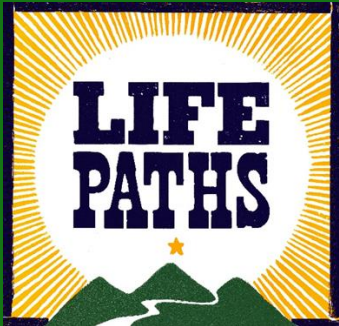


# Resilience Portfolios: A Framework for a More Strengths-Based Approach to Working with Older Adult Victims



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I'd also like to acknowledge the assistance of many research assistants and community members.

Presented at the USC Tamkin Symposium, Los Angeles, CA, March, 2018

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Preliminary findings, please do not cite without permission.

# What do people want from life?



Happiness



Meaning



Love

## What do people want out of life?



“A CBCL t-score < 60”



“Not too much  
delinquency”



“Relatively low levels  
of anxiety”

# Resilience Portfolios

- The objective of the Resilience Portfolio approach is to identify the most important strengths and protective factors for achieving well-being after adversity.
- We define resilience as achieving well-being and thriving after adversity, by using strengths (assets and resources) to counter the effects of adversity.
- We assess different aspects of adversity, strengths, and well-being to topple “silos.”



# Innovations of Resilience Portfolio Model

- Strengths-based & focused on thriving, not just absence of pathology
- Includes multiple elements of the social ecology (individual, peer, family, community)
- Focuses on malleable characteristics.
- Evaluating many strengths, including under-appreciated strengths that have been neglected in past research.
- Explores “poly-strengths” (density) and diversity of strengths.
- Strong emphasis on informing prevention and intervention. If you have limited time and resources with a client or group, what are most important targets? Emotional regulation or social support? A sense of purpose or compassion?
- Focuses on head-to-head comparisons of strengths to guide the best use of resources for prevention and intervention.



# Resilience Portfolio Domains

- Although there are many strengths, past research has identified 3 broad domains that are most important for recovering from adversity (Grych, Hamby, & Banyard, 2015):
  - Meaning making
  - Self-regulation
  - Interpersonal strengths

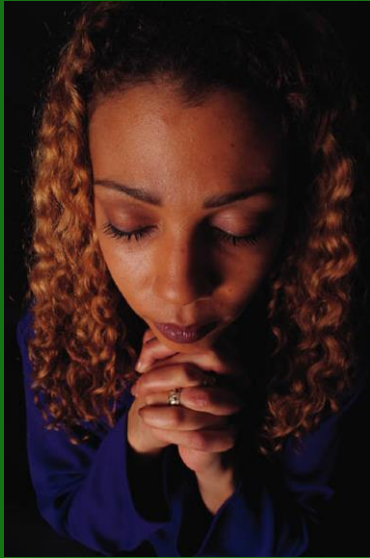
# Meaning Making

Humans are deeply interested in finding meaning and fulfillment in their lives, and have a fervent desire to connect to something larger than themselves.

The goal of meaning making is to make sense of major life events and to incorporate them into a broader view consistent with higher beliefs and values.



# Sources of Meaning



Religion & spirituality



Dedication to a cause

(Photo ID 544390, 08/03/2013, United Nations, New York, UN Photo/Mark Garten, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/un\\_photo/8539554951](https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/8539554951))



Commitment to a role  
(such as teacher or parent)

(Photo from USDA, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/16762770039>)



Belief in a better future

(RobbieRoss123, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plant\\_a\\_Sapling\\_for\\_Better\\_Future.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plant_a_Sapling_for_Better_Future.jpg))



Adhering to  
a code of  
values or  
ethics

(Photo from U.S. Marines)



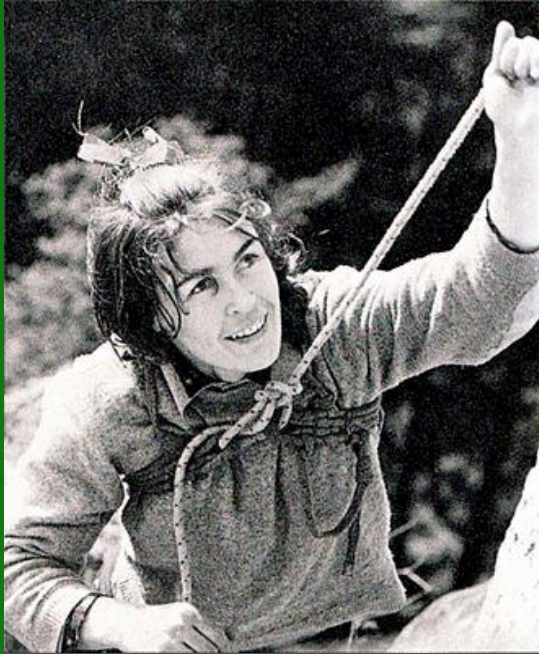
# Regulatory Strengths

- Self-regulation is typically defined as the capacity to sustain goal-driven behavior, often despite temptations or other challenges.
- Angela Duckworth's concept of "grit" also is another regulatory strength with a focus on goal-directed behavior.
- Regulation involves emotional, cognitive, and behavioral processes.



Child in Mischel's famous "Marshmallow experiment," trying to delay eating first marshmallow in order to earn a second one.

# Regulatory Strengths



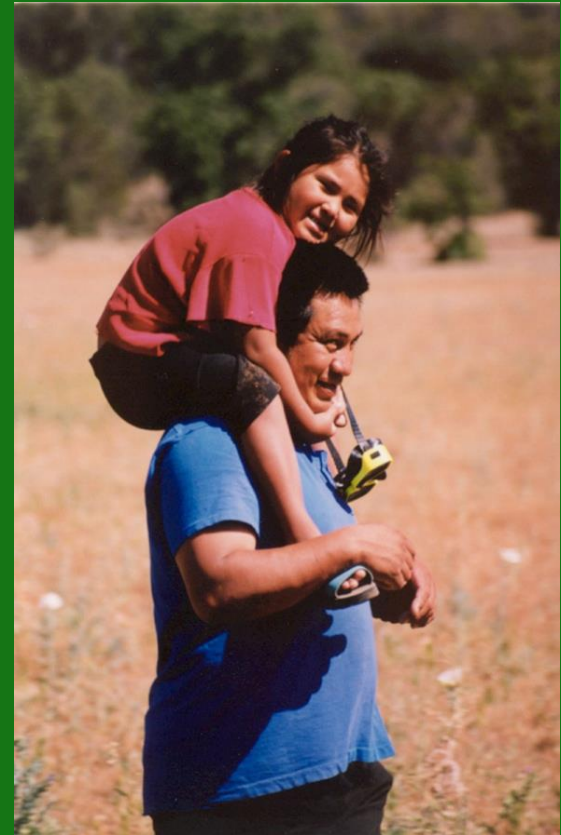
**Wanda Rutkiewicz**, first woman to successfully summit K2

[photo from Wikimedia commons]

- However, there is more to self-regulation than striving for goals.
- Self-regulation can involve:
  - Staying true to oneself during difficult times
  - Maintaining a routine after bereavement or other adversity
  - Regulating emotions, including distress, anger, and the ability to recover positive affect
- Self-regulation is also necessary for achieving longer term goals, such as graduating from college or running a marathon.

