we learned more through our research process, we refocused our study on one distinct population and reworked our guiding questions. What were the perceptions of those who self-identified as having the characteristics of the most vulnerable, were educationally successful, and who were from semi-nomadic pastoralist tribes? We knew they were resilient, but why were they resilient, and how was this resiliency manifested? What, if any, unique factors were involved?

For the purposes of this study, we are defining the vulnerable as those children who are at significant risk due to a variety of factors. This is discussed further in a following section of this paper. In addition, we are defining the educationally successful as those who successfully completed primary school, secondary school through Form 4, either Advanced level or Diploma level, and entered Year 1 in a university Bachelor's degree program (See Table 1 for clarification).

Table 1: Structure of Tanzanian Educational System

Primary School [All instruction in Kiswahili]	Secondary School [All instruction in English]	Diploma [All instruction in English]	University Level [All instruction in English]
Standard 1	Form 1		Degree Year 1
Standard 2	Form 2		Degree Year 2
Standard 3	Form 3		Degree Year 3 [Graduation with Bachelor's Degree upon successful completion]
Standard 4	Form 4 [National exams at the end of year 11 to determine continuance]		
Standard 5	Form 5 [Advanced level]	Diploma Year 1 [Those choosing not to attend or prevented from attending Form 5 may go to a diploma program]	
Standard 6	Form 6 [Advanced level] [National exams at the end of year 13 to determine continuance to university degree]	Diploma Year 2 [Exams to determine continuance to university degree]	
Standard 7 [National Exams at the end of year 7 to determine continuance]			

Barriers to Education of Rural Pastoralists in East Africa

Challenges of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children

Defining the concept of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) seems to depend largely upon methods used to project future levels of vulnerability. This would include the social effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, as well as other factors. Regardless of the methods followed, most of the literature seems to utilize the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS definition where orphans tend to be defined as children under 18 years who have lost mother, father, or both parents (UNAIDS, UNICEF, & USAID, 2004). The same source tends to define vulnerable children as those whose safety, well-being, or development is at significant risk.

Such children can include children orphaned due to AIDS, children infected with HIV, children caring for terminally sick parents with AIDS, fostered children, children in poor households which have taken in orphans, disabled children, street children, children exposed to excessively hazardous labor, children involved in the sex industry, children affected by conflict, migrant children, and children out of school. (UNAIDS, UNICEF, & USAID, 2004, p. 1)

A United Nations Children's Fund report (UNICEF, 2008) estimates that there were an estimated 145 million orphaned children worldwide, 0 to 17 years old, having lost one or both parents in 2007. Catholic World Relief and USAID (2008) state that many millions of other children can be described as vulnerable, due to the effects of illness, poverty, and reasons including conflict, disease, and accidents. Haacker (n.d.) argues that HIV/AIDS has significantly contributed to the numerical increase of both orphans and vulnerable children. The UNICEF (2008) report indicated that the HIV/AIDS pandemic left 15 million children orphaned worldwide. Of these children, 11.6 million resided in Sub-Saharan Africa. Orphans are reported to be more likely to suffer detrimental health and experience malnutrition effects compared with non-orphans (Evans & Miguel, 2007).

It is these children in particular, who are in need of education intervention, as they are among the children most vulnerable due to poverty, lack of parental care and protection, and increased susceptibility to abuse (Boler & Carroll, 2005; Jukes, Simmons, Smith-Fawzi, & Bundy 2008; Mbugua, 2004). These are among the many factors that contribute to the barriers orphans and vulnerable children face when pursuing an education (Ainsworth, Beegle, & Koda, 2005; Ainsworth & Filmer, 2006, Pridmore, 2008). Cooper, Risley, Drake, & Bundy (2007) categorized these barriers as (a) *within the child* - health, impaired development, and emotional stress factors; (b) *within the family* - including the child and the dynamics of the family; (c) *within the community*; and (d) *within the school* system and the school.

Challenges of Pastoralist Education

Traditionally, the pastoralist communities have had little interest in sending their children to school. Muir (1994) has reported that more recently, pastoralists have begun to show increased interest in formal education. Recent published statistics are limited for the Maasai in this area, but Muir, for example, has found that nearly 67.8% and 60% respectively, of sampled households in Simanjiro and Monduli districts, had at least one child in school. Contributing factors to the increase of enrollment among pastoralists includes an attitude change towards education and the decline in herds and the pastoral economy (Bonini, 2006). Muir further argues that one should also not forget that as more educated people are returning to their home

areas to work, they are setting an example of obtaining a salary, having a higher standard of living, and becoming more influential in their communities.

The education of girls in the pastoral areas has additional challenges (Vavrus, 2002). For example, one study of pastoralism in Simanjiro District found that more boys than girls were attending school for various reasons, including the general thinking that while "a boy returns the investment to the home, a girl is expected to leave home to marry and to bring in bridewealth" (Muir, 1994, p. 21). More difficult still, a girl tends to be seen as less capable. FitzGerald (2008) adds that by adolescence there is an imbalance within the domestic workload between girls and boys.

