Violence Across the Lifecourse

Research, Practice & Policy

Todd I. Herrenkohl, PhD
Marion Elizabeth Blue Professor of Children and Families
University of Michigan School of Social Work
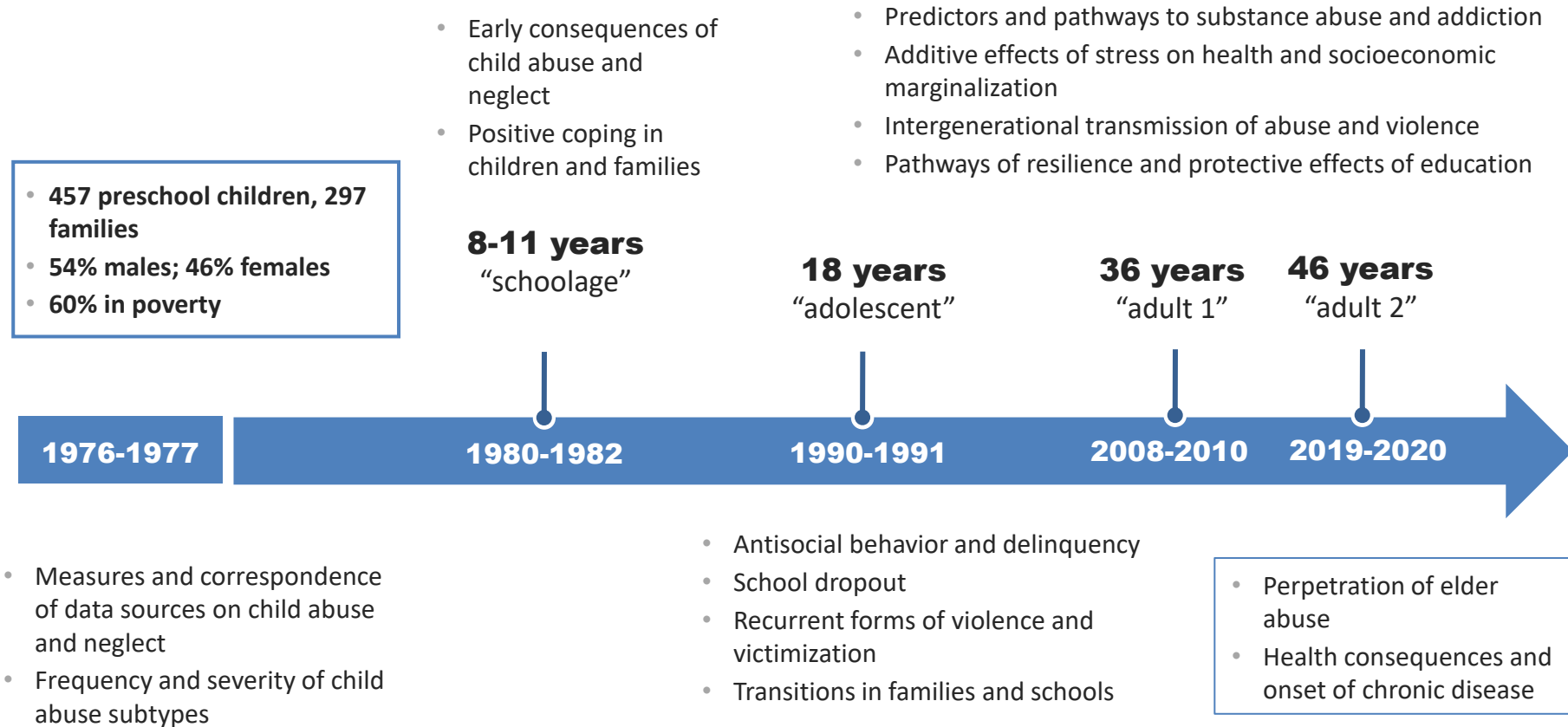
Tamkin Symposium on Elder Abuse
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Violence Across the Lifecourse

Research, Practice & Policy

- Summarize research on lifecourse patterns of violence (Lehigh Longitudinal Study).

- Explore the transmission of violence over time and relational contexts.

- Identify factors that can mitigate risks and promote resilience in individuals exposed to violence.

- Discuss prevention and intervention approaches that can change the developmental trajectories of individuals at-risk for violence and elder abuse.

