

My Dissertation: Foundational Aspects of Resilience

Jacob Campbell
California Institute of Integral Studies

Understanding the layout of the academic community is an important task in moving towards completing a Ph.D. and the required dissertation. It views resiliences related to disciplines, seminal works, institutions, and journals focused on resilience.

Keywords: Dissertation, Psychological Trauma, Complex Trauma, Resilience

There are many reasons that I was drawn to the California Institute of Integral Studies and the Transformative Studies Program (TSD). For the last couple of years, I had gone and perused various Ph.D. programs mostly focused on leadership and addressing organizational systems. When I would keep coming back to the TSD, as I examined the course of study, one thing that seemed unique to me was the seeming focus and direction given to the dissertation. The titles of each of the courses seem to be building the skills (and potentially some of the content) necessary for the dissertation. While the faculty in the TSD could probably elaborate on other reasonings for the various courses, it seems almost as if each one is helping directly to develop this final product and completion of the degree.

Armed with some basic understanding regarding dissertations, such as: Ph.D. programs are hard, you read and write a lot, you do a major research project, and you end up writing a book; one would think that I would have come into the program with a research question or a dissertation topic locked and loaded. For me, that is not the case although I have some ideas. Jennifer Wells, one of the TSD faculty, completed my entrance interview into the program. The answer I provided when she asked what my research topic might be was that of trauma and students with emotional and behavioral disabilities.

I'm a licensed independent clinical social worker. I spent several years of work with individuals implementing individual and group treatment for mental health disorders at a community counseling agency. I am interested in increasing my ability to understand the stressors that affect individuals and those individuals can increase their resiliency, espe-

cially as facilitated by groups, organizations and the broad community. An individual's resilience is highly connected to the systems in which they partake. I work for a mental health agency currently in a private school setting for students with disruptive mental health concerns, and previously for a school district in a similar position. The majority of my students have complex traumas and long histories of adversities. I find it accurate in the college setting that I work as well as an adjunct teaching classes related to social work.

This essay will review some of the growth that has taken place in regards to my thoughts about a dissertation. It will look at the topic to gain some understanding where I am situating myself as well it will look at the landscape of my field of study.

From Trauma to Resilience: My Field of Inquiry

At the core of my chosen topic of psychological and group/organizational resilience are trauma and adversity. All people have had to one degree or another adversity and difficulty that is in their lives. Many people have experiences that have been traumatic, and some even experience complex trauma. Resilience at one level is the ability that people have to manage and cope with those adversities and traumas along with the capacity to respond with new adversities as they come up.

Resilience can be seen from an individual level, but it also can be looked at at a group or organizational level. There are stressors on groups face throughout their growth and development. The capacity that they have to address stressors successfully based on the resilient characteristics that they possess.

The topics of resilience are one that is transdisciplinary and is looked at in different disciplines. For example, architects and mechanical engineers have to look at the resilience of the structures that they create. Economics looks at the resiliency of systems. The discipline that I see myself engaging the most with as I look into resilience is through the lens of social work, which is my background. Much of the concepts related to personal resiliency are related to psychology and

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 11/10/19 as a part of the coursework for TSD 8125: Creative Inquiry - Scholarship for the 21st Century.

even neuropsychology.

The Landscape of the Study of Resilience

Any discussion around resilience and trauma would need to look into the work that has been done around adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Both Felitti and Anda have frequently published around the research they completed as a part of Kiser Permanente and the centers for disease and control. The understanding of how ACEs impact peoples physical, mental, and social health has opened the door to the discussion about trauma in a way that it hasn't been open before (For a selection of impactful and highly cited work regarding ACEs Anda et al., 2006; Felitti et al., 1998). I was exposed to the concept of ACEs pretty early on in my academic career. In 2004, when I was still working on my associates of arts at Columbia Basin Community College, I attended a guest presentation facilitated by Felitti at my school. But it seems the concept of ACEs has transferred into many different areas of study and work for anybody that works within social services. Several years ago, with my undergraduate social work students, I would talk about ACEs and my student would not have ever heard of it before. But in the last couple of years, it seems that they are all familiar with the research.

For this paper, I am still somewhat new to my field of inquiry and so many of the sources that could be considered seminal are not highly known to me yet. To assist in determining some of the articles that have been the most impactful in the scientific literature. To help me asses this, I completed searches regarding resilience, psychological resilience, organizational resilience on Google Scholar and evaluated the number of sources that the various articles have.

Luthar et al. (2000) article reviewing the construct of resilience has the highest citation count, being listed at 8,776. In 1997 published a national and thorough longitudinal study regarding adolescent health. There has been a rating scale for evaluating individual resilience that has been highly implemented (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Both Luthar (2015) chapter synthesizing of research related to resilience and Cook et al. (2005) overview of complex trauma in children and adolescents provide broad-reaching and highly cited information regarding resilience and trauma. Table 1 lays out each of these articles and their titles and the number of citations as reported by Google Scholar.

My interest in resilience is further than individual resilience. A much less studied aspect is that of group resilience and organizational resilience, and very few studies look at how these levels of interaction work together. Bloom and Sreedhar (2008) provide an example of an organization's view and researched method for agencies providing trauma-informed care called the sanctuary model.

