



Understanding the Effects of Peer Victimization on Adolescent Health: Pathways and Protective Factors

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Alberti Center Virtual Colloquium Series, September 24, 2024

The Big Picture

Relationships matter across the lifespan...



...and **peers** take on heightened importance in **adolescence**.

Adolescent Relationships in Context (ARC) Lab



Mission & Vision

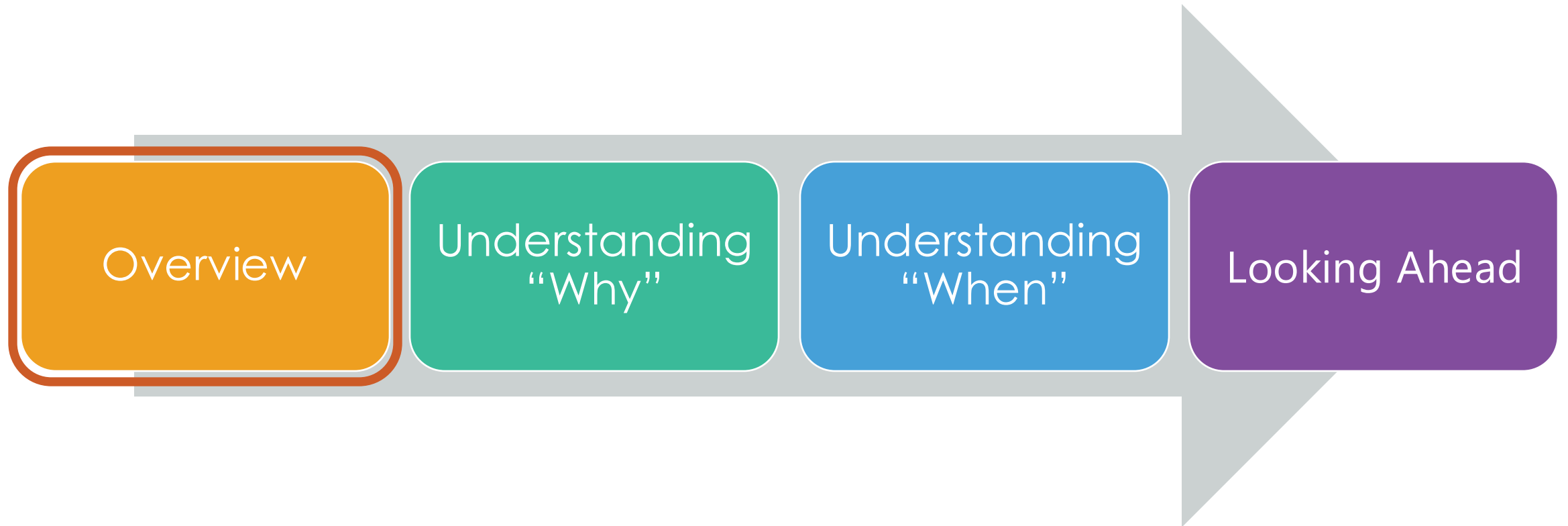


To **strengthen** adolescents' peer relationships and **reduce the suffering** of those facing peer adversity



A world where **every adolescent** enjoys the developmental benefits of **nurturing peer relationships**

Talk Agenda



Peer Victimization



Intentional

Repeated

Power Imbalance

Olweus, 1993

Victimization Subtypes



Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Williams & Guerra, 2007

Victimization Contexts



Turner et al., 2011

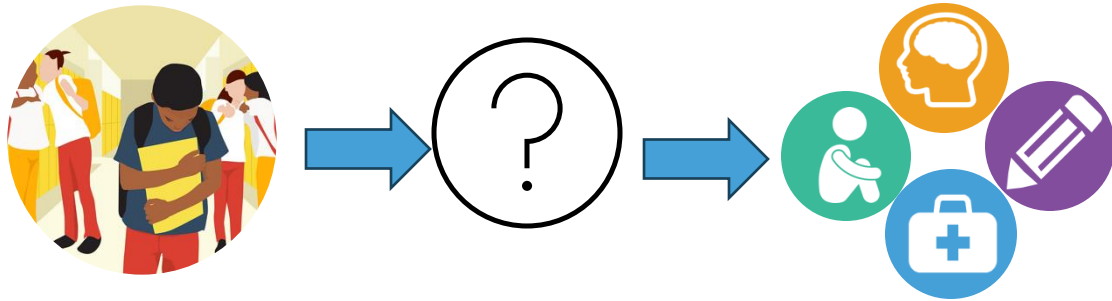
The Burden of Peer Victimization



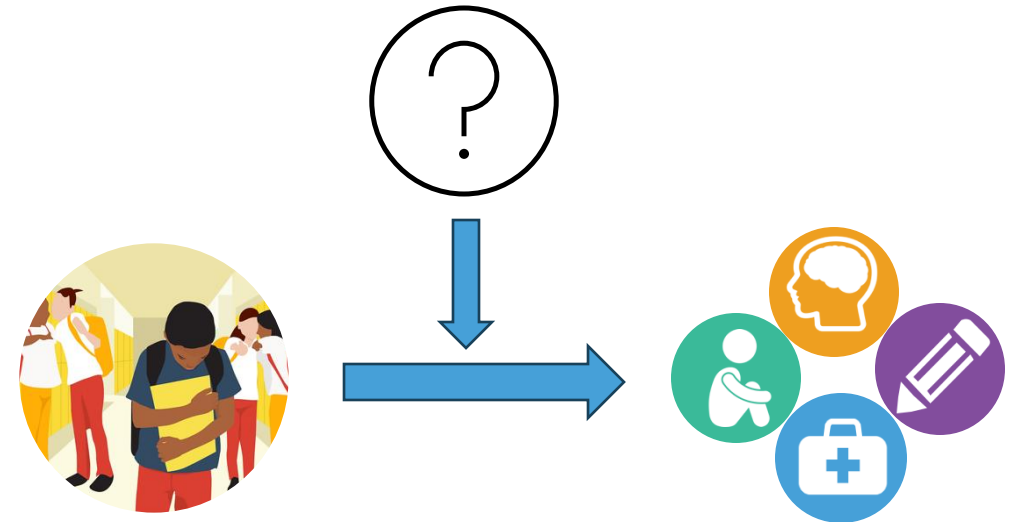
Christina et al., 2021; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010; Reijntjes et al., 2010; Schacter, 2021

Motivating Questions

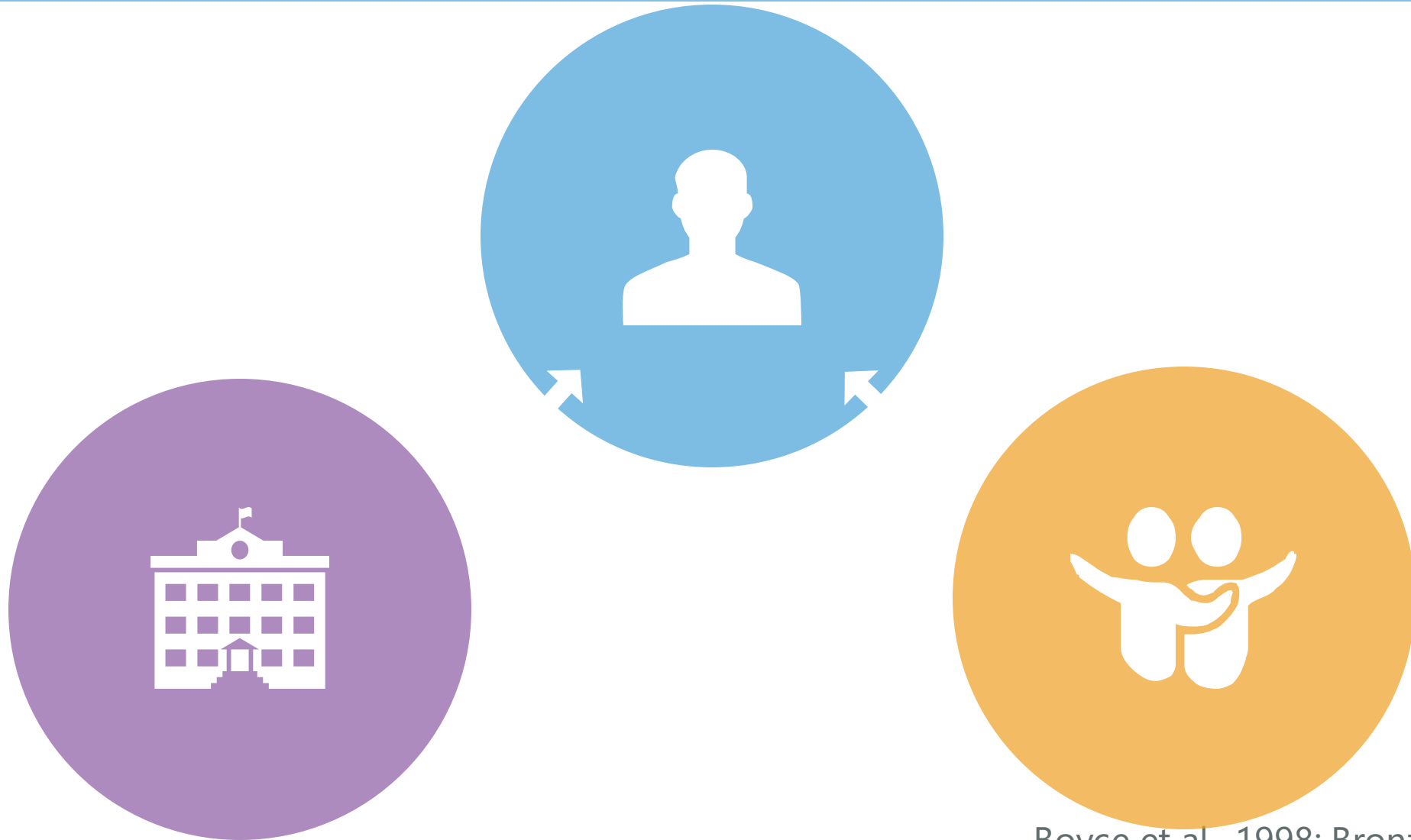
Why does peer victimization undermine adolescents' healthy development?



When does peer victimization undermine adolescents' healthy development?



Theoretical Framework: Contextual & Interactive



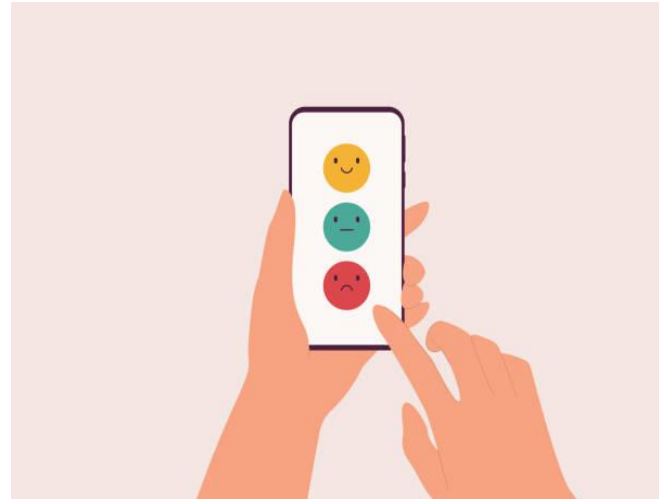
Boyce et al., 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 1979