Places for the children of pastoralists to attend school are seriously limited especially at the secondary level. Moreover, while state secondary schools are accessible only to children from within the districts where such schools are situated, there are hardly any secondary schools in the typically pastoral areas. Other problems and constraints on educational development in these communities include: the distances which must be traveled to attend school, little opportunity for women's education, unprepared teachers, and a general negative community attitude towards schooling as a whole (Kasunga, 1994; Mkkwa, 1996). Hartwig (2013) emphasizes that the problem of poor educational resources and infrastructure in Tanzanian rural schools forms a challenge to the nation. Muir (1994) and Hartwig draw a picture of a typical primary rural school: three or four rooms, one or two houses for teachers, no latrines, only a few textbooks, only basic buildings that are not maintained, many children having to walk long distances to school without food until evening when they come back home. In addition, most teachers come from outside the district and are only primary school graduates with a three-year training course.

Given these challenges, most children of the pastoralists do not perform well in the National Examination in Standard 7. There is a government policy that requires that a fixed number of Standard Seven graduates from every district proceed to secondary school. However, many of those who go to secondary schools are the children of government employees, most of whom come from outside the district (Muir, 1994). Hartwig (2013) associates poor performance with the lack of educational resources, non-commitment of parents, and content of education that is unrelated to, and often conflicting with, the problems, needs, and aspirations of students in Tanzania.

While commendable effort has been made to study the economic and social organization of these communities, Kratli (2001) reports that inadequate attention has been directed toward education and other development activities as they apply to specific community context. The report asks the question, how can the primary and secondary schools be operated as community schools, so that they may prepare children to meet the challenges and improve their lives in the communities by focusing on practical subjects? Involvement of these communities in the investigation of their own economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental realities through the use of participatory and action-oriented research designs and processes appears to be minimal.

The extant literature tends to illuminate a paternalistic scenario whereby the state formulates policies and programs aimed at "civilizing" the "backward" communities. In the process, the pastoral and mobile communities lose their freedom, autonomy, economy, social controls, and self-reliance. One is inclined to believe that if the community members were given a genuine opportunity to speak their minds, they would come up with a different assessment of their needs. Towo, Diyamett, and Bee (2002) confirm that the contribution of the pastoral and nomadic communities themselves to their own development does not seem to have been given adequate attention.

General Barriers to Education

In East Africa, one of the greater barriers is the requirement of school fees, which severely restricts the ability of families to enable children to go to school (Catholic World Relief & USAID, 2008). More recently, some countries have begun to waive primary school fees, which has led to dramatic increases in enrollment. For example, in Uganda, there was a 70 percent increase in enrollment after fees were waived in 1996. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the enrollment rate increased from 57 per cent to 85 per cent within one year after fees in primary school were abolished in 2001. Of course, other fees for uniforms, books, and supplies, not to mention secondary school fees, continue to pose a barrier for those living in poverty (Wedgwood, 2005).

This change in basic education policy was a positive step towards the increase in enrollment; it has not removed all barriers. For instance, although 'basic education' covers Standards 1–9, the free basic education policy applies only to Standards 1–7 (World Data on Education, 2006). Moreover, children still need money to pay for adequate clothing, uniforms (in some schools), and books and pencils. In addition, overcrowded conditions result in many children being turned away, or crowded into classrooms of 80 or more.

According to World Data on Education (2006), household poverty continues to prevent many children from attending school or having enough to eat to function well once they do attend. Nomadic children, as well as other children who are required to work, have problems conforming to the routines of regular schooling. For example, they will be gone for extended periods of time. In addition, a lack of adequate sanitary facilities at school (which has only been exacerbated by the increases in school enrollment) continues to hinder the participation of girls who have reached the age of menstruation.

Tanzania is rich in language. To unify the country the government has required the language of instruction from Standards 1-7 (World Data on Education, 2006) to be Swahili. So that students will learn the international trade language, the language of instruction changes to English in Form 1 and continues through university. The language requirement of academic English in Form 1 and the lack of student preparation for this becomes a tremendous barrier to success. In addition to their mother tongues, most students will need to be proficient in a second language of Swahili, and a third academic language of English.

The problem addressed by this study was that inadequate attention has been directed toward education and other development activities as they apply to the specific community context of the pastoralist. The purpose of this study was to look closely at this gap and to attempt to explain the perceptions of semi-nomadic pastoralists in Tanzania who self-identified as having the characteristics of the most vulnerable and who were educationally successful. The characteristics of our purpose are a fit with grounded theory methodology.

Role of Researcher

As teachers, we freely admit our biases toward the improvement of lives through education, while showing respect for traditional ways. As researchers, we struggled not to interject our opinions about the role of education into the study and instead, to consistently listen to participant views. However, through the questions we designed, the manner in which we interacted with our participants, and during our analysis, we acknowledge that, while not participants, we were certainly a part of the data and think it impossible to be completely detached in this type of study. This is consistent with grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006). In fact, we believe we were able to enter this research tension, as both insiders and outsiders, in a unique way that strengthens our study.

Insiders and Outsiders

As Kosov (2003) points out in his article on immigration ethnography, identifying who is inside and who is outside is problematic given the changing dynamics between researcher and participant. For example, for most immigration scholars the norm for insider/outsider status is based upon race and cultural differences. He goes on to contend that:

...we must not see insider/outsider identities as predetermined roles but rather as a result of the nature of the research topic under investigation, the status characteristics and biographical particularities of both the researcher and the participant(s), and the local conditions in which the fieldwork takes place. (p. 592)

For our study, race and culture were certainly important factors in the relationship between researcher and participant, but other factors were also important, and at times, more important. We believe that insider status gave us instant credibility as well as an ability to more deeply understand the perceptions of our participants. At the same time, our outsider status brought a fresh and valuable perspective considering our grounded theory methods. We tried to avoid literature that might lead us to theoretical biases prior to the study and took a critical stance with earlier theories (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We do not claim to be *tabula rasa* as some critics of this approach might contend (Dey, 1999); but as outsider, we were not predisposed to theories, presuppositions, or hypotheses from personal experience with the topic, and as insider, we could better understand participant perspectives, because of these experiences. A brief background of our research team may help explain this phenomenon.

