



KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT  
**LEUVEN**

# *Forgiveness and psychosocial functioning*



Jessie Dezutter (PhD) – KU Leuven *chair*  
Hanneke Muthert (PhD) – Groningen University  
Tine Schellekens (drs) – KU Leuven

# Forgiveness and health



- Approach of this panel
- Dr. Hanneke Muthert:  
Forgiveness in a context of mental health: A psychodynamic approach.
- Drs. Tine Schellekens:  
The Inner Side of Forgiveness: Transforming movements in Heart and Mind
- Dr. Jessie Dezutter:  
Forgiveness: A positive psychological resource for late life well-being

# Forgiveness and health



- Approach of this panel

Forgiveness =

a possible way to cope with an offense

a prosocial change towards an offender (process)

# Forgiveness and health



- Approach of this panel

a prosocial **change** towards an offender (process)

- \* negative to neutral
- \* negative to neutral to positive



# Forgiveness and health



- Approach of this panel

► **Giver** (tendency to forgive/forgivingness)

Forgive *others*

Forgive *yourself*

Forgive *God/situations*

**Receiver** (experience of forgiveness)

Receive from others

Receive from yourself

Receive from God

# Forgiveness and health



- Approach of this panel

► **Giver** (tendency to forgive/forgivingness)

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# *Forgiveness and health in advanced age*



