

INTERSECTIONAL
PERSPECTIVES ON
RESILIENCE IN GAY
MEN'S HEALTH
LITERATURE

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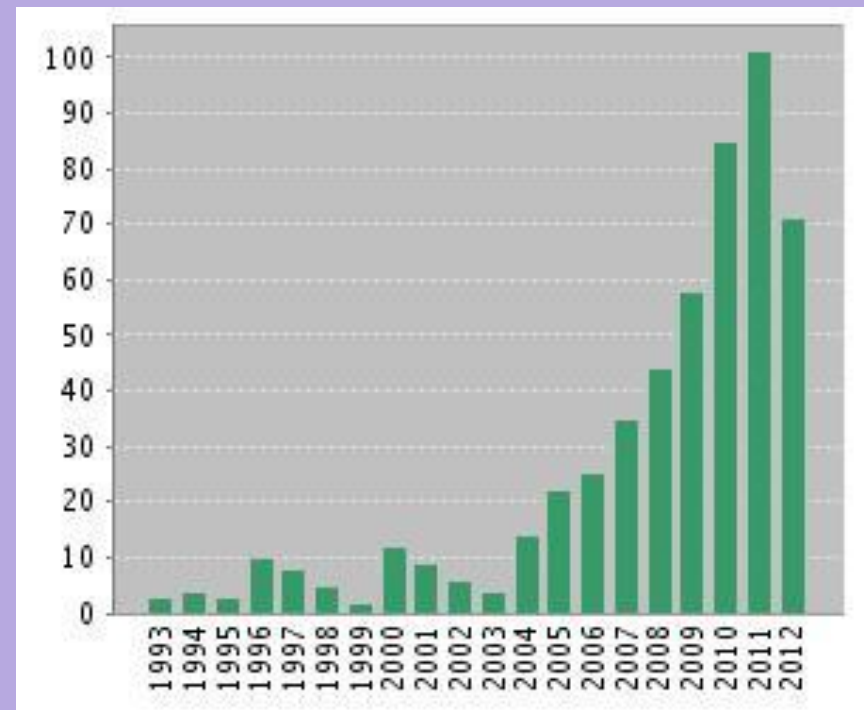
Lorraine
Halinka
Malcoe

GAY, NOT MSM

- Gay men includes cis and trans* men who are primarily attracted to men, and identify as gay, queer, two-spirit, homosexual
- This presentation does not speak to experiences of bisexual and heterosexual men who have sex with other men

BEYOND RESILIENCE AS A BUZZWORD

- Activism by gay men led the move “away from a perspective which exoticizes, demonizes, and pathologizes our bodies and our lives and into a model which recognizes the tenacity, survival-skills, and overall resilience of our cultures and communities” (Rofes, 1999)



Web of Science Citation report, results from keyword searches for gay men and resilience in October 2012

AIMS

- Review explicit conceptual definitions of resilience in the gay men's health literature
- Use intersectionality as a framework to consider the social and health equity implications of using resilience in these ways

INTERSECTIONALITY FRAMEWORK

- “more than one category should be analyzed, categories matters equally, relationship between categories is an open empirical question and members within a category are diverse,
- dynamic interaction between individual and institutional factors,
- analysis of the individual or set of individuals is integrated with institutional analysis”

