

# INITIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNG ADULT STRENGTHS QUESTIONNAIRE

---

Jesse Suter, PhD, Jody Kamon, PhD, Thomas Delaney, PhD,  
Paula Duncan, MD & Barbara Frankowski, MD

*Paper Presentation for 24th Annual Children's Mental Health  
Research and Policy Conference (March, 2011)*



The University of Vermont

## Project Supported By:

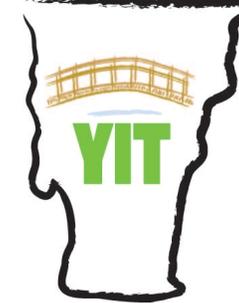


- SAMHSA System of Care grant for Vermont
- Vermont Youth in Transition project
- Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
- Vermont Department of Mental Health
- University of Vermont

<http://youth-in-transition-grant.com/>



<http://www.vffcmh.org/>



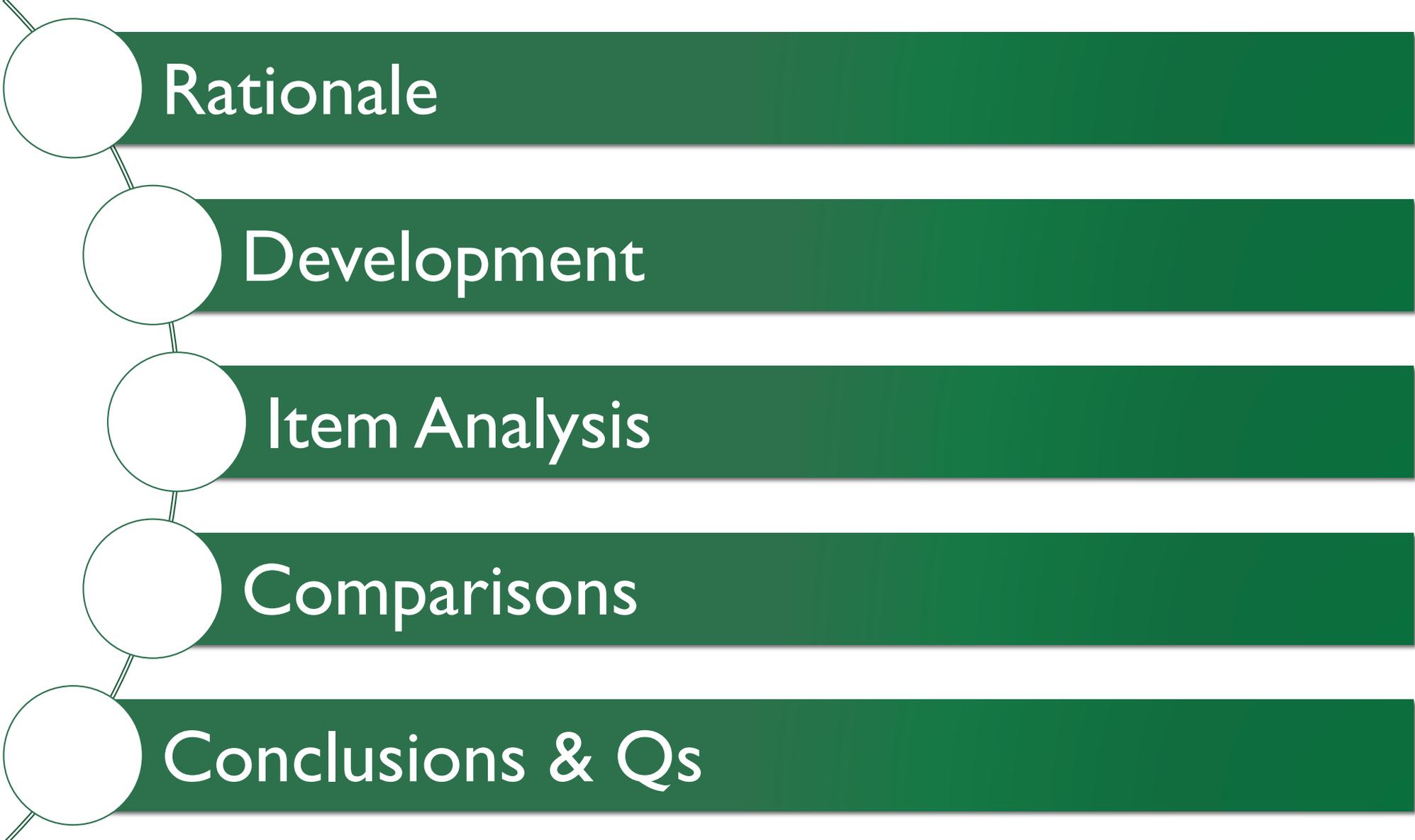
<http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/>



