Promoting Resilience for Young Children in Families Experiencing Homelessness

Photo by Dawn Villella

Ann S. Masten
Parenting Education Symposium
Minnesota Department of Education ~ January 10, 2019

CE+HD
College of Education + Human Development

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Overview

- Developmental risks associated with homelessness
- Roots of resilience in early childhood
- Resilience in the context of homelessness
- Implications for practice and policy

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Risk factors linked to homelessness

- **In parents**
  - Adverse childhood experiences
  - Recent negative life events
  - Poverty and sociodemographic risk
  - Incarceration
  - Domestic violence
  - Substance abuse problems
  - Low social support

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Frequency of specific ACEs in homeless parents vs MN adults

Abuse and Neglect	Homeless Parents	MN Adults
Physical Abuse/Neglect	39%	16%
Sexual Abuse	31%	10%
Emotional Neglect/Verbal Abuse	58%	28%
Household Dysfunction		
Mental Illness	22%	17%
Divorce/Separation	50%	21%
Domestic Violence	29%	14%
Parental Incarceration	17%	7%

MN data from Minnesota Department of Health (2011)

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ACE scores in homeless parents compared with national data

Total ACEs	ACEs in Homeless Sample	ACEs in National Sample
0	15.0%	36.1%
1	17.8%	26.0%
2	12.1%	15.9%
3	7.5%	9.5%
4 or more	43.0%	12.5%

National data retrieved from
http://www.cdc.gov/ace/prevalence.htm

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Risk factors linked to homelessness

- **In children and youth**
  - Adverse childhood experiences
  - Poverty and sociodemographic risk
  - Incarceration of parents
  - Maltreatment
  - Family violence and family instability
  - School mobility

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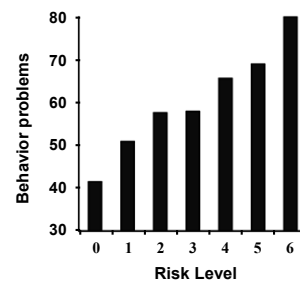
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Homelessness and developmental risk

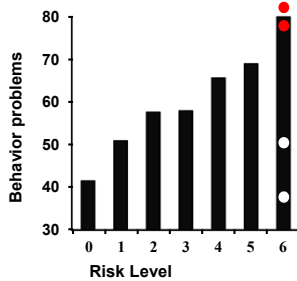**Developmental risk to**
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Achievement

High cumulative risk
- Acute current risk on top of ongoing chronic risk
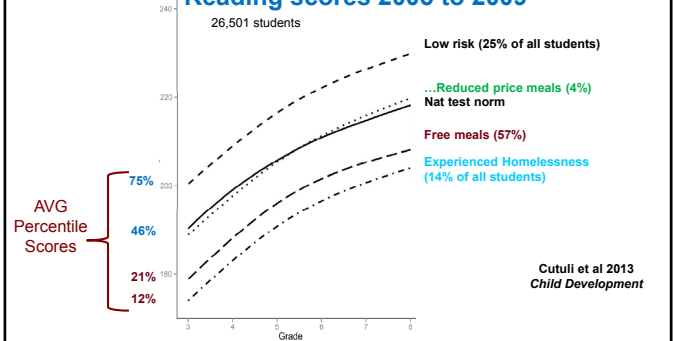- More problems when cumulative risk is high

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Cumulative risk

Risk Factors
- Low education
- Single parent
- Parent died
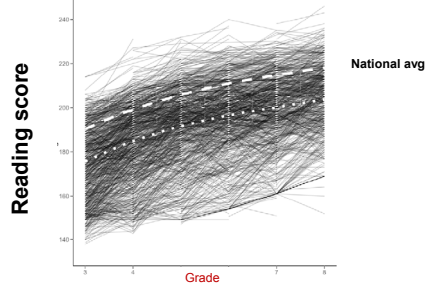- Parents divorced
- Foster care
- Maltreatment
- Saw violence

Masten & Sesma 1999

Yet there also is variation within risk level

Reading scores 2005 to 2009

26,501 students

Low risk (25% of all students)

…Reduced price meals (4%)

Nat test norm

Free meals (57%)

Experienced Homelessness (14% of all students)

AVG Percentile Scores

75%
46%
21%
12%

Cutuli et al 2013
Child Development

HHM student individual reading scores
>3000 students

National avg

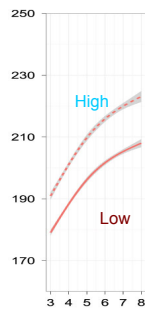## Data collected by schools

- Attendance
- Sociodemographic risk indicators (such as free lunch)
- School mobility
- School readiness (such as MPSI-R scores)