Methodological Approach

Longitudinal Surveys



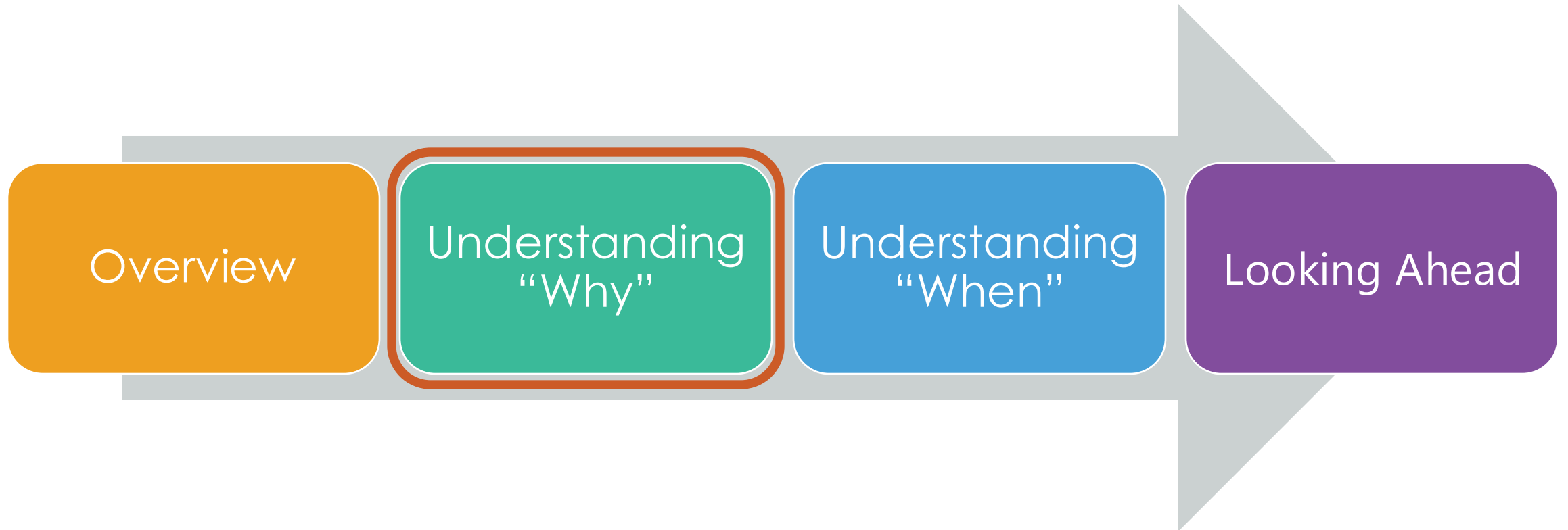
Experience Sampling



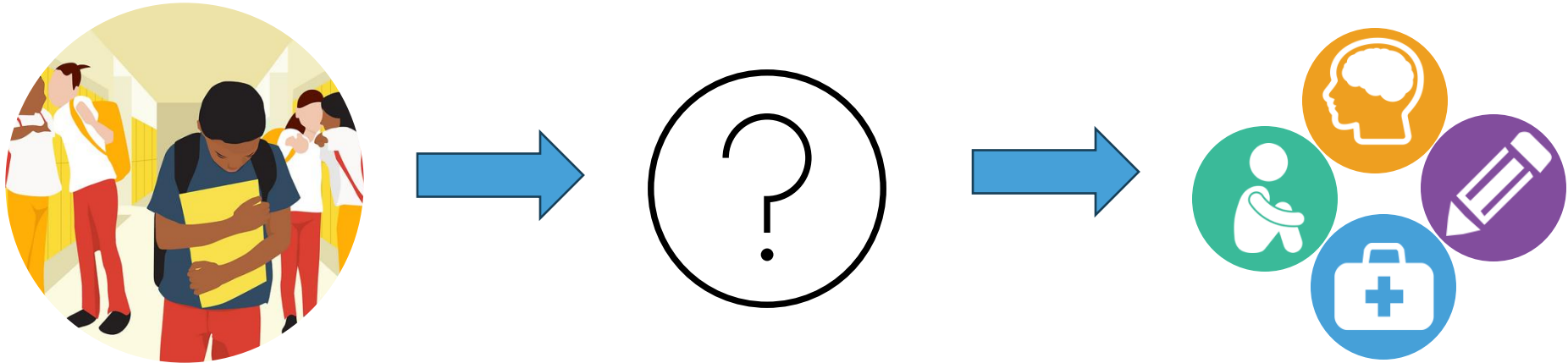
Physiological Assessment



Talk Agenda

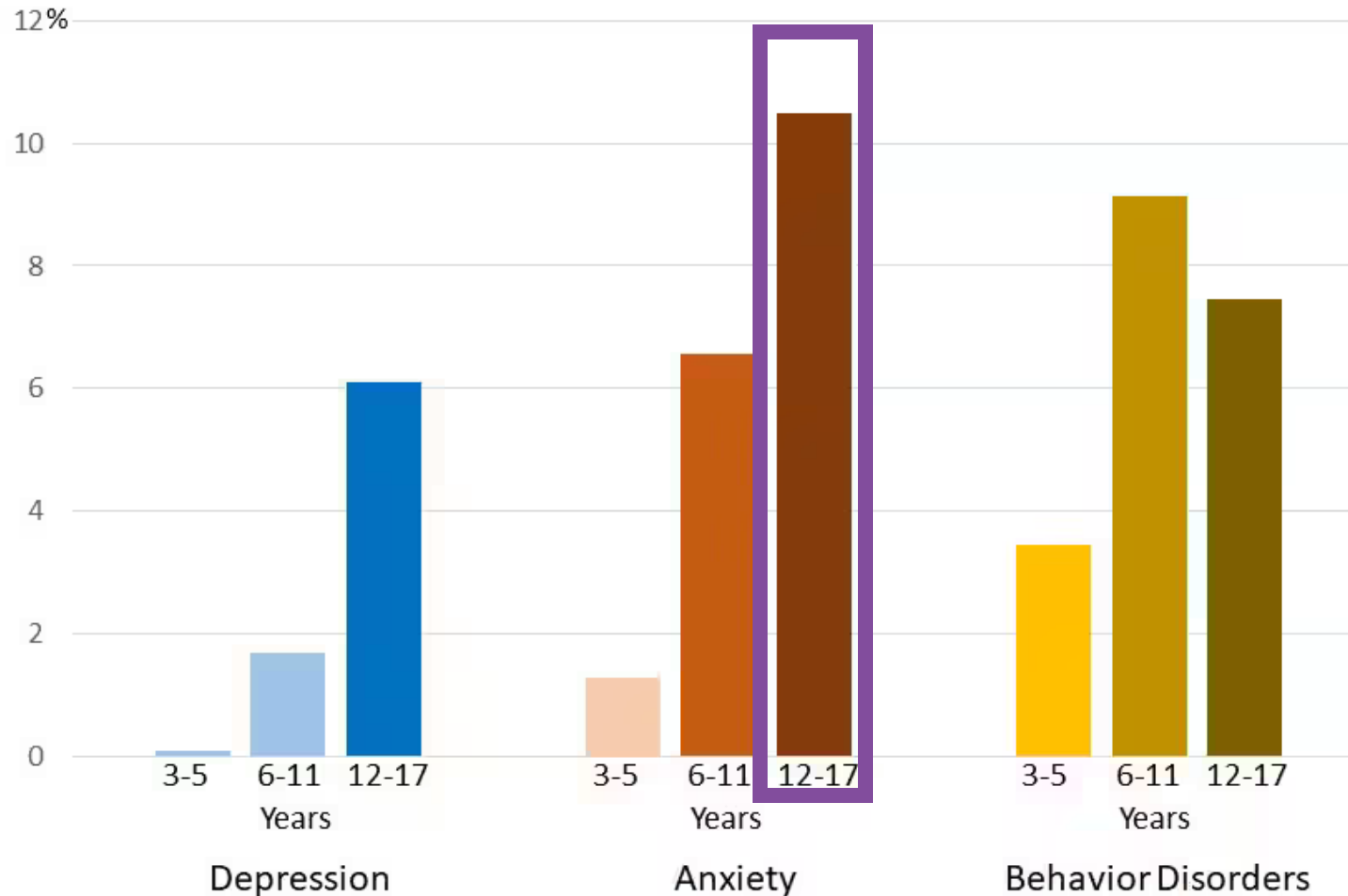


Why does peer victimization undermine adolescents' healthy development?



Peer Victimization & Anxiety

Depression, Anxiety, Behavior Disorders, by Age



Bitsko et al. (2013-2019)

Peer Victimization & Anxiety



Frequently victimized adolescents are two to three times more likely to develop an anxiety disorder than their non- or less victimized peers.

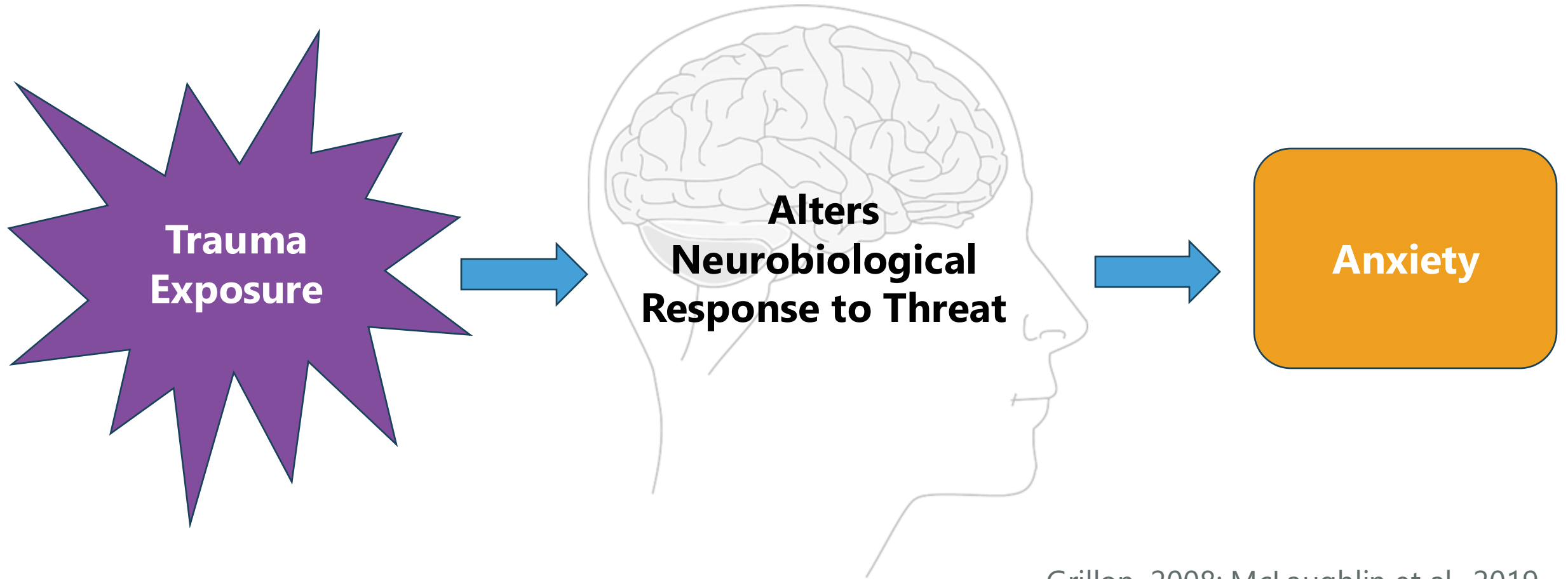
Fortuitous Collaboration



Dr. Hilary Marusak
Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience
Wayne State University

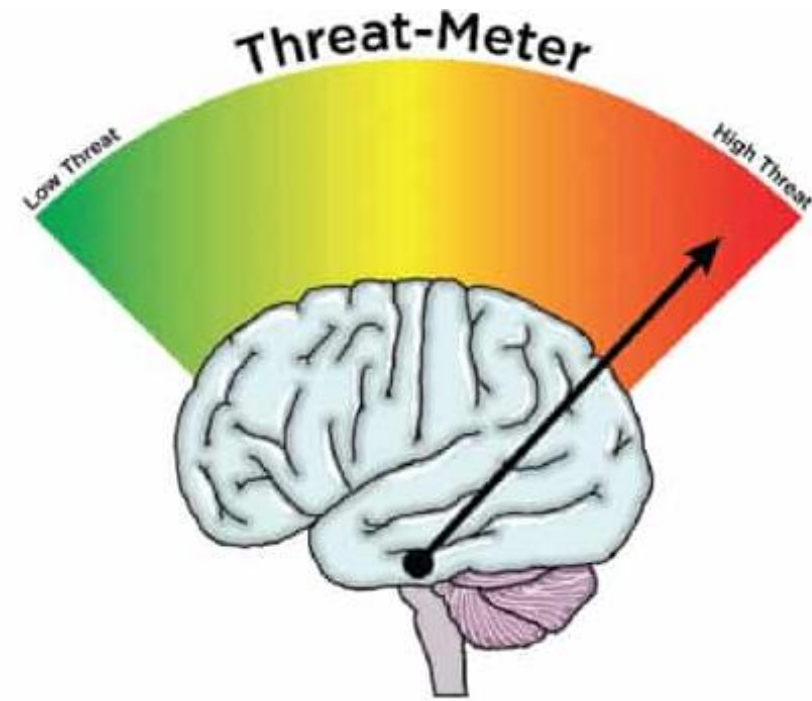
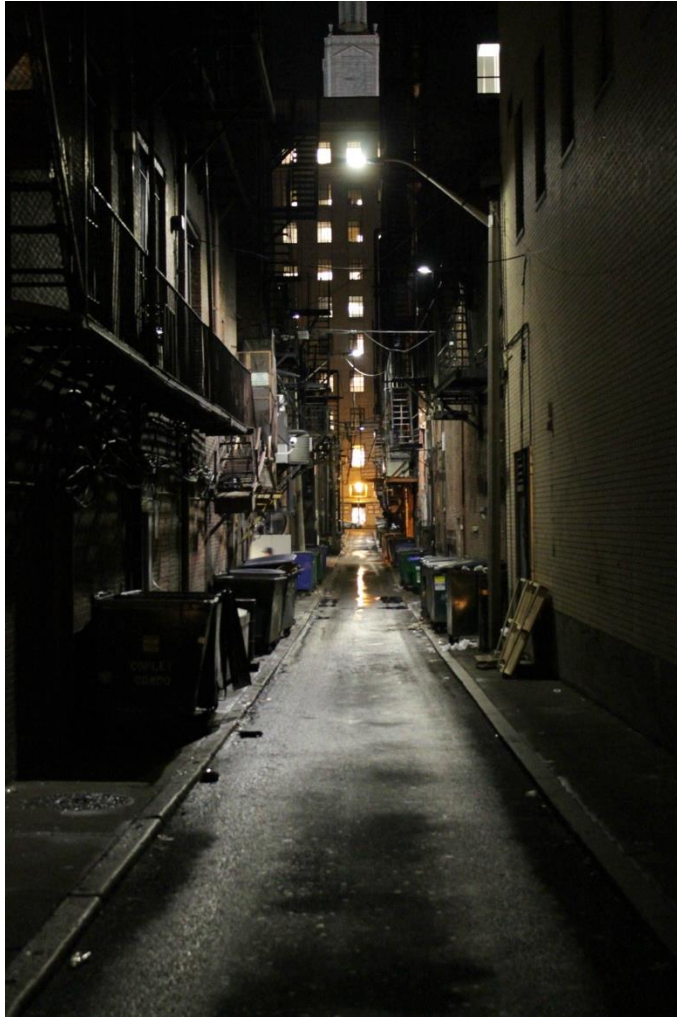


Neurobiology of Fear



Grillon, 2008; McLaughlin et al., 2019

Threat Sensitivity in Trauma-Exposed Youth



What About Peer Victimization?

