

Victimization, Internalized Homonegativity, and Support Networks in Latinx Sexual Minority Youth

Lauren Gouker¹, Maura Shramko¹, Russell B. Toomey¹, & Karla Anhalt²

¹The University of Arizona & ²Kent State University

Background

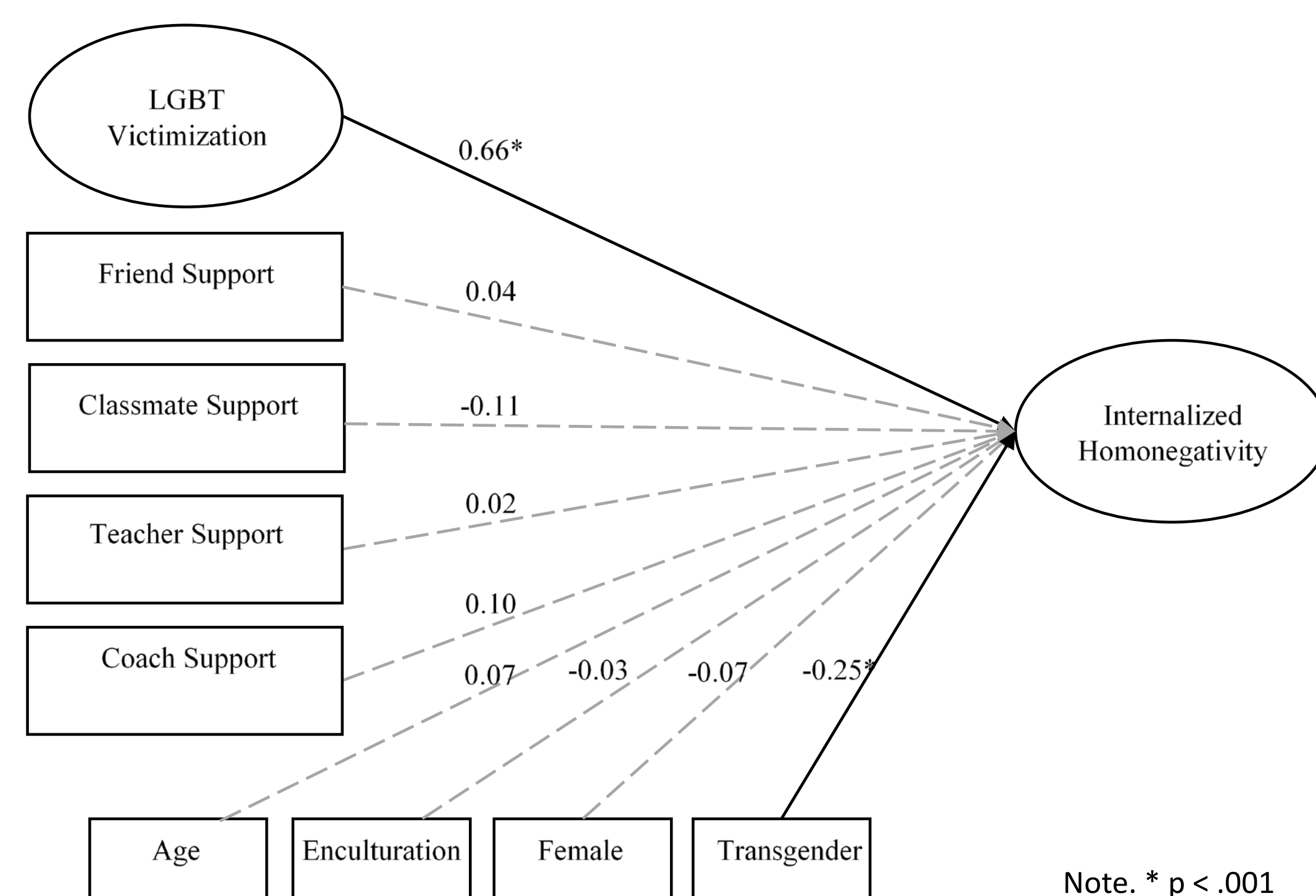
- **The minority stress model** posits that heightened risk for poor health and well-being outcomes in sexual minority youth (SMY) is partially explained by minority stress rather than a direct link between identification as a sexual minority and these outcomes (Meyer, 2003).
- Specifically, associations among proximal and distal minority stressors (e.g., bias-based victimization, internalized homonegativity [IH]) and well-being are well-documented among SMY (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010; Russell & Fish, 2016).
- Prior studies have shown that **IH is associated with poor mental health outcomes** (Collier et al., 2013; Pachankis 2007), as well as **low levels of social support** and limited disclosure of sexual orientation (Cox, 2010).
- At the same time, **social support acts as a promotive factor for SMY**, with familial support having an especially strong association with well-being (Snapp et al., 2015). Further, youth with **high levels of social support report lower levels of negative mental health outcomes** (Mustanski et al., 2011; Liu & Mustanski, 2012; Mustanski & Liu, 2013).

