
Preface

The study of resilience or the ability to “stay the course” or “bounce back” in the face of adversity has been a topic of investigation by developmental theorists for the past 50 years. Earlier researchers had observed that some persons, whether children or adults, managed to survive exposure to adversity and even thrive in later life while others succumbed to psychological disorders and physical illness that could either be acute or longer term. This observation has been repeated numerous times under conditions ranging from large natural disasters and war to the loss of a parent or child. The human result can also vary from the manifestation of increased capacity and will to “live and learn” or to anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and suicide.

The study of resilience has gone through many rich phases of discovery, identifying aspects of both the person and environment that appeared to serve as protective or mitigating variables to the impact of adversity. Several outstanding researchers and theorists have attempted to integrate the many research findings and their implications for practical application. However, the understanding that resilience is a product of complex interactions of personal attributes and environmental circumstances, mediated by internal mechanisms, has presented an assessment challenge to developmental researchers (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker, 2000).

On the other hand, the past few years have been witness to a plethora of self-help books and interventions that have not been systematically linked to sound core developmental constructs nor empirically tested for effectiveness. Some interventions that are found to be effective are explained on the basis that they increase resiliency while this implied mediating process is not documented. Thus there is a disconnect between the complex theory and body of research on resiliency and the abundant self-help products employing this term.

There is a need in the study of resiliency for construct clarification and research grounded translation for practical application. Furthermore, links between constructs, assessments, interventions, and outcomes need to be made more transparent and hence more easily understood and applied. In particular, this volume presents a thorough discussion of the tools and techniques developed by leading experts for assessing resilience along with evidence for their psychometric rigor and practical application. Eleven of the twenty-one chapters link underlying definitions of resilience with assessment and application using well-known tools for assessing resilience. Embedded in the “science of test development” is the rigor of construct identification, operational definition of the construct, and psychometric analysis to determine the

reliability, validity, and potential usefulness of the respective assessment. In this way, examination of carefully designed assessment tools allows comparison of different definitions of resilience.

This volume is divided into four parts which combine specific definitions and assessments with broad brushstrokes of application: Introduction and Conceptual Issues; Resilience and Children; Resilience, Youth, and Adults; and Resilience, Cultural, and Systemic Considerations. One intention of this volume is to present a diversity of specific definitions of resilience to the reader for the purpose of informed application with children, adolescents, and adults in ways that are theoretically sound, empirically supported, practical, and need specific. A second intention of this volume is to present a few broader contexts in which the resilience construct may be meaningfully understood and integrated in diverse human contexts.

We begin this book with an acknowledgement of the authors of the chapters to follow. The knowledge and expertise they bring to the study of resilience and their capacity to write informed, critical, and readable chapters have more than accomplished the task we set out when beginning this book. We also are grateful to Judy Jones and Garth Haller who provided the editorial support needed to bring this book to completion. We thank them and Springer.

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Translating Research into Practice

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