Translating Resilience Theory for Application: Introduction

1

Sandra Prince-Embury and Donald H. Saklofske

The study of resiliency or the ability to "bounce back" in the face of adversity has been a topic of investigation by developmental psychology theorists for the past 50 years. Earlier researchers had observed that some youth managed to survive exposure to adversity and even thrive in later life, while others were less successful even to the point of developing various physical and psychological disorders. As discussed in the chapters of this volume, the study of resilience and resilient children and adults has gone through many rich phases of discovery, identifying aspects of both the person and environment that appear to serve as protective or mitigating variables to the impact of adversity. While much of previous resilience research examined the interaction of protective factors and risk in high risk populations, the particular focus of this work has been the identification of factors that were present in the lives of those who both survived and thrived in the face of adversity compared to those who did not (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Luthar, 1991, 2003, 2006; Masten, 2001; Rutter, Harrington, Quinton, & Pickles, 1994; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992, 2001; Luthar & Zelazo, 2003; Luthar & Zigler, 1992; Masten, 2007; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Masten & Curtis, 2000; Masten & Powell, 2003; Masten et al., 1999; Masten & Wright, 2009).

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, & Becker, 2000). Some longitudinal studies from a developmental psychopathology perspective have tried to capture contextual aspects of resilience specific to the group and sets of circumstances (Masten, 2001, 2006; Werner, 1997, 2005). These studies have employed extensive batteries of preexisting tests, along with measures of achievement, to assess personal resiliency. Research has used different measures across studies and across populations, making it difficult to compare findings across studies and across groups. The research based tools employed in previous studies have often been impractical for widespread use in the schools and communities because they are too labor intensive, expensive, or focused on presence or absence of psychiatric symptoms. Consequently, the lack of a common metric for measuring resiliency has

S. Prince-Embury, Ph.D. (✉)
Resiliency Institute of Allenhurst, LLC,
625 North Edgemere Drive, West Allenhurst,
NJ 07711, USA
e-mail: sandraprince-embury@earthlink.net

D.H. Saklofske, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology, Social Science Centre,
The University of Western Ontario, 7th Floor, London,
ON, Canada N6A 5C2
e-mail: dsaklofs@uwo.ca

S. Prince-Embury and D.H. Saklofske (eds.), *Resilience in Children, Adolescents, and Adults: Translating Research into Practice*, The Springer Series on Human Exceptionality,
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4614-4939-3_1, © Springer Science+Business Media New York 2013

resulted in difficulty in assessing the need for, choice of, and effectiveness of preventive intervention strategies in a way that allows comparison across methods and populations.

Controversy Over Usefulness of the Resilience/Resiliency Construct

In light of the definitional diversity and research complexity, those with a more rigorous bent have challenged the utility and conceptual integrity of the resilience construct (Kaplan, 1999, 2005). Kaplan (1999) concluded that resilience is a once useful construct whose time has passed. He concluded that conceptualizations of resilience as a trait did not pass scrutiny in that there were no common defining features across all instances of resilience. Kaplan defined resilience as an aberration—a failure in the predictive model, causes for which being infinite (Kaplan, 1999). Kaplan suggests that resilience is not a phenomenon per se, but rather a conceptual tool in the development of increasingly refined predictive models. These criticisms, although perhaps understandable from the perspective of a researcher and statistician, may leave practitioners without working tools to use while the refined predictive models are being worked out.

Some have claimed that in spite of conceptual complexity, the phenomenon of resilience has too much heuristic power to be abandoned, (Luthar et al., 2000). Elias, Parker, & Rosenblatt (2005) propose the use of working definitions of resilience/resiliency that satisfy two criteria: (1) does the definition add value to existing constructs in understanding circumstances? (2) does the definition inform the design of interventions? Kaplan in his 2005 review conceded that concepts are not by their nature true or false but may be evaluated with regard to their usefulness.

The Current Volume

This volume on Resilience is written in the spirit of those who suggest that the construct has too much heuristic power to be abandoned (Luthar et al., 2000). The emphasis of this volume is not to identify the one true definition of the term with the purpose of excluding applications that lack conceptual purity. The major goal of this volume is to enhance practical usefulness of the "resilience" construct. In this pursuit, the first goal of the volume is to identify constructs of resilience that have practical usefulness, across contexts and to demonstrate this usefulness. The second goal of the volume is the examination of tools developed for the assessment of resilience for practical application. Embedded in the science of test development is the rigor of construct identification, development of tools for assessment and psychometric analysis to determine the reliability, validity, and potential usefulness of the respective assessment. The third purpose of the volume is to present cultural considerations in the discussion and application of resilience and related constructs. It is the hope of this volume's editors that the volume will be a valuable reference contribution to the growing literature on the construct of resilience as well as a practical guide for the application of this construct.