# Interpersonal Strengths

- This is the broadest category, which includes all kinds of relationships, including family, peer, and community.
- Because other people are involved, this domain can also refer to an individual's own interpersonal skills (“assets” in Resilience Portfolio Model) as well as what they receive from other (“resources”).



# Interpersonal Strengths



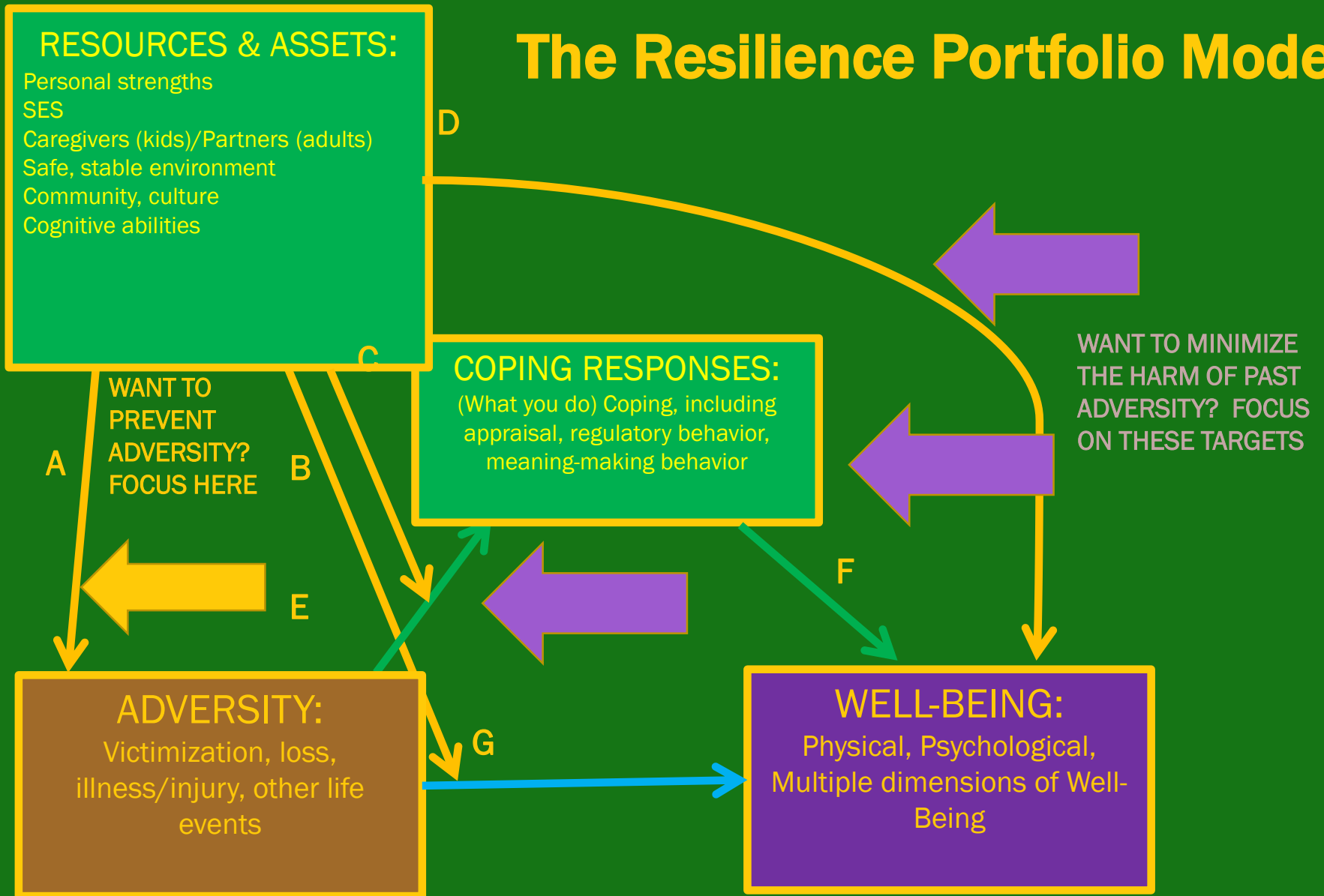
- We spend too much time using global measures of social support and collective efficacy, without unpacking exactly what it is about these factors that is helpful to children and how we might best promote such social factors.
- For example, is social support beneficial because of the assistance during difficult times? Or, are the most important elements the way that emotional bonds can inspire and create meaning?



# The Poly-Strength Concept

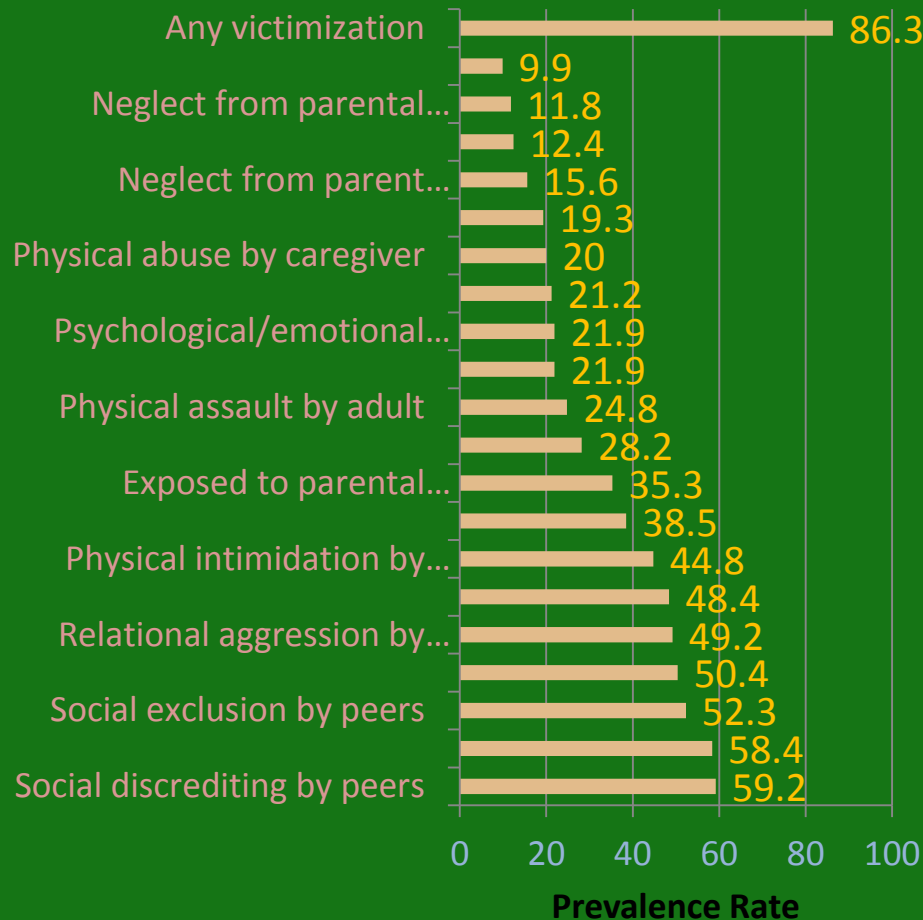
- Everyone has character strengths, but nobody has *every* character strength
- Strengths—psychological and social as well as physical—can also change across the lifespan.
- Seeking to identify the minimum density & diversity of strengths that promote well-being.
- Parallels the idea of poly-victimization (e.g., Finkelhor, Turner, Hamby, & Ormrod, 2011; Hamby & Grych, 2013).
- In our analyses, defined as the number of above-average scores on strength measures ( $> .5$  SD on standardized measures).

