



The Relationship Among Cognitive Schemata, Job-related Traumatic Exposure, and PTSD in Journalists

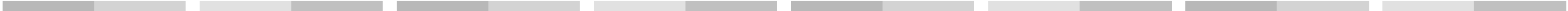
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May, 2001
ESTSS



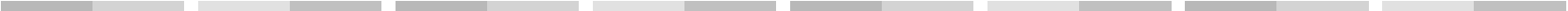


Journalists and Traumatic Stressors

- Exposure to traumatic assignments
 - Previous research
 - PTSD symptoms in journalists
(e.g. Simpson & Boggs, 1999; Feinstein, 2001)
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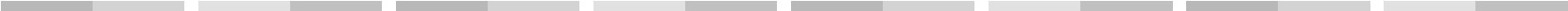


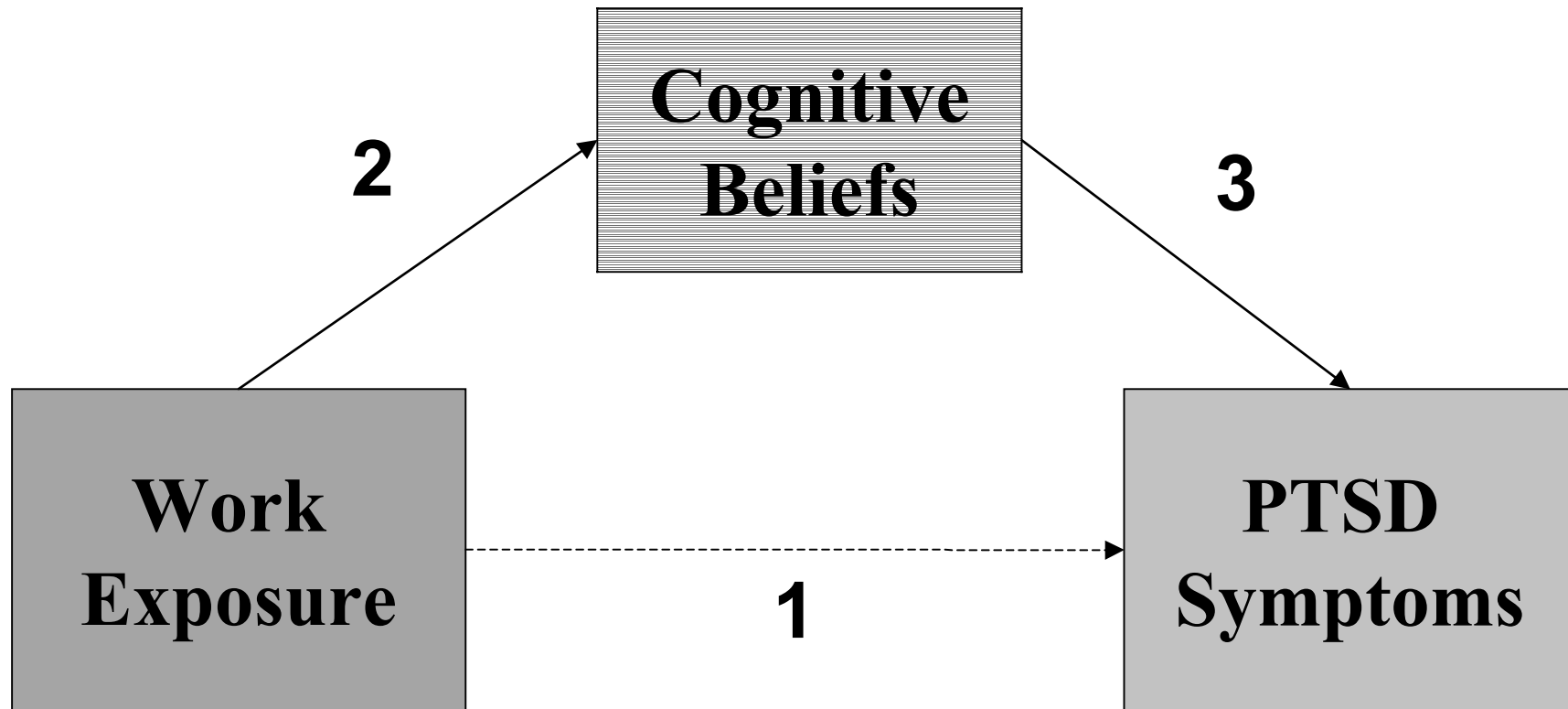
Schemas and PTSD

- World assumptions
 - Self-serving biases
 - Exposure to trauma and negative cognitive assumptions
 - Cognitive assumptions and distress
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Project Goals

