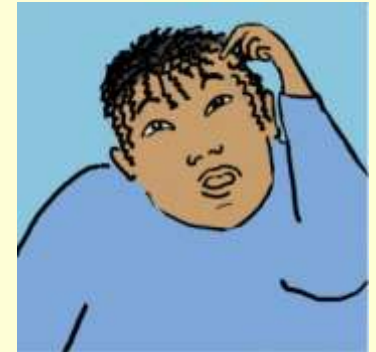


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# **Resilience and children´s work in Brazil**

## **The illustration of a “theory-real life” interaction**

**Renata Maria Coimbra Libório**

**Silvia Helena Koller**



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## Some inspiration from Physics... (Resilience is...)

*A **concept** is the verbal representation of a useful idea.*

*Can be done via the “critical dimensions” technique*

***What are the critical dimensions of Resilience?***

- 1. In a **context***
- 2. of exposure to (or perception of) **adversity***
- 3. **significant adversity***
- 4. a **non-unique combination of strengths and weaknesses (= a capacity)***
- 5. that allows a **system***
- 6. to **function normally***



**From Physics:**

***Resilience is...***

***Elasticity, plasticity, flexibility, hysteresis =  
properties of materials***

***Resilience is not just a property of some material,  
not just a case of deformation and shape change.  
Resilience requires a system (a body, a structure or a  
device) with an expected behavior, a purpose or finality;  
it is not just a process of deformation and recovery.***

***Resilience considers functioning of the system: the  
system goes on functioning as expected, within the  
boundaries of normality.***

***In human systems: functioning in a socially and  
culturally acceptable way or in accordance with socially  
accepted rules.***



## Some inspiration from Physics... (Resilience is...)

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***What are the critical dimensions of Resilience?***

- 1. In a context*
- 2. of exposure to (or perception of) adversity*
- 3. significant adversity*
- 4. a non-unique combination of strengths and weaknesses (= a capacity)*
- 5. that allows a system*
- 6. to function normally ✓*



## From Physics:

## *Resilience is...*

**system** = the part of the universe you are interested in  
*more than just individuals: families, school  
peers, ethnic groups, political parties...*

**context** = the environment (= universe – system) and  
**the system/environment interactions**

**significant adversity** = most systems of the same kind  
**would stop functioning normally** in such context.

**a capacity** = a non-unique combination of strengths and  
**weaknesses**

*the factors responsible for the observed resilience  
are in general different for each system  
a single behaviour with different mechanisms behind*



Some inspiration from Physics... (Resilience is...)

*A concept is the verbal representation of a useful idea.*

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***What are the critical dimensions of Resilience?***

- 1. In a context*** ✓
- 2. of exposure to (or perception of)*** ✓
- 3. significant adversity*** ✓
- 4. a non-unique combination of strengths and weaknesses*** ✓
- 5. that allows a system*** ✓
- 6. to function normally*** ✓



*Resilience is...*

*a capacity = a non-unique combination of strengths and weaknesses*

*a single behaviour with different mechanisms behind*

**This is why, in practice, there is such a large number of excellent practical tools to assess and to enhance resilience – all different, but *all working***

*probably based on different combination of strengths and weaknesses*

*Theory and application, hand in hand*

**What can theory do for you?**



## What can theory do for you?

Theory can unify all these tools, determining what mechanism is actually behind each one.

It will then return them to real life, allowing *more qualified intervention*: improved ways to solve the problems (more kinds of problems, more quickly, less side effects,...)

*Theory and application, hand in hand*  
*or Practice and Academy, hand in hand!*





***So, our resilience:***

***In the context of exposure to (or perception of) significant adversity, resilience is a non-unique combination of strengths and weaknesses of a system that allows it to function normally.***

***It definitely can not be a quantitative variable  
(it is unlikely that the same variable would  
be meaningful for systems of different kinds)***

**but**

***it probably can be expressed as a function  
of (eventually quantitative) variables.***



## *To approach the diversity of systems*

- *Classify variables accordingly to its role in the process*
- *Study the properties of the roles*
- *Establish variables corresponding to each role for each kind of system*
- *Measure the quantitative ones...*

**So,**

- *The concept must be system-independent*
- *The roles must be system-independent*
- *The variables are mostly system-dependent*



## *What I can sell you today?*

***To foster resilience:***

- ***Try to group the variables you are using accordingly to their roles (causal risk factor, concurrent risk factor, protection factor, vulnerability,...)***
- ***Are you taking in account all roles? All dimensions of the Resilience process? Uniformly?***

***So why did you not get resilience in this particular case?***

- ***Unusual high vulnerability?***
- ***Low or non-existent protection factor***
- ***Unusually high (or combination of) causal risk factor(s)***
- ***Significant (or combination of) concurrent risk factors...***



