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The Role of Resilience Portfolios in Overcoming Trauma

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Abstract

This special issue offers a series of papers that use the resilience portfolio model (RPM) to explore multidimensional, strength-based approaches to resilience in a wide variety of communities. The field is urgently in need of research that helps identify the factors that help people thrive despite exposure to violence and other trauma. We need to know how people typically overcome victimization and other adverse experiences if we are going to improve intervention and minimize the global burden of trauma. The series of papers in this issue consider resilience portfolios across geographic locations, forms of violence and trauma, communities, and age groups. In this introduction, we synthesize key themes in four RPM domains: meaning making, regulatory, interpersonal, and environmental. We use these themes to describe a revised RPM and implications for future research and practices.

Keywords

resilience, violence exposure, violence prevention

Resilience is the process of achieving well-being and facets of a good life after violence, trauma, and other adversity. Numerous conceptual models of resilience emphasize that it is a multidimensional construct (Hamby, Grych, et al., 2018; Masten et al., 2021; Panzeri et al., 2021; Ungar, 2013) with a range of strengths and protective factors contributing to positive outcomes. Yet the study of resilience has often been fragmented by type of adversity or by the study of one strength at a time (Grych et al., 2015). At least within fields like psychology and social work, analyses often focus on an individual's resilience or perhaps a family's well-being in relation to psychosocial outcomes (Yoon et al., 2024). Community resilience is its own body of work, often centered in fields like Urban and Regional Studies that study the capacity of a geographic group (town, city, and neighborhood) to respond to community adversities like disasters, broad economic hardships, or social disruptions using strengths that include leadership, disaster preparedness resources, and protocols (Links et al., 2018; Phillips et al., 2024). For example, resilience research has been critiqued for focusing on personality variables that may be relatively stable over time instead of malleable protective factors that can be the object of prevention and healing efforts (Banyard & Hamby, 2022; Hamby & Yoon, 2024). This special issue offers a series of papers that use the resilience portfolio model (RPM) to explore multidimensional, strength-based approaches to resilience in a wide variety of communities. The field is urgently in need of a more advanced "science of healing" (Hamby & Yoon, 2024)—identifying the factors that help people thrive despite exposure to violence and other trauma. We need to know how people typically overcome adverse experiences if we are going to improve intervention and minimize the global burden of trauma.

In contrast to personality-based approaches, strengths included in RPM research are selected for being modifiable assets and resources that are part of the mechanisms of healing after trauma and thriving in life. They can also contribute to prevention via building a solid foundation that insulates people from future exposures. The RPM also seeks to move beyond the limitations of past research by comparing many different strengths and including a composite measure, poly-strengths, that considers the breadth of one's resilience portfolios. Early RPM work focused on three domains (regulatory, meaning making, and interpersonal) and the density and diversity of a person's strengths portfolio (Grych et al., 2015). In the original model, these domains of assets (that mostly reside within the individual including emotion regulation, interpersonal skills, and sense of purpose) are put

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together with resources outside the individual (relationships, social contexts) to try to fully capture strengths that may be part of resilience processes and lead to aspects of well-being across the social ecological model.

The set of scoping reviews in this special issue represents significant advancements in our understanding of resilience and the RPM. It is a chance to review the model, 10 years after it was first developed. The goal is to take stock and envision changes with implications for new practices and research. In this introduction, we synthesize key themes within each of the three foundational domains of the RPM (regulatory, interpersonal, and meaning making) and introduce a fourth domain, environmental strengths (see Table 1).

Different Strengths Are Emphasized in Different Populations

Overall, interpersonal strengths were the most widely studied across the scoping reviews, especially when external social resources are also included in the conception of "interpersonal." This was especially true for the reviews of youth populations (Hagler et al., 2025; Rock et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025). For example, in Yoon et al.'s review of research on traumatized children belonging to minoritized racial and ethnic groups, almost three times as many studies included interpersonal strengths versus regulatory strengths and more than six times as many studies included interpersonal compared to meaning-making strengths. We think this pattern reflects an unwarranted assumption that strengths are generally provided *to* youth—not something they develop on their own.

In contrast, in Weber et al.'s (2025) review of veterans and active-duty military personnel, there was a strong focus on regulatory strengths, which were studied about twice as often as meaning-making or interpersonal strengths. Again, this may reflect the culture and needs of the military, who require discipline and tight control over impulses. Proportionately, the percentage of studies focusing on meaning-making strengths was relatively high in both reviews (Brooks et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025) that focused on collective or macro-level violence. Their focus on collective violence may have pulled for connections between individuals and communities that lend themselves to meaning-making strengths. At our current level of knowledge, we cannot discern whether these differences in study topic reflect true differences in the strengths that are most meaningful to different groups, or unwarranted assumptions on the part of researchers who are designing these studies. However, we do think this is an urgent topic for future research and an important insight that can only be obtained via reviews (not single studies).