- Parental abuse, community violence, harsh living conditions predict heightened anxiety risk via elevated *threat sensitivity*
- Recent theoretical accounts reconceptualize peer victimization as potentially traumatic event
- Working hypothesis: *social* threat sensitivity as underlying mechanism linking peer victimization to anxiety development



Herringa et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2023; McLaughlin & Lambert, 2017

A Preliminary Test: PATH Study



Dr. Tanja Jovanovic
Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience
Wayne State University

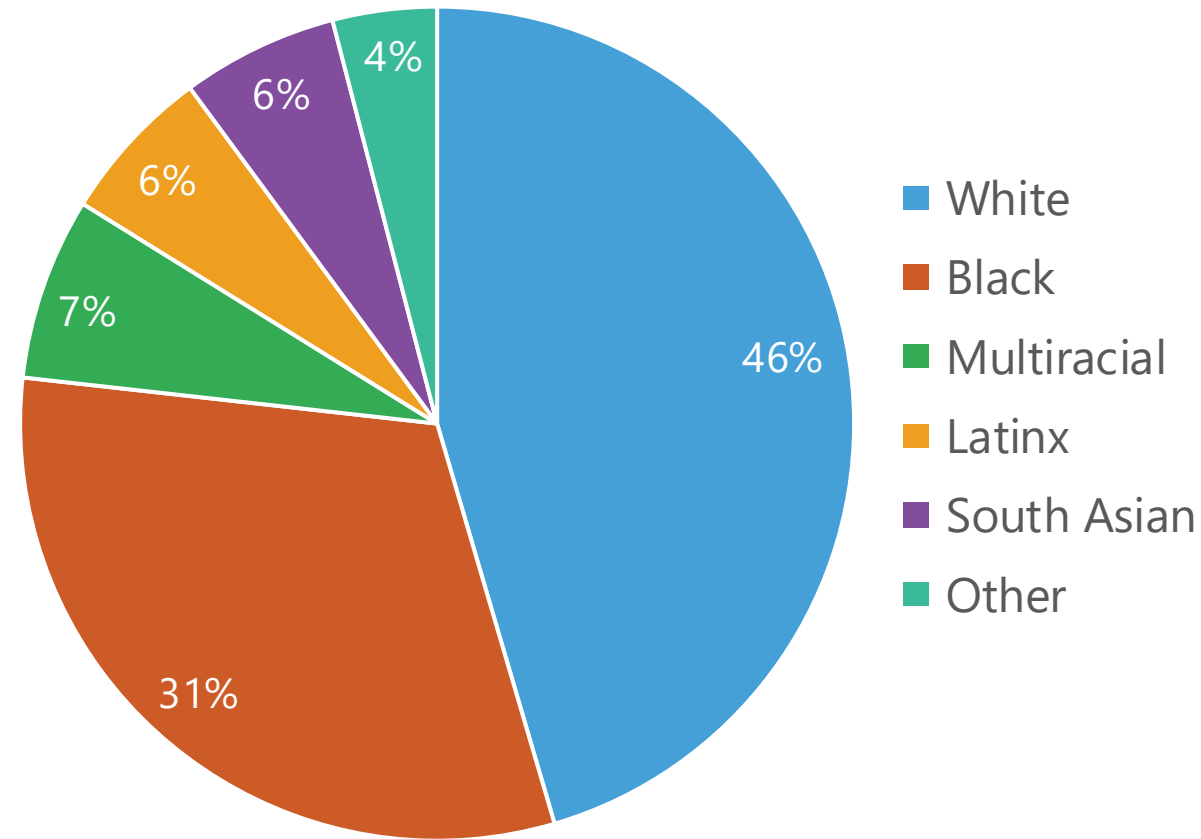
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
PATH STUDY



Peer Adjustment and Teen Health

PATH Study

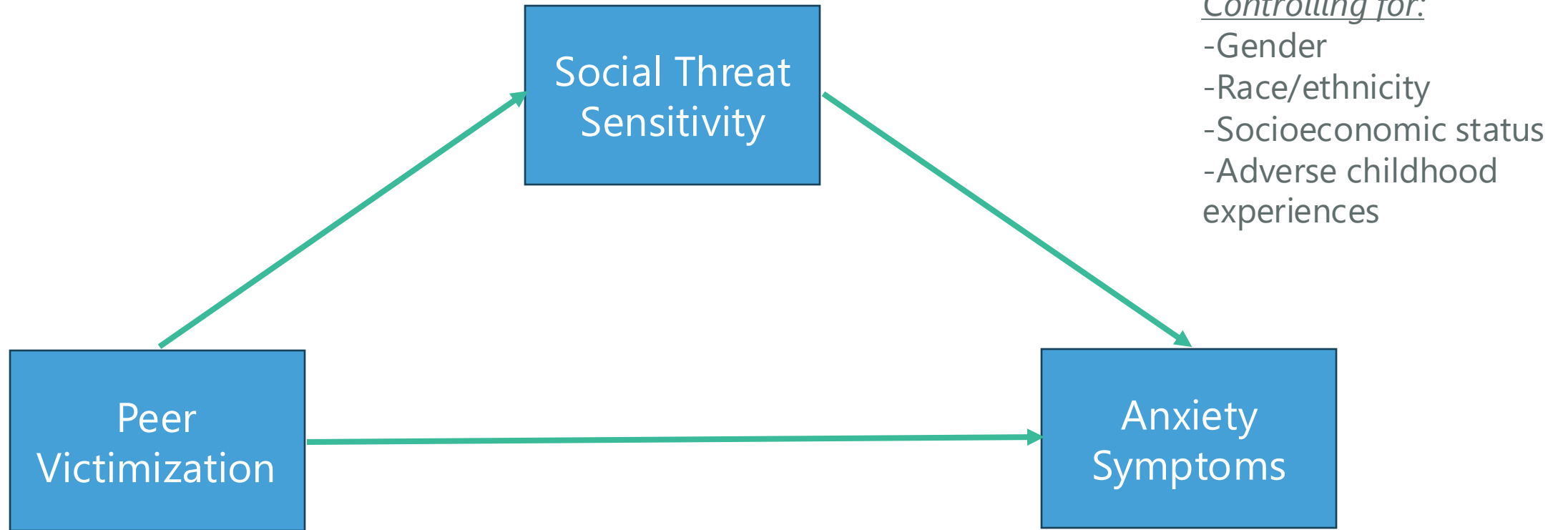
- N = 197 adolescents ($M_{age} = 12.02$; 46% female) and parent/caregivers ($M_{age} = 41.46$; 90% female)
- Recruited from Metro Detroit area
- Completed online surveys between May 2020 and May 2021
- Compensated \$20 for participation (\$15 for child; \$5 for parent/caregiver)
- Extensive screening & bot detection strategies



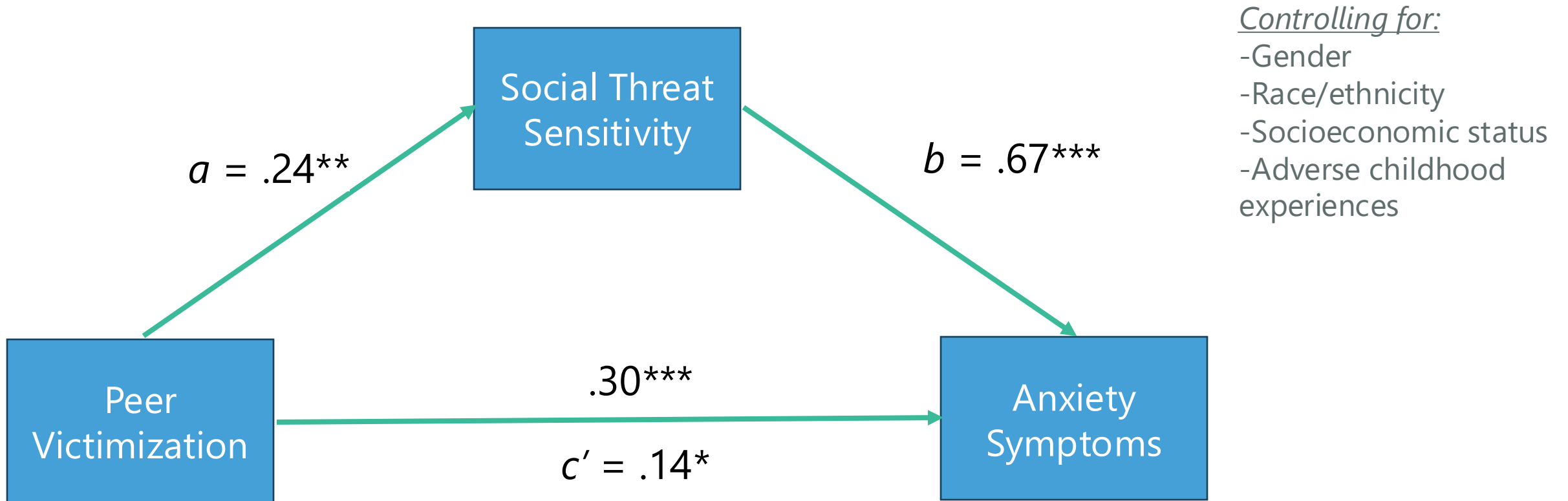
Measures

Variable	Measure	Sample Items	Scale
Peer Victimization	Revised Peer	"A peer threatened to hurt or	1 (Never) to 5 (A
			ek)
		<i>Your friend from school has invited a group of their out-of-school friends over and you are meeting them for the first time. You have been talking with them for a while when you get a phone call that you take in another room. When you return, everyone gets quiet when you walk in the room.</i>	
Se			ne
Se			B
			ne)
A			e)
			or
	Emotional Disorders (SCARED; Birmaher et al., 1999)	already happened"	often true)

Analyses

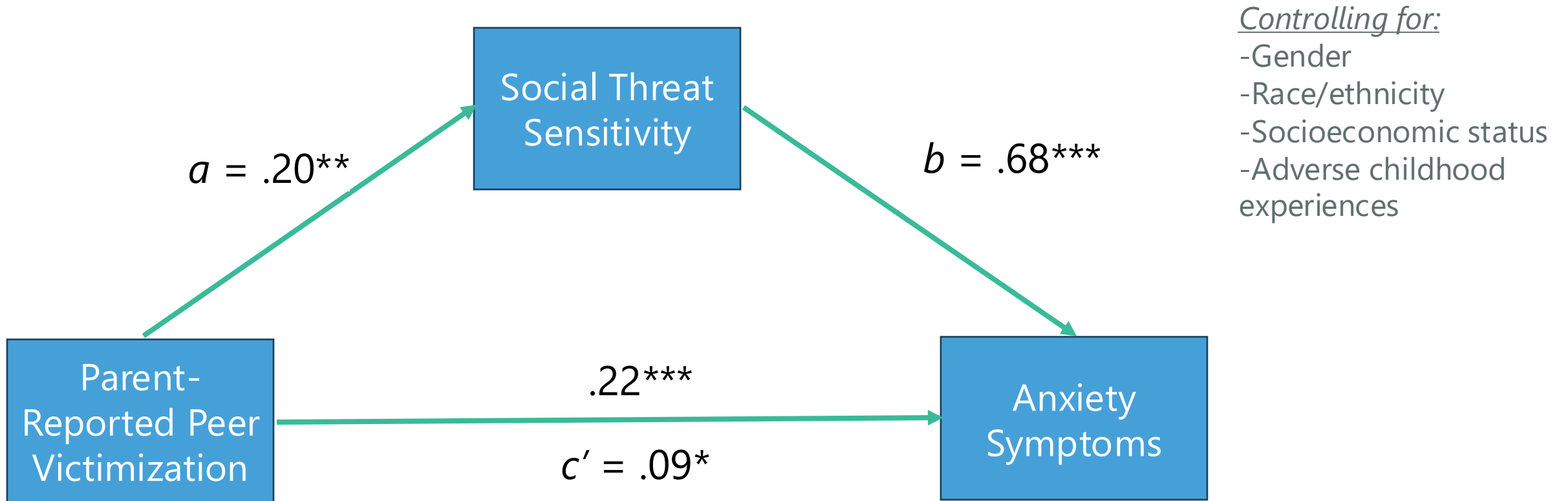


Results



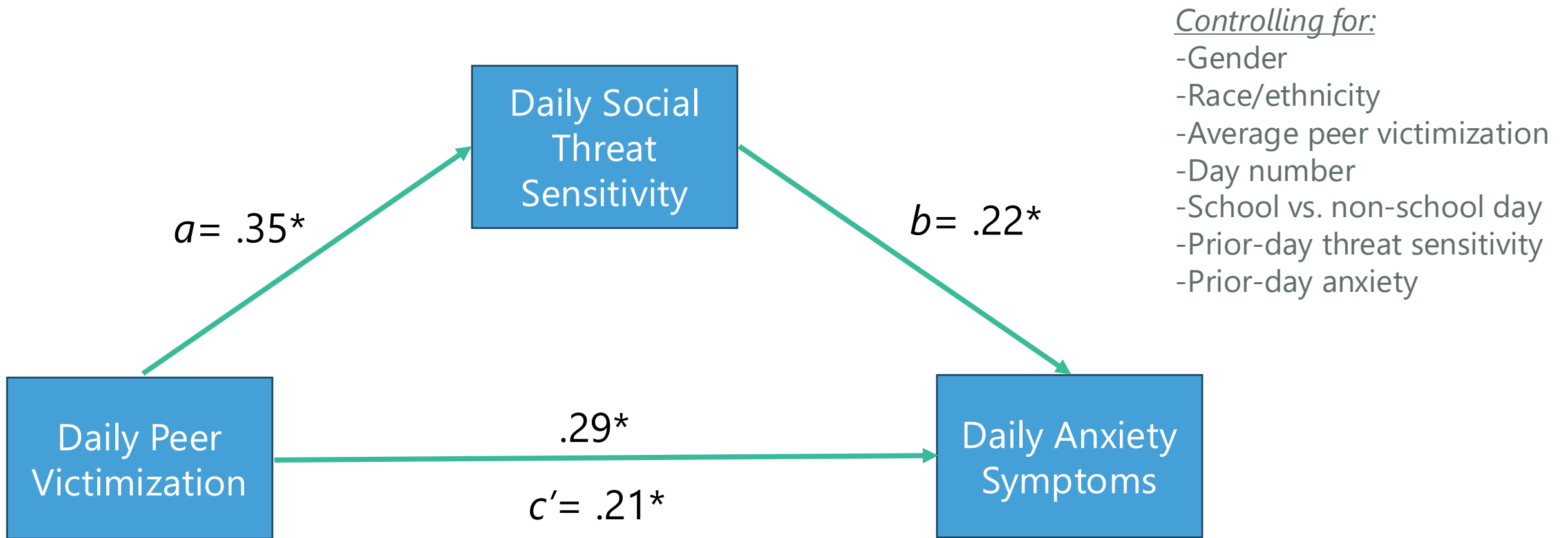
Standardized indirect effect = .16, 95% bootstrap confidence interval = .05 - .26

