

# Advancing the Concept of Resilience for Older People Who Are Experiencing Homelessness

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Mineko Wada  
Sarah L. Canham  
Mei Lan Fang





# Resilience

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Elusive, inconsistent concept

Dynamic, fluid, and multifaceted phenomenon

Ability to 'bounce back' from hardship

Thriving – doing more than just surviving – in the face of adverse and traumatic life experiences

# Resilience

- Little research to date has investigated resilience among homeless older adults
- Conceptualizing and theorizing resilience among older adults who experience homelessness is essential to advance services and policies to support them





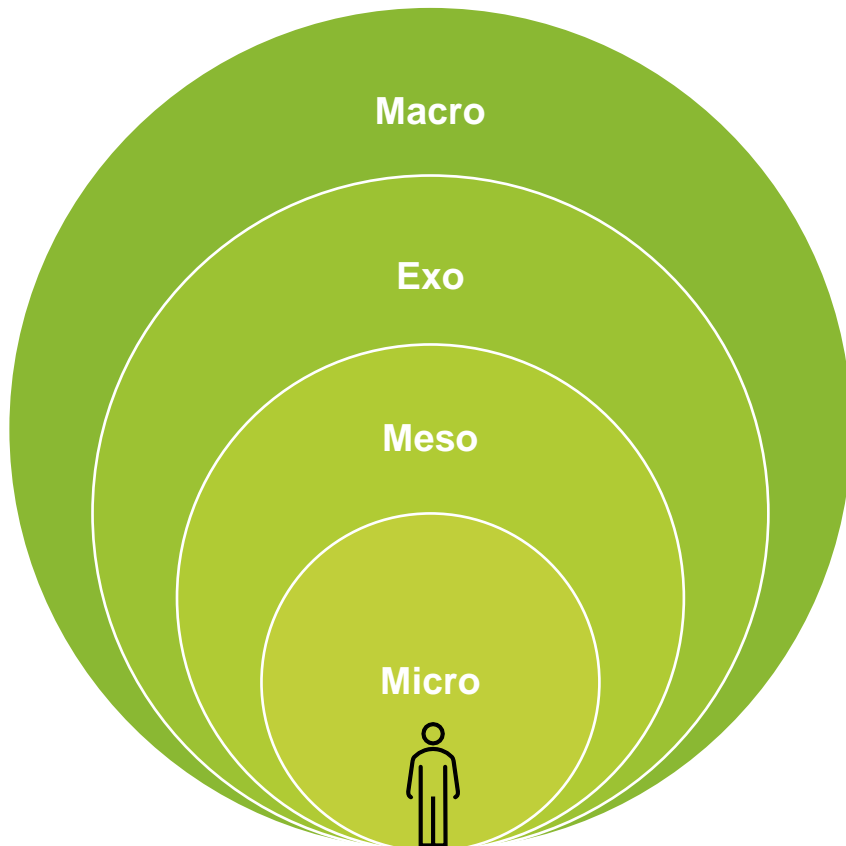
# Community-engaged research project

- Aimed to understand the needs and gaps in supporting individuals experiencing homelessness upon hospital discharge
- In-depth interviews conducted
- 40 participants:
  - 10 shelter/housing providers,
  - 10 hospital-based social workers
  - 20 persons with lived experience of homelessness



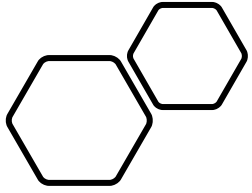
# Theoretical framework

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- Ecological system theory  
(Bronfenbrenner, 1977)