Lehigh Longitudinal Study

- **457 preschool children, 297 families**
- **54% males; 46% females**
- **60% in poverty**

- Early consequences of child abuse and neglect
- Positive coping in children and families

8-11 years
"schoolage"

- Predictors and pathways to substance abuse and addiction
- Additive effects of stress on health and socioeconomic marginalization
- Intergenerational transmission of abuse and violence
- Pathways of resilience and protective effects of education

18 years
"adolescent"

36 years
"adult 1"

46 years
"adult 2"

1976-1977 | **1980-1982** | **1990-1991** | **2008-2010** | **2019-2020**

- Measures and correspondence of data sources on child abuse and neglect
- Frequency and severity of child abuse subtypes

- Antisocial behavior and delinquency
- School dropout
- Recurrent forms of violence and victimization
- Transitions in families and schools

- Perpetration of elder abuse
- Health consequences and onset of chronic disease

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Lifecourse Patterns of Abuse and Elder Mistreatment (Perpetration)

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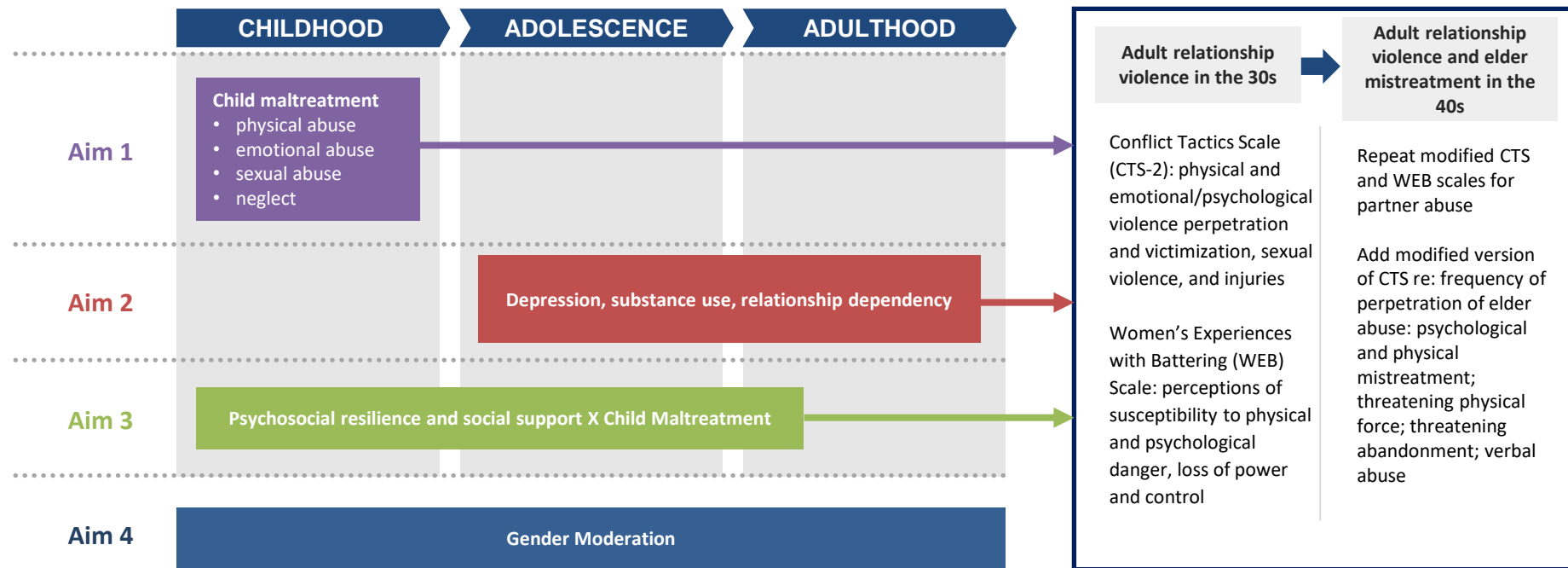
Review of Research on Violence Across the Lifecourse

Review Manuscript

Child Maltreatment, Youth Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, and Elder Mistreatment: A Review and Theoretical Analysis of Research on Violence Across the Life Course

Todd I. Herrenkohl[1], Lisa Fedina[1], Karen A. Roberto[2],
Kira L. Raquet[1], Rita X. Hu[1], Ashley N. Rousson[3], and W. Alex Mason[4]

Abstract

This article reports the results of a scoping review of the literature on life-course patterns of violence that span the developmental periods of childhood, adolescence, and early and middle adulthood. We also assess the evidence on elder mistreatment and its relation to earlier forms of violence. Additionally, we draw on theories and empirical studies to help explain the transmission of violence over time and relational contexts and the factors that appear to mitigate risks and promote resilience in individuals exposed to violence. Results suggest that encounters with violence beginning in childhood elevate the risk for violence in subsequent developmental periods. The strongest connections are between child maltreatment (physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect) and violence in adolescence and between violence in adolescence and violence in early and middle adulthood. Persistence of violence into older adulthood leading to elder mistreatment is less well-documented, but probable, based on available research. We conclude that more attention should be paid to studying developmental patterns and intersecting forms of violence that extend into old age. To eradicate violence in all its forms, considerably more must be done to increase awareness of the repetition of violence; to connect research to actionable steps for prevention and intervention across the life course; and to better integrate systems that serve vulnerable children, youth, and adults. Primary prevention is essential to breaking the cycle of violence within families and to alleviating the risks to children caused by poverty and other external factors such as social disconnection within communities.

