What Personalities Bounce Back from Life Events?

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Resilience and Reserve in Aging
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Definitions and terminology

• Life events

  • Stress literature: *Events that cause substantial change and readjustment in individuals’ usual routines.*

  • Developmental literature: *Transitions that require new behavioral responses*

  • Hybrid definition: *Time-discrete transitions that bring about a major change in status and/or social roles.*
Life Events

Marriage  Childbirth  Divorce  Widowhood
Graduation  Unemployment  Retirement  Disability
Definitions and terminology

- Studying Adaptation to Life Events
  - Prospective designs: *begins before the event*
  - Longitudinal data: *multiple measure occasions both before and after the event*
  - Control groups: *as similar as possible to the group that has experienced the event*
Source: Luhmann et al. (2014), European J of Personality
Do People Adapt to Major Life Events?

Source: Lucas (2007), Current Directions in Psychological Science
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Does the Big 5 Moderate Adaptation to Major Life Events?

Does personality moderate reaction and adaptation to major life events? Evidence from the British Household Panel Survey

Stevie C. Y. Yap*, Ivana Anusic, Richard E. Lucas*

Does personality moderate reaction and adaptation to major life events? Analysis of life satisfaction and affect in an Australian national sample

Ivana Anusic*, Stevie C.Y. Yap, Richard E. Lucas
What About Other Personality Factors?

Figure 1. Mean level of positive emotion at baseline and follow-up by widowhood status.

Figure 2. Change in positive emotion by widowhood status and trait resilience. High and low resilience were defined as one standard deviation from the mean.

Figure 3. Change in positive emotion by widowhood status and spousal strain. High and low strain were defined as one standard deviation from the mean.

Source: Ong, Fuller-Rowell, & Bonanno (2010), Psych & Aging
# LIFE TRANSITIONS, ROLE HISTORIES, AND MENTAL HEALTH

**Blair Wheaton**  
*The University of Toronto*

Table 6. Patterns of Support for the Stress-Relief Hypothesis for Nine Events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Pattern of Support</th>
<th>Support Restricted to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. a) Earlier divorce</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Recent divorce</td>
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<td>2. Pre-marital breakup</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Job loss</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Retirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Widowhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Child moving out</td>
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<td>7. Getting married</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Having a child</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Job promotion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Wheaton (1990), American Sociological Review*
Affective Reactivity
operationalizing idiographic processes

The degree of change in affect in response to daily stressors
Are individual differences in affective reactivity to daily stress prognostic of health?
Daily Affective Reactivity
conceptual representation of two-level data structure
Daily Affective Reactivity
multi-level modeling representation

- **Level 1 (day-level):**
  - \( \text{Affect}_{ij} = a_{0j} + a_{1j} (\text{Stressor Day})_{ij} + r_{ij} \)

- **Level 2 (person-level):**
  - \( a_{0j} = \beta_{00} + u_{0j} \)
  - \( a_{1j} = \beta_{10} + u_{1j} \)
Affective Reactivity: Underlying Health Vulnerability?

evidence from prior studies

Eudaimonic Well-Being
Selcuk, Gunaydin, Ong, & Almeida (2016)
J of Marriage and Family

Depressive Symptoms
Ong & Burrow (2018)
Developmental Psychopathology

Sleep
Ong, Exner, Riffin, Steptoe, Zautra, & Almeida (2013)
Annals of Behavioral Medicine

Marital Quality
Ong, Gardner, Urganci, Selcuk, & Gunaydin (2019)
J of Family Psychology

Physiology
Sin, Graham-Engeland, Ong, & Almeida (2015)
Health Psychology

Mortality
Mroczek et al. (2013),
Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Science
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Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Science
Chronic 5-30%

Delayed 0-15%?

Recovery 15-25%

Resilience 35-65%

Summing Up and Moving Forward

• **People differ in their rates of adaptation to major life events**
  - Some life events (e.g., disability) are associated with lasting changes

• **Personality does not moderate adaptation**
  - Other personality characteristics (e.g., role history) may shape adaptation

• **Idiographic approaches can be used to capture the dynamic nature of personality resilience**
  - Reactivity vs. recovery

• **Person-centered approaches may be useful in studying the influence of personality on adaptation**
  - Need to conceptualize adaptation as a multidimensional construct.