DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Review Article

Family and social resilience:
A scoping review of the empirical literature

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Abstract

BACKGROUND
The concept of resilience in familial and social contexts has gained prominence in academic and policy discussions. However, the interplay between family life and social inequalities, and how these relate to each other in the resilience literature, has yet to be documented.

OBJECTIVE
This scoping review addresses this gap by analysing 250 articles published between 1998 and 2023. We compare the concept of resilience as applied in family and social resilience studies through four constitutive elements: (1) the unit of analysis, (2) definitions, (3) types, and (4) the risks, outcomes, and explanatory factors that are examined empirically.

RESULTS
While both perspectives study individuals' resilience, the emphasis in family resilience is on families, whereas social resilience studies focus more on communities and societies. Both perspectives emphasize the centrality of risks in defining resilience, yet family resilience scholarship seeks solutions within the family, while social resilience highlights community dynamics. Additionally, family resilience studies explore topics related to family-specific risks and resources, while social resilience studies examine external risks and resources.

CONCLUSIONS
The family resilience scholarship follows the clinical tradition in the resilience literature, viewing families as a separate entity that is resourceful and agentic. Socioeconomic risks are recurrent themes in social resilience literature, but not in family resilience.

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CONTRIBUTION
Understanding resilience through the lens of family inequalities in socioeconomic contexts can bridge these two perspectives. Incorporating factors such as labour market dynamics, family transitions, and educational attainment into definitions of risks, outcomes, and explanatory factors of resilience can enhance this integration.

1. Introduction

Over the past decade the concept of resilience has gained prominence in analyses of the social challenges and crises that families are exposed to. Resilience is often used to describe and explain why some people or families in challenging positions are doing better than others who are in the same situation. Furthermore, the concept of resilience tends to refer to the process through which families adapt to challenges, emphasizing their agency, and thus it is used to analyse what families do, rather than what they lack (Frankenhuis and Nettle 2020). In particular, the concept of family resilience is relevant when addressing questions of family inequality, commonly studied in the social and population sciences including demography, sociology, and economics.

The importance of understanding the concept of resilience is further underlined by its adoption in EU policymaking, where it is increasingly applied to social issues, not least in response to COVID-19. For instance, the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) was installed in 2021 with the aim of "mitigating the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis" and seeks to achieve resilience in six areas, among them "inclusive growth, including economic cohesion, jobs, productivity."[4] Moreover, the High-Level Group on the Future of Social Protection of the Welfare State (2023: 10) reported that "… long-term megatrends and the emerging crises reinforce the need to foster social resilience." Here, social resilience is considered as the capacity to respond to crisis situations, like COVID-19, that occur at a macro level yet cause deteriorating inequalities effects at the micro level, placing the notion of resilience at the core of policymaking.

While family and social inequalities are intrinsically linked (cf. Kollmeyer 2013; McLanahan and Percheski 2008; Stier and Mandel 2009; UN Women 2019), little is known about how the concepts of family resilience and social resilience are understood, used, and related to each other. Yet there are indications that the two concepts are analysed in distinct ways. While this represents a richness in the literature, if not addressed systematically it can also inhibit learning about the conditions for resilience in

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[4]   https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/recovery-and-resilience-facility-performance_en#programme-in-a-nutshell   (last accessed: 7 October 2024)

more general terms. This article presents a scoping review of all empirical articles that were published up to and including 2023, with the concepts 'family resilience' or 'social resilience' in the title or abstract.

We answer two related questions: What similarities and differences exist between family resilience and social resilience in terms of how they are (1) conceptualised and (2) empirically applied?

In light of the vast heterogeneity present in how resilience is studied, our contribution is to develop a systematic approach to scoping this literature. We present a conceptualisation of how resilience is used and applied based on four constitutive elements: (1) the unit of resilience, (2) the components that constitute the definition of resilience, (3) the classification of types of resilience, and (4) the particular themes or topics of the risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes that are studied empirically.

These four constitutive elements are informed by insights from – and debates in – the broader resilience literature. The starting point for examining resilience is to chart the unit of resilience (1). The literature highlights the following as the units analysed in terms of resilience: individuals, families, communities, and/or societies as a whole (cf. Calado et al. 2020; Gray and Rooney 2018; Hall and Lamont 2013).

Second, definitions of resilience often entail some crisis or risk, a response to this crisis, and an assessment of whether the response is effective in protecting or achieving aspects of well-being (Mohaupt 2009). However, not all conceptualisations systematically incorporate all three aspects. We therefore map the extent to which risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes are used as criteria to define resilience in each article (2). First, the presence of a risk (or a significant change that may pose a challenge to maintaining a family's current quality of life or well-being) can occur as an instant unforeseen shock or as the result of a natural transition from one life stage to another. Second, we focus on the response (if any) to the risk: what factors explain why some people and families are more resilient than others? This can be explained by the resources at hand or their constraints, generated from within or through external support. Finally, we map the outcomes or the degree of efficiency of the response or lack thereof in cushioning individuals and families against further vulnerabilities.

