Families, Poly-victimization, & Resilience Portfolios: Understanding Risk, Vulnerability & Protection Across the Span of Childhood

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Sherry Hamby, Lindsey T. Roberts, Elizabeth Taylor, Matthew Hagler, and Wojciech Kaczkowski

A Need for a Paradigm Shift

In the last half century, remarkable progress has been made toward the goal of making families safer. However, to build on existing progress, a paradigm shift is needed. This chapter identifies three primary shifts that have the potential to further advance our understanding of family violence and to enhance our ability to prevent violence and promote resilience when violence does occur. The first shift is to encourage researchers and providers to adopt a more integrated framework for violence and victimization. All forms of violence and victimization are interconnected and treating them as discrete phenomena has been a major obstacle to progress in reducing the burden of violence on children, families and on society. The second shift is to focus more on mechanisms and less on correlates, especially static correlates such as demographic characteristics. The third shift is to promote a strengths-based

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approach to working with families, children, and parents. No one thinks of their life goals as simply avoiding psychological distress or trauma. People are motivated to pursue happiness and well-being for themselves and their loved ones. Using a framework called "Resilience Portfolios" (Grych, Hamby, & Banyard, 2015) we present a way to shift science, prevention and intervention to a family-centered approach that better aligns with the goals that most people have for their families.

Building on Prior Progress

To understand the need for new conceptual shifts, it is helpful to understand the first dramatic shift in our understanding of family and other forms of violence. Our earliest surviving writings and other artistic mediums are filled with depictions of violence. For millennia, however, violence was considered an inherent part of existence, not something that could be studied scientifically, much less reduced. That began to change in the nineteenth century and shifted in earnest in the second half of the twentieth century.

The twentieth century was a period of tremendous change and innovation. People began to apply the tools of social science to the issue of violence, revolutionizing our understanding of violence. By simply asking people about issues, even very private issues, a subject that was thought of as private, rare, and taboo transformed into a question to which the scientific method could be applied. Alfred Kinsey was one of the first scientists to cross these frontiers and collected the first systematic data on child sex offenders (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948). Another breakthrough occurred when physicians began to inquire about the nature of suspicious pediatric injuries (Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller, & Silver, 1962). In the 1970s, the first national survey on family violence was conducted in the United States (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). These efforts transformed the understanding of family violence. It was no longer seen as a rare problem affecting a deviant few, but a huge social problem that touched the lives of many. Largely as a result of these efforts, healthcare, schools, criminal justice institutions, social services, and policymakers invest far greater resources in family violence than was formerly the case. Despite these significant social changes, in some respects we have become too wedded to some of the conventions established in these early years. This is keeping us from making further progress.

Conceptual Shift #1: From Disciplinary Siloes to the Web of Violence

The first major shift that needs to occur is to move away from the hyper-specialization that has developed (Hamby & Grych, 2013). There has been a huge proliferation of research on all different types of child and family violence. However, these lines of

research have largely emerged in isolation from each other. Researchers studying sexual abuse are a different group than those who study rape; scientists who study exposure to domestic violence are different from those who study dating violence; experts who study adolescent dating violence are often different from those who study bullying and other peer victimizations. This separation limits the potential of the field, as those are not independent phenomena; they are all closely interrelated. Similarly, prevention and intervention efforts have tended to focus on a single problem.

Fortunately, this siloed approach to violence has started to shift and it is increasingly recognized that most people who are victimized have experienced multiple forms of victimization. Labels such as "victim of child abuse" or "victim of bullying" miss critical elements of many children's experiences. For the last decade, the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV; Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, & Hamby, 2009) has monitored youth victimization in the United States. NatSCEV is an ongoing survey, with each wave including more than 4000 families with children between the ages of 1 month and 17 years old. Surprisingly, until NatSCEV, there was no systematic attempt to measure (at a nationally-representative level) crimes against children under the age of 12 that were not reported to authorities. One of the primary insights from NatSCEV—and what sets it apart from other surveys that focus solely on one specific domain of victimization—is that children's lives are neither organized by our research disciplines nor by our social institutions.

Poly-victimization

Unlike many studies on child victimization, which often focus on a single type of abuse or closely related set of types. NatSCEV assesses more than 40 different types of victimization. This has enabled us to see the close interrelationships among all forms of victimization. For example, children who are victims of maltreatment are more than four times as likely to also be victims of sexual victimization by a non-caregiving offender (Finkelhor et al., 2009). Maltreated children are also almost twice as likely to be the victim of non-familial assault and more than twice as likely to witness violence. Perhaps especially surprisingly, they are even about twice as likely to experience a property crime. Seemingly unrelated offenses are not unrelated at all but rather are closely intertwined.

