

Studentship 2: Life course development of resilience

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A recent longitudinal study of resilience (defined as “bouncing back”) offered a sociological definition of resilience as a “process that converts social goods into good outcomes” when adversities are encountered. It identified that social goods (in this case, social support) had to persist over time and even precede adversity to produce resilience (Netuveli et al., 2008). This gives rise to the question of whether resilience processes also persist over time. From the very beginning of resilience research, the question whether resilience is a trait (i.e. a persistent characteristic of a person) or process (i.e. situation specific) has been raised but never answered completely (Jacelon, 1997). Longitudinal studies of resilience, done with a life span developmental orientation, have found that the manifestations of resilience might differ at different points in the life span and that an individual cannot be classified as resilient or non-resilient on the basis of observations at a single point or over a short period of time (Werner & Smith, 1977). The importance of the family context in providing protective resources for resilience has also been stressed (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996).

This project will address two research questions: (1) *Does resilience persist over the life course?* (2) *How much does the stability of social factors contribute towards resilience and its persistence?*

The datasets used in this project are the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) and Understanding Society. The proposed project will study how resilience appears to act as a trait i.e. some individuals persistently flourish despite adversity. Resilience over the life course might involve different outcomes at different periods and in the context of different adversities. One of the challenges of this PhD will be to devise means to measure this process of resilience over the life course. The hypothesis is that persistence in life course resilience is due to stable social factors over the life course.

References:

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