Building Resilience for Children in Turbulent Times

Ann S. Masten

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover℠
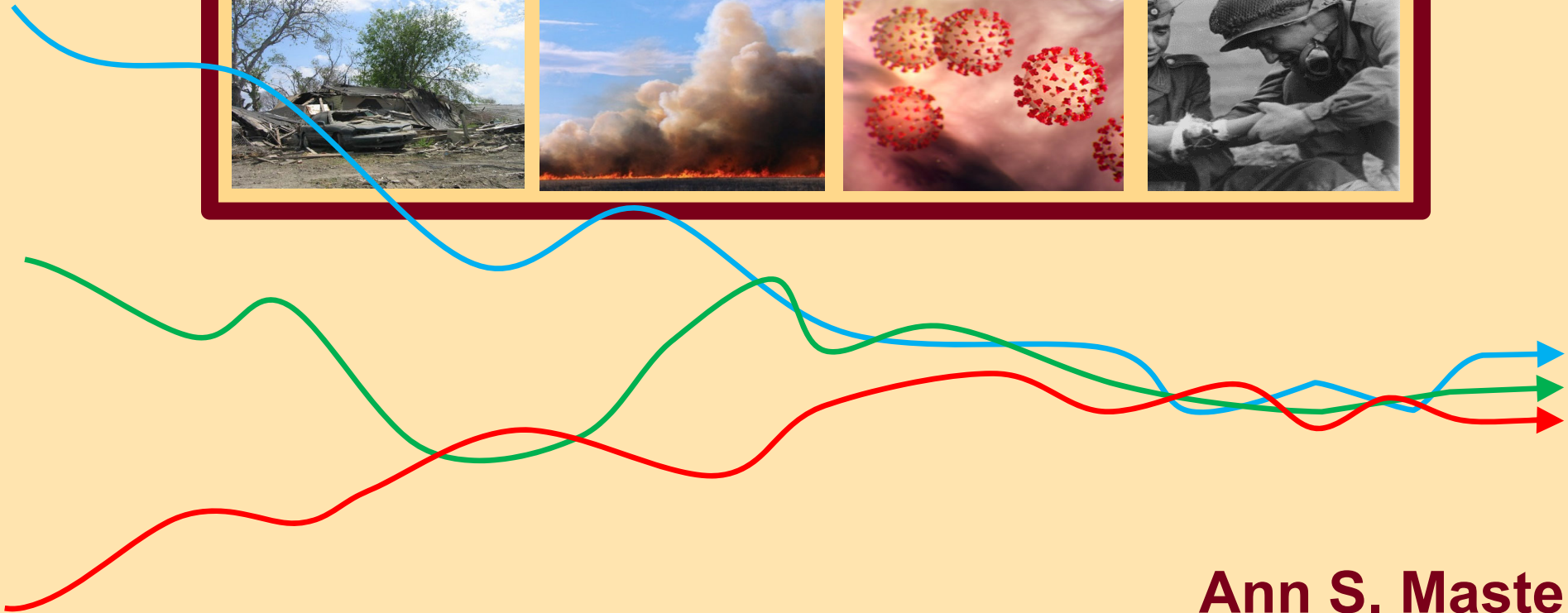
Advances in resilience science since 1970s

- Theory and models of resilience processes
- Methods ~ from imaging brain activity to field data collection
- Research on multiple levels of analysis and multisystem processes
- Neurobiological-focused research
- Studies of diverse cultures
- Expansion of research & researchers in the Global South
- Collaboration of humanitarian agencies with researchers
- Bridging divides to prepare for disaster
- Growing realization that we need a common language

◆ **Key drivers of evolution?**
   Developmental systems theory, technology, globalization

Observations on the COVID roller coaster

⊙ Cycles of surging capacity and depletion are normal

⊙ Massive disturbances can spur innovation & change

⊙ Increasing awareness that economies depend on resilience of families, childcare systems, healthcare systems, and schools, as well as supply chains and energy…

⊙ Multisystem disasters require multisystem responses

Essential → A systems definition of resilience
for scalability & portability

Photo © Kendra Mack 2008

RESILIENCE

Capacity of a system (child, family, community…) to adapt successfully (through multisystem processes) to challenges that threaten system function, survival or development

