

Building resilience: A strategic approach to addressing the needs of disadvantaged children and families.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. This poster presentation offers an overview of work being undertaken within the Resilience Group in the Centre for Health Research at the University of Brighton in partnership with Boingboing and other community groups. Resilience is a widely-used concept in health and wellbeing literature that helps to explain differences in how well people cope with biological or social adversity.¹ While much is known about the nature and circumstances that promote resilience, empirical and practical efforts to build it in disadvantaged populations are scarce.

Overview. Our group aims to bring resilience research and practice together for disadvantaged or marginalized populations (www.boingboing.org.uk). Supporting individuals and organisations working with them is at the core of our practice. Theoretical advances we are working on include the development of a social justice oriented resilience research. We review existing research² and regularly advise government, charities (e.g., the Big Lottery's current £75 million child mental health resilience initiative). Our systematically co-productive research and practice successfully draw stakeholders with different roles, such as academics, practitioners, policy-makers, parents and young individuals, into the same space to work on building resilience.

Specific Project Examples. Numerous projects have been carried out by our group, and we have a strong presence of doctoral students. Ten years ago, Professor Angie Hart and her colleagues developed Resilient Therapy (RT) whose mission is to promote health and wellbeing by acting tactically about where to direct one's efforts when building resilience.³ Over 2000 practitioners, parents and young individuals have been exposed to RT; and many subsequent projects tested it out. For example, young people worked with academics and youth workers and produced their own RT toolkit for parents. The Imagine Project, a complex, multi-site and multi-perspective study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, is another ongoing project in our group. It explores capacities to ignite imagination about the future of healthy and well-functioning communities, to build resilience and a momentum for change using a community-university partnership approach. This project also offers a platform to test RT more broadly in the UK and internationally.

Conclusion. How to actually help people improve their health and quality of life with sustainable changes is a key focus of our work. Our members self-identify as, and/or work alongside disadvantaged or marginalised populations who, in addition to their health-related difficulties, also face social and health inequalities in their access to and use of support services. Therefore, we emphasize developing a strategic set of mechanisms in building resilience which will help to cope with adversity as well as to deal with systemic challenges. Our work has a strong potential to contribute to public's health and quality of life by addressing the needs of disadvantaged or marginalised populations and developing efforts to build up their resilience capital.

Keywords. Resilience research, resilience practice, social justice.

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Biography of the first author. *Angie Hart* is Professor of Child, Family and Community Health at the University of Brighton. She is the Academic Director of the University's Community University Partnership Programme and also runs Boingboing, a not for profit undertaking resilience research and practice development. She is the PI of the Imagine Programme Work Package 1 on the social context of civic engagement.
<http://www.boingboing.org.uk/index.php/who-are-we/angie-hart>