The scoping reviews also suggested an addition of a fourth domain—environmental strengths. This domain goes beyond the social ecology to include the physical aspects of our environment, including both natural and human built as well as organizational or governmental policies (Engineer et al., 2020). As we will explore below, the addition of this domain raised questions about other areas of the model (separation of resources and assets). We first reflect on themes across the scoping reviews in each of these domains and then provide some key directions for a revised RPM.

Meaning-Making Strengths

In existing quantitative studies of resilience portfolios, meaning-making strengths, especially sense of purpose and hope, have consistently been some of the strongest predictors of thriving after adversity (Hamby et al., 2017; Manco et al., 2021). Nonetheless, in the reviews in this special issue, the focus on meaning making varied widely across communities and types of trauma studied. Indeed, meaning-making strengths remain understudied in many communities (e.g., Pinto-Cortez et al., 2025 found only one of the studies in their review focused on this domain). Further, Banyard et al.'s (2025) review did not find any forms of meaning making that were measured at the community level, such as community-based measures of shared values or traditions (vs. individual self-report). Even when meaning making was mentioned, it was often predominantly in qualitative literature (Obara & Banyard, 2025). While we greatly value qualitative research, especially as a source of new ideas, we think it is unfortunate that meaning-making constructs in these various communities have not transferred to quantitative research. This is an area that needs more scientific investment.

We found five broad themes that emerged most clearly across the reviews in meaning making. The best represented theme—consistent with its good performance in quantitative RPM literature—was a sense of purpose or connecting in some way to something larger than oneself. In youth, this often manifested as identity development and finding a place for oneself in the world (Yoon et al., 2025). Whittenbury et al.'s (2025) review probably identified the most varied expressions of this, with its focus on the mission-driven work of professionals. Some other unique expressions of this construct included embracing aspects of one's identity such as patriotism or veteran status (Weber et al., 2025) and experiencing redemption or transition narratives as young people take on roles such as becoming a parent (Rock et al., 2025). Another form of meaning making that was found in most of the reviews was some expression of hope, optimism, or future orientation (e.g., Yoon et al., 2025). These results represented some kind of belief or faith that things can improve or that effort toward a better future will pay off.

Another motif was the importance of trying to make the world a better place. One avenue involved engaging in some kind of social justice activism. Such activism could be empowering, reinforce values, as well as improve communities. It was probably seen in its most nuanced forms in the

Table 1. Key Themes That Emerged in Each Resilience Portfolio Domain Across the Scoping Reviews of the Special Issue.

Domain	Themes
Meaning making	Sense of purpose:
	Connecting in some way to something larger than oneself.
	For youth, includes identity development and finding a place for oneself in the world.
	Hope/optimism:
	Belief or faith that things can improve, that effort toward a better future will pay off, and/or that things are going to be ok. Positive expectancies.
	Faith and spirituality:
	Belief in a higher power and/or connections to traditions of organized religions.
	Making the world a better place:
	Many victims of trauma find it empowering to contribute to efforts to create a better world. One common avenue is through social justice activism, which includes working on reducing violence or trauma as well as other social problems. Another approach is via generativity and efforts to help the next generation.
	Culture, ceremony, tradition, and collective strengths:
	Participation in rituals, dances, ceremonies; preparing traditional foods; learning about one's heritage.
Regulatory strengths	Coping:
	Skills in navigating problems—especially cognitive strengths such as positive reappraisal, cognitive flexibility, problem solving, and reasoning.
	Emotion regulation and awareness:
	The ability to handle emotions of all types, including distress and anger. The ability to recognize one's own and others' emotions.
	Psychological endurance:
	Abilities to persist and remain steadfast in the face of adversities. Also related to determination, grit, and hardiness.
	Mindfulness/perspective taking:
	The capacity to pause, self-reflect, and observe one's thoughts without judgment. Ability to find some acceptance (of self and also things one cannot change) and inner serenity. Includes practicing meditation and yoga.
	Self-care and self-soothing:
	Activities that help create positive mood, modulate negative mood or stress, and help focus on the present (exercise, sports, listening to music, playing games, or puzzles including video games).
Interpersonal strengths	Social support:
	Help dealing with problems and challenges (traumatic events as well as minor issues). Includes intangible forms such as emotional support, information, and advice as well as tangible forms such as transportation and financial help.
	Social connectedness:
	A subjective sense of belonging, relatedness, and inclusion. Includes family (including chosen family), peer, school, workplace, and community relationships. Social leisure or time spent doing activities with others. Emphasis is on the quality of relationships and being in connection with other people.
	Social networks:
	The structural aspects of relationships, such as presence and quantity of relationships, bridging ties, and safety of relational spaces including respect for personal boundaries. Can include organizational structures in workplaces.
	Individual social skills:
	Skills that facilitate the development and maintenance of positive relationships, such as empathy, openness/willingness to disclose, communication skills, tolerance, and conflict management skills.
	Community relational resources:
	Programs, institutions, and other features of the social ecology. Access to therapy, healthcare, educational, and vocational opportunities.
Environmental strengths	Aspects of the natural environment:
	Access to green spaces.
	Access to blue (water) spaces.
	Activities like gardening and hiking.
	Relationships with (non-human) animals.
	Aspects of the built environment:
	Public transportation, internet access, safe workspaces, proximity to gyms or other places to exercise, natural light in buildings, access to grocery stores, walkability of neighborhoods, libraries.
	Policy:
	Policy has the potential to create structures that constrain or enhance how people think and act. Healthy policies can improve individual and community well-being.