# The Resilience Portfolio Model

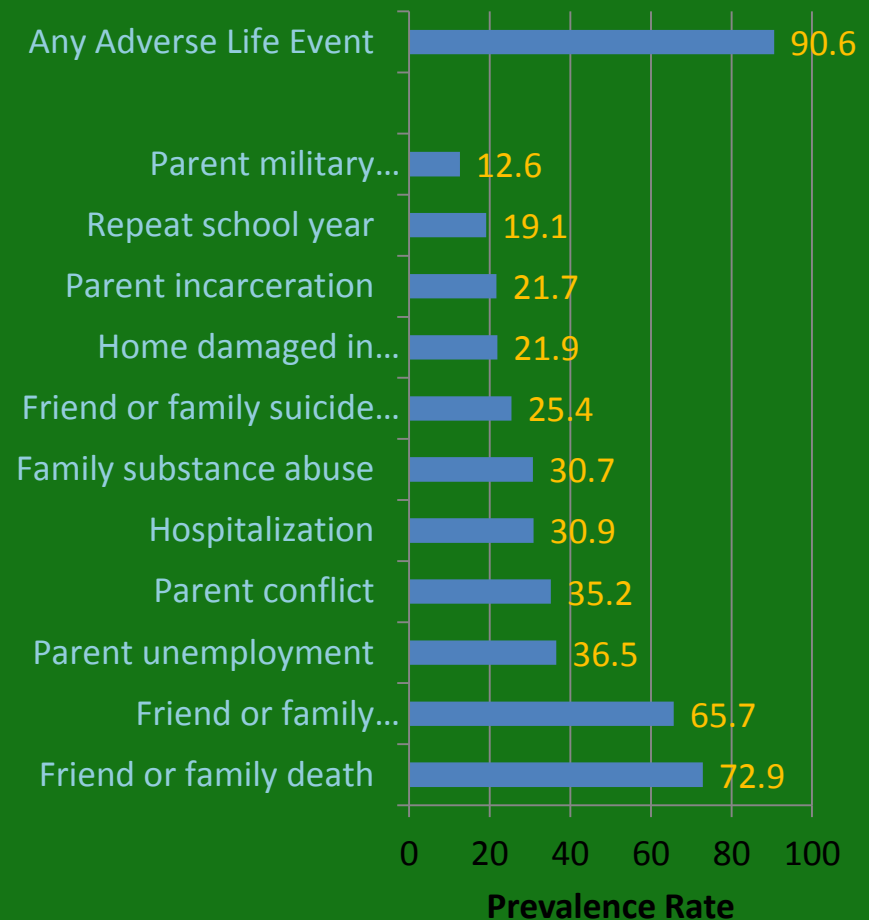


# The pervasiveness of adversity, & by extension, resilience

## Victimization



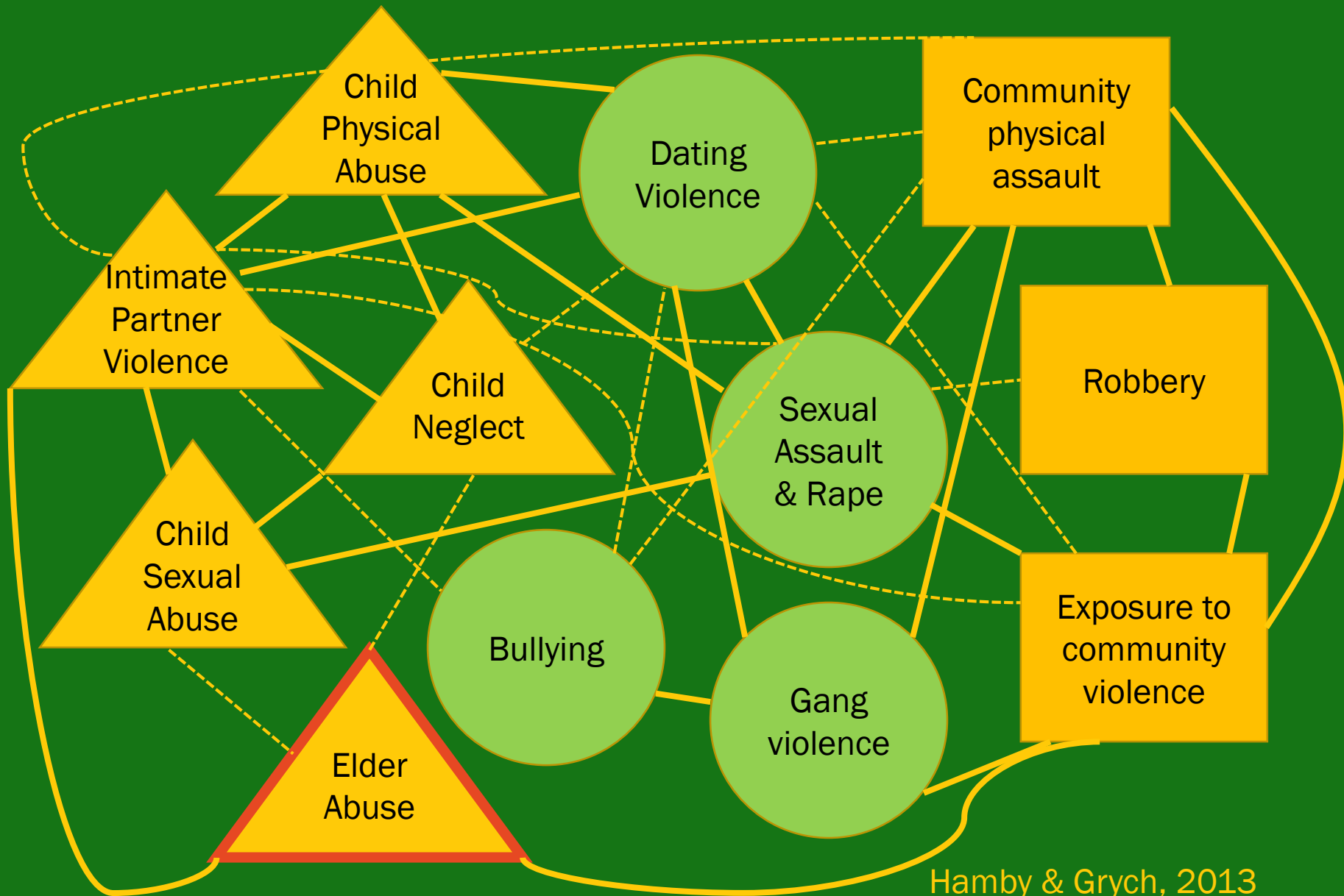
## Adverse Life Events



From Hamby et al., 2018

*Resilience is “ordinary magic”—Anne Masten*

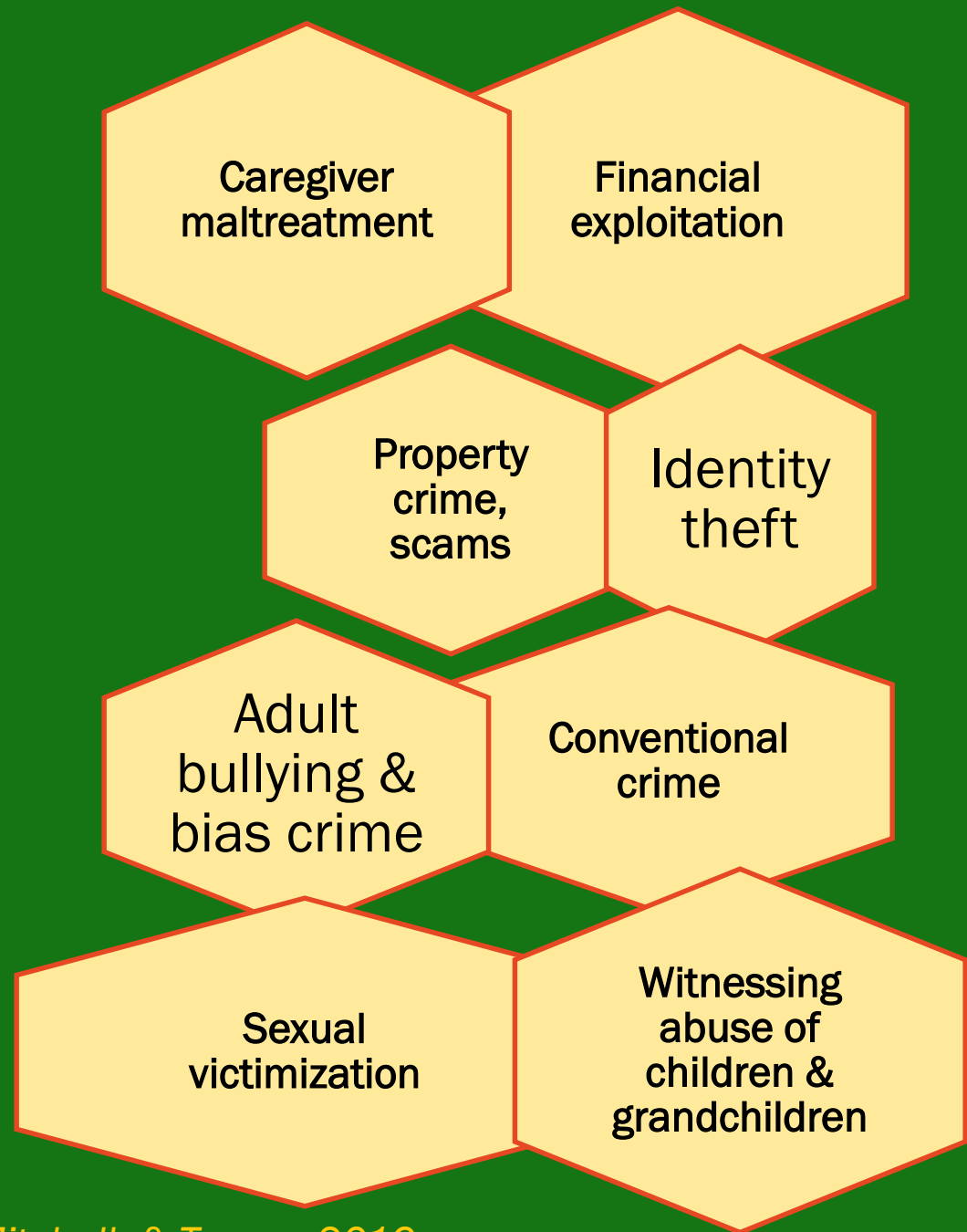
# The Web of Violence



## Hamby & Grych, 2013



# The True Burden of Victimization among Older Adults

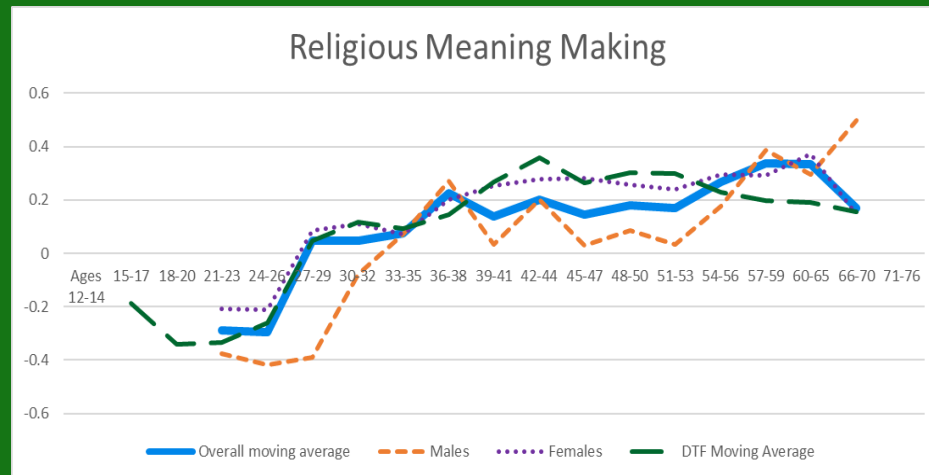
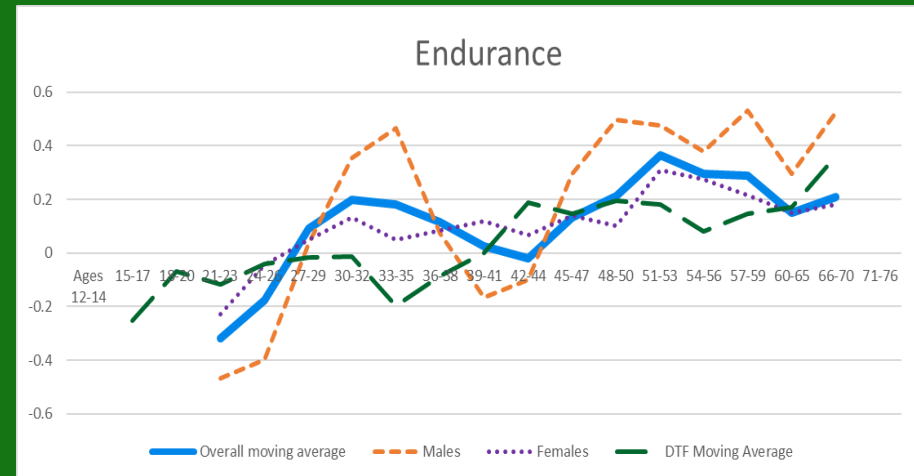
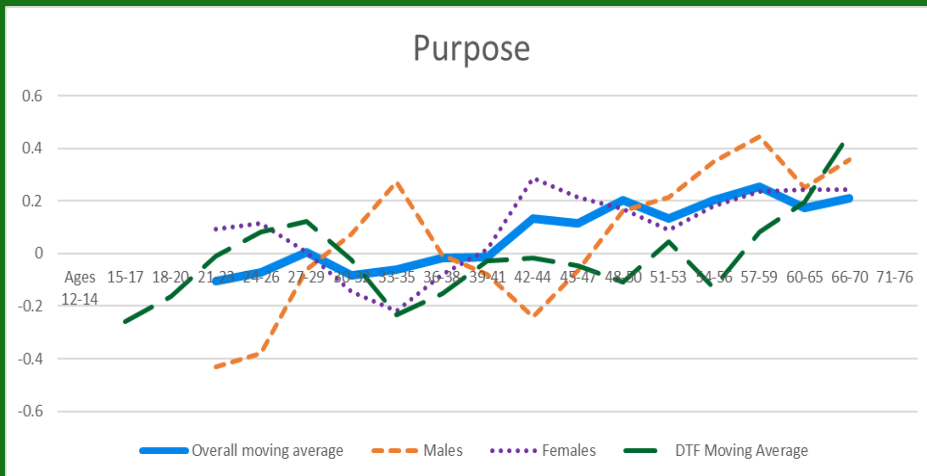