Masten 2007, 2014, 2018, Masten et al 2021

Key systems for children

- Embedded
- Interacting
- Interdependent

Photo © Kendra Mack 2008
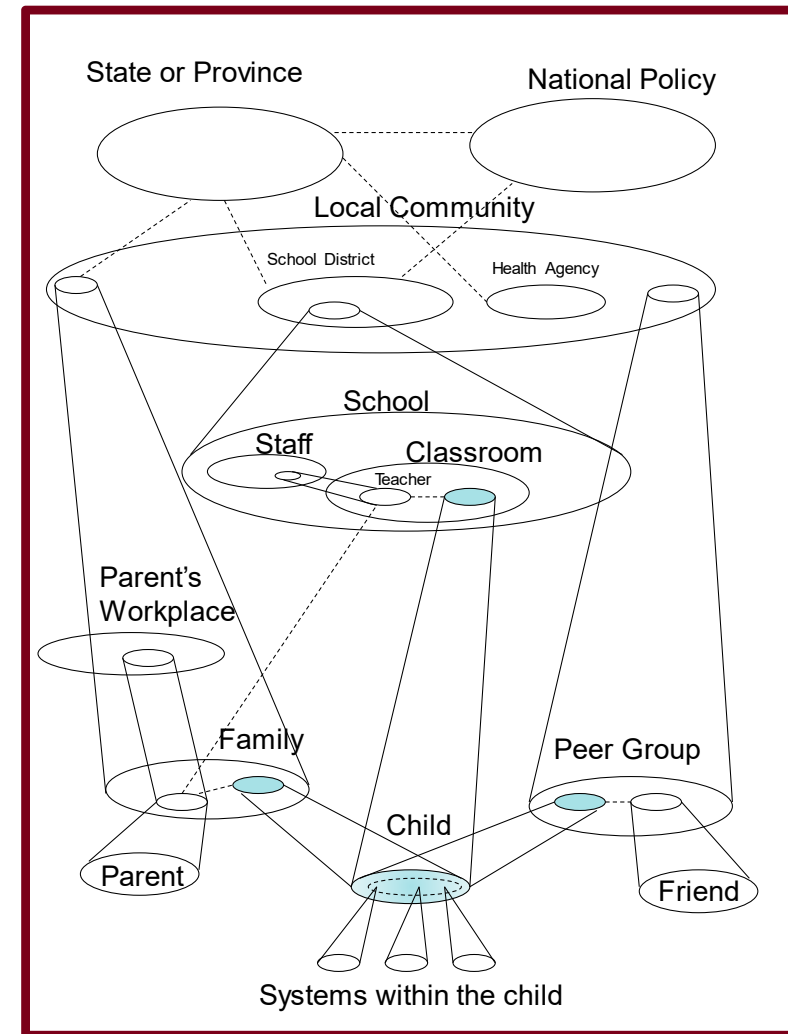
All embedded in cultural, physical, & historical context

State or Province

National Policy

Local Community

School District

Health Agency

School

Staff

Classroom

Teacher

Parent's Workplace

Family

Peer Group

Parent

Child

Friend

Systems within the child

Protecting now & building resilience for the future
How teachers & schools matter

Photo © Kendra Mack 2008

- Meeting basic needs (meals, health care)
- Relationships with competent and caring adults
- Rules and routines; Safety, security, stability
- A sense of belonging
- Opportunities for agency and building self-efficacy
- Nurturing human and social capital; scaffolding many skills
- After war/disaster/COVID…powerful symbol of return to normal
- **Building resilience for individuals & societies in multiple ways**

From a systems perspective

- **Resilience is dynamic, fluctuating and changing**

- **Resilience is distributed across multiple systems and levels**

- **"Individual" resilience depends on resilience of other systems**

- **Resilience can cascade across levels, domains, and generations**

The "short list" of resilience factors extends to multiple systems

◆ **Attachment bonds, close relationships, social support**

◆ **Sense of belonging, cohesion**

◆ **Self-regulation, executive function, system leadership**

◆ **Problem solving, planning**

◆ **Mastery motivation, motivation to adapt**

◆ **Beliefs in self or system efficacy, agency, active coping**

◆ **Hope, optimism, confidence in a better future**

◆ **Purpose, a sense of meaning**

◆ **Positive views of self, family, school, community**

◆ **Positive habits, routines, rituals, traditions, celebrations**

ORDINARY MAGIC
Resilience in Development
ANN S. MASTEN
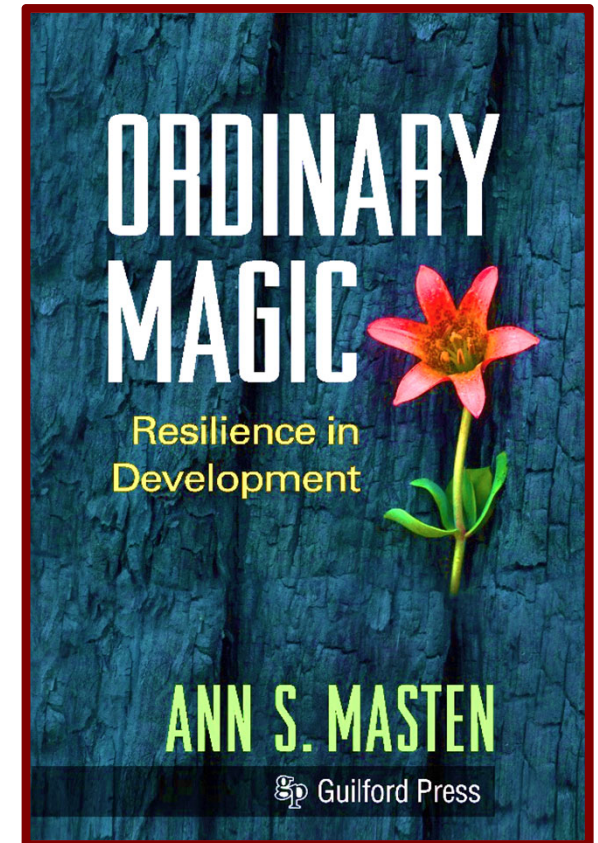Guilford Press

