

Ostracism in Healthcare Workplaces

Angela Wolff, PhD, RN, Director, FHA Professional
Practice and Integration

Sandra Robinson, PhD, Professor, UBC Sauder
School of Business

FH Strategic Imperatives Grant



**We came for the job,
*but stayed for the people***



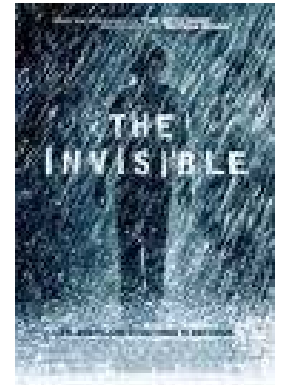
Ostracism in the Workplace

- Extent to which one feels ignored or excluded at work.
- Commonplace in organizations:
 - More socially acceptable
 - More invisible
- Potentially more impactful than other kinds of social treatment at work.

What Ostracism at Work Look Like?



www.shutterstock.com · 15976519



erhealth

The Effect of Ostracism



- *Why should it have an effect?*
 - More than just lack of social support
 - Takes away a fundamental need to belong
 - Undermines one's sense of self-worth and value
- *What should it effect?*
 - Negative self-attitudes and feelings
 - Disconnection from others and the organization
 - Ability and motivation to contribute at work

Method

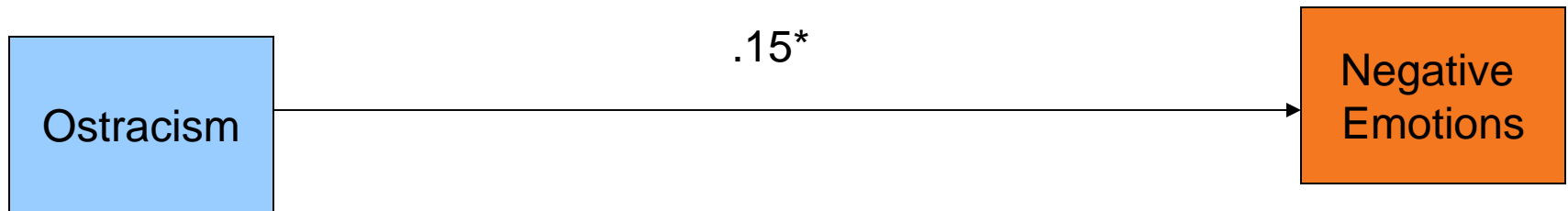
- 2 paper-pencil surveys, 4 weeks apart
- Population Sample – units > 45 nurses
- Sampling frame – 1385 nurses across 47 units
- Survey #1 response – 568 (41%)
- Survey #2 response – 422 (30%)
- Those returned both surveys 374 (27%)
- Analysis
 - Multiple regression