*See review in Hamby, Smith, Mitchell, & Turner, 2016*

# Age Patterns in Key Strengths

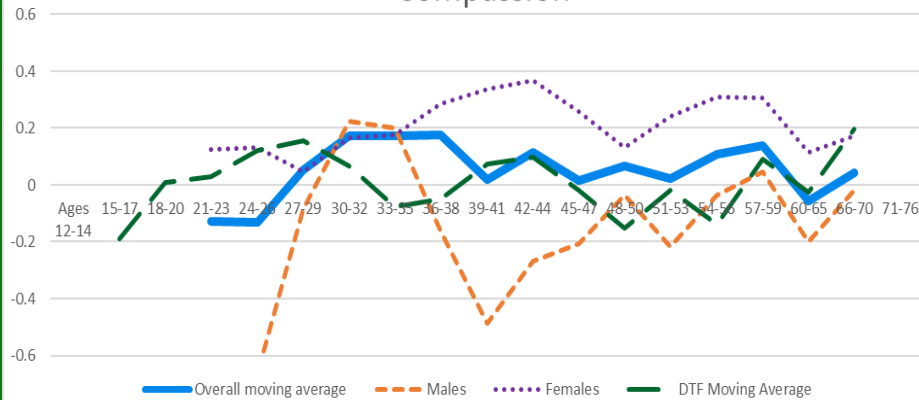
- Study of 357 adults (66% female) from Tennessee, age  $M=37.6$  ( $SD\ 15.6$ ).
- 93 participants were aged 50-76.
- Low-income sample (67.3% household income  $< \$50,000$ ).
- Recruited in-person at community events (non help-seeking sample).
- Survey included 16 strengths and 6 indicators of well-being, using new and revised brief measures in Resilience Portfolio domains. Questionnaire has a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.
- \$20 gift card incentive.
- All measures standardized to facilitate comparisons.
- A 2<sup>nd</sup> study (DTF) with a more limited set of 10 strengths in a sample of 478 adolescents and adults aged 12 and over. Coefficient alpha ranged from .71 to .95, average .82
- 123 were aged 50 and over (for these, alpha range .64-.94, average .81).
- Low-income sample
- Recruited via word-of-mouth, local organizations, and community events in rural Appalachian regions of Tennessee.
- \$20 gift card incentive.
- All measures standardized to facilitate comparisons but note that earlier versions of measures were used here.

