Measuring Resilience: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

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Resilience is an “abstract” concept

Abstract: existing in thought or as an idea but not having a physical or concrete existence

Measuring an abstract concept, such as resilience, can be tricky

The art of “measuring” resilience is still in the emergent phase
Resiliency Theory: A Strengths-Based Approach to Research and Practice for Adolescent Health

Zimmerman (2013)

Resiliency theory provides a useful framework for considering how promotive factors may operate for encouraging positive youth development.

Resilience models focus attention on relationships and processes - not just individual characteristics

Focuses on the cumulative effects of multiple promotive factors across ecological domains (e.g., individual, family, community) to more accurately reflect the complex nature of influences on adolescent development.
Defining Resilience - Ungar

- Personal strengths are different than resilience
- Resilience = “Fully able”
  - Capacity to **navigate** and **negotiate** the use of resources that are needed
  - Requires resources to be available
- Resilience is an interplay between personal traits and the environment
Cancer-yuck!

Individual resilience resources
Positive attitude!

Community resilience resources
Rides to Missoula, MT (1 hour drive one-way) for treatment, 5 day-a-week, for 6 weeks.

Cancer-defeated!
Defining Resilience- Ungar

- Resilience capacity is like a bank - resilience is added to and taken from constantly throughout a person’s lifetime.
- Resilience is NOT static (it’s always changing).
- Resilience capacity changes throughout the life course.
Resilience in Public Health

How do we identify and boost factors that contribute to a personal/community ‘resilience bank’?

How do we identify and mitigate factors that take withdraw from a person/community ‘resilience bank’?

How do we measure something that is always changing?
The Brief Resilience Scale: Assessing the Ability to Bounce Back

Smith et al. (2008)

Quantitative (#) surveys

- Measurements using (Likert) scales
- Focus was on individual resilience
- Personal characteristics
- Characteristics may increase the likelihood of resilience = “resilience resources”
Rural natives’ perceptions of strengths and challenges in their communities

Ulrich-Schad (2013)

Used both telephone surveys and focus groups

Qualitative data collection - participants identified important aspects of their community

Focus was on community “resilience resources”
Resilience in Public Health

- How do we identify and boost factors that contribute to a personal/community ‘resilience bank’?

- How do we identify and mitigate (decrease) factors that take withdraw from a person/community ‘resilience bank’?

- How do we measure something that is always changing?
How do you define resilience?

- Revisit the definition of resilience you created earlier today
- Has your definition changed since this morning?
- Tweak your own definition if you would like to
Resilience Resources

✧ Identify and list 2-4 ‘resilience resources’ that contribute to your own personal or community resilience bank

✧ Examples:
  ✧ Personal: sense of humor
  ✧ Community-level: good adult role models
Measuring Resilience

Quantitative Measurements: Create one question that could be used to quantitatively measure each of the resilience resources you selected.

Alternate between positively and negatively worded questions.

Example +: I know people I can confide in.

Example -: The teachers at my school are not interested in my future.
Example of a Likert Scale

- Notice there is the option to be ‘Neutral’ or ‘Undecided’
- You may choose if you want to use a 5 point scale (Likert) or a larger/smaller scale
- You may choose if you want to give the option of be ‘Neutral’ or not

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Measuring Resilience

◊ Ungar: *Qualitative methods are well suited to the discovery of the unnamed protective processes relevant to the lived experience of research participants.*

◊ In other words: Do qualitative research first

◊ Use the qualitative research results to identify what factors you want to measure quantitatively(#).
Measuring Resilience

🔹 Qualitative Measurements: Create 2 questions that could be used to qualitatively assess the resilience of a person/community

🔹 Example: How do you feel when you think about the future?

🔹 Example: What are the best parts about living in your community?
Publications used for this presentation:


Another useful read: Resilience & Historical Trauma

THANK YOU!

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◊ Thank you to AIHEC for allowing me to present my research.