Ostracism Among Nurses

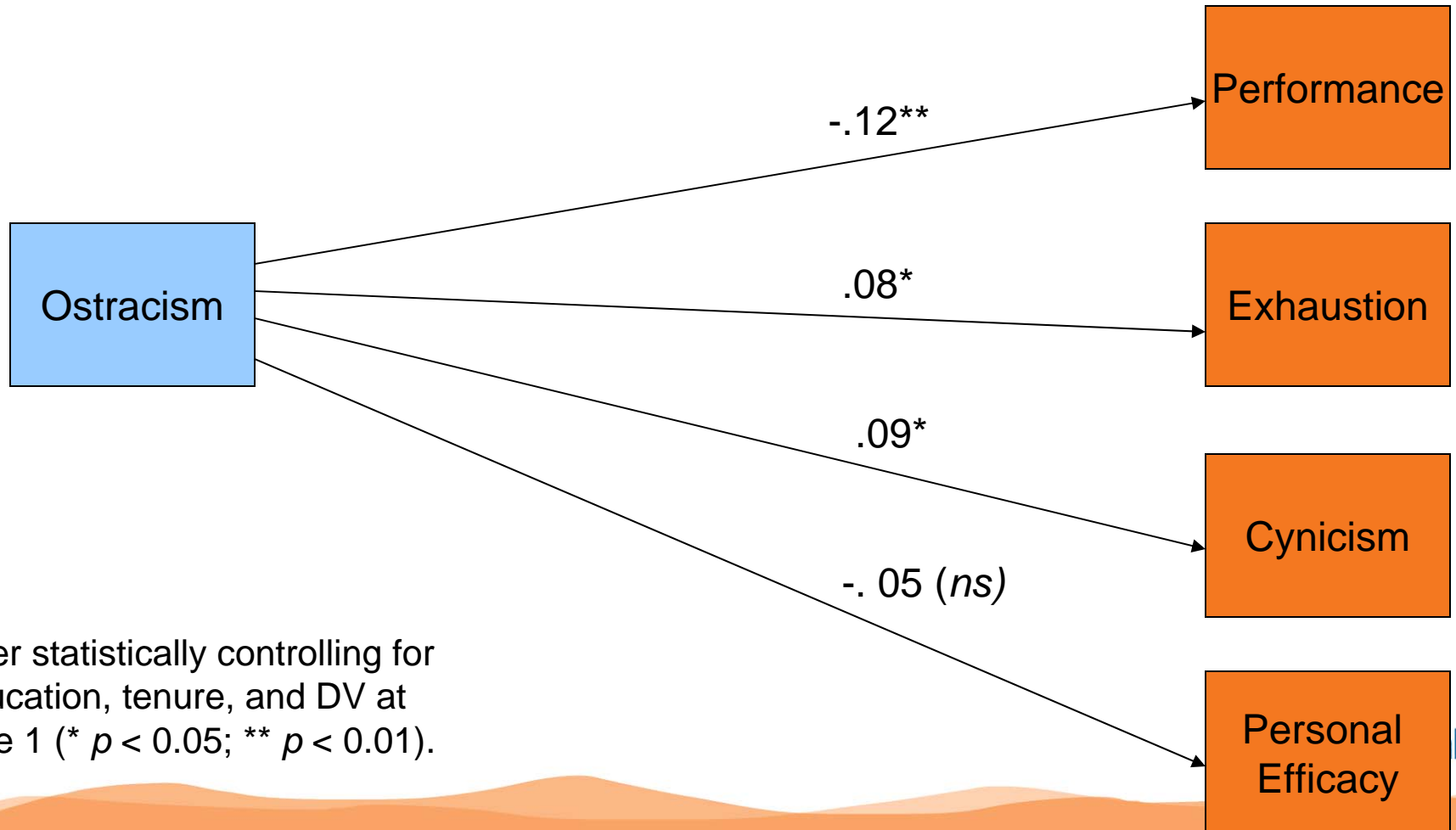
- Experience at work in last 6 months
- Scale range 1 "never" to 7 "always"
- Mean = 1.36
- Range = 1 to 3.70 (SD = 0.46)
- General population rate = 1.68 (SD = 0.98)
- 69% experienced at least one act from coworkers that is considered ostracism (31% of sample said 'never' to all ostracism behaviors).
- Unrelated to age, gender, education and employment status (no difference between regular, temporary, full time or part time).