The potential explanations of resilience partly depend on whether it is considered to be agentic (Van Acker et al. 2023; Walsh 2016). However, relying on agentic behaviours can lead to an over-emphasis on families being responsible for overcoming the risks. Contemporary resilience scholarship recognizes that there are inequalities in the resources and constraints that determine the ability to respond to crises and risks (Dagdeviren et al. 2020; Nieuwenhuis et al. 2023). The severity of inequalities and the variation in institutional support lead us to another relevant factor in family resilience: the social structure in which the families are situated that fosters familial capacities (Masten and Powell 2003).

Third, there is considerable debate on what is considered as being 'resilient': is it maintaining well-being, 'bouncing back', absorbing the risk or adapting to it? Does it require transformation, or is it something entirely different? We therefore present a classification of the types of resilience as conceptualised in the literature on family resilience and social resilience (3).

Fourth, and finally, we examine the substantive topic of which risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes are empirically studied in the literature on family resilience and social resilience.

The comparison between family and social resilience is first and foremost motivated by the aforementioned link between family inequalities and social inequalities. Second, family resilience and social resilience are independent, growing, and active academic subfields. Third, we focus on social resilience as well as family resilience because it is in line with the recommendations of the High-Level Group on the Future of Social Protection of the Welfare State, and it is a broader concept than some of its related alternatives (e.g., economic resilience) and thus captures a wider range of issues. Finally, while our study focuses on the conceptualisation and application of family and social resilience, we acknowledge that resilience research more broadly includes contributions on household and family resilience that do not always explicitly use the terms 'family resilience' or 'social resilience' (e.g., Canvin et al. 2009; Dagdeviren, Donoghue, and Promberger 2016). Our approach intentionally narrows the scope to these two concepts, complementing rather than encompassing those broader contributions.

This article is organised as follows. In the next section we present the methodological details of the scoping review. This is followed by sections that respectively address trends in the use of family and social resilience, how family and social resilience are defined, and what risks, outcomes, and explanatory factors are considered in the family and social resilience literature. In the concluding section we draw lessons from the similarities and differences in how family and social resilience are used and the potential gaps that can be identified in the respective literatures.

2. Methodology

A scoping review methodology was employed to map the rapidly growing literature on family resilience and social resilience. Conducting a scoping review in this field is essential for identifying key gaps in current research and clarifying the scope of the available evidence, ultimately helping to establish a unified understanding of how these concepts intersect. It specifically aims to "clarify key concepts in the literature", "identify key characteristics or factors related to a concept" and "identify and analyse knowledge gaps." (Munn et al. 2018: 2). To our knowledge, an extensive review of family and social

resilience, focusing particularly on families and socioeconomic outcomes, has not been conducted before, and a scoping review is therefore particularly well-suited to exploring the topic more broadly.

The following section includes the methodological steps taken to construct the review. In line with Levac and colleagues (2010), we follow a re-developed framework of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) methodological framework for conducting scoping reviews (Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien 2010). This framework consists of five steps: (1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) study selection, (4) charting the data, and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting results (Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien 2010). The full search strategy, data extraction procedures, data extraction sheet, and reference list are available in an online appendix to this article.

The scoping review was prepared in line with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) diagram (see Figure 1), visualizing the study selection process and presenting the excluded studies at each step of the search and screening process and the final sample of included studies (Tricco et al. 2018).

2.1 Data source and search strategy

The identification of eligible studies (first row in Figure 1) was performed using the Web of Science database. We selected this database because it covers a broad and extensive range of interdisciplinary peer-reviewed research, necessary to explore the potential common ground between the two fields of literature.

The search was performed using the keywords 'family resilience' and 'social resilience' as separate searches. Articles were included if the keyword(s) appeared in the title or the abstract. Furthermore, various social science or neighbouring research fields were included: economics, social work, family studies, social sciences (interdisciplinary), urban studies, political science, sociology, anthropology, behavioural sciences, public administration, social issues, women's studies, social sciences (mathematical methods), demography, statistics probability, applied mathematics, and mathematics. No start date was set, but the sample was restricted to papers available in the database before 2024. An initial search was performed in November 2023, and a second on 15 August 2024 to include subsequent publications through 2023. In total, this resulted in 233 records for family resilience and 152 for social resilience. All records were imported into the reference management software Zotero.