Jessie Dezutter (PhD) – KU Leuven *chair*

# Forgiveness and late life well-being

75+



# Forgiveness and late life well-being

challenges



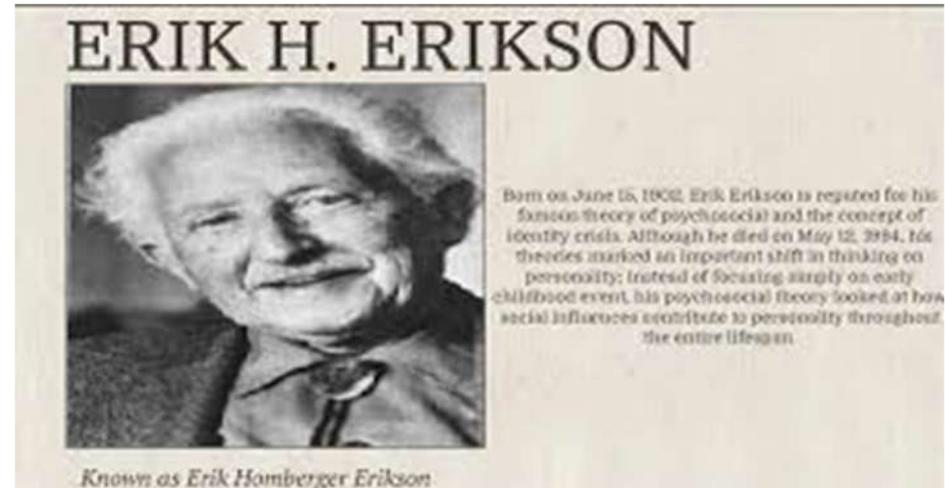
# Forgiveness and late life well-being

developmental  
task





## Psychosocial developmental model



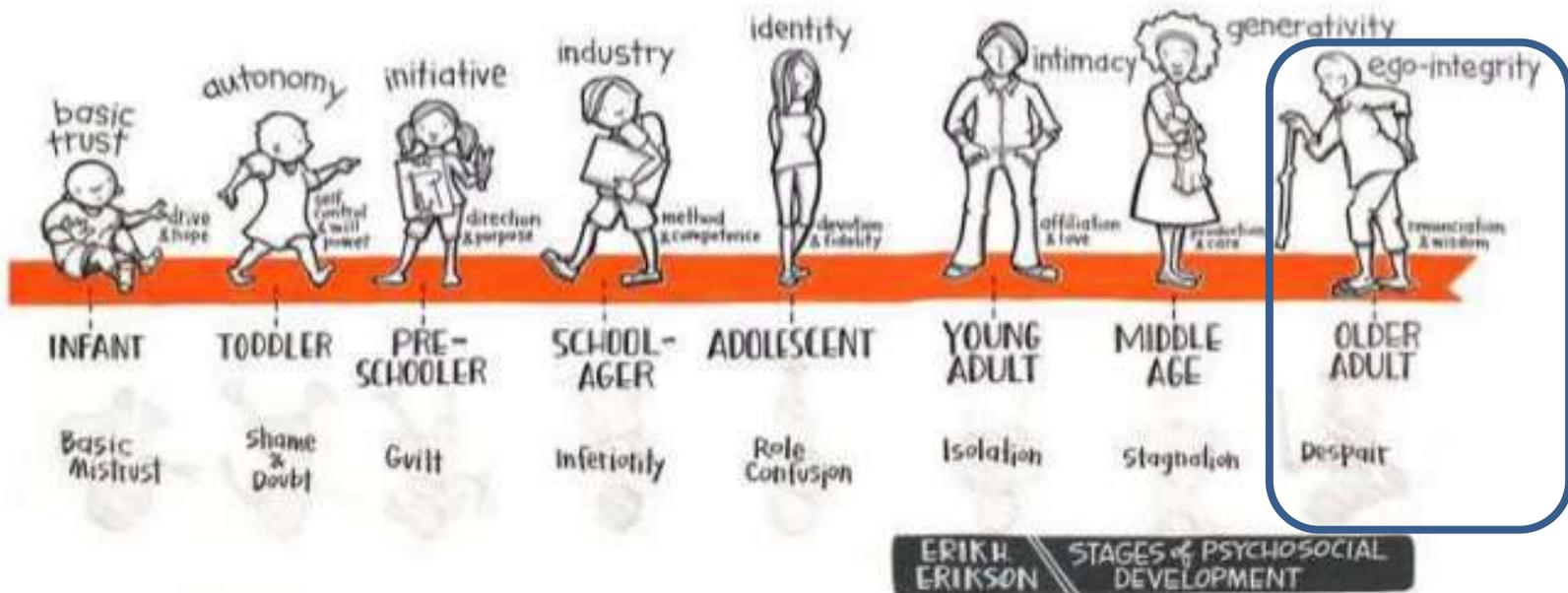
- Every stage: psychosocial crisis
- Positive resolution: ego-strength
- Can be used in next crisis

# Forgiveness and late life well-being



## Eight Stages

of Psychosocial Development





## Ego-integrity versus despair

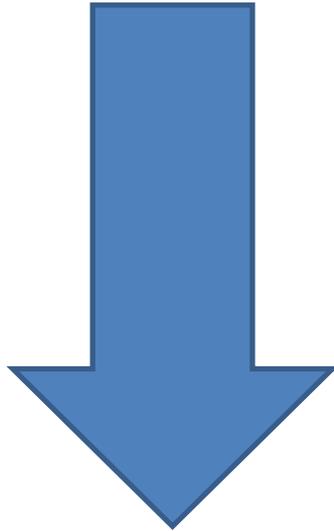
- Reflection on past life
- Integrations of failure, success, bad choices, satisfying decisions, ...
- Results in a feeling of meaningfulness and satisfaction (EGO-INTEGRITY) or in a feeling of sadness, anger, and regret (DESPAIR)



