



Sexual Violence in *University Students: A Multi-Level Approach to Understanding the Perpetration of Sexual Aggression

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01.

Content Warning: This presentation contains detailed definitions and descriptions of sensitive topics, including sexual violence, sexual assault victimization, and rape. The content covered may be triggering for individuals with personal trauma histories.

background

What is sexual violence?



What is sexual violence?



How common is sexual violence?

National



1 in 4

women in the U.S. will report completed or attempted rape victimization in their lifetime

National



1 in 26

men in the U.S. will experience completed or attempted rape victimization in their lifetime

(CDC, 2022)

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Institutional



21%

of U.S. college women report experiencing sexual assault victimization

Institutional



29%

of U.S. college men report engaging in behaviors that constitute perpetration

(Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016)

(Anderson et al., 2021)

Who is impacted by sexual violence?



People of all genders, sexualities, races, ethnicities, abilities, and periods of development

Disproportionately affects women, LGBTQ+ individuals, people of color, young people, and those with disabilities



(Basile et al., 2022; Basile et al., 2020)

How are they impacted by sexual violence?



- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Posttraumatic stress
- Suicidality
- Substance use disorders
- Medical conditions



Review

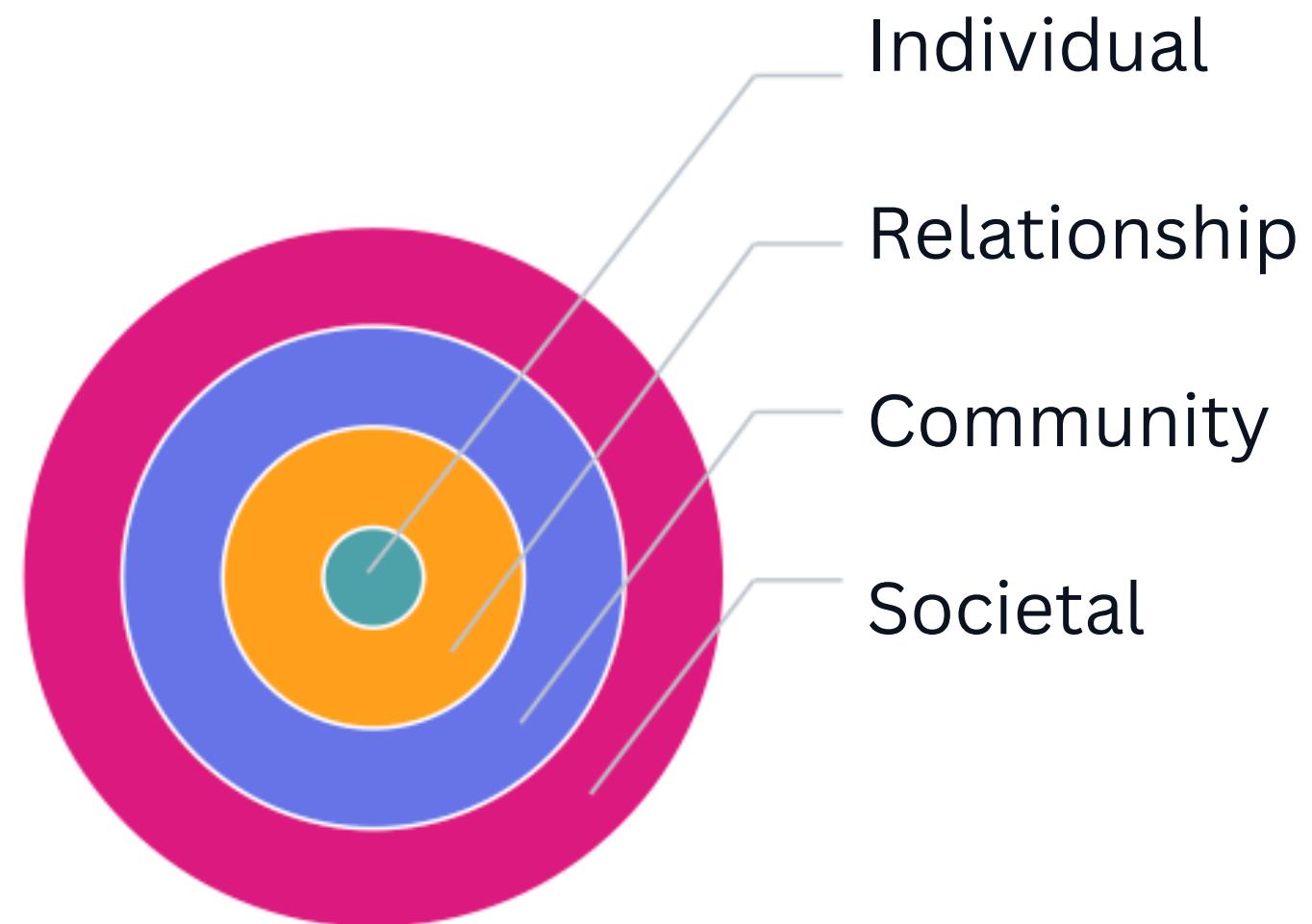


- Sexual violence exists on a continuum ranging from non-contact to penetration
- My research focuses on nonconsensual sexual behaviors involving physical contact
- Sexual violence is endemic on college campuses and among U.S. adults more broadly
- Anyone can experience sexual violence, but some are disproportionately impacted
- The consequences of sexual violence are severe, and often psychological in nature

02.

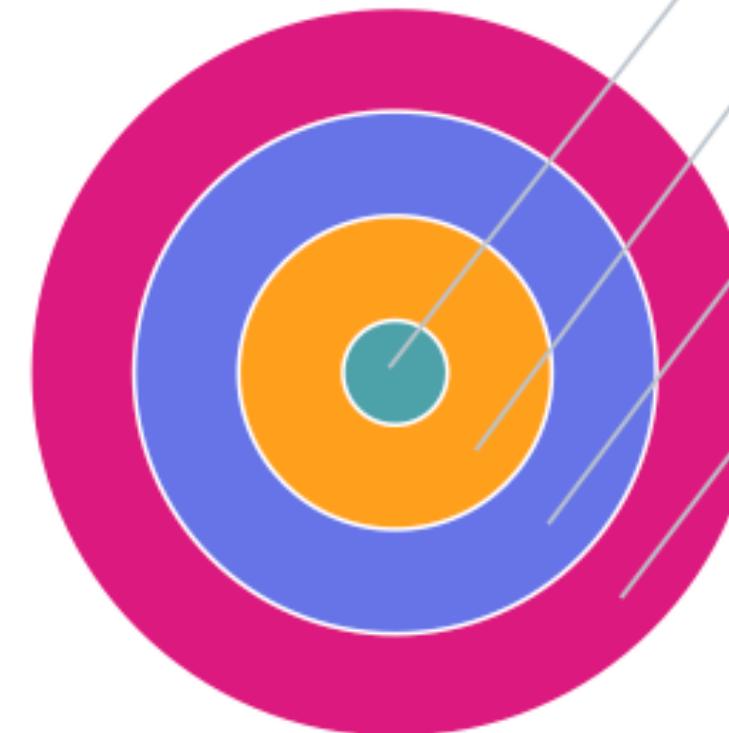
how can we prevent
sexual violence?

How can we prevent sexual violence?