David Finkelhor and Heather Turner coined the term "poly-victimization" to capture these relationships (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007; Turner, Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 2010). Poly-victims are people who experience multiple, different types of violence and represent the children with the greatest victimization burden. Children who are getting exposed to abuse in the home are often the same children who are being bullied at school and witnessing gang violence in the community. These are not independent populations. Rather, many children are getting victimized in multiple settings by multiple perpetrators and have no safe haven.

The Over-reliance on Formal Similarities in Studies of Interconnections

When thinking about these interconnections, the field, often without seeming to realize it, has emphasized isomorphic similarities instead of studying the mechanisms underlying these connections (Hamby & Grych, 2013). For example, dozens of studies link exposure to domestic violence and child physical abuse (for a review, see Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008). Although that is an important link, the emphasis on this particular interconnection misses something crucial. Exposure to domestic violence and child physical abuse are not linked simply because perpetrators enjoy hitting multiple targets. Instead, multiple, complex problems lead to multiple violations.

Recognizing these shared vulnerabilities begins to shed light on findings such as one from NatSCEV showing that exposure to domestic violence is *more closely related to other forms of maltreatment than it is to child physical abuse*. Children who grow up in domestically violent homes are about 5 times more likely to experience physical abuse by a caregiver (odds ratio = 4.99; Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2010). However, the odds ratios for neglect and sexual abuse by another known adult are as high or higher at 6.2 and 5.2, respectively (adjusting for several demographic characteristics). Exposure to domestic violence is also more closely related to other forms of victimization, including some that might not be expected, such as custodial interference (taking and keeping a child in violation of a custody agreement), which was more than 9 times as common in domestically violent homes as it was in other homes. In fact, custodial interference was extremely rare in non-domestically violent homes and almost 3 out of 4 cases (72 %) occurred in homes where children had also been exposed to domestic violence.

Another example is exposure to domestic violence and teen dating victimization. Although these two forms of victimization are significant related, they are related to many other forms of youth victimization as well. It is not as simple as one dysfunctional romantic relationship producing another dysfunctional romantic relationship. In NatSCEV, teen dating violence is more closely related to bias-motivated assaults (hate crimes), internet harassment, and statutory rape/sexual misconduct than it is to exposure to domestic violence, for example (Hamby, Finkelhor, & Turner, 2012). It is also closely related to poly-victimization. Multiple types of dysfunction are bleeding into all of the relationships in a child's life. They are so interconnected that in NatSCEV, there was not a single victim of teen dating violence who did not report at least one other form of victimization, although "mono-victimization" does occur (isolated incidents of violence; Hamby & Grych, 2013). The complete picture is not a simple mirroring phenomenon, but is instead a tangled web of dysfunction.

Taking a Child-Centered Approach

Another way that past research has missed important aspects of children's vulnerabilities is in taking an adult or parent-centered approach, rather than a child-centered approach to the assessment of violence. A distinctive feature of NatSCEV (Finkelhor

et al., 2009) is its child-centered approach. Unlike much of the family research that has been done, NatSCEV's child-centered focus means that the research is based on the child as the frame of reference. This might sound similar to other child abuse research, but a child-centered approach produces insights that are not well recognized in the field. An example best illustrates the differences in methodology. As is well known, in the United States Census there has been a decline in two-parent households (Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013) and household structure has been a topic of considerable interest. However, this Census statistic is parent-centered data, and it does not accurately reflect children's experiences. Simply surveying current two-parent households misses important aspects of many families and—surprisingly given the widespread recognition of the decline of the traditional "nuclear" family—is based on untenable assumptions about the homogeneity of two-parent families.

Consider the example of a man who gets married multiple times and starts multiple families. If he responds to the Census while currently married, he will appear to be part of a two-parent household. His current marital status does not, however, capture the fact that he could have biological children living in single-parent households (maybe even multiple single-parent households.) It could also be possible that he is parenting step-children and not all of the children living in his "two-parent" household are living with their biological parents. A child-centered approach, however, accounts for these possibilities. It is surprisingly difficult to find child-centered data on household structure, but a study using National Survey of Family Growth data showed that even by age 10, 29 % of children born in the U.S. to married parents are not living with both biological parents. For children born outside of marriage, the figure is more than twice as high. Two out of three (66 %) of children born to unmarried parents do not live with both biological parents by the age of 10 (Manning, 2004).

This different focus is the crucial difference between an adult-centered and child-centered perspective. A child-centered approach gives a very different picture of children's vulnerabilities. Children who are living in single-parent households are at greater risk of victimization, probably due to the increased financial strain and reduced ability to provide close supervision that are common in many single-parent homes (Turner et al., 2010). Although the situation of adoption (but not foster care) complicates the picture somewhat, other children experience increased vulnerability because they live with non-biologically related adult males. These children are at higher victimization risk too, in part because of "discriminative parental solicitude" (favoring biological children over non-genetically related children, whether step, foster, or adoptive) and also because antisocial individuals are over-represented in the population of individuals with multiple marriages. As a result of both processes, fathers are twice as likely to physically abuse step-children as genetically related children (Hilton, Harris, & Rice, 2015).

