

International Symposium on Pathways and Prevention

**Leisure as a Context for Risk
Prevention & Healthy
Development**

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Outline of Presentation

- Introduction of “free time”
- Recent research on free time and deviancy
- New possibilities & directions
 - Leisure, prevention, development
- Leisure education
- Preliminary data

Considerations

- Universal vs. targeted prevention
- Policy implications

Free Time: A Matter of Risk and Opportunity

A society that structures its youths' time to provide them chances for developing social and emotional competences is making a long-term investment in the overall maturity and mental health of its adult population.

Larson & Verma, 1999

Leisure Outcomes

Positive

- Initiative development
- Development of self-regulation
 - Physical activity
- Positive challenge
- Relationship building
- Positive stress release
- Skill and competence building

Negative

- Boredom
- Amotivation
- Stress and anxiety
 - Overeating
 - Risky decisions
- Lack of physical activity
 - Substance use
 - Deviant behavior

Current Perspectives on Deviance & Free Time

- **Filled Time:** Time filled with prosocial activities cannot be filled with deviant activities.
- **Association with Deviant Peers:** Certain activities are more likely to instigate deviant behavior or association with a deviant subculture.
- **Structured Activities Promote Prosocial Behavior:** Time spent in informal and/or unsupervised activities is likely to promote deviance, while time spent in supervised activities protects against it.

Recent Research

- Routine Activity and Situational Motivation

(Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 1996)

- Not individual characteristics but situations that drive deviance
- Motivation for deviance inherent in situation, youth seeks approval and excitement – situation is motivating largely based on rewards from peers

Recent Research Con't.

- Social control
 - Structured vs. unstructured
- But...can also come into contact with deviant peers and activities in structured activities

Recent Research Con't.

- Positive peer relations, good school achievement, positive response to authority, and effective use of leisure time were protective factors (Hoge, Andrees, & Leschied, 1996)
- Participation in extracurricular activities is protective because
 - acquisition of human capital, social capital, and cultural capital (McNeal, 1999)

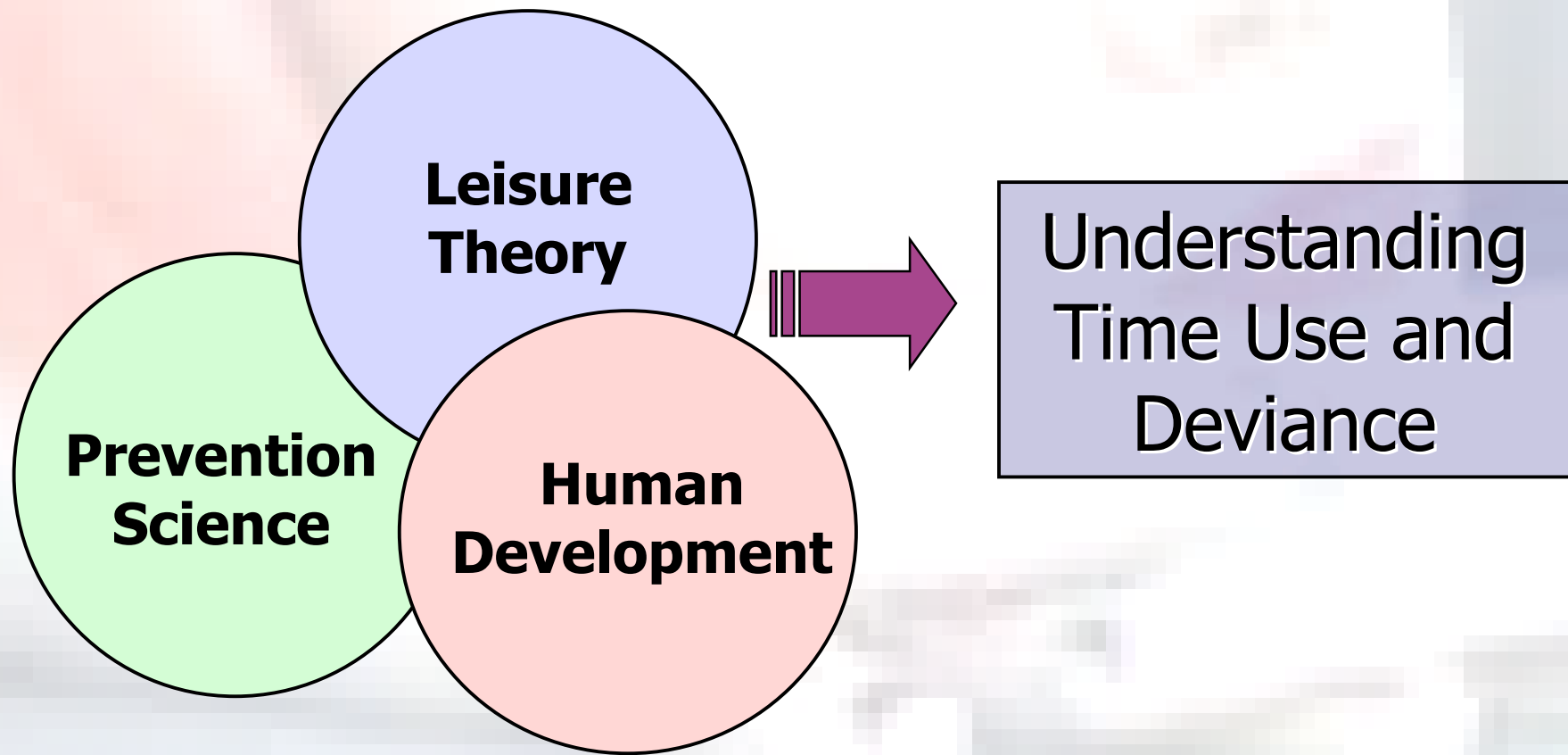
Recent Research Con't.

- Research becomes more developmental
- Ecological framework: individual, peers & parents, community, & culture (Duncan, & Strycker, 2000)
 - Family protective, peers risky
- More attention finally being paid to the quality, context, and characteristics of activity (e.g., Mahoney & Stattin, 2000)

Promising New Directions

- Previous research not based on theoretical premises related to leisure engagement and behavior.
- Important to understanding pathways to prevention
- Leisure: risk and opportunity
 - Natural context for prevention programs
 - Why?