Social Ecological Model

My Program of Research



Individual

Relationship

Community

Societal

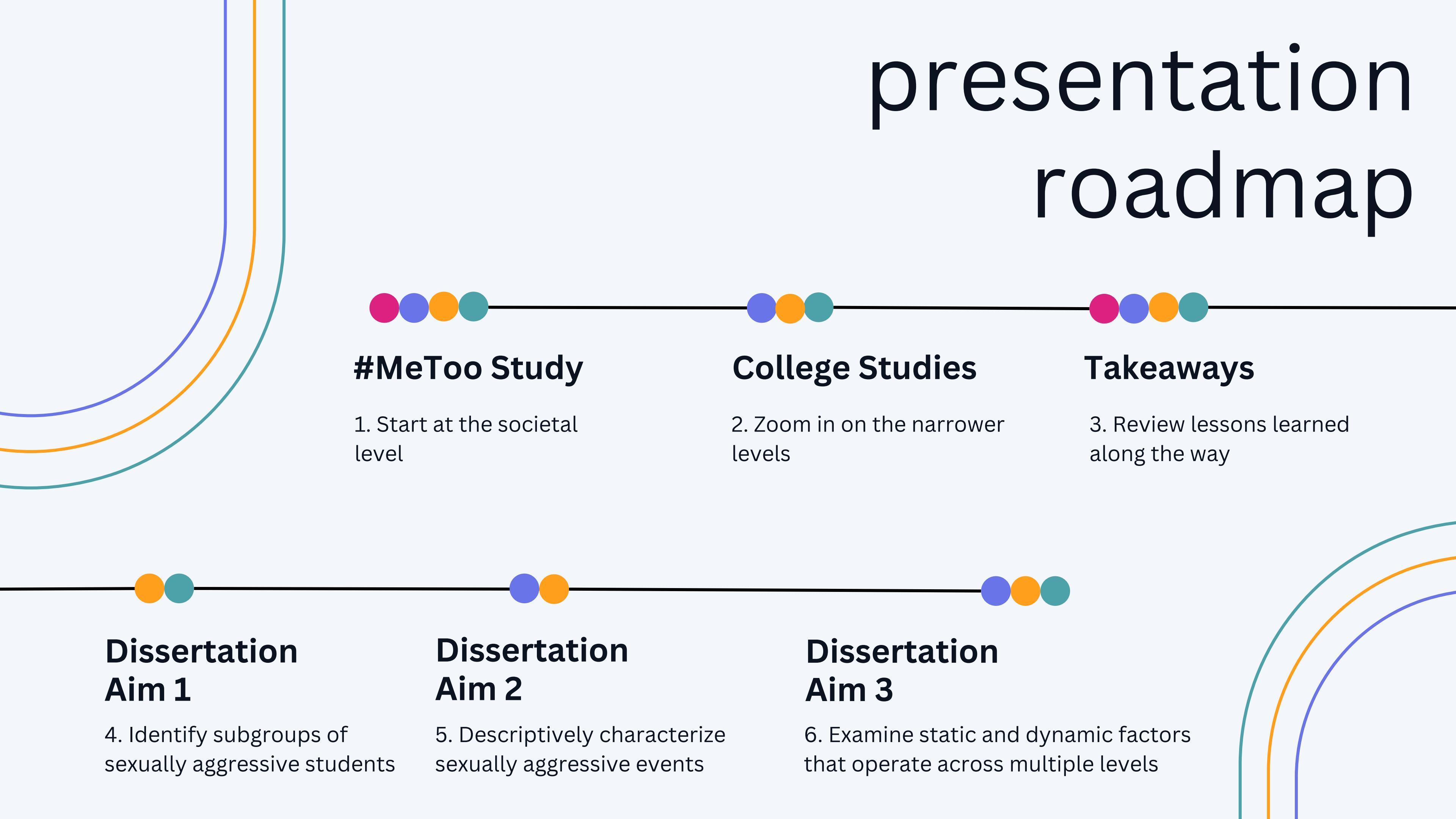
Substance Use

Sexual Consent

Peer Attitudes

Gender Roles

presentation roadmap



03.

past research



#MeToo



Dr. Christine Blasey Ford testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee that she was sexually assaulted:

- By a drunken Brett Kavanaugh
- During a high school party in the early 1980s
- While his friend watched and laughed
- Resulting in posttraumatic stress

- Millions watched the hearings and testimonies by both Dr. Ford and Brett Kavanaugh
- Case fueled national discourse about the #MeToo movement, which seeks to expose and address sexual assault

The #MeToo movement may have increased the general public's awareness of sexual violence in all its forms...