Broadly defined, child maltreatment includes physical, emotional, and sexual forms of abuse as well as neglect and, in some jurisdictions, children's exposure to domestic violence (Anda et al., 1999; Appleyard et al., 2005). Although prospective longitudinal studies on these and related topics are rare (Capaldi et al., 2012; Herrenkohl et al., 2008), existing research links each of these forms of child maltreatment to a range of problems later in life, including repeated victimization and perpetration of violence and abuse (Fuller-Thomson et al., 2019; Herrenkohl & Rousson, 2018; Widom, 1989; Widom & Maxfield, 2001). In this review, we focus on studies relevant to this life-course pattern, also called the "cycle of violence," with a goal of reviewing evidence on the connections between child maltreatment and later forms of violence that extend to and beyond midlife. We discuss the developmental associations between child maltreatment, violence in adolescence, and intimate partner violence (IPV) and elder mistreatment. We also review evidence, albeit limited, on the more proximal association between adult IPV and elder mistreatment. We examine what is known about the persistence of violence in and across relational contexts, noting where gaps in knowledge remain and where research is particularly strong. In reviewing the literature, we also draw on theories to help explain the

[1] University of Michigan School of Social Work, Ann Arbor, MI, USA
[2] Institute for Society, Culture, and Environment, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA, USA
[3] School of Social Work, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA
[4] Department of Preventive Medicine, University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Memphis, TN, USA

Corresponding Author:
Todd I. Herrenkohl, University of Michigan School of Social Work, 1080 South University Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA.
Email: tih@umich.edu

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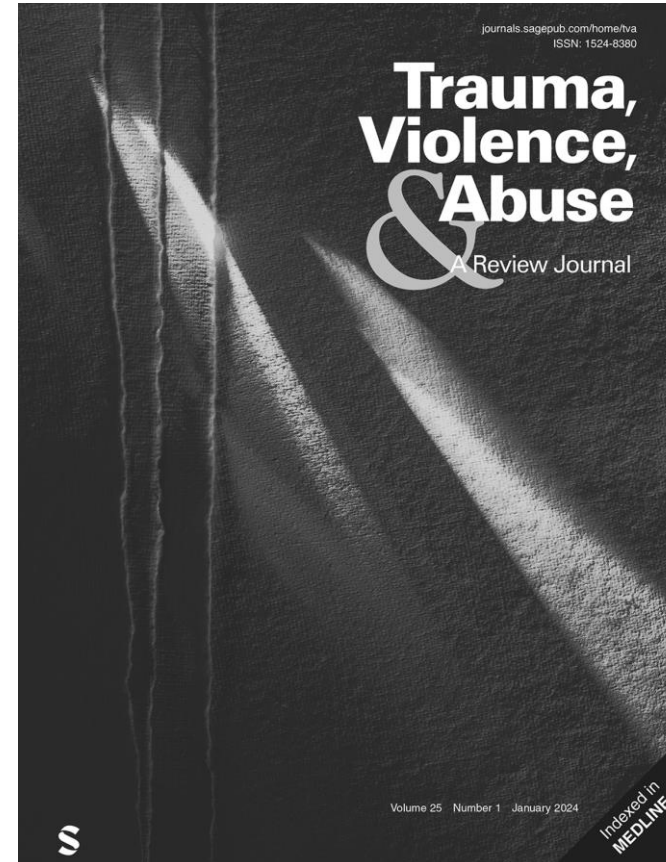
What we learned:

- Early exposure to abuse/violence elevates the risk for later violence (direct and indirect effects).

- Pathways from child to adolescent and adolescent to adult violence (IPV) is well established.

- IPV is both a consequence of, and risk for, ongoing violence in adulthood (including elder mistreatment).

- Perpetration of violence peaks in early adulthood; whereas the risk of victimization continues throughout the adult years.

- Racial disparities in the causes and consequences of violence.

The CM and IPV connection to Elder Abuse

- Few longitudinal studies, but evidence supports a connection:

  - History of abuse in childhood, young adulthood, and adulthood is associated with a higher risk for abuse as an older adult (55 or older) (McDonald & Thomas, 2013).