# Forgiveness and late life well-being



Ego-integrity versus despair



Improved late life well-being



# Forgiveness and late life well-being



Ego-integrity versus despair



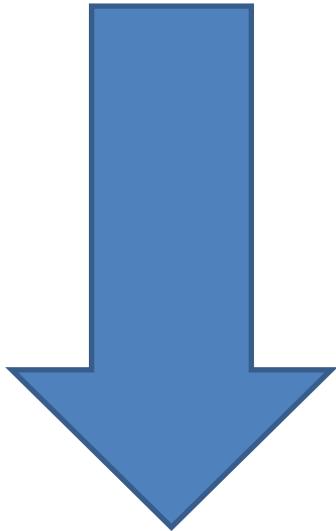
Improved late life well-being



# Forgiveness and late life well-being



## Forgiveness



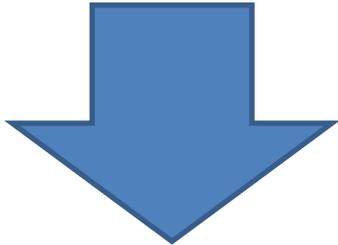
## Late life well-being



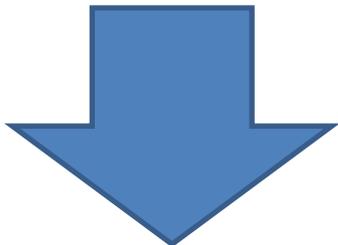
# Forgiveness and late life well-being



Forgiveness



Integrity and despair



Late life well-being



# Forgiveness and late life well-being

## Study 1

### Forgiveness, Ego-Integrity, and Depressive Symptoms in Community-Dwelling and Residential Elderly Adults

Jessie Dezutter,<sup>1</sup> Loren Toussaint,<sup>2</sup> and Mia Leijssen<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven University of Leuven, Belgium.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, Luther College Decorah, Iowa.