Research Questions

Has exposure to the #MeToo movement or media coverage of related cases...

- influenced how people think about sexual assault?
- influenced how people with sexual assault histories view their experiences?
- influenced how people interact with potential sexual partners?
- influenced how people think about sexual consent?

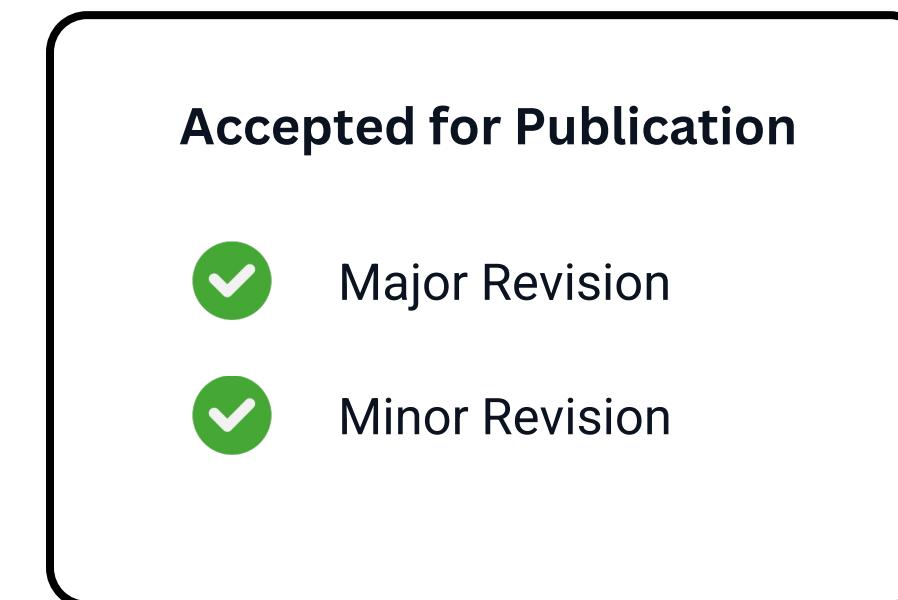


Does awareness and perceived legitimacy of the #MeToo movement vary as a function of...

- personal attitudes (e.g., rape myths) or sociodemographic characteristics?



Examining Changes in Perceptions of Sexual Assault, Sex and Consent, and Sexual Behavior as a Function of the #MeToo Movement: A Mixed-Methods Study





Quantitative Results (N = 680)

- M age = 45.8, 60% women, 77.4% white
- Indicated moderate awareness and perceived legitimacy of the #MeToo movement
- Black, LGBTQ+, and more politically liberal respondents had greater #MeToo awareness
- Younger, more liberal respondents, and those with greater rejection of rape myths rated #MeToo more legitimate
- Men had lower rejection of rape myths than women did

Qualitative Results (N = 354)

Changes in understanding

- Increased awareness of sexual assault
- Deeper understanding of consent

Easier to talk about

- More communicative about consent and boundaries
- More public conversations about sexual assault

“Consent
is/should be VERY
CLEAR. It's not the
absence of ‘no’”

“It has made me
feel like being
more expressive
about boundaries”

Qualitative Results (N = 354)

Gendered social norms

- Heteronormative ideas
- Rape myths
 - *She Asked For It*
 - *He Didn't Mean To*
 - *It Wasn't Really Rape*
 - *She Lied*

“if a woman says no, even if you both have started it means stop”

“I mean sexual assault is bad either way but it's never the females fault. We never ask for it”

“I think a lot of women lie about being raped when they're not”

“Women have become too aggressive in accusing men when they haven't been raped”

takeaways



Positive Changes

#MeToo increased awareness and understanding of sexual assault and consent

This movement made it easier to talk about sexual assault and engage in communicative sexual consent

Mixed Consequences

For Survivors

- Reduced feelings of loneliness and self-blame
- Reignited symptoms
- Reconsidered previous experiences they hadn't recognized were assault before #MeToo

