

You'll get by with a little help from
your friends:

Social support, community cohesion
and mental health

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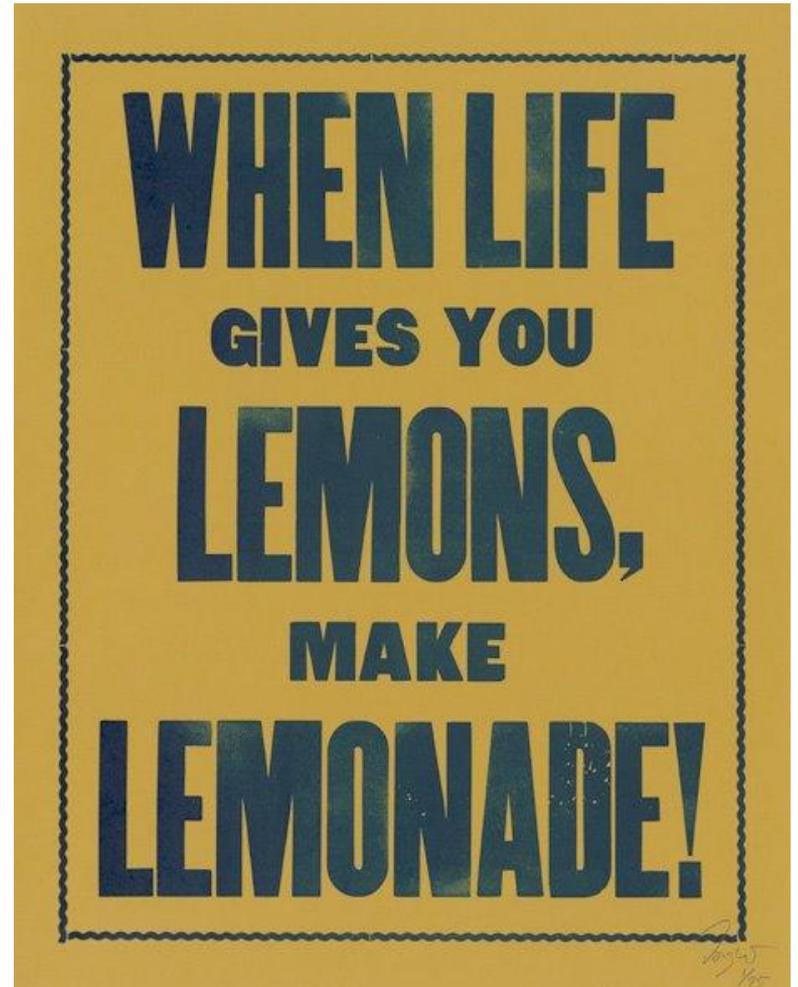


Mental Health

- What is the basis of our mental health- mine and yours?
- What are the types of resources we have available to promote and maintain our mental health?
 - Individual psychological resources for mental health
 - Social support as a resource for mental health
 - Socio-economic and community resources for health

The Psychological Basis of Mental Health

- A sense of Agentic Control
 - Predicts physical health, mental health, longevity
 - Related to achievement, optimism, persistence, motivation, coping, self esteem, adjustment, success



Locating Antecedents of Agentic Control in a Virtual Lab



Key characteristics of Agentic control

- People with higher levels of wellbeing
 - Sensitivity to changes in environment is key to greater feelings of agency
 - Background levels of control crucial to development of feelings of agency
- Learning about the **control available in the environment** is part of and as important as learning about own actions and outcomes
- Implications for promoting wellbeing

Msetfi et al (2005). *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*

Msetfi et al (2007). *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*.