Note. The resilience portfolio approach offers flexibility for individuals and communities. Not everyone will have (or need) all these strengths in their own portfolio. The list is also not meant to be exhaustive—there are many other strengths, and some important ones may simply not have much research yet. Especially, environmental strengths have received less study, and this domain needs further elaboration. We also recognize that there can be unhelpful aspects to some of these strengths, at least as they often get embodied. See text of this paper and the individual papers in the special issue (marked with asterisks in references) for more details.

literature covered by Brooks et al. (2025) and Whittenbury et al. (2025). Brooks et al.'s review mentioned the importance of a moral approach to life, working toward constructing societies based on democracy and the rule of law, and commitment to rebuilding one's homeland. Whittenbury et al.'s review included the importance of maintaining passion for the "fight" against injustice, promoting women's rights and humanitarianism, the belief in the inherent dignity, and worth of humans, among other related issues.

Relatedly, generativity was mentioned in several reviews. This could range from anything such as showing younger trans girls how to apply makeup, as noted in the Hagler et al. (2025) review, to joy in being able to give back to one's community, as in Obara and Banyard (2025) and Sabina et al. (2025). The investment in the value of "giving back" or helping younger generations shares elements with social justice activism, and in Table 1, we include them together.

Several reviews mentioned the importance of culture, ceremony, and tradition. Sabina et al. (2025) found that this was such a prominent theme that they included "cultural collective strengths" as a separate domain. These are topics that are often omitted from mainstream resilience research, but ceremony and tradition are important in most communities and can be powerful forces of healing. This included factors such as participating in rituals, dances, and ceremonies (Brooks et al., 2025; Obara & Banyard, 2025; Rock et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025) as well as preparing traditional foods and learning about one's heritage (Obara & Banyard, 2025; Rock et al., 2025). Other factors such as respect for elders and learning from intergenerational wisdom were also noted for their healing power (Sabina et al., 2025). Although they could overlap, these mentions could be distinguished from generativity because they emphasized participation and benefiting from one's own involvement, versus teaching cultural traditions to younger generations.

Another pervasive theme was the importance of faith and spirituality. Spirituality and faith were studied more often than adherence or involvement with a specific religion. Although almost all mentions of religion and spirituality were positive, it is notable that Hagler et al. (2025) found that some LGBTQ+ youth felt empowered by rejecting religious or spiritual beliefs they had been exposed to as a child. This is an important note, because the existing quantitative RPM literature is not uniformly positive regarding spirituality, which has sometimes shown significant results in the wrong direction (Hamby et al., in press). Further, many researchers have identified problematic sides to some religious practices in prior work on trauma, such as pressuring people to remain with violent spouses. As noted in recent work by Ajayi (2024)— who found different facets of faith served as regulatory, interpersonal, and meaning-making strengths— constructs like spirituality may need to be unpacked and measured in more complex ways. Indeed, across reviews, some strengths had mixed showings, and these patterns indicate that some concepts need more nuanced consideration and measurement.

Regulatory Strengths

The RPM sheds light on the power of regulatory strengths in fostering resilience. This model takes a positive and empowering approach, illustrating how various protective factors contribute to healthy adaptation. Regulatory strengths contribute to individuals' ability to effectively manage their emotions, cognitions, and behaviors and cope with disruptions to physical, psychological, and social disruptions/difficulties (Hamby, Taylor, et al., 2018). Within the RPM, regulatory strengths encompass a wide range of skills related to emotional, cognitive, and behavioral self-control (Hamby, Taylor, et al., 2018), including emotion regulation, impulse control, and psychological endurance, all essential for effectively managing stress and adversity (e.g., Pinto-Cortez et al., 2025). The range of specific strengths measured across the scoping reviews in this issue include aspects of emotion awareness and regulation (e.g., self-awareness, self-control), coping (e.g., humor, readiness for change), cognitive skills (e.g., positive reappraisal, deliberate rumination), and behavioral activities that can help physically regulate the mind and body (e.g., mindfulness, exercise, yoga). The scoping reviews explored these strengths across settings including workplaces. Below, we present several key themes across these reviews.