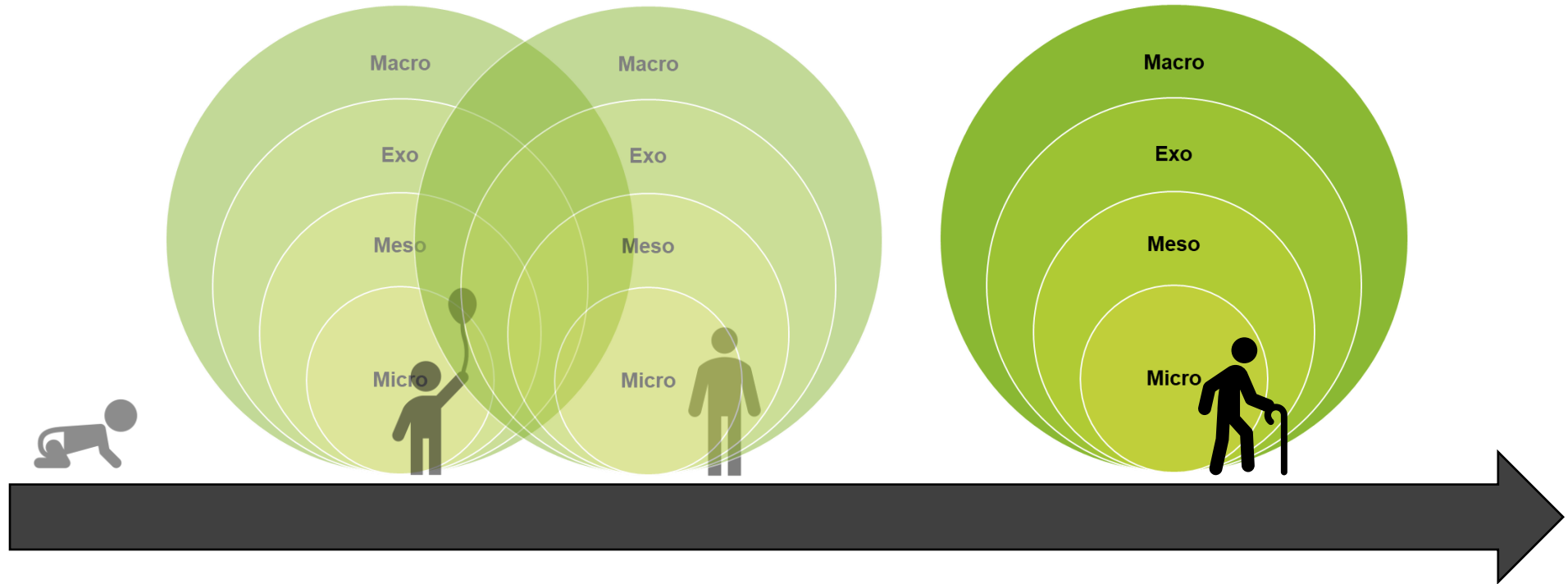
Delineates how people's immediate and larger environments influence their growth and development and how each environment system interacts with the another in affecting human growth and development



# Theoretical framework (cont'd)

Ecological  
system theory

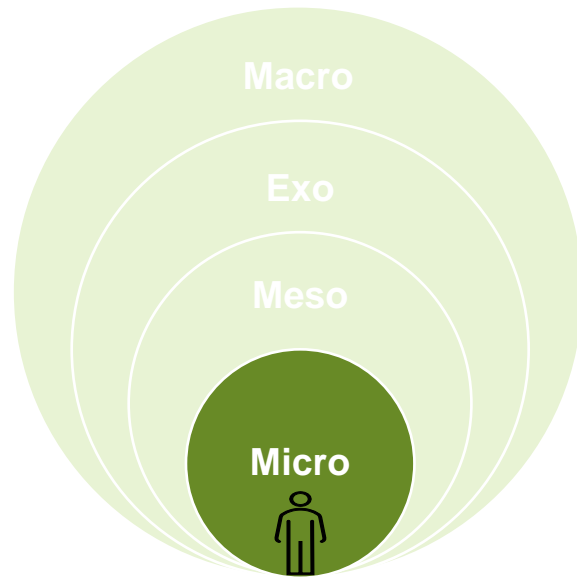
Life course  
perspective



Earlier life events and experiences influence human development and experience in later life

# Resilience of homeless older adults in ecological context

## Micro system



Consists of a person and their immediate environment



“Inner strength”