J. Rugira experienced the trauma of the Rwandan genocide and was a refugee for several years. While he is African and Black, it was these experiences consistent with those of the most vulnerable, rather than shared race or culture, which gave him insider status and a unique perspective in our study. He considers himself to be dissimilar in culture and race. He is not from a pastoralist background and does not speak the mother tongue of our participants.

T. Keiper is *Mzungu* (White), male, not from East Africa and has never experienced any characteristic of vulnerability similar to the participants. In all aspects except one (gender) he was an outsider. He was able to speak with men, in patriarchal societies, as an insider. Interestingly, our research assistant was a woman. Due to cultural constraints, she was able to conduct interviews about personal issues with women in cultures where women are not open to speaking with men.

We lived on the same grounds as many of the participants (Mt. Meru University) and interacted with them regularly. We did not have an inclination to solve the problems of our participants, nor did we pretend to deeply understand their lives. However, we did deeply want to understand and explain the perceptions of our participants and believed the best way to go about this was to ask questions, listen, and look for patterns. This gave us a wonderful opportunity to immerse ourselves in data while attempting to gain a clear focus.

Method

Research Framework

After considering various qualitative approaches we determined grounded theory was indeed our best option due to these factors and the nature of questions we were pursuing. Our inductive research method fit into the grounded theory framework first advocated by Glaser

and Strauss (1967). According to Charmaz (2006), the defining characteristics of grounded theory practice are:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis
- Constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses
- Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis
- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis
- Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps
- Sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for popular representativeness
- Conducting the literature review after developing an independent analysis. (p.11)

While studying the perceptions of pastoralist students to determine motivating factors associated with resiliency, we had hopes of adding to a growing literature assisting in the formulation of formal grounded theory. Our hope was to articulate a new substantive grounded theory of educational success among a subset of the vulnerable population of East Africa. Considering our focus on one subset of vulnerable children (semi-nomadic population) and not on the more general vulnerable population, the reach of this study is delimited to emerging substantive theory (Glaser, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Integrated Stages

Study data were collected in five distinct stages. Throughout we continuously mined and filtered the data to pursue analysis and, during the later stages, would return to our participants to test ideas or debunk myths we had created. Participants were part of this study over a nine-month period in 2010–2011. Most were Tanzanian, but several were from Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. There was no approval from a review board, as this was not required in our local context. We ensured ethical research practice to protect our participants by informing them of the nature of our research, of how we intended to use the data in the study, and by adhering to common practices of participant anonymity in research. All participants were volunteers, and written consent was obtained from all participants in later stages for audio recorded interviews. In the following description of our stages we have included participant description, data collection process, and ongoing analysis.

During these stages we followed the characteristics of grounded theory research as identified by Charmaz (2006), however, we did not look at these as sequential steps for our research but rather as critical attributes of the study.

First stage: Initial data gathering interview. Initially, we believed a ready source of participants were students at the university in which we were working in Tanzania. However, instead of striking out right away with this participant pool, one of our team members sought to gather some initial data from outside the area. As we travelled through the region we made contacts and became friends with several pastoralists. We began initial data gathering by purposefully selecting one man of the pastoral Borani tribe of Northeastern Province in Kenya, whom we met through friends in the area, for first stage interviews to help gather ideas for the direction of the study and to help us identify appropriate interview questions for later stages. Yara's (pseudonym) command of English, pastoral upbringing, and educational success made him a perfect fit for initial data gathering. This well-educated young man in his early 30s speaks four languages (his tribal mother tongue, Swahili, Somali, and English. Yara grew up "watching

the cattles” in lieu of primary school in remote Kenya and went on to earn his master’s degree. His people live in mud and stick homes and depend on good weather to have something to eat. His family has experienced much hardship and survived famine. In fact, they endured another drought-induced famine during the spring of 2011, during part of this study. “*How did he manage to become educationally successful?*” became the question that resonated with us as outsiders.

After discussing our research aims, Yara agreed to participate and was interviewed by one of our team over several weeks, much of the time as we drove mile after mile on four-wheel drive tracks in the bush and visited villages in NE province for his job with a Kenyan NGO. He agreed to be interviewed after I assured him his name would not be used and little personal information divulged, as his work is sensitive and in a dangerous area. In fact, since our time together, Yara has moved from this region because of the bombings of several churches and kidnapping of NGO workers. During our travels, we visited many of his nomadic Somali herdsman friends in remote villages of Northeastern Province, Kenya. This is an area known for its major UN refugee camps as Somalis flee the violence in their homeland. There were almost 400,000 Somali refugees in Dadaab, Kenya during the write-up of the study, and Al-Shabaab, the terrorist organization linked to Al Qaeda, was active in this area. Through these discussions, interviews, and observations, we determined an initial outline for the process and procedure of the study. This included leads on initial ideas for categories of vulnerability and a survey tool to determine other participants. The process we decided upon included a means of selecting participants from the students at the university where we taught in order to form a large group of participants. Later stages featured a small focus group selected from the large group of participants, and purposefully selected participants for further interviews.

