

SEXUAL HARASSMENT & ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS:

Assessing the roles of harassment, depression and trauma

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Definitions of Harassment: Chronic-Contextual Stressor (Harrell, 2000)

Legal	Social Science
Hostile Environment →	Gender harassment Unwanted sexual attention
Quid Pro Quo →	Sexual Coercion
(EEOC, 1980; Fitzgerald et al., 1997)	(Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Fitzgerald et al, 1995; 1997; 1999)

Sexual Harassment: Prevalence & Outcomes

■ Prevalence

- **Working women = 50% over course of working lives** (Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993; Illies et al., 2003)
- **College students = 50-70% during 4 years of college** (Cortina, Swan, Fitzgerald, & Waldo, 1998; Paludi & Paludi, 2003)

■ Outcomes

- **Work/School--poor performance, withdrawal**
- **Physical--Headaches, ulcers, sexual dysfunc.**
- **Psychological--PTSD, depression, anxiety**

(Dansky & Kilpatrick, 1997; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Magley, & Waldo, 1999; O'Connell & Korabik, 2000; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007)

Sexual harassment: Mental Health Correlates

- **Trauma → Posttraumatic stress (PTS) symptoms** (Briere & Scott, 2007; Lamprecht & Sack 2002; Tolin & Foa, 2006)
- **Depression is related to maladaptive coping and emotion-regulation** (Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001)
- **SH is associated with diagnosable & subclinical levels of PTS and Depressive symptoms** (Avina & O'Donahue, 2002; Fitzgerald, Buchanan, Collinsworth, Magley, & Ramos, 1999; Munson et al., 2000; Willness et al., 2007)

Sexual Harassment: Eating, drinking, & Drugging

- **SH associated with eating pathology among adolescent girls & women** (Harned, 2000; Harned & Fitzgerald, 2002; Harrington et al., 2006; Huerta et al., 2005; Lindberg et al., 2007)
- **Increased alcohol use following SH** (Freels et al., 2005; Richman et al., 2006)
- **Less on drug use, conceptually is an extension of eating pathology & alcohol use**
- **Can conceptualize each as coping responses**

Addictive Behaviors & Coping

- **Negative affect and trauma are associated with externalizing behaviors in women**
 - **Disordered eating**
 - **Drug use**
 - **Alcohol use**

Sexual Trauma, Depression & Addictive Behaviors

- **Sexual trauma has been associated with the initiation of drug and alcohol use** (Boyd et al., 1997; Boyd & Young, 2000; Ullman et al., 2005; Zucker & Landry, 2007).
- **In women alcohol abuse, eating disorders, and drug use have all been associated with depression** (Boyd 1993; Dixit & Crum, 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2004; Harrell & Jackson, 2008; Stice, Presnell, & Spangler, 2002)

Sexual Harassment:

- **Dissociative coping responses may be managing depression and PTSD symptoms**
 - **Distancing from pain associated with depression (eating)**
 - **Dealing with intrusive thoughts, nightmares (alcohol/drug)**
 - **Reducing inhibitions that complicate triggers (sex, etc)**

Sexual Trauma, Depression & Addictive Behaviors

- **Relationships between trauma/discrimination & drinking and weight control is mediated by psychological distress** (Zucker & Landry, 2007)

Purpose

- **To examine the relationship between sexual harassment, trauma and depression and addictive behaviors in a college sample.**
- **To explore the role of trauma and depression as mediators**