  - For Chinese American older adults, elder abuse is more prevalent among those who report child maltreatment and IPV (Dong & Wang, 2019).

  - Reports of sexual and emotional abuse before age 18 are associated with a higher risk for abuse among adults ages 70+ (Kong & Easton, 2019).

  - Physical limitations and depression elevate the risk for abuse among older adults (McDonald & Thomas, 2013).

  - Older women normalize their abusive childhood experiences, viewing violent relationships as a way of life (Roberto & McCann, 2021; Tetterton & Farnsworth, 2011).

Common Risk Factors for Violence Over the Lifecourse

Domain	Risk Factor	Child Maltreatment	Youth Violence	IPV	Elder Maltreatment
Societal	Cultural norms favorable to aggression/violence	X	X	X	X
Community	Neighborhood poverty	X	X	X	
	Low neighborhood support & cohesion	X	X	X	
Relationship	Social isolation	X	X	X	X
	Economic stress	X	X	X	X
Individual	Low educational achievement	X	X	X	
	History of violent victimization	X	X	X	X
	SA/MH problems	X	X	X	X

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Child Abuse and Elder Mistreatment

- Official record and parent self-reports of physical abuse & neglect.

- Verbal and physical forms of elder abuse + exploitation (e.g., took things w/out permission).

- Adolescent and adult depression and substance use problems as mediators.

- Bivariate correlations and path models (3-step process, childhood to adult).
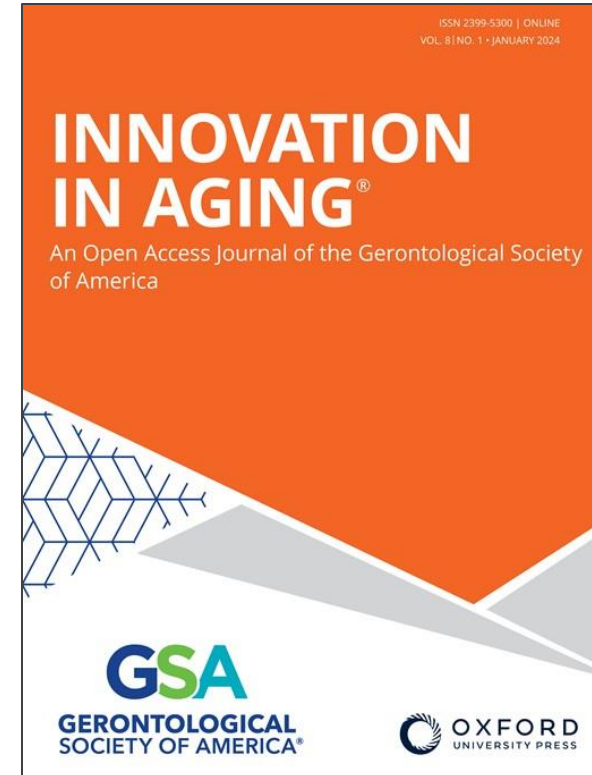
Source: Herrenkohl TI, Roberto KA, Fedina L, Hong S, Love J. (2021) A Prospective Study on Child Abuse and Elder Mistreatment: Assessing Direct Effects and Associations With Depression and Substance Use Problems During Adolescence and Middle Adulthood. Innov Aging, 20;5(3)

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Child Abuse and Elder Mistreatment

Table 2. Results of Path Models Including Childhood, Adolescent, and Adult Variables Related to Elder Mistreatment

	First model (R^2 = .113)[a]			Second model (R^2 = .153)[a]			Third model (R^2 = .186)[a]		
	b	SE	β	b	SE	β	b	SE	β
Covariates									
Childhood socioeconomic status	−0.015	0.016	−0.088	−0.008	0.016	−0.045	−0.008	0.016	−0.048
Gender	−0.041	0.082	−0.034	−0.054	0.080	−0.045	−0.057	0.079	−0.047
Race	−0.162	0.112	−0.100	−0.164	0.109	−0.102	−0.166	0.107	−0.103
Age	−0.036	0.023	−0.125	−0.030	0.023	−0.104	−0.028	0.022	−0.098
Child abuse									
Official record	0.210*	0.099	0.172	0.198*	0.098	0.163	0.155	0.098	0.128
Parent self-report	0.014**	0.005	0.217	0.012*	0.004	0.180	0.011*	0.004	0.173
Adolescent									
Substance use problems				0.309**	0.100	0.224	0.212*	0.105	0.153
Depression				0.003	0.006	0.037	−0.003	0.006	−0.043
Adulthood									
Substance use problems							0.159*	0.079	0.176
Depression							0.008	0.006	0.108

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# Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Relationships

- Three relational themes:

    - (1) tightening ties with parents while taking few COVID-19 precautions (more emotional connection; exchanges of support)

    - (2) keeping customary ties to maintain the status quo (neutral emotional ties; task-based instrumental support; little reciprocity)

    - (3) loosening ties, drifting apart (few expectations; obligation, strain, and dissatisfaction).