Motivation for and attitude towards treatment adherence



Self-direction & determination



Inclusive decision making process



# Self-direction & determination

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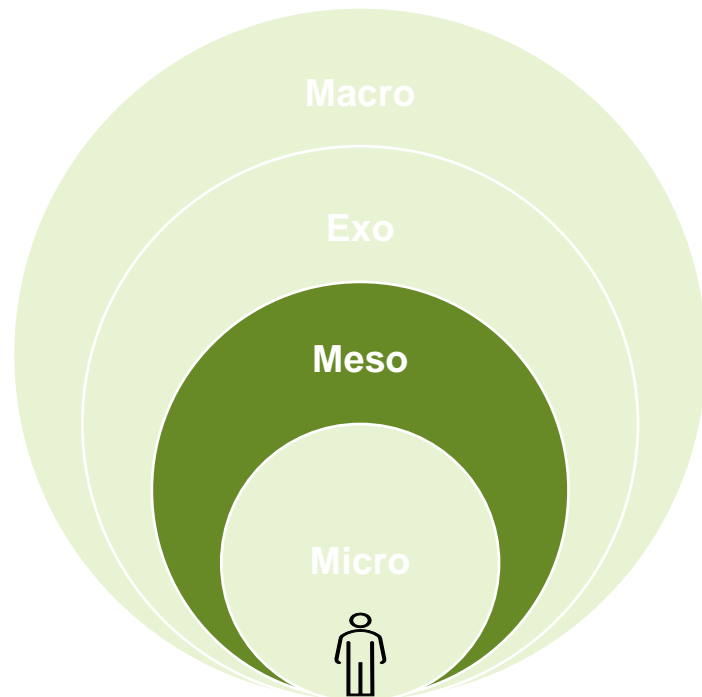
“What worked well is my ability to figure out what I was doing ... if I didn’t have that ability, I probably would have sat there [at the hospital] a lot longer. I wanted to be discharged.”





# Meso system

Comprises interrelations between a person and their major environment



Harnessing formal support and informal support network



Supportive housing and in-home services

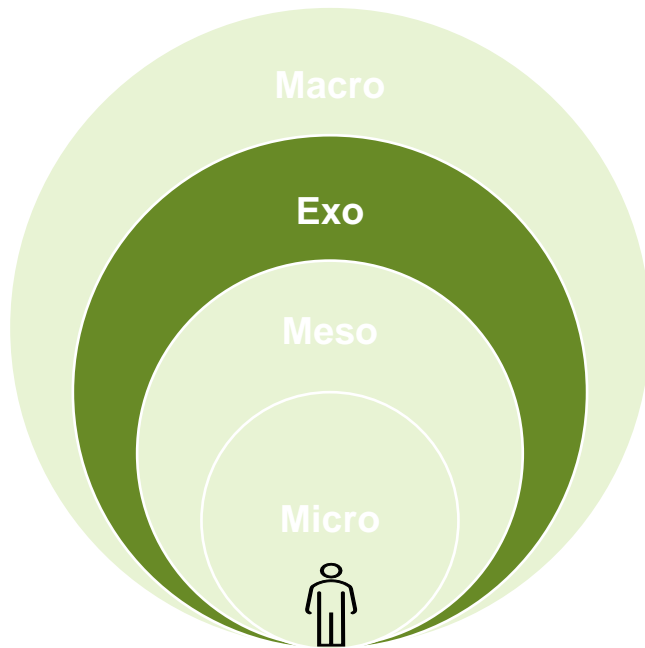
# Formal support

“One thing I found was especially with the seniors, if there’s follow-up with the social worker—if I can connect with the social worker regarding this senior who is discharged, there’s usually a higher success rate for wherever this person is going because the social worker usually has started a referral.”



# Exo system

Informal and formal social structures  
that influence the person and their  
setting