In the study of family violence, a child-centered approach requires assessing family violence among all of the caregivers to whom the child is exposed. This approach, however, is surprisingly uncommon. Most domestic violence studies only assess a single caregiver, often the mother, and her current relationship.

That approach does not accurately represent the number of caregivers who are often responsible for children, particularly following divorce or other relationship termination. Huge numbers of children follow joint custody schedules and shuttle back and forth between households. For example, these schedules might involve spending Wednesdays and every other weekend with their father's family. The lack of two parents in either household could mean that other caregivers are commonly present too. Of course, this is just one example of many patterns that occur. Given the variety of situations in which children might be under the supervision of other caregivers, when researchers measure domestic violence exposure in the traditional way by only asking one parent (usually the mother) about their current relationship, they may not be capturing all of the child's exposure to victimization. This is exactly what we found in NatSCEV. Children are in fact getting exposed to violence by a wide variety of caregivers. About 1 in 4 DV perpetrators are not mothers or fathers, but are other caregivers. The single biggest category in this "other" group is mothers' boyfriends (Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2011). By only talking to one parent, researchers miss much of the domestic violence to which children are exposed.

Missing the Sources of Psychological Trauma due to the Overly Siloed Approach

A final important insight from NatSCEV (Finkelhor et al., 2009) regards the source of trauma symptoms and the ways that "siloed" approaches miss important aspects of mental health symptoms (Hamby & Grych, 2013). Researchers studying a specific area of violence, such as exposure to domestic violence or sexual assault, often assume that the specific types of violence they study are responsible for any trauma symptoms that are reported. Although all of these separate forms of victimization are certainly traumatic and toxic events, this bivariate approach is missing important connections. Researchers, although they may have the best of intentions, tend to focus on and attempt to artificially carve out a single causal factor that realistically cannot be separated from a complex system of causal factors. Bivariate approaches, at least in violence research, do not represent the reality of victimization experiences. In the population, children are not *only* victims of exposure to domestic violence or child sexual abuse, but are often victimized across many domains of their lives. This is especially true for children who have experienced more severe forms of victimization.

Not surprisingly, there is a linear relationship between the number of exposures for different victimization types and mean trauma scores on the Trauma Symptom Checklist (Briere, 1996; Turner et al., 2012). Like many other studies, NatSCEV finds that at the bivariate level, all forms of victimization are associated with trauma symptoms (Finkelhor et al., 2009). However, with poly-victimization introduced into the equations first as a score that measures the total number of *different* ways that a child has been victimized, the statistical contribution of any single form of

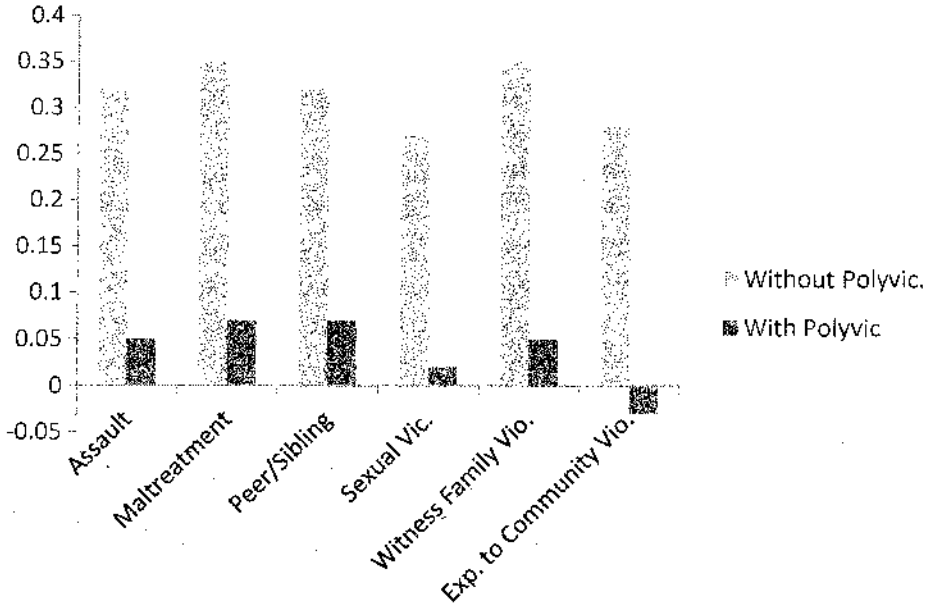

Fig. 1 Mean Trauma Symptom Checklist scores for individual effects compared with effects of poly-victimization