Source: Roberto, K. A., Potter, E. C., Fedina, L., Love, J., Chang, Y., & Herrenkohl, T. I. (2023). Families With Early History of Parental Abuse and Neglect: Midlife Adult Children's Relationships With Their Parents During COVID-19. *Journal of Family Issues*, *0*(0).

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Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Stress and Coping of Adults

- 50% reported the pandemic negatively impacted their life, relationships, and wellbeing.

- Primary stressors: fear of getting sick, navigating work changes, economic and housing hardships, grief/loss, social isolation.

- 80% reported no changes in alcohol use.

- Most used positive coping strategies (e.g., seeking outside support, positive reframing, drawing on internal strengths).
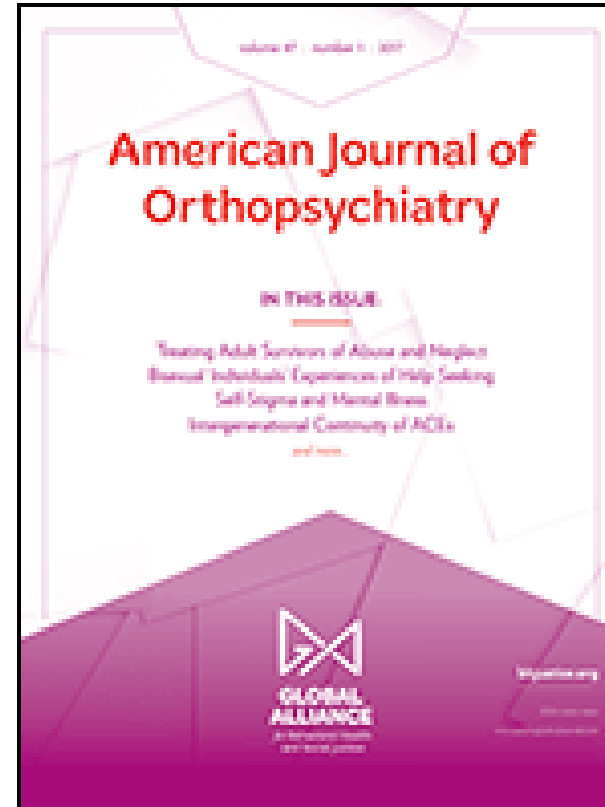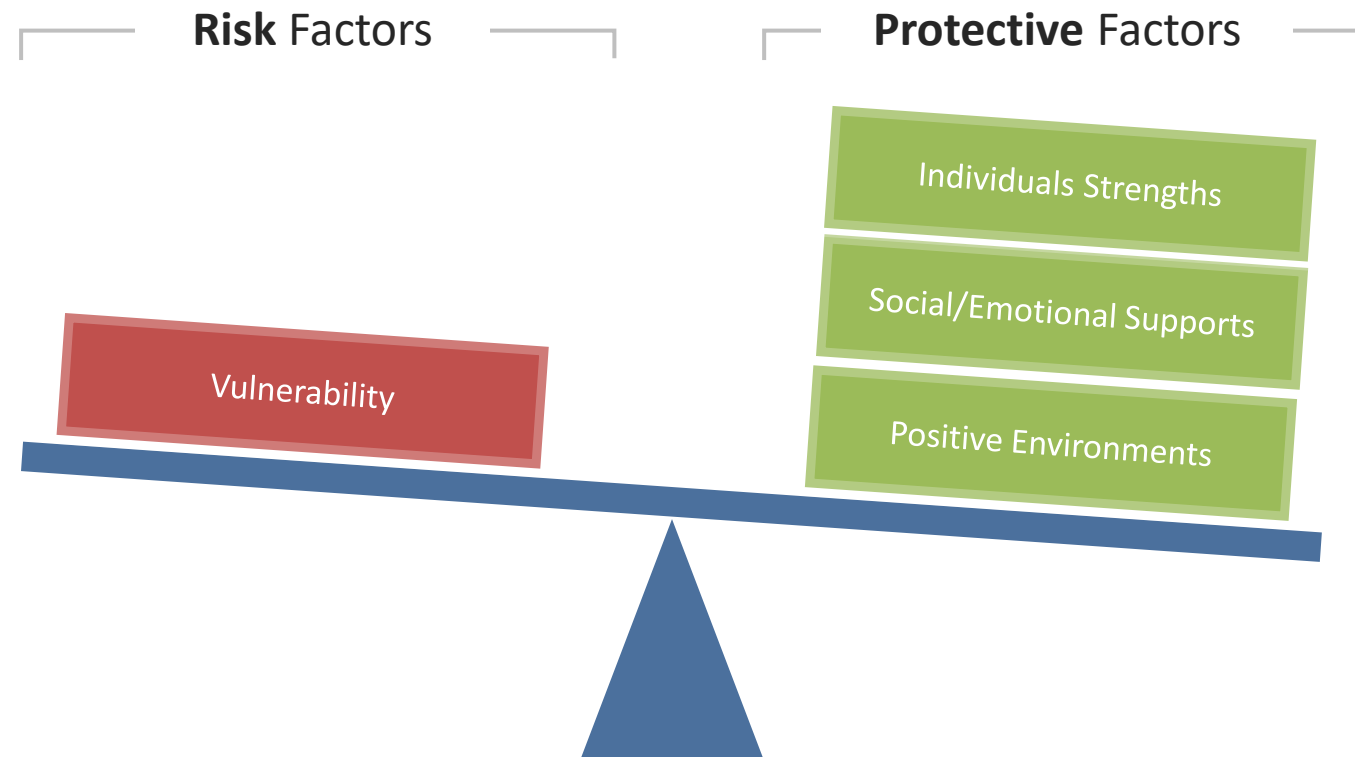
Source: Fedina L, Roberto KA, Zhang X, Chang Y, Love J, Herrenkohl TI. (2023). Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on stress, coping, and well-being among adults with histories of child maltreatment. Am J Orthopsychiatry. Epub ahead of print.