Accessible shelter  
environment



Available, affordable, &  
appropriate housing



Continuity of  
community resources



Autonomy, dignity,  
security, & privacy



Operational policies



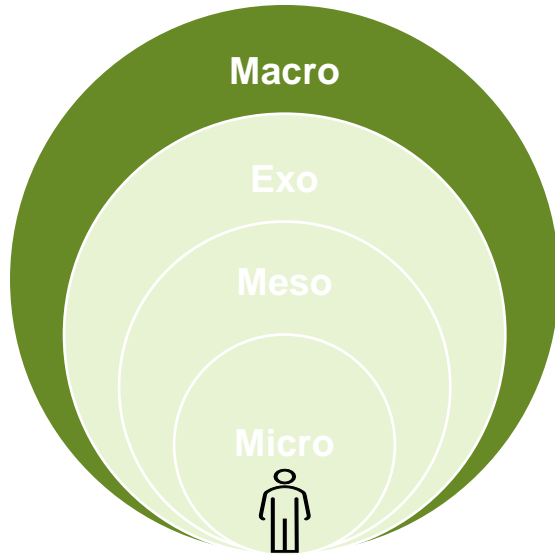
# Continuity of community resources

“The most challenging part is they go from a hospital—somewhere that everything is provided for them—into the shelter... There’s minimal support within the shelter setting because of the large number of clients that we do have and the limited services we can provide.”



# Macro system

Overarching social and cultural norms,  
ideologies, and beliefs



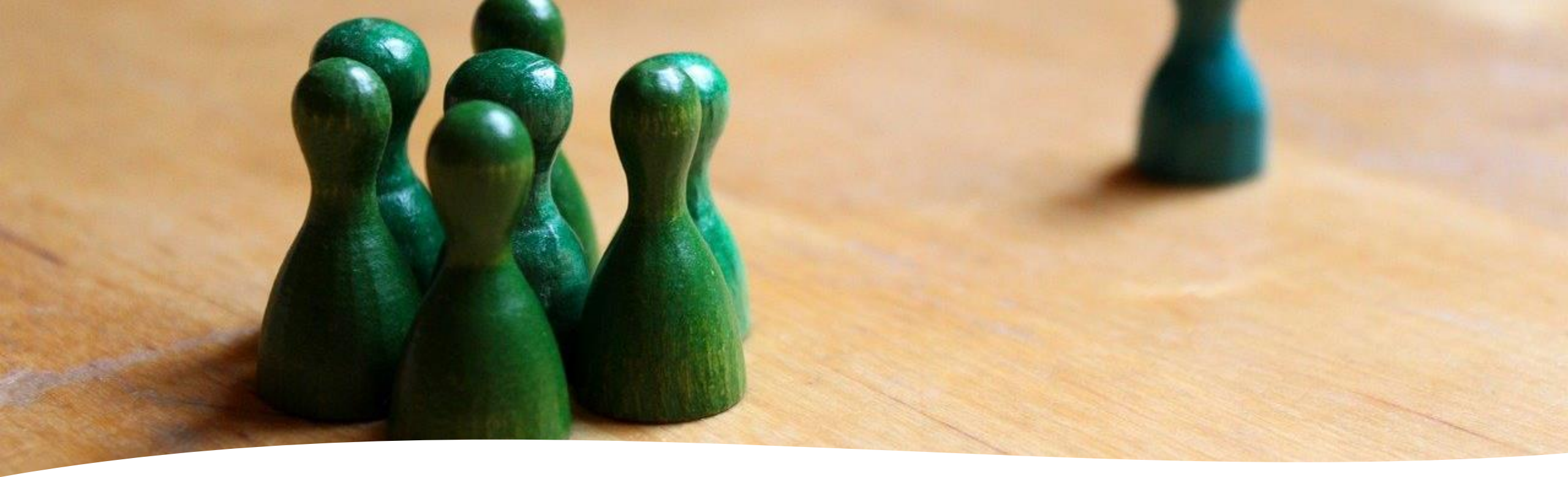
Social perceptions of  
homelessness, mental  
health, substance use,  
and poverty