Theoretical Foundation



Developmental Challenges of Youth—Producing Own Development

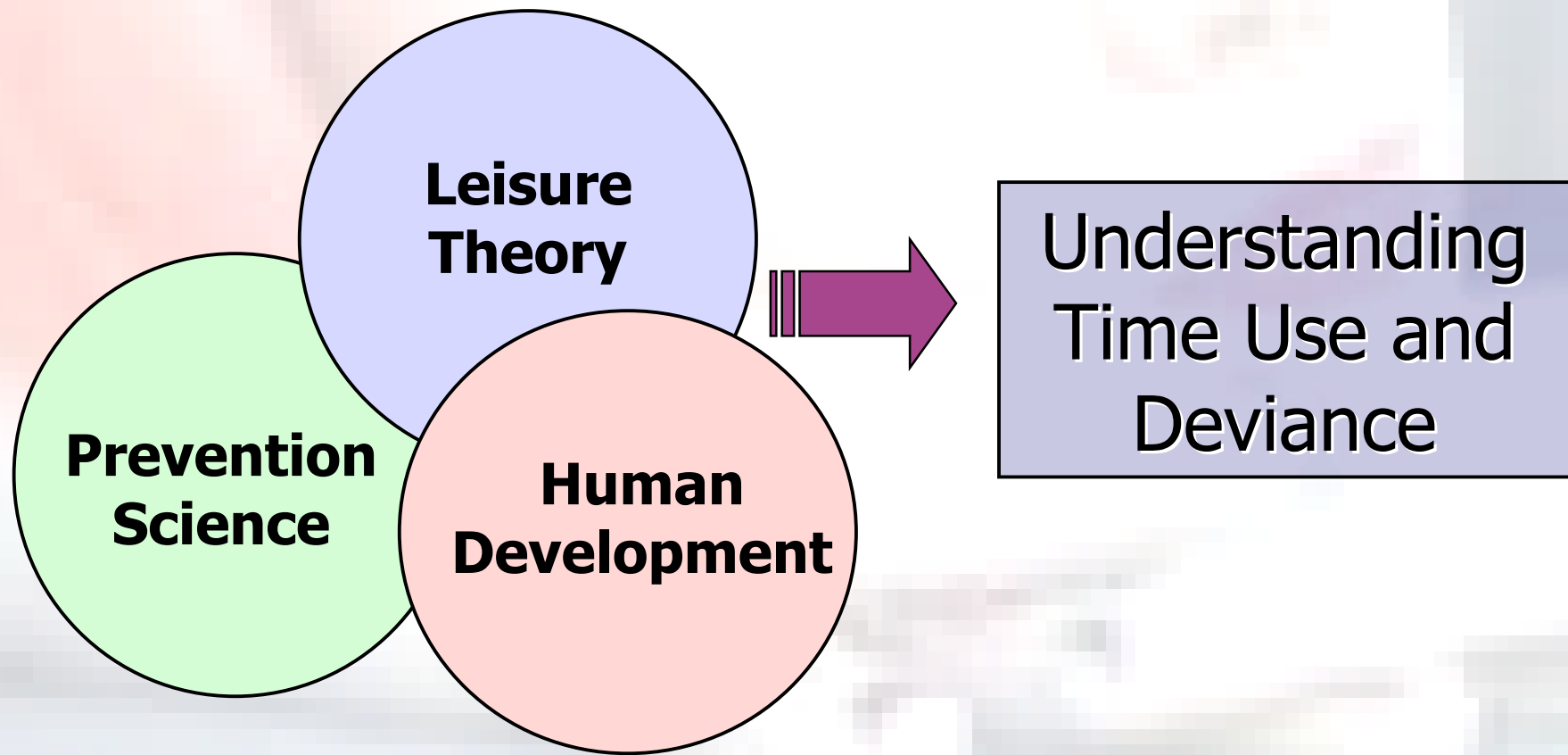
- Initiative
- Intimacy
- Identity
- Experimentation
- Social relationships
- Personal responsibility
- Achievement & competence



To Develop...

- Youth need
 - Supports
 - Opportunities
 - Programs
 - Services
- From
 - Caring Adults
 - Community Supports

Theoretical Foundation



Leisure Interventions as Prevention and Promotion

- *Problem free is not fully prepared.*
- *Fully prepared is not fully engaged.*

(Karen Pittman)