Figure 1:   PRISMA diagram of eligible studies
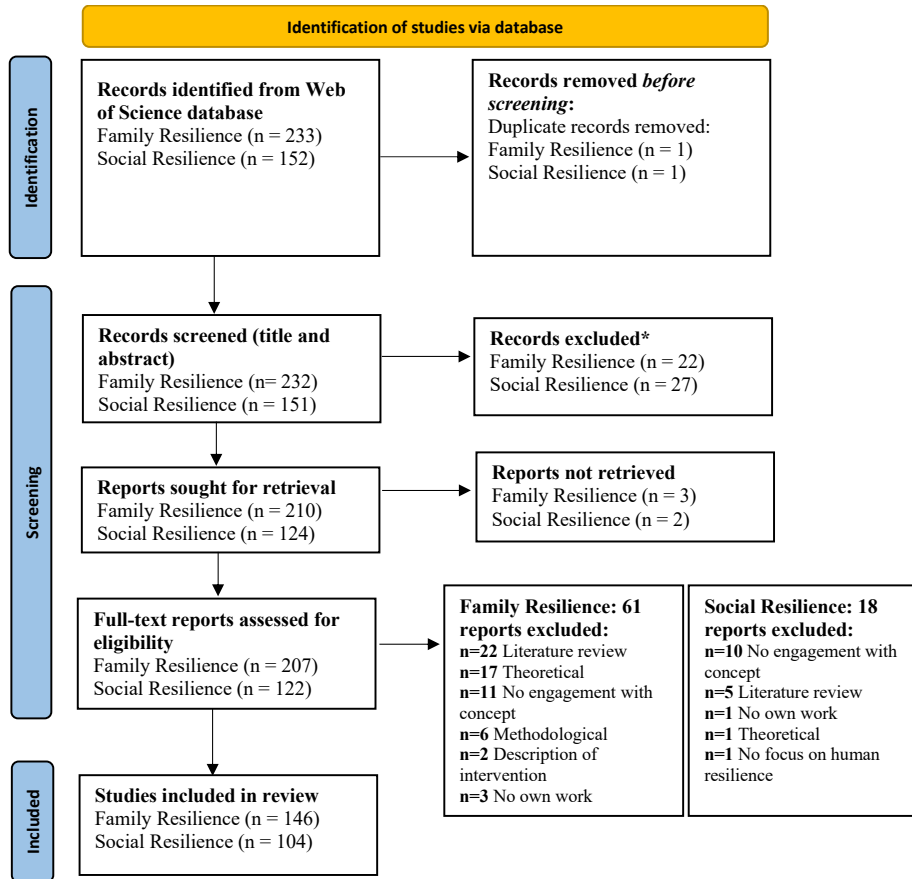
Note: *Reasons for exclusion: conference proceedings; book reviews or chapters; non-English language; journal-issue introductions; meta-analyses; policy reviews; editorials; or abstracts only. (See online appendix for further details).

2.2 Eligibility criteria and screening process

The screening process (second row of Figure 1) was carried out in two stages: title and abstract screening, and full-text screening. One reviewer was responsible for screening all identified studies, with a second reviewer involved in uncertain cases. Studies that did not have an empirical part, did not focus on human subjects, did not engage with the

concept of family or social resilience, were not peer-reviewed, and were not written in English were excluded from the review. Among the excluded reports (fourth row of Figure 1) 'no own work' refers to publications that were commentary pieces, literature reflections, or descriptions of research projects without original data or analysis.

If other forms of resilience were conceptualised in any of the articles, we only coded the information pertaining to family or social resilience. In the end (bottom row of Figure 1), 146 articles on family resilience and 104 articles on social resilience were eligible for inclusion in the review.

2.3 Methodology for data extraction

After finalising the screening process, the remaining articles were used for data extraction. These papers were evaluated using a coding scheme based on the four constitutive elements of conceptualising resilience. It included 12 questions related to (1) the unit of resilience, (2) the elements that constitute the definition of resilience, (3) the classification of types of resilience, and (4) the particular themes or topics of the risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes that were empirically studied (see the Appendix). In addition, we also mapped the publication year. Risks, explanatory factors, outcomes, and definitions of resilience were further aggregated to make analysis and generalisation possible. When there was any uncertainty with the coding, two additional reviewers looked at the papers of interest. The reviewers double-checked if the relevant information could be found or whether it was missing in the studies. The final coding was then summarized in a separate coding sheet, which we then used to extract the data for the tables to get an overview of the similarities and differences between the various papers.

3. Results

The empirical literature on family and social resilience shows a marked growth in recent years, with our included studies dating back to 1998 (Figure 2). Engagement with family resilience reached its first peak in 2016 and social resilience in 2018. The increased interest in family and social resilience is evident from the publication date patterns: most articles were published between 2020 and 2023, in line with the subject becoming more prominent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2:   **Family and social resilience publication frequency: 1998–2023**
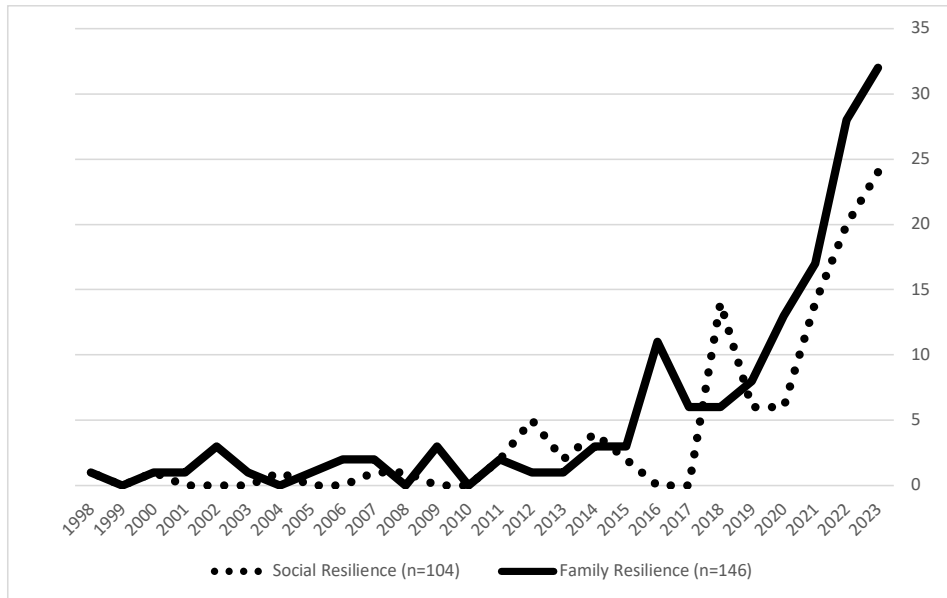
3.1 Unit of resilience

