

My Dissertation: Creatively Opening More Aspects of Resilience

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In part B of this miniseries looking at my dissertation I investigate assumptions related to my dissertation and some of the ways to evaluate those assumptions. It tries to understand some of the motivating factors of my area of inquiry and what I would be looking forward to completing as a part of that inquiry. It also looks into the areas of doubt and insecurity related to the dissertation.

Keywords: Resilience, Dissertation

The dissertation for a Ph.D. is meant to be a creative and generative endeavor. It should make an original contribution to the field in which the scholars in completing their inquiry ([CIS], 2017). In the planning and preparation for such a creative venture, it is practical to look at the wide expanse and feelings around that inquiry. In part A of this series of essays, I described my expected topic for my dissertation to be grounded in the concepts of psychological trauma and resilience. It looked at the scholarly landscape around these topics. In this essay, I will open the door outside of the grounded present in the investigation of Resilience, to explore what could be creatively included in my research.

This task of creatively understanding resilience must start from an attitude of not knowing. While there is a lot that I already have experience in, and ideas towards what my inquiry will be about, those familiar terms can be understood with new eyes (Montuori & Donnelly, 2013). There is a need to have a wider perspective and see the topic of resilience from new and diverse perspectives.

To be able to go more wide-eyed into my dissertation, this essay will explore this wider view and attempt to see the topic through new eyes. It will look at the assumptions of my research topic and what I might consider if I was free of assumptions. Motivation is another key factor related to creativity (Montuori & Donnelly, 2013), and this essay will look into what are some of the areas that I find most interesting. Finally, it will delve into some of the potential doubts that I have related to my inquiry into resilience.

This article was written Jacob was working on Ph.D. in Transformative Studies program while at the California Institute of Integral Studies. It is being self-published at his website, <http://jacobrcampbell.com/resources> to help other practitioner and students in their practice and give them ideas. This essay was submitted to Dan Crowe Ph.D. on 11/24/19 as a part of the coursework for TSD 8125: Creative Inquiry - Scholarship for the 21st Century.

Dissertation Assumptions and an Opening View of Those Assumptions

In writing about qualitative research assumptions for a dissertation, Wargo (2015) describes some research specific assumptions that students should consider. Topics such as how participants will answer, appropriate sampling methods, and the motives for the participants in the study. While I am not ready to start designing the actual study that I will be completing as a part of my dissertation, I do have some assumptions that I will be using an interpretive approach such as qualitative methods.

The actual assumptions presumed in the research are a starting place for the actual starting of the research process, there are other assumptions that I can examine in thinking about my area of inquiry. Understanding that the dissertation is to be an original contribution, also presumes that we must be knowledgeable about the state of the current literature. There are a great number of tools that have already been developed to help us understand an individual's resilience and the capacity building ability of organizations. I will be building on these tools. In my exploration thus far, I have not found anything directly tying individual resilience and the group/organization together. Being able to build

Being able to consider the other underlying aspects of a research project could also include thinking about what type of research project that the inquiry will be using. For example, I'm considering using a program evaluation as a part of my dissertation. I am also assuming that I will be drawing on some tools that have already been published previously. I will need to find ways of creatively connecting and bridging these topics through my research, and building on the work that is already done.

Some of the assumptions that I have around my research project are also changeable and I might be able to move past those assumptions. Firstly, there is an assumption that I could take a significant amount of time to complete my dissertation. I am working on my coursework through the two-year

program in the CIIS Transformative Studies Department. I wanted to be able to push myself through as quickly as possible and would like to complete my dissertation in a year. I've known too many people that are ABD (All But Dissertation) and I have no plan to join their ranks.

Along with changing my assumptions about the time that it takes to complete the study, secondly, I also have assumptions that I can open up about the scope of my study. When I think about completing a research project, and in my background, I feel more grounded in topics related to quantitative methods. I want to be able to prove something or to make some sort of breakthrough as a part of my research. I can open my perspective some, and understand that my dissertation is very likely just a first step into this topic. Over the years to come and I can continue to iterate and better understand the topic of resilience. There are many different facets that I can explore as I continue my scholarship and spirit of inquiry throughout my career, and I do not need my dissertation to be an insurmountable set of topics. Very related to the scope of my project is thirdly an assumption of needing to have a comprehensive investigation. To be able to complete my dissertation, I need to be able to show that I can make an original contribution and hopefully have that be meaningful. But it does not need to include everything or all the aspects that I might want to continue to look at as a part of my future scholarship.