<http://www.uvm.edu>

The University of Vermont

# Outline



Rationale

Development

Item Analysis

Comparisons

Conclusions & Qs

# Youth in Transition Grant Mission

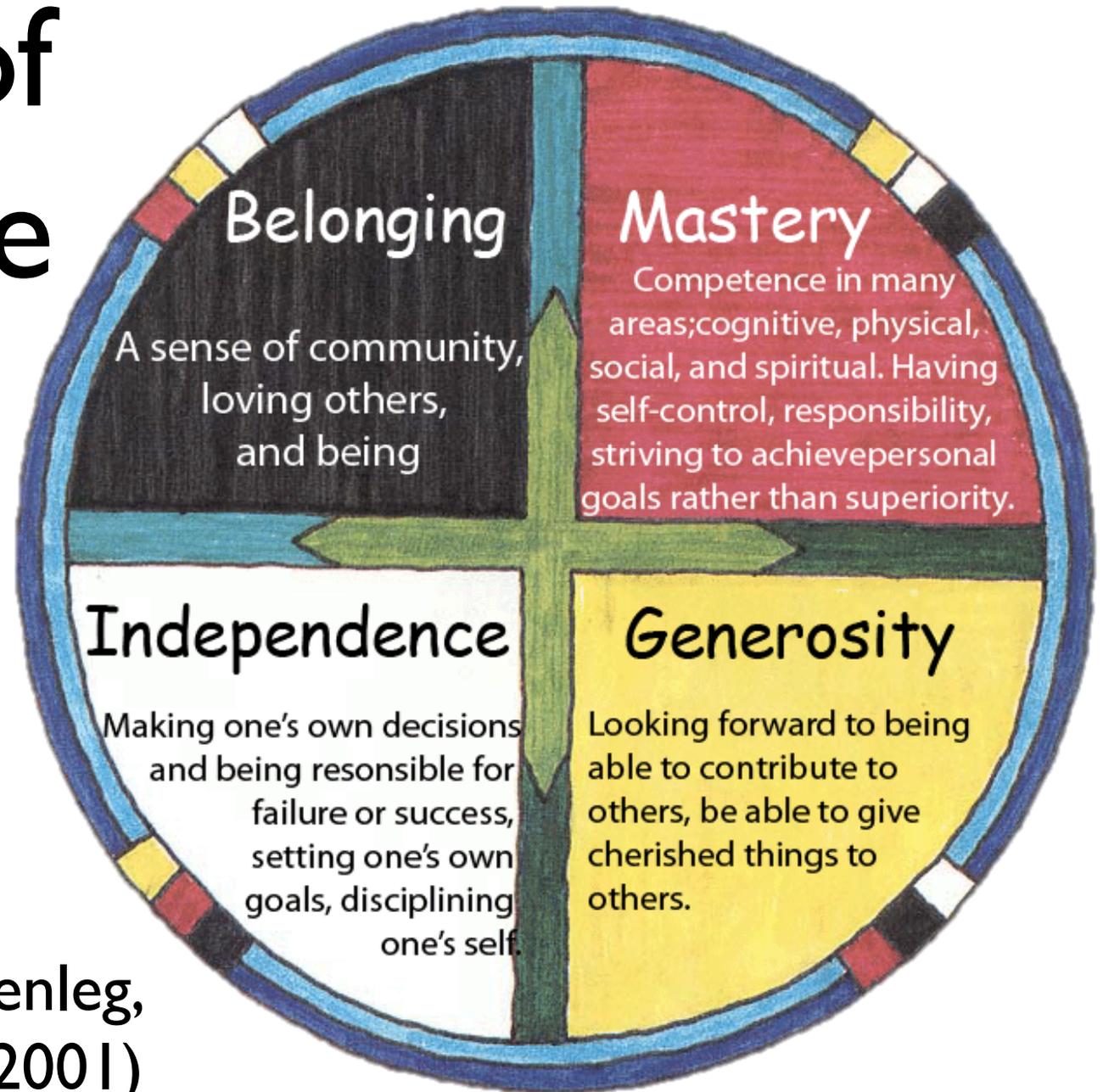
*Young adults, families/adult allies and community partners collaborate to develop a system of care to support transition to adulthood. The system builds upon the strengths of young adults and creates an array of specialized mental health and related services to meet their unique and changing needs. The system also fosters young adult leadership.*