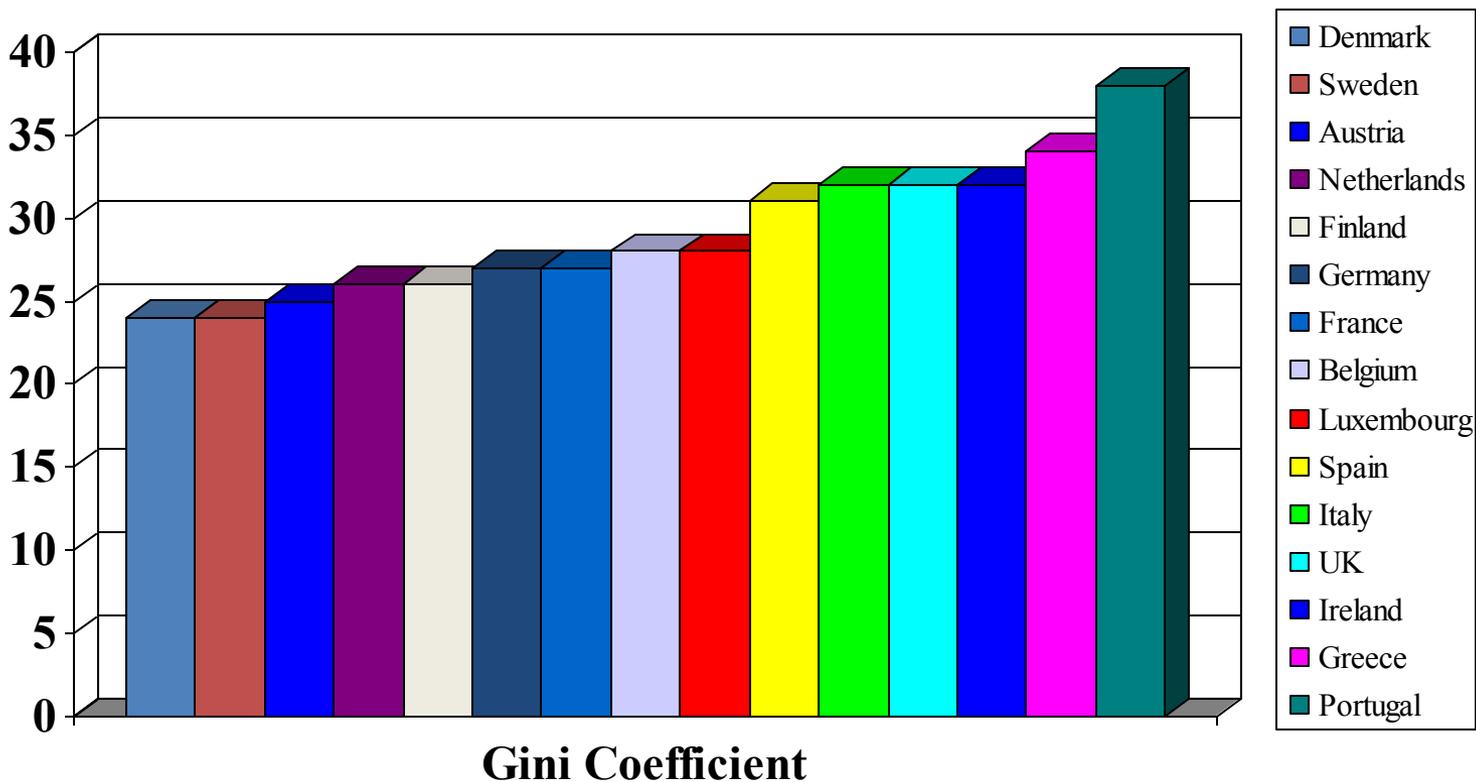


99% OF THE WORLDS COOKIES
ARE CONSUMED BY 1% OF
THE MONSTERS

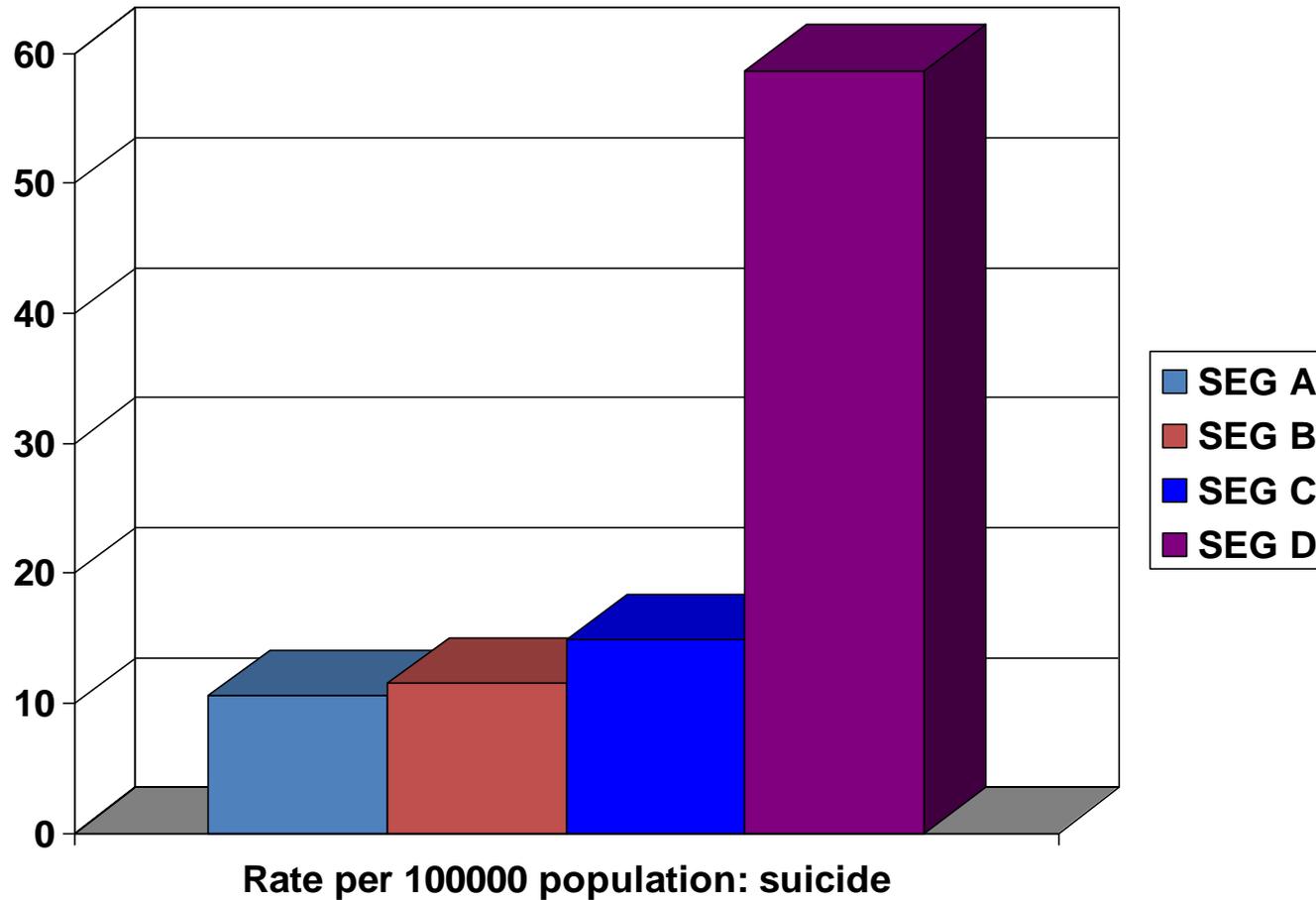


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Socio-Economic and Community Resources for Health