Results



Standardized indirect effect = .14, 95% bootstrap confidence interval = .05 - .23

Replication in a Daily Context



Schacter et al., *under review*

A More Rigorous Test: NICHD R21



Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health
EUNICE KENNEDY SHRIVER NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHILD
HEALTH & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Notice of Award
FAIN# R21HD105882
Federal Award Date
08-29-2022

Recipient Information

1. Recipient Name

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
5057 WOODWARD STE 13001

DETROIT, 48202

Federal Award Information

11. Award Number

1R21HD105882-01A1

12. Unique Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN)

R21HD105882

13. Statutory Authority

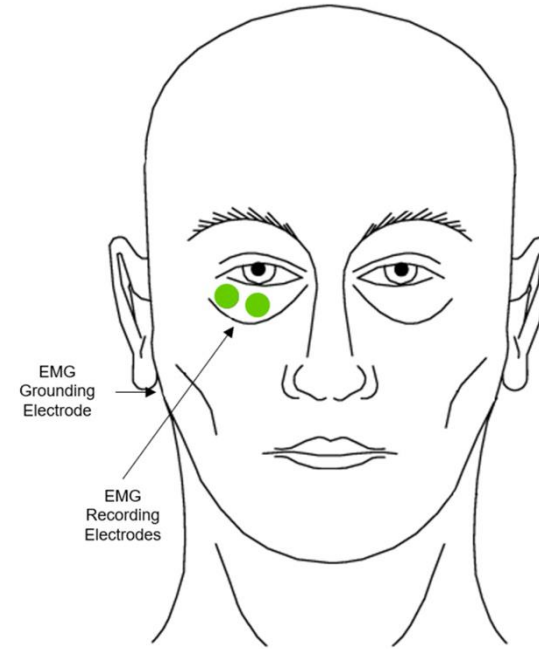
42 USC 241 42 CFR 52

14. Federal Award Project Title

Effects of peer victimization on physiological markers of threat sensitivity in adolescents

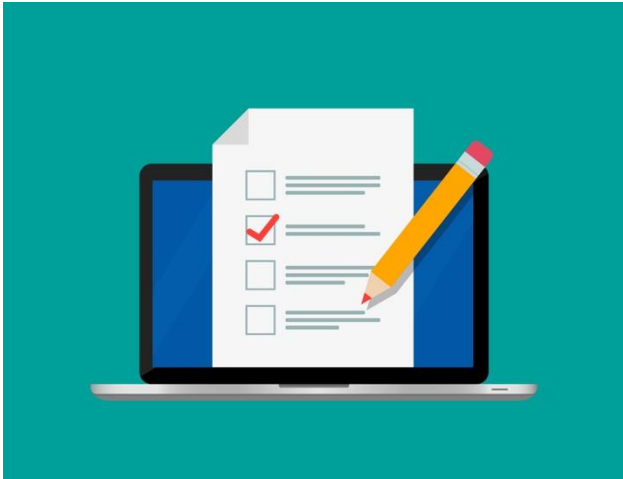
PATH Study Extension

- Re-recruiting 100 previous PATH participants for lab-based visit and 3-month follow-up survey
- Evaluate threat sensitivity via validated startle paradigms that assess reactivity to predictable and unpredictable threats
 - Eyeblink electromyography (EMG) to capture amplitude of eyeblink response
 - Electrodermal activity (EDA) to capture skin conductance



Longitudinal Design

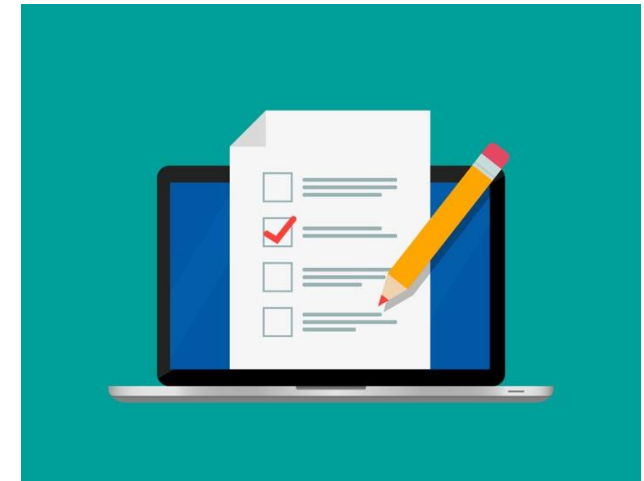
Time 1



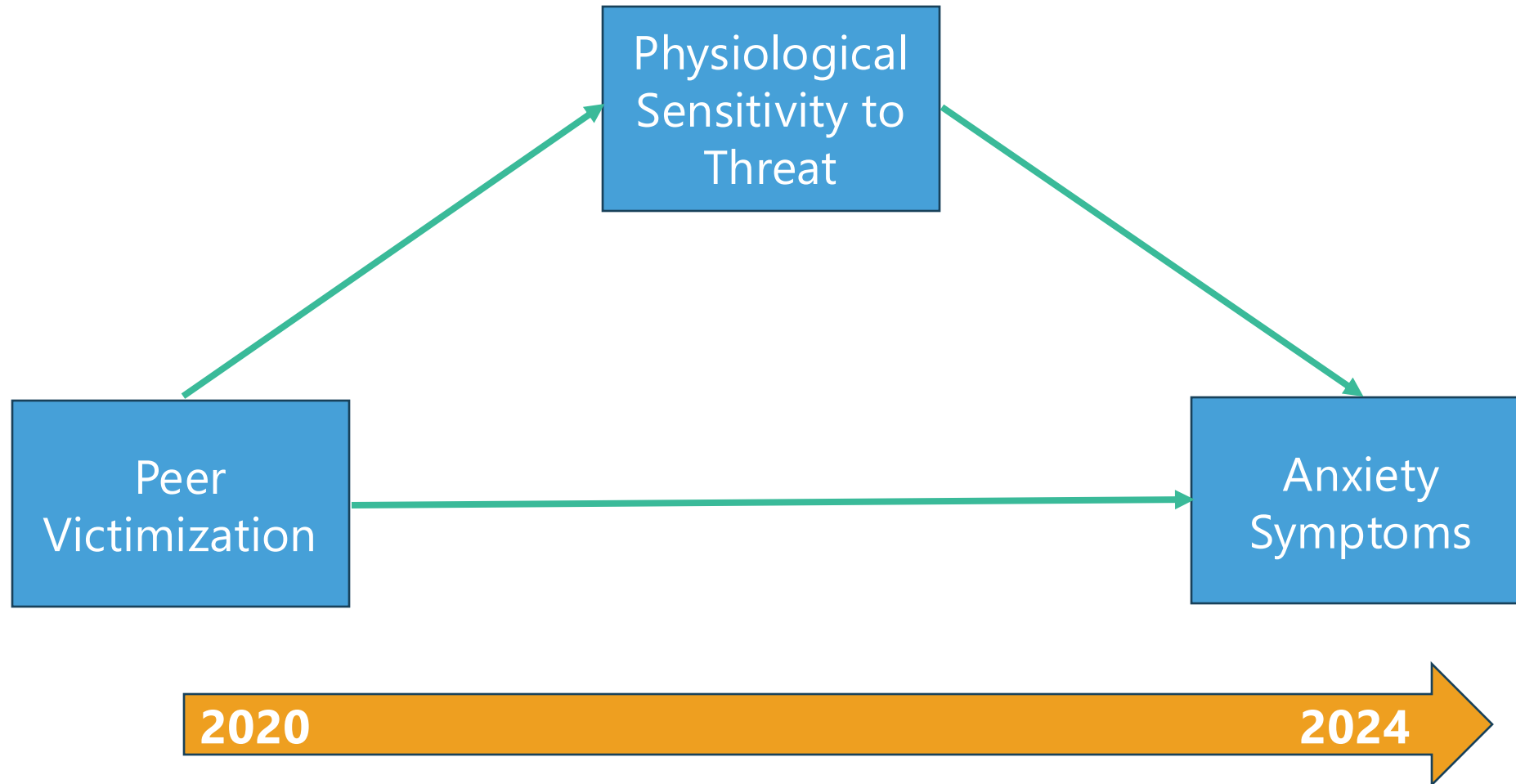
Time 2



Time 3



Testing Longitudinal Pathways



Other Outcomes?



Cascading Effects on Educational Outcomes



Faiza Bakth



Start of 10th Grade

Peer Victimization

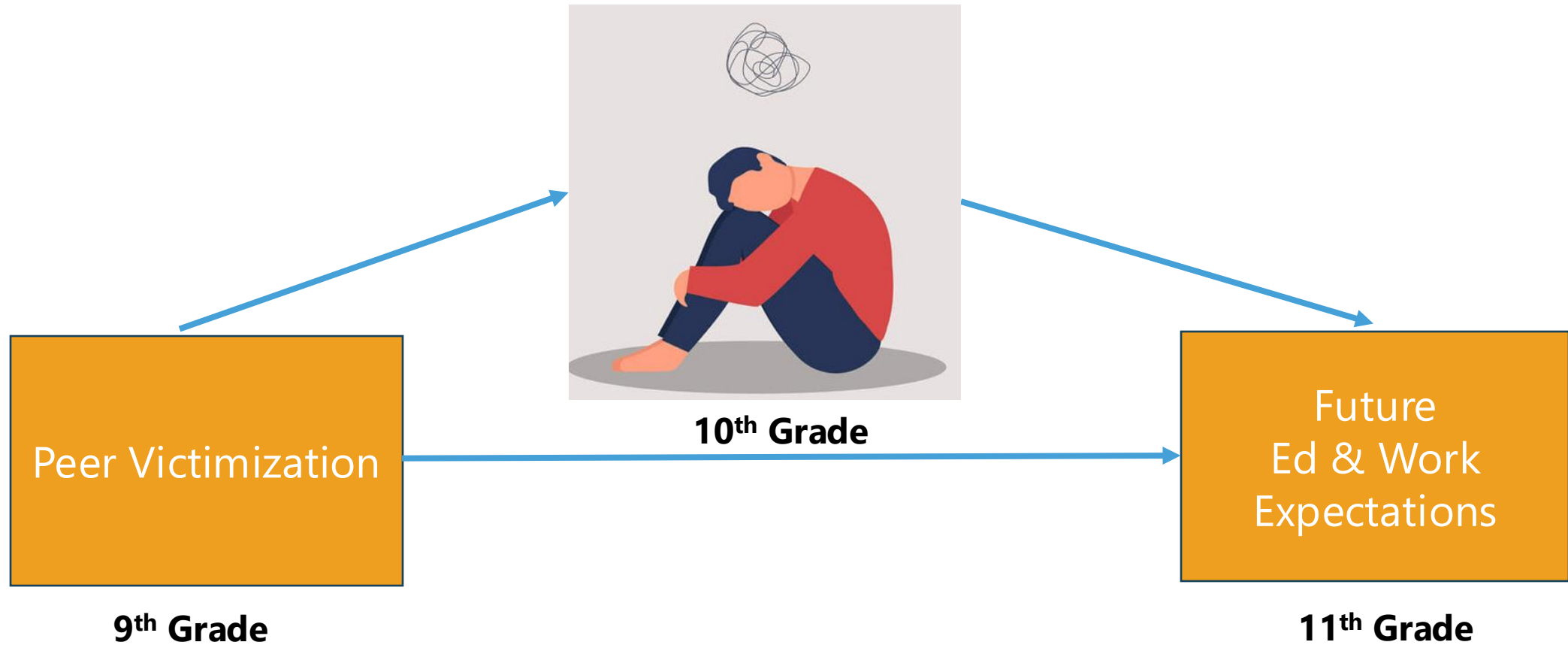
9th Grade

Academic Efficacy

Mid-10th Grade

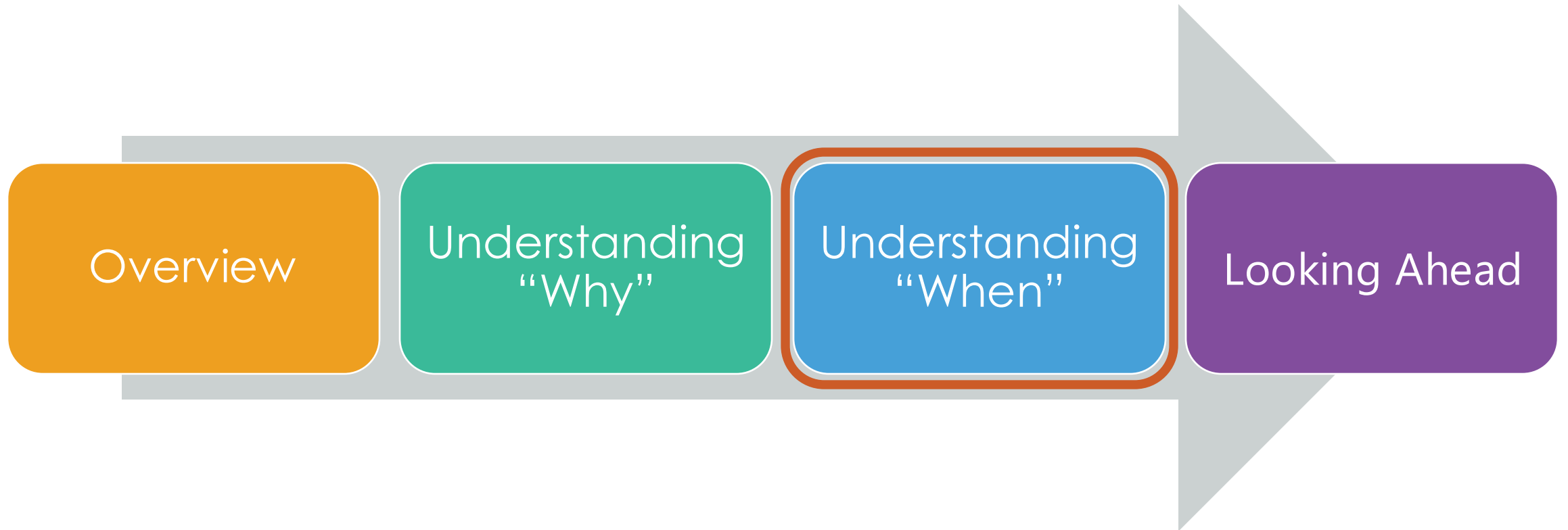
Bakth et al., revise & resubmit

Cascading Effects on Career Outcomes?