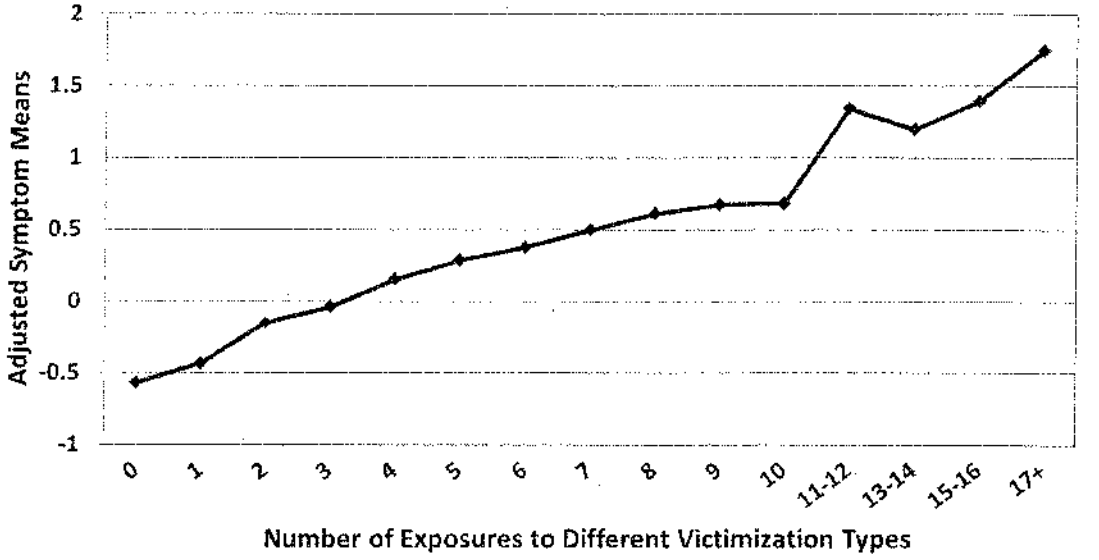

Fig. 2 Mean standardized trauma symptom levels by total number of victimization types, after controlling for demographic variables

victimization, over and above poly-victimization, drops to zero (statistically) (Finkelhor et al., 2007). Figure 1 illustrates the effects of each type of victimization on trauma symptoms both before and after the introduction of poly-victimization into the equation, while Fig. 2 shows the increase in trauma symptoms as types of victimization increase. Even victimizations that are commonly thought of as driving forces behind children's symptomatology (e.g., maltreatment, assault) are reduced

to having statistically no effects after the introduction of poly-victimization. Current trauma symptoms are more tied to the *number and variety* of exposures than to specific victimization types. These findings have been replicated in NatSCEV 2 (Turner et al., 2010).

Researchers often wonder about confounding poly-victimization with frequency and chronicity of abuse. One way this has been explored is by dividing children into four groups: non-victims, mono-victims who report a low frequency, mono-victims who report a high frequency of incidents but only for one type of victimization, and poly-victims (Turner et al., 2010). As one would expect, the non-victims score low on trauma symptoms and the low and high frequency mono-victims are notably higher than non-victims. However, even mono-victims who experienced a high frequency of violence do not score nearly as high as the poly-victims, who are highest in symptomatology. This is true for all of our major victimization domains, including exposure to domestic violence, maltreatment, sexual victimization, and peer victimization. It is also interesting to note the low and high frequency victims score fairly similarly on symptomatology for each of these domains.

Another way we have explored the intersections between severity and frequency is by trying a number of combinations of weights and other scoring alternatives, to see if there is any advantage to, for example, weighting sexual victimizations more heavily than verbal aggressions (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005). Surprisingly, this also turns out not to be the case. This result parallels studies of dating violence—frequency is a better measure of the problem than severity (Hamby, Poindexter, & Gray-Little, 1996) and poly-victimization scores—number of different types—have better psychometrics than other measures of frequency or severity (Shorey, Brasfield, Febres, Cornelius, & Stuart, 2012).

Beyond Poly-victimization: Reinventing the Web of Violence

Thinking about violence in the poly-victimization framework has many implications for prevention and intervention. Poly-victimization is not the only type of interconnection that has been studied and, remarkably, even the study of interconnections has become fragmented (Hamby & Grych, 2013). Several disciplines describe similar phenomena that also refer to types of interconnections among forms of violence, but they often do so using terminology that obscures the similarities. For example, in criminology, researchers have been studying "criminal generalists" for decades (e.g., Chamelin, Fox, & Whisenand, 1979). However, this pattern of "poly-perpetration" conceptually overlaps with poly-victimization, and those two concepts could (and should) inform each other. Further, poly-perpetration and poly-victimization have been studied in isolation from re-victimization or perpetrator-victimization patterns such as the intergenerational transmission of violence. Other similarly overlapping concepts exist, such as "trauma-informed care" (e.g., Hodas, 2006), which also reflects interconnections between perpetration and

victimization, and "complex trauma" (e.g., Spinazzola et al., 2005), which is similar to the concepts of poly-victimization and re-victimization. This large number of terms impedes scientific progress. Many of these terms do not lend themselves to recognizing similarities in these patterns or the development of an internally consistent terminology. By studying related concepts in isolation from each other, much of psychologists' work has ended up in silos, and as a result, the field as a whole spends too much time reinventing the wheel. Because of these artificial siloes, psychologists do not fully benefit from insights in closely-related fields. One such place this occurs is in the study of mechanisms.