# Older Adults Reported Higher Levels of Some Strengths Than Younger Adults

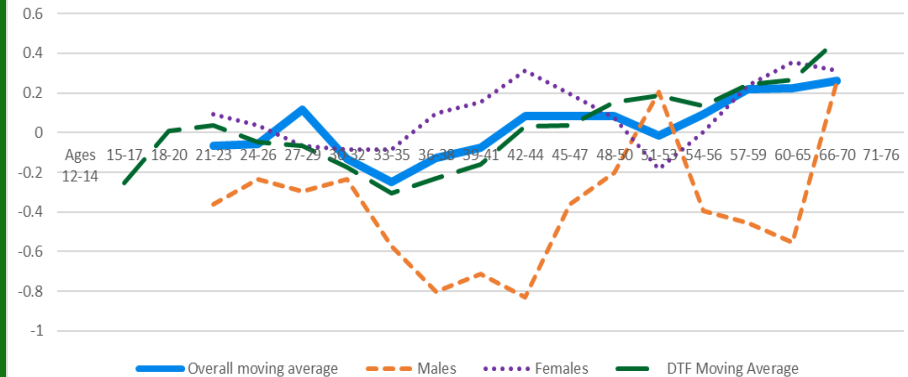


# Many Were Similar for Old & Young

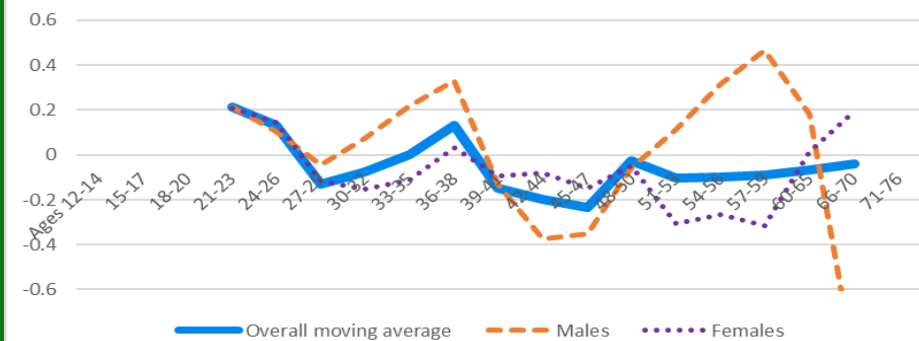
## Compassion



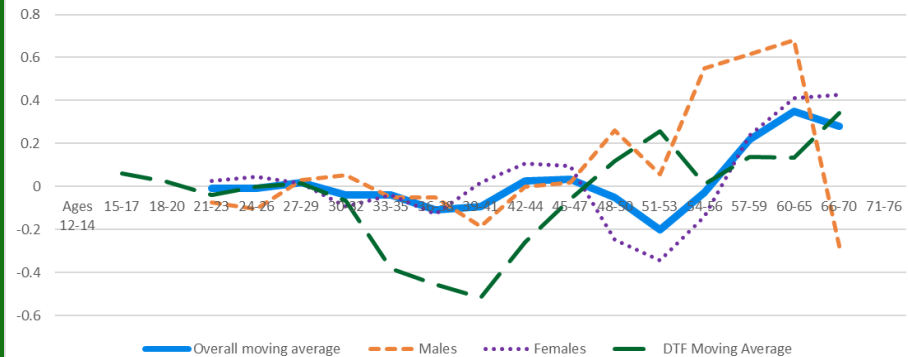
## Impulse Control



## Group Connectedness



## Community Support

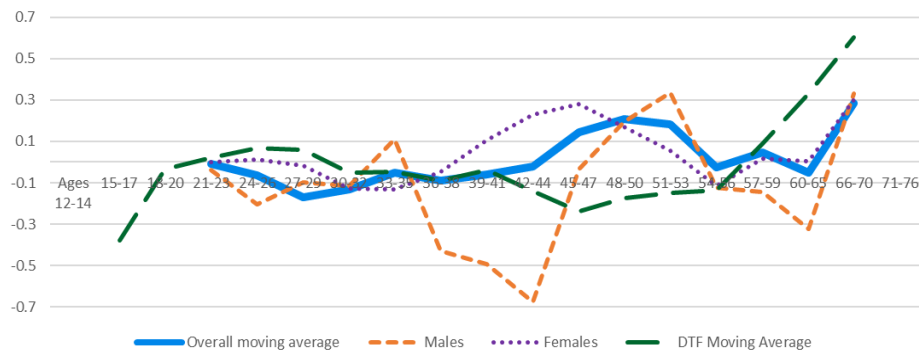


Compassion & Impulse control demonstrated gender differences (higher for females)