Ongoing analysis. This stage was helpful for us to gain our bearings and could be thought of as a pre-study interview. However, it was an intense experience of travel and conversation and almost certainly impacted the outlook of the researcher/interviewer, in that it allowed an intimate look at barriers faced by this individual. During this stage, we identified several categories of vulnerability in East Africa based upon (a) this initial interview in Kenya, (b) insider knowledge of the significant aspects of vulnerability, and (c) an overview of literature related to vulnerable children to confirm our perceptions. The categories that arose from these data were: Orphanhood, Nomadic lifestyle/Cultural Practice, Extreme poverty, Personal stresses/trauma related to disease (specifically HIV/AIDS or malaria), Migration/refugee, and Other trauma related. Many economists distinguish between three descriptions of the poor: extreme, moderate, and relative. The World Bank measure of extreme poverty is income of the equivalent of \$1 per day. For our survey, we used the measure of *experience* of poverty (hunger, common lack of food, lack of funds for school, experience of famine). These categories were then used to create a schooling resilience survey and writing prompts in the next stage of data collection.

Second stage: Large group. From what we learned from this young man in the Kenyan bush, we decided to proceed in several stages. These stages would allow us to move from a large group of over 200 down to a focus group and further narrowed down to one or two individuals. With this process, it made structural sense that we could progress with simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis, construct analytic codes and categories from data while avoiding preconceived hypotheses, make comparisons during each stage of the analysis, and advance theory development during each stage (Charmaz, 2006).

We knew we had a large potential population of participants at our university who fit our definition of educationally successful. We assumed they had navigated through significant barriers along the way but we did not know for certain. The schooling resilience survey and other writing prompts would give us demographic information about this group that would enable us to see them more clearly as well as help us determine our stage three focus group.

We did not view these survey data as movement into a mixed study method, but rather as a means of gathering information that would assist in understanding our participants' backgrounds. In addition, we saw that it was likely that these participants had experienced several of the characteristics of vulnerability we had identified in stage one. What impact would this have on our study as we proceeded?

Our large group of participants was the entire first year Bachelor of Education admittees at Mt. Meru University in Arusha, Tanzania. These 236 students were studying to be teachers, and met for a course every other day for one semester. One of our research members taught this course and explained our research aims and methods and asked for volunteers to take the survey after class one day. Based upon our first survey of this group, it proved amazingly diverse. We found that many tribes and sub-tribes were represented in our large group. By using mother tongue as representative of culture variation, we identified 46 distinct culture groups represented in the group. More than 80% identified as Christian, 10% as Muslim, and the remainder either gave no response or indicated a tribal religion. Mt. Meru University is affiliated with a Christian denomination, which may be indicative of the percentage identifying as Christian. However, this is uncertain as in Tanzania, beginning in 2010, students were required to apply to the central government for university placement. The government places students at universities throughout the country with apparent nominal regard for student preference.

We collected data with this large group throughout their four-month term through surveys, observed and noted peer-discussions, researcher-led discussions, and focused writing tasks. As *outsider* every student seemed vulnerable, as operationally defined for this study, in one way or another when compared with our experience in the U.S., but we were interested in participant self-identification. For example anecdotally, in one writing task the question was asked, "*How can the instructor help you become a successful learner in this class?*" More than half responded with requests for help with tuition or other issues related to personal wellbeing (illness, hunger, family issues). With these responses in mind, we administered a survey to help understand the magnitude of vulnerability as self-identified by participants. We sought to understand how they saw themselves. The findings from this schooling resilience survey gave us a foothold to a more insightful view of these participants.

This survey guided participants through a series of Likert scale statements to help them self-identify from 5 major characteristics of vulnerability with an opportunity to indicate a 6th unnamed category. The survey was crosschecked through focused writing tasks. The following are the characteristics that corresponded to a variety of statements on the survey, which were subsequently supported in the qualitative data:

Characteristics of Vulnerability

1. Orphanhood (we did not ask them to identify whether they were double or single orphans, only to identify whether they were raised by relatives who were not their own parents)
2. Nomadic lifestyle or cultural practice (practices that formed a barrier to school)
3. Extreme Poverty (lack of basic needs such as regular food, housing that included great difficulty obtaining school necessities, or the disruption of schooling by traumatic natural events such as famine)
4. Personal stresses/trauma related to disease (HIV/AIDS or malaria)
5. Migration/refugee
6. Other trauma

Ongoing analysis. The first look at this university class was eye opening to an outsider. The students came each day ready to learn, dressed in their finest clothing that would have fit in well with a professional group of teachers in the West, and of these students over 77% identified with at least one characteristic of vulnerability. Along with this, over 40% had lost an immediate family member to AIDS, 15% were orphaned, 7% indicated nomadic lifestyle or cultural practice that became a barrier to school, and 35% lived in extreme poverty. Our participants had clearly struggled immensely before arriving at the university, and as we noted in their writing, many still were facing significant barriers. Writing prompts and after-class discussions allowed us to hear the stories of individuals and to begin forming informal ideas about possible categories. We decided to wait on a more formal coding process until we had organized into a focus group and collected focus group data in stage three.