Conceptual Shift #2: Understanding the Mechanisms of Violence and Victimization

There are etiological processes that affect many different forms of violence (Hamby & Grych, 2013). Because of these overlapping causal agents, the insight that interconnections among violence are not simple, unitary links becomes even more important. Arguably, our job as researchers would be far simpler if these relationships were unitary. However, sexual victimization does not simply beget more sexual victimization. The first instance of sexual victimization probably occurred because of vulnerabilities that leave children open to many types of victimizations. Indeed, 50 % of child sexual abuse victims are poly-victims, the most highly victimized segment of the population. Further, prior sexual victimization is not the best predictor of risk of later sexual victimization—poly-victimization is (Finkelhor, Shattuck, Turner, & Hamby, 2014). The total burden of victimization both signals extensive vulnerabilities and also can create additional vulnerabilities, such as dissociative symptoms, that increase the risk for further victimization.

Why One Form of Violence and Not Another?

Psychologists need to better understand these processes. The field has already made significant progress in identifying a large number of causal factors. For example, identified factors at the individual level include affective processes, self-regulation, cognitive processes such as beliefs about aggression and schemas, and personality factors such as impulsivity and narcissism (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994). At the situational level, factors such as environmental conditions (heat, overcrowding, etc.), substance use, social integration, family context, and behavior of others are important. Although these discoveries are promising in some sense, that same list of etiological factors could potentially describe the risks of almost all forms of victimization and even perpetration. All too often, they have been "discovered" multiple times in multiple sub-disciplines of violence research (Hamby & Grych, 2013).

The interconnection among forms of violence is evidenced by the fact that any list of etiological factors drawn from any sub-discipline of violence research can be applied to almost any other form of violence. To advance the scientific knowledge on the subject, researchers need to identify and understand both the common mechanisms and the unique ones. For example, on some occasions, a perpetrator might hit his dating partner and on other occasions bully a peer in the classroom. Further research is needed to investigate the difference between these two types of perpetration and victimization. Why does it emerge as dating violence in one scenario and as bullying in another? At least part of the answer can be found in situational characteristics. This is one more area that would greatly benefit from interdisciplinary communication. Psychologists tend to focus more on individual characteristics, while criminologists excel at studying situational characteristics. Criminology knows far more about how situational factors can trigger violence than psychology does, despite the fact that these factors almost always work in conjunction and that both fields might benefit from collaboration. Yet, we often do not take advantage of the hard-earned insights that others have already learned. There are relational and other factors that probably influence these patterns too, although we know relatively little about them. For example, a woman who might hit her child may never hit her boss, co-worker, or her own parent. Psychology has largely neglected the study of inhibiting factors in individuals who commit violence in some settings but not others, but this is one avenue that holds promise for understanding variation in the behavior one individual (Finkel, 2007, 2008).

Understanding Direct Versus Indirect Mechanisms

In addition to the proliferation of terms for the web of violence, other terminology problems also hold us back. When talking about mechanisms, researchers often reference "direct" and "indirect" mechanisms. Unfortunately, these terms have different meanings depending on whether the context is theory or statistics and this has created considerable confusion. Oftentimes, testing a "direct" statistical relationship does not mean that a direct, bivariate relationship exists in the real world. What is the difference? There are some real-world causal relationships that are best described as direct. For example, imagine a person is incapacitated in a fight, and the perpetrator leaves the scene with the unconscious victim still on the ground. Then, a second perpetrator spots an easy target and steals the wallet of the victim. In this direct relationship, the actions of the first perpetrator rendered the victim defenseless in a scenario where he might otherwise have been able to keep his wallet (had he been conscious). For a non-violent example of a direct relationship, consider substance abuse. Being intoxicated is another immediate situational characteristic that creates a direct vulnerability or risk for perpetration in the moment.

Some longer term factors can also have direct relationships, speaking conceptually. For example, persistent poverty can create long-term direct vulnerabilities, such as living in unsafe neighborhoods.

However, many factors studied by psychologists represent theoretically indirect relationships, regardless of how they are tested statistically. Psychologists are typically trying to understand how people's experiences, often events that happened years or even decades ago, affect and change their lives (e.g., Felitti et al., 1998). How can long ago events increase the long-term risk for becoming a victim or a perpetrator? It is because these events change people, and people carry traces of their experiences with them into later relationships long after the situation changes. Victims are still affected, sometimes very deeply, by their experiences long after they have moved to a new house in a new city and the perpetrator is no longer anywhere nearby. Some of these changes are direct consequences of the victimization, such as persistently heightened anxiety, dissociative symptoms, poor emotional regulation, or other mental health symptoms that might put someone at risk (Jouriles, Simpson Rowe, McDonald, & Kleinsasser, 2014; Noll & Grych, 2011). Unfortunately (and so unjustly), such changes can make people look like "easy marks" to future would-be perpetrators. Other effects can create cascading chains of risk—for example, victimization can interfere with the ability to work (Browne, Salomon, & Bassuk, 1999) and that can lower socioeconomic status, which increases vulnerability to other crimes.

