

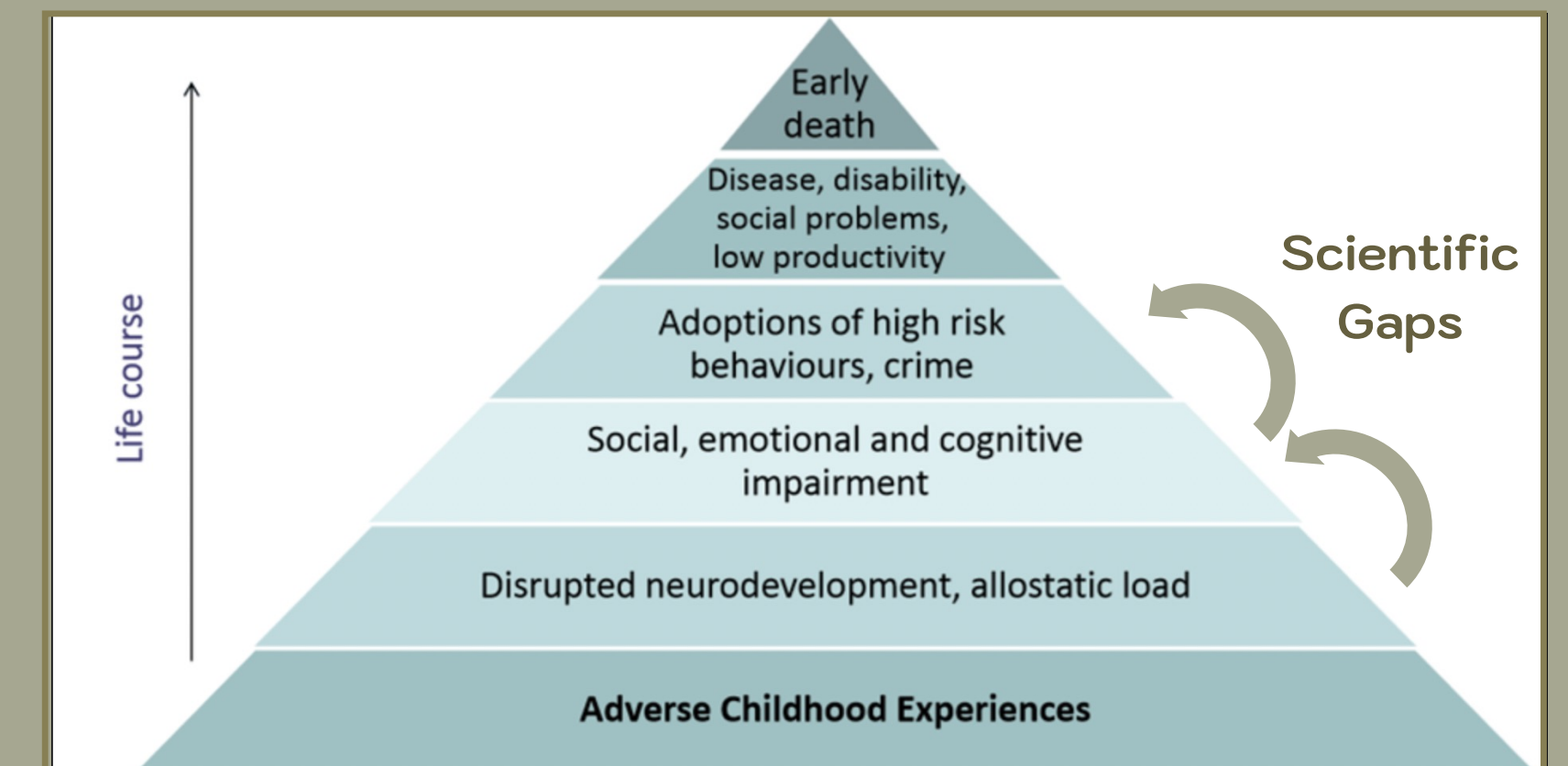
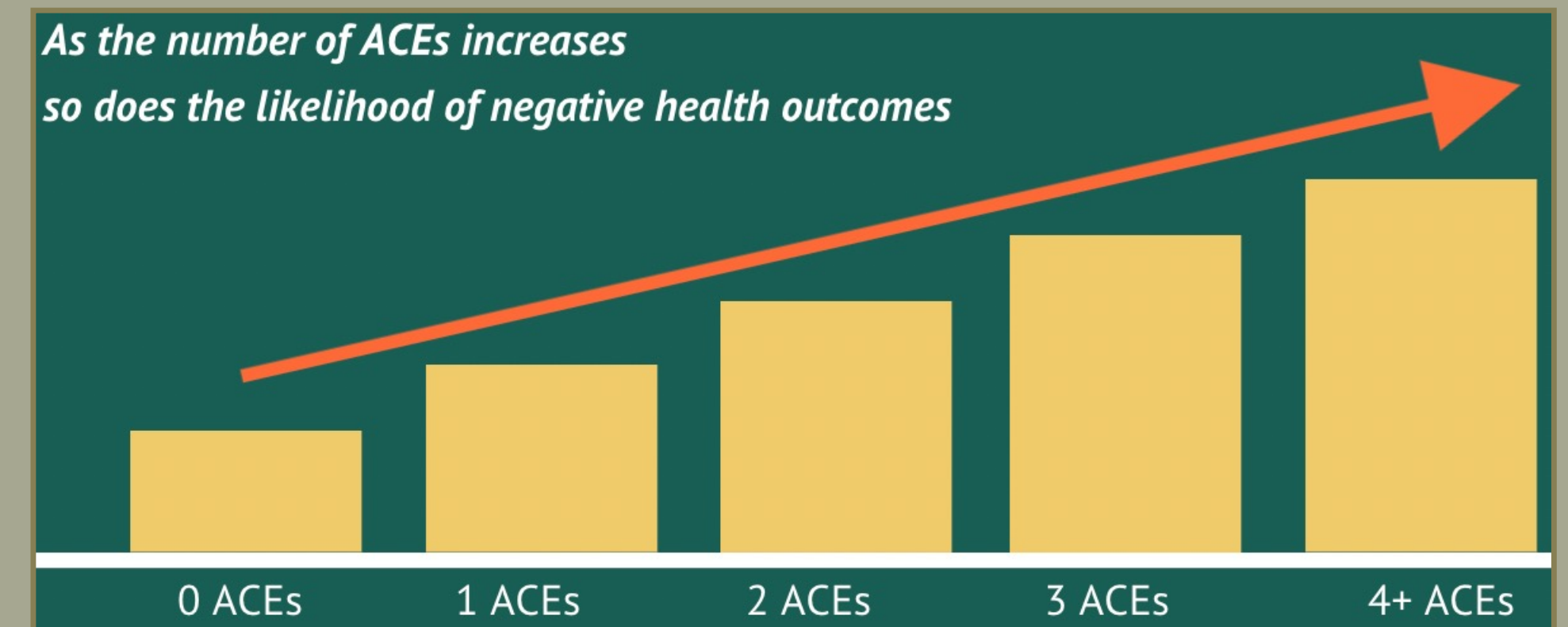
Adverse Childhood Events, Safety, & Comfort: Associations with Adolescent Symptoms.