As we analyzed these informal data we quickly recognized that these characteristics of vulnerability are often tightly interwoven, and that they cannot be easily separated into distinguishable categories. For example, almost all those identifying as *orphaned* also identified with *extreme poverty*. Many of those identifying with trauma related to disease also identified with orphanhood, extreme poverty, nomadic lifestyle, or other traumas. As we gathered stories from our participants, it was disturbingly clear how one characteristic would interplay with another, compounding the trauma. Our intent was not to identify cause and effect or to pursue understanding of the interrelationship of the characteristics of vulnerability. We determined that for the purposes of our study, it would be best to identify a sub-group that we could identify clearly and with confidence. It was at this point we shifted our research focus from the study of the vulnerable in general to those vulnerable from rural nomadic lifestyles from this area of Tanzania.

Third stage: Focus group. One could argue that stages 1 and 2 were both pre-study and that the grounded theory study began with stage 3. We decided to include all stages as part of GT due to the impact early stages had on our development. We selected ten focus group participants after selecting *nomadic lifestyle or cultural practice* as the principle focus characteristic of vulnerability that we would pursue for this study. These characteristics are listed and clarified in the above section by number. We chose this focus for three reasons: first, our interest leaned in this direction partly due to the stage one interviews with the previously described pastoralist from northeastern Kenya. Second, we were overwhelmed with the number of students we were identifying as having multiple vulnerable characteristics and, as a result, having difficulty narrowing the focus. Third, we were able to clearly identify/distinguish those identifying with *nomadic lifestyle or cultural practice* in their writing. The focus group participants were all volunteers who were from the stage two large group whom were interested in working with us further.

The writing samples from this group were incredibly interesting. In response to writing prompts, four participants described killing lions as part of their cultural practices, while one described a childhood confrontation with a group of cattle thieves who were subsequently killed by the warriors from his village. We found ourselves in long discussions about cultural practice in general and nomadic people's place in society, caught between a traditional tribal world and modern globalization. Table 2 offers descriptive data for these ten participants and indicates that the common link is characteristic two: *Nomadic lifestyle or cultural practice*.

Table 2: Focus Group Participants

Participant	Gender	Tribe or Region	Age at Start of Degree	Characteristic of Vulnerability
1.	M	Maasai	30	1, 2, 3,
2.	F	Barbaik	24	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3.	F	Mara region/Bunda district	21	2, 4
4.	F	Zinza	23	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5.	M	Iraq/Chunga	24	1, 2, 3, 4,
6.	M	Sukuma	30	2, 3, 4
7.	M	Nyambo	23	1, 2, 3, 4
8.	M	Wambugwe	35	2
9.	M	Maasai	41	2
10.	F	Discontinued participation	26	2, 3, 4

Interview guide and process: During our work with the focus group, we based semi-structured protocols on sample interview questions from Charmaz (2006), as well as from prior experience. Consistent with discovery-oriented interviews we asked open-ended initial questions and followed up with intermediate and ending questions. Often the questioning followed twists and turns, as led by the participant; or we allowed the conversation to flow away from our focus, as we developed relationships with the participants. This sometimes led to fruitful conversation, as the participant described events that led back to an important aspect of our research focus. For example during an individual interview, “*When did you realize you wanted to go to school?*” elicited a several-hour long description of tending cattle near the Ngogongoro Crater, which led to descriptive observations of others going to school, which led to a description of assistance from a safari tourist, which led to a story about running away from home to attend school so as to escape angry family members. For example:

Participant (male): I was 15. I watched the cows with a boy from my uncle’s village. One day I saw the lions coming.

Interviewer: You saw lions coming? How many lions?

P: Three. A mother and two younger.

I: And you were out in the bush with just a spear and the boy? Were you afraid?

P: (laughing) Of course. I took the boy and we went inside the cows. Between cows. I could hear the mother lion calling the younger lions to come back. They would leave her to attack, but she would call them back. I have never heard this before. Then they all fell asleep. It was afternoon. Maybe they would wait until dark. I took the boy and ran for help. It was not good that I went inside the cows. I was supposed to protect the cows with my spear. No, no, that was not good for me. No.

P: (later in the conversation with no prompting) I would come back sometimes from being with the cows and see the child's going to this school or coming from this school. I would hear these speak in English and think, I want to learn this...but I must go to the cows. Talk to the cows...but the cows don't talk back (laughing).

These conversational twists and turns, we realized during the coding process, were valuable data. Later, we were able to ask focusing questions, such as: "*Why did you want to run away to go to school?*" and "*As you reflect back, what was so important to you about school that you would leave home for it?*"

We discovered that at times we would discuss topics that were unique to men or women and it was helpful to have conversations with the group separated by gender. Several participants brought this to our attention. This was extremely helpful as the group of women especially felt more comfortable discussing aspects of their culture that created immense barriers to their educational success. For example, the women of our focus group had experienced abuse, exploitation, forced marriage, and circumcision and were able to discuss many of these things with our female research assistant.

As an aid to interviewing, prompted writing strategies were used to help encourage discussion. The focus group was asked on several occasions to write a reaction to pictures prior to discussing their writing. For example, a picture we had taken of a group of boys tending their cattle in the bush was presented to the group. The group was then asked to write a response to "*What do you think the boys are experiencing?*" and "*What is their life like?*" In this way participants were encouraged to use their experiences to interpret another's similar life and then use this thinking as a springboard to discussion about their own lives. One writing sample said:

P: I think it is cold. You can see how they are cold. I think the boys want to go to the warm. They are not happy there but that is the home. The boys must stay with the cows now. But they are not happy.