When studying risk and protective factors, it is important not to confuse direct and indirect mechanisms. However, this is not uncommon in the language of some empirical articles. For example, when testing a mediational model between a victimization and a long-term consequence, if the mediator is not statistically significant, it is often said that the relationship between the original variables is "direct." However, this is theoretically incorrect unless the factors are the sort of immediate situational characteristics that do produce direct vulnerabilities. A more accurate way to present the findings would be to say that the study failed to identify the mediator of the victimization-consequence relationship, or perhaps even that the tested mediator is ruled out. This is very different from saying that there is no mediating mechanism. The relationship between past victimization and later functioning is always indirect, because it is always about some consequence that the victim is carrying into later interactions. It is important to note that this does not make the victim responsible—this cascade of negative consequences is the perpetrator's fault (Hamby & Grych, 2013). However, we must understand how these consequences operate if we are to successfully interrupt these trajectories and reduce the risk of re-victimization and poly-victimization.

This is one conceptual problem with existing research on risk and protective factors. In the next section we take up further limitations of current knowledge and propose a new conceptual framework, Resilience Portfolios, to address these limitations.

Conceptual Shift #3: From A Fragmentary Mélange of Risk & Protective Factors to Resilience Portfolios

In the foregoing we have shown how disciplinary siloes have impeded the scientific study of patterns of victimization and perpetration and the mechanisms responsible for both. The lack of appreciation for poly-victimization and other interconnections from the web of violence has limited our ability to recognize the many shared mechanisms that exist across forms of violence. A regrettable focus on isomorphism when interconnections are studied has likewise hampered progress. Further, there is confusion in the study of mechanisms and an inattention to the conceptual elements of direct and indirect relationships. In this section of the chapter, we add to the analysis of conceptual limitations that are holding the field back and present a new strengths-based model, the Resilience Portfolio Model.

Key Limitations of Existing Research on Resilience

Too much focus on risk and harm. Another problem in the existing literature is too much emphasis on problems and deficits rather than strengths. This deficit orientation, however, does not reflect the way people think about their own lives. The vast majority of people want to thrive; they do not simply hope to be "not dysfunctional." In the clinical arena, Ticho (1972) nicely captured this concept in his distinction between "treatment goals" and "life goals." However, this insight has remained at the periphery of most work. Surprisingly, even when studying resilience, researchers often do not move beyond deficit-focused conceptualizations (Grych et al., 2015). In much of the protective factors literature, scholars have simply studied the reverse of well-known risk factors. Indeed, one review found this accounted for fully 75 % of publications using a protective factors framework (Houston & Grych, 2015).

For example, instead of measuring school drop-out rates, a study on protective factors might measure school retention. Other well-established risk factors include *poor* self-regulation (at the individual level), *inconsistent* parenting (at the family level), and *unsafe* neighborhoods (at the community level). The complementary protective factors include *good* self-regulation, consistent parenting, *higher* socioeconomic status and *safe* neighborhoods. Although it might be preferable to discuss these concepts in positive terms, doing so does not actually add anything scientific to the conversation. Simply reversing the scoring on indicators of risk does not add new scientific information, because mathematically those are the same findings (Grych et al., 2014). The solution to this problem is to identify truly new factors that really are strengths that people have and not just the absence of problems.

Too much focus on relatively static characteristics as risk factors. Much of the risk factors literature also focuses on relatively static characteristics such as age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. These are important contextual factors and research is needed on *why* these sociodemographic markers affect vulnerability to victimization, risk for perpetration, and differences in outcomes (Hamby, 2015).

However, it is not always widely recognized that these are not mechanisms themselves; they are markers for other processes, such as differences in roles, differences in access to services, differences in the experience of discrimination and other elements that explain the variations in these groups. A more developmentally attuned approach is needed too; one that does not simply include age but explores developmental trajectories. Further, not only are these factors not mechanisms themselves, also they are not ready targets for intervention or prevention. They range from difficult to change (socioeconomic status) to impossible to change (age). In this regard, it is even somewhat regrettable how many scholarly resources have been devoted to simply identifying group differences. The solution to this problem is to shift focus to more malleable factors.

