



Resilience in the city? Evidence from the Determinants of young Adult Social wellbeing and Health (DASH) longitudinal study of diverse young adults

UM Read¹, OR Molaodi¹, ZE Enayat² and S Harding¹

¹MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow, UK ²King's College London, UK

Background

DASH is a unique study tracking the health of young Londoners.

Findings show that whilst ethnic differences in cardiovascular biomarkers are emerging, related to deprivation, there is strong evidence of resilience.

Ethnic minority adolescents appeared to have better mental health than their White British peers, despite more adversity.

Key influences on mental health were:

- family connectedness
- attending a place of worship
- ethnic diversity of friendships

Research question

What fosters resilience in young people growing up in an urban context of diversity and deprivation?

Methods

- Sub-sample from DASH longitudinal study of 6,443 schoolchildren, now aged 21-23 years
- 42 qualitative interviews
- Purposive sampling by key determinants in each ethnic group (sex, family type, religion, socio-economic circumstances)
- Participants completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in adolescence and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) in adulthood alongside questions about social circumstances
- Inductive and deductive themes were derived from longitudinal survey data and qualitative interviews

Results

Resilience continues

GHQ scores indicate better mental health for Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian boys

Interview themes

Flexible but secure identities



"I want to really do well at uni, I don't just want to get a 2:1, if I'm going to pay my fees I want to get a first, I want to do well rather than have those things hold me back"
Female, Bangladeshi

"To be black, obviously you know your roots come from somewhere, so at the same time I am British, because a lot of my ways of thinking and just my own norms and things I do, just my general way of life is just very British. That's how it is"
Female, Ghanaian

Sense of belonging in deprived neighbourhoods

"If you grow up in Hackney it's just safe because it's what you know. So I never thought it was an unsafe area. Everyone knows everyone so it's alright."
Female, mixed ethnicity

Personal aspirations and family responsibility

"I would never want to embarrass my parents because they've raised me in such a way, [...] I've prided myself on just being a good person."
Male, Pakistani

Risk factors for mental ill health

- Problematic relationships
- Academic underachievement
- Prolonged unemployment

Social and moral influence of religion

"because I follow the Christian way of life, what the Bible tells us the way to live and that is a major part of my life. And I guess growing up with it has influenced me in a way as well, a lot in my way of living and family lifestyle and things like that."
Male, Nigerian

Conclusion

- These findings challenge hypotheses regarding the negative effect of diversity and city living on social capital and mental health
- Positive experiences of parenting, family life and diversity in childhood appear to have enduring effects on well-being and mental health during the transition to adulthood
- Implications for fostering resilience in conditions of adversity for all ethnic groups, including White British

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<http://dash.sphsu.mrc.ac.uk/>

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