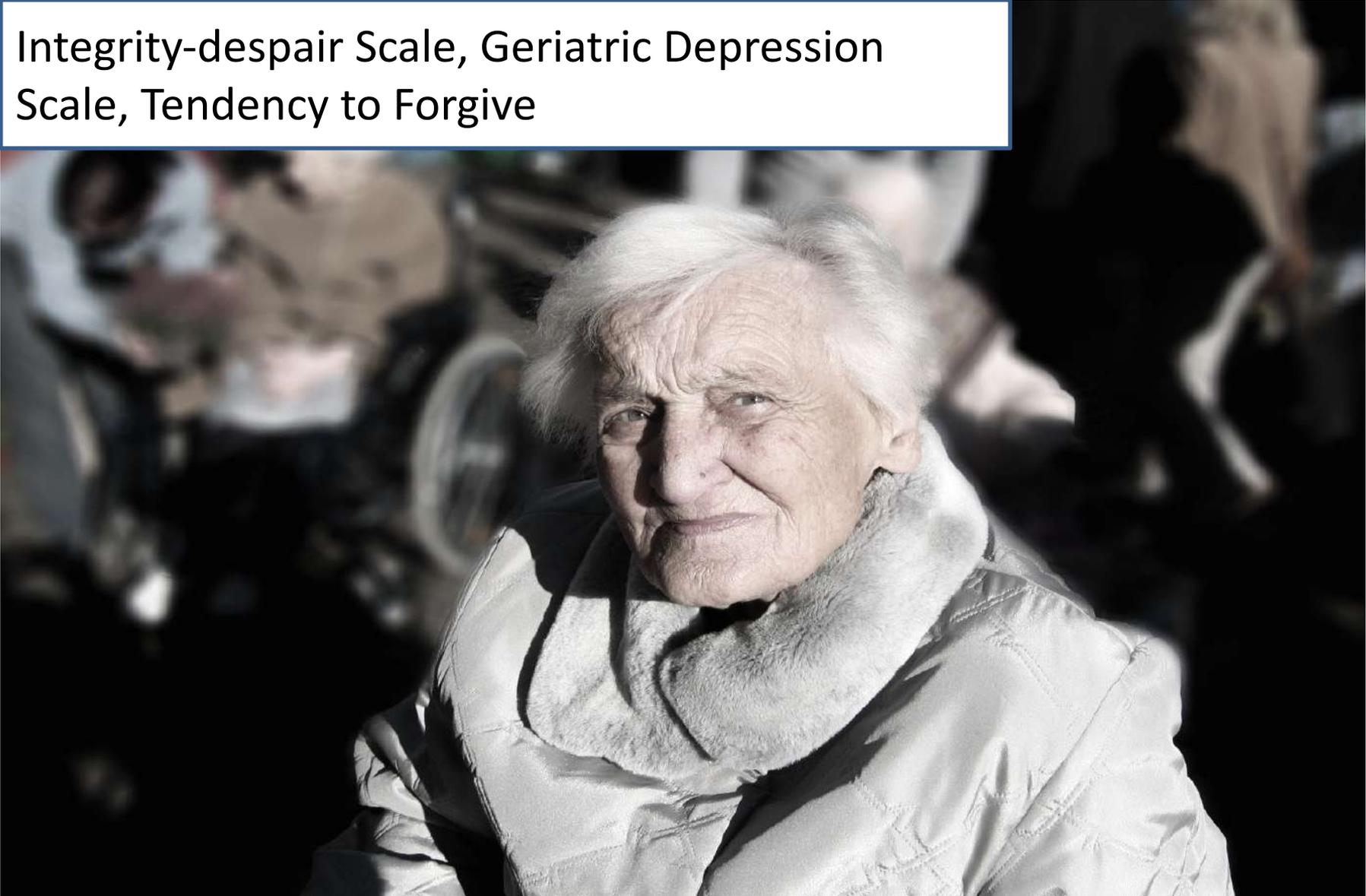
# Forgiveness and late life well-being

**Sample:** Community-dwelling adults ( $n = 280$ ),  
M = 75.98 years, range = 70 –91, 56% women



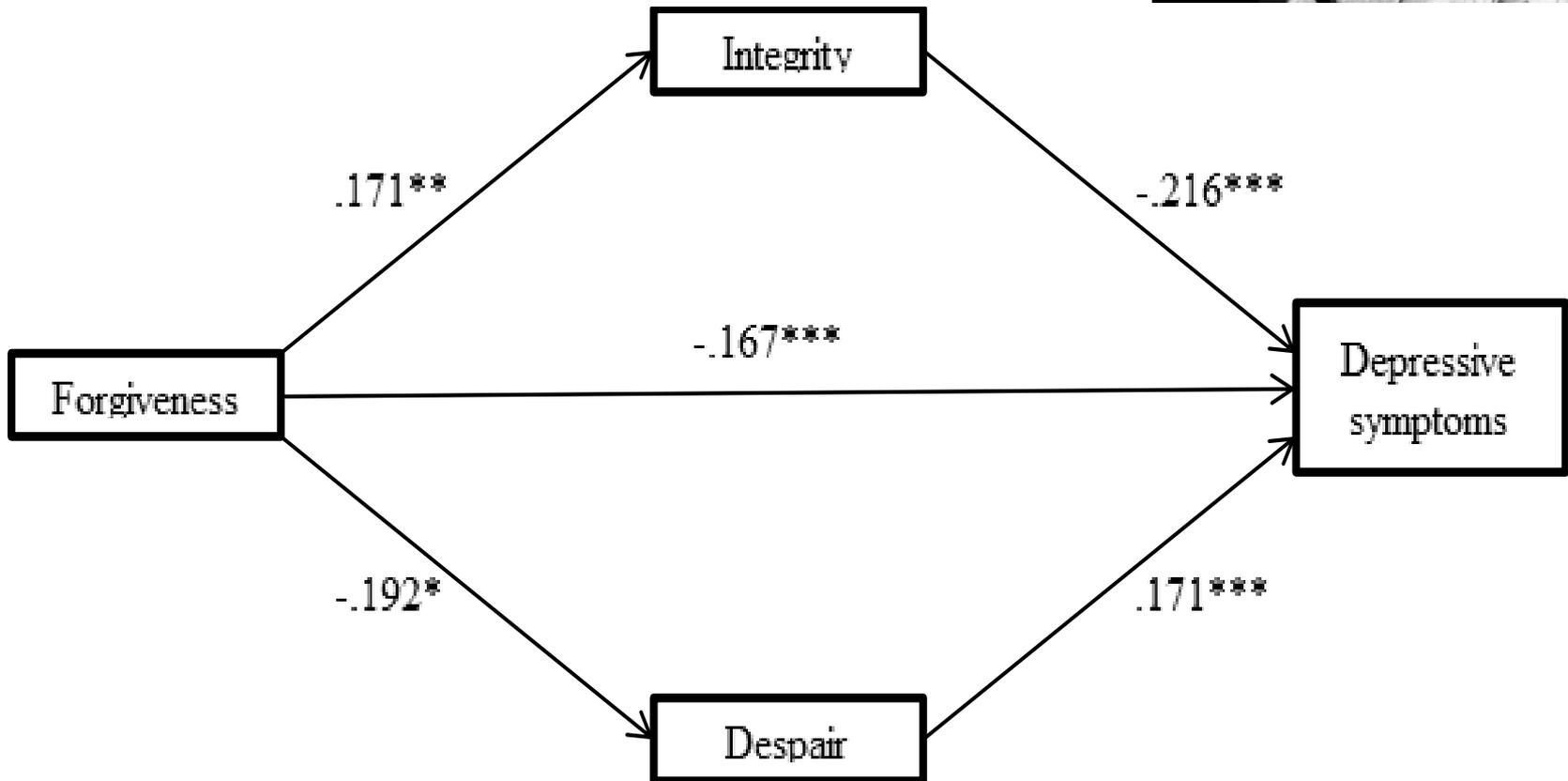
# Forgiveness and late life well-being

Integrity-despair Scale, Geriatric Depression Scale, Tendency to Forgive



# Forgiveness and late life well-being

Multiple mediator model of the associations between forgiveness, integrity, despair, and depressive symptoms in community-dwelling elderly. All coefficients are unstandardized. \* $P < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Model adjusted for sex, age, education, and marital status.



# Forgiveness and late life well-being

## Study 2

### Forgiveness, Ego-Integrity, and Depressive Symptoms in Community-Dwelling and Residential Elderly Adults

Jessie Dezutter,<sup>1</sup> Loren Toussaint,<sup>2</sup> and Mia Leijssen<sup>1</sup>

