

Chapter 1. Introduction: Defining and theorising key concepts of resilience and well-being and arts-based research

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Abstract

Resilience and well-being are critical attributes for survival in today's world. Often people face many challenges in the home, workplace environments and/or educational institutions. This chapter will introduce and theorise key concepts such as resilience, well-being and reflection. It will advocate for arts-based approaches to researching these core principles as the arts can trigger different ways of knowing and thinking about situations that require reflection for advancement. The volume will take the World Health Organization's (2014) definition of well-being as "the state in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community" (WHO, p. 1). Resilience is related to the ideal of well-being as it refers to how people adapt to and adopt the ability to cope with challenges and new circumstances.

Introduction

Arts-based research, resilience and well-being across the lifespan shares robust research that utilises arts-based research methods in diverse contexts and from across the globe. The main objective of research included in this volume is to investigate how arts-based research methods can influence participants' resilience and well-being at various stages of life and in various

context. The book brings together a diverse range of contributors who work in the field.

We live in a time where change is the only constant. Increasing day-to-day pressures stem from a variety of sources such as, but not limited to work-life balance, social media influences, civil unrest, isolation, economic instability and new technologies. Understanding how both resilience and well-being can be supported is important in a world that is rarely stress-free. Recognising the effective personal tools of individuals and groups as well as how these skills are harnessed and utilised is important to counter the current marketisation of quick-fix solutions for the challenges that are faced.

A search of the literature makes it clear that resilience and well-being have been increasing areas of research in the last 20 years, conducted on various populations across the lifespan, including people from all walks of life and in multiple contexts (see, e.g., systematic literature reviews by Aburn, Gott, & Hoare, 2016 [defining resilience]; Chmitorz et al., 2018 [resilience intervention studies]; Dray et al., (2017) [child and adolescent resilience-focused interventions]; King, Renó, & Novo, 2014 [dimensions and measures of well-being]; Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar, & Curran, 2015 [resilience training in the workplace]). The topic is represented across multiple domains such as psychology, occupational therapy, sociology, adolescent and early childhood studies and education. The numerous lenses used to research resilience and

well-being may contribute to the lack of clarity that exists around the definition of terms.

Resilience

Resilience is a slippery term. According to Aburn et al. (2016), no universal definition of resilience exists within the research literature. There are, however, common elements that have been identified that encapsulate a trait-oriented perspective with a process-oriented view. A trait-oriented view considers that individuals have a set of personal characteristics that determine their ability to cope with or adjust to adversity, although, Kalisch et al. (2017) suggest the empirical evidence to support this view is weak. More recently, resilience has been considered from a process-oriented approach that considers physical and emotional health can be sustained during or returned following adversity or hardship (Chmitorz et al., 2018). From this perspective, resilience is not a fixed entity but rather a dynamic process, and therefore, something that can be taught or developed (Masten, 2001). In their review of literature within education Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley, and Weatherby-Fell, (2016) determined that resilience could be determined as a personal resource, a strategy, a contextual resource or an outcome. As a personal resource, resilience is a set of characteristics that acts as a buffer or protective coating during adversity. These qualities can be developed over time during context-personal interactions which suggests a certain amount of hardship needs to be experienced as part of the learning process in which strategies are also developed (Masten, 2001). Masten

(2011) also suggests that it is through a complex set of interactions of factors: biological, personal, temporal and environmental, that resilience emerges.

For the purpose of this book resilience is defined as “the state in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community” (World Health Organization, 2014, p. 1). Resilience is related to the ideal of well-being as it refers to how people adapt to and adopt the ability to cope with challenges and new circumstances. When people are resilient, they are able to face others with confidence and positivity. Furthermore, they have the skills needed in different contexts and throughout one’s life to maintain the positive approach to life that supports their well-being.

Well-being

Well-being and resilience are closely linked, and like resilience, well-being is a multidimensional concept. According to Dodge, Daly, Huyton and Sanders (2012), well-being occurs when individuals have “the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge” (p. 230). The broader socioecological perspective of well-being is considered more holistically than previous measures that were limited to “objective measures of economic conditions, housing, education, and welfare” (King et al., 2014, p. 682). A socioecological perspective includes the quality of the social and material attributes of a person’s life, such as employment, housing, health care, and education, as well as satisfaction,

connectedness and autonomy associated with life circumstances (King et al., 2014). Well-being can be seen as an outcome of resilience (Mansfield et al., 2016) or as a precursor to developing resilience when personal resources including motivation, efficacy, optimism, high expectations and courage are activated to manage or move on from adversity (Dodge et al., 2012).

Arts-based research

One important area of development has been the *arts in health movement* with a focus on resilience and well-being. The *arts in health* field can be defined as comprising all activities that aim to use arts-based approaches to improve individual and community health, health promotion, healthcare or seek to enhance the healthcare environment through visual art and performances (Macnaughton, White, & Stacy, 2005). As such, arts are viewed as good for the health of society and viewed as essential for physical, social and mental well-being (Macnaughton et al., 2005). From such movements has come a focus on the importance of arts-based research for resilience and well-being across community health, medical perspectives and physical environment creations.