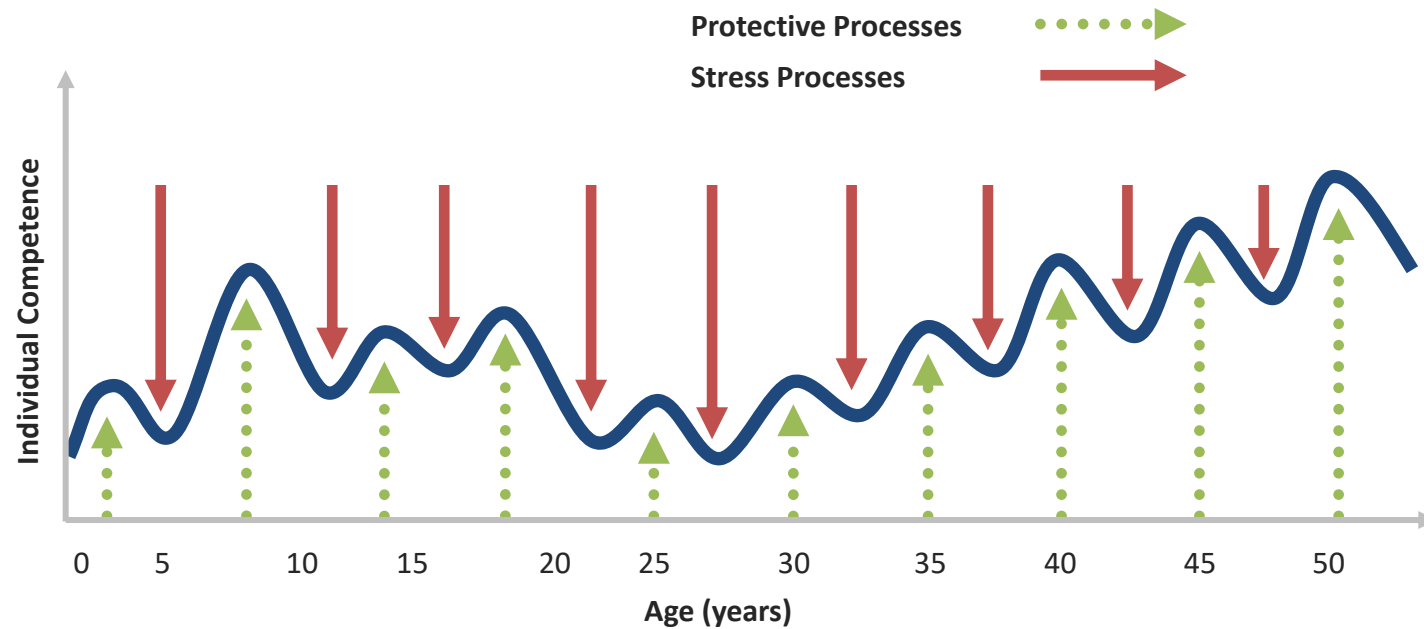SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
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Individual Variation in Responses to Risks and Adversity

- When, for how long, and under what conditions risk/stress exposure occurs will influence lifeocurse outcomes.

