Research methods for exploring, building and monitoring community resilience

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Abstract

The growing interest in improving our understandings of community resilience, across the different conceptualisations found across the social-ecological systems, mental health, and disaster management paradigms, requires new and improved research approaches. This paper reviews methods used to date, and suggests opportunities for expanding the range and efficacy of approaches used to understand, improve and monitor the coupled social and ecological aspects of community resilience. The paper explores three potential foci: research approaches that enhance conceptual understanding of community resilience; those that help to improve community resilience through the research process (linking to practice); and the further development of methods to guide monitoring. Most studies to date have relied on mixed and multi-staged methods, including in-depth interviews and case studies. Other approaches deserve attention. There is particular scope for greater use of cumulative studies, historical or retrospective studies, participatory methods, and systems approaches, and a need for more methods that explore the coupling of social and ecological dimensions. The paper uses illustrations from Australian studies.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary, learning, shared learning, resilience assessment, social, ecological systems

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