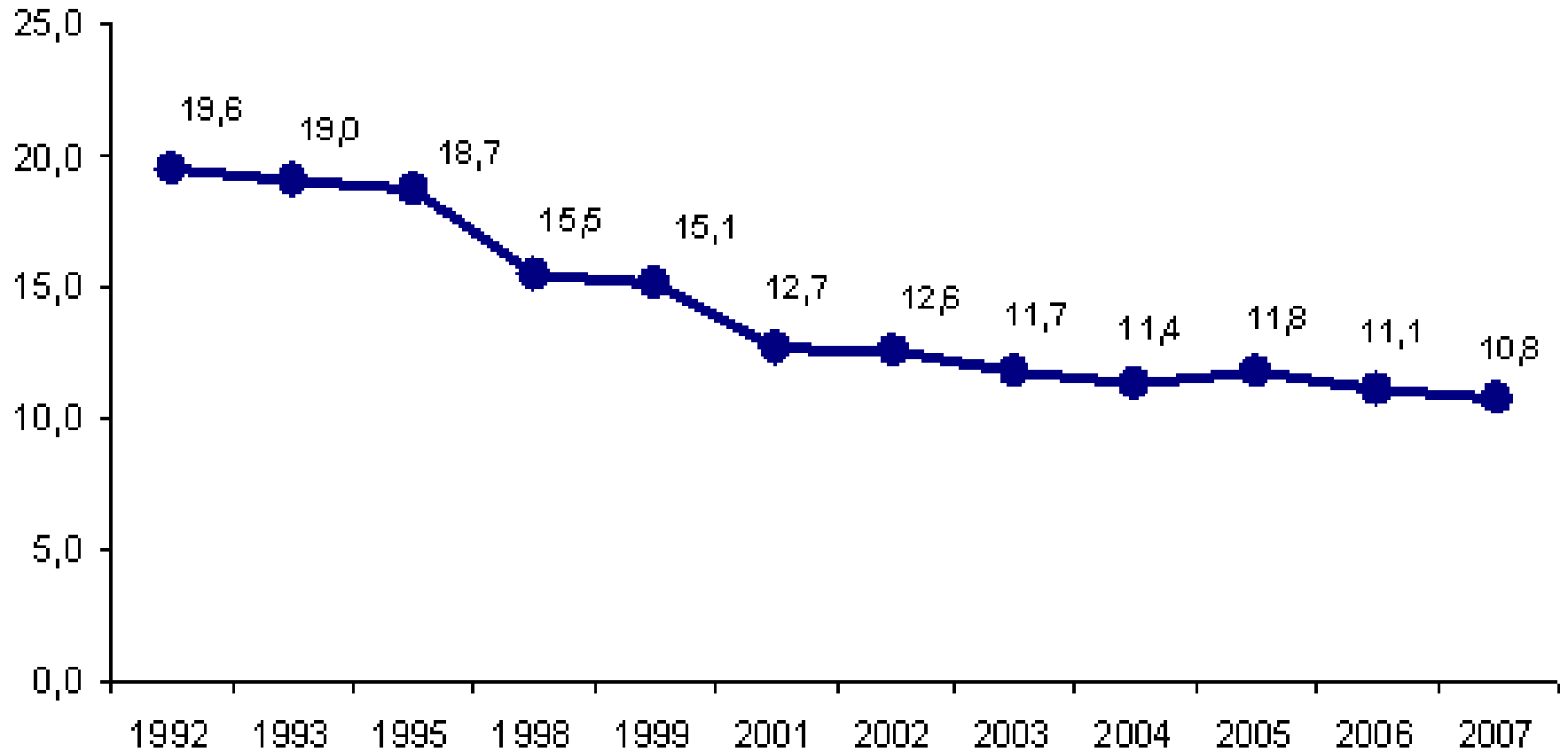
# Child labour in Brazil

- ***Brazilian law: no legal work until 14 years; restricted work if 14 or more***
- ***1989 Constitution + Childhood and Adolescence Statute + discussion on human rights mostly promoted by NGO's → social pressures → public policies (by both Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Lula)***

## Good and bad news

- ***Child labour in Brazil is consistently decreasing (quantitatively) in the last 17 years; and decreased more at earlier ages.***
- ***It is also changing qualitatively: you cannot see any more some exploitations which were usual thirty, forty years ago.***
- ***But is still there, and is still a problem in some parts of the Country.***

***Percentage of persons with age between 5 and 17 years occupied in the week of data collection (IBGE, 2008)***



# Real life (Renata Libório & Silvia Koller)

- *702 children between 9 and 14 years, from public schools in aggressive environments*
- *61 multiple choice questions interview (quantitative data, statistical analysis)*
- *About 20% reported doing some kind of work*
- *Of these, 16 were selected and answered a semi-structured interview.*
- *Participants were separated in two groups of 8: those doing domestic- and those doing non-domestic work.*