Ongoing analysis. We pursued these data first broadly following Charmaz' (2006) initial coding as looking at the totality of a tree, and then through an increasingly narrow lens at the leaves and trunk during focused coding. For example, in the above writing sample, we noted in the margin the note "bad weather." We noted in many other writing samples or transcripts that we had coded a thought in a similar way. We began quickly and easily noting this initial code. Later, we began looking more closely at these initial codes for categories or ways to group them together. Often, we found ourselves going back and forth between initial and focused coding and then back to data collection again. Continuing with the above example, at first we coded this experience as "cold" and then "bad weather" as we began seeing other related ideas in the data. We started asking questions in the focus group related to experiences with bad weather. Later, as we continued to collect and code data, we began to realize that this fit in a broader category beyond the weather that we called "difficult lifestyle." Again, we went

back to the focus group to ask more specific questions related to difficult lifestyles. Later this code was included in a broader category we called “Seeking refuge” as it was grouped with other connected codes.

We hoped by using this method we would eventually be able to more clearly see the roots of our metaphorical tree with theoretical coding. Utilizing Charmaz’ (2006) grounded theory method, led us to recording interviews when possible, but at times, especially in the first and fourth stages, we relied on field notes, as we traveled in the bush. We would then code our notes of conversations, rather than exact transcripts of recordings. While this was not ideal, we believed it was practical, as it proved impossible to record in all circumstances. Usually, we would code collected data prior to the next interview as recommended by Fassinger (2005), but this was not always practical. We examined the text for what we saw as critical attributes and kept notes of initial codes with potential focused codes in a notebook along with memos regarding those codes. As we proceeded with interviews, the categories emerged from the data. When we had enough data that we could easily recall details, and the data from our focus group seemed to become redundant, we determined the data were saturated (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The data showed evidence of energizing factors for success in school. Our previous example gave evidence for how we created the category “Seeking refuge.” We tried to use action words for this level of coding and to use terms or phrases that clearly identified a pattern for the initial coding. This is exemplified in Table 3, for example, as *Seeking refuge* connects the code *difficult lifestyle* with *abuse, poverty, hunger, and disease*. Charmaz (2006) cautions against coding at too general a level, identifying topics instead of actions, attending to our own personal agendas and suggests using gerunds to introduce the action of the codes to gain specificity. With these caveats and suggestions in mind the coding process led us to the following six action categories and sub-categories.

Table 3: Motivating Factors for the Resilient Educationally Successful in this Study

Seeing design for their life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divine direction, “God in my life,” Destiny • Purpose beyond themselves • Desire to be part of a spiritual movement for good
Receiving support/encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External support system (encouraging friends, family, financial sponsors) • Internal support system (inner strength, stubborn, strong will) • Observing someone in their lives who was a role model, an example who showed them how to live differently
Seeking refuge – (Avoiding suffering or pain, push factors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse (escape - literally) • Poverty • Hunger • Difficult lifestyle • Disease
Seeking Personal Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn • Improve self • Satisfy curiosity

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be with those learning, avoiding feelings of being left behind, wasting life • Bringing oneself to a position that deserves respect, self-respect, dignity
Empowering self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a voice as a woman in culture and family - no voice in tribal affairs • Control of one's own body – stopping FGM, having marriage choice, choosing when to have sex and with whom, stopping abuse. (Note: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is called circumcision by some and varies from tribe to tribe) • Money – better job • Greater voice in tribal and national government • Desire to be role a model/influential • Option to stay or leave village
Seeking improvements for their village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to health care, nearby clean water, local schools of quality, better housing • Interesting jobs • Benefits of wealth • Enlightened discourse (“not just talking to the cows”) • Children having capacity to support themselves, not rely on parents

Fourth stage: Selection of two individuals for theoretical sampling. Finally, we purposefully selected two students (participants #1 and #2 in Table 2) from the focus group for additional extensive interviews, and one of these to follow up extensively at his family home, or “boma.” These two participants, one male and one female, were excellent communicators in English and had connected with us during the focus group meetings. They invited us to their homes and wanted to continue our conversations and so made natural candidates for this stage. We did not choose them as a way to see whether new data would emerge, to discover data about a different population, or to address the research questions in a new way. We conducted the theoretical sampling to help look for data for our existing categories and to help us understand those categories more fully (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Our many formal interviews and informal discussions helped us further understand the background of our participants and their ways of thinking. We developed trusted relationships that allowed us to talk deeply and with ease. After careful consideration, we determined that our categories were saturated when we were no longer gaining new insights into the categories we had formed.

During this stage, we were attempting to write memos related to each of our categories. We understood that this strategy might enable us to gather fresh insights into the perceptions of our participants. As we look back, this writing was akin to a free writing technique that reflectively helped clarify our thinking. Through our writing we were exploring the questions: How do these categories connect? How can we reconstruct these categories into something meaningful? How do the categories we have formed move us into theory? This reflexivity helped us to begin to see patterns among the categories that led us into a substantive theory as we explain in the section below, *Interpretive theorizing*.

