



Moving to, and Growing Up in, Ireland:

Immigrant children's experiences of early life stress, supportive relationships, and long-term psychological wellbeing

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Background

- ❖ Stressors associated with some children's migration experiences can result in poorer mental health functioning (e.g. Abdi, 2018; Kim et al., 2018)
 - Known in the psychiatry of migration as a grief process--considered as a type of stress characterized by its intensity and length (Carta et al., 2005)
 - Younger children at time of immigration do better (Beiser et al., 2013)

- ❖ Sense of relatedness with peers and parents can be important buffers for many psychological stressors (King, 2015)

- ❖ Stressors experienced by parents can lead to higher conflict or estranged parent-child relations (e.g. Qin, 2008)

Immigrant children:

- ❖ Make up 10% of primary school children in Ireland (McNicholas & Skokauskas, 2013)
- ❖ Less likely to report positive peer relationships at school (Molcho, Kelly, & Nic Gabhainn, 2010)
- ❖ Show no sig differences in psychopathology when compared with native children on number of stressors and SDQ scores (Cotter et al., 2019)

The current research focuses more on the significance of the migration experience and age at which this took place

Immigrant Definition

- Variable MML51: Was the Study Child born in Ireland?
- Variable MML53: How long ago did the Study Child come to live in Ireland?

Three groups:

1. Native: Born in Ireland
2. Moved in infancy/early childhood: Not born in Ireland, moved before age five
3. Moved in middle childhood: Not born in Ireland, moved between the age of five and nine

Data from Wave 1 (nine years old) and Wave 2 (13 years old) of the Child Cohort (GUI)

Research Questions

The impact of the migration experience on psychological wellbeing at age nine and 13 and the importance of relatedness

➤ Do children who...