In the current study, we hypothesized that:

H1: LGBT bias-based school victimization (a distal stressor) will each be positively associated with internalized homonegativity (a proximal stressor).

H2: The associations between LGBT bias-based school victimization and internalized homonegativity will be moderated by friend, classmate, coach, and school adult support, such that the associations will be weaker among youth with higher reported levels of each type of support.

Figure 1.



Method

Participants

- The analytic sample consisted of 236 Latinx SMY enrolled in school (ages 14 to 24 years; *Age* = 19, *SD* = 2.30); about half were enrolled in secondary education (47%). The majority of the participants were men (69.5%); 8.5% identified as transgender. Most participants were of Mexican (68.2%) or Puerto Rican (18.6%) descent, and predominately U.S. born (94.5%).

Procedure

- Participants completed an online survey that was available in both English and Spanish (29% of the sample completed the survey in Spanish).
- Recruitment of participants (n = 386) was conducted through the assistance of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN). GLSEN posted recruitment messages for the study in English and Spanish on social media.
- **Measures** included *internalized homonegativity* (subscale of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Revised Scale; Mohr & Kendra, 2011); self-reported *bias-based school victimization* (Little, Jones, Henrich, & Hawley, 2003; Toomey, Card, & Casper, 2014); *perceived social support of the LGBTQ community* of friends, classmates, teachers, and coaches was measured through the Networks' Views of LGBTQ People Survey.

Figure 2.