Fifth Stage: Resiliency in the Literature. Consistent with grounded theory methods, we waited to conduct the literature review until toward the later stages of the study, thereby enabling us to look more freshly at the data (Charmaz, 2006). However, we did begin with considerable general background. We began our study with an eye toward understanding the resiliency of our participants and, during this stage, looked to the literature to inform our data analysis. The literature indicates that the commonly known concept of resilience is derived from both the social and health sciences (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, and Larkin (2003) state that “habitual effective coping as a durable personal resource is considered to constitute a facet of trait resilience, which functions as a reserve that can be drawn on as a buffer against a wide range of future adversities” (p. 366). Emotional stability is seen as a primary factor within trait resilience, which reduces the risk of depression and promotes healthy living. Elsewhere, researchers have been using the concept of resilience as a process that drives a person to grow through adversity (Richardson & Waite, 2002).

Being resilient means confronting change by acknowledging it and using it as a spur for continuing development. It means dealing effectively with mistakes, considering them as “experiences for learning and growth” (Brooks & Goldstein, 2004, p. 17). When identifying human resilience skills, Antonovsky (1987) states that an aspect of courage is a paramount feature that assists one to adapt to new situations and remain open for the personal growth that comes with it. He further argues that the core component in effective coping is mastering the feeling that the odds can be surmounted, that obstacles can be overcome and that control over the situation can be obtained. There is also an element of optimism in all of this, the conviction that things will turn out for the better in the end, that challenges can be mastered successfully. Once more, this leads us back to the core of resilience thinking – that facing adversity could also present itself as an opportunity to grow, individually, as well as interpersonally. Resilient individuals possess personal attributes such as an internal locus of control, pro-social behavior, empathy, positive self-image, optimism, and the ability to organize daily responsibilities (Friborg et al., 2003 in McAllister & McKinnon, 2009). These attributes enable individuals to build supportive relationships with family members and friends that are used in stressful times.

Resilience is a multi-faceted (Oswald, Johnson, & Howard, 2003) and unstable construct. The nature of resilience is determined by the interaction between the individual and the external environments in which the individual lives and grows (or does not grow). Thus, the manifestations of resilience vary from person to person according to the environment in which they live and their capacities to manage these successfully (Gu & Day, 2007). The findings of this study confirm and extend the extant literature on resilience as described by Gu and Day describe the lived experience of people who maintain a continuing positive contribution despite the range of experiences they encounter in their environments which challenge their commitment.

Cultural identity or ethnic schema has been highlighted as an important ingredient in resilience (McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, & Thompson, 1998). There has been some exploration of differences in resilience among cultures (Antonovsky, 1998). VanBreda (2001) argues that many of the strengths of African families grew out of interaction with oppressive cultures. McCubbin and associates (1998) suggest that cultural identity plays an important role in the resilience of individuals, minority or oppressed cultures in particular. Furthermore, Van Breda (2001) argues that “having a healthy cultural identity requires identifying the innate cultural strengths in that culture. These strengths may or may not differ from the strengths of other cultures – the emphasis here is not comparative, but rather looking at features within a culture” (Van Breda, 2001, p. 215). A resilient, semi-pastoral individual will need to overcome challenges facing the pastoral communities in order to improve his or her livelihood in a changing environment and the shrinking natural resource base (Towo et al., 2002).

Discussion

As the six major categories emerged from the others and were compared during analysis as described above, a seventh category emerged, which we labeled *Reconciling inner cultural tension*. This category appeared related to the others, but remained distinct and seemed fertile ground for further study. We then ran across an anthropologist's comments in a local newspaper arguing that Western aid organizations should not assist with community development (build clinics, schools, or clean water facilities), as it would disrupt the traditional culture of the Maasai. When this report was brought to the attention of one participant during an individual interview, she became angry. The study participants rarely, if ever, expressed emotion openly to us. We began looking back at the previously collected data and proposed new interview questions to more closely pursue this concept.

Participants indicated many factors that caused them to want to remain in their village within their traditional culture. Expressions of pride in their communities were commonplace, but they also indicated they were caught between two cultural worlds. On the one hand they were called by their traditional way of life. They loved their families and communities and had a sense of geographic place. On the other hand, the categories that emerged from the data are filled with evidence of factors motivating them to leave for an education and a new way of looking at life. All of the focus group participants expressed this tension.

Related literature revealed that geographers, led by Ernst Ravenstein (1889) in the late 19th century, have long framed a phenomenon in the field of human migration in terms of the impact of push and pull factors (Lee, 1966). Push factors exist at the point of origin as grounds for migration, while pull factors exist at the destination. These factors are usually complementary in that they trigger migration when a push factor is resolved by the pull factor (e.g., unemployment by employment, poor working conditions by healthy environment). Recent scholarship has built upon this scheme, focusing beyond economic reasons for migration to broader factors associated with societal obstacles and opportunity structures, gender differences, and the roles of various supportive structures such as aid organizations (Brettell & Hollifield, 2008). Associated with this is Hardwick's (2008) concept of *transnationalism theory* characterized by the idea that immigrants maintain transnational connections with their homelands. These connections have multiple dimensions and reflect complex experiences in terms of both push/pull factors from the point of origin as well as the destination for migrants crossing borders on a regular basis (Hardwick, 2008).