Inequalities: Health & Mortality



•<http://www.publichealth.ie/files/file/Inequalities%20in%20Mortality.pdf>

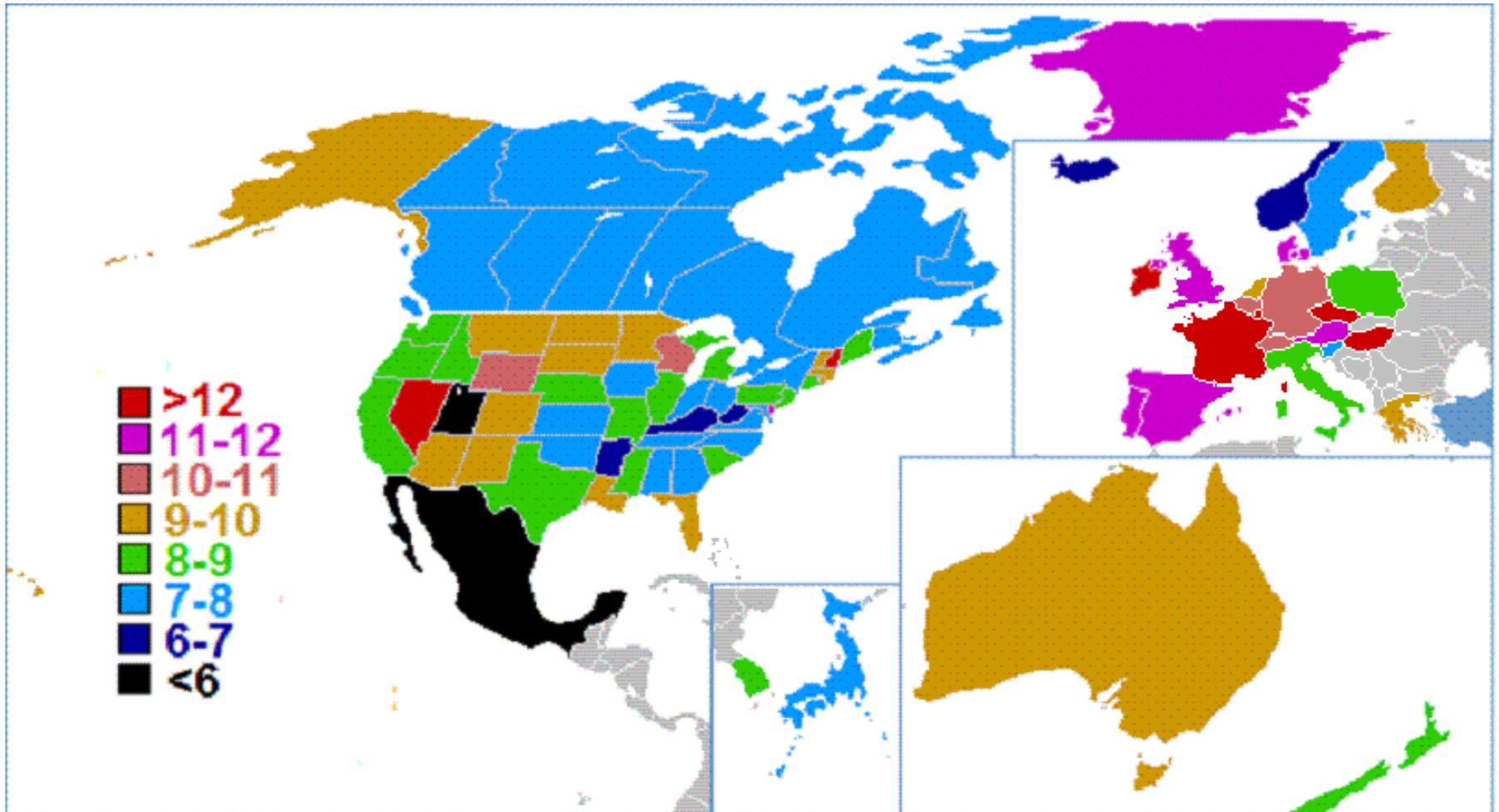
Social Resources and Health

- Reciprocal relationships between social divisions and
 1. Everyday behaviour and practices
 2. How we see ourselves
 3. How we see our social world
 4. Who we look after?