First grade reading skills

- Predict later achievement and growth in math, reading

- Show **protective** effects for high-risk students
 - Both free lunch and HHM identified

Herbers et al 2012 *Educational Researcher*

High

Low

250
230
210
190
170

3 4 5 6 7 8

The short list: Hints from research on resilience

- Capable caregiving
- Other close relationships
- Problem-solving skills
- Self-regulation skills
- Self-efficacy
- Motivation to succeed
- Faith, hope, optimism
- Purpose/belief life has meaning
- Effective schools
- Well-functioning communities

ORDINARY MAGIC
Resilience in Development
ANN S. MASTEN
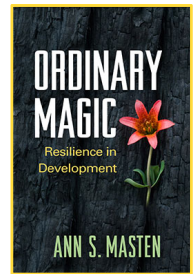
Parallel Protective Factors	
Child Resilience	**Family Resilience**
Nurturing, sensitive caregiving	Nurturing care of vulnerable members
Attachment, security, belonging	Family cohesion, sense of belonging
Skilled parent management, discipline	Maintaining family boundaries, rules
Agency, motivation to adapt	Active coping, mastery
Problem-solving, planning	Collaborative problem-solving
Self-regulation, emotion regulation	Co-regulation, family balance
Hope, faith, optimism	Hope, faith, optimism
Meaning making, life has meaning	Coherence, family meaning making
Positive views of the self or identity	Positive views of family/family identity
Routines and rituals	Family routines and rituals

Masten 2018 Journal of Family Theory and Research

Roots of resilience in early childhood

- Prenatal health and well-being of mother
- Healthy growth and brain development of child
- Nutrition and health care (2 gen)
- Quality of caregiving and stimulation
- Early childhood education, opportunities for learning
- Family resilience
- Community support of families
- State and national policies that support families

Early childhood examples of malleable targets

- **Food/nutrition/hunger**
- **Housing/homelessness**
- **School mobility**
- **Medical care**
- **Premature birth**
- **Income**
- **Toxic stress**
- **Parenting quality**
- **Access to quality ECE**
- **Quality of ECE**
- **Teacher-child relationships**
- **Child executive function**

Families matter in multiple ways

- Nurture body, mind and spirit
- Secure base (emotional security)
- Economic security
- Regulate stress
- Influence gene expression
- Monitor environment for safety
- Foster learning and self-regulation skills
- Facilitate achievement of developmental tasks
- Broker resources (social capital)
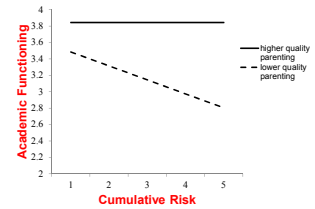- Transmit cultural capital

Roles of families in adversity exposure

☐ Gatekeeping and shielding
- Preventing or reducing exposure
- Monitoring exposure

☐ Preventing family stress spillover
- Cascading effects of stress on family function
- Terrified parents are terrifying to children

Parenting quality moderates risk in homeless families

See Herbers et al 2011, 2014

Parenting Resilience

"the capacity of parents to deliver competent, quality parenting to children despite adverse circumstances"
– Gavidia-Payne, Denny, Davis, Francis, & Jackson, 2015

- Social connectedness
- Family functioning
- Psychological well-being
- Self-efficacy

Figure 1 A parental resilience model.

Child skills

- **EXAMPLE** Executive function skills (EF)
  – Neurocognitive processes that we use to direct attention, thoughts, or actions to achieve goals
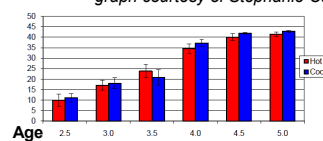 – Self-control

- Important for school success
  – pay attention, listen to teacher
  – control emotions and impulses
  – wait turn, sit on the circle
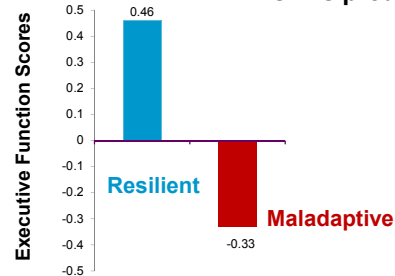 – follow instructions
  – switch activities

Why EF?