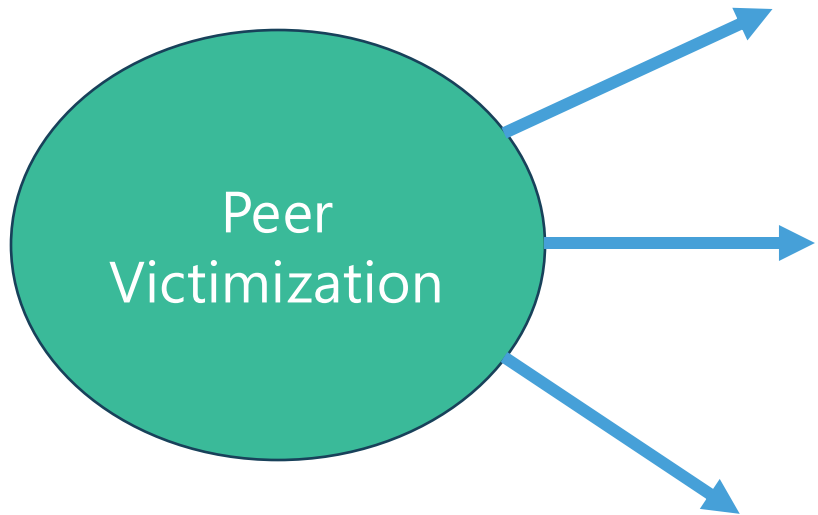
Schacter et al., 2024, *Journal of Research on Adolescence*

Talk Agenda

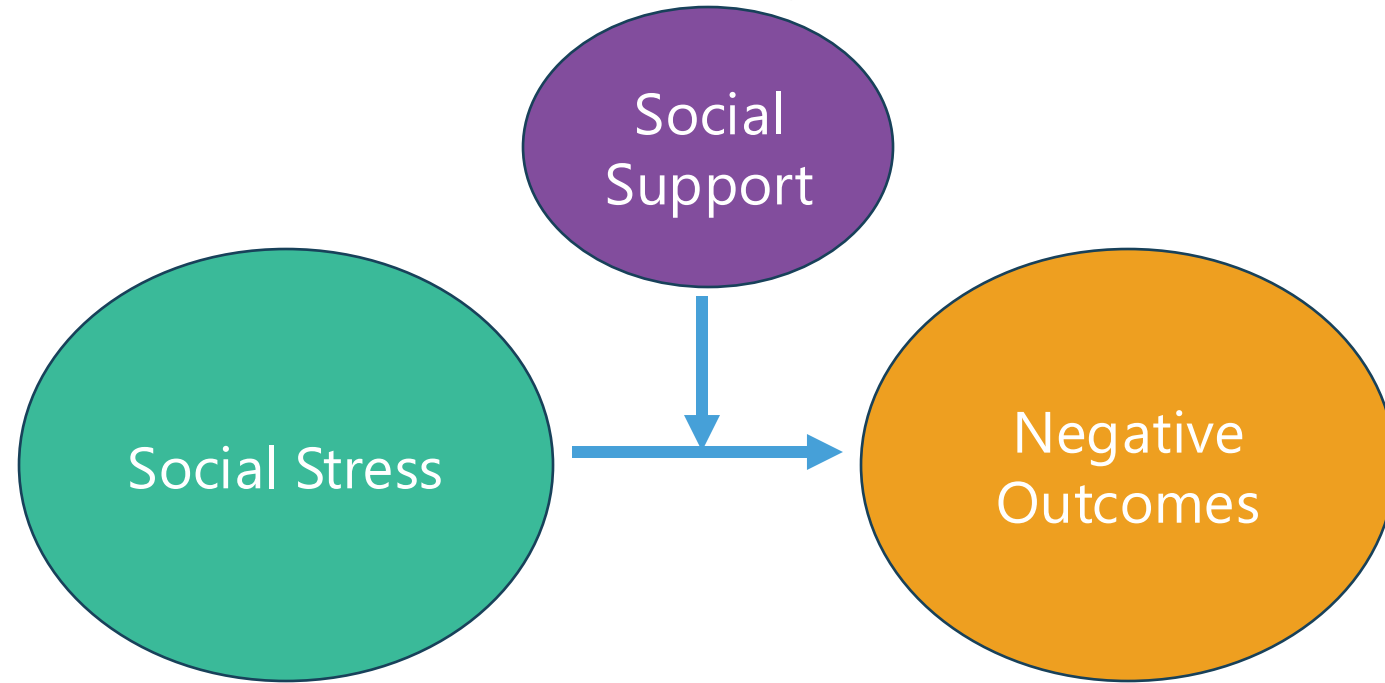


Searching for Risk & Protective Factors

Multifinality



Stress-Buffering Framework



Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996; Cohen & Wills, 1985

A Focus on Friendships



Bagwell & Schmidt, 2013; Bowker & Weingarten, 2022

Inconsistencies Abound

School Mental Health
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-021-09417-x>

REVIEW PAPER



Can Friendships Protect Against the Health Consequences of Peer Victimization in Adolescence? A Systematic Review

Hannah L. Schacter¹ · Leah M. Lessard² · Sarah Kiperman³ · Faizun Bakth¹ · Alexandra Ehrhardt¹ · Janelle Uganski⁴

Accepted: 3 February 2021

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Abstract

Although bullied adolescents experience elevated risk for adverse mental and physical health outcomes, some youth exhibit resilience in the face of peer victimization. Given the developmental importance of peer relationships during adolescence, much of the research examining protective factors that can mitigate bullying-related harm has focused on the role of friendships. However, the findings from studies testing the protective role of friendships for bullied youth have never been systematically reviewed. The goals of the current systematic review were to (a) synthesize the evidence for the protective effect of friendships (quantity and quality) on the mental and physical health of peer victimized adolescents and (b) provide corresponding recommendations for school-based health practitioners to facilitate appropriate supports among socially vulnerable youth in educational settings. A total of 37 studies were identified and evaluated. Approximately half of studies were cross-sectional and most tested friendship quality as a moderator of links between peer victimization and mental health. Although some studies provided evidence for a protective function of friendships, others yielded null effects or found that close friendships amplified victimization-related distress. Given the inconsistency of findings, school-based health practitioners should be aware of the various ways that friendships may, or may not, buffer bullied adolescents from negative health outcomes. Further replication of friendship buffering effects will be essential for guiding school-based bullying prevention and intervention efforts.

Keywords Peer victimization · Friendship · Health · School context · Systematic review · Adolescence

“Although some studies provided evidence for a protective function of friendships, others yielded null effects or found that close friendships amplified victimization-related distress.”

Power of Shared Plight?

Attribution theory: how people explain causes of events and behavior

Characterological Self-Blame



Internal

Stable

Uncontrollable

Why me?

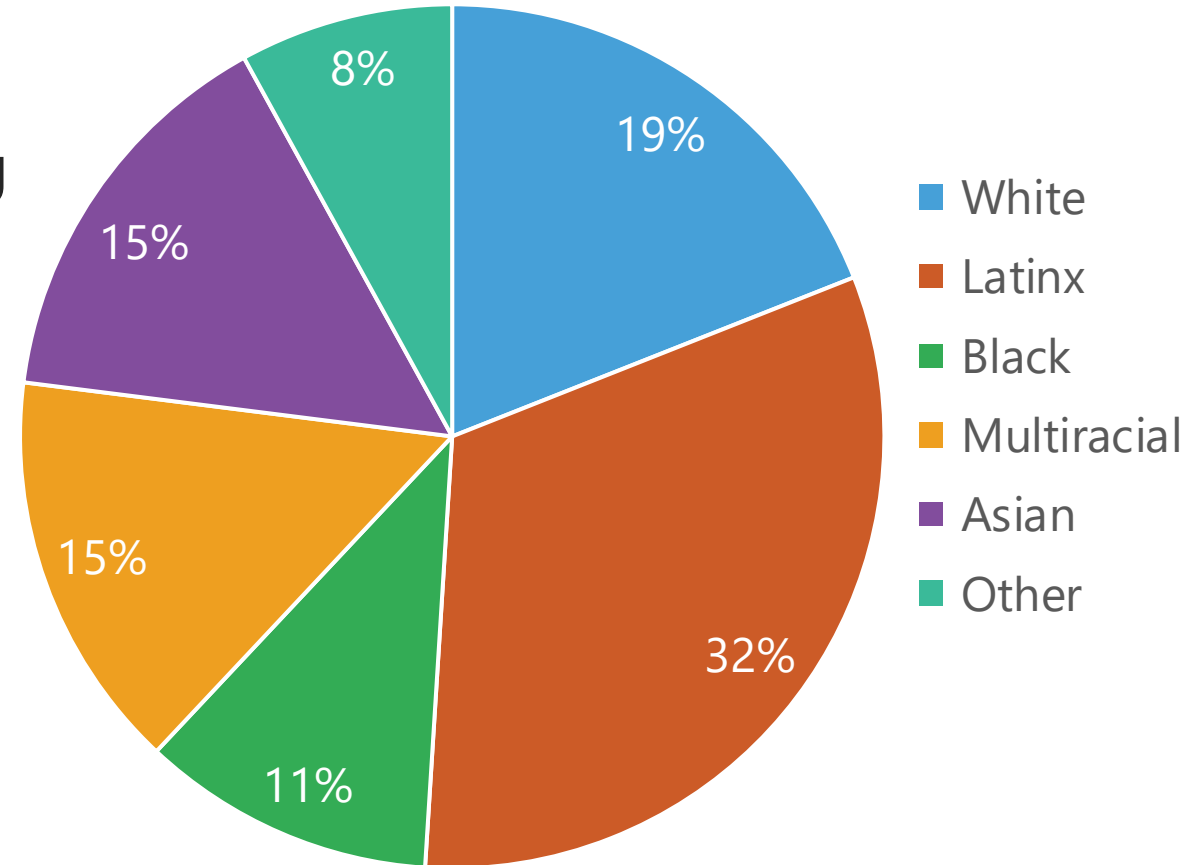


Something wrong with *me*
Will keep happening
Nothing I can do

Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Weiner, 1985

UCLA Diversity Project

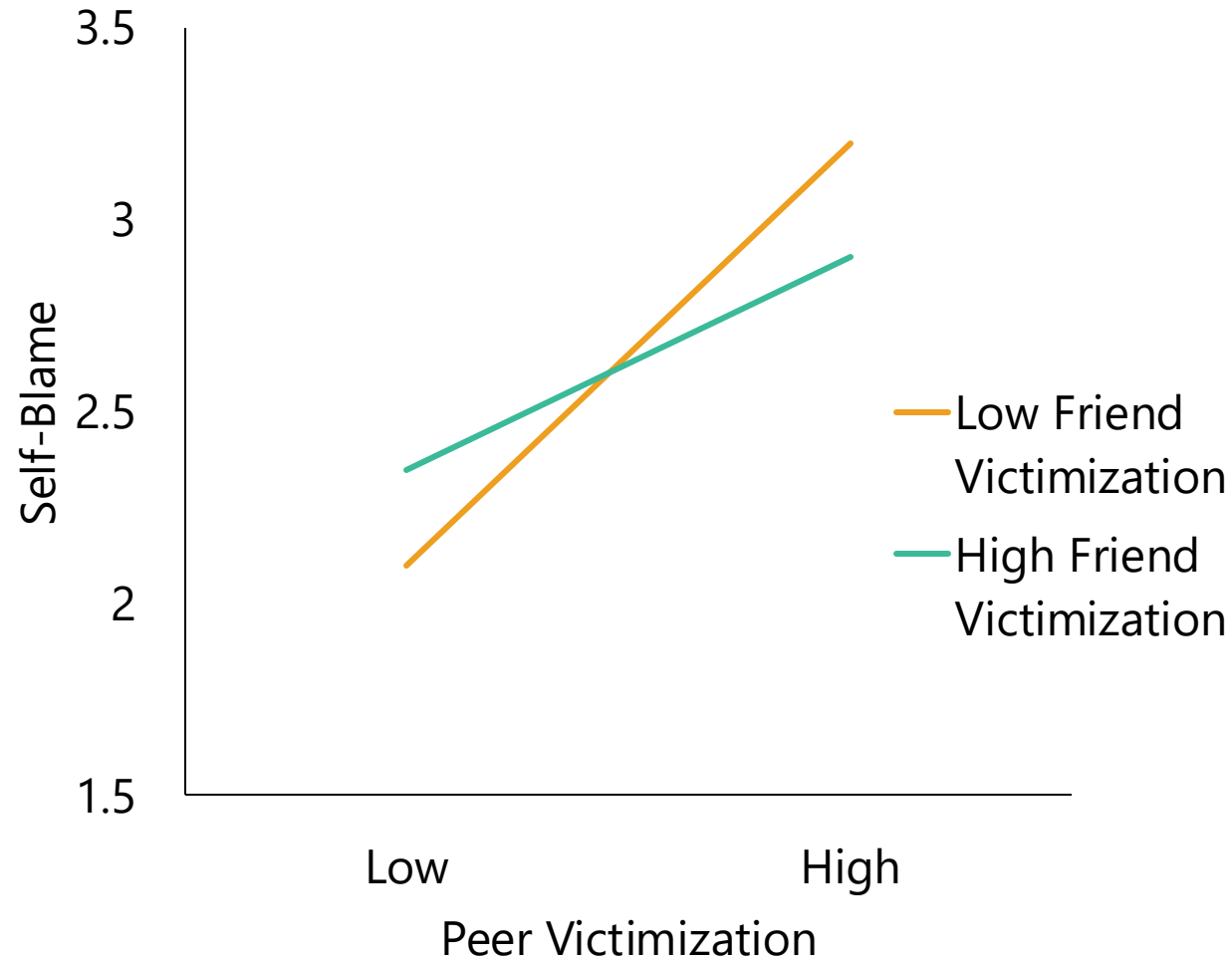
- PIs: Drs. Sandra Graham & Jaana Juvonen
- Longitudinal multicohort study spanning adolescents' middle and high school years
- 5,991 racially and ethnically diverse adolescents (52% female)
- Recruited from 26 middle schools in Northern & Southern California



Is there power in shared plight?