Organization of this volume begins with this introduction and a consideration of "Conceptual Issues" by Prince-Embury in Chap. 2. This chapter will touch upon some of the conceptual issues associated with the "resilience" construct and together with this introduction, constitute Section 1. Chapter 2 will also touch on but not claim to comprehensively explore all conceptual issues related to resilience. For this purpose, references presented in this introduction and in Chap. 2 are offered for the reader who wants to read more extensively. Following these introductory chapters, the volume is divided into three broad sections: Resilience and Children, Resilience, Youth and adults, and Resilience, Cultural and Systemic Issues.

Section 2 contains six chapters on resilience in children representing different perspectives: the subjective experience of the child, the ratings of teachers and parents, and the assessment of aspects of the classroom. Chapter 3 describes the underlying theoretical constructs, research with and application of the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA) (Prince-Embury, 2007). The RSCA is designed to reflect

the child's experience of core aspects of personal resiliency: sense of mastery, sense of relatedness, and emotional reactivity for use in preventive screening, treatment planning, and outcome monitoring. Chapter 4 presents the Devereux Suite of Assessments (DECA-Infant, DECA-Toddler, DECA-Preschool, and DESSA) (LeBuffe, Shapiro, & Naglieri, 2009), discussing how these reflect the growing emphasis on strength-based assessment, how they are designed to advance professional practice, and how they (and other strength-based measures) can influence professional attitudes and practices. Chapter 5 by Song et al., describes an ecological approach to assessing resilience of classroom environments using "ClassMaps" a tool developed by Doll et al. (2010). This assessment is proposed as a tool for providing feedback to teachers on ways to modify their classroom environments to be more supportive of resilience. Section 1 then moves toward intervention. Chapter 6 discusses the principle of training parents and teachers in the attitudes supportive of a resilient mind-set in children presented by Goldstein, Brooks, and DeVries. In Chap. 7, Mallin, Walker, and Levin overview prevention programs aimed at screening for and enhancement of resiliency in children. In Chap. 8 Climie et al. discuss the integration of resilience into the study of childhood disorders.

Section 3 focuses on the assessment of resilience in youth and adults as well as interventions. Chapters 9–13 present assessment tools that are designed to assess resilience and related constructs. Each of these assessment tools reflects a different assessment approach. Chapter 9 presents the work of Jack Block, focusing on his "Ego Resiliency Scale (Block & Kremen, 1996)." The "Ego-Resiliency Scale" is based on a psychodynamic view of ego-resiliency as a personality trait that allows the individual to adjust ego control of emotion appropriate to presenting circumstances.

Chapter 10 by Schwarzer and Warner presents the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Schwarzer presents validity information for the Self-Efficacy Scale and differentiates the construct of self-efficacy from resilience and other constructs. Chapter 11 by Gail Wagnild presents her Resilience Scale designed to tap constructs of resilience in middle and older adults. Wagnild identified the "resilience core" as Purpose, Equanimity, Self-Reliance, Perseverance, and Existential Aloneness and aimed to tap these attributes in the RS (Wagnild & Young, 1993).

Chapters 12 and 13 present the CD-RISC, the Connors–Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003) and the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008). Both of these assessment tools have been used with medical populations and with specific disorders. The CD-RISC is discussed as an instrument that has shown sensitivity to medication response in patients with PTSD. Chapter 13 presents the BRS which defines resilience more narrowly as a quick response to upset.

Chapters 14 and 15 expand past the basic assessment of resilience. In Chap. 14 Saklofske et al., employ the adult versions of the RSCA-A in relation to other measures of well-being and emotional intelligence to gain a further understanding of the construct of resilience in adults. Chapter 15 by Eliot, Kaliski, Burrus, and Roberts explores the importance of self-evaluation as an important component of personal resilience.

Chapters 16 and 17 examine resilience in the face of disaster. Chapter 16, written by psychologist first responders Hanbury and Indart, discusses response to disaster immediately after it has occurred. Chapter 17 by Prince-Embury applies principles of resilience retroactively to the design of a community level intervention under remaining conditions of uncertainty in the aftermath of technological disaster.

Chapters 18–22 explore some cultural and systemic considerations of resiliency. In Chap. 18 Michael Unger and Linda Libenberg (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011) discuss the cultural relativity of resilience, the CYRM-28 and caution against generalizing assumptions across cultures. Chapter 19 by Tignor and Prince-Embury, tests the applicability of the RSCA to youth in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya. In Chap. 20, Oades-Sese et al. look at bilingualism and language development as sources of educational resilience in Hispanic children. In Chap. 21, Bowman looks at role strain as a chronic risk factor for African Americans and explores protective factors at

many levels including public policy. In Chap. 22, Prince-Embury introduces Bowen Family Systems Theory as a framework for considering resilience at multiple levels of human systems.

In all, we trust that this collection of original papers will shed new light on both theoretical and assessment issues of relevance to understanding and measuring resiliency.

References

Block, J., & Kremen, A. M. (1996). IQ and ego-resiliency: Conceptual and empirical connections and separateness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70*, 349–361.

Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and Anxiety, 18*, 76–82.

Doll, B., Spies, R. A., Champion, A., Guerrero, C., Dooley, K., & Turner, A. (2010). The ClassMaps Survey: A measure of students' perceptions of classroom resilience. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 28*, 338–348.

Elias, M. J., Parker, S. R., & Rosenblatt, J. L. (2005). Building educational opportunity. In R. B. Brooks & S. Goldstein (Eds.), *Handbook of resilience in children* (pp. 315–336). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Garmezy, N., Masten, A. S., & Tellegen, A. (1984). The study of stress and competence in children: A building block for developmental psychopathology. *Child Development, 55*, 97–111.

Kaplan, H. B. (1999). Toward an understanding of resilience: A critical review of definitions and models. In M. D. Glantz & J. L. Johnson (Eds.), *Resilience and development: Positive life adaptations* (pp. 17–83). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Kaplan, H. B. (2005). Understanding the concept of resilience. In S. Goldstein & R. Brooks (Eds.), *Handbook of resilience in children*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

LeBuffe, P. A., Shapiro, V. B., & Naglieri, J. A. (2009). *The Devereux student strengths assessment (DESSA), technical manual, and User's guide*. Lewisville: Kaplan.

Luthar, S. S. (1991). Vulnerability and resilience: A study of high-risk adolescents. *Child Development, 62*, 600–616.

Luthar, S. S. (2003). *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luthar, S. S. (2006). Resilience in development: A synthesis of research across five decades. In D. Cicchetti & D. J. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology: Risk, disorder, and adaptation* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 739–795). Hoboken: Wiley.

Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development, 71*(3), 543–562.

Luthar, S. S., & Zelazo, L. B. (2003). Research on resilience: An integrative review. In S. S. Luthar (Ed.), *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities* (pp. 510–549). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luthar, S. S., & Zigler, E. (1991). Vulnerability and competence: A review of research on resilience in childhood. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 61*(1), 6–22.

Luthar, S. S., & Zigler, E. (1992). Intelligence and social competence among high-risk adolescents. *Development and Psychopathology, 4*, 287–299.

Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 227–238.

Masten, A. S. (2006). Developmental psychopathology: Pathways to the future. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 31*, 47–54.

Masten, A. S. (2007). Resilience in developing systems: Progress and promise as the fourth wave rises. *Development and Psychopathology, 19*, 921–930.

Masten, A. S., & Coatsworth, J. D. (1998). The development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments: Lessons from research on successful children. *American Psychologist, 53*(2), 205–220.

Masten, A. S., & Curtis, W. J. (2000). Integrating competence and psychopathology: Pathways toward a comprehensive science of adaptation in development [Special issue]. *Development and Psychopathology, 12*, 529–550.

Masten, A., Hubbard, J., Gest, S., Tellegen, A., Garmezy, N., & Ramirez, M. (1999). Competence in the context of adversity: Pathways to resilience and maladaptation from childhood to late adolescence. *Development and Psychopathology, 11*, 143–169.

Masten, A. S., & Powell, J. L. (2003). A resilience framework for research, policy, and practice. In S. S. Luthar (Ed.), *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities* (pp. 1–25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Masten, W., & Wright, M. O. (2009). Resilience over the lifespan. In J. W. Reich (Ed.), *Handbook of adult resilience* (pp. 213–237). New York: Guilford.

Prince-Embury, S. (2007). *The resiliency scales for children and adolescents: Profiles of personal strength*. San Antonio: The Psychological Corporation.

Rutter, M., Harrington, R., Quinton, D., & Pickles, A. (1994). Adult outcome of conduct disorder in childhood: Implications for concepts and definitions of patterns of psychopathology. In R. D. Ketterlinus & M. E. Lamb (Eds.), *Adolescent problem behaviors: Issues and research* (pp. 57–80). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). General self-efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston (Eds.), *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs* (pp. 35–37). Windsor: NFER-Nelson.

Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008). The brief

resilience scale: Assessing the ability to bounce back. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 15*, 194–200.

Ungar, M., & Liebenberg, L. (2011). Assessing resilience across cultures using mixed-methods: Construction of the child and youth resilience measure-28. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 5*(2), 126–149.

Wagnild, G., & Young, H. M. (1993). Development and psychometric evaluation of the resilience scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement, 1*, 165–177.

Werner, E. E. (1997). Vulnerable but invincible: High-risk children from birth to adulthood. *Acta Paediatrica Supplement, 422*, 103–105.

Werner, E. E. (2005). What can we learn about resilience from large-scale longitudinal studies? In S. Goldstein & R. Brooks (Eds.), *Handbook of resilience in children* (pp. 91–206). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (1982). *Vulnerable but invincible: A longitudinal study of resilient children and youth*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (1992). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (2001). *Journeys from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience, and recovery*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.