Prevention

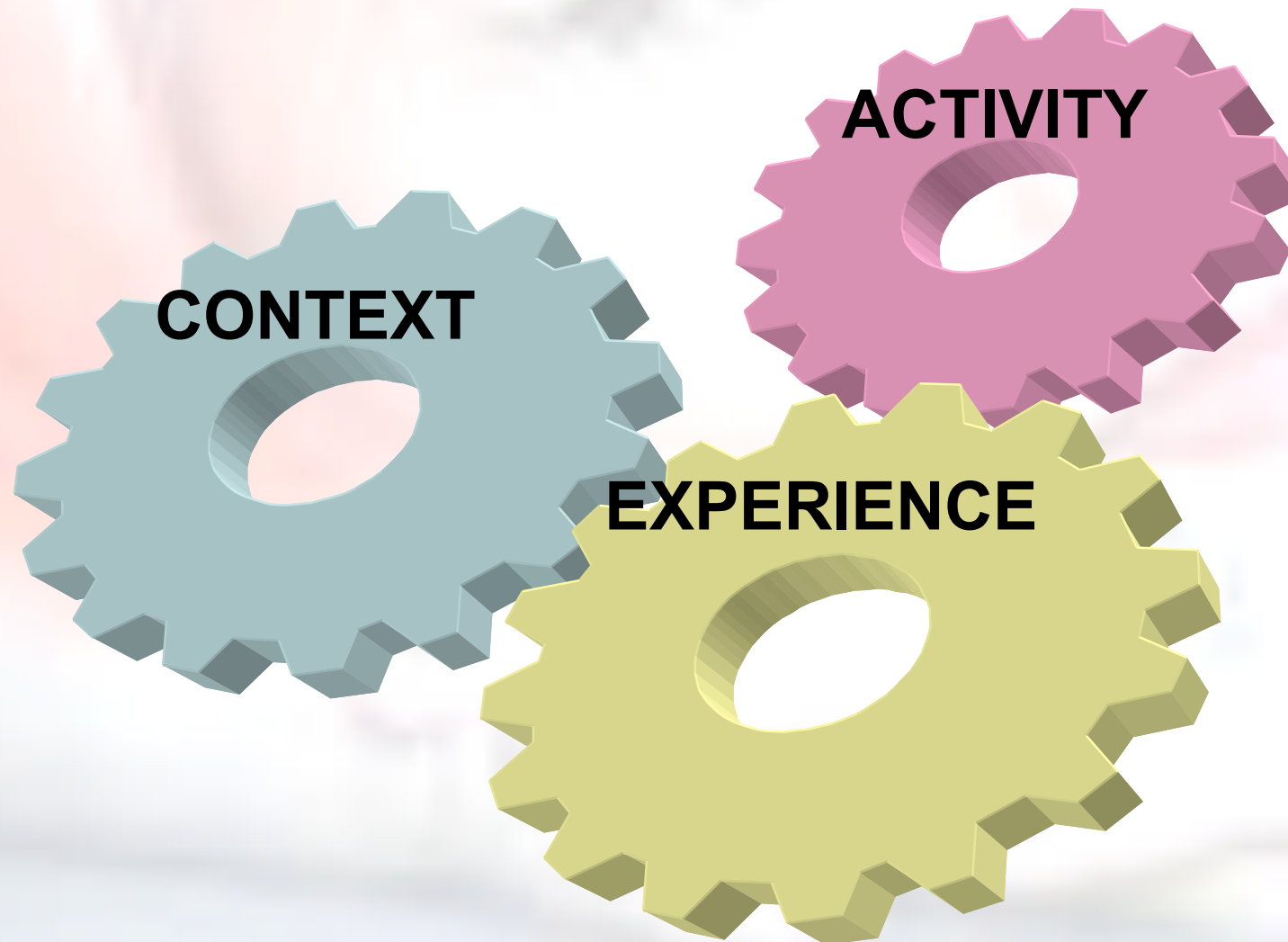
Prevention

- Risky behaviors
- Non-positive experience of leisure

Promotion

- Interest development
- Skills
- Personal awareness & responsibility

Understanding Leisure



Context

- Option to use resources
- Opportunities embedded
 - Exploring one's identity and gender roles
 - Becoming connected to schools, communities, and churches
 - Forming durable relationships with adults
 - Choice and voice (e.g., participating in rule and decision making)

Context

- Feeling a sense of belonging and mattering
- Being challenged
- Developing competence

Parental Influence

- Positive Involvement
 - Knowledge and interest
 - Having fun
- Autonomy support
 - Encourage and support child to initiate and make choices
 - Intrinsically motivating

Parental Influence Control vs. Knowledge

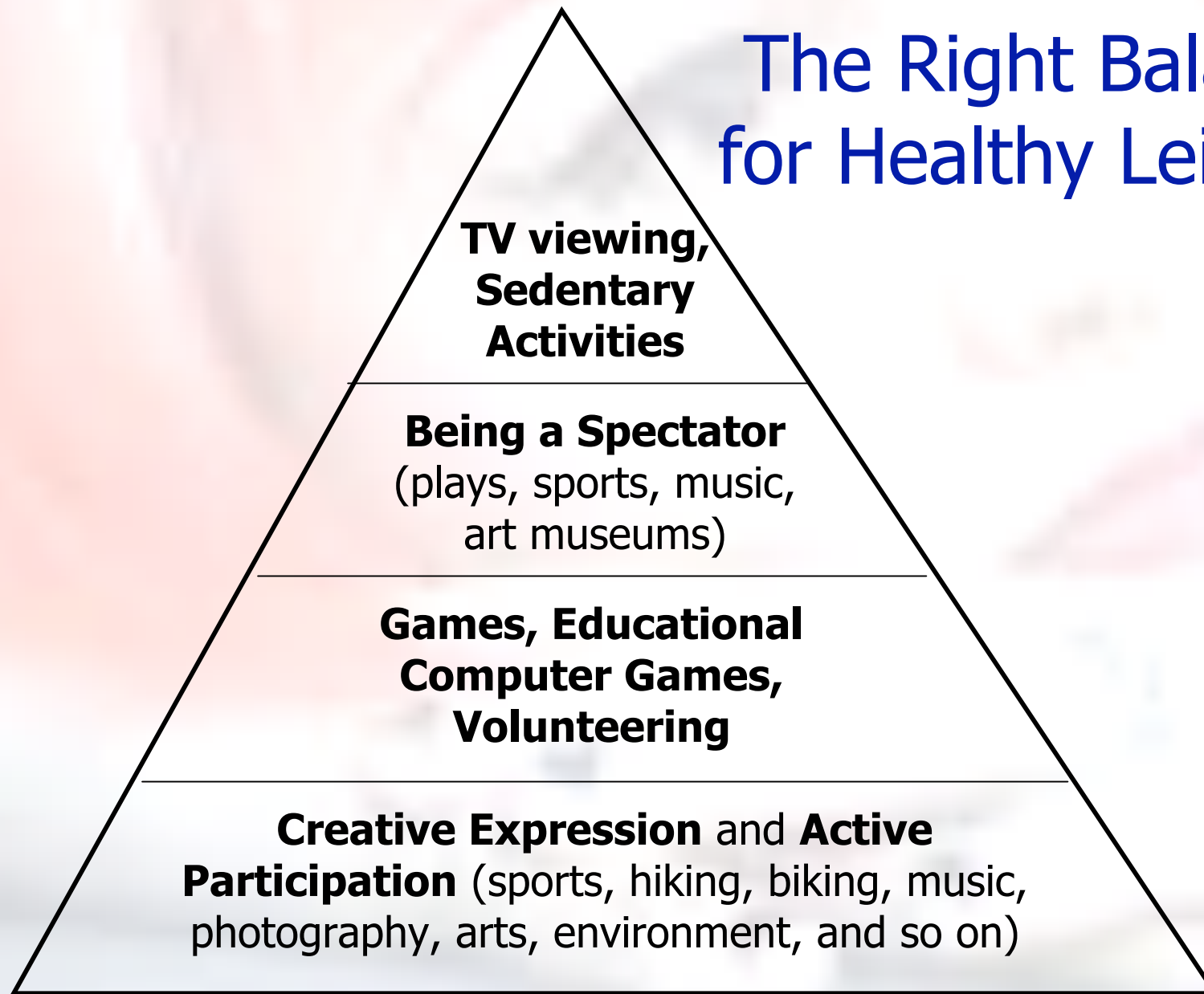
*“They (adults)
never leave us
alone. They don’t
trust us to do
things on our
own.”*

Kleop & Hendry,
2002

Activity – Container for More than Fun & Games

- Goal-oriented and/or creative and expressive in nature,
- Requires discipline and focused attention,
- Offers challenges to overcome,
- Build skills and increase one's level of competence, and
- Requires persistence, commitment and continuity to participation over time.

