AMERICAN INDIAN ELDERS’ RESILIENCE

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June 23, 2015

2015 AIHEC Behavioral Health Institute
Background

- Role of American Indian (AI) elders
  - Keepers and transmitters of knowledge (Wexler, 2011; McCubbin, 2006; Mokuau, 2011)
  - Endured many adversities (Grandbois & Sanders, 2009)
  - Life stories hold life lessons and foundational knowledge to better understand resilience

- Youth in today’s society
  - Disconnect between elders and youth (Wexler, 2011)
  - Urban AI youth face greater challenges connecting with elders (Stumblingbear-Riddle, 2012)
  - Previous research acknowledges that ties to culture and other variables (i.e. social support) may be protective and lead to resilient outcomes for positive youth development (LaFromboise et al., 2006; Wexler, 2011)
Protective intergenerational strategies

What protective strategies can elders offer to enhance American Indian youth resilience?

HeavyRunner and Morris, 1997
What protective strategies can elders offer to enhance URBAN American Indian youth resilience?

HeavyRunner and Morris, 1997
Methods: Literature review

1. Medical and Social science databases were surveyed
   - (1) Peer-reviewed English based articles
   - (2) Published from January 1, 1980 to December 31, 2013
   - (3) AIAN and Hawaiian elders as the target population
   - (4) Non-clinical based
   - (5) Key words and terms for American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Resilience: resilience, culture, intergenerational, community
Methods:

Diagram of Literature Review:
American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian Elder Resilience

- Number of journal articles identified in database search (n=138)
- Number of articles reviewed by primary categories (n=92)
- Number of articles included (n=8), all address family dynamics and influence
- Titles and abstracts excluded, focus not culture (n=46)
- Articles excluded as Other (n=27)
- Articles excluded, elder resilience not included (n=57)
Methods: CAIR research project

2. Documenting and Promoting Resilience in Urban American Indians (Co-PIs: Agnes Attakai, Kerstin Reinschmidt)
   - CBPR approach
Methods: CAIR research project

- Defining resilience from the perspective of urban American Indian elders.
Results: Literature review

- Resilience outcomes
  - Culture
    - Storytelling, activities, sense of belonging, sense-making, reaffirm cultural practices daily, policy promoting cultural renaissance, feeling pride
  - American Indian identity
  - Stories of survival
  - Mental and physical health associations
Results: Literature review

• Intergenerational relationships
• Family/community/collective connectedness, rely on others
Results: Pilot Research Project

• Revealed protective factors for youth related to culture, youth activities, education
## Resilience factors: Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Patterns</th>
<th>Example of patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Know tribal roots and history</td>
<td>Teach historical events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intergenerational relationships</td>
<td>Build connection through cultural activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engagement in cultural activities</td>
<td>Engage youth by connecting them to the land</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Personal strength from cultural teachings and values</td>
<td>Teach youth they can use personal strength from positive thinking and spiritual faith</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build character traits from cultural teachings</td>
<td>Encourage positive character traits (i.e. respect body, enjoy life)</td>
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## Resilience factors: Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Patterns</th>
<th>Example of patterns</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Engagement in traditional activities</td>
<td>Expose youth to activities not often experienced in urban settings (i.e collect saguaro fruit, grow fruit and vegetables)</td>
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<td>Engagement in Contemporary activities</td>
<td>Engage youth in low cost events (i.e. free community events) and activities that are family-based (i.e. traveling, camping, grandparents taking grandkids on educational trips)</td>
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## Resilience factors: Education

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<tr>
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<th>Example of patterns</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Support for education</td>
<td>Support education through community programs (i.e. tutoring programs at Tucson Indian Center)</td>
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<td>Taking responsibility for own education</td>
<td>Teach youth personal responsibility for reaching educational goals by sharing personal experiences and lessons learned (i.e., high school drop outs can get GEDs)</td>
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<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>Parents support and influence youth to pursue and complete school (i.e. parents visit school and talk to teacher; enroll child in YMCA afterschool programs; set high expectations)</td>
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<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Build motivation in youth by teaching them not to take things for granted and know their purpose for existing so that they understand the importance of getting educated.</td>
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</table>
Discussion

- Literature search and qualitative data from elder’s narratives helped identify key resilience strategies uniquely specific for AI youth
  - Strengths in culture, youth activities, and education
Recommendations

- Strategies for enhancing resilience among youth
  - Intergenerational communication
  - Teach youth how culture can be a sustaining force and how it is linked to strengths to overcome challenges
  - Support youth activities and education
- Need for resilience research to strive for an understanding of the worldview of AI communities
- Need for future increased research to further investigate resilience among AI, AN, and NH populations
Thank you

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This work was supported by the Center for American Indian Resilience (CAIR) a NIH-NIMHD P20 Exploratory Center of Excellence (1P20MD006872) awarded to Northern Arizona University with subcontracts to University of Arizona and Dine College.
References


• HeavyRunner, I., & Morris, J. S. (1997). Traditional Native culture and resilience. CAREI Research/Practice Newsletter, 5(1).