Strength-based care



Trauma-informed  
practice



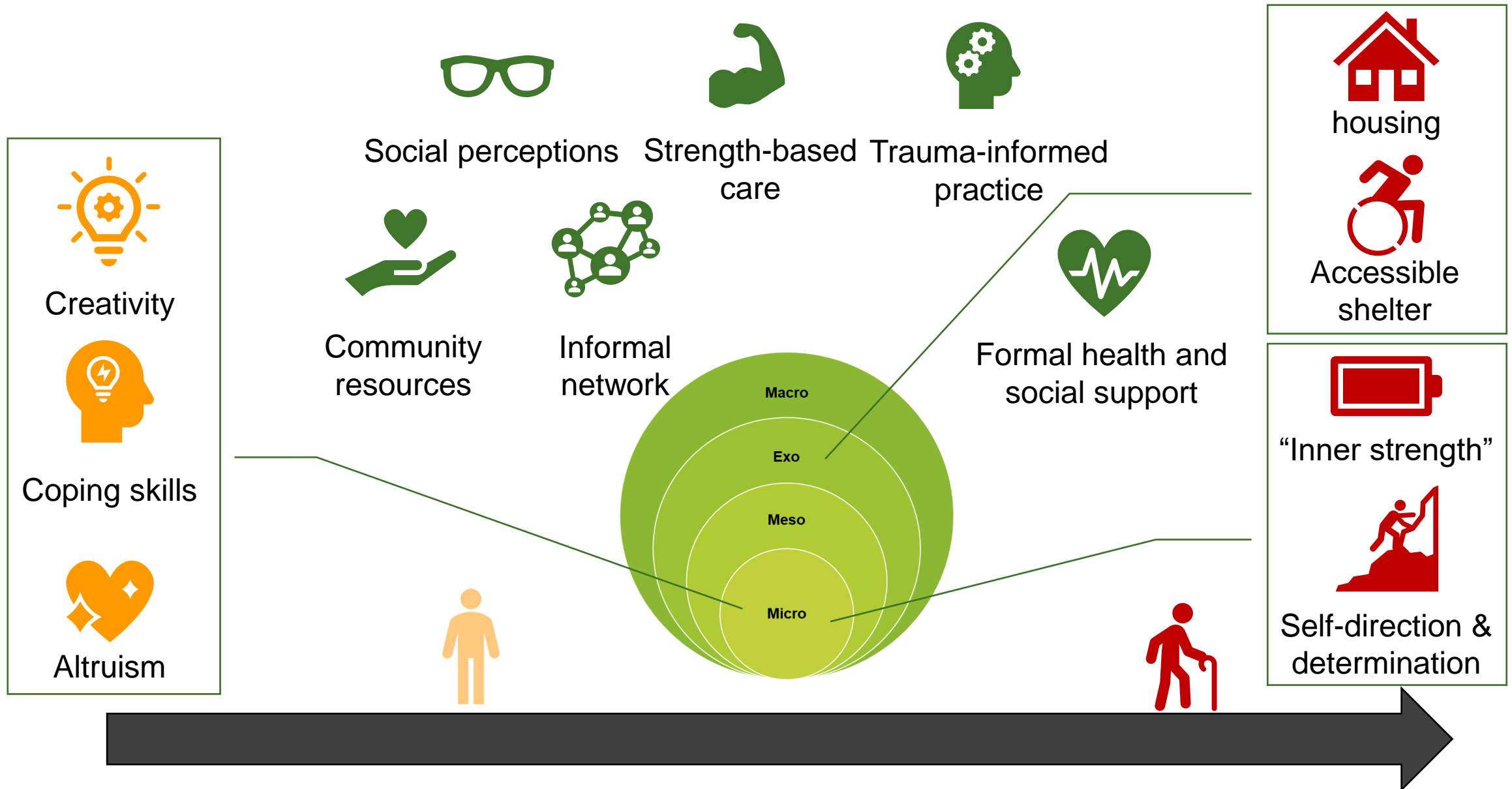
## Structural discrimination

“There’s a real problem with discrimination at the hospitals. They will release somebody to the street if they have any history of being in a shelter system or if they have an appearance of some sort and they will keep other people for months. It’s basically classism. And I’m not kidding about this.”



# Discussion

Similar and different influential factors for resilience between homeless individuals in general and homeless older adults



# CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF RESILIENCE

Macro-, Meso-, Exo- & Micro-level Resilience Factors

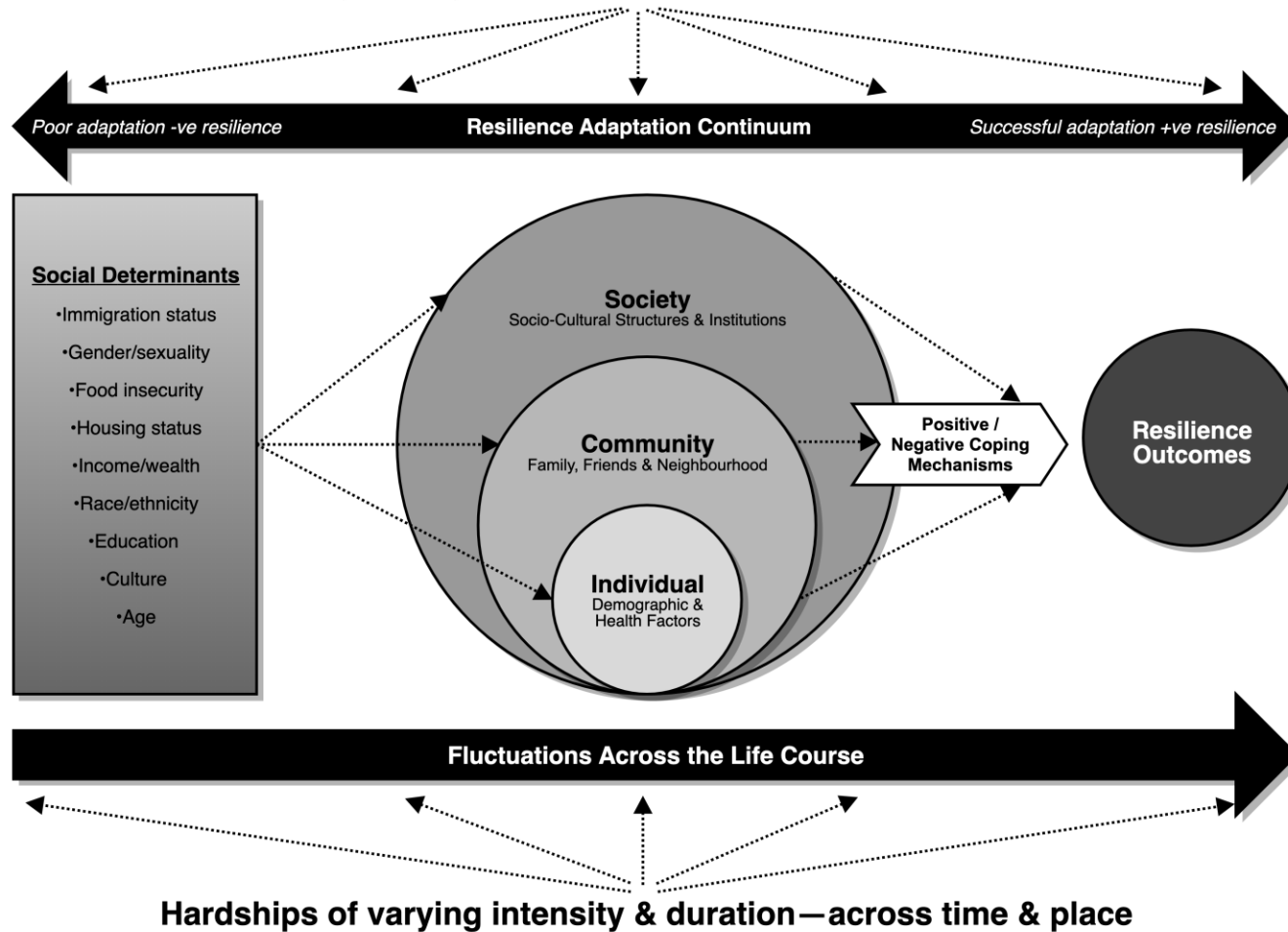


Figure 1. Presents a multi-system conceptualisation of resilience across time and place.

Canham, S.L., Fang, M.L. & Wada, M. (accepted). Advancing the concept of resilience for older adults who are experiencing homelessness. In A. Wister & T. Cosco (Eds.), *Resilience and Aging: Emerging Science and Future Possibilities*. Basel: Springer

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## PARTNERS





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Mineko Wada: [mineko\\_wada@sfu.ca](mailto:mineko_wada@sfu.ca)

Sarah Canham: [sarah.canham@utah.edu](mailto:sarah.canham@utah.edu)

Mei Lan Fang: [m.l.fang@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:m.l.fang@dundee.ac.uk)