*(starting at this slide)*





## Some $\beta$ information

- *All 16 participants were attending elementary school, except one of the domestic group, who was in high school.*
- *Gender: 7 female participants in the domestic group and 3 in the non-domestic one.*
- *Age distribution was very similar in both groups, with two participants in the 9-11 and six in the 12-14 years range.*
- *Domestic group: participants were working every day, at their own homes, and were exclusively responsible for all tasks; 2 reported they were verbally or even violently punished, if they did not accomplish all assigned activities.*
- *Of the non-domestic group, 7 were working Monday-Friday and 1 only on weekends. 2 were involved in potentially dangerous activities (electric services and packing coal). The others were selling products, dealing with cattle and taking orders and/or cleaning in restaurants and supermarkets.*



## Domestic work: Positive perceptions (4/8)

- *Motivation, stimuli and praise given by parents and grandparents;*
- *Satisfaction with being able to help the mother, who comes home tired after working elsewhere all day;*
- *Acknowledgement, by family and friends, of the importance of the work done;*
- *The importance given to “taking care of home” by others in the child’s family and community;*
- *Expectation to be rewarded in the future;*
- *Feeling that their work has an important social function in the family, being useful and not replaceable;*
- *Development of responsibility and of a sense of solidarity among family members.*





## Domestic work: Negative perceptions (4/8)

- *Imposition of the work as an obligation by the family;*
- *Body pain and fatigue, which would be the reason for poor school performance;*
- *Punishment for not doing their work;*
- *Lack of recognition of the effort taken;*
- *Devaluation of the work, causing dissatisfaction.*



## Non-domestic work: Positive perceptions

- *The relationship between work and dignity was implicitly present in the statements of some participants.*
- *Also, seven of the participants received payment for work done (at the time of the survey, their monthly payments were between 25 and 60 American dollars).*
- *They mostly decided for themselves that they wanted to work (to have money to buy things for themselves and, to a lesser extent, to directly help their families financially).*

*All but one respondent reported that, although working, they still had free time, which they used to perform a variety of activities.*



## Non-domestic work: Negative perceptions

- *Interviewees reported that payment was irregular, occurring according to the will of parents or employers*
- *Two adolescents reported exposure to activities and locations that could harm them physically (such as handling poisons); and others were performing tasks dealing with tools (hoes and electrical equipment) and objects (recyclable garbage) that may pose risks to their health*

*Nevertheless, despite having identified the physical risks, they still reported valuing their work as something important and enriching for their self-esteem.*




## Summary and conclusions - theory

- *Resilience is a concept at the phenomenon/process level that cannot be directly measured.*
- *Resilience, in psychology, should apply not just to individuals, but also to groups of humans; therefore, we prefer to say that it applies to systems.*
- *As a concept, resilience has six critical dimensions. It concerns (1) systems that, due to (2) a non-unique set of internal resources, are able to (3) function normally, although exposed to a (4) context of (5) significant (6) stress.*




## Summary and conclusions - theory

- *Measurements related to the resilience process can be made specifying their characteristic through quantitative parameters and variables; the more complete and unambiguous the information these parameters and variables contain, the better is its quality.*
- *As the nature of the system of interest changes, it is almost certain that new variables and parameters will be needed; rather than studying any of the latter specifically, it is more useful to establish effects and properties of the variables and parameters, describing them as categories. For example, classifying them as risk factors, protection factors, vulnerabilities, etc.*



## Summary and conclusions – empirical part - child labour as a resilience variable

- *Child labor per se is an ambiguous and even contradictory variable, requiring qualification to eventually become meaningful;*
- *The meaning child labor has in the lives of our research participants is undefined, since we found both positive and negative aspects, sometimes both occurring simultaneously. This implies that, for some participants, work is perceived as a risk factor, while for others it functions as a protection factor. For others, work is both a risk factor and a protective factor at the same time.*



## Summary and conclusions – empirical part - child labour as a resilience variable

- *The positive perceptions associated with work by most of our participants suggests that a carefully established and correctly administrated “dose of work” can favor the resilience process in a social ecology where that work receives social valorization, promotes the autonomy of the child, and strengthens the sense of solidarity and responsibility of the child towards family members.*
- *While we are not seeking to collude with those who promote conditions of social exclusion, we recognize that in circumstances with little access to other resources, doing some kind of work is the best option for some children and adolescents to enhance their self-esteem, their feelings of self-efficacy, their relationships with significant others, and their social valorization.*

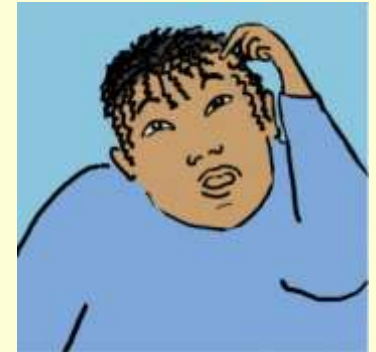
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**Thank you!!!**

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