

# Using a multivariate, multi-level model to understand how youths' in-the-moment engagement predicts changes in youths' interest

Joshua M. Rosenberg<sup>1</sup>, Patrick N. Beymer<sup>3</sup>, Tom M. Houslay<sup>3</sup>, & Jennifer A. Schmidt<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Tennessee, Knoxville <sup>2</sup>Oxford University <sup>3</sup>Michigan State University

## Background

- Though many have argued that out-of-school-time (OST) programs have an important role to play in youths' development of interest, relatively little is known about whether and how youths' interest develops in such contexts.
- Contemporary motivational theory suggests that interests emerge from the interactions of an individual in a particular environment, rather than residing entirely within the individual (Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 2016).

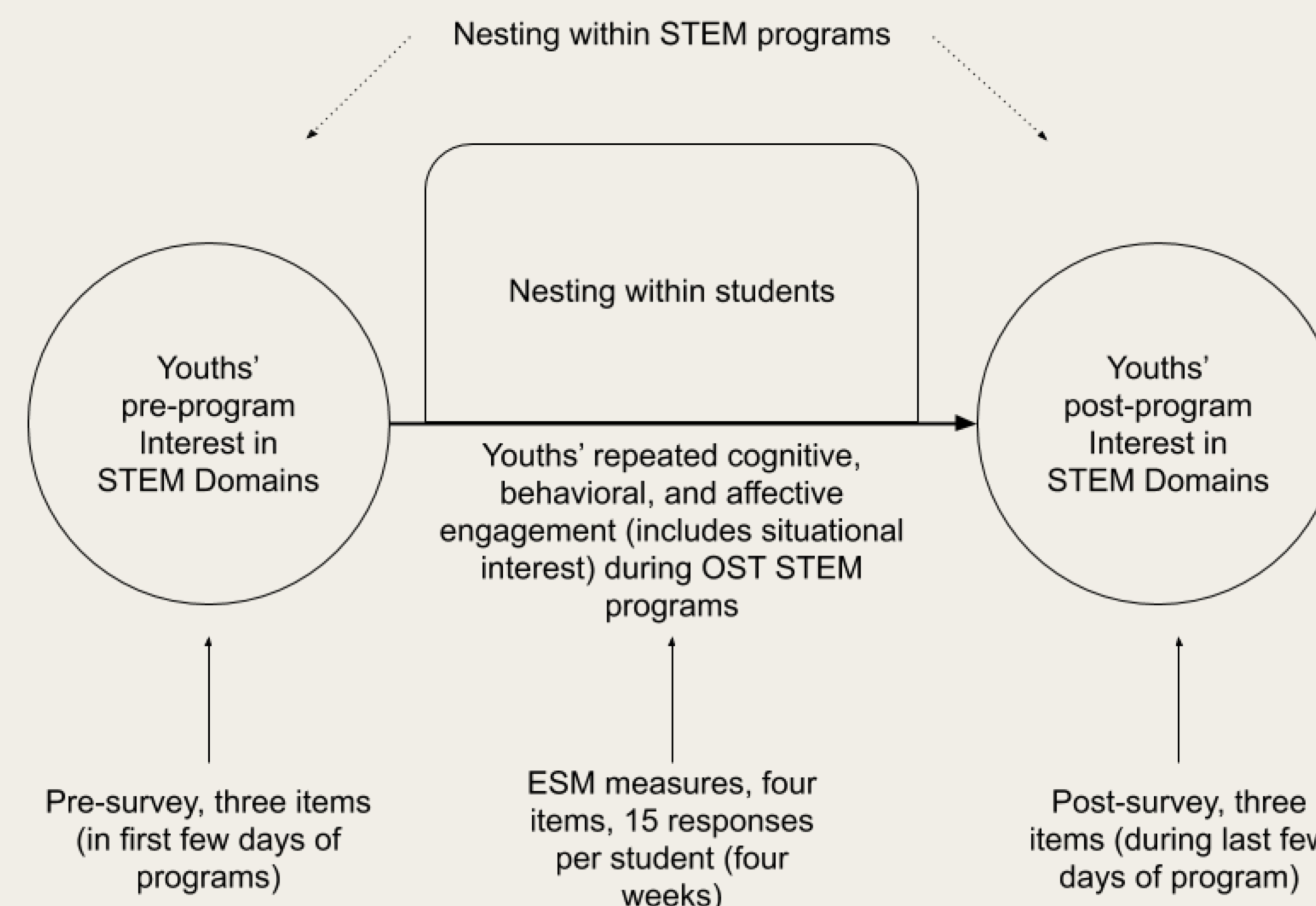
## Research Questions

How does youths' in-the-moment engagement relate to changes in their interest in STEM from before to after their involvement in summer STEM OST programs?

## Research Context and Design

- 204 youth participating in nine, three-week summer STEM OST programs.
- Observational study using pre- ( $n = 181$ ) and post-program survey measures ( $n = 159$ ) of youths' interest in STEM and Experience Sampling Method (ESM) measures of students' engagement ( $n = 2,970$ ).

## Data Structure



## Results

- Youths' in-the-moment engagement was a significant, positive predictor (effect size  $r = .27$ ) of youths' post-program interest in STEM, accounting for their pre-program interest in STEM and gender.
- Pre-interest was related to in-the-moment engagement ( $\beta = 0.10$  [0.01, 0.20],  $p = .028$ ) and to post-interest ( $\beta = 0.48$  [0.35, 0.65],  $p < .001$ ).

## Significance

- This study demonstrates how the use of MCMC methods may be a natural fit for analyses when a goal is to embrace and study multivariate motivational and engagement-related processes in complex, real-world settings.
- There are many questions in education that bear resemblance to those found in this study, such as those that involve longer-term outcomes that are related to momentary outcomes (i.e., how repeated measures of motivation relate to changes in achievement).
- Future work can use MCMC to extend this approach to recognize additional levels of nesting and/or cross-classification and to examine the effects of both engagement and its *rate of change* upon interest development.

## Methodological Approach

- We estimated a **multivariate, multi-level model** using Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) via the *MCMCglmm* R package (Hadfield, 2010), wherein the key outcome was the correlation between engagement and post-program interest in STEM.
- The model includes both youths' engagement (nested in students) and their post-program interest in one model, **which can be challenging to do when using a multi-level modeling approach**.
- Also, a feature of MCMC is that its use allows for the recognition of complex data structures, such as the nesting within students (and/or the *program* or the *moment*), **which can be challenging to do when using a latent variable modeling approach**.