The Right Balance for Healthy Leisure



Experience

- Initiative
- Boredom & Interest
- Motivation
- Well-being
- Excitement
- Flow
- Stress

Initiative

- Capacity to direct attention and effort over time toward challenging goal.
- Overcoming obstacles.
(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1999; Larson, 2000; Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2002)

Optimal Arousal

Boredom (Caldwell, Darling, Payne, & Dowdy, 1999)

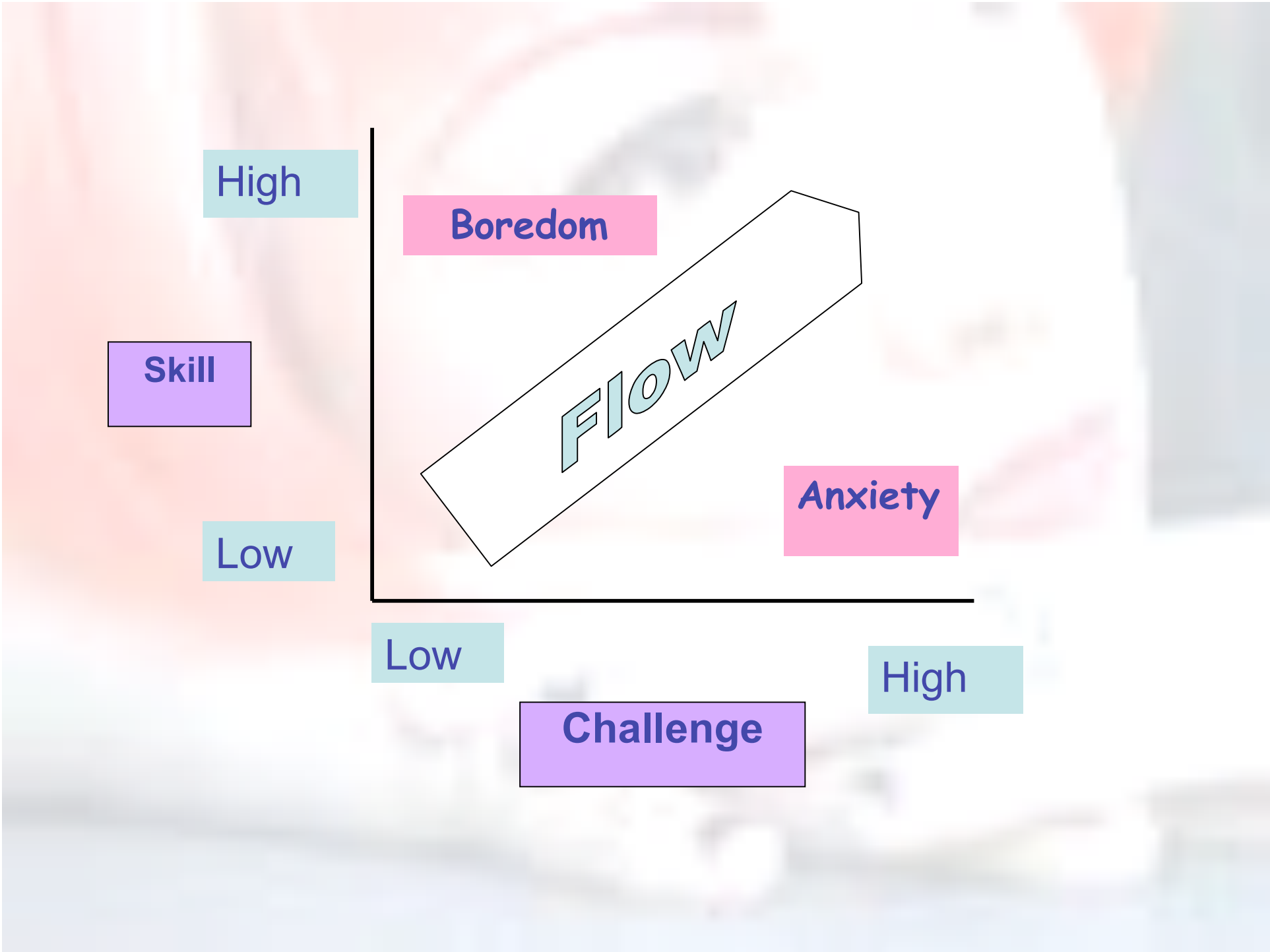
- Psychological roots, e.g., mismatch between challenge and skill level, routine
- Social control causes, e.g., I have no other choice

Interest (Hunter & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003)

- Wanting to be engaged, involved
- Fascinated
- Motivational
- Opposite of boredom

Experience -- Flow

- Clear goals
- Immediate feedback
- The activity becomes self-guiding
- Merging of action and awareness
- Being unaware of surroundings
- No worry of failure
- Experience of time is distorted
- Lack of self-consciousness
- **Optimal balance between skill and challenge**



High

Boredom

Skill

FLOW

Anxiety

Low

Low

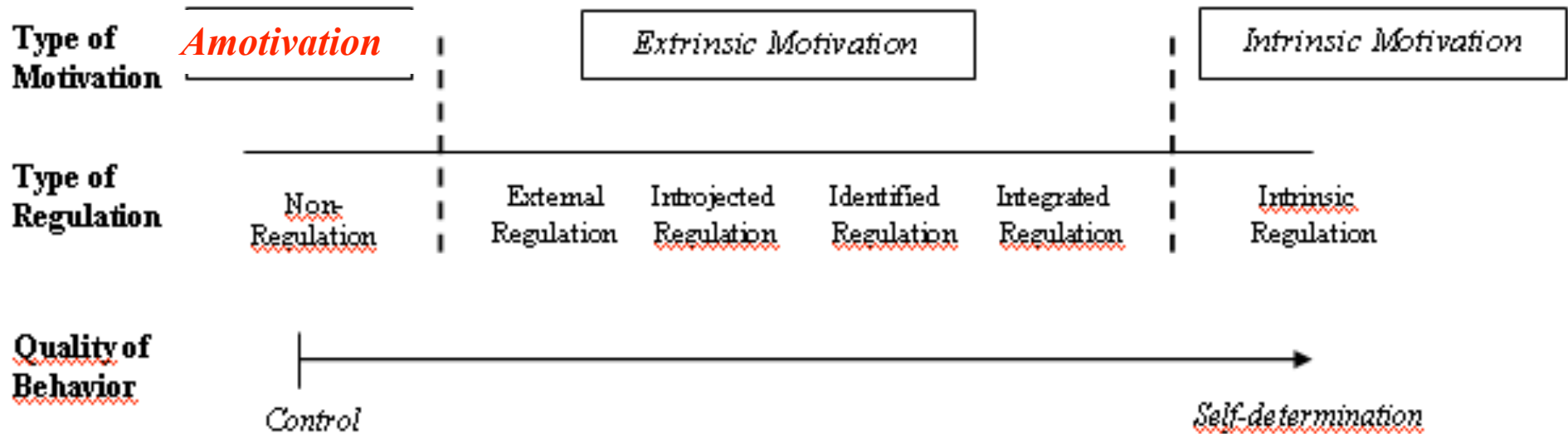
Challenge

High

Motivation

- What propels behavior?
- Many social contexts “controlling” – giving rewards, deadlines, surveillance
 - Undermines intrinsic motivation and often associated with negative outcomes (e.g., decreased physical activity, lower achievement)
- Important to develop self-regulation
- Leisure context should be self-determined and intrinsically motivating

Motivation Continuum



Process of *Internalization*

Affected by two styles: controlling and autonomy supportive (Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, & Briere, 2001)

Types of Motivation

- Amotivation** ➤ I used to like my free time, but now, nothing much interests me.
- External** ➤ Because it is what I am supposed to do.
- Introjected** ➤ Because it impresses my friends.
- Identified** ➤ Because it is a good way to develop skills that I can use later in life.
- Intrinsic** ➤ Because it is fun.