A piecemeal approach. There are a very large number of risk or protective factors that might be studied. Indeed, one criticism that we have heard of the discipline of positive psychology is that it is the study of "all the adjectives in the dictionary." To date, even those papers that have adopted a clearer focus on true, malleable protective factors have tended to pick and choose which factors to study in a rather unsystematic fashion (Sabina & Banyard, 2015). Although there are many, many individual, family, and community strengths, it is not likely that all of them are equally relevant for understanding and facilitating resilience. We need to move beyond simply exploring whether a factor has a non-zero relationship with an outcome or whether a program is better than no treatment at all. Instead, we should be engaging in head-to-head comparisons of both mechanisms and programs to see which are the most promising. Time and other resource limitations will always mean that tough choices have to be made and these should be more scientifically informed.

Challenges in Shifting to a Strengths-Based Framework

We recognize that there are challenges in overcoming these limitations and share an example from NatSCEV to illustrate some of these challenges. One important effort to develop a resilience and thriving framework for children is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concept of "essentials for childhood." They identified safe, stable and nurturing relationships as key elements necessary for healthy children (CDC, 2013). Operationalizing these concepts, however, has proven complex for several reasons, several of which would pertain to any effort to shift to a more strengths-based approach. One issue is that each protective construct has a number of potential indicators. Another issue is that switching from a risk factor to a protective factor framework can be more difficult than it might at first seem. A higher order construct such as "safety" will have many dimensions, some of which might be best conceptualized as protective or desirable factors and others which are more readily conceptualized as risk or negative factors. For example, monitoring and supervision are desirable, protective aspects of safety that are readily conceptualized as actions that parents do. Conceptualizing these as protective factors makes sense because the risk "side" of the construct is the absence of

behaviors (lack of monitoring). Higher scores = more supervision = protective factor. On the other hand, corporal punishment can also be considered an element of safety and is also clearly comprised of parental behaviors, but in this case the parental actions add to risk, not protection. Although not impossible, it is not conceptually elegant to think of high scores as representing the "lack of corporal punishment." To craft a single indicator of safety, some compromises must be made.

NatSCEV operationalized each of these constructs (safety, stability, nurture) (Turner et al., 2012). As expected, we found a linear relationship between the number of different protective factors and trauma symptoms. However, disentangling the effects proved to be complex. The strongest unique association was with inconsistent and hostile parenting. For an example of inconsistent parenting, consider a moody parent who is too tired to punish the child one day, but then inflicts a severe punishment for the same offense on a different day. Other strong associations were found for parental psychiatric diagnoses and parental substance abuse. Initially, it seemed that these factors might make parents less available for nurturing, but results showed that they actually affected all three domains. Not only did these problems make parents less nurturing, these factors also incapacitated parents' ability to promote safety and stability as well. Despite significant efforts to develop positively framed indicators of safety, stability, and nurture, problem behaviors such as parental substance abuse showed the strongest associations with trauma and victimization. By and large, it was not possible to statistically demonstrate that parents who excelled in the three domains produced children with significantly fewer trauma symptoms than parents who provided merely adequate care (Turner et al., 2012). In the end, the results seemed to lend credence to Winnicott's idea of a "good enough" parent (Winnicott, 1960). The results were frustrating in terms of an effort to shift towards a more positive approach to understanding parent-child relationships, but offered several lessons for future research, including the need to experiment with different constructs and different operationalizations, because the protective factor literature is not as well-developed as the risk factor literature.

Resilience Portfolios: Advancing Our Understanding of Resilience

Despite the aforementioned limitations and challenges, the potential to advance research and programming through a stronger focus on protective factors exists and several of the solutions to some challenges can be readily implemented. Resilience Portfolios provide a path to strengthening the science and practice of resilience (Grych et al., 2015). Resilience Portfolios both expand and organize an approach that emphasizes protective factors over risk factors and thriving over the avoidance of clinically significant distress.

From re-packaged risk factors to true protective factors. To move beyond simply re-framing well-studied risk factors, Resilience Portfolios make use of the positive

psychology literature. Although that literature has limitations as well, such as an excessive reliance on main effects (McNulty & Fincham, 2012), the positive psychology literature has introduced a new realm of strengths that are not simply the inverse of risk factors. For example, forgiveness is an important strength in that literature (e.g., Gordon, Hughes, Tomcik, Dixon, & Litzinger, 2009) and there exists no large literature on vengefulness in the study of children's and families' responses to adversity. Gratitude is another major protective factor in that sub-discipline (Layous, Chancellor, Lyubomirsky, Wang, & Doraiswamy, 2011), and we do not have dozens of studies on ingratitude.

From static to malleable. Another advantage of many of the protective factors that are emphasized in the positive psychology literature is that virtually all of them are malleable. There may yet be unrecognized challenges in making long-term shifts in characteristics such as forgiveness or gratitude (some of the programs developed to target these attributes are fairly simple and short term and may not produce long-term change) (Bolier et al., 2013). Nonetheless, they are at least more malleable than age or gender. They are potential targets for prevention and intervention programs and hence potentially more productive targets for research as well.