Dimensions of Division: Age, Gender, Sexuality, Occupation, Social relations, Educational status, Social relations, Health Status

Lowe and Muldoon (under review). *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*; Muldoon & Lowe (2012). *Political Psychology*.

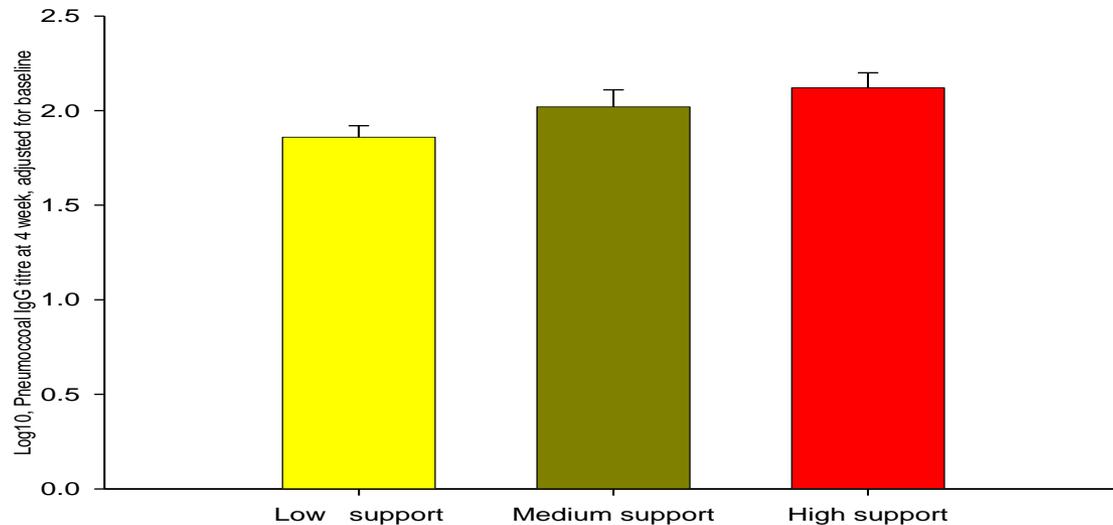
1. Everyday behaviour and Practices



2007: World Map of Alcohol Consumption

2. How we see ourselves and others

- Social support and health
- In young adults, support available in terms of network size was positively associated with antibody response to a pneumococcal vaccine



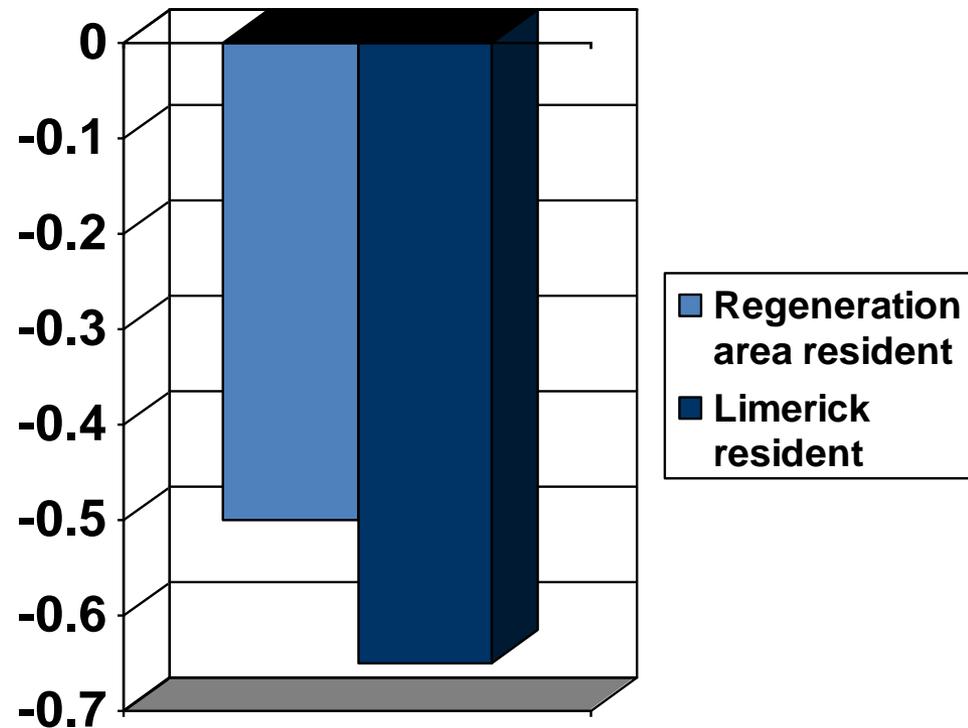
“This means that those with larger social networks are better able to fight infections than those with smaller networks”