Some of the most common strengths studied were related to coping, such as positive reappraisal and cognitive or psychological flexibility. Individuals used cognitive processing techniques to look at difficult situations differently. Healthcare professionals and others specifically highlighted cognitive skills (attention, reasoning), and meta-cognitive skills (self-awareness, reflection) as critical for managing secondary trauma (Pinto-Cortez et al., 2025; Weber et al., 2025; Whittenbury et al., 2025). Qualitative studies (such as those included in Sabina et al., 2025) highlighted problem-solving, coping, and negotiation as notable strengths within the Latin American community. Self-regulation and self-reflection were widely accepted as appropriate interventions for managing responses to collective violence in the review by Brooks et al. (2025) as were emotion awareness and expression in other samples (Pinto-Cortez et al., 2025). Self-efficacy and self-worth can also be considered coping strengths. Populations such as minoritized racial and ethnic youth (Obara & Banyard, 2025; Yoon et al., 2025), adolescents (Rock et al., 2025), and healthcare professionals (Whittenbury et al., 2025) demonstrated how belief in one's capabilities enhanced their ability to cope with stress and adversity.

Another theme was psychological endurance. Endurance was emphasized as a crucial characteristic that empowers individuals to persist and remain steadfast in the face of challenges and adversity (see Obara & Banyard, 2025). The scoping review by Hagler et al. (2025) among sexual- and

gender- minority (SGM) youth experiencing homelessness found that endurance was important for promoting resilience, mostly in qualitative studies. Overall, many populations, including healthcare professionals (Whittenbury et al., 2025), military personnel (Weber et al., 2025), and individuals affected by collective violence (Sabina et al., 2025), emphasized the importance of endurance or hardiness.

Mindfulness and perspective taking was also underscored, encouraging individuals to find inner peace and serenity in situations beyond their control as a method to cultivate resilience. Self-care behaviors were part of this segment of strengths (Hagler et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025) as are meditation and mindfulness practices including yoga (Brooks et al., 2025; Weber et al., 2025). The capacities to pause, self-reflect, and observe one's thoughts were also important skills. Psychological acceptance was particularly crucial, as many aspects of participants' lives were beyond their control. However, many of these findings were based on small-scale qualitative studies and may not be generalizable.

A third theme focused on self-care and self-soothing activities. Sports, music, and other leisure activities emerged as ways to promote resilience and well-being in many reviews (Brooks et al., 2025; Hagler et al., 2025; Rock et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025; Whittenbury et al., 2025). Although there are many reasons to engage in these activities, they can promote relaxation, positive mood, and emotional balance. Obara and Banyard's (2025) review of strengths in Kenya found significance for exercise for improved well-being, as well as for following routines and cultural practices. Similarly, leisure activities such as music, video games, and crossword puzzles were important activities for enjoyment and coping with boredom among homeless SGM youth (Hagler et al., 2025). Whittenbury et al.'s (2025) review on helping professionals showed that physical exercise and relaxation were effective strategies for dealing with traumatic stress.

Several scoping reviews (Rock et al., 2025; Weber et al., 2025) included studies that tested interventions. Many of these centered on regulatory strengths (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy) and found positive effects of participation for military personnel and system-involved youth.

As with other strengths reviewed, studies of regulatory strengths also found some conflicting findings. For example, Brooks et al. (2025) found less conclusive evidence regarding the strengths of problem-focused coping, acceptance, and positive reappraisal in their scoping review, which requires further elaboration. Hagler et al. (2025) found mixed results for self-efficacy. More research on regulatory strengths, including measurement innovation and refinement is needed to better understand details of these resilience-promoting factors across populations.

Interpersonal Strengths

Interpersonal strengths, another domain of the RPM, encompass both positive interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics that support the formation and maintenance of interpersonal connections (Grych et al., 2015; Hamby, Grych, et al., 2018). In previous work, aspects of the social environment such as school climate or social norms have also been included in this domain as social ecological resources that contribute to the process of resilience and that are made up of relationships between people either dyadically or within broader networks or the social environment (e.g., Brooks et al., 2025). The scoping reviews published in this special issue collectively underscore the importance of interpersonal strengths as critical factors associated with resilience and well-being after adversity.