First, we focus on what the unit of analysis is that exhibits resilience, as summarised in Table 1. There are substantial differences between family resilience and social resilience: While the family unit is primarily studied in the field of family resilience, the individual, community, city, and society as a whole are the main focus in the social resilience literature. Individual resilience is tackled in only a small fraction (16%) of the publications on family resilience. While individual resilience appears to be at the intersection of these two branches, resilience of family strictly falls into the territory of family resilience. The commonality in studying individual experiences is highlighted by examples such as studies on young people living with epilepsy (Chew, Carpenter, and Haase 2018) and children with autism and ADHD (Schneider, VanOrmer, and Zlomke 2019), with a focus on family dynamics and resilience. Among scholars investigating social resilience, examples of research areas are unemployment among young adults (Assmann et al. 2021) and the impact of chronic shocks on well-being (Fahlberg et al. 2020). There are a few cases in both fields – 7% in family resilience and 1% in social resilience – where the analysis combines the individual and family perspectives.

Table 1:   **Unit of resilience**

Family resilience			Social resilience		
Unit of resilience	N	%	Unit of resilience	N	%
Family	111	76%	Individual	31	30%
Individual	24	16%	Community	29	28%
Family and individual	10	7%	City	16	15%
Community	1	1%	Society/Country	15	14%
			Region	4	4%
			Family	3	3%
			Neighbourhood	2	2%
			Individual and community	2	2%
			Society	1	1%
			Family and individual	1	1%
	146	100%	Total	104	100%

3.2 Definition of resilience

Second, we focus on the definitions of the concept of resilience as classified in Table 2, based on whether the articles explicitly refer to an element of risk, explanatory factors, or outcomes in defining resilience. Explanatory factors refer to what helps explain why some are resilient and others are not. We make a distinction between explanations that are external to the person or family, and those that are internal and related to using personal or familial resources. A further distinction is made in relation to whether the explanation is based on agency. Thus, the definitions have been coded according to a scheme with three criteria and six sub-criteria: risk, explanatory factors (overall, external resources, internal resources, and agency), outcomes (overall, well-being, maintenance, and improvement). The risk, explanatory factors (overall), and outcomes (overall*)* indicate that a paper gives a general indication of a risk, explanation, or outcome. The external sub-criteria refer to an active element and can be expressed through policy interventions, state support, support networks, or other general external involvement, while the internal sub-criteria allude to the resources in families' or people's possession. By contrast, agency refers only to actions by individuals or families. Lastly, three types of outcomes are common in the literature and can be considered included in a definition: well-being, maintenance (holding on to the current level or returning to the same state), and improvement (improving the situation/current state of the outcome).

Table 2:   **Components of resilience definitions**

	Family Resilience		Social Resilience	
	N	%	N	%
Risk	125	86%	86	83%
Explanatory factors (overall)	115	78%	76	73%
External resources	7	5%	14	13%
Internal resources	55	37%	41	39%
Agency	109	75%	59	57%
Outcomes (overall)	94	64%	49	47%
Well-being	12	8%	4	4%
Maintenance	60	41%	33	32%
Improvement	46	31%	24	23%
Total	146		104	

Note: The columns do not sum to 100%, since one article can be classified as having multiple components included in its definitions of resilience.

A clear pattern in both literatures is the inclusion of some type of risk in the definition of resilience. The majority of the papers, both on family (83%) and social (86%) resilience, explicitly look at risk as part of the definition of resilience. In family resilience, this can include "significant adversity" (Levine 2009) or "a dangerous situation" (Park and Chung 2014). In social resilience, "adverse conditions" (Podgorska et al. 2023: 389) or "protracted conflict and displacement" (Fleschenberg and Yousufzai 2019: 465) are examples of indications of risk.