# 5 Cs of Positive Youth Development

(Lerner et al., 2005)

5 Cs	Description
<i>Competence</i>	Positive view of one's actions in domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive, and vocational.
<i>Confidence</i>	An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy; one's global self-regard, as opposed to domain specific beliefs.
<i>Connection</i>	Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bidirectional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community.
<i>Character</i>	Respect for societal and cultural rules, possession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity.
<i>Caring &amp; Compassion</i>	A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.

# Circle of Courage



(Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2001)

# Strengths Measures Reviewed

<i>Strengths Measure</i>	<i>Empirical Support</i>	<i>Youth Report</i>	<i>Model COC or PYD</i>	<i>Transition Age 16-22</i>
Behavioral And Emotional Rating Scale BERS-2 (Epstein, et al. 2004)	✓	✓		
Child & Adolescent Needs & Strengths (Lyons, 2004)	✓			
Adult Needs & Strengths Assessment Transition Age (Lyons, 2003)	✓			✓
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 2001)	✓	✓		
Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors (Benson, 2008)	✓	✓	✓ (PYD)	
4-D (Gilgun, 2005)	✓		✓(COC)	

# Initial Development

- Started with existing Vermont practice tools:
  - Vermont Coalition for Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs
  - Physician's Primary Practice Tool
- Reviewed existing measures for additional items
- Got feedback from our state operations team and evaluation advisory board
- Chose items based on “fit” with the 4 domains of Circle of Courage and 5 Cs of Positive Youth Development

# Models for Vermont Strengths Assessment

*Positive Youth Development  
Lerner (2005)*



<http://www.search-institute.org>

*Circle of Courage  
Brendtro (2002)*



<http://www.reclaiming.com>

# Young Adult Strengths Questionnaire (YASQ)

<i>Circle the number that best describes you during the last six months:</i>	<i>Not at all like me</i>	<i>Not much like me</i>	<i>Like me</i>	<i>Completely like me</i>
1. I respect the needs, opinions, and property of others.	0	1	2	3
2. I am good at resolving conflicts peacefully.	0	1	2	3
3. I have spiritual or religious beliefs that comfort me during difficult times.	0	1	2	3

# Participants

- Administered as part of our Youth in Transition Evaluation (1 to 1 ½ hour interview)
- Baseline data only (ultimately will have 6 & 12 month data)
- $N = 27$  (dropped 3 others with missing data)
- Age:  $M = 19.2$  ( $SD = 1.5$ , range = 16 to 22)
- Gender: 13 (48%) women & 14 (52%) men
- Ethnicity/Race: 26 (96%) Non-Hispanic or Latino White