2. How we see ourselves and others

- Significant difference between groups on implicit measures of prejudice
- Participants from regeneration areas rated less positively
- Effect size greater for males

Mean D scores for both residential groups



McNamara, Muldoon, Stevenson & Slattery (2011).
Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology

3 . How we see our worlds: A Study of Adolescence

- Cross sectional qualitative research
- 32, 15-17 yr old second level students – 17 female & 15 male.
- A relatively affluent area, bordering a disadvantaged area, a second chance education centre
- Analysis of the data revealed a profound difference between the groups which was in their sense of ***agency and choice***.



Sarah Jay, IRC Post
Graduate Scholar



IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

- D: see half of us won't even end up doing it (the leaving cert) because we don't want to go up to the tec
- E: I'm going up doing mine
- Int: what's the problem with going up to the tec?
- C: I don't know it's just
- F: it's in the middle of town
- Int: what if you all go together?
- D: it's just who's up there, like there's other people from all over the place
- F: some people don't see
- D: like down here we know em all from around here and everything,
- F: and some people don't see eye to eye
- D: there's all the other people like so
- Int: there's all sorts of different people, er students from all over Limerick?
- D: they should make this place bigger and leave us to do the leaving cert
- Int: what would that be about then?
- B: save us from outsiders

3. How we see the world: Different models of agency

The hidden advantages of being middle classed are psychological.

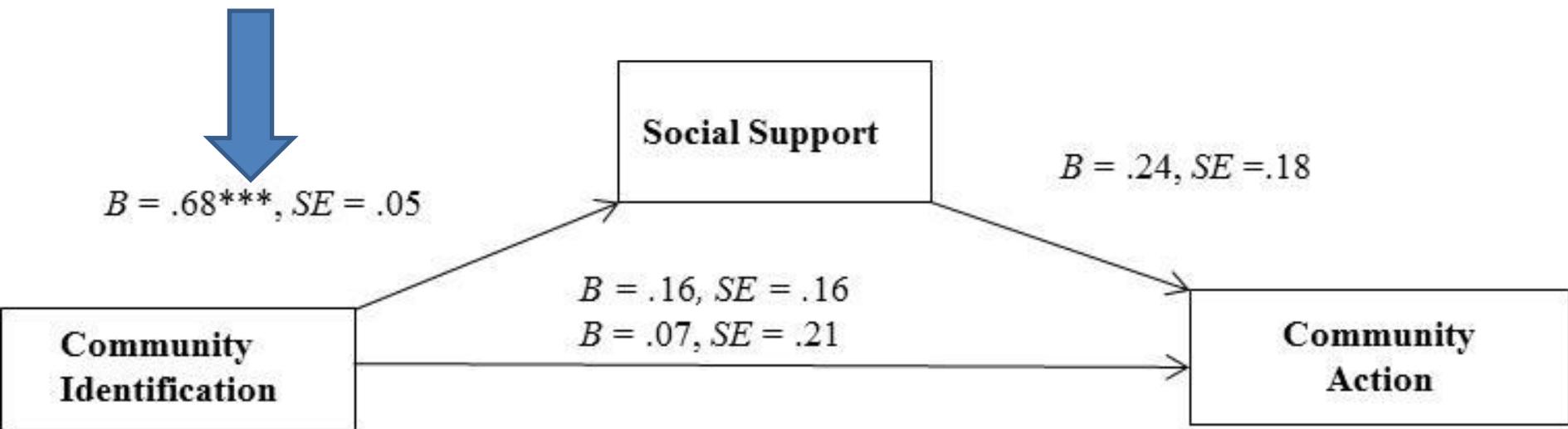
-A sense of ownership, influence, entitlement, and control over ones self and the world