- **Resilience**
- **Learning**
- **Stress**
- **Good parenting**
- **Develop rapidly in preschool**
- **Malleable**

Photo © Kendra Mack 2008

graph courtesy of Stephanie Carlson

EF skills predict school success

Resilient   **Maladaptive**

Obradović 2010
Masten et al 2012
Kalstabakken 2016

Teachers and schools matter in multiple ways

- Basic needs
- Nurturing human and social capital
- Relationships with competent, caring adults
- Security and stability
- Opportunities for building self-efficacy
- After war/disaster…powerful symbols of return to normal
- Build resilience for the future in many ways

Communities matter

- Supports for families
- Supports for education
- Parks, libraries, recreation
- Health care
- Emergency services and disaster preparedness
- NGO + government services
- Policies and laws that support children & their families
- Traditions and rituals for overcoming stress
- Support for cultural practices and celebrations

"Sense of community" moderates link of ACEs to adult well-being
Nurius et al 2015

High
Mod
Low
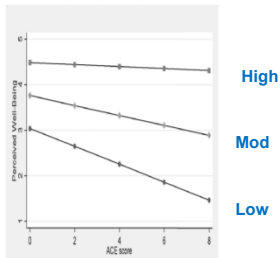
2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System BRFSS for Washington State (random dialing) N over 13,000

Resilience science has transformed practice in many fields

- Clinical psychology
- Pediatrics, Psychiatry
- School psychology
- Counseling
- Social work
- Family social science

Shifting the focus

- Positive outcomes
- Strength-based
- Promotive & protective processes
- Building capacity at multiple levels

Resilience Framework for Action

Mission	Frame positive goals
Models	Include positive influences
Measures	Assess assets & positive goals
Methods	Prevent - promote - protect
Multiple	Multiple levels & disciplines

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3 basic strategies to promote resilience

- Reduce or mitigate risk
- Boost resources and opportunities
- Mobilize power of "ordinary magic" resilience factors

Examples of Risk-focused strategies

- Prenatal care to prevent premature birth
- Reduce stress of pregnant women
- Screen and treat depression in mothers
- Reduce child maltreatment
- Avoid multiple foster care placements
- Reduce family violence
- Reduce school and neighborhood violence
- Clean up toxins
- Dig up landmines
- Prevent homelessness

Examples of Asset-focused strategies

- Food, water, shelter, medical care, dental care
- Educate parents, teachers, and traditional "first responders"
- Add financial resources
- Provide books or a tutor
- Quality childcare & early education programs
- Build schools, playgrounds, libraries
- Build or restore community services
- Stabilize housing, schooling, case managers
- Scholarships from early childhood to adulthood

Adaptive system focused strategies
Engage powerful engines of change

- Foster secure attachment relationships
- Promote bonds with competent/caring adults
- Support healthy family life and function
- Protect and nurture brain development
- Facilitate school bonding and engagement
- Foster friendships with prosocial peers
- Integrate systems of care
- Provide opportunities to succeed, develop talents…
- Support cultural traditions
  - To provide children with adaptive tools & connections with prosocial adults

Strengthen relationships brain power self control purpose

Example

How can we promote school success in children from very high-risk homeless or highly mobile families?

Interventions to consider

★ **Reduce risk & stress**
  - Reduce family stress; screen & treat depression in parents
  - Prevent homeless episodes & school changes
  - Reduce hunger and food insecurity
  - Prevent family and community violence

★ **Increase resources & access**
  - Financial supports, housing
  - Health care and mental health services
  - Quality childcare, early education, schools
  - Tutors, summer programs, computers, high speed internet
  - Family advocates

★ **Promote protective processes**
  - Effective parenting, teaching, mentoring
  - Sleep
  - Self-regulation skills in children and parents
  - Opportunities to succeed and develop talents
  - Support families & cultural traditions that promote resilience

Promoting Sleep

- Parents and children function better with adequate sleep

- Education and trouble-shooting for parents

- Collaborative pilot project on sleep
  - Simpson staff, Dr. Andy Barnes, Masten students
  - Relaxation training, actigraphers
  - See Labella et al 2017 for highlights
    - Podcast on this article also available (see resources last page of handout)

Parenting support and education

- Research is limited specific to homeless families
- Interests of parents
  - Stress reduction in the family
  - Access to good childcare and schools
  - School readiness and success
  - Promoting brain development
  - Child self-control

Ready? Set. Go! Intervention

Executive Function → School readiness

Risk
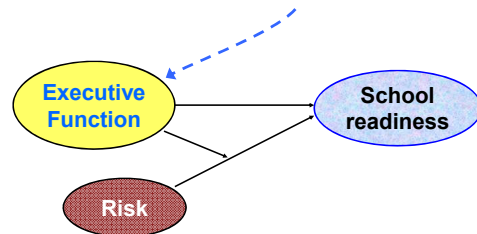
Collaborative

- **Developed in context**
  - Focus groups with local educators
  - Insight and expertise from cooperating teachers
  - Focus groups and feedback from parents