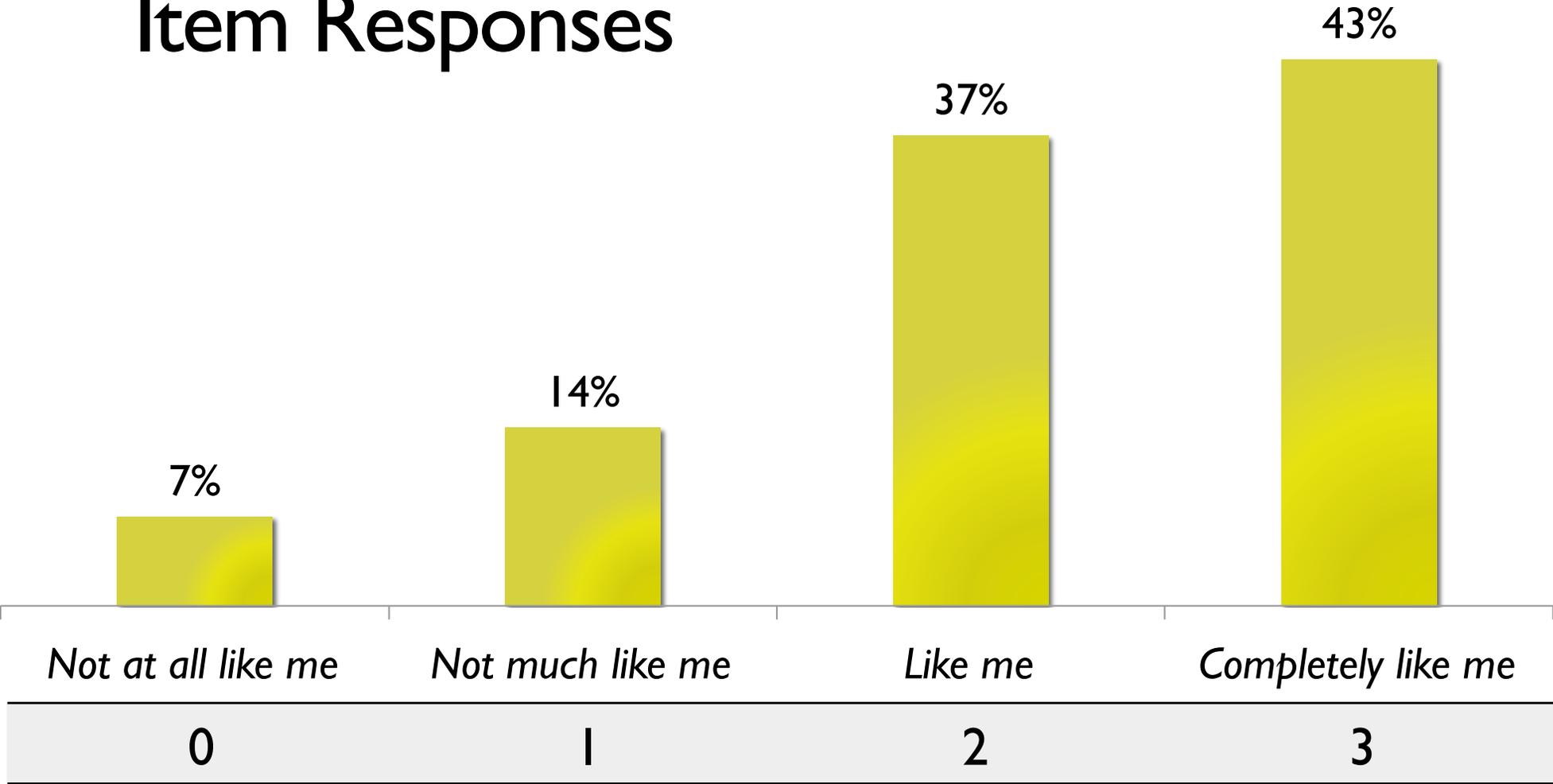
## Most Common Referral Problems

41% Depression or Anxiety  
30% Substance Use,  
26% Conduct Problems  
22% Housing or Hyperactivity

## DSM Diagnoses

37% Missing\*  
37% Mood Disorders  
30% Anxiety Disorders  
22% ADHD or ODD  
11% Substance Use

# Item Responses



↑  
“Part of religious community”

↑  
M

↑  
“I help my friends”

# Internal Consistency – Initial Scales

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Item-Total Correlations</i>	<i>Drop</i>
Belonging	11	27	.76	.15 to .62	2
Generosity	8	27	.62	.13 to .63	3
Independence	10	27	.86	.23 to .73	1
Mastery	8	27	.57	-.07 to .57	4
Mastery w/ Job	10	14	.77	.05 to .85	4
Mastery w/ School	11	15	.64	.04 to .68	4
Combined	37	27	.89		
Combined w/ Job	39	14	.90		
Combined w/ School	40	15	.85		

# Internal Consistency – Revised Scales

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Item-Total Correlations</i>
Belonging	9	27	.78	.33 to .60
Generosity	5	27	.63	.22 to .55
Independence	9	27	.87	.50 to .76
Mastery	4	27	.77	.49 to .66
Mastery w/ Job	6	14	.88	.60 to .78
Mastery w/ School	7	15	.78	.12 to .85
Combined	27	27	.90	
Combined w/ Job	29	14	.89	
Combined w/ School	30	15	.86	

# Preliminary Comparisons

- Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA)
- Youth Self Report (YSR) 11-18 year olds
- Adult Self Report (ASR) 18-59 year olds

## Correlations with Adult Self Report ( $n = 18$ ) & Youth Self Report ( $n = 8$ ) Problem Scales

	<i>n</i>	<i>Total Problems</i>	<i>Internalizing</i>	<i>Externalizing</i>
Belonging	26	-.44*	-.64**	-.22
Generosity	26	-.36	-.22	-.53**
Independence	26	-.55**	-.73**	-.29
Mastery	26	-.54**	-.52**	-.54**
Mastery w/Job	14	-.60*	-.58*	-.60*
Mastery w/ School	14	-.60*	-.40	-.69*