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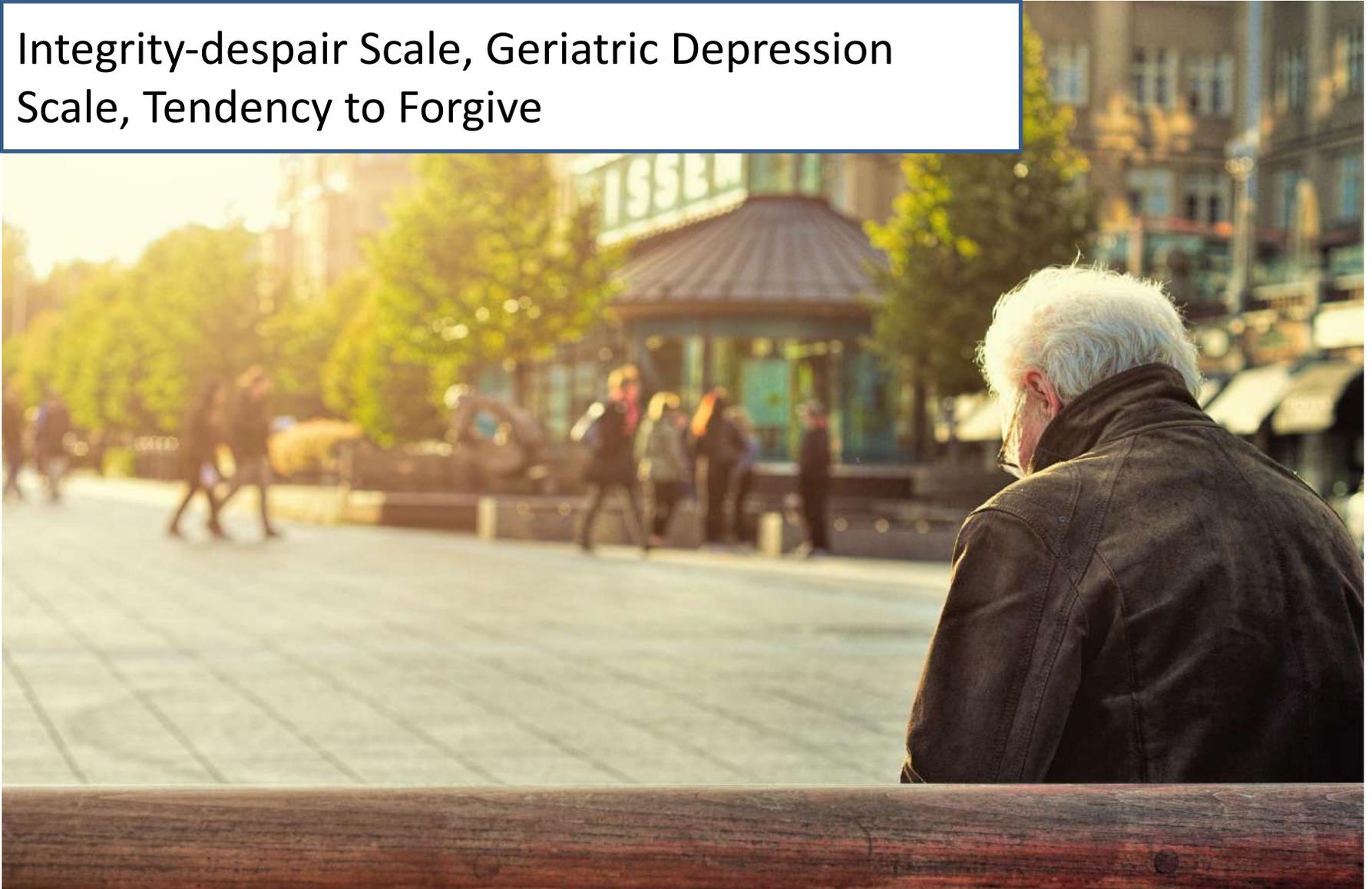
# Forgiveness and late life well-being