Skaggs, C., Howard, M., Pangallo, T., & Kidwell, S.L.



ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EVENTS (ACEs)

- Traumatic and/or stressful early life experiences including:
 - One-time negative events
 - Maltreatment
 - Chronic stressors
- Commonly reported ACEs:
 - Physical abuse
 - Parental substance use
 - Parental separation/divorce(Hays-Grudo & Morris, 2020)
- Number of ACEs increases → risk of negative health outcomes increases (Hays-Grudo & Morris, 2020)



ATTACHMENT SECURITY

- ACEs ≠ cause of maladaptation
- Attachment security
 - Comfort & protection by caregivers may lessen psychological danger (Crittenden, Landini, & Snieker, 2021)
 - Protective factor
 - May buffer against stress-related dysregulation of hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis (HPA) response patterns (Bendezú et al, 2019)
 - Predictive factor
 - Insecure attachments increase risk of internalizing & externalizing symptoms (Dagan et al, 2021)
- Crittenden Danger Scale: attachment-attuned measure → mitigates shortcomings of ACE questionnaire
 - Potential clinical/developmental diagnostic reference to predict functioning

HYPOTHESIS

We hypothesize that as adolescent danger increases, mental health symptoms will also increase.



PARTICIPANTS



MEASURE: CRITTENDEN
DANGER SCALE



MEASURE: CHILD
BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST



PARTICIPANTS

- 21 families from Eastern Kentucky participating in a larger, longitudinal study on attachment
- 20 Families used in data analyses (coding incomplete)
- Age range: 16-18 (Avg. age = 16.6)
- Sex: 11 male, 9 female
- Most were Caucasian & from low-income families



MEASURE: CRITTENDEN
DANGER SCALE



MEASURE: CHILD
BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST



PARTICIPANTS



MEASURE: CRITTENDEN DANGER SCALE

- Adolescents participated in Transition to Adult Attachment Interview (TAAI: Crittenden, 2020)
- Coded psychological danger from TAAIs, using Crittenden Danger Scale (2021):

1 - 2	Normal dangers w/ protection & comfort
3 - 4	Normal dangers w/ protection OR inappropriate dangers w/ protection & comfort or only comfort
5 - 6	Inappropriate dangers w/ no comfort or protection
7 - 8	Parentally- or self-inflicted dangers

- Commonly reported dangers: Parental divorce/separation (~3-4), Exposure to substance abuse (~5-6), Domestic violence (~5-6)



