

Toxic Resilience: Tipping the Scales of Resilience Against Black Women

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Introduction

Abstract

Resilience is defined as “An interactive concept that is concerned with the combination of serious risk experiences and a relatively positive psychological outcome despite those experiences” (Rutter, 2006, p. 336). By framing resilience in this way, society desensitizes Black Women to the scale of the adversities they face and ignoring the magnitude of psychological stress that they have had to endure as a means of survival. The praise and reinforcement associated with perceptions of resilience and situations where perseverance is sustained as a means of survival further the illusion that Black Women adapt characteristics of the “Superwoman Schema” independently.

Aims of the Research

The purpose of my study is to pinpoint and analyze key subsections of rhetoric, locate the beliefs that Black women have surrounding resiliency and compare them to the history and construction of resilience, mindfulness, and the stigmas surrounding mental health. I acknowledge the deficit thinking used when addressing Black women’s relationship with overstress as an issue that they have taken on, as opposed to a societal desensitization that has been pushed upon them.

Research Questions

Research questions were formed by acknowledging the deficit thinking that is used when addressing Black women’s relationship with overstress as an issue that they have taken on, as opposed to a societal desensitization that has been pushed upon them.

Research Questions:

- What are the perceptions/experiences of adversity and perseverance?
- How do Black Women manage and respond to adversity?

Method

Research Design

This exploratory qualitative study sought to examine a culturally specific phenomenon with the analytical objective of describing the individual experiences of Black women and resiliency.

The data were collected using interviews to gather the perspectives and experiences of participants. Interviews lasted around 45 minutes to one hour each and were held on campus in private conference rooms.

Participants

Snowball sampling was used to identify participants as well as the utilization of University resources like department newsletters and listservs. Black women who work in student affairs at a Predominately White institution were recruited. Participants were two Black women who self-identified as cisgender women.

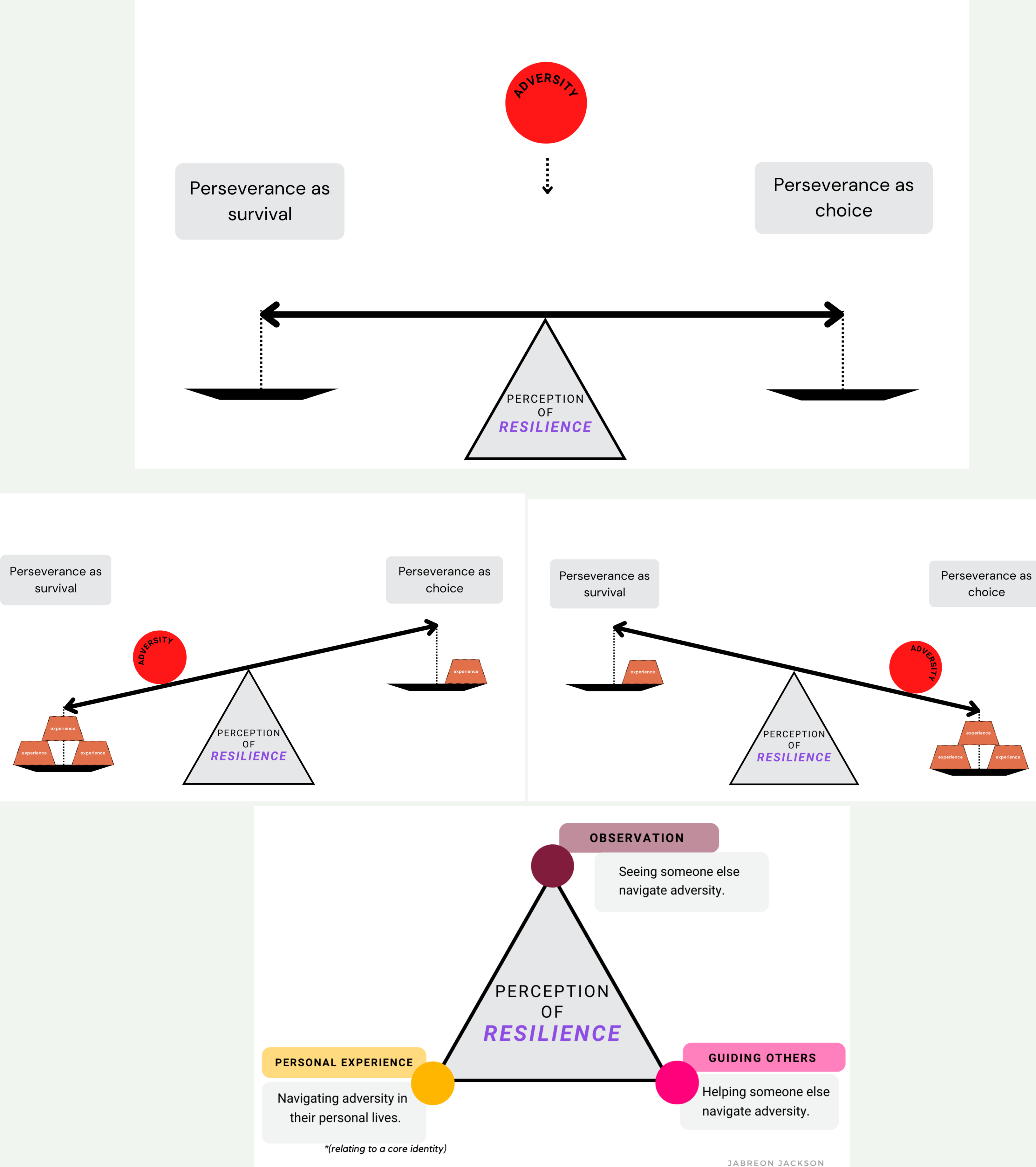
Data Collection and Analysis

While developing the interview protocol, I was conscious of the traumas associated with Blackness and resiliency and developed holistic interview questions with the attempt to target narratives that may not naturally surface in conversation. Interviews were held in person and on campus and consisted of 14 standardized questions. Each session was audio recorded.

Interview data were coded and analyzed by grouping together common themes from the interview process and after reviewing the interview transcripts. A two-phase analysis process was used to review each interview twice. First, I highlighted sections of data that contained related ideas. In the second phase, I created idea groupings that I later used for analysis.

Results

Conclusion



Key References

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