

# Mid-life Economic Well-being of Parent-Caregivers

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Presented at the Arc of Illinois conference  
Lisle, Illinois - 2003

# Research Question

- ◆ Does economic well-being differ for parents of children with developmental disabilities, as compared with other parents?

# Data & Methods

- ◆ Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS)
- ◆ Sample of parents of children with developmental disabilities (Seltzer & Greenberg, et al., 2000)
- ◆ Prospective, began in 1959
- ◆ Comparison of parents of children with and without developmental disabilities
- ◆ N=330, same gender distribution in 2 groups of 165

# Measures of Parents' Mid-life Economic Well-being

- ◆ Parental income
- ◆ Combined savings and investments
- ◆ Home equity
- ◆ Home ownership
- ◆ Mortgage amount
- ◆ Participation in pension or IRA

# Measures of Women's Employment

- ◆ Own earned income in 1974 & 1991
- ◆ Months of full-time & part-time employment
- ◆ Duration of longest job spell
- ◆ Transitions between level of employment and/or home

# Sample Characteristics

	DD	Contrast	M-W U/ $\chi^2$
Family Income, 1957-60	\$5500	\$5400	-.03
Mother's Educ (yrs)	10.4	10.6	-.14
Education (yrs)	13.3	13.4	-.03
Age in 1992/4	53.1	53.0	-.35
# of Children 1992/4	3.4	2.9	-2.67**
# in Household	2.9	2.7	-1.21
% Married	87%	85%	.22
Child at home	57%	17%	55.20***

\*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

# Results: Economic Well-being

Variable	DD Mean/%	Contrast Mean/%	Mann-Whitney U
Income	\$38.2	\$50.1	-2.23*
Savings	\$132.7	\$181.0	-2.02*
Home Equity	\$95.6	\$97.6	-0.81
Mortgage	\$39.2	\$31.3	-0.42
% Owns home	90%	91%	-0.37
% Pension	81%	81%	-0.14

\*  $p < .05$  Median \$s are in 1,000s

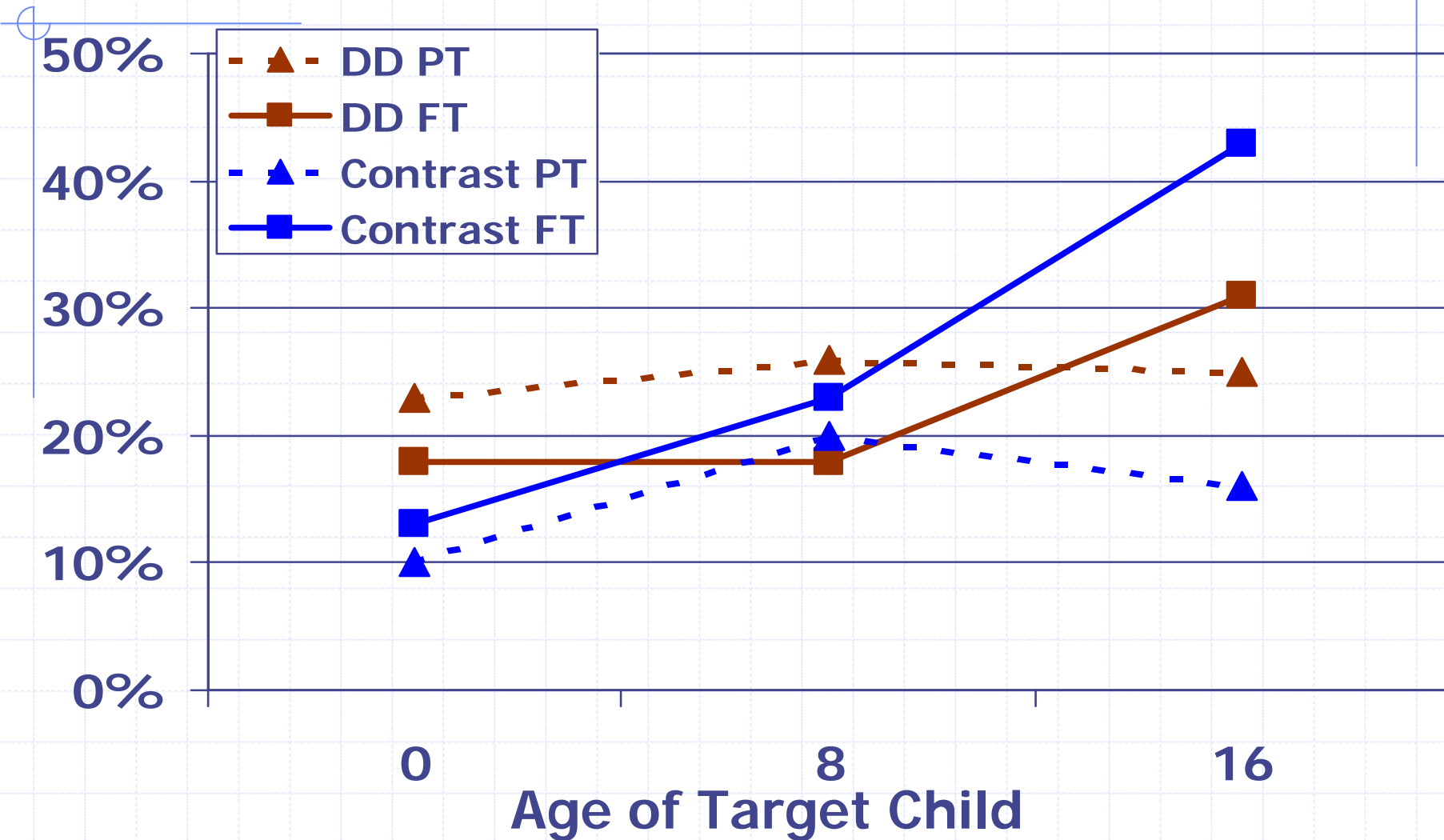
# Results: Women's Employment

Variable	DD Mean/%	Contrast Mean/%	M-W U or $\chi^2$
Income, 1974	\$4900	\$9400	-2.46*
Income, 1991	\$14600	\$18800	-1.46
Months FT	125	147	-1.70*
Months PT	74	64	-.77
Transitions	2.8	3.4	-2.06*
Ever FT	69%	84%	3.66*
Ever Job > 5 yrs	53%	75%	6.97**

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



# Women's Employment Trajectories



# What does it all mean?

- ◆ Some negative effects (income, savings) at mid-life for parents of children with developmental disabilities
- ◆ Effects are not universally detrimental
- ◆ Mothers of DD children slower to increase employment to FT
- ◆ Potentially deleterious outcomes in later life for the mothers
- ◆ May suggest evidence of parental resilience or successful coping

# Study Limitations

- ◆ Educated, white sample
- ◆ Data on severity of child's condition unavailable

# Implications for Advocacy

- ◆ Families would benefit from programs that improve their financial situations
- ◆ Families would benefit from programs that enable mothers to work at same levels as mothers of nondisabled children
- ◆ Cash subsidy & respite programs for people with developmental disabilities are notoriously underfunded in Illinois and the U.S.

# Acknowledgments

- ◆ Drs. Marsha Seltzer & Jan Greenberg,  
Waisman Center, University of  
Wisconsin-Madison
- ◆ NIH Post-doctoral Training Grant,  
(NICHD) T32 HD07489