**Sample:** older adults in nursing homes (n = 205),  
M = 83.20 years, range = 70 - 103, 74% women



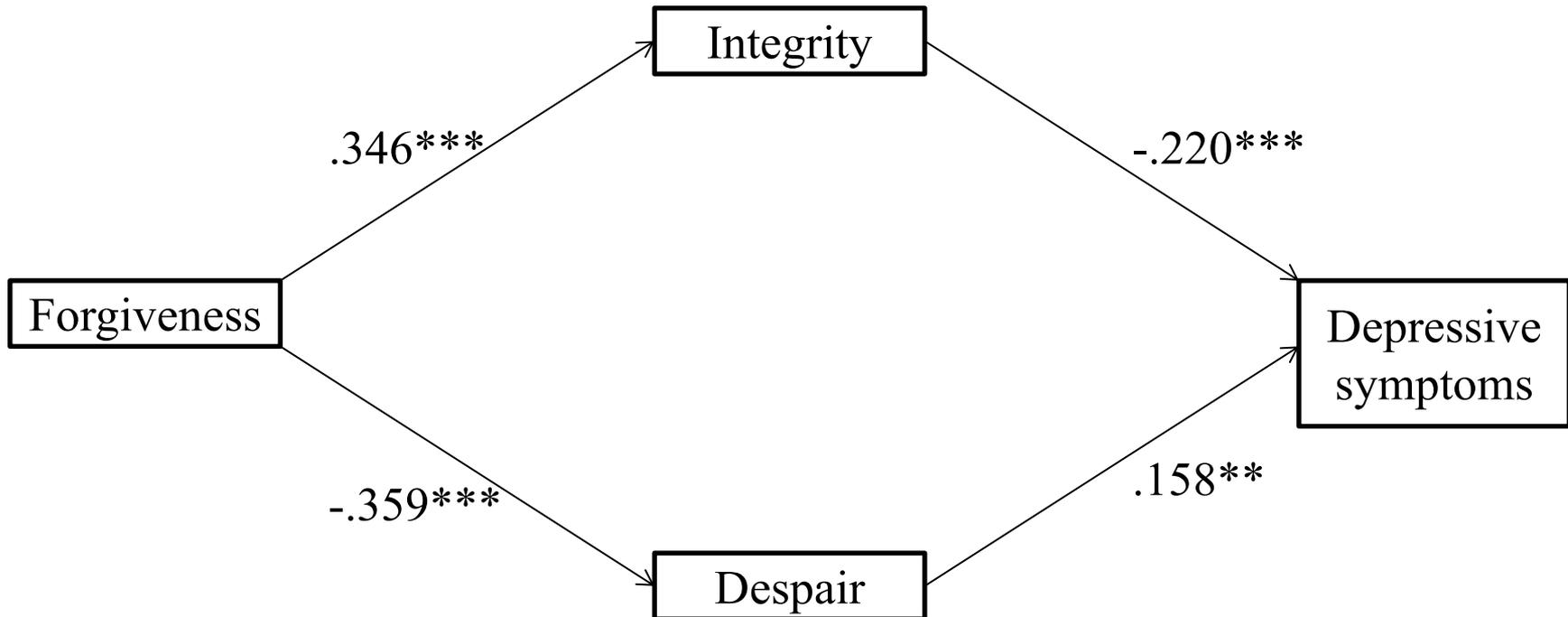
# Forgiveness and late life well-being

Integrity-despair Scale, Geriatric Depression Scale, Tendency to Forgive



# Forgiveness and late life well-being

Multiple mediator model of the associations between forgiveness, integrity, despair, and depressive symptoms in residential elderly. All coefficients are unstandardized. \*P < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001. Model adjusted for sex, age, education, and marital status.



# Forgiveness and late life well-being

## Study 3



### Forgiveness and late life functioning: the mediating role of finding ego-integrity

Elke Derdaele, Loren Toussaint, Evalyne Thauvoye & Jessie Dezutter

To cite this article: Elke Derdaele, Loren Toussaint, Evalyne Thauvoye & Jessie Dezutter (2017): Forgiveness and late life functioning: the mediating role of finding ego-integrity, *Aging & Mental Health*, DOI: [10.1080/13607863.2017.1399346](https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2017.1399346)