All 10 reviews in this special issue examined at least some form of social support. Social support included a range of tangible and intangible forms, including emotional, practical, functional, informational, and instrumental support. The reviews also pointed to multiple and diverse sources of social support, such as family (Brooks et al., 2025; Obara & Banyard, 2025; Pinto-Cortez et al., 2025; Rock et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025; Weber et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025), friends (Brooks et al., 2025; Hagler et al., 2025; Obara & Banyard, 2025; Pinto-Cortez et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025; Weber et al., 2025; Whittenbury et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025), teachers (Brooks et al., 2025; Rock et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025), organizations/jobs/coworkers (Whittenbury et al., 2025), neighbors (Brooks et al., 2025), and community/global agencies and networks (Brooks et al., 2025; Pinto-Cortez et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025).

The second element was social connectedness, which is similar yet distinct from social support. Social connectedness refers to the subjective sense of belongingness, relatedness, closeness, and inclusion, whereas social support focuses more on assistance received from others during times of distress. Similar to social support, social connectedness was identified across different levels of the social ecology. At the family level, strengths such as positive parent–child relationships, family bonds, secure attachment, parental monitoring, father involvement, family visits and connections with incarcerated family members, and family connectedness were highlighted (Obara & Banyard, 2025; Rock et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025). At the peer/school level, factors like school connectedness, teacher involvement, teacher bonding, and positive peer connections were found (Rock et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025). Opportunity for social leisure with friends and family was also noted (Obara & Banyard, 2025; Sabina et al., 2025; Weber et al., 2025). Community/neighborhoods were also part of connections, though mostly measured at the individual level (Pinto-Cortez et al., 2025). Variables included community engagement/participation and belongingness (Brooks et al., 2025; Obara & Banyard, 2025), community connection and care, and collective efficacy, including neighborhood cohesion and informal social control (Banyard et al., 2025; Rock et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025). At the systems level, positive

relationships and rapport with system professionals (e.g., parole officers, health workers) were noted. Other forms of social connectedness identified in the reviews included connection with religious communities (Brooks et al., 2025), chosen families (Hagler et al., 2025), others who experience similar types of adversity (Obara & Banyard, 2025), positive relationships with mentors (Rock et al., 2025), organizational qualities such as workplace leadership and supervision (Whittenbury et al., 2025), and a general sense of relatedness, trust, and feeling cared for and loved (Obara & Banyard, 2025).

The third theme was social networks. While social support and social connectedness focus more on the quality of relationships, social networks focus more on the structural aspects of relationships, such as the presence, quantity (e.g., number of network members), and diversity (e.g., range and variety of relationship types; family, friends, neighbors) of relationships. The reviews highlighted various types of social networks and their characteristics, such as the presence of family members in youth's social support network (Hagler et al., 2025), having a romantic partner (Hagler et al., 2025; Rock et al., 2025), family ties and broader social networks (Obara & Banyard, 2025; Pinto-Cortez et al., 2025), youth support groups (Obara & Banyard, 2025), networks of mutual aid across economic, emotional, health support (Obara & Banyard, 2025), safe neighborhoods (Yoon et al., 2025), positive workplace environment (Whittenbury et al., 2025), LGBTQ+ allies (Sabina et al., 2025), informal informational networks to find housing, food, healthcare, and other resources (Hagler et al., 2025). Overall, the presence of these networks was associated with well-being. The size and diversity of survivors' support networks were also associated with higher levels of perceived posttraumatic growth after exposure to collective violence (Brooks et al., 2025).

A fourth theme captured internal assets or individual social skills that facilitate the development and maintenance of positive, strong, close interpersonal relationships. These internal assets generally highlighted an individual's ability to understand and relate to others, including assets such as empathy, compassion, tolerance of others, forgiveness, love, warmth, openness, and altruism/willingness to help others (Banyard et al., 2025; Rock et al., 2025; Sabina et al., 2025; Whittenbury et al., 2025). Weber et al.'s review highlighted work with military couples on the power of predeployment planning and communication. Another key aspect highlighted in some reviews was the individual's willingness to seek help and resources, such as willingness to disclose/share emotions, acceptance of a need to seek support (Whittenbury et al., 2025), and safety-seeking behavior (Yoon et al., 2025). Although these personal characteristics were generally related to positive outcomes and well-being in the reviews, some mixed findings were also reported, as shown in Brooks et al.'s (2025) review where one's ability to open up to others was seen as less helpful for perceived posttraumatic growth among survivors of collective violence. This is consistent with mixed results found in quantitative RPM research for these characteristics (Hamby, Grych, et al., 2018).