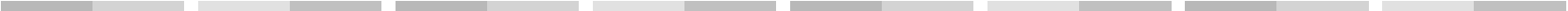
- 1) Do journalists exposed to traumatic assignments experience post-traumatic distress?
 - 2) Is job-related traumatic exposure associated with negative beliefs?
 - 3) Are negative beliefs associated with PTSD symptoms in journalists?
 - 4) Do these beliefs mediate the effect of job-related traumatic exposure on PTSD symptoms?
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Cognitive Beliefs as a mediator of the relationship between Work Exposure and PTSD symptoms



Method

- Web survey
 - 3713 emails to 369 U.S. daily newspapers
 - 906 (24.4%) responded
 - 866 useable surveys
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Participants

- **Journalism Experience:** Mdn = 9 years
 - **Job Position:** Mostly reporters (86.8%)
 - **Setting:** Mostly urban (66.4%)
 - **Age:** Mdn = 33 years
 - **Gender:** 49.5% women, 50.5% men
 - **Ethnicity:** mostly white (88.9%)
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Measures

Exposure to job-related traumatic events

- frequency, range, intensity

Cognitive Beliefs

- Negative Cognitions about the World (Foa, et al.,1999)
- Optimism for Future Life Events
- World Assumptions Scale (Janoff-Bulman,1989)

PTSD Symptoms

- PTSD checklist (PCL, Weathers, et al.,1993)
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Measures

Work Stressors

- Quantitative Workload Inventory (Spector & Jex, 1998).

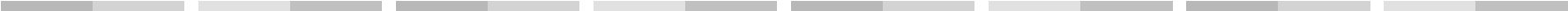
Exposure to Personal Traumatic Events

Emotional Reactions to Traumatic Event



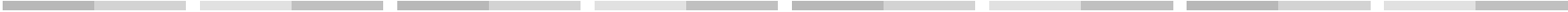


Exposure in 2000

- 96% exposed to at least one assignment in which someone hurt or killed
 - Mean of 7.78 different events covered (from 14 types)
 - **Most common:** 1) Motor vehicle accidents
2) Injured/dead child
3) Murder
 - **Least common:** War
 - **Direct Threats** 1) verbally threatened (61%)
2) injured (6%)
3) physical attack (5%)
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Most stressful assignments in 2000

- Dead/injured child (36.1%)
 - Murder (11.2%)
 - Motor vehicle accidents (8.1%)
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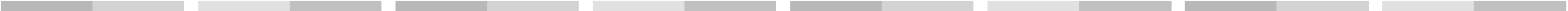


Emotional Reactions to Assignments

- - 70% experienced at least one intense reaction to a work-related event
 - Intense horror/disgust (47%) or helplessness are most common (46%)
 - Fear is less common (11%)
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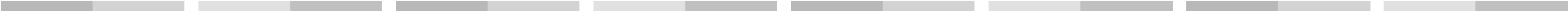
Personal Traumatic Exposure

- 76.6% experience at least 1 of 9 events in lifetime (*mean* = 1.87).
 - **Most common:** Natural disaster (40.1%)
 - **Least common:** Military combat (3%), torture (1.5%)
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Summary

Most journalists have covered assignments in which they are:

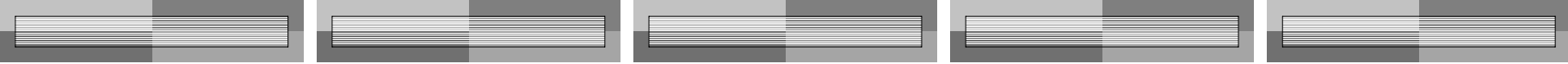
- personally threatened
 - exposed to events in which people are hurt or killed
 - indirectly involved with such events
 - most have intense emotional reaction to at least one event
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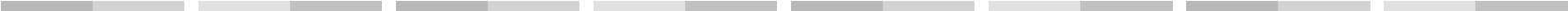
Current PTSD Prevalence

- 4.3% of journalists (n = 34) met PTSD cutoff score on PCL





Do journalists with PTSD differ from those without PTSD?