The family resilience and social resilience literatures define explanatory factors, in this case predominantly resources and agency, in a divergent manner. In the family resilience literature we find a focus on internal resources and discussions on "how family members are interconnected and mutually influence each other, and how culture is essential in their lives" (Davey et al. 2012: 1261), as well as "family's belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication processes" (Arenliu et al. 2020: 392). By contrast, in similar situations, social resilience scholarship focuses on external resources manifested by individuals or through the family unit. For example, to "prepare for the unforeseen" is met by "direct grants and infrastructure investments" (Johnson and Mundell 2023: 248), and "strengthening existing social engagements and developing new relationships with creative collective actions" (Cipolla 2018: 112). Hence, there is an assumption that there will be collective support through external means but that will still require individuals' or families' efforts to make (to have or establish) such connections. In other words, the conceptualisation of resilience in the social context often relates to

the system and collective response, whereas resilience at the family level emphasizes relationality. Interestingly, the system-level components of family resilience have more abstract connotations, such as belief systems or cultural habits. Family resilience is most strongly developed in psychology-oriented fields, and correspondingly leans more towards specific family functioning, an internal process, or a set of relational dynamics.

In both literatures, agency relates to the inherent power to handle and manage a situation despite adversity. The most commonly used terms are 'cope with' or 'coping' (Chew and Haase 2016), used in 75% of the cases in family resilience, and 'adapt to' or 'adaptation' (Bova 2022), used in 57% of the cases in social resilience. Stressing external explanatory factors is less prevalent in general but is relatively more common in social (13%) than family (5%) resilience, corroborating the (often criticized) perception of resilience as an intrinsic process, an inherent quality, or an individual responsibility.

Definitions of resilience are less likely to include outcomes than risks and explanatory factors. Almost half of the social resilience studies (47%) and 64% of the family resilience articles include an outcome indicator in their definition. Maintenance is mentioned in 32% of the social resilience articles: examples are 'bounce back' (Busic-Sontic and Schubert 2023) and "…without altering its basic functioning" (Lyon 2014: 1010). Improvement is used slightly less (23%), examples being the "ability to innovate, to learn, and positively change" (Salazar 2019: 8) and "promote the flourishing of all human and nonhuman lives." (Whyte 2018: 136). Similarly, 'bouncing back' from adversity is also used to define family resilience (McKinley and Scarnato 2021). In comparison to maintenance and improvement, well-being as an outcome receives the least attention in both literatures. Only 8% of the papers on family resilience and 4% on social resilience refer to sustaining or increasing well-being (Andia and Chorev 2021; de Bres and Morrison-Young 2023). Overall, the definitions of resilience in research on family resilience appear to be slightly more explicit in defining risk, outcomes, and explanatory factors than the research on social resilience.

3.3 Types of resilience

Next, in Table 3 we focus on the different types of resilience. While the definitions of resilience describe the core concept, the types of resilience classify how families or other systems respond to risks, highlighting strategies for managing challenges and uncertainties. The results show large discrepancies between family and social resilience. Scholars engaging with social resilience focus on the adaptation process (35%) or the transformation process (14%). In many cases, transformation in the social resilience literature refers to larger changes within a system, such as "long term socio-institutional transformations" (Paidakaki and Parra 2018), transformation to a market economy and

post-communist transition (Bouzarovski, Salukvadze, and Gentile 2011), or "…change in existing structures and practices" (Preston, Shields, and Akbar 2022: 1424). The concept of adapting is also applied in family resilience, but to a lesser degree.

Table 3:   **Types of resilience**

Family resilience			Social resilience		
Classification	Number of articles mentioning	% of articles mentioning	Classification	Number of articles mentioning	% of articles mentioning
Communication processes	34	23.00%	Adapt	36	35%
Belief systems	34	23.00%	Transform	15	14%
Organisational patterns	32	21.60%	Reactive	5	5%
Adapt	17	11.50%	Cope	5	5%
Protective factors	5	3.40%	Proactive	5	5%
Personal traits and perspectives	4	2.70%	Absorb	3	3%
Adjust	3	2.00%	Anticipate	2	2%
Flexibility	2	1.40%	Recover	2	2%
Cope	2	1.40%	Prevent	2	2%
			Transform	2	2%
			Resist	2	2%
Other (mentioned only once)	21	14.20%	Other (mentioned only once)	12	12%
Total number of articles	146			104	
Total number of mentions	154			91	

Notably, adaptation generally indicates two different processes. On the one hand, among social resilience scholars, adaptation refers in many cases to planning strategies and established routines, structural changes, anticipation, system flexibility, collective resources, and minimising negative consequences (Abu Alrob and Shields 2022; Chhabra 2021; Fourie and Foller 2012). Among family resilience scholars, on the other hand, adaptation is family strengths and abilities, buffering against increased stresses during caregiving, individual qualities, avoiding emotional and behavioural problems, and, finally, communication, belief systems, and organisational patterns within the family unit (Al-Jadiri et al. 2021; Barboza and Seedall 2023; Levine 2009). In line with this, studies on family resilience often use Walsh's (psychological) concept of family resilience, developed as a framework for clinical practice and focusing on three components: (1) communication processes (clarity, open emotional expression, collaborative problem-solving), (2) belief systems (meaning-making out of adversity, positive outlook,

transcendence), and (3) organisational patterns (flexibility, connectedness, social and economic resources) (Walsh 2003). This framework is only evident in family resilience scholarship, with around one-fourth of the articles using this classification. This can be seen as a natural extension of the divergence between these two branches of resilience scholarship in the definition of resources and agency. These disparities likely point to distinct risks, outcomes, and explanatory factors of resilience, which will be explored further in the analysis below.