Amotivation

- Belief that action has no control over outcome.
- Action without intent.
- No sense of purpose.
- No expectation of reward.
- Does not mean inaction.

Need for Leisure Education

- Many youth not well equipped to deal with large blocks of unsupervised free time
- 40% of time is “free”
- Boredom in leisure ~ 10% of youth
- Leisure matter of risk and opportunity

Need for Leisure Education

- Changes in drives, emotions and motivations in *early* adolescents
 - ***Ignite passions!*** (Dahl, 2005)
- Support gradually emerging skills in self-control and planning
- Negotiating constraints – learning to be self-regulatory in context

Two Curricula – Risk Prevention & Health Promotion

- TimeWise: Taking Charge of Leisure Time (published by ETR Associations, www.etr.org)
- HealthWise: Life Skills for Adolescents

Purpose: Prevent substance abuse and promote healthy leisure

- Substance abuse prevention program funded by U.S. NIDA
- Quasi-experimental design
 - 9 rural schools provided data, 4 rural got program, Grade 7 got 6 core sessions
- Grades 8 & 9 advanced skill builder lessons

Evaluation

- Baseline data from 7th grade, Fall 2000
- N=634 at baseline
- Three waves of follow-up data: Springs 2001, 2002, 2003
- Final N ~ 475 (75%)

At Baseline:

- 49.7% female
- 95% Euro-American
- 51% earn mostly As and Bs in school
- 31.1% get free or subsidized lunch

How often have you done the following?

Never	Before, but not this year	Once or twice this year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Almost every day or daily
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Purposely damage someone's property or belongings.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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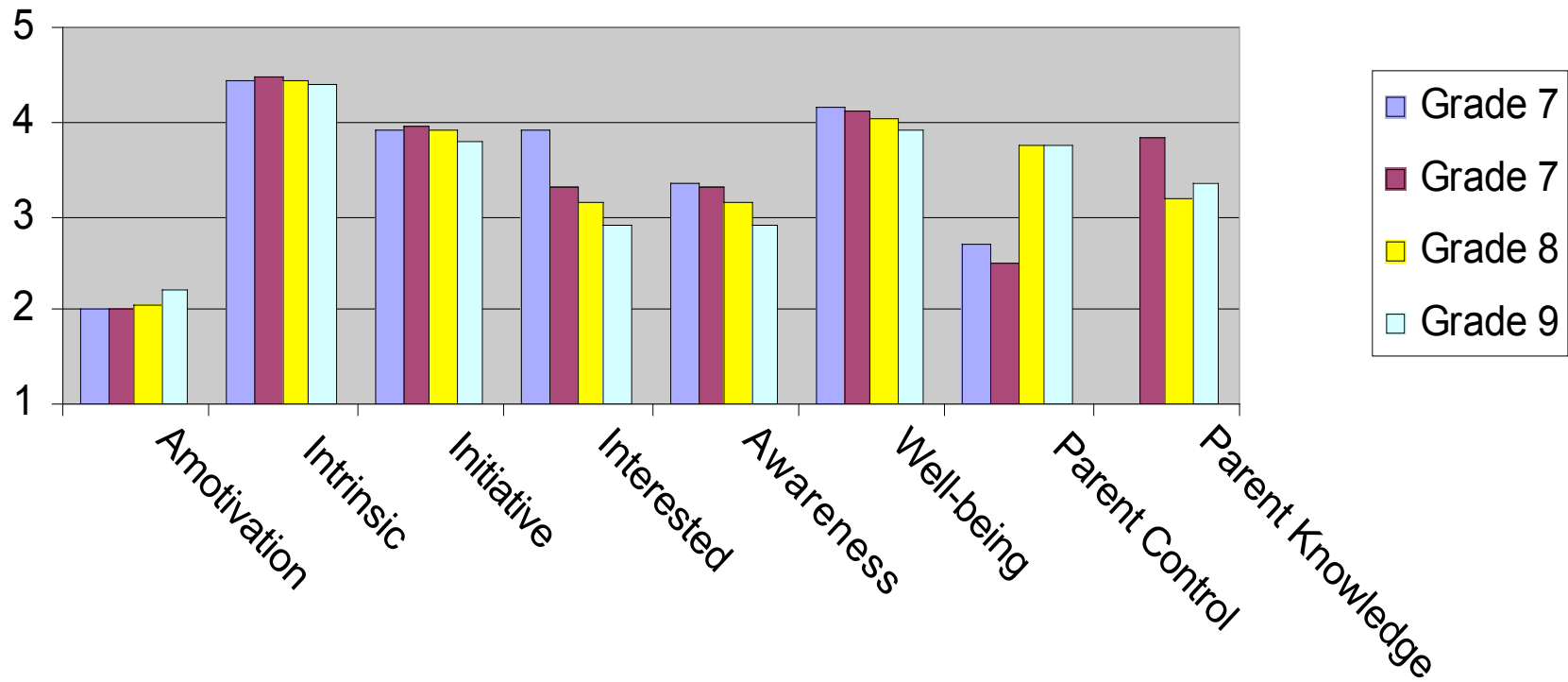
Rebelling in Free Time

I do things in my free time to get back at my parents.

I do things in my free time to get back at society.

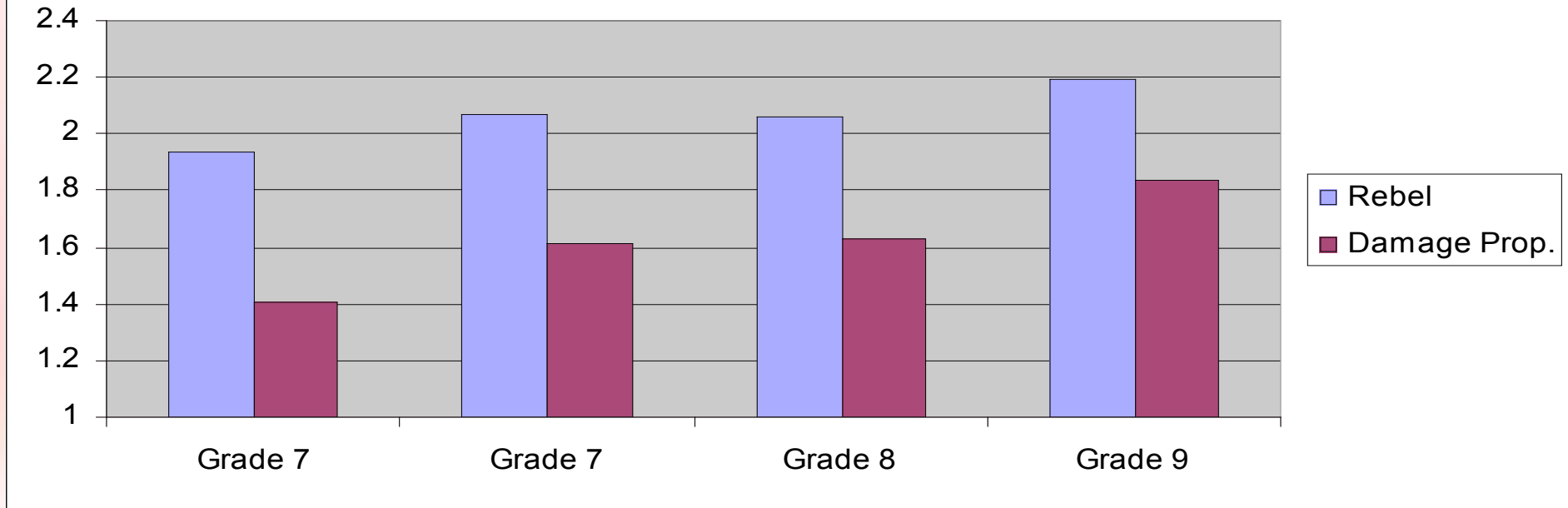
My parents would not be happy about what I do in my free time.