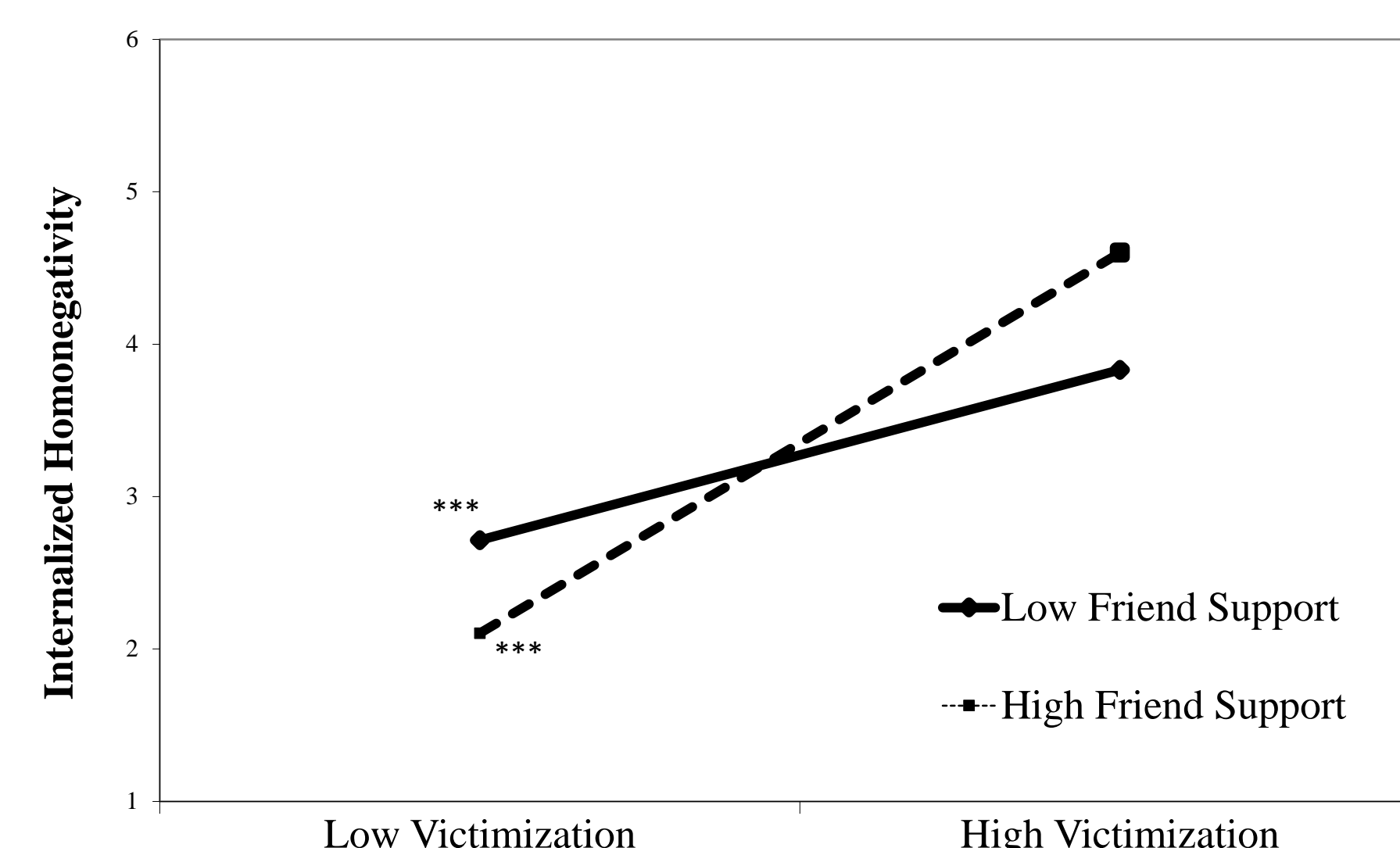
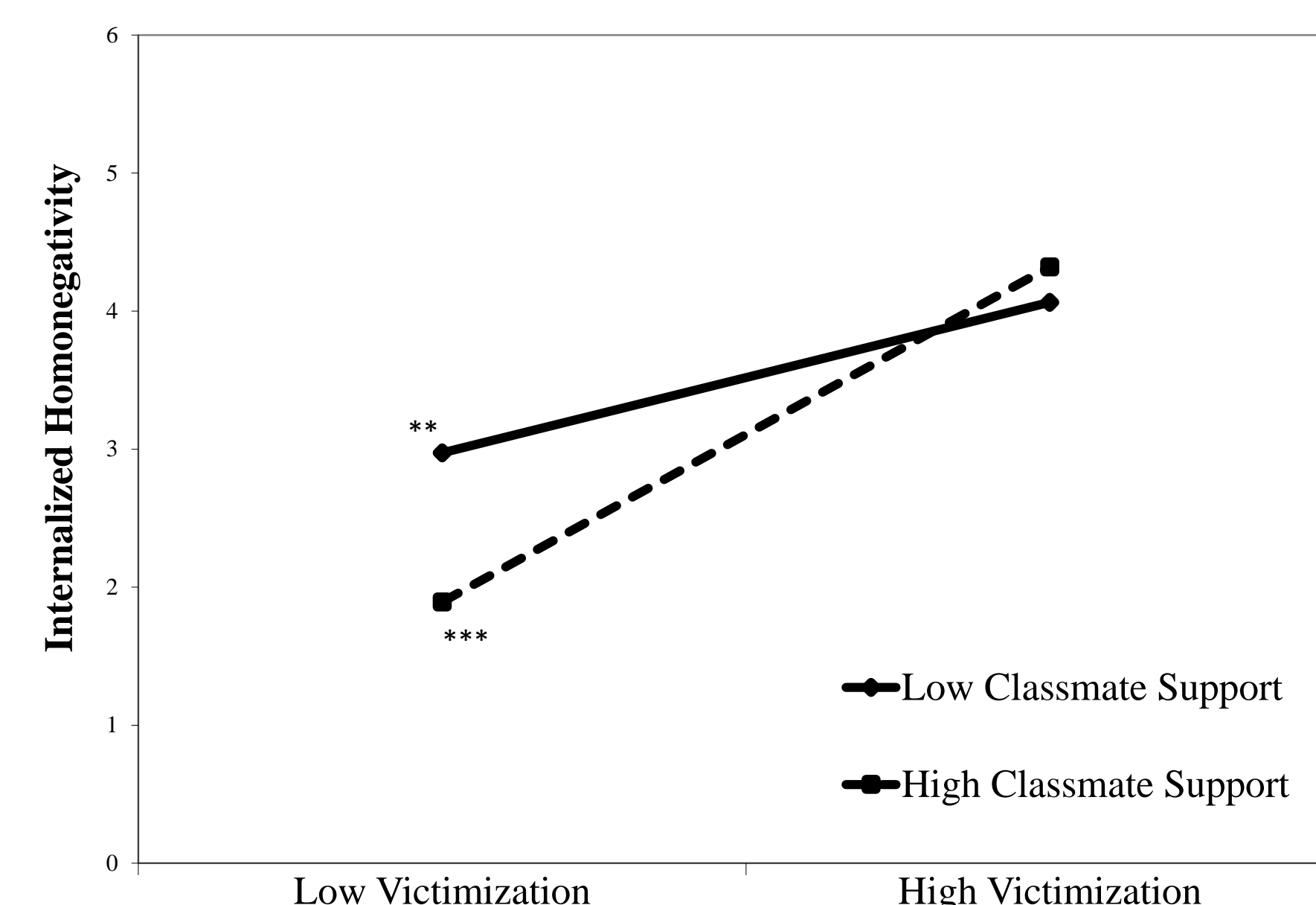