Like many who fall into continuing with school to the doctoral degree level, I enjoy and value education. I love to learn and find out new information. I enjoy the self-reflection of seeing how I am and finding ways that I can improve. A final assumption that I have about my dissertation is that while there likely will be times and activities I don't necessarily enjoy, the overwhelming sentiment will be one of pleasure and accomplishment.

Academic Interests and Considerations for What Might Be the Most Pleasurable in My Inquiry

Being a social worker is something that I highly appreciate in my life. I have so many clients (and other professionals) that have entrusted me to support them. This is a humbling feeling and one that I greatly appreciate the opportunity to have. Anytime I can make positive changes for others and seeing the growth and progress of that change is extremely edifying to me. It is why I am doing what I'm doing. I hope that in my research and through sharing it, I will be able to help support others in making positive changes and making the world a better place.

One of the methods I am most interested in using for my inquiry is related to program evaluation. While I have some doubts about this discussed later, the prospect of potentially working with a school system and helping to evaluate one of their programs, give relevant feedback and recommendations is highly motivating for me. Being more equipped to

understand these students and for the teams I work with, to understand our students is a great expectation and area of joy around.

Knowing that trauma and challenge is a hard subject to hear about, taking on the lens of resilience is an enjoyable aspect for me. While I've heard many very sad and difficult stories, the potentiality of looking at how people can handle those stresses.

The focus on taking large and complex topics and trying to understand them and conceptualize those topics. In my academic instruction I do, I find great pleasure in trying to take topics for students and trying to find ways for them to both understand and internalize that instruction. Being able to do that in the topic Like the prospect of being able to think big. I find being able to think about big-picture ideas and finding ways to make them very engaging. Along with all of these potential pleasures of my inquiry, there is also anxiety and doubt.

Doubts and Insecurities With My Inquiry

Starting down the path of completing a Ph.D. can be a pretty intimidating process. Along with working (I'm continuing to work two jobs as an adjunct faculty for a university and a social worker in addition to the program), regular life (I'm a father of five children), there is the expectation and rigor in the coursework. That all takes place before the actual conception and implementation of the dissertation. Not only is there doubts that can be had in the ability to complete such a comprehensive process, but doubts about the process itself.

In looking at Resilience, it is a budding topic. There is a fast past of material being published and different aspects of resilience, it is also a very diverse field of study. There is a wide breadth of research coming out related to resilience, and a number of different ways of conceptualizing and considering resilience. Being able to take a transdisciplinary approach to the concept of resilience will be useful in approaching a broad spectrum of inquiry.

In my thinking right now, I would like to look into resilience as a way of understanding individuals and groups/organizations. The method for evaluating this that I'm most considering would be through the process of program evaluation. While there are some examples in the CIIS of program evaluations none of them seem to be through the transformative studies department (some examples include Hagar, 2006; Lawson, 2009; Steiger, 2011). All of these dissertations come from the Doctor of Psychology program. I feel some concern in knowing if a similar type of dissertation is possible through this department. One method that has been discussed as a potential option is related to action research.

Some of the push that I have felt in considering a program evaluation looking at resilience is my experience having par-

ticipated in the PEER-EBD (Participatory Evaluation Expert Review for classrooms serving students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities) several times. It has been a fabulous process that is used to look at the systems in place in a classroom/program and evaluate if they are following evidence-based practices. It covers a very in-depth set of evidence-based topics, is a researched and validated program evaluation. It is comprehensive in how it thinks about the structures within the classroom and in the expert reviewers recommendations they offer to help improve the program. While being able to conceptualize something similar to this but looking at the ideas of resiliency is engaging to me, it is also overwhelming to see how to get there.

All of these anxieties aside, I look forward to continuing forward in the program. To finding solutions and keeping myself open to the directions I move forward as I continue in the Transformative Studies Department.

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