- ↑ work-related traumatic exposure
 - ↑ personal traumatic exposure
 - ↑ emotional reactions (fear, horror, helplessness)
 - ↑ workload stressors
 - ↑ negative beliefs on some measures
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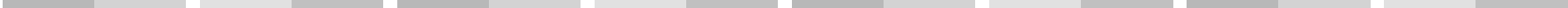


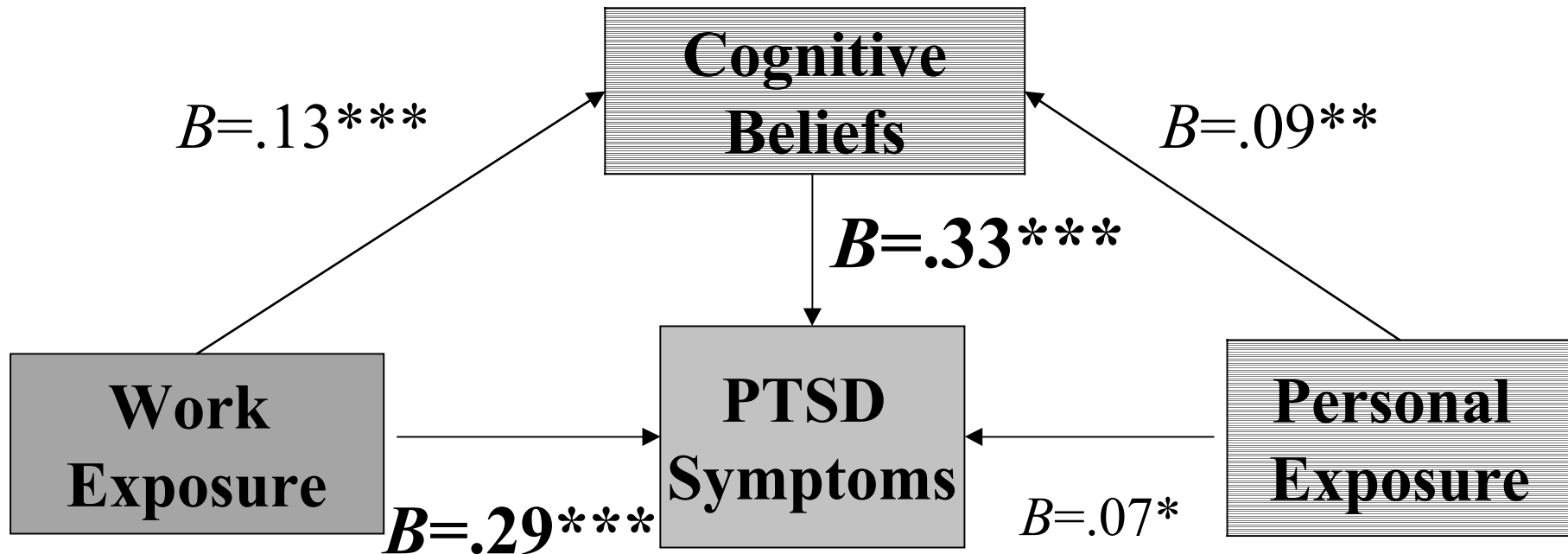
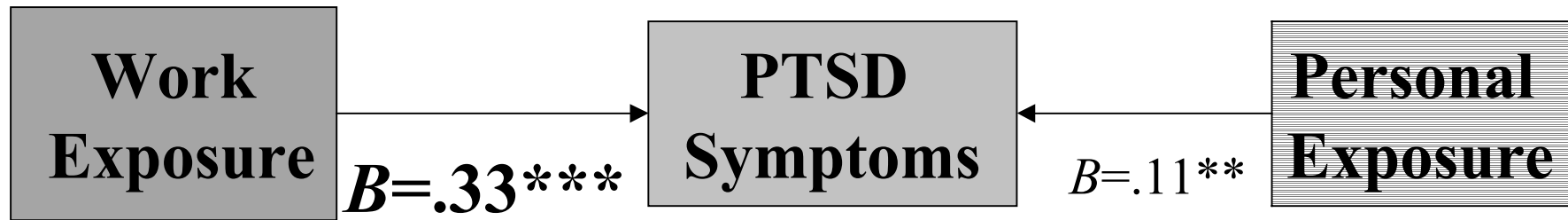
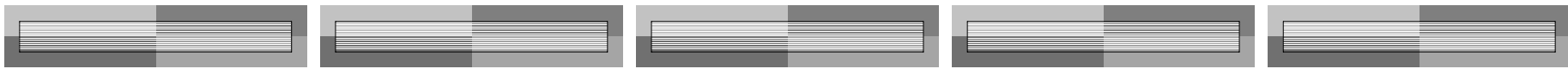
Primary Regression Analyses