# Forgiveness and late life well-being

**Sample:** older adults in nursing homes (n = 329),  
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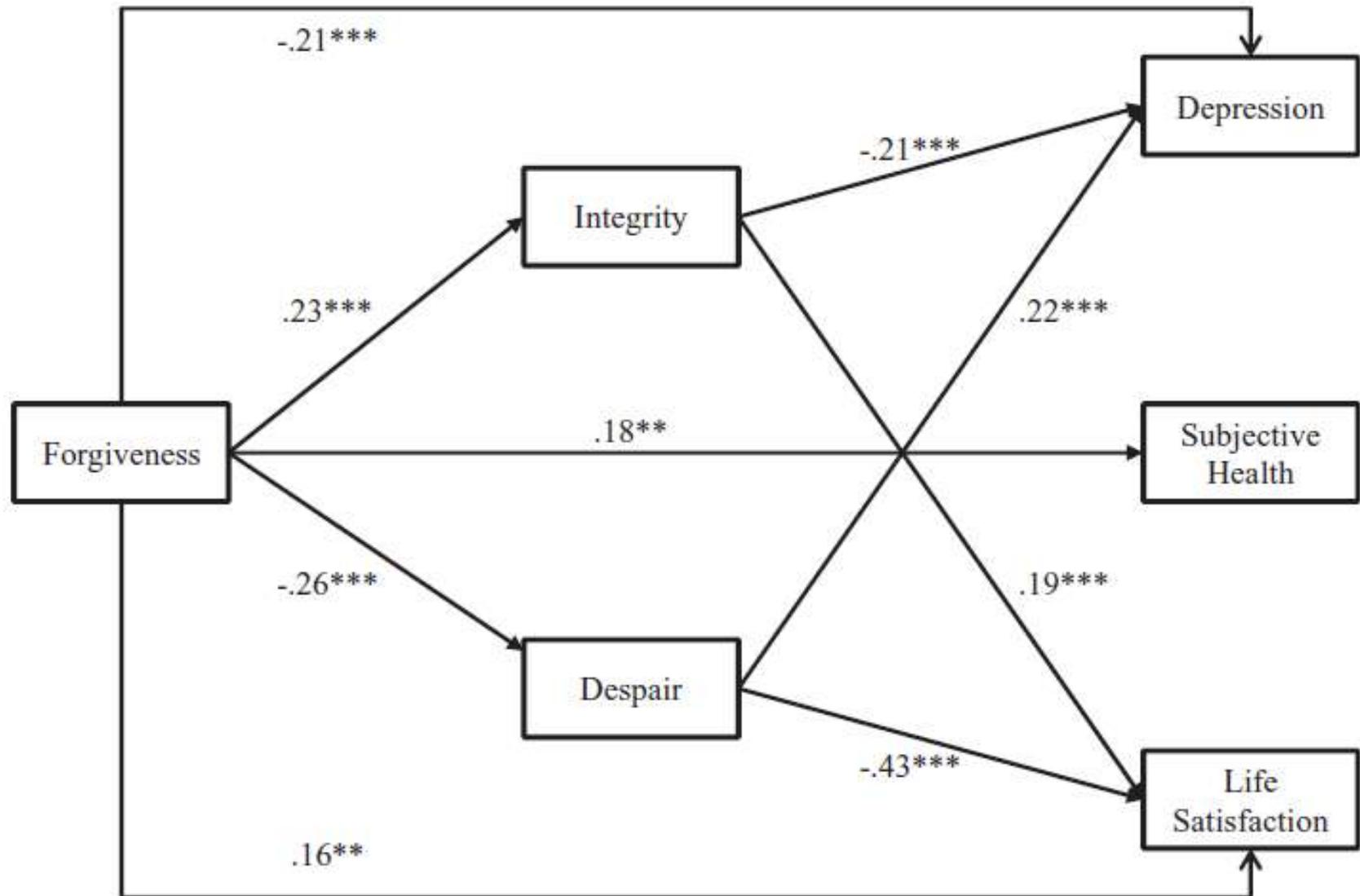


# Forgiveness and late life well-being

Integrity-despair, Geriatric Depression, Life Satisfaction, Subjective health, Tendency to Forgive



# Forgiveness and late life well-being



# Forgiveness and late life well-being



# Forgiveness and late life well-being

- Conclusion?



Forgiveness is (direct – indirect) related to late life functioning

Forgiveness seems to stimulate ego-integrity and to reduce despair → more optimal late life functioning

- However!

# Forgiveness and late life well-being

- Take home message:

Train yourself in forgiveness!

More information:

- <http://www.luther.edu/touslo01/>
- <https://internationalforgiveness.com/>
- <http://www.evworthington-forgiveness.com/>



# Forgiveness and late life well-being

- Questions?



- Thank you:

Loren Toussaint, Laura Dewitte, Evalyne Thauvoye,  
Elke Derdaele, & Tine Schellekens  
all participants and the board of the Flemish  
nursing homes