- **Design team**
  - Teachers & researchers from U of M, community
  - Pooled expertise

- **Community Advisory Board**

Multiple components

- Curriculum and teacher training

- Parent training in family fun sessions

- Individual child coaching

Grand Challenge: End Student Homelessness

Homework Starts with Home Research Partnership

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Take-home messages

- ★ Homelessness indicates academic & developmental risk
- ★ Resilience can be promoted in children at risk
- ★ Resilience of students depends on resilience of parents, families, schools, & communities
- ★ All of our futures depends on nurturing resilience and mitigating risk
- ★ Invest early in child development

Resources by Ann Masten (Selected)

RESILIENCE

Book

Masten, A. S. (2014, paperback ed. 2015). *Ordinary magic: Resilience in development*. New York: Guilford Press. Available from Amazon and Guilford. First chapter preview is available free online at Guilford.

PopTech talk on resilience

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBMet8oIvXQ

MOOC - Massive Open Online Course

Resilience in Children Exposed to Trauma, Disaster and War: Global Perspectives. Available free at Coursera.org (new sessions every 8 weeks). CE hours from College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) at U of M (with fee). https://www.coursera.org/learn/resilience-in-children   Trailer: https://www.class-central.com/mooc/1768/coursera-resilience-in-children-exposed-to-trauma-disaster-and-war-global-perspectives

Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development (on line free material) topic on resilience

There is a summary and also articles by leading researchers. Masten edited this topic. http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/resilience/introduction (free to download complete topic)

Summary of the case for investing in young children globally

Huebner, G., et al. (2016). Beyond survival: The case for investing in young children globally. National Academy of Medicine. https://nam.edu/beyond-survival-the-case-for-investing-in-young-children-globally/

Articles (open access)

Masten, A. S. (2019). Resilience from a developmental systems perspective. *World Psychiatry, 18(1),* 101-102. https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20591

Masten, A. S. (2018). Schools nurture resilience of children and societies. *Green Schools Catalyst Quarterly, V(3)*, 14-19.

http://catalyst.greenschoolsnationalnetwork.org/gscatalyst/september_2018/MobilePagedReplica.action?pm=2&folio=12#pg12

Masten, A. S. (2018). Resilience theory and research on children and families: Past, present, and promise. *Journal of Family Theory and Review, 10,* 12-31. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jftr.12255

Masten, A. S., & Barnes, A. J. (2018). Resilience in children: Developmental perspectives. *Children, 5, 98.* https://doi.org/10.3390/children5070098

Masten, A. S. (2014). Global perspectives on resilience in children and youth. *Child Development, 85,* 6-20. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12205 or https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cdev.12205

Southwick, S. M., Bonanno, G. A., Masten, A. S., …(2014). Resilience definitions theory, and challenges: Interdisciplinary perspectives. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 5*, 25338 (1-14). https://doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v5.25338

HOMELESSNESS

EDtalk on resilience in students experiencing homelessness given in Minneapolis Sep 25, 2017 https://www.achievempls.org/edtalks

Labella, M. H., Kalstabakken, A.W., Johnson, J., Leppa, J., Robinson, N., Masten, A. S., & Barnes, A. J. (2017). Promoting resilience by improving children's sleep…*Progress in Community Health Partnerships, 11, 285-293*. Podcast about the study: https://muse.jhu.edu/article/673546

Masten, A. S., Fiat, A. E., & Labella, M. H., & R. Strack (2015). Educating homeless and highly mobile students: Implications of research on risk and resilience. *School Psychology Review, 44*, 315-330. **OVERVIEW**

Cutuli, J. J., …& Masten, A. S. (2013). Academic achievement trajectories of homeless and highly mobile students: Resilience in the context of chronic and acute risk. *Child Development, 84,* 841-857.

Herbers, J. E., …& Masten, A. S. (2012). Early reading skills and academic achievement trajectories of students facing poverty, homelessness, and high residential mobility. *Educational Researcher, 41,* 366-374.

Masten, A. S., …& Zelazo, P. D. (2012). Executive function skills and school success in young children experiencing homelessness. *Educational Researcher, 41,* 375-384.

Masten, A. S., & Sesma, A. (1999). Risk and resilience among children homeless in Minneapolis. *CURA Reporter, 29*(1), 1-6. http://www.cura.umn.edu/publications/catalog/reporter-29-1-0

For additional articles and books search Google Scholar for Ann Masten