3.4 Topics of resilience

Finally, we examine in more detail what risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes are considered in the family resilience and social resilience literatures. Table 4 (family resilience) and Table 5 (social resilience) classifies the particular topics of risks, outcomes, and explanatory factors within each literature.

Table 4: **Family resilience – risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes**

Risk	N	%	Explanatory factor	N	%	Outcome	N	%
Other (single paper)	19	13%	Family functioning	43	29%	Health and well-being	49	34%
Caregiving and care needs	17	12%	Parenting practices	17	12%	Family functioning	35	24%
COVID-19	17	12%	Communication, belief systems, and organisational patterns	14	10%	Resilience	18	12%
Disability	17	12%	Support from surroundings	10	7%	Child development	13	9%
Physical and mental health problems	16	11%	Resilience	9	6%	Other (single paper)	11	8%
Native's oppression	12	8%	Several	8	5%	Coping and adaptation	8	5%
Poverty and exclusion	11	8%	Intervention	8	5%	Delinquent behaviour	5	3%
Migration	7	5%	Other (single paper)	8	5%	Empowerment	3	2%
Child maltreatment	6	4%	Socio-ecological factors	7	5%	Social engagement and networks	1	1%
Military deployment	5	3%	Agency	6	4%	Childhood adversity	1	1%
Substance abuse	4	3%	Attitudes	4	3%	Poverty	1	1%
Work–family conflict	3	2%	Social work	4	3%	None	1	1%
Multiple stressors	2	1%	Culture and religion	3	2%			
None	2	1%	Work–life balance	3	2%			
Transnational families	2	1%	Institutional Structures	2	1%			
Natural and environmental disasters	2	1%						
Family bereavement	2	1%						
Gender dysphoria	2	1%						
Total	146	100%		146	100%		146	100%

Table 5: **Social resilience – risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes**

Risk	N	%	Explanatory factor	N	%	Outcome	N	%
Covid-19	19	18%	Social capital and trust	14	13%	Other (single paper)	21	20%
Climate change and weather shocks	19	18%	Agency	12	12%	Health and well-being	20	19%
Other (single paper)	17	16%	Other (single paper)	11	11%	Infrastructure and urban planning	14	13%
Poverty, exclusion, and inequality	10	10%	Policy	10	10%	Community development	10	10%
Social and environmental change	9	9%	Societal collaboration	8	8%	Empowerment	8	8%
Migration	9	9%	Institutional structures	8	8%	Perceptions	7	7%
Economic crisis	7	7%	Infrastructure	7	7%	Financial prosperity	4	4%
Urban deficiencies	6	6%	Social work	6	6%	Climate change impact	3	3%
Terrorism	2	2%	Support from surroundings	4	4%	Mobility	3	3%
Resource dependency	2	2%	Financial support	4	4%	Societal development	2	2%
Disability	2	2%	Agency and support from surroundings	4	4%	Welfare state	2	2%
High-risk youth	2	2%	Several	4	4%	Vulnerability	2	2%
			Mobility	3	3%	Social resilience	2	2%
			Sustainability directives	2	2%	Food system functioning	2	2%
			Collective action	2	2%	Social inclusion	2	2%
			Activity	2	2%	Employment	2	2%
			Innovation	2	2%			
			Not specified	1	1%			
Total	104	100%		104	100%		104	100%

3.5 Risks

Our review of the literature reveals that family resilience studies tend to investigate risks specific to individual families. By contrast, social resilience research predominantly focuses on external risks, often associated with large-scale shocks that affect entire communities or societies. Both family (12%) and social (18%) resilience studies pay considerable attention to the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting the increased focus on these concepts in recent years.

While both fields examine the impact of COVID-19, the approaches differ in their level of detail. Social resilience research generally focuses on the pandemic's impact on the population as a whole, whereas family resilience more often studies the compounded risks within family contexts. The latter risks include, for instance, the loss of childcare and in-person schooling, the challenges faced by socioeconomically vulnerable families, experiences of racial trauma, marginalisation, and parental abuse (Childress, Labrenz, and Findley 2023; Daniels 2022; Oldham and Bradley 2022; Roberto et al. 2023; Yuda and Munir 2023). Although a few social resilience scholars also address factors such as social inequalities among migrants or the social misrecognition of homeless populations

(Bova 2022; Preston, Shields, and Akbar 2022), this level of detail on how different families respond to crises is more frequently observed within the family resilience literature.

Migration, poverty, exclusion, and inequality are shared risks that, though less frequently studied, appear in both fields. In these cases, family resilience studies tend to focus almost exclusively on family units, while social resilience literature emphasizes individuals or communities.