Future* Directions

Findings warranted further inquiry in different samples exploring internalized misogyny and strict adherence to gender roles

Understanding Sexual Aggression Among College Men

Methods

Participants were recruited from Greek life fraternity organizations and the Sona subject pool to complete a cross-sectional survey

Eligibility criteria:

- 18 years or older
- self-identified as a man

Procedures

All study materials and analytic code for the consent study using these data were made publicly available via OSF and submitted with the manuscript for masked peer-review

[Registration DOI](#)



Understanding Sexual Aggression Among College Men

Sample (N = 463)

- Fraternity men (n = 186; 40%)
- Sona sample (n = 277; 60%)
- M age = 19.32, SD = 1.52;
- 99% of participants ages 18 – 22
- 64% white, non-Hispanic
- 93% identified as heterosexual
- 57% identified as single

Results

Past-month prevalence of alcohol-induced blackouts ~62%

Perceived peer attitudes moderated the negative association between alcohol-involved sexual consent attitudes and process-based sexual consent

takeaways



9%

Unexpectedly **low**
rates of sexual
assault perpetration

cross-sectional

Meant I was limited in
terms of the questions
I could ask...

03.

next steps:
dissertation

Aim 1

Use a data-driven approach to explore subgroups of university students characterized by engagement in sexually aggressive behaviors and examine socioecological correlates (e.g., drinking, consent) of class membership

Aim 2

Use daily diary data to conduct an event-based analysis of partnered sexual encounters to determine what factors differentiate experiences involving aggression from those not involving aggression

Aim 3

Examine static and dynamic factors associated with sexual aggression over the course of the 28-day diary study

methodology



Participants

Undergraduate students taking intro psychology courses were invited to participate via Sona

Eligibility criteria:

- 18 years or older
- consumed at least one alcoholic beverage in the past year

Procedures

- 1) 30-minute baseline survey
- 2) 28-days of daily diary surveys

Compensation: Participants received...

- 1.0 class credits for completing the baseline survey, and 0.25 class credits for every complete daily diary survey
- \$20 amazon gift card in addition to the 7.0 class credits (0.25×28) if they completed all 28 surveys

Sample

N = 386 participants passed the screening questions and completed at least 20% of the baseline survey

N = 282 participants enrolled in the daily dairy portion of the study, completing more than 6k surveys

Aim 1



Objective:

- In the baseline data, explore subgroups of university students characterized by engagement in sexually aggressive behaviors and examine socioecological correlates (e.g., drinking, consent) of class membership

Rationale:

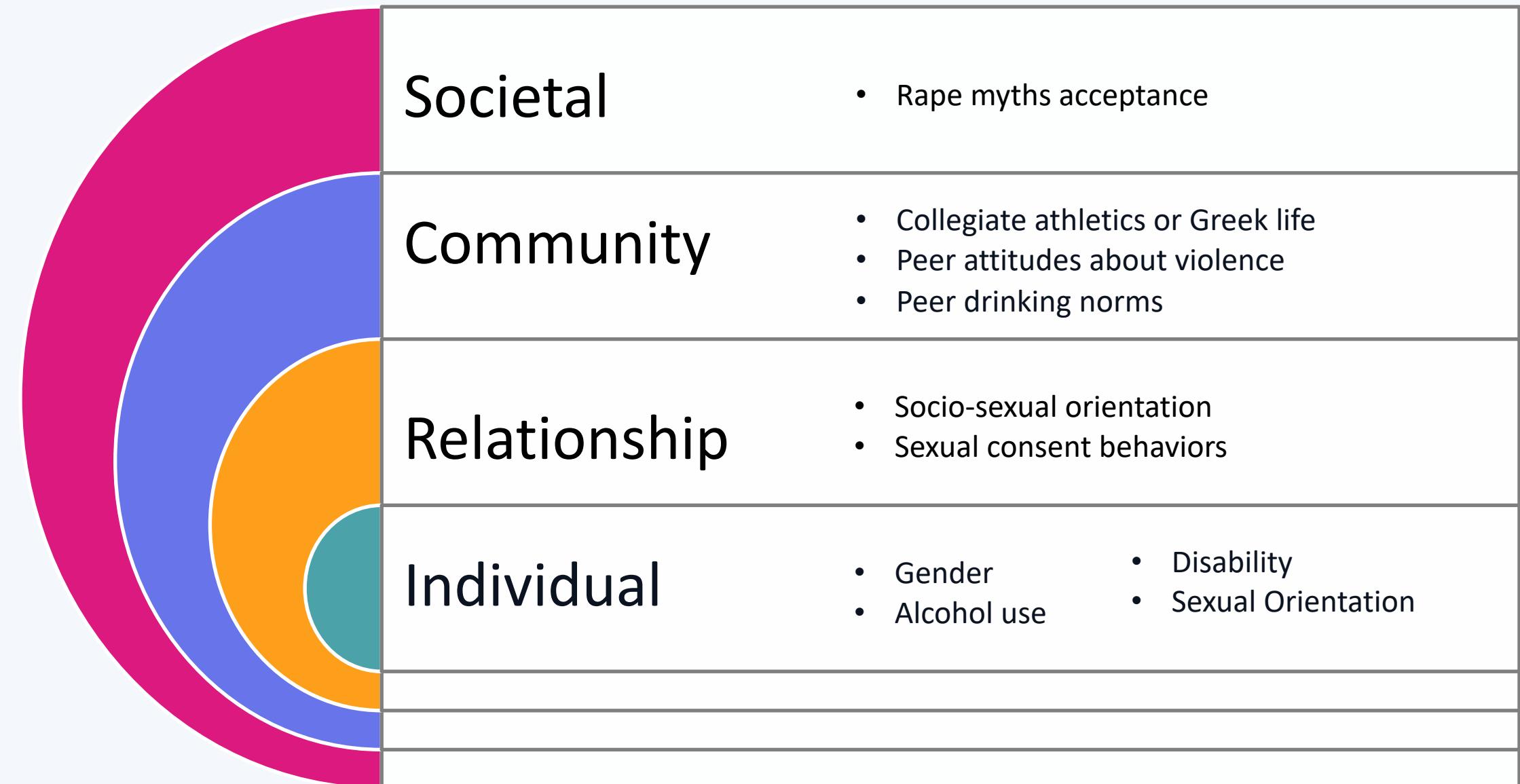
- Numerous latent class analyses of sexual victimization experiences have been conducted, but few exist on aggression, which has limited our ability to develop phenotypes that can inform prevention and intervention approaches
- Some socio-ecological correlates may serve as malleable prevention or intervention targets

Aim 1.1: Examine latent classes of sexual aggression

Using the following as **indicators**:

- self-reported sexual coercion, including both rape and assault
- condom use resistance or nonconsensual condom removal (i.e., “stealthing”)

Sequentially fit models with 1+ classes and select the model with lowest BIC, a significant BLRT, and theoretical merit



Aim 1.2: Correlate resulting classes with:

Aim 2



Objective:

- Understand how partnered sexual encounters involving aggression differ from those that do not involve aggression in terms of socioecological characteristics

Rationale:

- To move past the individual lens that has largely guided the field's understanding of sexual aggression among college students, it is essential to identify the situational and contextual characteristics of these events and how they are conducive to the perpetuation of violence
- Prevention strategies can focus on improving the physical and social environments where these events take place
- Data can serve as evidence that strengthens efforts to challenge policies perpetuating high-risk power differentials, like those allowing Greek fraternity houses to acquire alcohol and throw parties while prohibiting other campus organizations from doing the same