The topic of resilience has been growing quickly in recent years. There are many different institutes, organizations, and

groups focused on resilience. Many of them work to perform training. A brief selection of some of these includes; The Resilience Institute , The Global Resilience Institute , The Resilience Research Center , The Resiliency Institute , and many more. In my local community, the Benton-Franklin Health District has an ACEs coalition that is focused on developing a more resilient community. In a nearby town, I have a friend that is involved with the Community Resilience Initiative .

Many journals look into trauma and resilience. For looking at the individual and addressing their needs, there is a need to understand the traumatic experiences and their underlying needs. Journals such as PubMed Central (n.d.) *Archives of Trauma Research*, or Springer (n.d.-d) *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma*, and American Psychological Association (n.d.) *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*.

Because I'm interested in this concept of resilience in organizations, and especially in the school-based setting (as this is where I practice), the Illinois Association of School Social Workers (n.d.) facilitates the *School Social Work Journal*; *Chicago* especially due to my social work background, but also *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* by Springer (n.d.-c), or Sage Journal (n.d.) *Review of Educational Research*, and from a community perspective outside of K-12 education Springer (n.d.-b) *Community Mental Health Journal*.

There is no specific journal on Resilience given on the CIIS Library website. It is a fairly new subject, and some journals are looking into this. For example, Taylor and Francis (n.d.) has a journal on *Resilience: International Policies, Practices, and Discourses*, and Springer (n.d.-a) has Journal that is starting in 2020, *Adversity and Resilience Science: Journal of Research and Practice*.

There are quite a few dissertations that are focused on resilience. LeFalle (2010) was enrolled in the Transformative Studies Program and wrote about the importance of personal strengths in academic success, through qualitative data collection. Several months ago, as I was looking through a dissertation, I found myself drawn a little more toward the clinical psychology PsyD dissertation in their focus and methods for their inquiry. Both Purcell (n.d.) and Shrira (2011) offer studies through the clinical psychology department focused on resilience.

References

- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Psychological trauma: Theory, research, practice, and policy*. <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/tra/>
- Anda, R. F., Felitti, V. J., Bremner, J. D., Walker, J. D., Whitfield, C., Perry, B. D., Dube, S. R., & Giles, W. H. (2006). The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood: A convergence of

- evidence from neurobiology and epidemiology. *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*, 256(3), 174–186. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00406-005-0624-4>
- Bloom, S. L., & Sreedhar, S. Y. (2008). The Sanctuary Model of Trauma-Informed Organizational Change. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 17(3), 48–53.
- Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and Anxiety*, 18(2), 76–82. <https://doi.org/10.1002/da.10113>
- Cook, A., Spinazzola, J., Ford, J., Lanktree, C., Blaustein, M., Cloitre, M., DeRosa, R., Hubbard, R., Kagan, R., Liataud, J., Mallah, K., Olafson, E., & van der Kolk, B. (2005). Complex Trauma in Children and Adolescents. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 390–398. <https://doi.org/10.3928/00485713-20050501-05>
- Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245–258. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0749-3797\(98\)00017-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0749-3797(98)00017-8)
- Illinois Association of School Social Workers. (n.d.). *School social work journal: Editorial policy and author guidelines*. <https://iassw.org/about/school-social-work-journal/>
- LeFalle, D. (2010). *The role of personal strengths in academic success: Views and voices of resilient community college students (Doctoral dissertation)* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Luthar, S. S. (2015). Developmental psychopathology. In D. Cicchetti & D. J. Cohen (Eds.). Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470939406.ch20>
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00164>
- PubMed Central. (n.d.). *Archives of trauma research*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/journals/2244/>
- Purcell, M. C. (n.d.). *Surviving inner-city war zones: Trauma and resiliency among urban youth exposed to community violence (Doctoral dissertation)* (Dissertations & Theses).
- Sage Journal. (n.d.). *Review of educational research*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/rer>
- Shrira, N. (2011). *Becoming your own good-enough mother: A new intervention to foster resiliency in adults (Doctoral dissertation)* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Springer. (n.d.-a). *Adversity and resilience science: Journal of research and practice*. <https://www.springer.com/journal/42844>
- Springer. (n.d.-b). *Community mental health journal*. <https://www.springer.com/journal/10597>
- Springer. (n.d.-c). *Educational research for policy and practice*. <https://link.springer.com/journal/10671>
- Springer. (n.d.-d). *Journal of child and adolescent trauma*. <https://www.springer.com/journal/40653>
- Taylor and Francis. (n.d.). *Resilience: International policies, practices, and discourses*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/resi20/current>

Tables and Figures

Table 1

List of Highly Cited Articles Related to Trauma and Resilience

Author	Title	Cited By
Felitti et al. (1998)	Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in Adults	9739 citations
Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000)	The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work	8776 citations
Resnick (1997)	Protecting adolescents from harm: findings from the national longitudinal study on adolescent health	6094 citations
Connor and Davidson (2003)	Development of a new resilience scale: The Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD–RISC)	5318 citations
Anda et al. (2006)	The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood	3165 citations
Luthar, S. S. (2015)	Resilience in development: A synthesis of research across five decades	1858 citations
Cook et al. (2015)	Complex trauma in children and adolescents	1709 citations