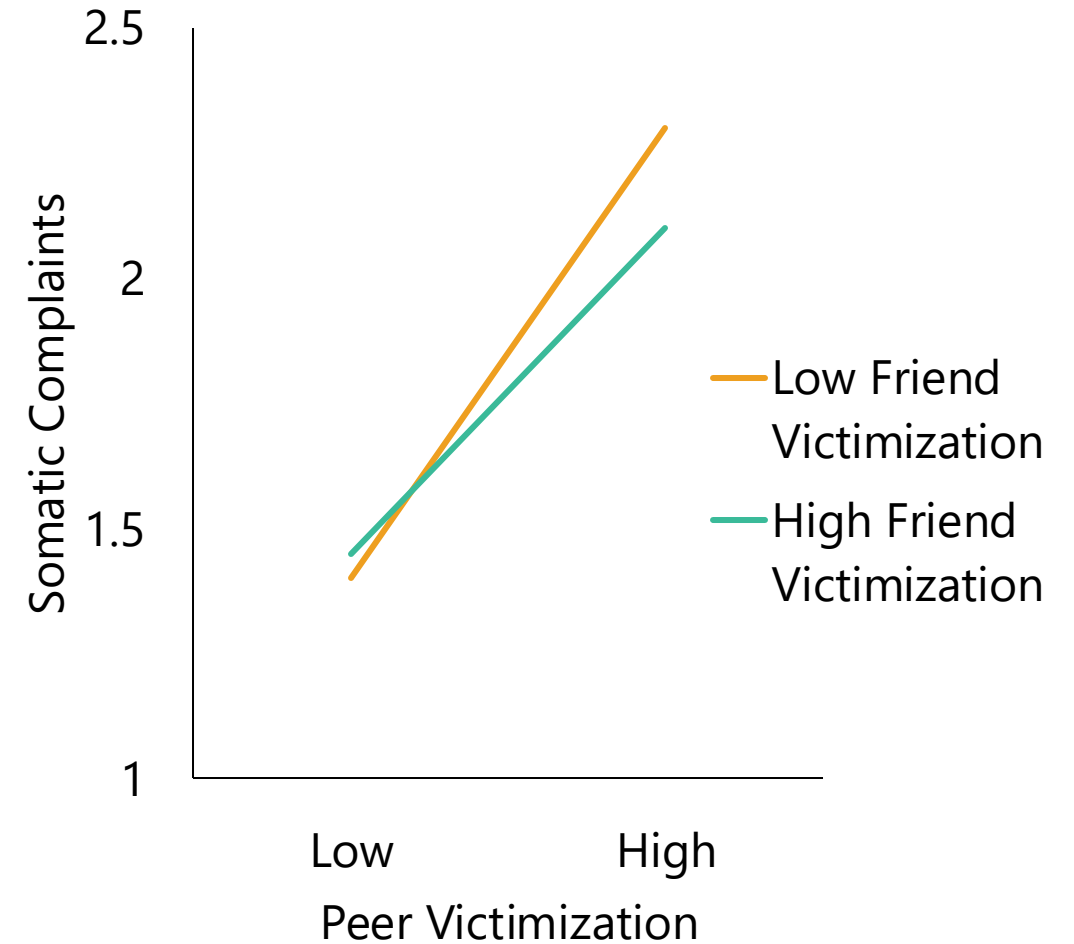
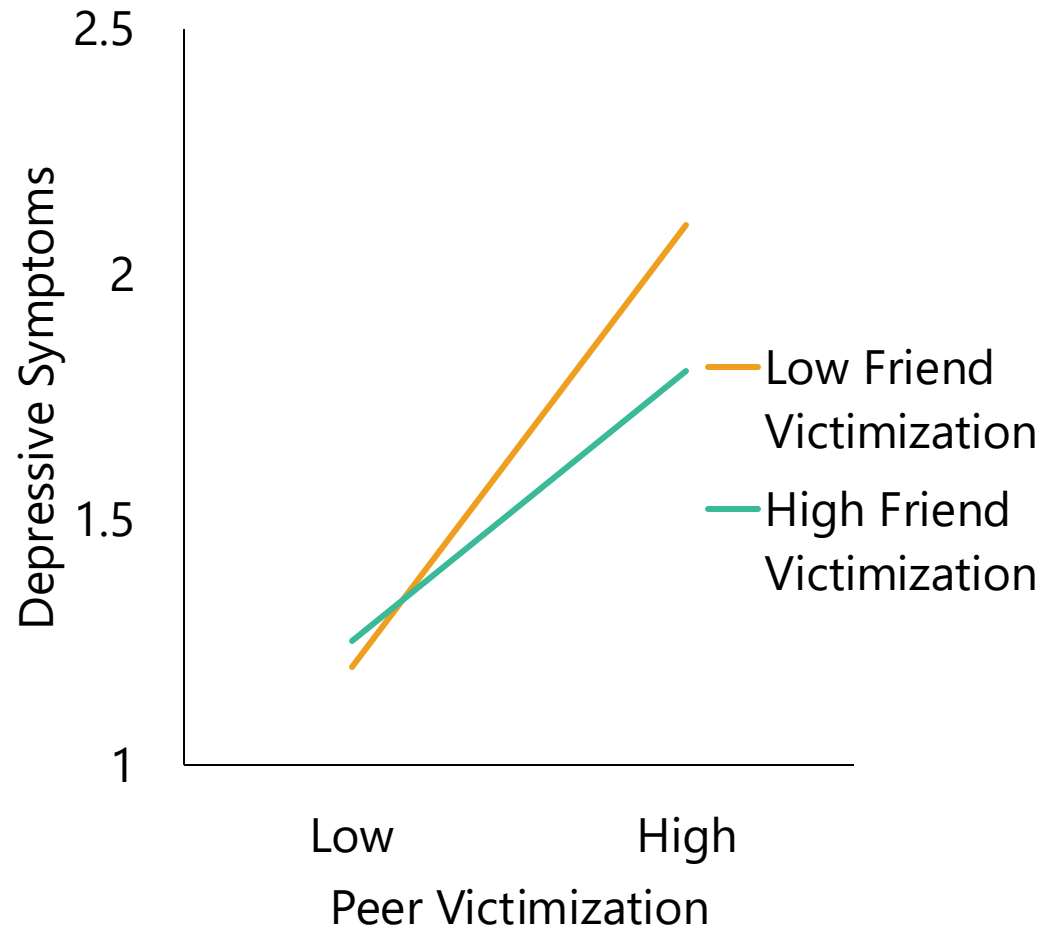


In the Same Boat: “It’s Not Just Me”



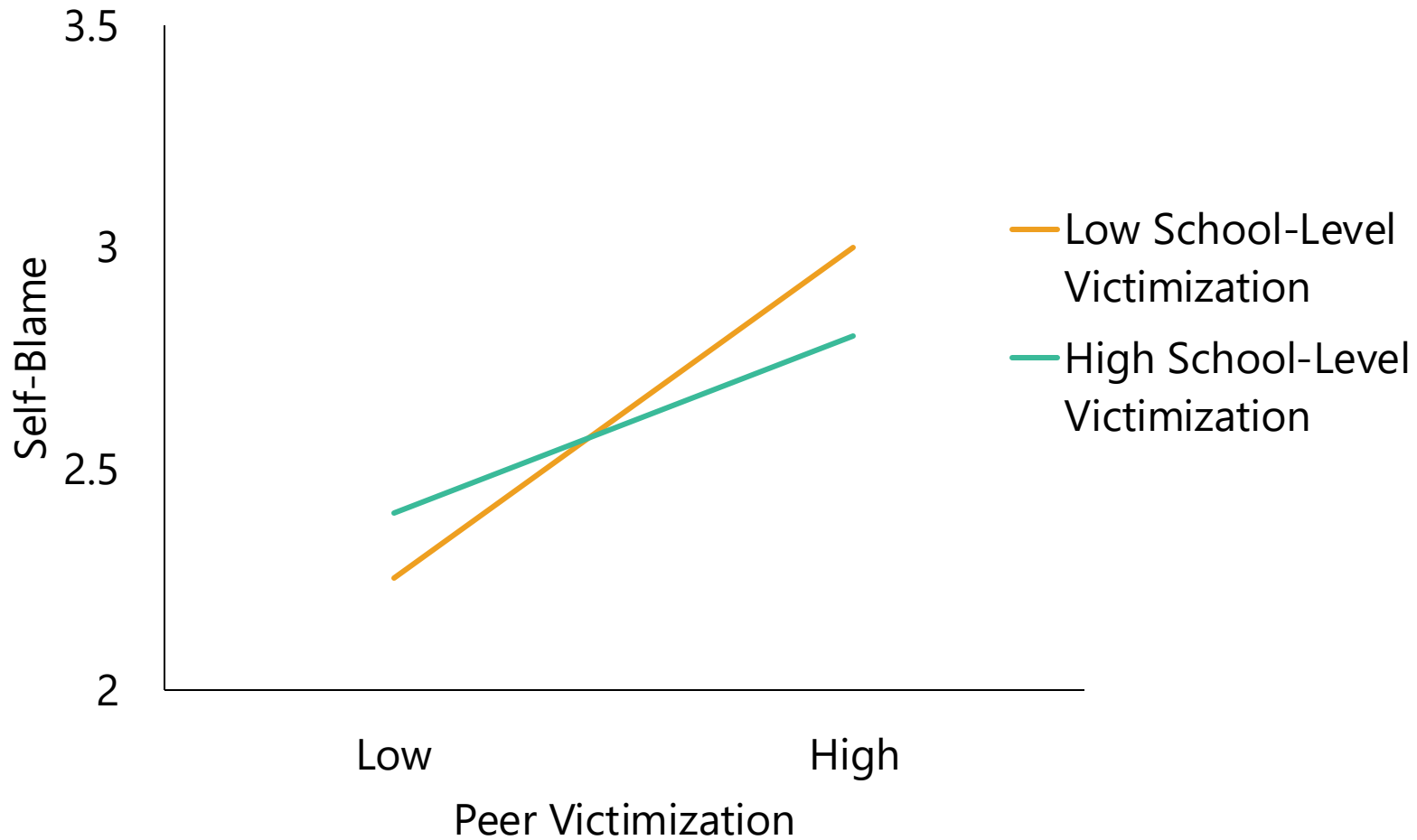
Schacter & Juvonen, 2019, *Child Development*

In the Same Boat: Less Depressed, Sick



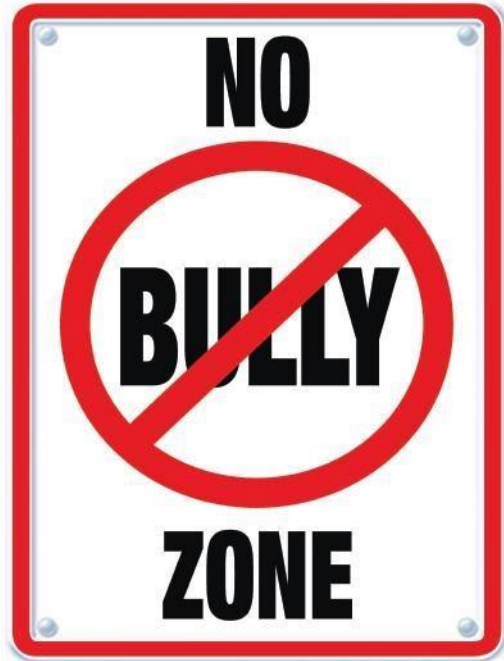
Schacter & Juvonen, 2019, *Child Development*

Safety in Numbers at School



Schacter & Juvonen, 2015, *Developmental Psychology*

Bullying Prevention in Schools



Safety in **shared** social plight

Solution?

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH
2020, VOL. 5, NO. 1, 83–101
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23794925.2020.1727796>

 **Routledge**
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Toward Evidence-Based Interventions for Chronically Bullied Children: Candidate Mechanisms and Potential Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Current anti-bullying interventions are designed to reduce the overall prevalence of bullying and victimization. Systematic reviews document the efficacy of these programs, but emerging evidence suggests that chronically bullied children are less likely to benefit and possibly experience increased problems following program implementation. Recent investigations into processes contributing to chronic peer victimization help explain the limited impact of anti-bullying programs. We drew from that literature to offer a working model of the plight of chronic victims. This framework emphasizes social exclusion as a pivotal pathway to peers' moral disengagement and involvement in what Thornberg (2015a) calls the collective action of bullying. We propose that chronic victims of school bullying require intervention strategies that can counter the prevailing narrative of social exclusion. We suggest effective interventions will be those that target the following candidate mechanisms: a) quality contact between chronic victims and peers, b) contingencies that govern social exclusion of chronic victims, and c) contingencies that govern social bids by chronic victims. We present five existing school-based interventions that have the potential to alter one or more of these mechanisms: Social Skills Training with Peer Group Experiences; The Good Behavior Game, Making Socially Accepting Inclusive Classrooms, Cooperative Learning and Lunch Buddy mentoring. We highlight features shared by these interventions and discuss implications for future research.