MEASURE: CHILD BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST



PARTICIPANTS



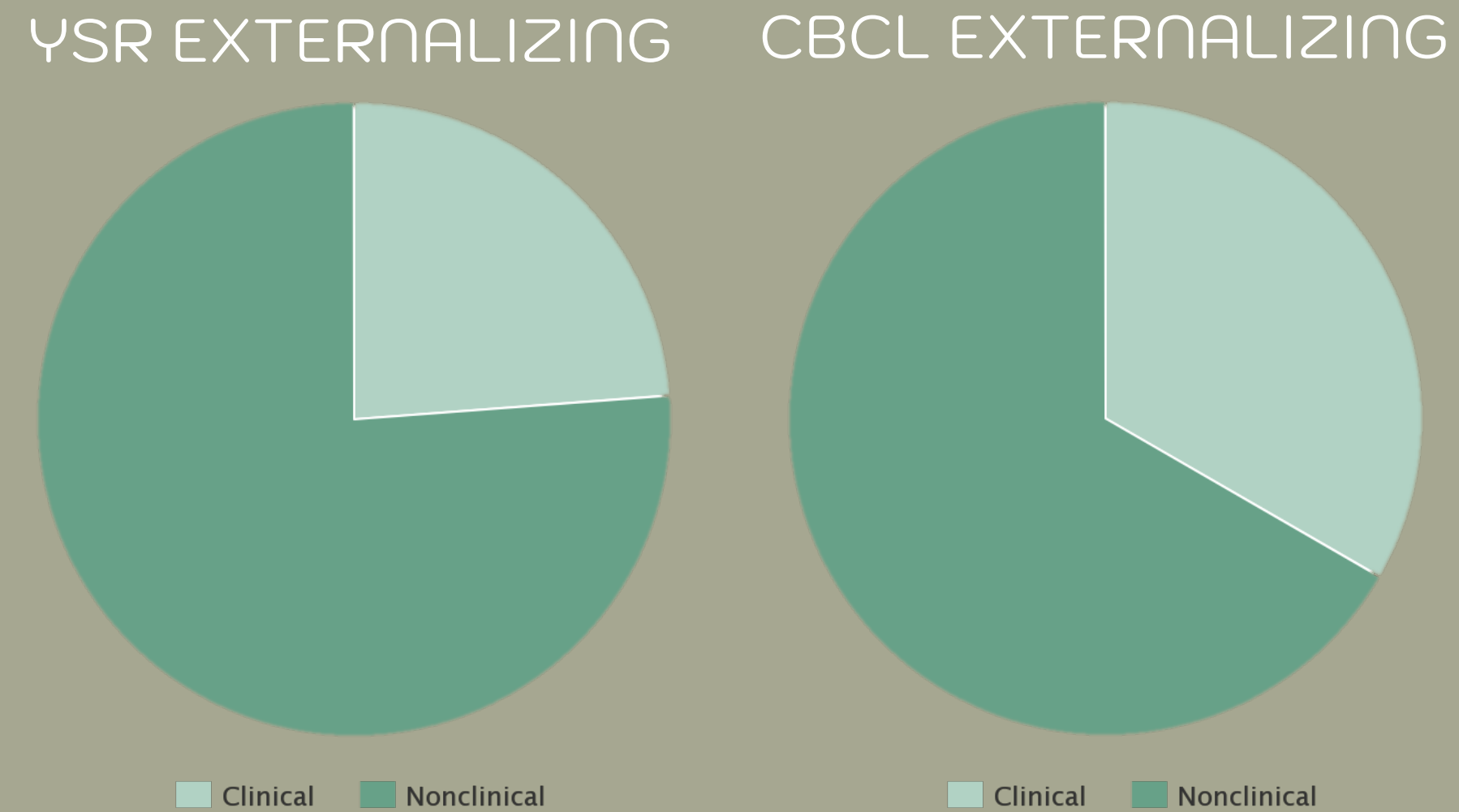
MEASURE: CRITTENDEN
DANGER SCALE



MEASURE: CHILD BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST

- Measured adolescent internalizing & externalizing symptoms (Adenbach & Rescorla, 2001)
 - Internalizing symptoms = anxiety, sadness, social withdrawal, etc.
 - Externalizing symptoms = noncompliance, overactivity, aggression, etc.
- 112 items rated on a 0-2 scale
- Separate parent-report (CBCL) & self-reports (YSR) were obtained

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dangers	8	26	15.5	5.4
Total Danger Score	21	125	58.4	28.7



		CBCL Intern	CBCL Extern	YSR Intern	YSR Extern
Dangers	Pearson Correlation	.063	.318	.336	.566**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.791	.172	.148	.009°
Total Danger Score	Pearson Correlation	.090	.310	.278	.557*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.706	.183	.235	.011°
Avg Danger Score	Pearson Correlation	.241	.279	.061	.397
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.306	.233	.799	.083

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). °. p < 0.05.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

RESULTS

- Number of psychological dangers: 8 - 26 (avg of 15.5 dangers)
- Total danger scores: 21 to 125 (avg score of 58.4)
- % of clinically at-risk youth in our study is surprisingly high
- ~1/3 of sample clinically at risk for internalizing & externalizing psychopathology
 - Coincides w/ CDC data on youth anxiety & depression (2021)
- Our hypothesis was partially supported, as our YSR externalizing data was statistically significant (.009 & .011) .
- Data regarding internalizing symptoms was not significant.

DISCUSSION

- Adolescent participants had surprisingly high levels of danger → many experienced within context of lack of protection or comfort from caregivers
- Internalizing & externalizing symptoms are often correlated → expect greater significance in our internalizing data, but certain factors may inhibit our youth from discussing internalizing symptoms
 - Issues expressing vulnerability
 - Modelling/internalizing negative self-beliefs from parents
- The Danger Scale is a promising potential measure of functioning; however, we have low power to detect findings. Power would be improved with a larger sample size.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- Further examine the validity of the Danger Scale as an alternative to the ACE questionnaire.
 - Currently coding danger ratings for parental AAls (potential to compare parental ACE questionnaires & danger scale ratings).
 - This is the first empirical study of the Danger Scale
- Our study suggests that early intervention to enhance parents' capacity to provide comfort and protection might have a meaningful impact on children's lifetime exposure to danger, and thus, their mental health

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Crittenden, P.M., Landini, A., & Snieker, S. (2021). Staying alive: A 21st century agenda for mental health, child protection and forensic services. *Human Systems: Therapy, Culture And Attachments, 0*, 1-23.
- Hays-Grudo, J., & Morris, A.S. (2020). *Adverse and protective childhood experiences: A developmental perspective*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Publishing.
- Dagan et al. (2021) Configurations of mother-child and father-child attachment as predictors of internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems: An individual participant data (IPD) meta-analysis. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 67– 94.
- Bendezú, J., Loughlin-Presnal, J., & Wadsworth, M. (2019). Attachment Security Moderates Effects of Uncontrollable Stress on Preadolescent Hypothalamic–Pituitary–Adrenal Axis Responses: Evidence of Regulatory Fit. *Clinical Psychological Science*. 7(6):216770261985474.