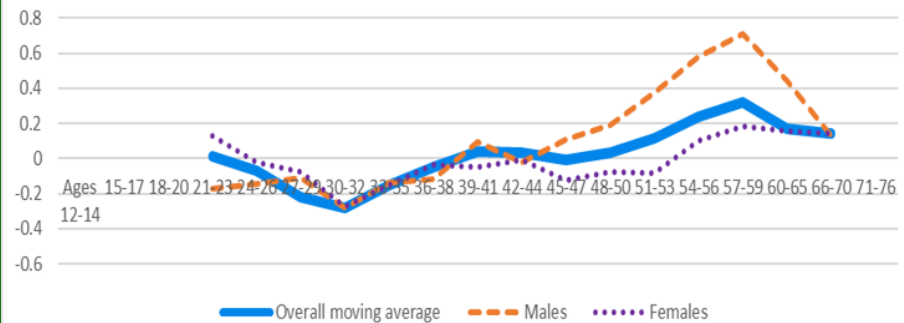


# Most Common Pattern Was Stability Across Adulthood

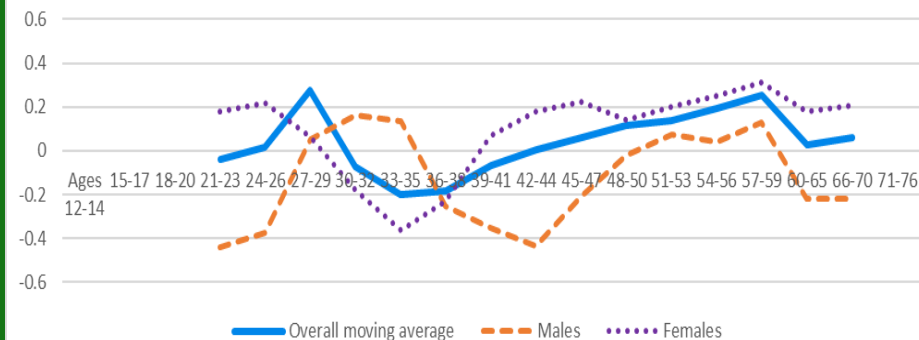
Recovering Positive Affect



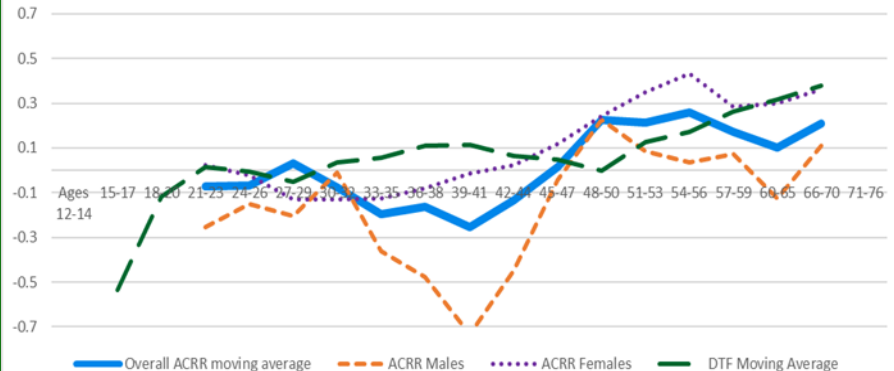
Mattering and Appreciation



Relational Accountability



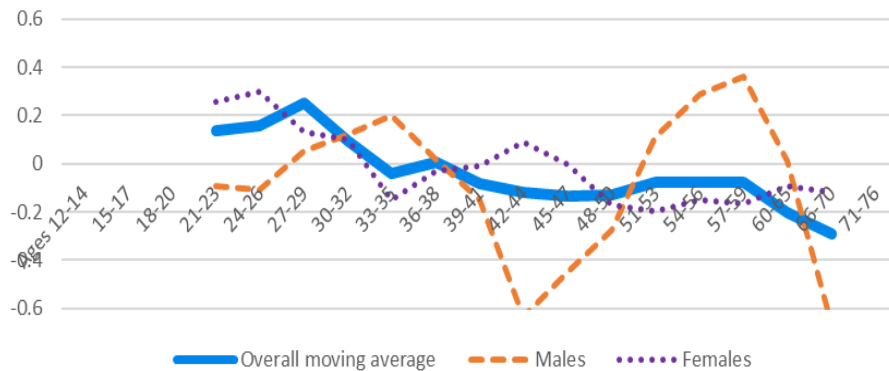
Self-Reliance



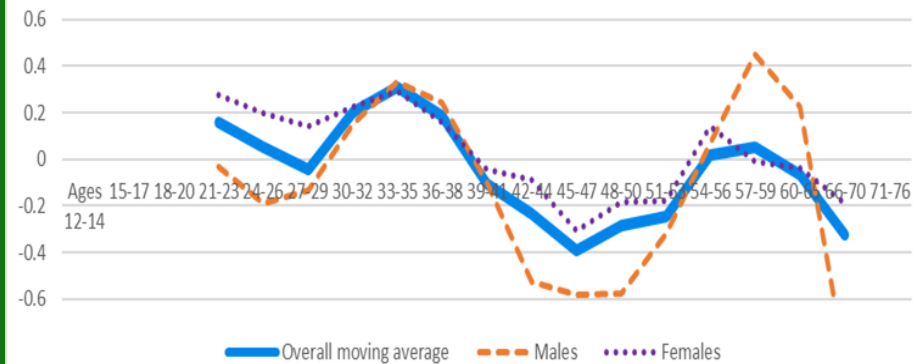
Relational accountability & self-reliance demonstrated gender differences (higher for females). [Age  $p = .07$  for self-reliance.]

# Older Age Was Associated With Lower Levels of Some Strengths

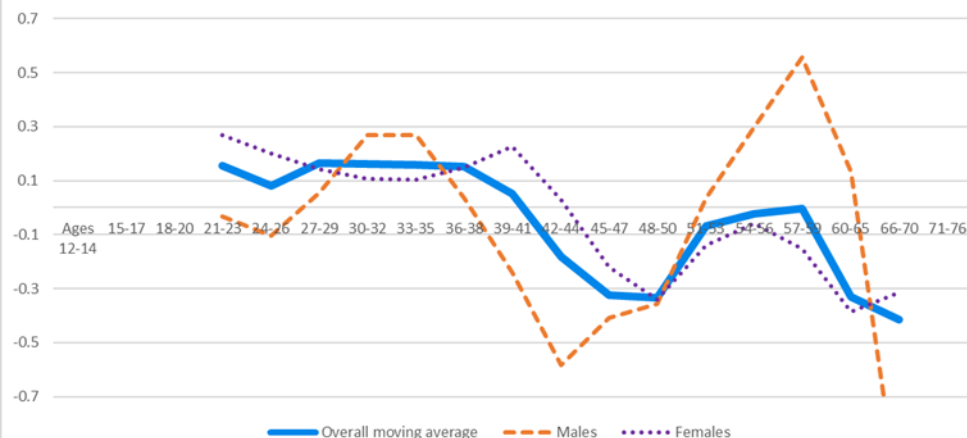
## Future Orientation



## Social Support Received



## Social Support Seeking



No gender differences for any of these three.

# What Promotes Resilience?

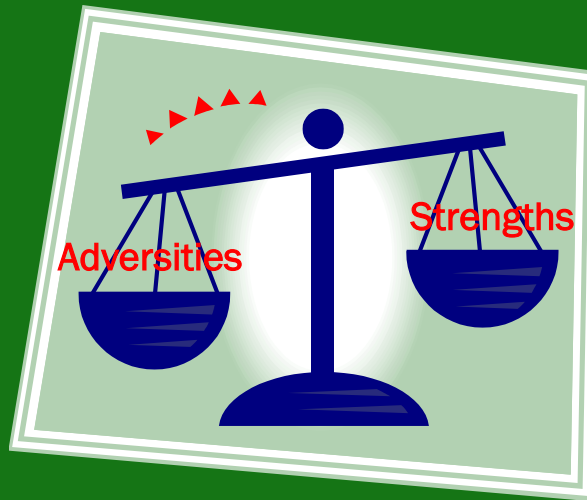
Outcome: Mental Health (Low trauma symptoms)

Poly-strengths†

Recovering positive  
affect\*\*\*

Purpose †

Community support †



Poly-victimization\*\*

$R^2$  for victimization, other adversities, financial strain & demographics = .18.  
 $R^2$  for total model including strengths = .44.

Age was not a significant moderator for any strength in this analysis.

Sig effects in unexpected direction: Self-reliance, relational accountability, religious meaning making, and compassion.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ ; †  $p < .07$ .

# What Promotes Resilience?

## Outcome: Psychological Well-Being

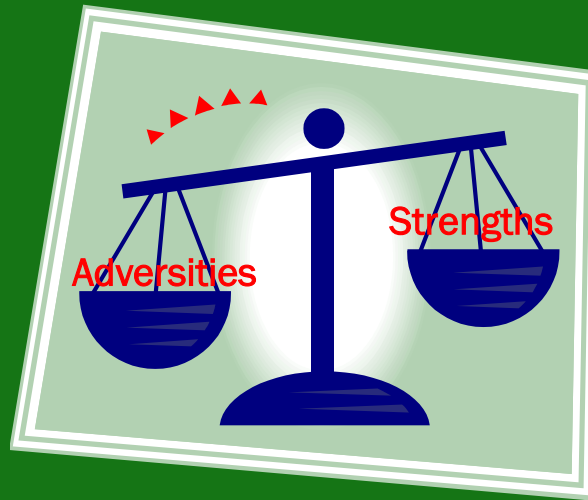
Poly-strengths\*

Recovering positive affect\*\*

Purpose †

Social support received (strongest 18-35)\*

Impulse control (18-49 yo only)\*



Poly-victimization \*

$R^2$  for victimization, other adversities, financial strain & demographics = .05.  
 $R^2$  for total model including strengths and moderation by age = .58.  
Age significantly moderated the associations with impulse control & social support received.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ ; †  $p < .07$ .