H1: Ostracism will be positively related to negative affect

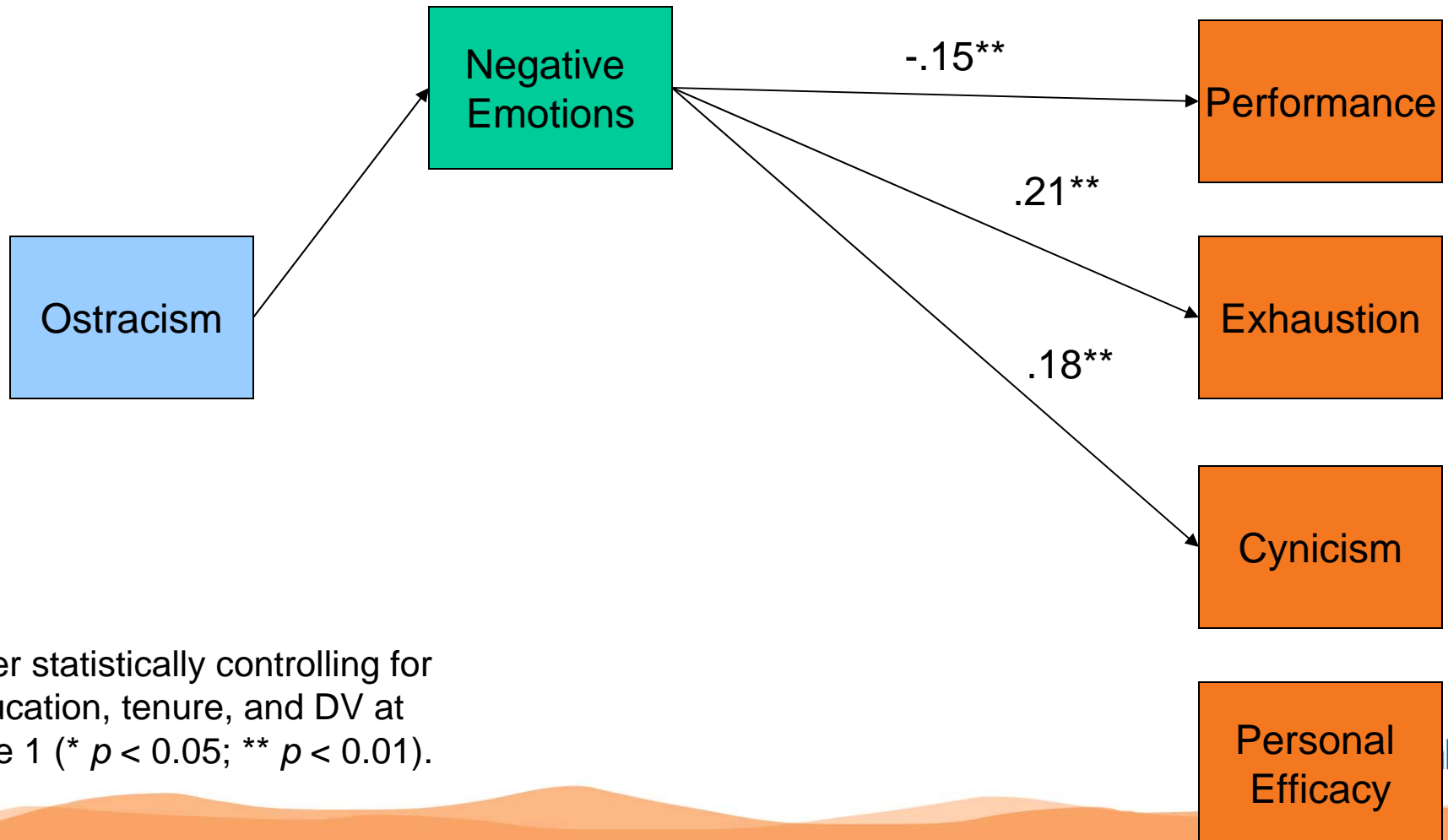


After statistically controlling
for education, tenure, and
DV at time 1 (* $p < 0.05$)

H2: Ostracism will be negatively related to work contributions (job performance & burnout)

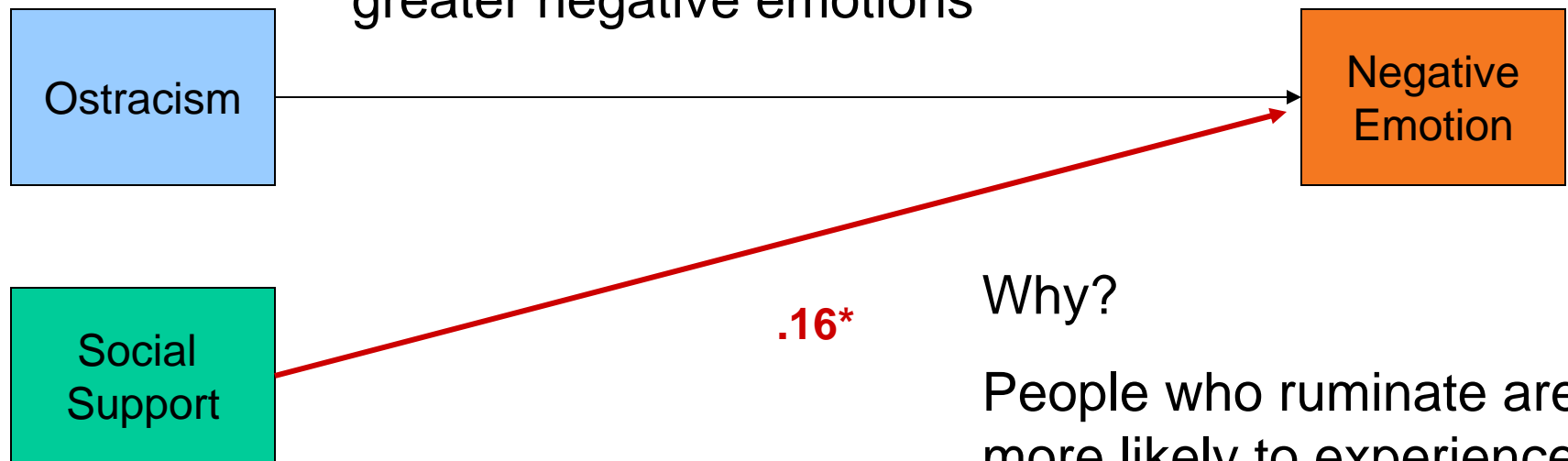


H3: Negative affect will mediate (explain) the relationship between ostracism and work contributions.



H8: Social support at work will moderate (intensify or weaken) the relationship between ostracism and negative affect such that the greater the support, the strong the relationship

When people had social support, those that experienced ostracism were more likely to experience greater negative emotions



Why?

People who ruminate are more likely to experience this effect.

After statistically controlling for social support seeking tendencies, need for affiliation and entitlement of positive social regard

Buffers and Enhancers of the Effect of Ostracism

- For nurses with high social support at work, ostracism leads to greater negative emotions if one *ruminates* about it.
- Ostracism leads to negative emotions which in turn lead to poorer performance, greater feelings of emotional exhaustion and being more cynical.

Conclusions



- Largely invisible form of social mistreatment impacts employees and the organization
- Ostracism just as serious as workplace harassment.
- Signals one's lack of value of others, goes against fundamental needs of belonging, and undermines one's self-worth.
- Social support makes you feel worse?
- Rumination about experience of ostracism may have long-term consequences on employees

Questions and Comments

We came for the job,
but stayed for the people

Angela.wolff@fraserhealth.ca