- In middle class contexts;
- An ***independent model of agency*** – has become the default standard of being in the (developed) world (Stephens, Fryberg & Markus, 2012)
 - Normative actions are; independent from others and the social context, freely chosen possible selves, contingent on preference, to influence and to stand out from others
- In working class contexts
- An ***interdependent model of agency***;
 - Normative actions are; interdependent with others, responsive to expectations of others, situations and social contexts, oriented to fitting in with others (Stephens, Fryberg & Markus, 2012)



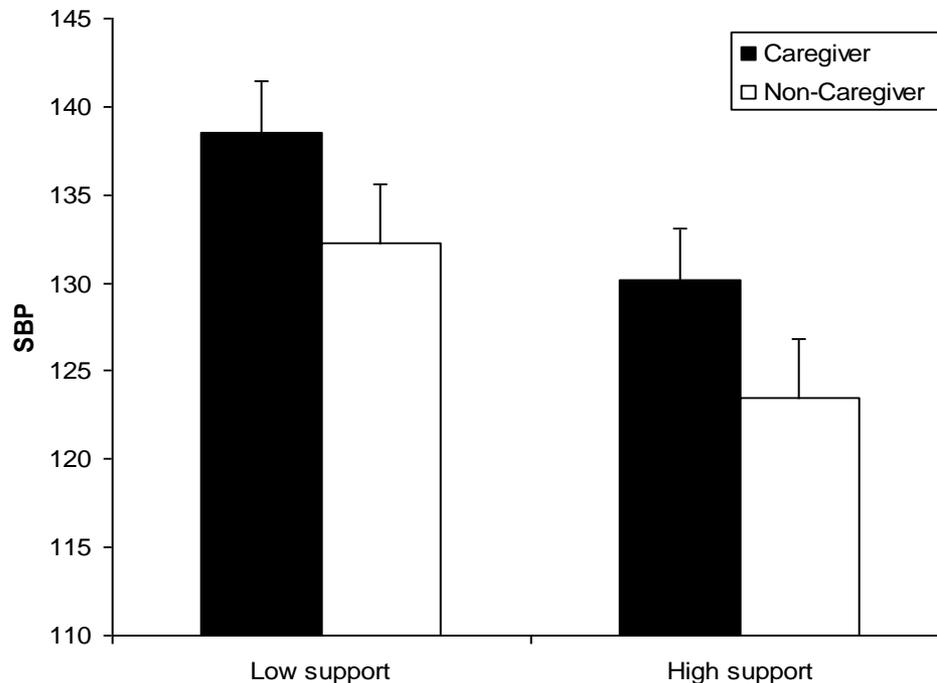
4. Who we look after?

- Study of N=344 adults in Limerick Regeneration areas
- Community Identification and social support