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover℠

Table 1 Parallel psychosocial resilience factors in human systems at the level of individual, family, school, and community

Individual children or youth	Family	School	Community
Nurturing and sensitive caregivers	Nurturing by family, care of vulnerable members	Nurturing by school community, disability services	Social capital, care of vulnerable members
Close relationships, trust, belonging	Close relationships, trust, belonging, cohesion	Close relationships, trust, belonging, cohesion	Social connections, trust, belonging, cohesion
Self-regulation, executive function skills	Skilled family management	Skilled school leadership	Skilled governance, collective efficacy
Agency; active coping	Active coping	Active coping	Community action
Problem-solving and planning	Family problem-solving and planning	School problem-solving and planning	Collaborative community problem-solving, planning
Hope, optimism	Hope, optimism	Hope, optimism	Hope, optimism
Sense of individual meaning and purpose	Sense of family meaning, purpose, family coherence	Sense of school meaning, purpose, and coherence	Sense of community meaning, purpose, and coherence
Positive views of self, self-efficacy	Positive views of family	Positive views of school	Positive views of community
Positive habits, routines	Family routines, traditions, celebrations	School routines, traditions, celebrations	Community routines, traditions, celebrations

Why do resilience factors & processes align so well?

- **Plausible possibilities…**
  - They reflect basic human adaptive systems that co-evolved across system levels in key contexts of human interaction
  - They index major multisystem psychosocial drivers of resilience
  - They operate as interacting systems and networks
  - Yielding greater human adaptive capacity collectively than individually

- **Evident in other major human socioecological systems?**
  - **YES** for example in religious, military, cultural, & business organizations

Resilience science transformed practice in many fields

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

Shifting the focus

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

COVID-19 was a wake-up call

- Pervasive racial disparities & inequities
  - ACEs, food insecurity, homelessness, broadband, health
- Gaps in safety nets for children, youth, and families
- Costs of ignoring dependence of economies on schools and childcare
- Vital role of schools in child health and well-being
- Inadequate mental health care systems
- Fragmented supports for child development
- Underinvestment in disaster preparedness
- The need for resilience-informed as well as trauma-informed care

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover℠

COVID-19 required multisystem mobilization
Examples

♦ Immune systems

♦ Individual behaviors: handwashing, masks, distancing, getting vaccine…

♦ Family systems: care for family, monitor & protect children…

♦ Health systems: treat, surge, educate, prevent, innovate, vaccinate…

♦ Government & commerce systems

  ▪ Maintain power, water, food, internet, transportation systems…

  ▪ Surge supplies, funds, logistics, enforce safety…

♦ R & D systems: develop, test, manufacture vaccines and treatments…

♦ Media: communicate accurate information…

♦ Trusted leaders at every level: convey information and sustain hope…

**3 basic strategies implicated by resilience research
to foster positive adaptation in the context of adversity**

♦ **Reduce or mitigate compounding risk**

♦ **Boost resources and opportunities**

♦ **Leverage powerful adaptive systems**

Northside Achievement Zone

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover℠

Reduce risk & adversity

- Reduce exposure to COVID-19
- Reduce carbon emissions, air & water pollution
- Prevent child maltreatment or premature birth
- Screen & treat maternal depression
- Monitor child exposure to traumatic media coverage
- Reduce violence or systemic racism

Boost resources

- Surge supplies of water, food, ventilators, vaccines…
- Incentives for green energy; Nature education
- Cash payments & subsidies to families
- Parental leave, early childhood education scholarships
- Increase training and pay of teachers and ECE workers
- Increase availability of mental health services

Mobilize/restore/improve adaptive & protective processes

- Surge research on vaccines and treatments
- Enlist youth as advocates & educators for climate action
- Reunite families; restore childcare
- Foster self care practices: sleep, exercise, gratitude, mindfulness…
- Provide opportunities for children to play, learn, and help
- Promote a sense of meaning and belonging
- Support cultural traditions that support child and family resilience

Examples

Remember ~ Resilience of children depends on resilience of families & schools

◆ How do we nurture & support the resilience of parents?

◆ How do communities & governments support family resilience?

◆ How do we support the resilience of educators?

◆ How do communities & governments support school resilience?

Integration is underway
across systems, disciplines, sectors, and applications

In theory

- Molecular & global
- Individual & family
- Family & community
- Psychosocial & ecological
- Human & electronic
- Social & economic

In action

- Disaster response
- Humanitarian intervention
- Prevention science
- Public health
- Climate change
- Peacebuilding

MULTISYSTEMIC RESILIENCE
ADAPTATION AND TRANSFORMATION IN CONTEXTS OF CHANGE

EDITED BY
MICHAEL UNGAR

OXFORD