Native born

Move in
early
childhood

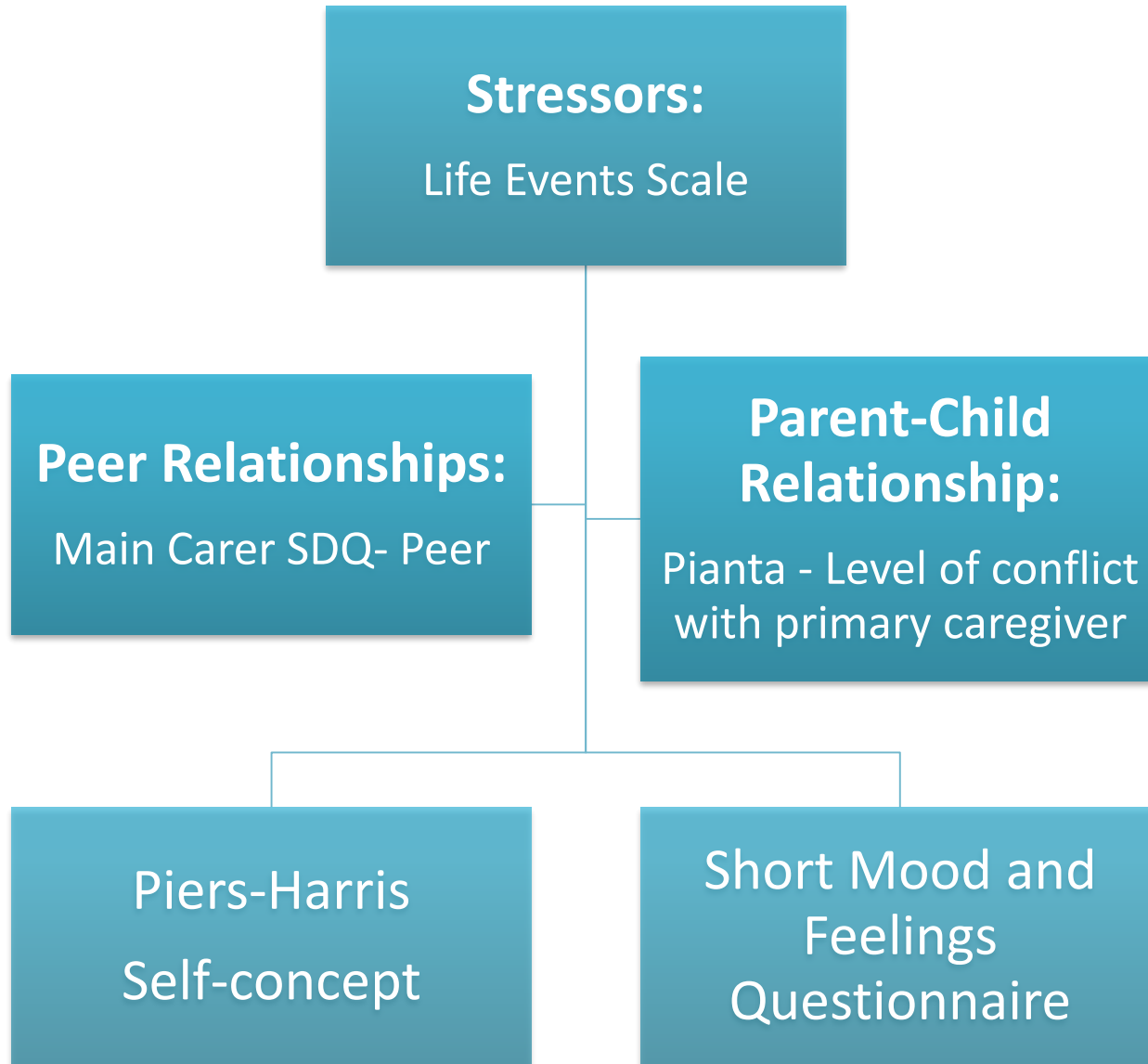
Move in
middle
childhood

➤ differ in terms of their

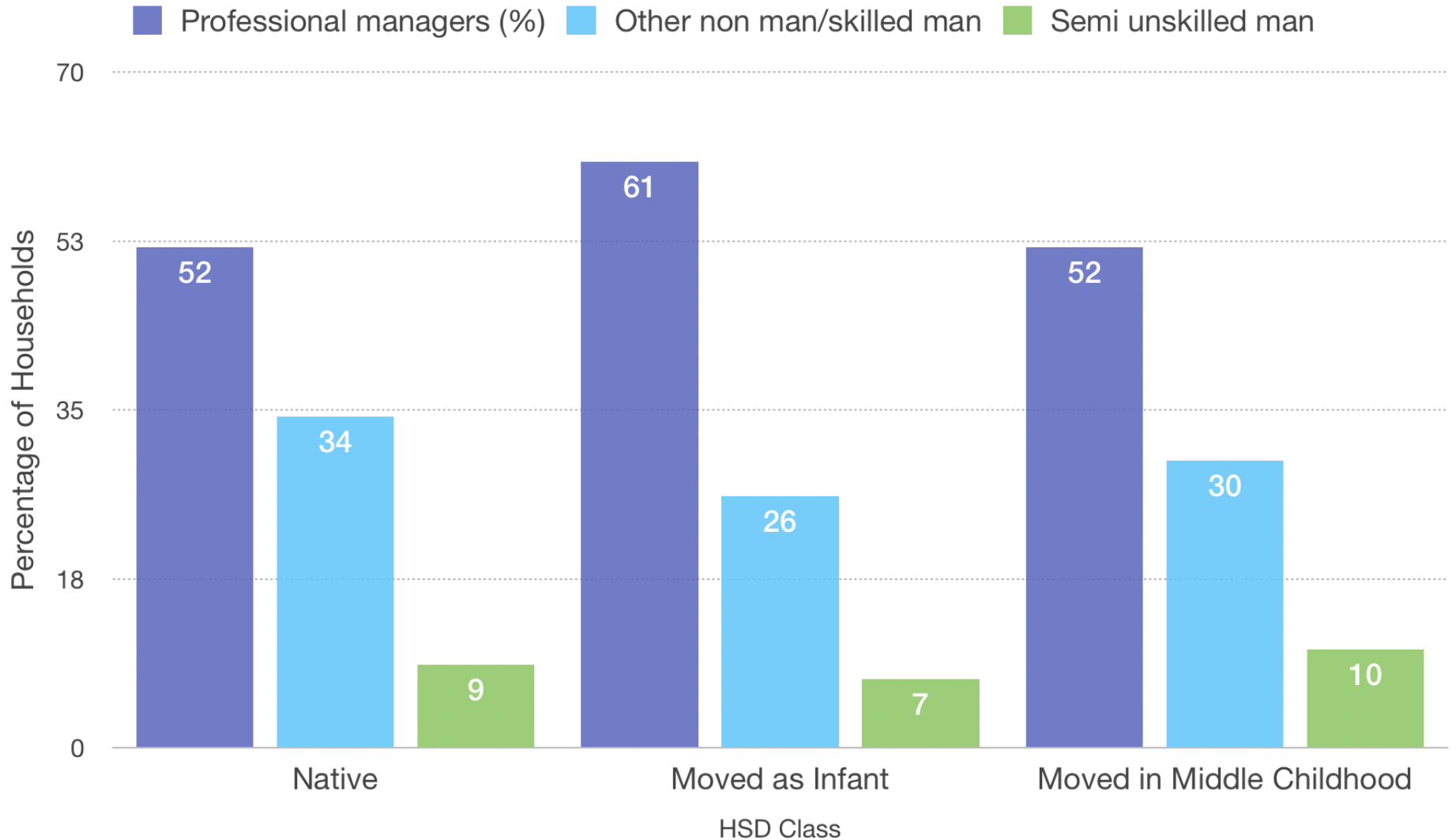
- experiences of ELS
- psychological wellbeing
- relationships with parents/peers?