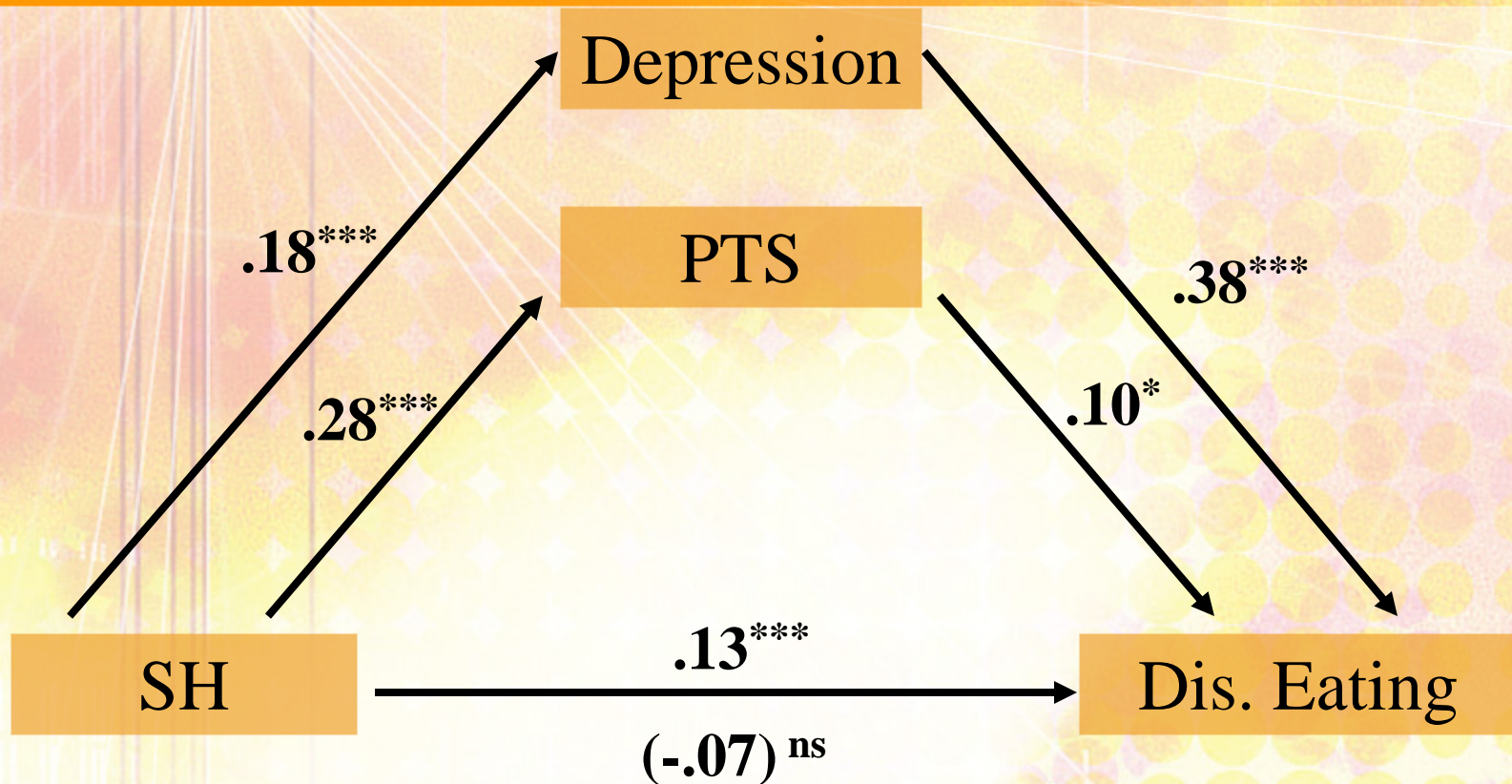
Sample & Procedure

- **College women**
 - $N = 906$
- **Age = $M = 19.95$**
 - $SD = 2.9$
 - **Range = 17-56**
 - African American = 11%
 - American Indian = 1 %
 - Asian/Pacific Islander = 7 %
 - Caucasian = 68%
 - Latino/a = 2.5 %
 - Other = 4 %
- **Online survey**
- **Psychology Subject pool**
- **Survey structured to reduce bias**

Measures

- **Sexual Experiences Questionnaire** (Fitzgerald et al., 1988)
- **AUDIT (Drug & Alcohol)** (Saunders et al., 1993)
- **Beck Depression Inventory** (Beck et al., 1996)
- **PTSD Checklist** (Weathers & Ford, 1996; Weathers et al., 1993)