Change Across Time in Control Group



All significantly different across time.

Deviant Behavior Across Time

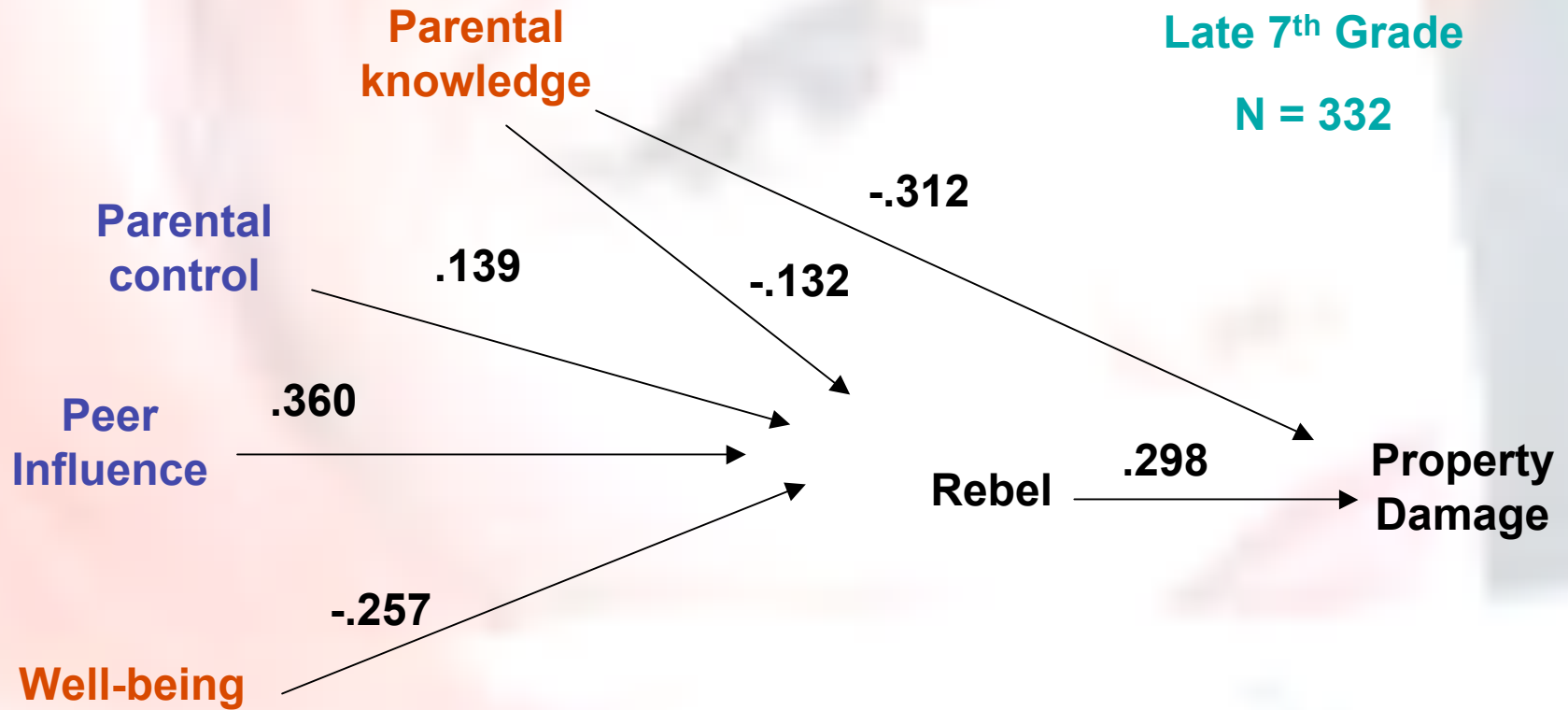


Both significantly increase across time.

Predicting Deviance – A Leisure and Developmental Perspective

- Using an ecological perspective
 - What is the role of leisure-related person characteristics, parents, and peers in predicting using leisure to rebel and damaging property?
 - Do the relations change over time?
 - End of 7th, 8th, and 9th grades