A fifth theme that was frequently discussed within the interpersonal domain was community relational resources. This theme represented broader elements of the social ecology. In the scoping reviews in this special issue, variables like sense of community, collective efficacy, sense of belonging, and (perceived) school climate often showed significant relationships with better well-being (Yoon et al., 2025) and military unit social cohesion was key for service members (Weber et al., 2025). As noted above in the discussion of interpersonal strengths, this group of variables in the social environment may be best placed in the interpersonal domain of the RPM because the protective nature of these strengths has to do with relationships, exchange of support, and the way groups of people influence individuals. Commonly, the papers indicated that formal programs and services, such as psychosocial intervention, family-based group therapy, healthcare resources and interventions, mental health services, and therapeutic services, contributed to positive psychosocial outcomes (Hagler et al., 2025; Obara & Banyard, 2025; Rock et al., 2025; Yoon et al., 2025). Other examples included access to social media and safe spaces designed for SGM youth (Hagler et al., 2025), access to educational and vocational opportunities (Rock et al., 2025), and access to material resources (Yoon et al., 2025). Across studies, access to such resources was largely connected to greater well-being indicators. At the community level, Banyard et al. (2025) organized a series of findings under the heading of social environment, and this was the largest set of articles in their review. Interestingly, Banyard et al. found that studies usually measured these constructs in relation to risks (e.g., crime rates, poverty, low levels of neighborhood cohesion) and then linked indices of neighborhood disadvantage to other adversities.

Similar to recent quantitative studies of the RPM interpersonal domain, the scoping reviews note some mixed and nonsignificant findings in the relationship between social support and other interpersonal strengths and well-being outcomes. For instance, one of the studies included in Yoon et al. (2025) found that peer support worsened the association between relational victimization and depressive symptoms for Latina/Latino youth. Similarly, one study included in Whittenbury et al.'s (2025) review found that support from coworkers was related to higher levels of secondary traumatic stress among healthcare helping professionals. These inconsistent or unexpected findings regarding social support point to the need for more nuanced measures that capture the helpful elements of support (Hamby et al., 2020) as well as attention to different contexts and cultures.

Findings in the scoping reviews related to interpersonal strengths also collectively offer several insights for advancing the conceptualization and measurement of this domain

within the RPM. First, there seems to be some ambiguity regarding the distinction between interpersonal strengths and external (social) resources. Several reviews in this special issue combined interpersonal strengths with ecological/external resources, discussing ecological/external strengths under the "interpersonal strengths" domain (Yoon et al., 2025) or introducing terms like "interpersonal and ecological strengths" (Hagler et al., 2025) and "relationships and social ecology" (Rock et al., 2025). Conversely, other studies separated ecological/external strengths from interpersonal strengths, using terms like "ecological strengths" (Whittenbury et al., 2025), "external social resources" (Sabina et al., 2025), "external resources" (Weber et al., 2025), and "resources" (Obara & Banyard, 2025) to separately discuss this domain. Although the original RPM posited that each domain can encompass both internal assets and external resources (Grych et al., 2015), external resources seem to have generally been categorized into the interpersonal strengths domain, likely due to the social ecological nature of these resources. Later in this introduction, we consider and clarify how external resources can be best represented in the RPM and whether they should be explicitly combined with or separated from interpersonal strengths.

The reviews also suggested ways to expand the interpersonal strengths domain to incorporate new, unique, and underexamined interpersonal strengths. For example, Hagler et al.'s (2025) review, which focused on strengths and resilience among sexual and gender minority youth experiencing homelessness, identified unique and novel interpersonal strengths, such as chosen families and companionship with animals (which we will consider part of environmental strengths going forward). Further, the identification of "chosen families" as a distinct and important strength among SGM youth points to the need for the development of measures that effectively capture strengths that are particularly relevant to specific populations.

Environmental Strengths

In the original RPM, environmental strengths could be considered part of external resources. Resources included a variety of strengths located outside of the individual that promote well-being, including family and school environments, relationships with peers, and participation in communities. However, the examples of external resources in the original paper were all social in nature. Further, all the measures of the social ecology in prior RPM quantitative studies have been limited to social elements such as school climate and community support, strengths that we argue earlier in this paper, may be best placed in the interpersonal domain. The natural and built environments have not been well integrated into RPM or other resilience research, although this is beginning to change (Chien et al., 2019; Devos et al., 2019; Lyu et al., 2019).