Additionally, family resilience places greater emphasis on personal and family-specific risks, such as caregiving burdens, disability, and health challenges, which are seldom considered in the social resilience literature. Conversely, social resilience scholars often address broader external risks, such as climate change, weather shocks, and urban deficiencies, topics largely absent from the family resilience discourse. In one way or another, social resilience appears to be dealing with more macro-level risks, whereas family resilience focuses on everyday hurdles that threaten or have the potential to deteriorate family life.

3.6 Explanatory factors

Several explanatory factors help predict how different social units – families, individuals, communities, or others – respond to crises. A key similarity between the two branches of this literature is the emphasis on agency and support from surrounding networks, such as family members, friends, co-workers, community members, and social support systems (Benitez-Avila, Schuberth, and Copeland 2023; McKinley and Knipp 2022; Orthner and Rose 2009; Winarnita et al. 2022).

In social resilience, individual agency often manifests through actions like job seeking (Chhabra 2021), managing medical conditions independently (Fahlberg et al. 2020), and cultivating hope and optimism (Gaspar et al. 2023). By contrast, family agency is expressed through decisions involving family members, such as managing the care of disabled children (Levine 2009), fostering effective family communication (Maenhout, Rober, and Greeff 2014), or drawing on personal strengths like spirituality and the desire to create better opportunities for one's children (Julien-Chinn and Park 2022). Though operating at different levels of analysis, both literatures recognise the central role in fostering resilience of action-taking, an activated agency, and cognitive capability, whether a form of mental stability or strength. This shared focus highlights the importance of agency as a key mechanism in both fields, even though framed within different contexts.

The literature also diverges in other explanations of how resilience can be promoted and the conditions under which it can be fostered. Family resilience scholars look inwards

to focus on family communication, belief systems, and organisational patterns (10%), which, again, is in line with Walsh's (2003) conceptualisation, whereas social resilience emphasizes social capital and trust (13%), policy (10%), and institutional structures (8%) as crucial factors.

Social capital and trust are often examined at the individual or community level, while policies and institutional structures reflect larger societal frameworks that impact individual capabilities. This interplay between individual capacities and broader social policies illustrates how social structures and personal agency come together to build social resilience in the literature. This interplay is less prominent in family resilience literature, where scholars instead focus on family functioning (29%) and parenting practices (12%) as essential mechanisms for fostering resilience. In other words, the responsibility of being resilient is left to the families, and the role of external resources is implicitly or explicitly undermined. While social resilience scholarship puts a higher weight on the outer structures and external support mechanisms, family resilience scholarship takes an individualistic turn, which harms the potential value of social policies. It also suggests the importance of a family's position in society and how initial characteristics and the set of resources that a family possesses can be deterministic in their capacity for resilience.

3.7 Outcomes

The empirical literature reveals commonalities in the outcomes examined, with health and well-being emerging as the most prominent category, often related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Andia and Chorev 2021). Thirty-four per cent of papers on family resilience and 19% of papers on social resilience investigate these outcomes, underscoring the importance of improving and maintaining health and well-being in both fields. However, this emphasis is not consistently reflected in their conceptual definitions of resilience. A notable distinction is that family resilience literature predominantly centres around family functioning (24%) and child development (9%), both of which are essential to family and child well-being. By contrast, social resilience research typically focuses on broader community or societal outcomes, such as infrastructure, urban planning, and community development.

An intriguing aspect that emerges in both fields is the consideration of resilience itself as an outcome. In family resilience literature, 12% treat 'resilience' as a desired outcome, while only 2% of the studies on social resilience take this approach. Social resilience studies refer to resilience as an outcome through quantitative indicators such as unemployment rates, relative poverty, a sense of belonging, and social activities, particularly in the context of COVID-19, and crises related to labour, poverty, and

inequality (Busic-Sontic and Schubert 2023; de Frutos and Garcia 2023). In family resilience research, resilience as an outcome is similarly grounded in several indicators but tends to be approached more directly. Scholars in this area often conceptualise resilience as an outcome by focusing on belief systems, communication processes, and organisational patterns – in line with Walsh's (2003) psychological definition of resilience – measured through various indicators, regardless of the methodological strategy employed.

In summary, while family and social resilience literature share common ground in addressing global risks and outcomes related to health and well-being, they diverge in their explanatory frameworks and primary areas of focus.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have conducted a scoping review of the respective literatures on family resilience and social resilience. Our analysis builds on a total net sample of 250 articles published in a broad and diverse set of academic journals in the social and behavioural sciences between 1998 and 2023. Our contribution lies in analysing the differences and overlaps between how the two branches of literature on resilience use the concept, and the topics they study. Specifically, we studied four constitutive elements of resilience and how their application differs across family and social resilience. These four elements are: (1) the unit of resilience, (2) the definition of resilience, (3) the classification of types of resilience, and (4) the particular themes or topics of the risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes studied.