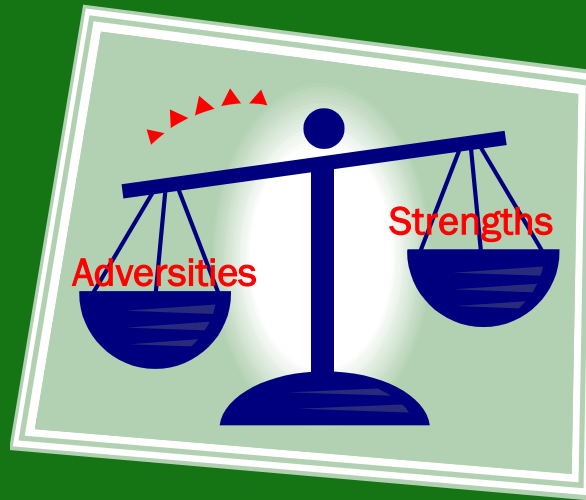


# What Promotes Resilience?

## Outcome: Physical Well-Being

Financial strain \*

Non-vic adversities\*



Psychological Endurance\*

Recovering positive affect\*

*$R^2$  for victimization, other adversities, financial strain & demographics = .10.*

*$R^2$  for total model including strengths and moderation by age = .24.*

# What Promotes Resilience?

## Outcome: Family Well-Being

Poly-strengths †  
Mattering \*\*

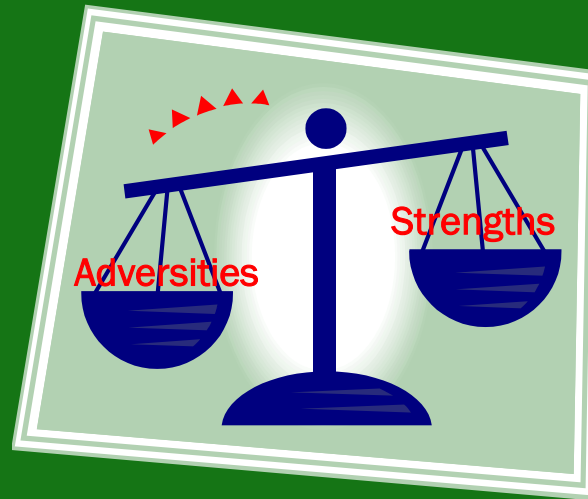
Purpose \* (50+ yo)

Self-reliance\* (18-35yo)

Recovering positive  
affect\* (18-49 yo)

Social support received\*  
(18-35 yo)

Poly-victimization \*



$R^2$  for victimization, other adversities, financial strain & demographics = .13.

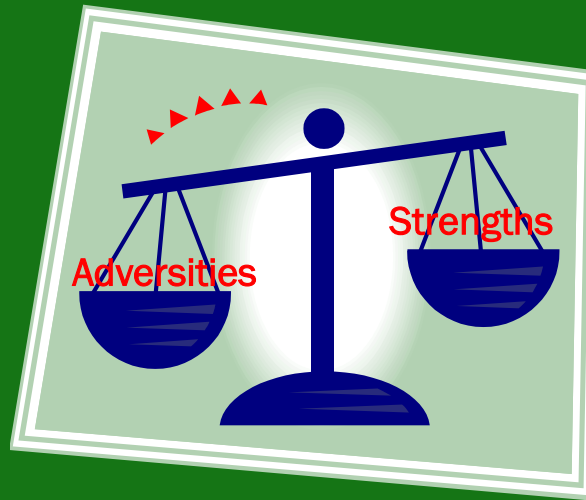
$R^2$  for total model including strengths and moderation by age = .40.

Age significantly moderated the associations with self-reliance, social support received, recovering positive affect, and purpose.

# What Promotes Resilience?

## Outcome: Spiritual Well-Being–Theistic

No significant  
adversities



Self-reliance\*\*  
Religious meaning  
making \*\*\*  
Purpose\*

*$R^2$  for victimization, other adversities, financial strain & demographics = .05.*

*$R^2$  for total model including strengths = .72.*

*Findings in unexpected direction: Endurance*

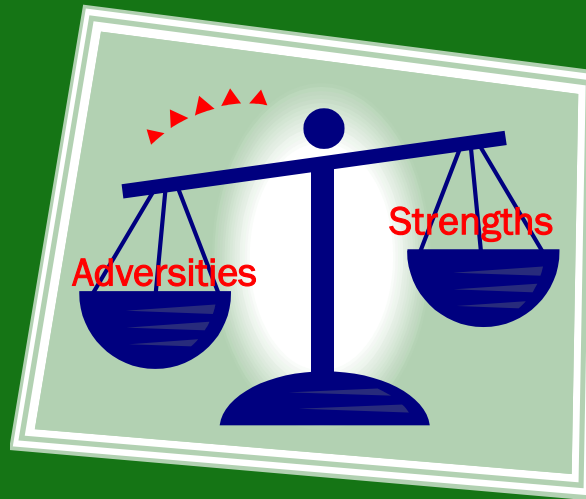
*The block examining moderation by age was non-significant.*

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ ; †  $p < .07$ .

# What Promotes Resilience?

## Outcome: Spiritual Well-Being—Non-theistic

No significant  
adversities



Poly-strengths\*

Self-reliance\*\* (strongest  
36+ yo)

Religious meaning  
making \*\*\*

Purpose\*

Mattering \* (generally  
linear but medium levels  
similar to high for 50+)

*R<sup>2</sup> for victimization, other adversities, financial strain & demographics= .06.*

*R<sup>2</sup> for total model including strengths and moderation by age = .26.*

*Age moderated the associations with self-reliance (p=.05) and mattering and appreciation.*

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ ; †  $p < .07$ .

# Some Ways to Improve Strengths



## Mindfulness:

- Compassion
- Emotional regulation



## Narrative:

- Purpose
- Emotional regulation



## Spirituality improves:

- Purpose
- Social Support



## Volunteering improves:

- Purpose
- Community support



## Regular exercise (actually most routines, even sleep!):

- Endurance
- Optimism

Abstract principles  
Warning signs  
Debunking myths



# Key Take-Aways

- Ageist stereotypes are not supported by data.
- Declines in psychological strengths and well-being are not an inevitable part of aging. Just the opposite is true—it is not unusual for people to continue to strengthen into their 50s-70s and perhaps beyond.
- Many strengths were similarly beneficial across the lifespan, with poly-strengths, recovering positive affect, and purpose showing particular promise.
- Moderation by age, when present, showed we have more work to do to understand what helps older people thrive.
- These preliminary data provide support for using these scales with older adults.
- There are many ways to improve strengths.