Figure 3.



Results

- **Bias-based victimization was positively associated with IH** ($\beta=0.66$, $p<.001$) in the main effects model ($\chi^2[82]=204.034$, CFI = .90, SRMR = .048) shown in Figure 1; none of the school-based supports were significantly and uniquely associated with IH.
- Latent variable interactions between victimization and each type of school-based support (friend, classmate, teacher, coach) were created in *Mplus* using XWITH command and each interaction was examined separately, controlling for all other types of support.
- **Three of the four interactions were significant**, including the **interactions between victimization and friend support** shown in Figure 2 ($b=.49$, $p<.001$), **classmate support** shown in Figure 3 ($b=.43$, $p<.01$), and **school adult support** ($b=.26$, $p<.05$). Friend, classmate, and school adult support all acted as a protective yet reactive factor (see Figures).
- The interaction between coach support and victimization predicting IH was not significant ($b=.16$, $p=.27$).

Conclusions

- Consistent with prior work on protective factors for marginalized youth (Toomey & Anhalt, 2016; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2015), we found that school-based supports were only protective at low levels of bias-based school victimization. At high levels of bias-based school victimization, support (i.e., friend, classmate, and teacher) did not effectively mitigate the link between victimization and IH.
- Potentially, when youth discuss issues and problems associated with marginalization with supportive others, they may ruminate on negatives which is typically associated with poorer outcomes. For instance, recent work by Velez et al. (2016) found that rumination explained discriminate findings related to the protective role of social support.
- More research is needed to improve support network functioning for SMY, and to reduce the presence of systemic bias-based victimization.

Acknowledgements

We thank the young people who participated in the study. We also thank the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) for their assistance with participant recruitment. [The study was approved by GLSEN's Research Ethics Review Committee for promotion by GLSEN]. Support for this project was provided by a Loan Repayment Award by the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (L60 MD008862; Toomey).

The authors acknowledge funding from the Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families.