- Risk factors do not determine outcomes, however (developmental divergence and discontinuity).

- Many individuals exposed to abuse do well despite the toxic stress they endure (if they also encounter protective/resilience factors).

- P X E interactions (e.g., temperament, adaptive coping, social support) relate to positive changes.

Interaction of Risk and Protection: Foundations of Resilience

Risk Factors

Protective Factors

Vulnerability

Individuals Strengths

Social/Emotional Supports

Positive Environments

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Stress and Protection-Development & Resilience

Source: Leadbeater, et al. (2004). Research and policy for building strengths: Processes and contexts of individual, family, and community development. In K. I. Maton et al. (Eds.), Investing in children, youth, families, and communities: Strengths-based research and policy (pp. 13–30). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Dropping Out of School: Lehigh Longitudinal Study
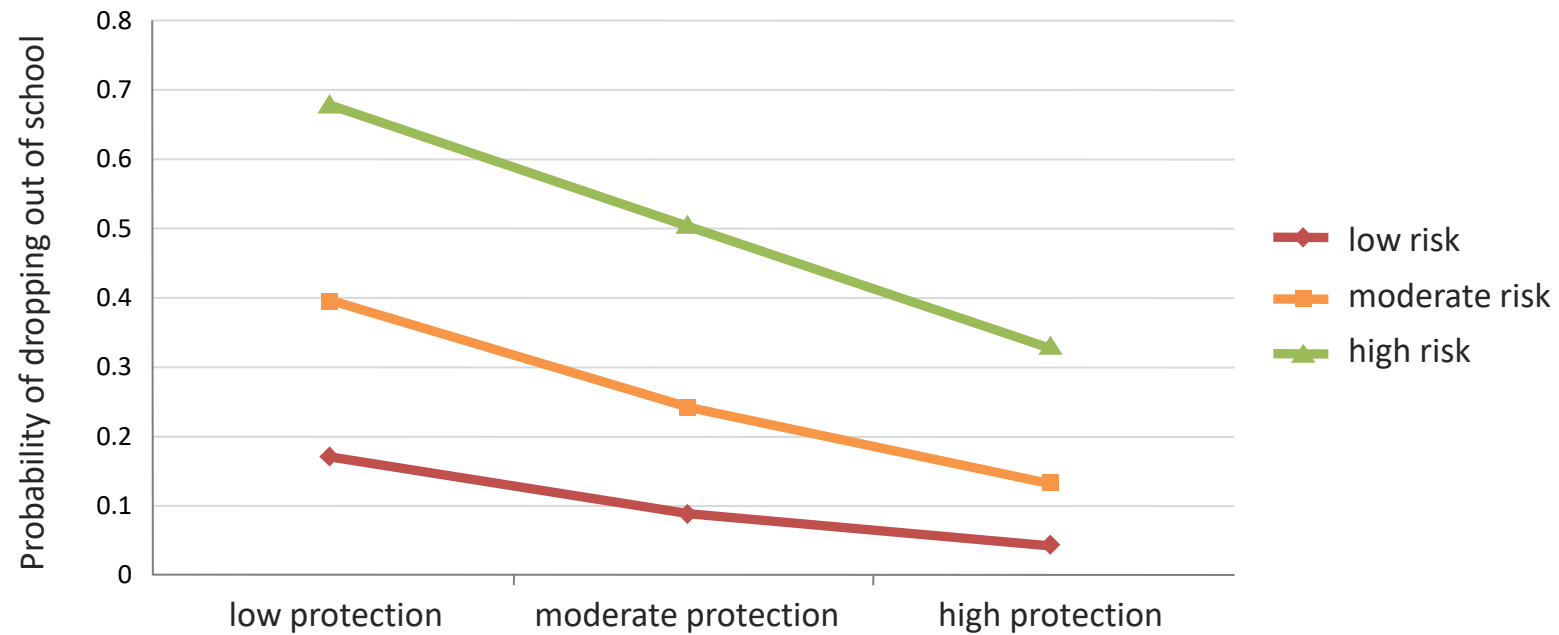
Protective Factors Against Childhood Exposure and Repetition of Abuse

- Economic supports for families

- Stable living situations for children

- Access to programs and services (e.g., housing, employment, mental health)

- Coordination among service agencies (break down silos, pool resources)

- Supportive and caring individuals and communities

- Individual dispositions and skills (e.g., social emotional skills, goal-orientation)

Intervention Programs to Reduce Risks and Promote Resilience

- Primary prevention to lessen risk factors and strengthen the functioning of families

