

Call for papers – Special issue in Demographic Research

Title: Families’ resilience and the well-being of children and youth in contexts of global socioeconomic crises

Special collection co-editors: Anna Baranowska-Rataj, Centre for Demographic and Ageing Research, Umeå University; Pablo Gracia, Trinity College Dublin; Wiebke Schulz, SOCIUM Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy, University of Bremen

Submissions: can be made starting from 1st July 2024 via website www.demographic-research.org/authors/Submission indicating that the submission is a part of the Special Collection.

Deadline: 31st October 2024.

Families across the world have been increasingly exposed to socioeconomic crises (Burgard & Kalousova 2015; Schulz et al. 2023). Recent events of global reach and significance, such as the Great Recession and COVID-19 pandemic, have had direct effects on families’ well-being, resulting in reduced labour demand, reduced employment opportunities and social restrictions that affected social ties among family members. Although the immediate consequences of these crises may at first be observed in the working-age population, they directly affect the well-being of children and youth (Baranowska-Rataj et al. 2023; Gassman-Pines et al. 2015; Högberg & Baranowska-Rataj 2024).

While it is difficult to prevent crises that threaten the well-being of children and youth, families can build resilience to these calamities. Resilience was originally defined as persistability of a system despite disturbances in its environment (Holling 1973). In early studies, resilience was viewed as the ability of a system to absorb a shock, while retaining functionality as well as the capacity of adaptation, i.e. changing behaviours in a way which prevents declines in well-being (Folke 2006). Most recently, research on social resilience has moved away from the earlier ideas of persistability or adaptability by putting increased emphasis on *transformative changes* in response to threats (Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013; Pereirinha & Pereira 2021), thus stressing the dynamic aspects of resilience (Bartova et al. 2023). Compared to adaptation, the idea of a transformative change focuses on radical shifts that lead to *enhancement of present and future well-being*.

In research on families, examples of transformative changes can be found in the seminal study “Children of the Great Depression” by Glen Elder (1974). This study showed that for some children a crisis was a trigger leading to obtaining a new status or role. In response to the crisis, many families re-organised the division of domestic and economic responsibilities, altering the balance of power in parent-child relationships, and leading young people to obtain new skills in self-direction, greater self-reliance, increased social independence, money-management skills and social responsibility. Thus, while the Great Depression did have detrimental consequences for many children, this crisis also led

families to adopt transformative changes that promote children's well-being. Yet, resilience understood as transformative changes in families remains underinvestigated. This is the knowledge gap that we aim to fill in this special issue.

The contributions to this special issue will allow us to answer the following key questions:

- (1) How do families respond to crises?
- (2) What changes in parenting behaviour, inner-family organization or investments in skills are made?
- (3) What types of resources or types of support are mobilised or re-allocated by families to enhance the present and future well-being of children and youth?
- (4) What challenges and trade-offs need to be tackled in this process so that families can maximise their children's well-being?

The ambition of this special issue is to provide new understanding of *transformative changes* in families beyond adaptive responses to socioeconomic crises. We conceptualise a transformative change as a mechanism which alters power relations in intergenerational relations and provides youngest family members with more resources and skills, autonomy, authority, as well as socioeconomic power linked to enhancing their current well-being and securing a better future. Examples include changes to parenting behaviour, changes to the inner-family organization of care, as well as increased investments in educational or extra-curricular activities. We define well-being as a state that allows children and adolescents to achieve their full potential, using an approach that draws on previous multidimensional definitions of young people's well-being (Ross et al. 2020). Using this definition, studies collected in this issue may include analyses focusing on children's and/or adolescent emotional, cognitive, physical and sociocultural well-being or a combination of these.

We welcome empirical analyses that employ longitudinal data and methods. Research designs where families are observed over extended time, before and after the onset of a crisis, provide excellent opportunities for causal inference to contribute to this special issue. Analyses employing techniques such as mediation analysis (VanderWeele 2016) or structural equation modelling approaches (Bollen et al. 2022) are particularly welcome to study the mechanisms of transformative change. Large-scale field experiments leveraging data on interventions that support families in the wake of socioeconomic crises may also illuminate institutional conditions that empower families to overcome adversities (Masten 2018). Additionally, longitudinal qualitative studies (Bernardi & Sánchez-Mira 2021) that follow families as they re-organise in response to a crisis are of interest.

Overall, this special issue should help to better understand: (1) how an exposure to crises triggers families to relocate resources, re-organise, transform power relations and shift authority, and (2) how these changes subsequently enhance well-being among children and youth, while (3) distinguishing

these indirect effects of crises, channelled via transformative responses, from direct consequences of economic and social deprivation that crises typically involve. Studies that innovate theoretically and empirically in the fields of child and youth well-being, and which refer to the central themes outlined above, are particularly welcome as contributions to the special issue.

References

- Baranowska-Rataj, A., Högberg, B., & Bernardi, L. (2023). Parental unemployment and adolescents' subjective wellbeing—the moderating role of educational policies. *European Sociological Review*, advanced access: <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcad038>.
- Bartova, A., Thaning, M., Van Lancker, W., Backman, L., & Nieuwenhuis, R. (2023). Family Profiles: Risks, resources and inequalities. *rEUsilience Working Paper Series*: 1.
- Bernardi, L., & Sánchez-Mira, N. (2021). Prospective qualitative research: new directions, opportunities and challenges. *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, 12(1), 3-5.
- Bollen, K. A., Fisher, Z., Lilly, A., Brehm, C., Luo, L., Martinez, A., & Ye, A. (2022). Fifty years of structural equation modeling: A history of generalization, unification, and diffusion. *Social Science Research*, 107.
- Burgard, S. A., & Kalousova, L. (2015). Effects of the Great Recession: Health and well-being. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41, 181-201.
- Elder, G. H., Jr. (1974). *Children of the Great Depression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Folke, C. (2006). Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social–ecological systems analyses. *Global Environmental Change*, 16(3), 253-267.
- Gassman-Pines, A., Gibson-Davis, C. M., & Ananat, E. O. (2015). How economic downturns affect children's development: an interdisciplinary perspective on pathways of influence. *Child Development Perspectives*, 9(4), 233-238.
- Högberg, B., & Baranowska-Rataj, A. (2024). Effects of parental job loss on psychotropic drug use in children: long-term effects, timing, and cumulative exposure. *Advances in Life Course Research*, advanced access: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2024.100607>.
- Holling, C. S. (1973). Resilience and stability of ecological systems. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, 4(1), 1-23.
- Keck, M., & Sakdapolrak, P. (2013). What is social resilience? Lessons learned and ways forward. *Erdkunde*, 5-19.
- Masten, A. S. (2018). Resilience theory and research on children and families: Past, present, and promise. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10(1), 12-31.
- Pereirinha, J. A. C., & Pereira, E. (2021). Social resilience and welfare systems under COVID-19: A European comparative perspective. *Global Social Policy*, 21(3), 569-594.
- Ross, D. A., Hinton, R., Melles-Brewer, M., Engel, D., Zeck, W., Fagan, L., ... & Mohan, A. (2020). Adolescent well-being: a definition and conceptual framework. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 67(4), 472-476.
- Schulz, W., Solga, H., & Pollak, R. (2023). Vocational education, tertiary education, and skill use across career stages. *European Sociological Review*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcac074>
- VanderWeele, T. J. (2016). Mediation analysis: a practitioner's guide. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 37, 17-32.