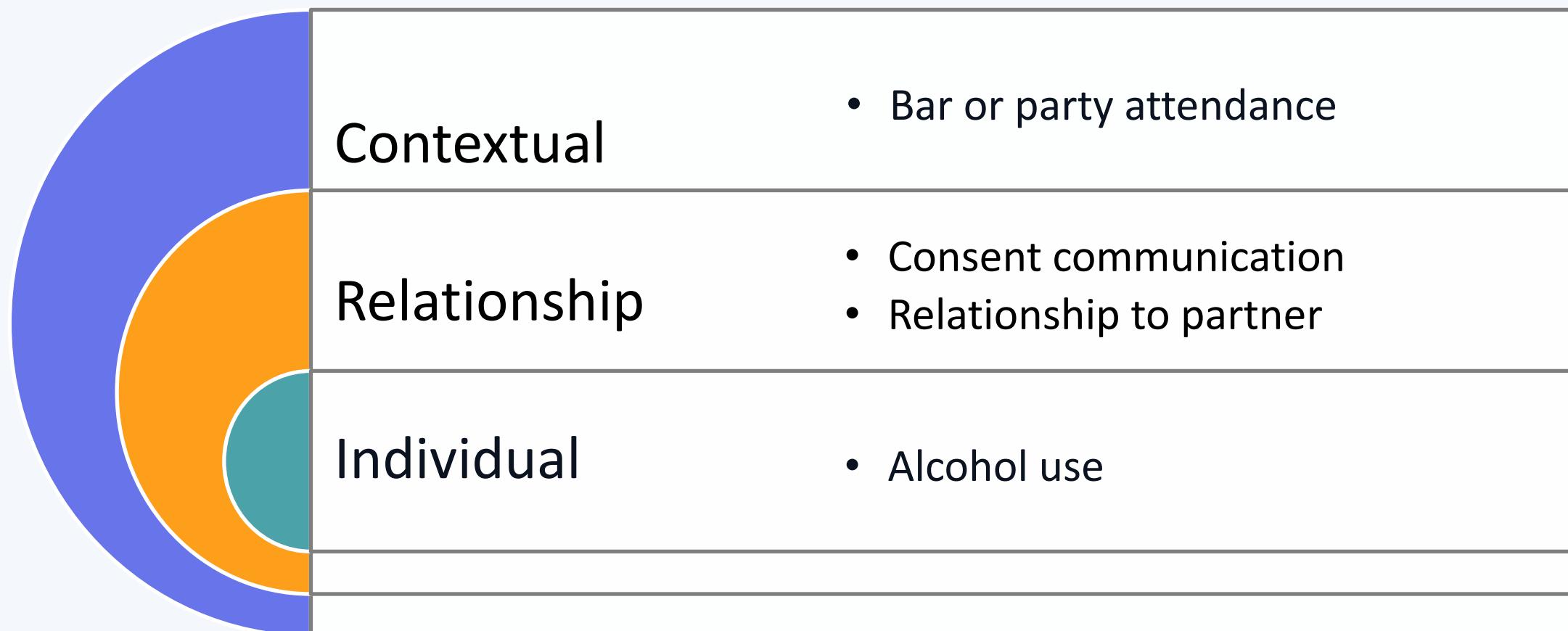
Aim 2: Partnered Sexual Encounters Involving Aggression

Method: Calculate event-level descriptive statistics for partnered sexual encounters:

- % involving sexual aggression in some form
- % involving alcohol use
- % involving each type of consent communication

Examine differences between sexually aggressive vs. non-aggressive events along the following dimensions:

- alcohol use by self and partner
- current relationship to partner
- consent communication
- bar or party attendance



Aim 3



Objective:

- Examine static and dynamic factors associated with sexual aggression over the course of the 28-day diary study

Rationale:

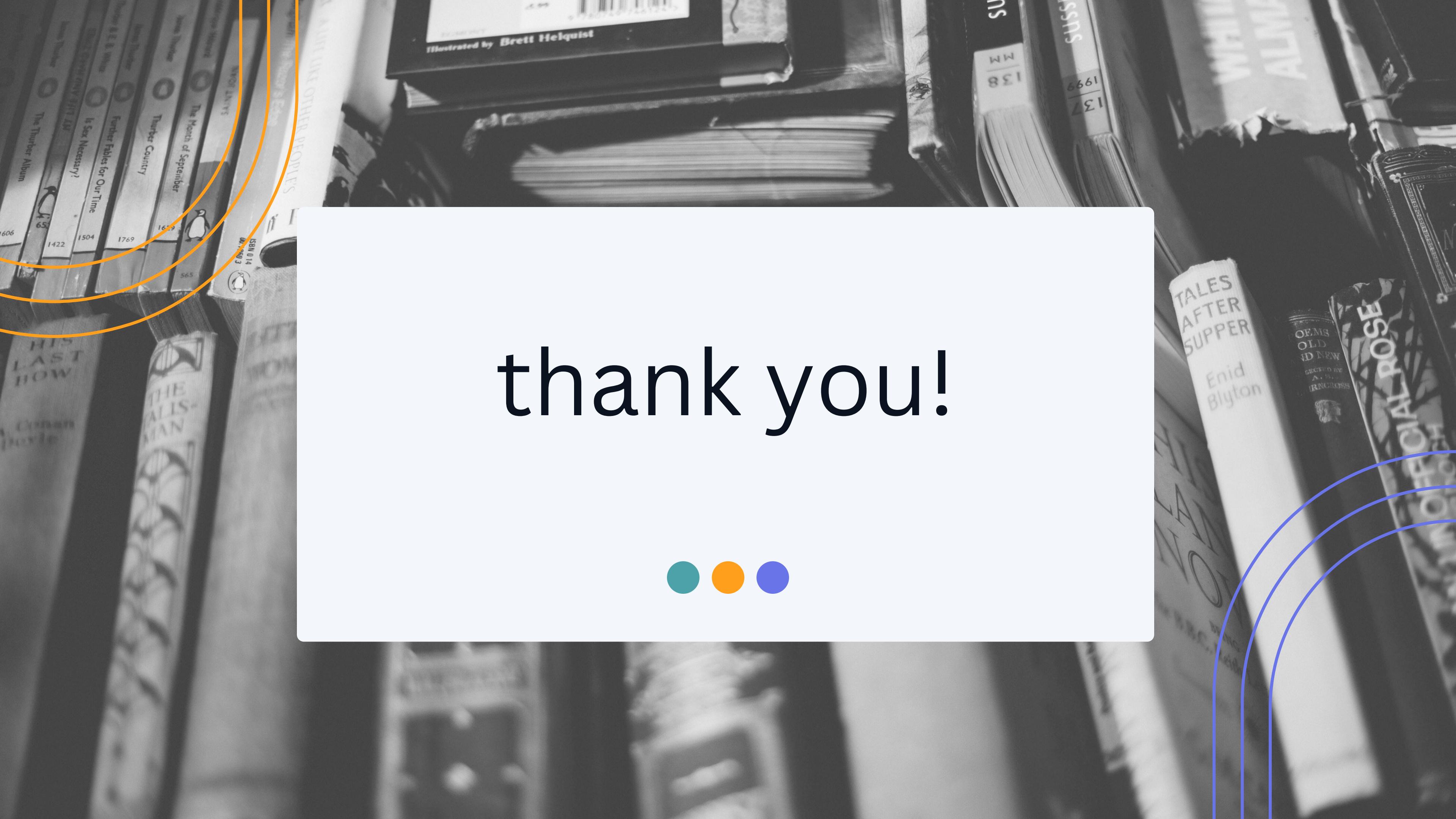
- Important to understand the degree to which static (demographics, history of assault, trait-level factors) and dynamic (time-varying event-level alcohol use, consent behaviors, and contexts) factors are related to risk for perpetrating sexual aggression

Method:

- Multilevel modeling predicting within-person sexually aggressive behaviors (Level 1) from time-varying, event-level factors (alcohol use, sexual consent behaviors, context) and between-person (Level 2) static, trait-level factors (demographics, baseline sexual aggression latent class membership at OR prior history of sexual aggression or victimization)

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thank you!