- Psychoeducation and public awareness campaigns

- Mentoring supports to enhance academic achievement; educational attainment

- Social emotional skill-building, mindfulness training

- "System-focused" trauma-informed programs and practices

Universal and Blended Prevention Strategies

Lower Risk
Intervene with Many

Higher Risk
Intervene with Few

Universal

Selective

Indicated

PREVENTION
OF CHILD
MALTREATMENT

Economic supports; public awareness campaigns

Home visitation; parenting skill and family relationship-building approaches

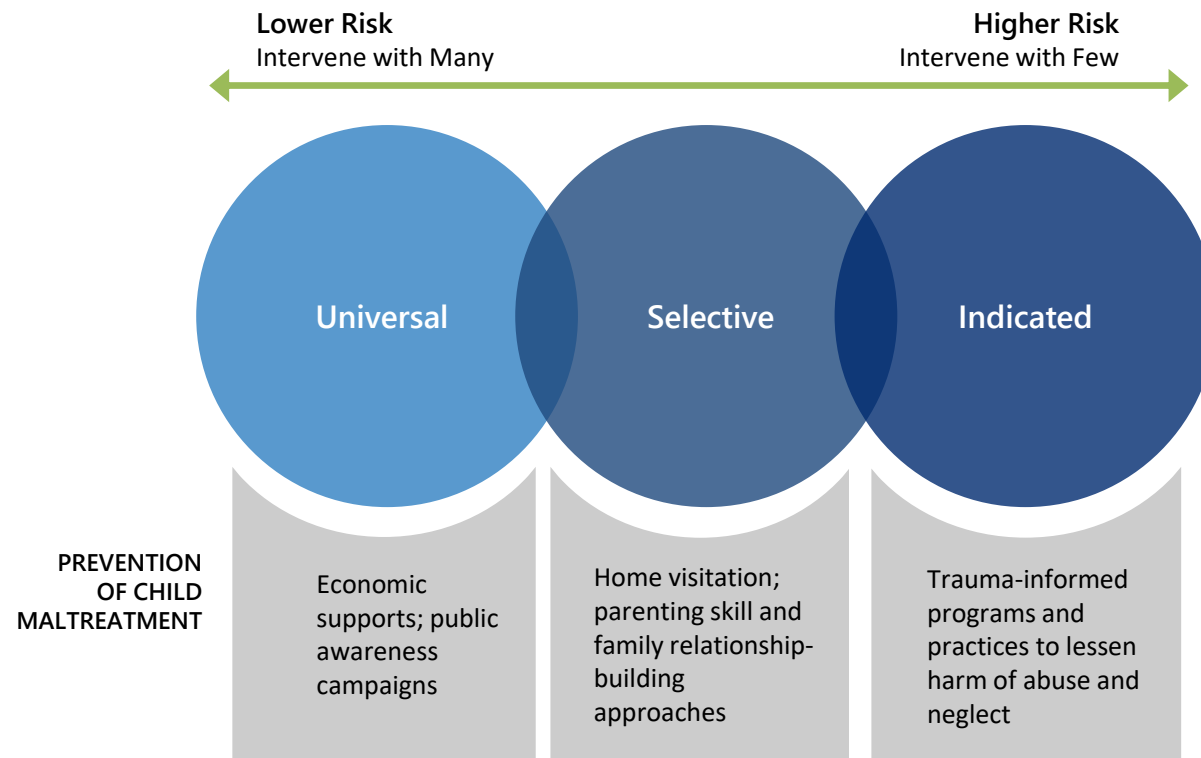Trauma-informed programs and practices to lessen harm of abuse and neglect

Figure adapted from: Greenberg & Abenavoli (2017). Universal interventions: Fully exploring their impacts and potential to produce population-level impacts, Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 10 (1), 40-67.

Benefits of Universal and Blended Prevention Strategies

Reach more people at lower and moderate risk

Avoid stigmatizing individuals who need services (not dependent on risk status)

Less expensive per person than high intensity interventions

Stronger and more lasting impact on the overall health of a population

Increase access to services and improve the quality of services

Shifts the focus from **deficits to strengths**

"To eradicate violence in all its forms, considerably more must be done to increase awareness of the repetition of violence; to connect research to actionable steps for prevention and intervention across the life course; and to better integrate systems that serve vulnerable children, youth, and adults."

Source: Herrenkohl, T. I., Fedina, L., Roberto, K. A., Raquet, K. L., Hu, R. X., Rousson, A. N., & Mason, W. A. (2022). Child Maltreatment, Youth Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, and Elder Mistreatment: A Review and Theoretical Analysis of Research on Violence Across the Life Course. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *23*(1), 314-328.

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