● **Regression Analysis**

- Does Work Exposure account for PTSD symptoms?
- Does Work Exposure account for Cognitive Beliefs?
- Does Cognitive Beliefs account for PTSD symptoms?

● **Mediational model with Hierarchical Regression**

- Is Work Exposure no longer significantly associated with PTSD symptoms when Cognitive Beliefs enter the regression equation? (Baron & Kenny, 1986)
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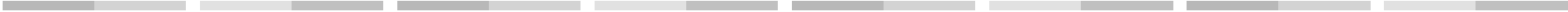


Cognitive Beliefs in relationship between Work Exposure and PTSD symptoms



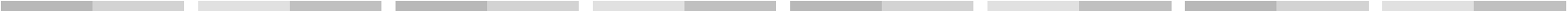


Conclusion

- Work-related traumatic events associated with PTSD symptoms, as well as PTSD diagnosis
 - Overall, PTSD prevalence is low given the high exposure
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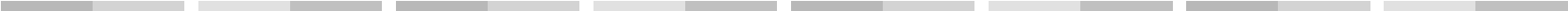


Conclusion

- Journalists with negative cognitive beliefs show more PTSD symptoms, as well as PTSD diagnosis
 - Cognitive beliefs do not fully mediate the relationship between work-related exposure to traumatic events and PTSD symptoms
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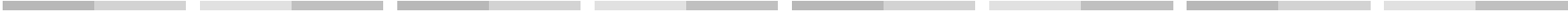


Summary

- 1) Do journalists exposed to traumatic assignments experience post-traumatic distress? **YES**
 - 2) Is job-related traumatic exposure associated with negative cognitive beliefs? **YES**
 - 3) Are negative beliefs associated with PTSD symptoms in journalists? **YES**
 - 4) Do these beliefs mediate the effect of job-related traumatic exposure on PTSD symptoms? **NO**
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Limitations

- Limited assessment of psychological distress
 - Limited time frame
 - Retrospective/Cross-sectional
 - Low rate of PTSD
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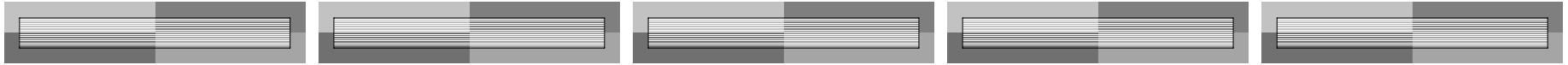
Implications

Interventions

- Reduce distress for minority of journalists with PTSD
- Prevention efforts for those with high exposure to traumatic assignments

Theoretical

- Cognitive model considered
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The End

Questions?





Model Variations

- Limit to exposed participants
 - Use PTSD diagnosis as dependent measure
 - Control for Workload Stressors
 - Include Emotional Reactions
 - Include Recent Attitude Change
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