Arts-based research can thus be described as:

A research method in which the arts play a primary role in any or all of the steps of the research method. Art forms such as poetry, music, visual art, drama and dance are essential to the research process itself and central in formulating the research question, generating data, analysing data and presenting the research results (Austin & Forinash, 2005, pp. 460-461).

The arts have an important role to play in providing different understandings and ways of supporting positive health development. Eisner (2008) argues that since not all knowledge is reducible to language, exploration of visual and sensory understanding provide opportunities for non-linguistic dimensions in research, which may allow us to represent different levels of experience, creating greater awareness and support for well-being and resilience.

The use of arts-based research also creates possibilities to engage in research with children. Broadly speaking, arts-based research help children communicate with others (Brooks, 2009), allowing problems from traditional research methods such as interviews to be overcome. Wright (2007, p. 24) notes:

Language as a communicational medium is inadequate for the expression of everything that we think, feel or sense. Hence drawing, graphic-narrative play and other forms of artistic expression offer important and distinct forms of meaning-making through figurative communication, which is intricate, multifaceted, symbolic and metaphoric.

For example, asking children to create portraits allows children to also be more aware of their own emotions (Muri, 2007) as well as being able to condense their experiences and identity into a visual metaphor (Bagnoli, 2009). The different forms of representation provide alternate ways of expressing understanding and experience. In this sense, arts-based research is more inclusive of providing different opportunities for representation. It is for this reason arts-based research was considered for this book.

Examples of arts-based methods for resilience and well-being across the lifespan

The arts, and more specifically, arts-based research, provides opportunities for creative experiences and learning to occur in different ways. Craft, Cremin, Burnard and Chappell (2007) propose five fundamental conditions of creative learning as described by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority in England. These include providing opportunities to ask questions, to make connections, imagining possibilities, exploring options and reflecting critically. All that can be provided by the arts and more specifically arts-based research.

In this book we draw from Akkerman and Bakker (2011) and understand learning to include new knowledge and skills, transference of these skills into meaningful opportunities in our own lives, transformation of our belief system because of these meaningful opportunities and institutional development. We have deliberately adopted a broad definition of learning that can incorporate developing new knowledge and skills; adopting changes to belief systems; developing self regulatory behaviours, including emotional regulation; applying creativity across various stages of the lifespan and in multiple contexts. We propose that all learning requires reflection, which can take many forms and can be enriched through arts-based practices.

For some time, scholars have utilised the arts to support people's resilience and well-being. There is strong evidence to suggest that the arts allow the opportunity to express oneself through multiple means, enabling transformative

practice and reflection. Leitch's (2006) work showed that when participants created images related to 'self' "new meanings, previously unaware, unvoiced, unexpressed, half-understood came to be significant and capable of being incorporated into the participants' social and/or emotional understanding of themselves, to the point that new actions or directions could be taken in their lives" (p. 566). Such work is critical when dealing with factors related to resilience and well-being as it enables participants to tap into areas of thought that may not always be conscious or present. In McNiff's (2008) study arts-based and creative approaches to reflection resulted in more "meaningful insights [that] often come by surprise, unexpectedly and even against the will of the creator" (p. 40). Such experience is important for transformed practice and different ways of knowing or being (Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008).

Arts-based methods can assist researchers and their participants in having different perspectives about the subject of inquiry (Ewing & Hughes, 2008). Ewing and Hughes (2008) highlight how such approaches can promote more empathy and empathic understanding, thereby providing access to components of resilience and well-being. Many studies have used arts-based methods as a foundation of transformative practice and these have been across a range of disciplines including education, health, and professional contexts.

Cliff's (2012) work, for example, notes that the arts can be utilised as a creative and public health resource. He recognised that "the field of arts and health is complex and multifaceted and there are challenges in moving beyond *practice-*

based research, towards building a progressive body of knowledge that can provide a basis for future *evidence-based* practice in health care and public health” (p. 120). In this sense, it is important for arts-based researchers in the area of health to develop robust evidence when presenting research.

Similarly, Pearson and Wilson (2008) showed how arts-based methods can enhance well-being and resilience, resulting in long term changes. The authors use the notion of inner-life skills to explore emotions in the hope of improving therapeutic outcomes. They argue that creativity is “an in-built drive and a major goal within the psyche” (Pearson & Wilson, 2008, p. 3) therefore it makes sense to use arts-based approaches to support people’s development of resilience and well-being.

Participating in arts-based practices can also improve resilience and well-being in various communities. Bungay and Vella-Burrows’ (2013) work, for example, presented a comprehensive review of the literature exploring the effects of young people’s (aged 11-18) participation in creative activities. Their review of the literature revealed that while there is evidence that creative activities are beneficial for students it is important that studies provide robust proof through rigorous and useful methods.