4. Looking after each other- does it matter?

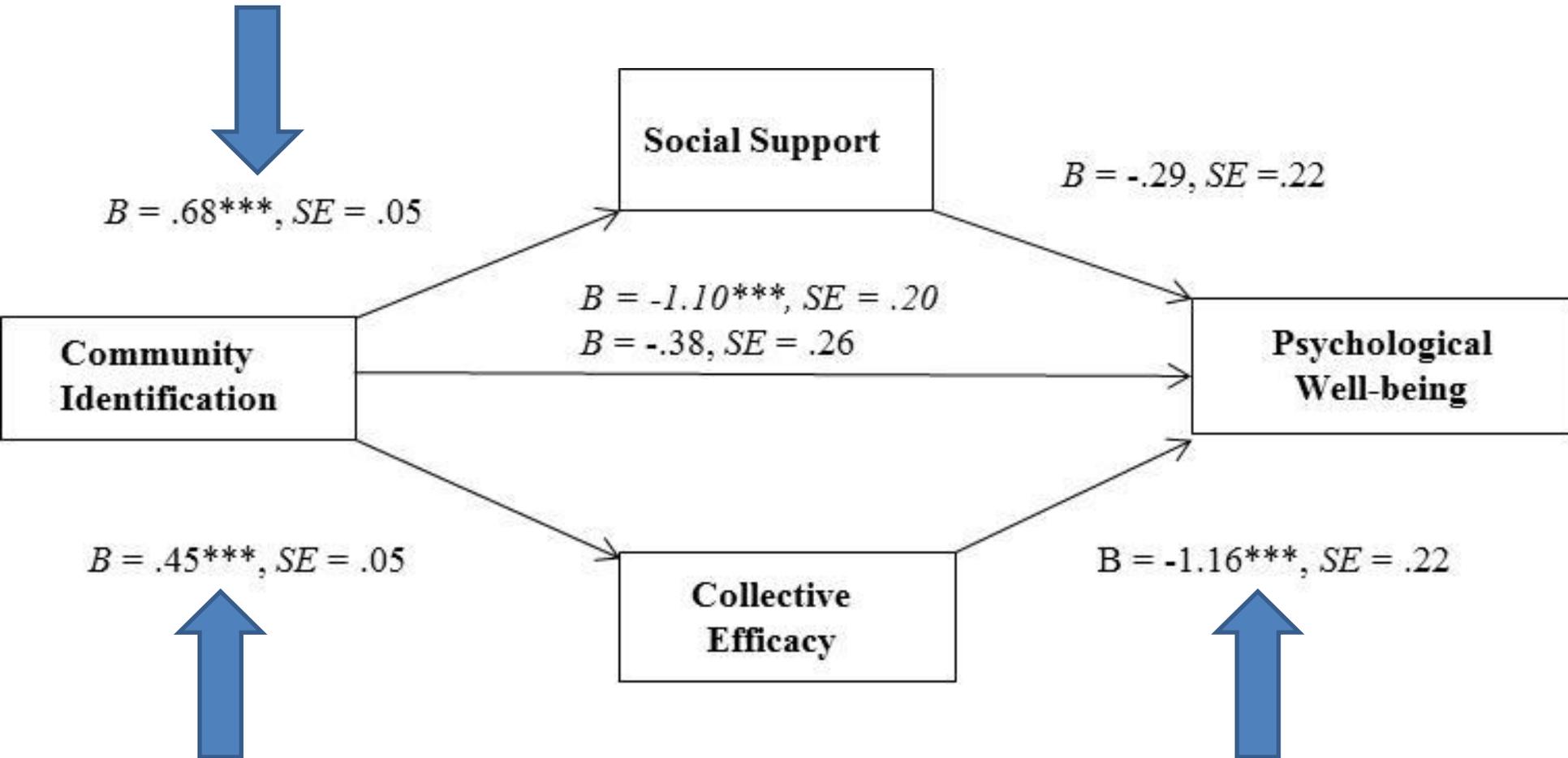
- **Social support & physiological health:** Parents caring for children with developmental disabilities have lower blood pressure where their social support was high



“This means that social support may attenuate the risk of developing hypertension in family caregivers”

Gallagher et al (2012). *Research in Developmental Disabilities*.

4. Looking after each other- does it matter?



Stevenson, McNamara & Muldoon (under review). *European Journal of Social Psychology*.

Conclusions

- Agency and control are central to mental and physical health.
- Levels of agency and control are often determined by banal social and cultural forces.
- These forces can shape resources available to deal with life's pressures- for ill and good.



Thanks for your attention

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