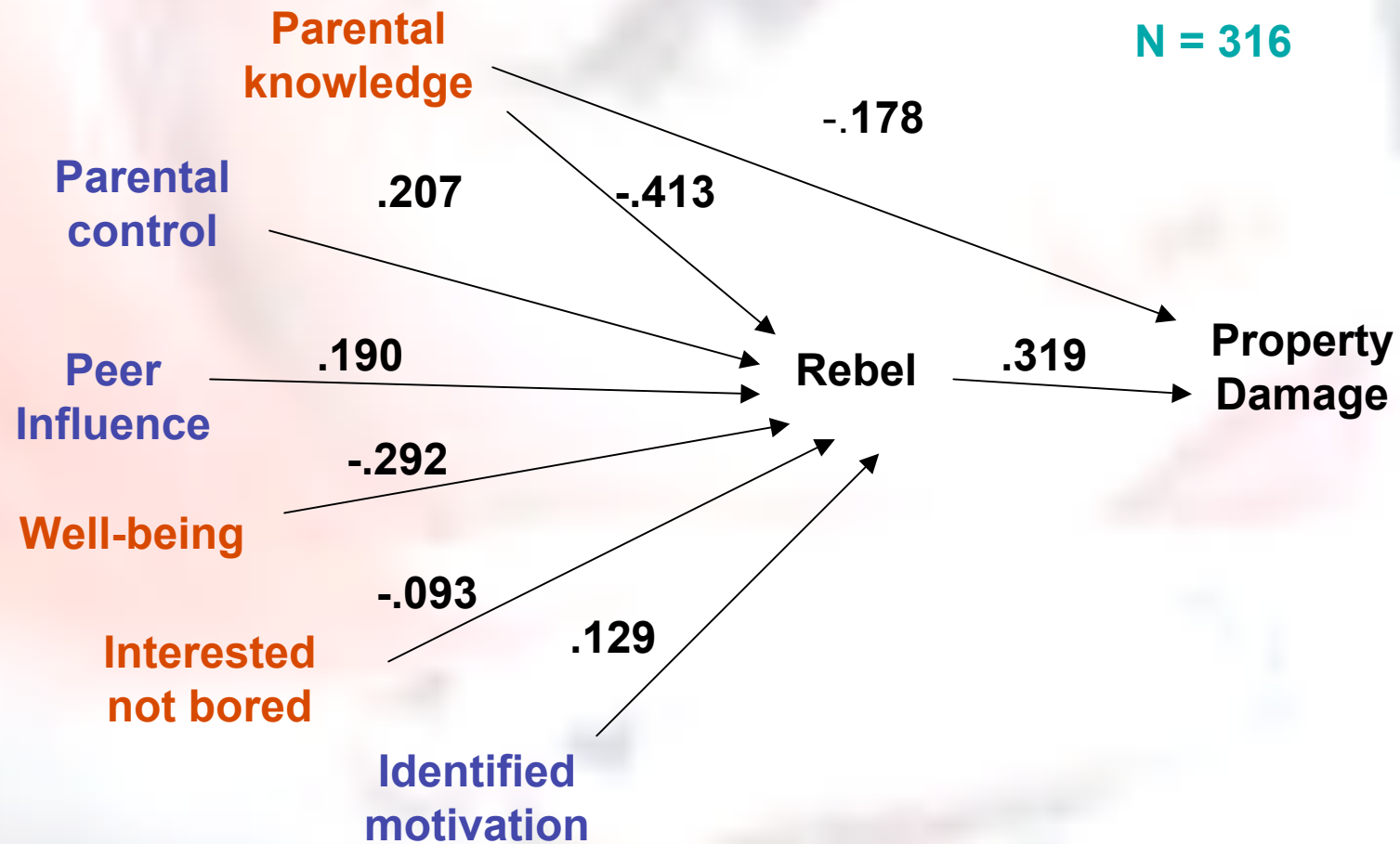
TIME 2
Late 7th Grade
N = 332



AR² = .617

AR² = .201

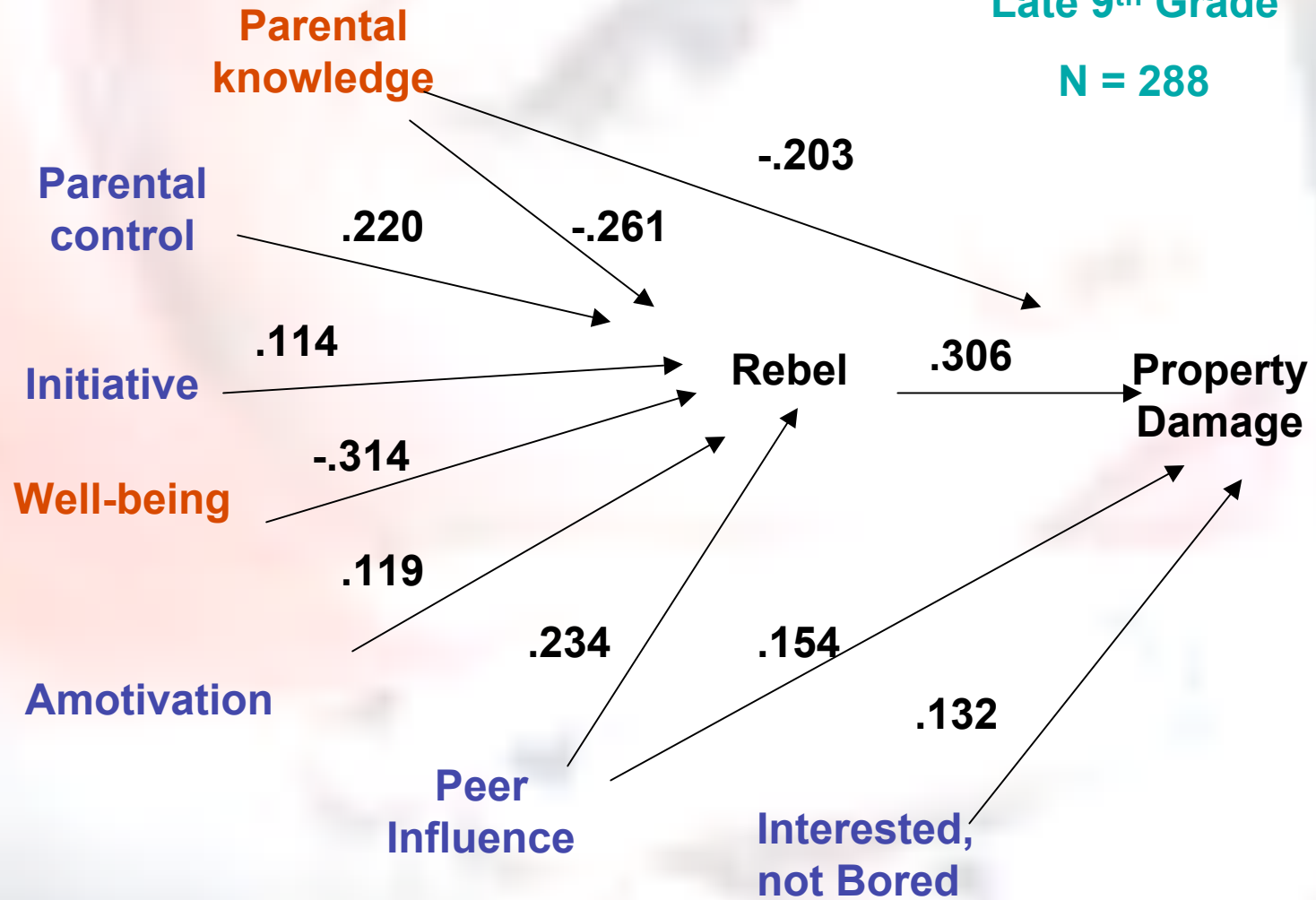
TIME 3
Late 8th Grade
N = 316



AR² = .680

AR² = .207

TIME 4
Late 9th Grade
N = 288



AR² = .641

AR² = .264

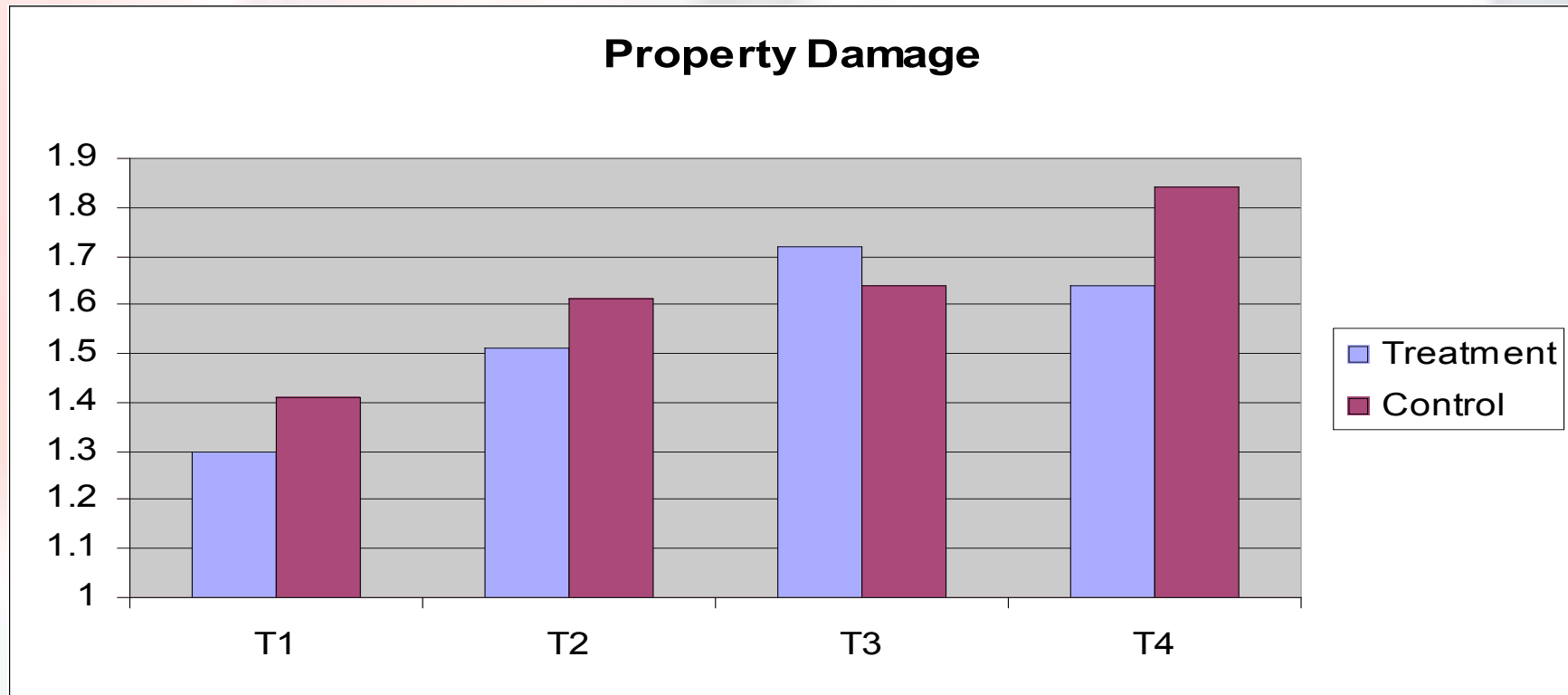
Across Time

- Purposefully rebelling in free time mediates damaging property for all variables except parental knowledge and peer influence at T4
- Parental knowledge and well-being always protective
- Parental control always negative
- Peers always negative

Across Time

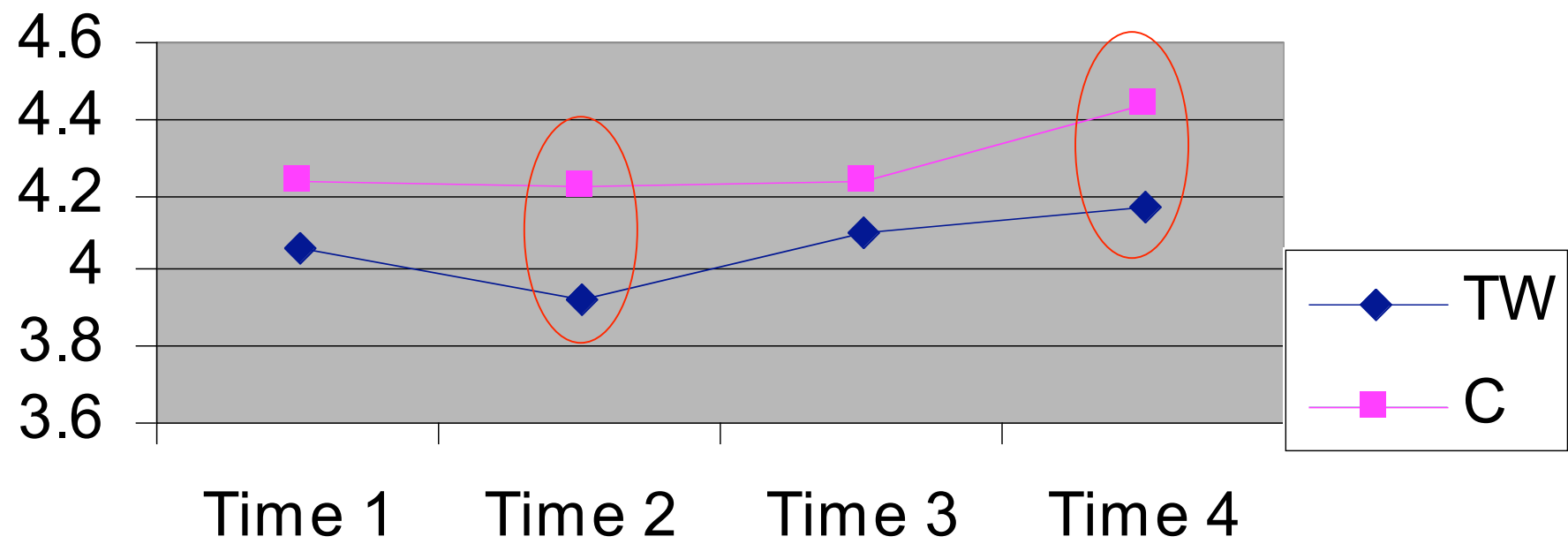
- Motivation, initiative and interest change and vary
 - Seems that rebelling becomes more internalized
 - Routine activity theory suggests that these situations become more self-rewarding
- Influences seem more complex
 - Amotivation comes in at T4
- Fairly good explanatory power (R^2)

Leisure Intervention?



T4 only significant difference

Non-self Regulatory Motivations



Conclusions

- Leisure intervention may be protective
- Public policy implications
- Who is responsible:
 - Adolescents
 - Schools
 - Parents
 - Community (recreation and other providers)
- In context – recognizing and helping overcome constraints

Conclusions

- Insufficiency hypothesis
 - Significant numbers of youth are not participating at levels sufficient to support their development and future civic competence
- Inadequacy hypothesis
 - Non-participation related to inadequacy of existing public systems