From Dhamoon, 2011, p.232

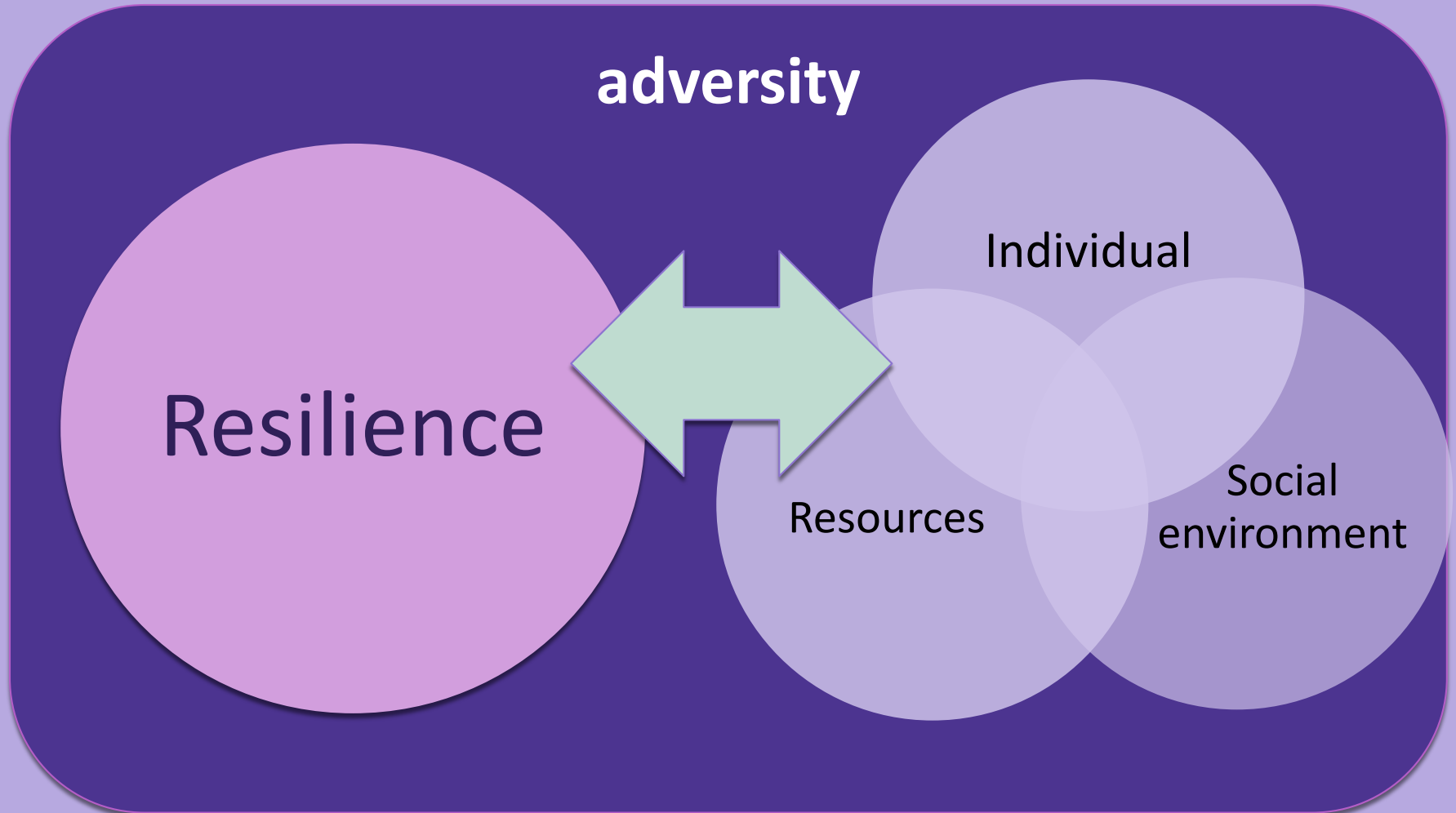
METHODS

- Systematic searches in CINAHL, Medline, PsycINFO and Social Work Abstracts (n=245)
 - **Gay:** queer, two-spirit, 'men who have sex with men' (MSM), down low, ibbi, yoos, radical faeries
 - **Man:** trans, male, man, boy
 - **Resilience:** resilien*, protective factors, strengths-based approaches
- 131 articles specifically used the concept of resilience in relation to gay men

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

- Published between 1987 and 2012
- Quantitative research and reviews
 - Most focused on youth and people living with HIV
- General (resilience) and specific (couple, ego, family, caregiving, educational, emotional and psychological resilience) concepts used
- 84% of articles did not provide an explicit conceptual definition of resilience

RESILIENCE = DYNAMIC PROCESS



ACUTE AND CHRONIC ADVERSITY

- Acute adverse event (e.g. suicide attempt, HIV diagnosis, loss of partner)
 - Getting through
 - Bouncing back
- Chronic adversity (e.g. systems of oppression, potential for HIV infection, living with HIV)
 - Thriving despite adversity
 - Growing from exposure to adversity

ANALYSIS

RESILIENCE AS A CATEGORY

- “Resilience” and “risk” are not dichotomous outcomes and may be experienced simultaneously
- Resilience is a strength in some contexts, heightens vulnerability in others

RESILIENCE AS A HOMOGENOUS EXPERIENCE

- Resilience literature focuses on identity category of “gay’ and fails to account for simultaneous parts of individuals’ identities
 - Diversity within samples may be reported, but no meaning is attributed to those attributes
 - Many measures of resilience reflect neoliberal, heteronormative values and are defined by researchers

STRUCTURAL FORCES

- Current conceptions of resilience divert attention from the role of structural forces
 - Systems of oppression that gay men are said to be resilient *to* are left unexamined
 - Unparalleled expectation of resilience amongst gay men (CATIE pan-Canadian deliberative dialogue participant)

PRODUCTIVE FORCES

- Researchers are *producing* a new category of 'good gay men' with the definitions of resilience

CONCLUSION

- Revisit the origins of resilience within gay men's health
 - Prevent adverse conditions that create resilience
- Use resilience research specifically to support a larger gay men's health agenda
 - Create space for diverse ways of achieving resilience
- There is a place for resilience in gay men's health research

NEXT STEPS FOR MY WORK

- Incorporate literature on resilience amongst indigenous people and other groups experiencing minority stress
- Expand this analysis to articles with implicit definitions
- Discuss relationships between protective factors and resilience

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS



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THINKING OF THE WORLD

EXTRAS

DISCUSSION

- Strength in some contexts, heightens vulnerability in others
- Unparalleled expectation of resilience amongst gay men
- Depoliticizes gay men's needs
- Narrow definition

LIMITATIONS OF DEFINITIONS

- Measures of resilience are often Eurocentric and based on “mainstream” values
- Systems of oppression that people are *resilient to* often left unexamined
- Rarely, if ever, is resilience studied at the community level

RESILIENCE

“Individuals’ *mental* health in the face of adversity, and why some individuals are able to experience adversity without negative ongoing physical and mental health outcomes and others aren’t.”

-Herman et al, 2011

CONCLUSION

- Resilience is located in gay men and in their communities

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO RESILIENCE

- Successfully negotiating coming out
- Multiple experiences of oppression
- Individual, internal factors
- Social support across the lifecycle