

# Psychopathology Research

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## Types of Psychopathology Research

- **Developmental Psychopathology** – study of multi-level trajectories to normal/abnormal behavior across time.
  - **Equifinality:** Multiple paths can lead to the same outcome.
  - **Multifinality:** The same path can lead to multiple outcomes.
  - **Resilience:** Factors that protect against dysfunction after exposure to chronic adversity or acute trauma
  - **Context:** Factors external to the individual that channel developmental trajectories

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## Types of Psychopathology Research

- **Stress-Vulnerability Research:** Study of interplay between person and environment in predicting pathology
  - **Risk factors or diatheses:** factors that leave people vulnerable to a disorder when experiencing environmental triggers.
  - **Necessary factor:** an etiological factor that **MUST** be present for the disorder to occur.
  - **Sufficient factor:** etiological factor whose presence guarantees that the disorder will occur.
  - **Contributory factor:** increases the likelihood that a disorder will occur

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## Specifying the Construct

- Initial research: broad conceptualization
- Later research: more narrow conceptualization

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## Research Designs

- Prospective-longitudinal (cohort) design
  - Single group cohort design
    - Identify a single group and follow over time
  - Multiple group cohort design
    - Groups differ in whether they have a characteristic or experience thought to increase vulnerability to the outcome of interest.

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## Research Designs

Accelerated longitudinal (cohort) design

- High risk prospective longitudinal design
  - Follow a high risk cohort of individuals to see if they develop the outcome of interest
  - May also include a low risk cohort
- Multi-cohort Longitudinal Design
  - Study multiple groups who vary in age
  - Shortens to time to completion and reduces cohort or period effects

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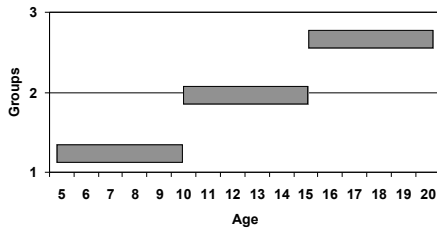
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## Accelerated multi-cohort longitudinal design



Graph adapted from Kadzin, 1999

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## Strengths of longitudinal designs

- Establishes the order of events
- Examine all combinations of people who did and did not experience the hypothesized antecedents, and who did and did not show the outcome
- (Generate hypotheses based on within and between group differences)

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## Limitations of longitudinal designs

- Time
- Attrition
- Resources
- Not optimal for outcomes with low base rates
- Cannot infer causality
- Possible influence of cohort and period effects

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## Research Designs

- Case-control design: study groups who vary in whether they have the **OUTCOME** of interest (cases) or not (controls).
  - Cross-sectional case control design: compare on current characteristics and experiences
  - Retrospective case control design: assess information about past characteristics and experiences
  - Follow-back study: Use archival records to study past experiences and characteristics

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## Strengths of Case-Control Designs

- Can study infrequent outcome
- Short time frame
- Fewer resources required
- Little or no attrition
- Good for preliminary research

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## Limitations of Case-Control Designs

- Limited conclusions
- Sampling bias
- Recall bias (retrospective designs)
- Quality of record-keeping (follow-back designs)

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### Sampling and grouping in psychopathology research

- From which population will you draw your sample?
- How will you select your sample?
  - Random selection
  - Non-random population based sampling
  - Stratified sampling procedures (random or nonrandom)
  - Convenience sampling
  - Volunteer-based community sampling

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### Sampling and grouping in psychopathology research

- How will you delineate groups?
  - What modality of assessment will you use?
  - Will you use a continuous or categorical method?
  - Will you use participant matching?
- Which is the appropriate control group? (Which comparison do you want to make?)

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