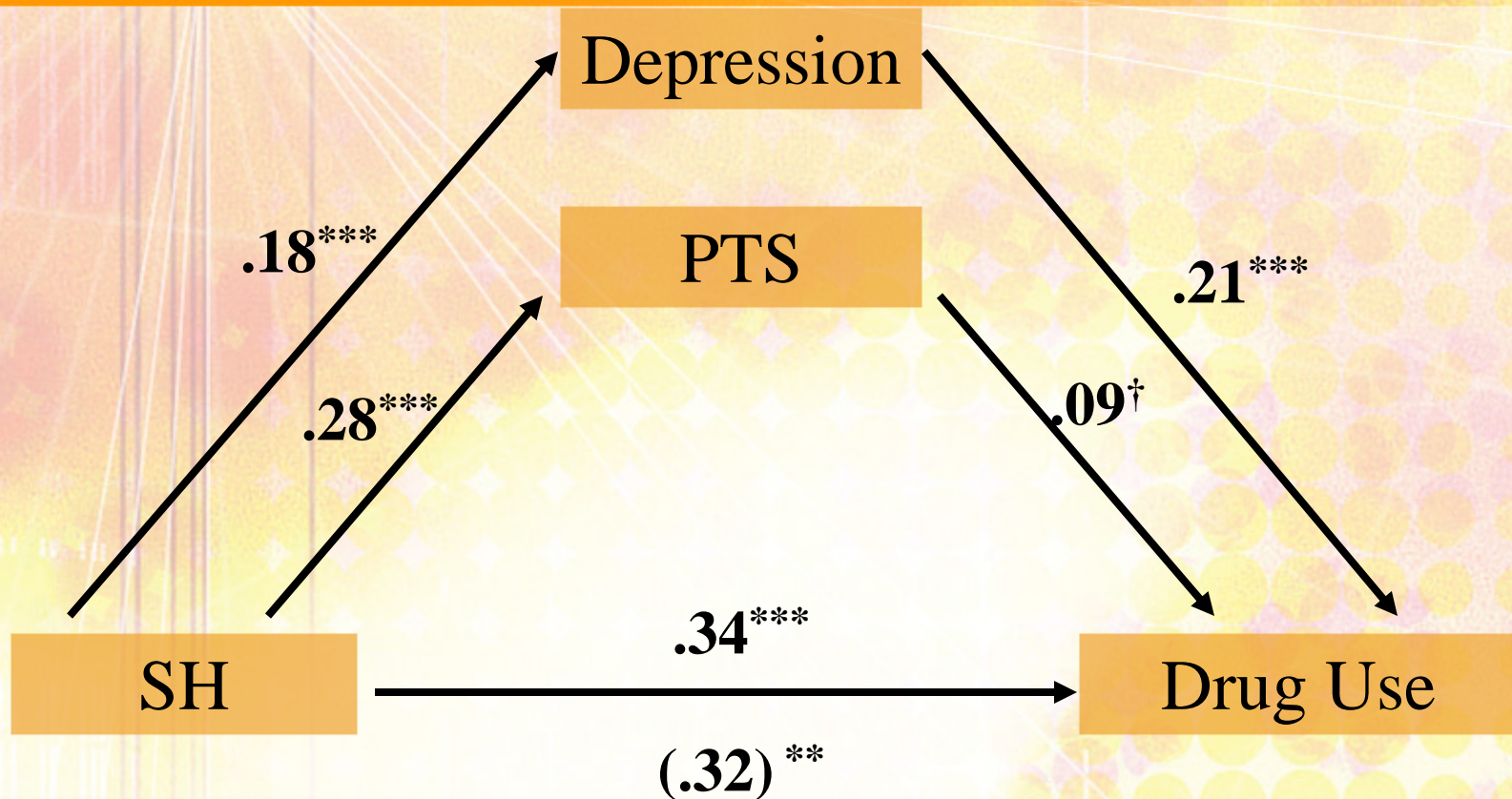
Sexual Harassment & Disordered Eating



$F(3, 163) = 14.83, R^2 = .20, p = .0001$

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

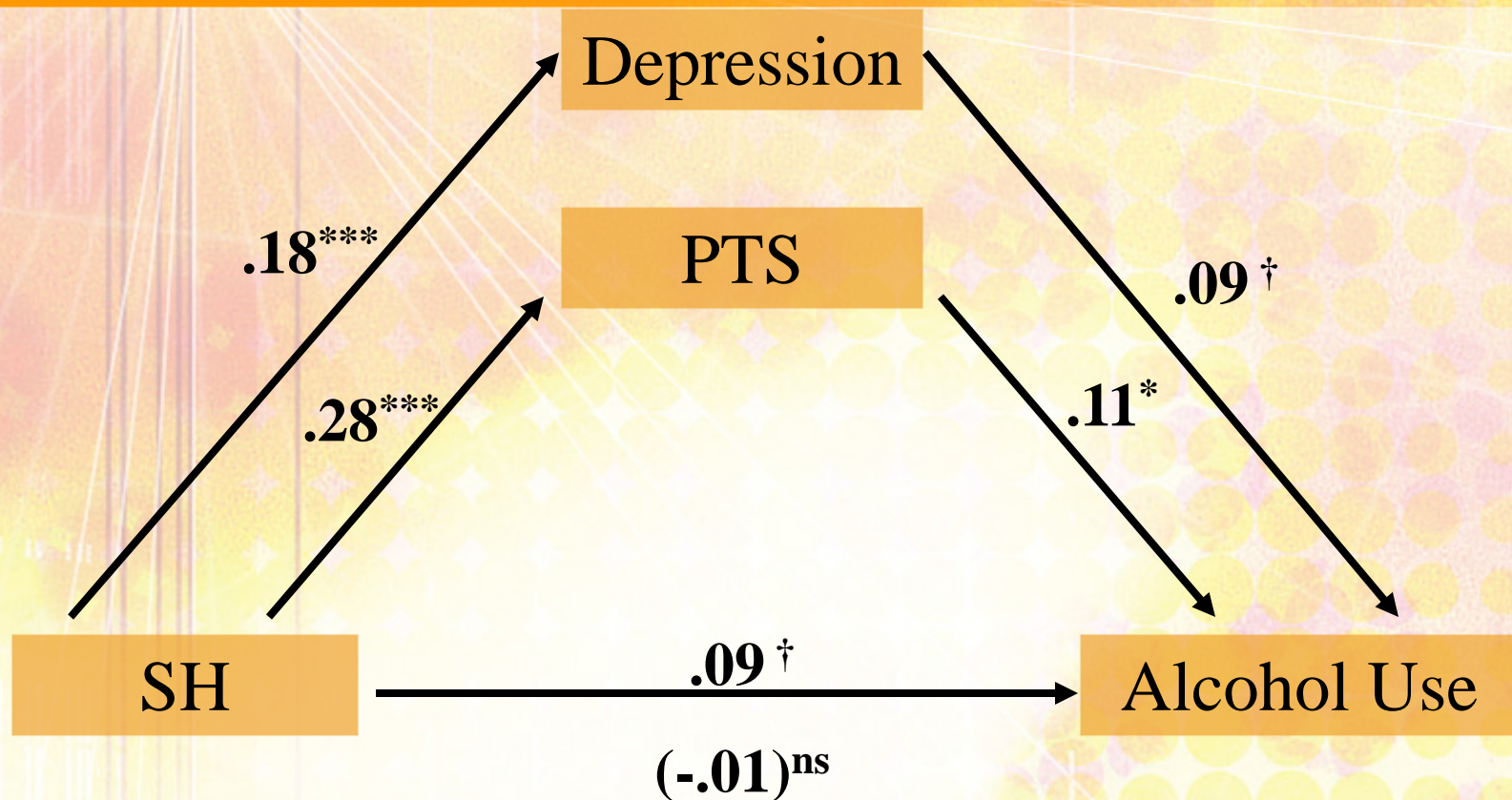
Sexual Harassment and Drug Use



$F(3, 163) = 11.78, R^2 = .18, p < .00$

$^{\dagger} < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001,$

Sexual Harassment and Alcohol Use



$F(3, 163) = 1.91, R^2 = .016, ns$

$^{\dagger} < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001$

Results summary

- **Sexual harassment was associated with addictive behaviors.**
- **Depression and PTS mediated the relationship between SH and disordered eating.**
- **Depression and PTS mediated the relationship between SH and alcohol use.**
- **Depression and PTS did not mediate the relationship between SH and drug use.**

Considerations

- **Correlational data, cannot assume causal relationships**
 - **Reverse & Reciprocal causality**
- **College/emerging adulthood is a unique developmental period for assessing disordered eating, drug & alcohol use**
- **Those engaging in drug use may already be a distinct group in terms of their degree of pathology**

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