In this book we theorise how arts-based research methods can positively contribute to resilience and well-being. As such, the book will discuss ways in which researchers and educators can consider and implement such strategies. A range of arts-based practices being used to support the resilience and well-

being of individuals and groups across the lifespan are presented. Drawing on a range of arts-based methodologies, each chapter examines these spaces at various junctures across the lifespan. The intention is to provide a holistic understanding of the research field that covers a range of arts-based methodologies at various junctures of life.

The book contains a total of eighteen chapters. The chapters are organised into a chronological sequence across the lifespan. Chapter 2 explores early childhood education, arts-based research and resilience. In this chapter, Garvis has a particular focus on how arts-based research can be chosen as an important tool to support refugee children and their families in early childhood settings. The focus in adolescence as a developmental phase is presented in Chapter 3 by MacDonald, Baguley, Barton and Kerby. The authors draw on their experiences as academics and arts educators who have worked with adolescent students, teachers and preservice teachers to explore well-being and resilience. In particular, enablers to support young people's well-being are identified. The fourth chapter by Coad, focuses on how arts-based methods can be used to build resilience with children aged 9 to 18 years. Real life case studies are presented that shows the importance of supporting young people's resilience in hospitals and transitions across health services. Coholic presents how to promote resilience with young through mindfulness group programs in Chapter 5. The program builds a variety of resiliencies including self-awareness, emotion regulation and self-esteem, allowing the importance of arts-based methods and processes when working with youth to be visible.

Chapter 6 (Yohani) focuses on photography in arts-based research with children and youth with a particular focus on children in post-conflict countries living in Canada and Tanzania. The approach shows the importance of arts-based research for the development of child-centred approaches that allow active meaning-making.

The next section of the book moves into adulthood. In Chapter 7, McKay and Gibbs explore resilience and well-being of mature aged preservice teachers who have returned to study following motherhood. A specific focus is made on arts-based reflection and its contribution to learning, transformation and growth related to resilience and well-being. Chapter 8 describes how Expressive Arts Therapy can be used to help a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder to express emotions and develop a better relationship with his mother. Ho and Wong show how joint painting approaches enable bi-directional communication between the mother and son. Chapter 9 provides insights into a resilience-building intervention based on the forum theatre technique. Sappa and Barabsch show how the technique can be used to empower in-service teachers. Salini and Durand in Chapter 10 write how theatrical drama can be used to overcome the lived experience of personal impasse by promoting resilience in adult education. The experience allowed participants to gain value as an event triggering resilience and dynamic vitality. Still within adulthood, Chapter 11 focuses on improving the working conditions and increasing the well-being of employees through the use of clowning training. Tschiesner and Farneti show how the training allows individuals to rediscover themselves and grow resilience.

Chapter 12 moves towards teachers and the reflexive practitioners, where Meltzer examines how arts-based approaches can be used to stimulate professional growth in teachers and learners. The approach provides deep learning and stimulates communication, exploration and creativity. Chapter 13 continues with the theme of teachers with a focus on the identity of university teachers' professional identity. Vähäsantanen, Hökkä and Paloniemi investigate professional identity work and emotions in the context of arts-based coaching programs. They uncover how professional identity work is an emotional endeavour that encompasses both pleasant and unpleasant emotions in the shaping of professional identity.

Riches, Riches and O'Brien in Chapter 14 share findings from a qualitative study that explored how the arts can build resilience amongst unemployed and underemployed Australians with disabilities. In the chapter, artistic endeavours are seen as acts of self-definition that play an important role in society's meaning-making. Chapter 15 shares experiences from the Swedish context with Uusimäki sharing specific cultural strategies prompted by arts-based reflection by reflecting on experiences as a university academic. She suggests a number of specific strategies to support workplace well-being. In Chapter 16, Šicková-Fabrici describes how clay can be used in spiritually ecological-existential art therapy with a specific focus on three-dimensional art expression. The use of clay and moulding as a means to stimulate senses and emotions is examined. Black in Chapter 17 demonstrates how arts-based reflection and representation strengthen preservice early childhood teachers' understandings about well-

being, belonging and place. This understanding leads to better ways to support children's relationships and well-being through nature-rich environments and connections, bringing the life trajectory focus back around again from adult to child. In the final chapter (Chapter 18 by the editors) reflections are given on the overall themes across the book around resiliency and well-being. A particular focus is also made on the importance of arts-based research methods to support resiliency.

As you engage with the life trajectory across the book, we hope you also start to reflect on how arts-based methods could be useful to supporting resilience and well-being in your own life and the lives of those around you. We hope that for readers, the book opens up new possibilities for implementing arts-based methods in different educational settings and workplaces to begin a holistic focus on supporting resiliency and well-being for all.

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