Current Psychology (2024) 43:9270–9279
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-05083-1>



Bullying: issues and challenges in prevention and intervention

Muhammad Waseem ^{1,2,3}  · Amanda B. Nickerson ⁴

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Abstract

Bullying is a public health issue that persists and occurs across several contexts. In this narrative review, we highlight issues and challenges in addressing bullying prevention. Specifically, we discuss issues related to defining, measuring, and screening for bullying. These include discrepancies in the interpretation and measurement of power imbalance, repetition of behavior, and perceptions of the reporter. The contexts of bullying, both within and outside of the school setting (including the online environment), are raised as an important issue relevant for identification and prevention. The role of medical professionals in screening for bullying is also noted. Prevention and intervention approaches are reviewed, and we highlight the need and evidence for social architectural interventions that involve multiple stakeholders, including parents, in these efforts. Areas in need are identified, such as understanding and intervening in cyberbullying, working more specifically with perpetrators as a heterogeneous group, and providing more intensive interventions for the most vulnerable youth who remain at risk despite universal prevention efforts.

Keywords Bullying · Context · Prevention · Intervention · Cyberbullying

BULLYING

Peer Victimization & the Pandemic



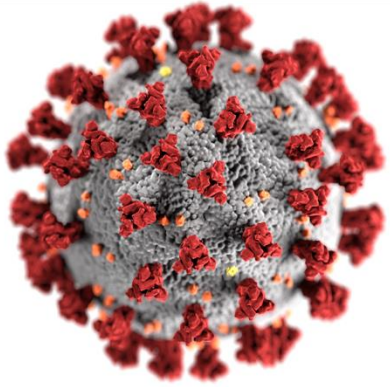
Victimization Contexts



Victimization and Internalizing Symptoms



COVID-19 Related Contextual Variations



Does peer victimization “hurt” more when students attend in-person versus online school?

Competing Hypotheses

- **Safe haven hypothesis:** victims find safety in online school environment
 - Victimized adolescents often feel unsafe at school
 - Escape from public evidence of ostracism
 - Comfort of home & support access



Graham et al., 2006; Vaillancourt et al., 2010

Competing Hypotheses

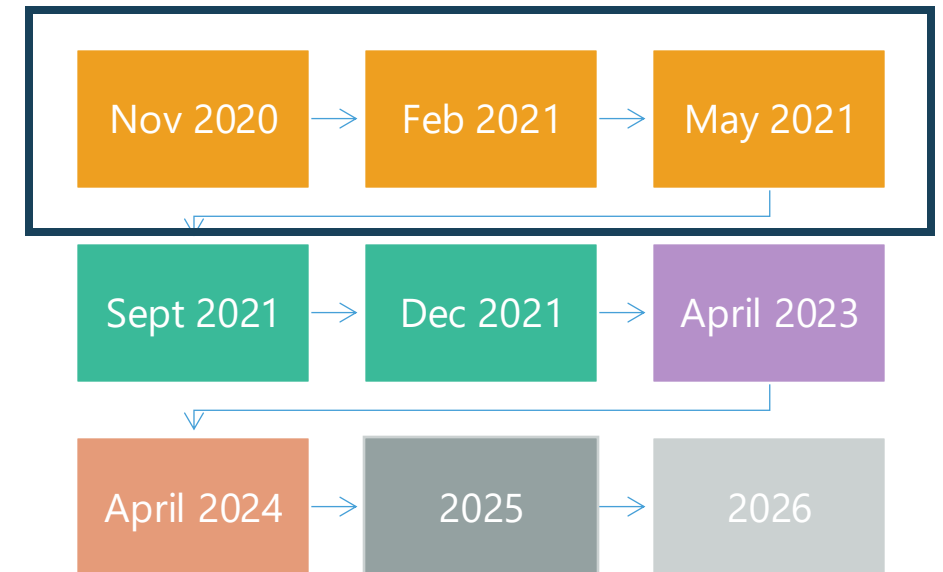
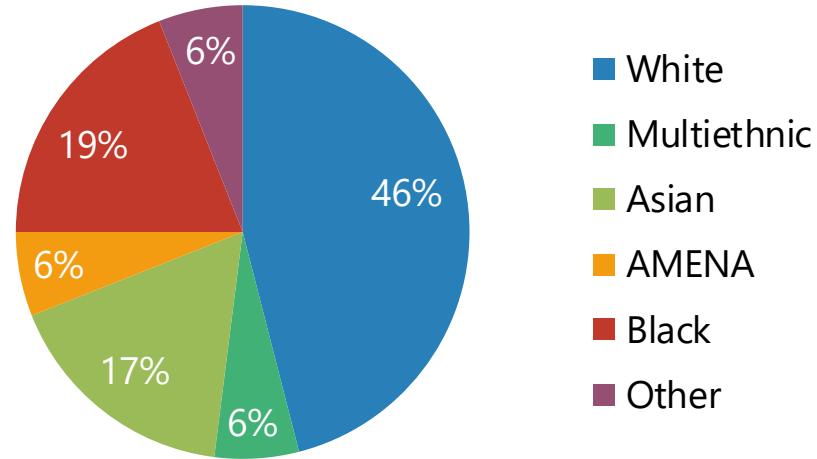
- **Hazard hypothesis:** victims more distressed in online school environment
 - Sense of isolation amplified
 - Limited teacher supervision
 - Less direct access to peer support



Duckworth et al., 2021; Scott et al., 2021; Silk et al., 2021

Method

- Promoting Relationships and Identity in Education (PRIDE) Study
- 388 9th graders ($M_{age} = 14.02$) in Michigan recruited during pandemic
- Followed across high school (and beyond)



Measures

Variable	Measure	Sample Items	Scale
Peer victimization	Revised Peer Experiences Questionnaire (De Los Reyes & Prinstein, 2004)	"A peer threatened to hurt or beat me up" <i>"Some peers left me out of an activity or conversation that I really wanted to be included in"</i>	1 (Never) to 5 (A few times a week)
Depressive symptoms	Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale Revised (CESD-R; Radloff, 1977)	"I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me" "I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing"	0 (Rarely or none of the time) to 3 (Most of the time)
Anxiety symptoms	Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006)	"Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge" "Not being able to stop or control worrying"	0 (Not at all) to 3 (Nearly every day)
Somatic symptoms	Children's Somatic Symptoms Inventory (CSSI-8; Walker et al., 2009)	"Headaches" "Pain in your stomach or abdomen"	0 (Not at all) to 4 (A whole lot)

Measures

**Which of the following best describes your current school situation?
Please select all that apply.**

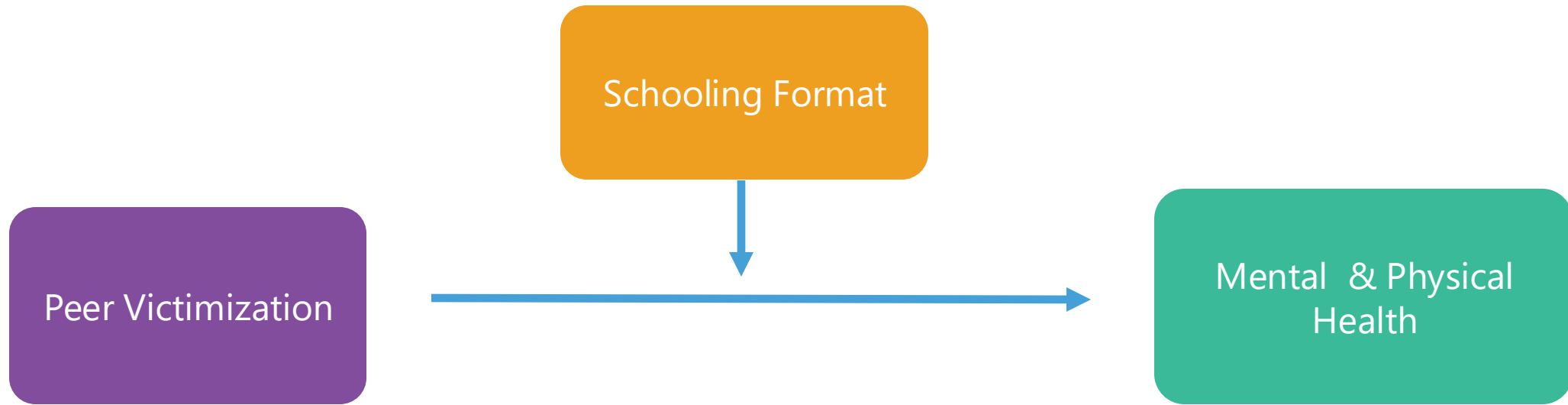
I physically go to school every day

I go to school some days and take classes online some days

I take all my school classes online

	Wave 1 (11/2020)	Wave 2 (2/2021)	Wave 3 (5/2021)
In-person	4.4%	10.4%	35.9%
Hybrid	5.2%	40.5%	20.9%
Online	85.8%	45.8%	39.5%
Indeterminable/Missing	4.6%	3.3%	3.6%

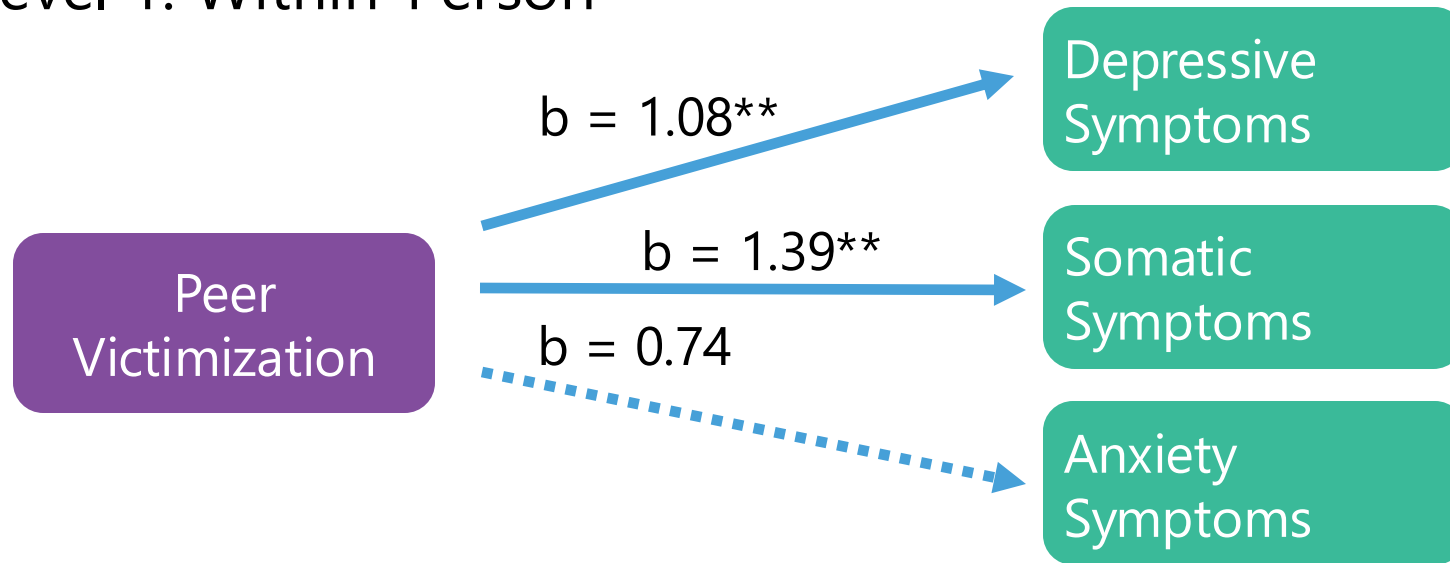
Analyses



- Multilevel modeling: time nested within participants
- Parsing apart within-person and between-person associations across the school year
 - *Within-person*: relative increases in peer victimization & changes in school format (self as own control)
 - *Between-person*: individual differences in peer victimization & school format across students

Within-Person Effects

Level 1: Within-Person

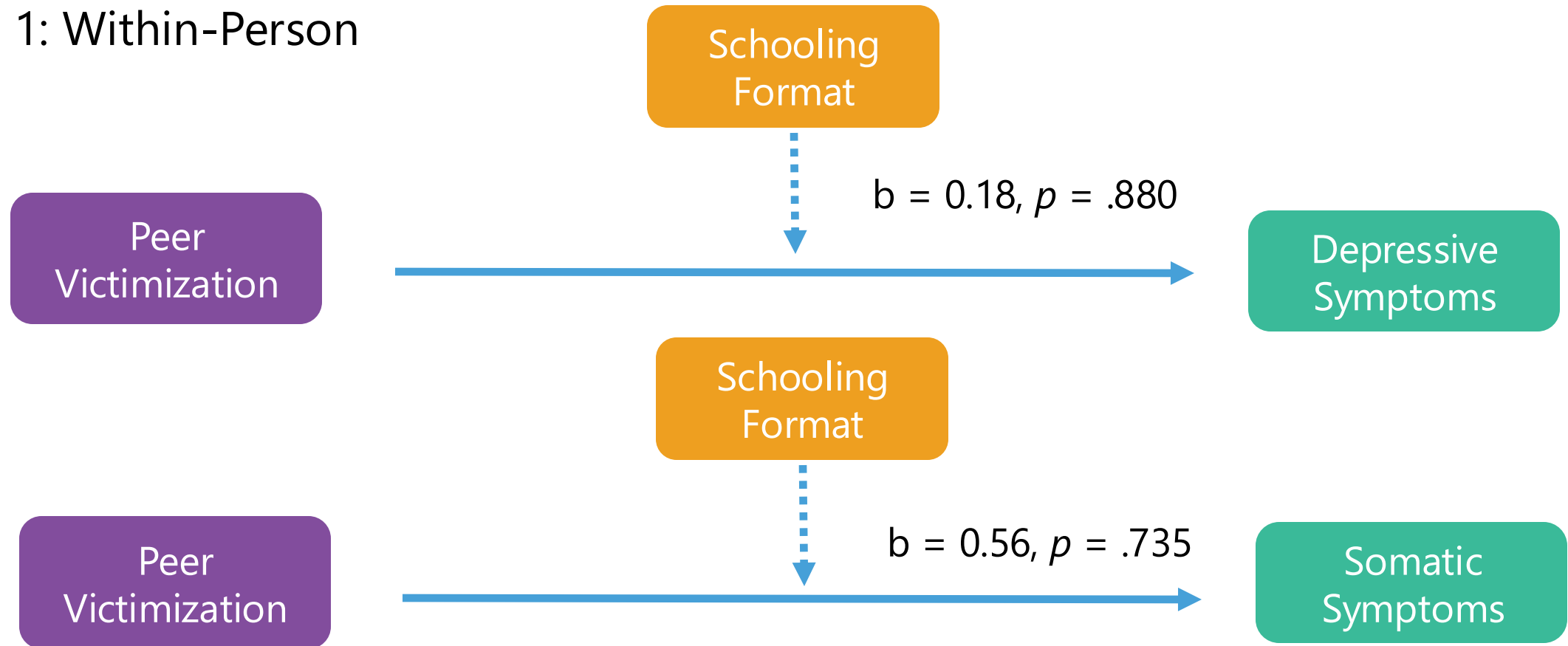


Controlling for:

- Time
- COVID-19 positivity rates
- School format
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Race/ethnicity
- SES
- Intervention condition
- % of study waves in online school

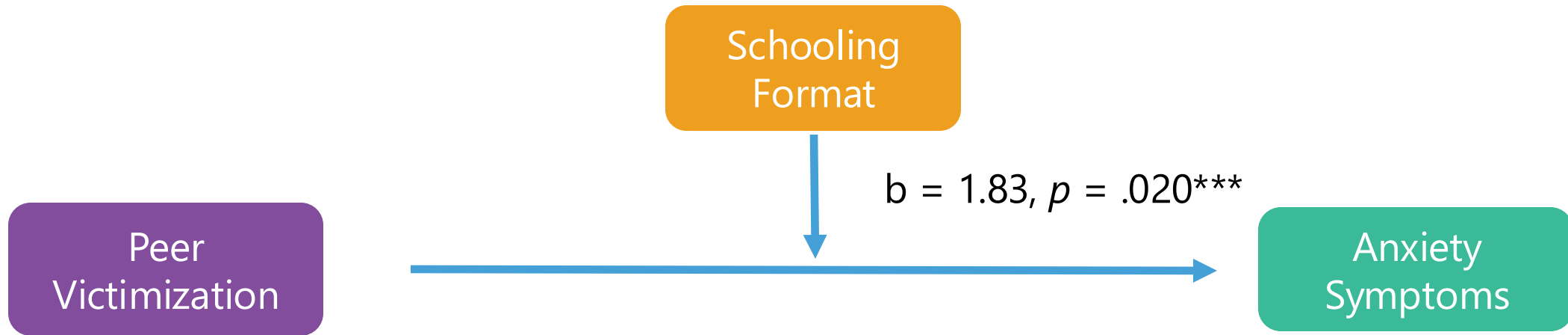
Moderation by School Format

Level 1: Within-Person

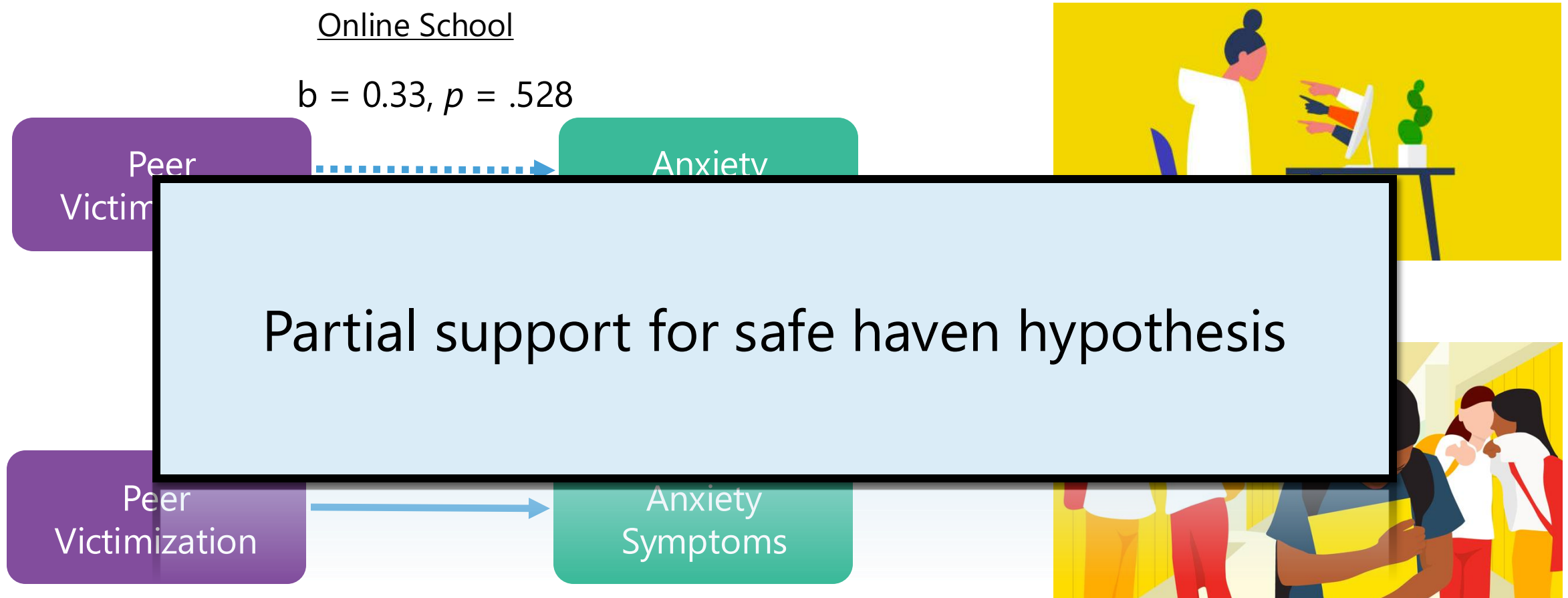


Moderation by School Format

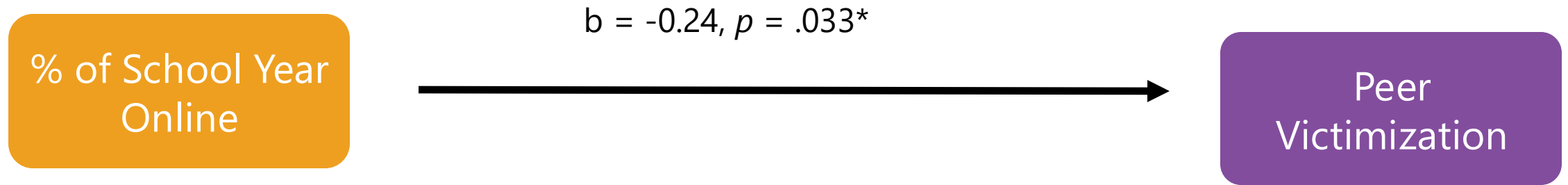
Level 1: Within-Person



Peer Victimization & Anxiety by School Format



Prevalence of Peer Victimization

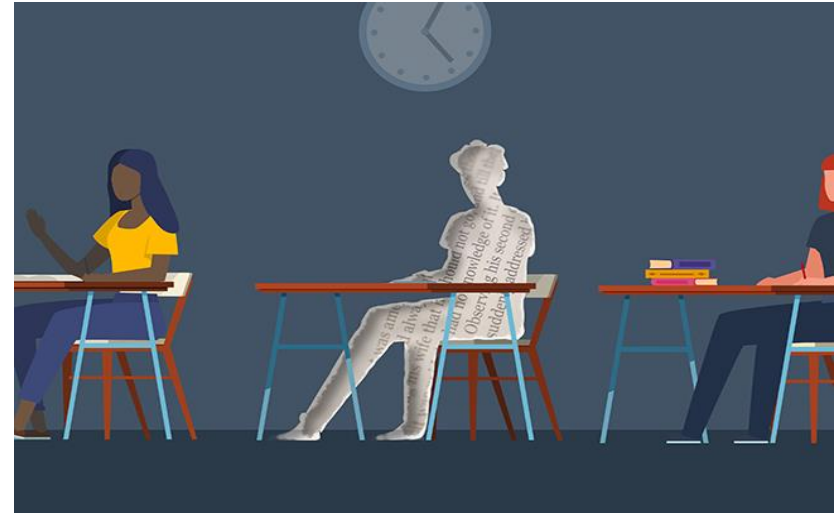
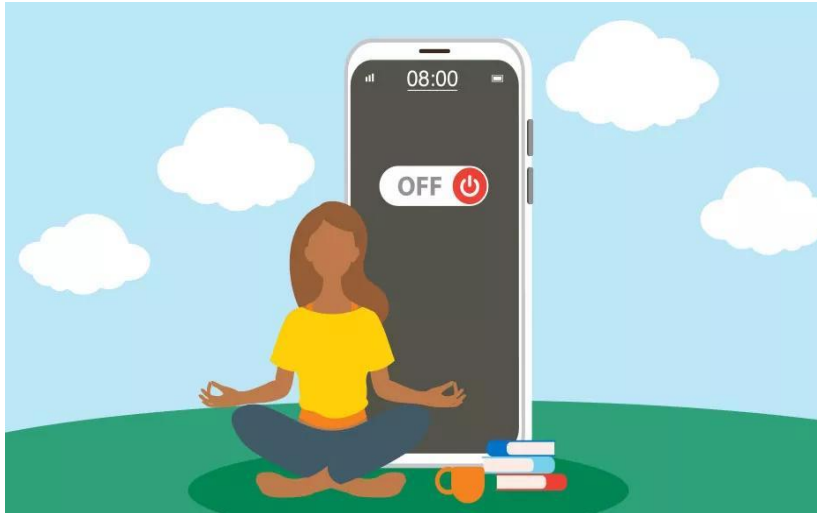


*Students who spent **more of 9th grade in online school** were less likely to be bullied.*

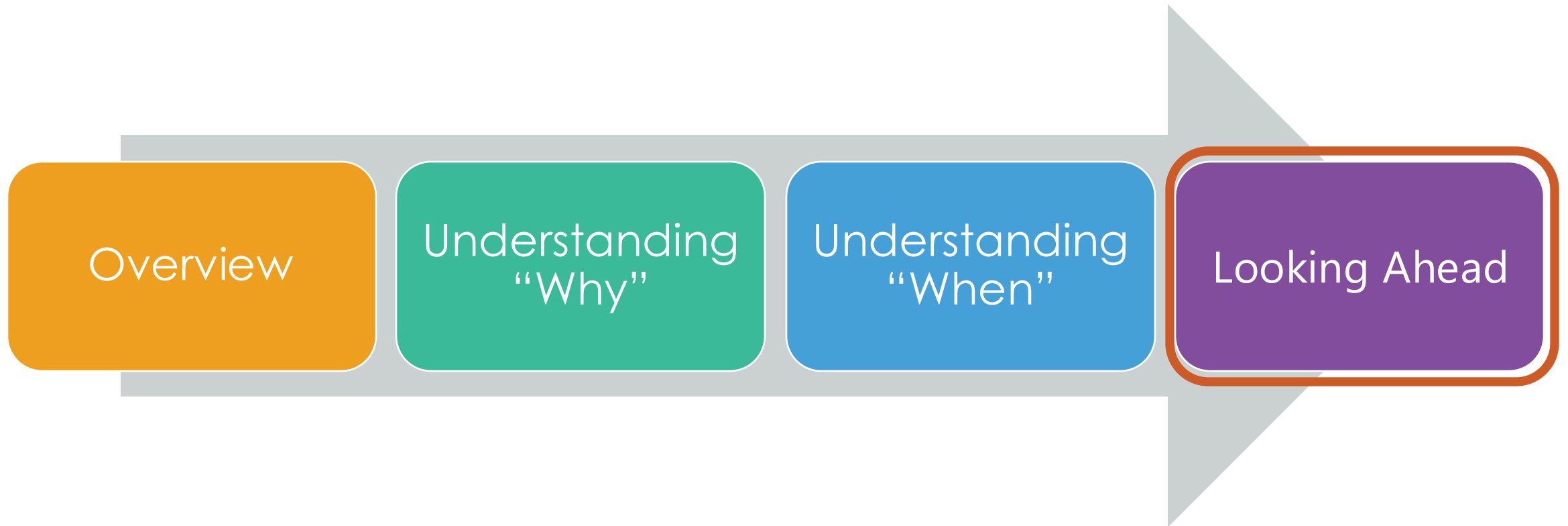
*Students who spent **more of 9th grade in in-person school** were more likely to be bullied.*



Generalization Beyond COVID-19



Talk Agenda



Implications



Biopsychosocial pathways

- Peer victimization shapes how adolescents see their social world and, in turn, their health and well-being



Context matters

- Impact of peer victimization varies depending on *where* adolescents are and *who* they spend time with



Opportunities for intervention

- Identifying specific risk and protective factors can guide development of targeted interventions

Recommendations



Beyond bullying prevention

- Also need to focus on *harm reduction* among victims



Treat peer victimization as potential trauma

- E.g., Attentional/threat bias modification training



Promote peer support networks

- Power in shared experience

Acknowledgments

Funding



ARC Lab Team



Participating Youth & Families



Alberti Center



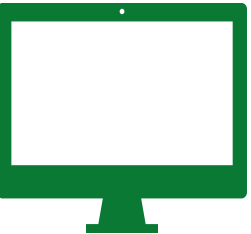
Thank You! Questions?



hannah.schacter@wayne.edu



@hannah_schacter



www.arclabwsu.com