From demographic differences to ecological niches. Although simply examining group differences based on demographic characteristics is limited, we are not suggesting that demographic characteristics are unimportant. Rather, the recognition that they are not mechanisms and not likely programming targets calls for a shift in conceptualization. Fortunately, such a framework already exists, social ecology (Bronfenbrenner). However, although social ecology is an increasingly popular framework, the full implications of adopting an ecological approach are not always well understood.

From an ecological point of view, it would be more helpful to study the ways these variables might intersect with prevention or intervention efforts (Sabina & Banyard, 2015). In some cases, that would mean a shift to conceiving of demographic factors as potential moderators, in terms of a research and statistical framework. For example, would some programs work better for girls than boys? Is there a developmental stage that is ideal for some prevention messages? In others, attention to these aspects of social identity could be built directly into programs. For example, are there culturally specific strengths that could be incorporated into programs so that they would be more effective in diverse settings? Finally, this framework also calls for more explicit study of the mechanisms that are related to these social identities, such as social roles, the burden of discrimination, and other factors that might explain any observed group differences (Hamby, 2015).

The Elements of Resilience Portfolios

Resilience Portfolios focus on three core domains of individual strengths: regulatory, meaning making, and interpersonal. These three domains were identified through a review of the literature and especially the existing (limited) literature that has examined multiple strengths and thus identifies not only ones that might have a non-zero relationship with resilience but might be especially good predictors of it (Grych et al., 2015). Regulatory strengths are the ability to control impulses, manage difficult emotions, and persevere in the face of setbacks and are some of the individual strengths that have long been singled out as particularly important (Fosco & Grych, 2013; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Meaning making is another heavily siloed area in psychological research, too often relegated only to the specific topic area of the psychology of religion. However, meaning making, including religious and spiritual meaning making, is a key way that many, many people cope with family violence and other victimization (Hamby, 2014). Interpersonal strengths, the third domain, bring in the outer layers of the social ecology and show how both the presence of good relationships and the ability to initiate and maintain strong relationships among families, friends, and communities supports resilience and thriving. Furthermore, we believe these fit into a broader system of personal, family, and community resources that improve well-being (beyond just a lack of symptoms).

The largest psychological study, to our knowledge, ever conducted in rural Appalachia addressed many of these research goals. The survey included a wider range of positive strengths—more than 20—than are commonly studied in victimization research. Most of them have a significant, positive outcome with measures of well-being, but some were more strongly associated than others with thriving after adversity (Grych et al., 2015; Hamby, 2015). It also has various other unique features worth mentioning. The community sample includes both adolescents and adults. There is often an artificial break where researchers focusing on children study participants up until age 17, and researchers studying adults start sampling at age 18. This set up, however, does not accurately represent adolescence. There is no magical transformation that happens on an eighteenth birthday. Because of this artificial and arbitrary distinction between adolescence and adulthood, scientists know very little about the transition between the two. A few longitudinal studies exist, but the field in general does not sufficiently track how these cohorts change across late adolescence and early adulthood. This allowed us to explore age as a moderator in greater detail than prior studies.

Preliminary Findings on Resilience Portfolios

In our analyses, we were looking at predictors of several indicators that promoted well-being even after accounting for poly-victimization and other adversities. The set of predictors were remarkably successful at explaining current levels of

well-being. For psychological forms of well-being (subjective well-being, spiritual well-being, posttraumatic growth, mental health), we explained 42–58 % of the variance in scores with a combination of strengths, poly-victimization, and other adversities (improving notably over the earlier effort in NatSCEV to operationalize the CDC's Essentials for Childhood) (Hamby, Banyard, & Grych, 2015). Even for physical health in this relatively young sample, these factors explained 24 % of the variability in physical health reports (Banyard, Hamby, & Grych, 2015). Our analyses of these data have identified key constructs in each of the Resilience Portfolio domains. In Regulatory Strengths, some key constructs appear to be: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and endurance. In Meaning Making, key strengths were optimism, purpose, and religious meaning making. In interpersonal strengths, some key strengths were compassion, generativity, and community support.

Conclusion

Three conceptual shifts hold promise for advancing our abilities to understand and promote resilience after family violence. The first of these is the furthest along—the field increasingly recognizes the web of violence and the importance for understanding poly-victimization to truly understand the burden of violence among children and families. A child-centered and family-centered approach—versus a discipline-centered or institution-centered approach—is needed. The second shift requires extending this understanding to the causes and consequences of violence and realizing that they, too, are largely overlapping processes affecting many forms of violence. The final shift involves a further step in adopting a family-centered approach and realizing that past efforts have been too focused on pathology and sociodemographic markers of vulnerability. What is needed is a more positive and integrated approach that identifies the best and most malleable targets for intervention. Resilience Portfolios offer promise for integrating multiple lines of research and taking the field to the next level of understanding and ability to impact resilience. Instead of having individual programs that focus on a specific problem, the field of psychology and the communities in which it works would benefit from a more developmentally-informed and coordinated offering of prevention curricula.

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