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

# ASR / YSR Positive Scales

## ASR Adaptive Functioning

Friends

Spouse

Family

Job

Education

## YSR Competencies

Activities  
(+jobs)

Social

School

## “Social Desirability”

ASR  
Personal  
Strengths

YSR Positive  
Qualities

# ASR Personal Strengths Items

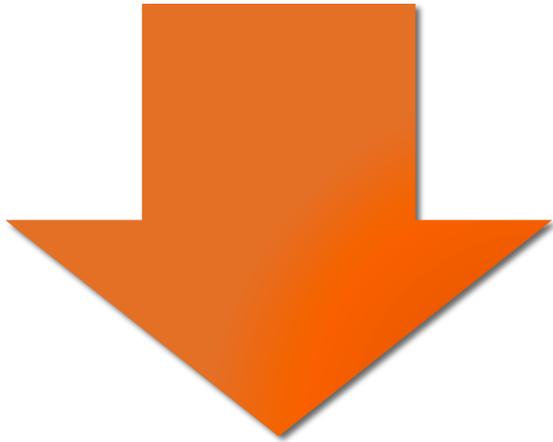
- I make good use of my opportunities
- I work up to my ability
- I am pretty honest
- I can do certain things better than other people
- I meet my responsibilities to my family
- I stand up for my rights
- I enjoy being with people
- I like to help others
- I try to be fair to others
- I like to try new things
- I am a happy person

# Correlations with Adult Self Report & Youth Self Report Positive Scales

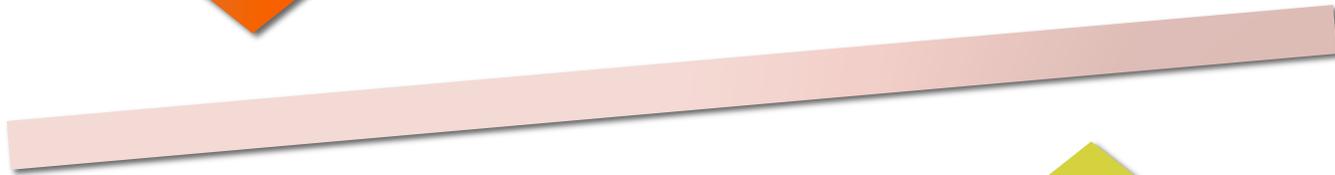
	<i>ASR Adaptive Functioning (n = 20)</i>	<i>ASR Pers. Strengths YSR Pos. Qualities (n = 26)</i>
Belonging	.49*	.53**
Generosity	.40	.48*
Independence	.39	.47*
Mastery	.21	.32
Mastery w/Job	.38 (n = 10)	.20 (n = 14)
Mastery w/ School	.07 (n = 9)	-.05 (n = 14)

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

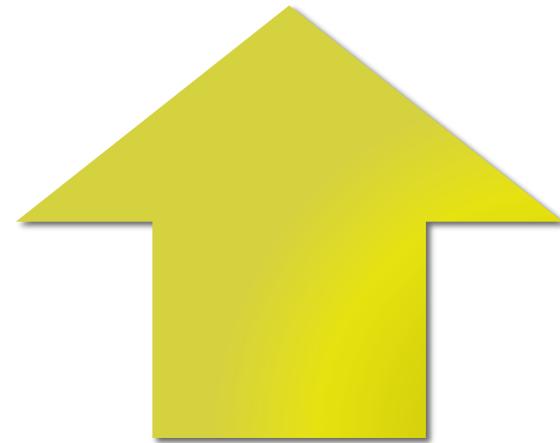
Conclusions



Shows  
promise



Needs  
work



# Next Steps

- Address limitations
  - Sample
  - Exclusive quantitative focus
- Identify what items are missing
  - Explore generosity domain (2 Cs)
  - Examine qualitative interview data
  - Internal strengths & external assets
  - General vs. specific strengths
- Revise, collect new data, reanalyze

# Questions & Comments?

- Contact Jesse Suter [jesse.suter@uvm.edu](mailto:jesse.suter@uvm.edu)
- Slides will be available at <http://www.uvm.edu/~jsuter>
- Visit Vermont Youth in Transition website: <http://youth-in-transition-grant.com>