We are calling for the addition of a fourth domain to the RPM—environmental strengths. These include aspects of the natural as well as physical, human-built environments that promote well-being after trauma and adversity. The review by Banyard et al. (2025) in this issue demonstrates that the built and natural environments are a rich and complex category of strengths that aren't well captured by just referring to "resources." We note, as can be seen in the Banyard et al. (2025) review, that the environment is also important on the trauma side, because environmental disasters can be a source of trauma, just as interpersonal violence can be. These are siloed topics that need integrating. One way these topics need integrating is by recognizing the human hand in many environmental disasters, as noted in a recent commentary by van Breda (2024). She calls for doing away with the term "*natural* disaster." Disasters are often about the interactions of the built and social environments with natural environments. Calling them "natural" disasters hides the choices and resource allocations by humans that make natural events like storms and earthquakes into disasters for human communities. Failing to recognize the human role in environmental disasters impedes creative thinking about community resilience processes and strengths that need to be identified and supported.

Thus, we argue that the environment needs to be more strongly centered in research on trauma, violence, and resilience and call for adding environmental strengths as their own domain in the RPM. We believe that this also helps clarify the difference between resources of the social ecology versus resources of the physical ecology—hence sharpening the definition of the interpersonal domain where we believe community-level measures of social processes like social climate (e.g., school or workplace climate) belong. We also elucidate the difference between strengths measured at the community level (see Banyard et al., 2025), which can be included in all three of the other RPM domains, and the environmental domain of the RPM, which can also be assessed at either the individual level (perceptions of the physical environment or one's interactions with it) or the community level (indicators of the physical environment that characterize an entire community, such as the number of parks or the walkability of a neighborhood). The environment domain is not defined specifically by simply having a community-level measure of a construct. For example, strengths within the social ecology that we discuss earlier belong in the interpersonal domain (e.g., collective efficacy, workplace climate) can be measured at individual or collective levels (e.g., individual perceptions of school climate versus school-based records of teacher-student ratio, teacher retention, etc.). Most resilience research for interpersonal violence has relied on individual-level assessment, but there has historically been more use of community indicators in research on environmental disasters, crime rates, and other community traumas. Thus, the environmental domain can help us improve

multidimensional assessment of other domains of the RPM as well.

It is exciting that some of the scoping reviews in this issue found evidence of built and natural environment strengths that enhance well-being. Hagler et al. (2025), for example, noted the protective function of access to public transportation and safe spaces to access the internet for unhoused LGBTQ+ youth. Whittenbury et al. (2025) found that dimensions of the workplace—including built aspects and organizational policies—contributed to positive outcomes. Specially designed facilities for work with sexual assault survivors, work spaces that encourage staff interactions, natural light, proximity to gyms, and open plan offices were associated with greater well-being. These are all excellent examples of strengths in the built environment. Obara and Banyard's (2025) review included a study that showed that time spent in green spaces was related to better mental health.

Banyard et al.'s (2025) review identified the most studies on the environment's impact on resilience, given the focus on community-level measures of strengths. This review generally found that aspects of the built and natural environments were more consistently related to better outcomes after trauma (greater resilience) than research on the social aspects of the environment. Studies of the built environment found that observations of "neighborhood disorder" (what we might term systems/landlord/city government neglect and under-resourcing) were related to negative health outcomes. Interestingly, suburban sprawl was a risk factor for depression (compared to more dense urban areas or more rural communities). Access to grocery stores (measured as shorter distance from home to store) was related to better nutrition (less fast food consumption). Walkability, a public health indicator of ease of pedestrian travel within a geographic space, was associated with positive physical health indicators. Natural green spaces were consistently related to positive well-being outcomes. Green space was measured in many ways, including the amount of vegetation observed in satellite imagery, number of parks or gardens in an area, distances to parks from where participants live, and the positive impact over time of adding green spaces. Green spaces reduced crime and enhanced well-being.

Despite these promising findings, the physical environment was the least represented domain across scoping reviews. This is an area for further study and for creating links between fields like psychology and social work with fields like landscape architecture, urban and regional planning, and even engineering. This work would further the interdisciplinary approach that is at the core of the RPM. Further, although policy analysis rarely appeared in this set of reviews (see Brooks et al., 2025 and Whittenbury et al., 2025, for exceptions), policy environments also create structures that influence how people navigate spaces and respond to violence and trauma. We consider the impact of policy to be more structural than relational, because once in place, policies guide how people behave and interact in much the same way that sidewalks or nature trails do. The review by Brooks et al. (2025) has an example of this in relation to collective violence. School anti-violence policies were not related to posttraumatic growth, but human rights policies were associated with greater scores on this outcome. In Whittenbury et al.'s review, workplace organizational factors included role clarity, compensation and reward structures, and innovative schedules like the flyin/flyout model for professionals working in remote areas. These are examples of the policy environment that contributed to positive outcomes.