In a similar way, the data revealed a *transculturalism* operating with our participants. This concept, which became the basis for our emerging substantive theory, was characterized by an emotional and intellectual tension between their traditional culture and the culture of progressive education based upon the values and interests of the modern world. Significant push factors were at play as participants sought to avoid the pain and suffering of abuse, poverty, hunger, difficult lifestyle, and disease. There was deep pain associated with their experiences, especially for the women. For example, various forms of female genital mutilation are practiced in these nomadic cultures. We labeled this category "*Seeking refuge*." At the same time, significant pull factors were also at play in the categories we labeled "*Empowering self*" and "*Seeking personal change*." The data showed that these push and pull factors did not seem to be enough to produce a transcultural tipping point, as they were interplaying with pull factors represented by the many positive aspects of their home culture, and perhaps they were caught in the limbo of inner cultural tension. However, we theorized that these participants exhibited resilient characteristics to the degree they were able to become educationally successful when push/pull factors were combined with a sense of something beyond themselves as exhibited in the categories "*Seeing design for their life*," and "*Seeking improvements for their village*." In this way, they seemed to reconcile their inner cultural tension among the varying

push/pull factors and their feelings of guilt over abandoning their brothers, sisters, or other members of the community. Finally, we theorized that receiving support and encouragement from external and internal support systems enhances their resiliency. This resiliency enables them, then, to safely migrate transculturally between the borders of their traditional culture and the culture of education and back again.

We offer the following two examples of our substantive theory of *Transcultural Migration*.

Participant (male): I read a book called *Is it Possible?* In the book it told about a Maasai man that got an education and became very important for his people. Do you know what he said at the end of the book? That he was able to carry a spear in one hand and a book in the other. Do you understand? A spear and a book. I think this is very important.... I want to go back to my village and build a school. The boys are suffering....I realize that when I get an education, I learn to be creative. I can solve problems. I can help the people in my village... Then I realized I can help the people in my region...then I realized I can help the people in Tanzania.... I want to go back to the children in my village with a book I write. I will call the book *It Is Possible*.

Participant (female): When I am finished here [university], I have more voice in my village. I will keep many things, but some I will try to change...like circumcision on girls or forcing the young ones to marry old men....*Question:* you said you ran away from home to avoid a forced marriage. Now you are at the university. Why is education so important to you? *Participant:* So, I can return to my village and teach them about new, better ways. I want to teach at the school. Some things in my culture need to be changed, like my mother's house. It is like sleeping outside with the animals; you don't feel safe or you get wet from the rains. *Question:* if you could take out all the Baraqui traditional houses [round huts built of mud, sticks, and grass similar to Maasai bomas] and replace them with western style houses would you do it? *Participant:* Yes, of course. We would feel safe. Our health would be better. We would wake up not feeling like we slept outside like the animals.

Limitations

The participants in this study were primarily first year students in one university in Tanzania during the 2010-2011 academic year. Students of other years and other universities might have offered different perspectives. Our definition of educational success (attendance at a university) delimited the participant population to the exclusion of those who were admitted to a university, but not able to find funding to attend, not to mention other legitimate definitions of educational success. The perspectives of those students who qualified to attend a university, but were prohibited by lack of funds, might have shaped the emergent theory in another way, as might have other definitions of educational success. While we propose that the emerging theory is significant, more data and analysis are needed prior to developing a grand theory and generalizing, especially if decontextualized. In addition, further research is needed to explore this theory and to determine to what extent it is limited or enhanced by the researchers' shared experiences and relationships with participants.

Verification

The trustworthiness of this study was established through consideration of four components posited by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility of the findings was established through prolonged engagement and persistent observation of focus group and individual participants. Repeated contact with our participants over a long period of time also allowed for member checking opportunities. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility is through member checks” (p. 314). Participants were asked for their input after initial coding and categorization were complete. This insured that the data we had collected was consistent with the intended meaning of the participants. Transferability of the findings was established through thick descriptions of conversations and observations during the study period. Dependability was not established through external audits as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Our understanding and analysis of the data was created through internal discussion among the research team and did not seek input from an external auditor. Finally, confirmability was established through an audit trail and reflexivity at every stage of the process. We did not seek consensus during the process but looked to probe our presuppositions.

Implications and Recommendations

It was our privilege to be able to sit for many hours, listening to the stories of these amazing individuals who have overcome so much to become educationally successful. Some stories we could hardly bear to hear because of the pain described. With other stories we could hardly contain our excitement because of the amazing bravery and exotic adventure of it all. But some stories were incomplete, such as the story of focus group participant number ten. She is represented as just a number in our table, but to us she was a student who had to drop out of the university because she lacked funding. Was she no longer educationally successful? Would she prove to be even more resilient in finding a way to return as she hoped? It is difficult to remove the faces from the statistics and other data we present here.

These students have helped us move toward answers to our questions, but we see so much more to be explored and dissected from a variety of angles. One avenue of fruitful and interesting research would be that of the impact external support systems, such as nongovernmental organization (NGO) sponsorship agencies, have on the long term educational success of those sponsored. We interviewed two university students who had received sponsorships through Compassion International since childhood. Would they have been attending the university without having received this assistance? Further research into the perception of women and girls facing these educational barriers would also be valuable. What are the characteristics of women who are educationally successful? What specific interventions are most beneficial? And with which barriers? In addition, more research is needed to help us understand the factors in place that encourage men in pastoral cultures to dominate and abuse women. These factors make educational success unlikely for women in general.

We will work to continue describing and analyzing resilient characteristics in part because we have heard these stories and looked into the eyes of those who participated in this study. In some way, we are hopeful this will help more children from similar backgrounds become educationally successful.

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