Accordingly, the first constitutive element in a resilience perspective is to formulate what kind of unit (1) is analysed in terms of being resilient or exhibiting resilience. We find that families as the unit of resilience are practically non-existent in the social resilience literature. Only 3% to 4% of the published studies focus on families, whereas in the family resilience field the overwhelming majority (76%) study families. While there is a moderate overlap between the two branches of resilience literature in studying individuals, an immediate conclusion is that social resilience could generate new knowledge by studying families (and not primarily individuals) as units of resilience. Families, just like individuals, are embedded in broader social contexts, such as neighbourhoods, communities, cities, regions, and varying kinds of welfare states. Hence, the workings of resilience in terms of risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes might play out very differently compared to when it is analysed based on individuals as the unit of resilience. The question of whether family resilience can learn from the social resilience literature by aggregating the unit of resilience into more abstract and geographical entities is less straightforward to answer. Since family resilience by design focuses on families –

a more delineated and detailed area of study than the 'social' – it is not clear that there would be analytical or knowledge gains simply by changing the unit of resilience. However, the interaction of family resilience and broader geographical entities could be a fruitful area of research.

After assessing the unit of resilience, we examined the extent to which the definition (2) of resilience comprised the terms of risks, explanatory factors (explaining the capacity of being resilient), and outcomes. Here we find that the two kinds of literature agree on risks being a central constitutive element (85% of all the articles on both family and social resilience use risk in their definition of resilience). However, a focus on agency is more prevalent in family resilience, while focusing on external explanatory factors is more common in the social resilience literature. The family resilience literature uses outcomes more frequently in defining the concept of resilience, and in particular focuses more on notions of well-being than the social literature. More broadly, the two branches of resilience literature are consistent in the rank ordering of the prevalence of outcomes in the definitions of resilience: Outcomes that are based on maintenance of status are most popular, outcomes based on improvement are in-between, while outcomes based on well-being are used relatively sparsely.

The third constitutive element of resilience is the type (3) of resilience analysed. The results show that the social resilience literature focuses on a more systemic description or understanding of the concept. In stark contrast, the family literature is heavily influenced by the 'family resilience' perspective of Walsh (2003), which provides a clinical framework catering to within-family psychological dynamics. Nevertheless, the overlap between the two kinds of literature is found in the common use of the concept of adaptation as a type of resilience. Thus, one conclusion is that the way adaptation is used in these two fields is constitutive to understanding resilience in a more general sense – although it is clear from our findings that the majority of studies use other words to describe this type of resilience, such as 'transform' or alternatives that can be subsumed under the notion of adaptation.

Finally, we analysed the particular topics (4) of the risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes that are studied. Our review revealed that social resilience research predominantly focuses on external risks, often associated with large-scale shocks that affect entire communities or societies. By contrast, family resilience studies tend to investigate risks specific to individual families. Correspondingly, the explanatory factors differ substantially between the two fields. Apart from the focus on agency in both family and social resilience, social resilience centres on more abstract factors than families, such as social capital and trust, policies, institutional structures, and societal collaboration. Again, the explanatory factors in the family resilience literature are dominated by clinical within-family processes. However, a relatively small share of papers addresses support from surroundings, interventions, or socio-ecological factors. Our findings suggest that

family resilience is characterised by a more myopic focus than social resilience literature. A potential disadvantage of this focus is that the family resilience literature tends to hold individual families responsible for (coping with) external shocks, with the risk of ignoring structural inequalities. However, a commonality in the focus on outcomes is the joint attention to health and well-being across the two literatures. Apart from that, again, a pattern emerges of social resilience focusing more on aggregated outcomes such as infrastructure and urban and community development, while family resilience is more preoccupied with meso- and micro-outcomes such as family functioning and child development.

There is a surprising absence of socioeconomic themes in the literature on risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes in family resilience. Socioeconomic risks (poverty, exclusion, inequality) and migration are more recurrent themes in the social resilience literature, but even there the outcomes centre on urban and community development and other more diverse topics. Based on this observation, we suggest that social resilience in general, and family resilience in particular, are academic literatures that would benefit from an increased introduction of research that specifically centres on situating questions of resilience in a socioeconomic inequality context. In practice, this means understanding resilience from the point of view of individual and family inequalities in labour market careers vis-à-vis exclusion, family formation and transitions, and educational attainment. We suggest that these topics are critical areas to incorporate into definitions of risks, outcomes, and explanatory factors of resilience. While our study highlights these gaps, we acknowledge that resilience research that is beyond the methodological limitations and scope of our review has addressed socioeconomic inequality in various ways (e.g., Dagdeviren, Donoghue, and Promberger 2016; Calado et al. 2022; Canvin et al. 2009). Our findings contribute to ongoing efforts to integrate different strands of resilience research, emphasizing the need for further dialogue between the family and social resilience perspectives.

In conclusion, the two kinds of literature based on family resilience and social resilience overlap but show substantial discrepancies. We see strong potential for future academic work that bridges these two fields by expanding the range of the units of resilience being used and the topics of risks, explanatory factors, and outcomes (particularly to focus on socioeconomic themes) being covered. While social resilience could benefit from focusing on families, family resilience would gain by more systematically introducing relevant factors outside the family dynamic and embracing questions and perspectives outside of applied clinical work.

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