Future Directions for an Enhanced RPM

The set of scoping reviews in this special issue enhance our multidimensional understanding of strengths that promote well-being after adversity. They reinforce the utility of the RPM as a conceptual model as all reviews found evidence of significant impacts of regulatory, interpersonal, and meaning-making strengths on outcomes. The reviews also suggested potential enhancements and future directions for resilience science. Key next steps include paying more attention to layers of the resilience ecology beyond individuals, exploring more closely cultural connections as sources of strength using samples that better represent communities globally, developing better measures, and launching longitudinal studies across all RPM domains.

Connections to culture and community were threads that, as Chan et al. (2016) describe, sit at the center of RPM analyses in several reviews (e.g., Sabina et al., 2025). They were a feature of regulatory strengths (Obara & Banyard, 2025) and meaning making (Brooks et al., 2025). This is consistent with other work (Hamiti et al., 2024), including studies of social action, activism, and making contributions to one's community as sources of strength (Kelmendi & Hamby, 2023). These are variables that may cut across RPM domains. For example, actively participating in community organizations and activities builds valuable social networks and offers essential support in the interpersonal domain. It may also cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning in life. However, these opportunities are also tied to the resources and opportunities present in our environmental context. Engaging with our communities is vital for fostering a stronger, more connected society. A focus on culture also points to the need to get better at capturing collective and community-level indicators of strengths and collective measures of well-being. For example, a review of resilience in Kosovo (Kelmendi & Hamby, 2023) identified nationwide meaning making as a collective, shared process. Centering cultural activities and processes helps to reinforce the interconnections between components of people's portfolios.

Overall, the RPM and resilience research needs to more clearly center variables external to the individual such as

community that are usually described as part of the outer layers of the social ecology. As discussed above, the scoping reviews in this issue suggest the utility of adding a fourth domain to the RPM, the environmental domain. Further, we need to better recognize and measure ways that even the original three domains (regulatory, interpersonal, and meaning making) can be measured at multiple levels. Indeed, the scoping review of community strengths by Banyard et al. (2025) proposes a parallel Community Resilience Portfolio Model as a conceptual way to move more of this work forward. Attention to these topics is particularly important for better understanding resilience following collective forms of trauma including war, gang violence, political violence, and unrest (Brooks et al., 2025; Kelmendi & Hamby, 2023; Sabina et al., 2025). These are important topics because even though they are often measured through an individual's self-report of exposure, they are events that affect whole communities and thus the resilience process might require more community level or environmental strengths.

To move such innovations forward the field needs new measures, more global samples, and longitudinal designs. Indeed, individual, group, and community levels of variables and measures need to be available within each of the RPM domains. As an example, it is noteworthy that, consistent with the RPM's perspective of interpersonal strengths as a social-ecological construct/domain (Hamby, Grych et al., 2018), the papers in this special issue captured multilevel interpersonal relationships and strengths across the social ecology, (e.g., individual-, family-, peer-, school-, organizational-, community/neighborhood-, and societal level). While many of these interpersonal strengths conceptually represent multilevel factors, they are often still measured at the individual level based on personal perceptions or, at the community level, measured as indices of risk factors (e.g., Banyard et al., 2025). Given the social ecological nature of interpersonal strengths, there may be significant benefits to investing in the development and utilization of innovative, multilevel measurement approaches (e.g., community-level assessment) and analyses (e.g., dyadic analysis, social network analysis) and not just for the environmental domain of the RPM. These measures need to go beyond demographic items that, as seen in the scoping reviews, can be important moderators of links between strengths and thriving, but are not in and of themselves modifiable strengths. A strength of the RPM is that it provides a roadmap for new measures to be developed and tested. Many specific suggestions for measures are described in the scoping reviews included in this issue.

Beyond measurement, the scoping reviews in this special issue highlight the need for more global samples. While resilience research is being conducted multinationally, a good deal of this work is qualitative. A strength of this research is that it helps us understand new types of strengths and new ways of thinking about flourishing and thriving after adversity but further work is needed. Formal testing of links between multidimensional groups of strengths and well-being outcomes in larger quantitative studies is less widely done. Finally, given that resilience is a process, it needs to be understood developmentally. We know little about how strengths change over time and how specific strengths may be important and uniquely accessible at different points in the lifecycle (Yoon et al., 2024). Overall, this special issue provides an opportunity to take stock of how conceptualization of multidimensional models of resilience is supported across interdisciplinary studies. The findings of these scoping reviews underscore the importance of using strength-based lenses for understanding trauma and adversity and for developing resilience-centered intervention and prevention efforts. The reviews provide direction for next steps in research and practices to create a science of healing and a resilience science of violence prevention.

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