

Master's thesis in International Social Welfare and Health Policy
Oslo Metropolitan University
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The purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationship between resilience and child wellbeing within a hyper-focused study of 6 research articles that studied multiple-generation Latino immigrant children within the United States. By comparing the various interpretations that researchers can make on what resilience is and how it can be applied within a study, this thesis argues that the manner which researchers define child wellbeing is altered. This thesis argues that the various interpretations of child wellbeing include and exclude a variety of factors that are vital to the overall positive development of the Latino youths within their respective studies. This thesis highlights the complicated nature of the use of resilience in research and urges for a broad and multi-faceted use of this complex concept.

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SYNOPSIS

I have set out to try and understand the vast phenomenon of the term resilience. Within the world of research, resilience functions as a very broad and over-encompassing term which can be applied and interpreted very differently depending on the context of the study that it is being used in. There turns out to be a gap in resilience literature in connection with child wellbeing as researchers have various interpretations for resilience which then alters how they define and assess child wellbeing. Both terms are very wide and open-ended, leading to a multitude of interpretations and connections. I will show how resilience is a proxy (or not) for child wellbeing within this thesis.

I have attempted to map out this terrain of research and set out with nearly 10,000 articles and ended with 6. Initially, the focus of this thesis was all second-generation immigrant, regardless of ethnic identity. However, because of how the screening process was performed, all of the 6 articles are studies from the United States that measure resilience amongst Latino American children and youths. Because of these very similar foci, the focus of my thesis changed, but I kept the initial keywords and central concepts that I had which were “resilience,” “child wellbeing,” and “immigrant.” It is important to note that although several articles discussed minorities and immigrants, these articles did not fit the type of immigrant that is included in this thesis; specifically, this thesis looks into second-generation immigrants which is defined as the children of immigrants (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

This thesis ultimately turned into an investigation into the use of resilience as a literature review. My intent is to understand how within the world of research, researchers’ different applications of the term resilience alter how child wellbeing is understood within my specific world of focus of Latino children and youth in the United States. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to shine some light in understanding some of the uses for resilience and how these interpretations can affect how child wellbeing is considered in a study, both directly and indirectly.

The field of resilience is tremendously large and includes a vast array of interpretations and applications within studies. As an example, Werner’s (1995) definition, in the field of behavioral psychology, resilience encompasses the three following interpretations: “good developmental outcomes despite high-risk status; sustained competence under stress; and recovery from trauma” (as cited in Fleming and Ledogar, 2008, p. 2); all three of these interpretations represent different aspects of a study and therefore affect what the study

analyzes when being performed. As a result, resilience can differ extensively depending on the study it is being applied to.

Within any society, children form the basis for the next generation; the preservation of their health, both mentally and physically, is vital so that they “can fully assume its responsibilities within the community” (United Nations, 1989, p. 1). Within the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1989, participant countries agreed to begin implementing safeguards within their societies to better the living conditions of their children. Although this treaty does not directly use the term “child wellbeing,” it began the wave of focus on the wellbeing of children and led to further research. Child wellbeing, put simply, can be understood as the positive development and growth of children.

With an understanding of the definitions of resilience, and resilience specifically in children, and child wellbeing, I compare how each study defines and applies resilience within their own terms. In doing so, I draw connections between the articles, indicating both similarities and differences in addition to the potential pros and cons.

The results illustrate how resilience and child wellbeing are often used interchangeably. Resilience is such a wide term that it ultimately cannot be compared to anything unless it is used in proxy. The word resilience says so little that it needs to be put in some sort of proxy so that you can start discussing it. As a proxy, you can have these kinds of categories that the researchers use. With this thesis, I have produced 1 type of result which reflects the data that is present within my unique pool of studies; this result reflects that within the world of resilience, differences and similarities among interpretations can exist even within very similar studies.

The hypothesis for this thesis is that the interpretations that researchers make regarding the definition of resilience can and often will affect their understandings of child wellbeing and what it, as an overall term, can mean. The results of this thesis prove the hypothesis to be true, as each study’s interpretation of resilience affected what they deemed as important factors in being able to measure resilience within these children and youths. The data that is represented within this thesis represents an extremely hyper-focused and minute percentage of what resilience encompasses; as a result, further research is required in the future in order to better understand how resilience can be connected to child wellbeing, both on a very focused scale such as that of this thesis and also on a wider scale.

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