➤ How do relationships mediate the association between ELS and later mental health functioning?

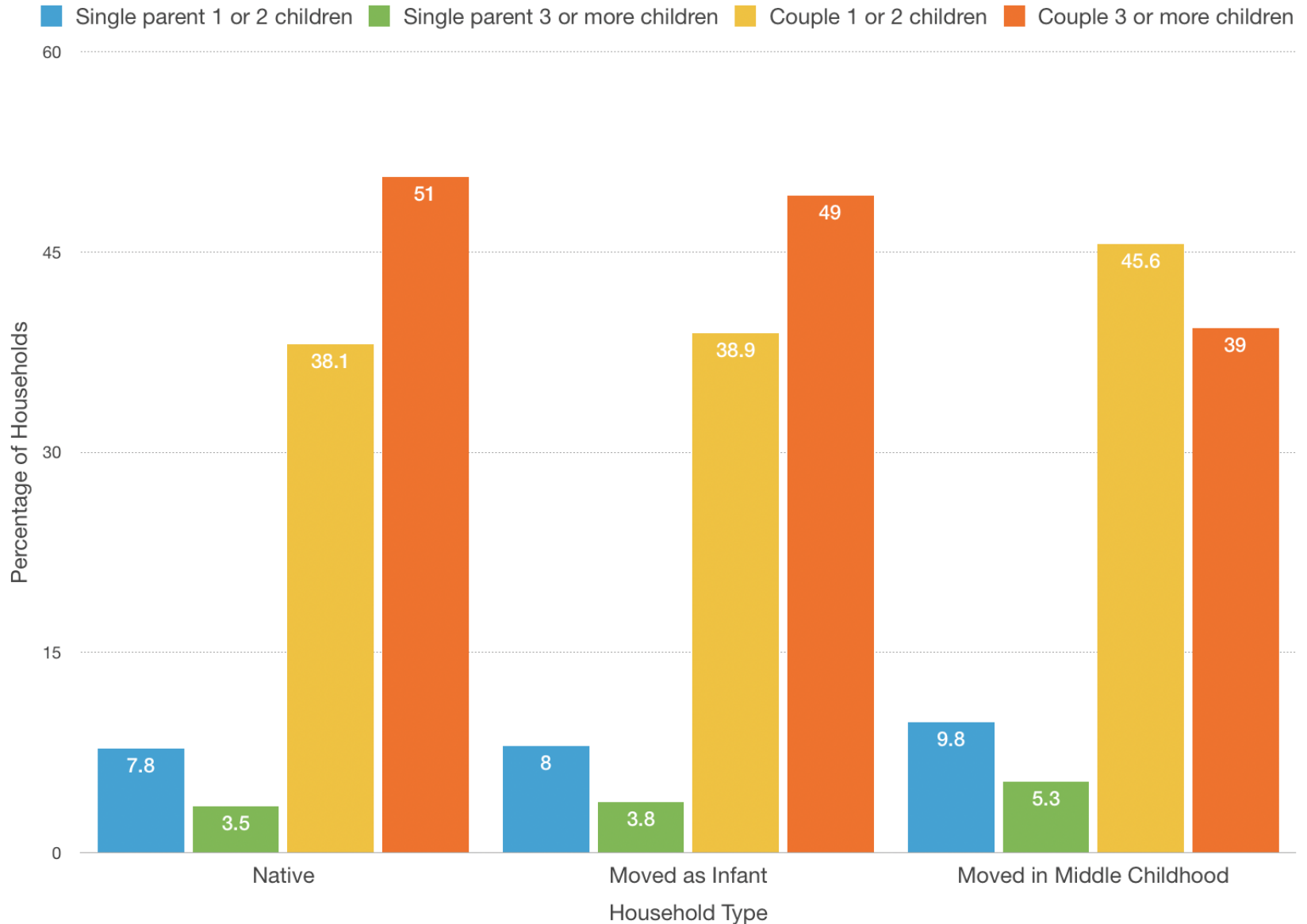
Method: Measures



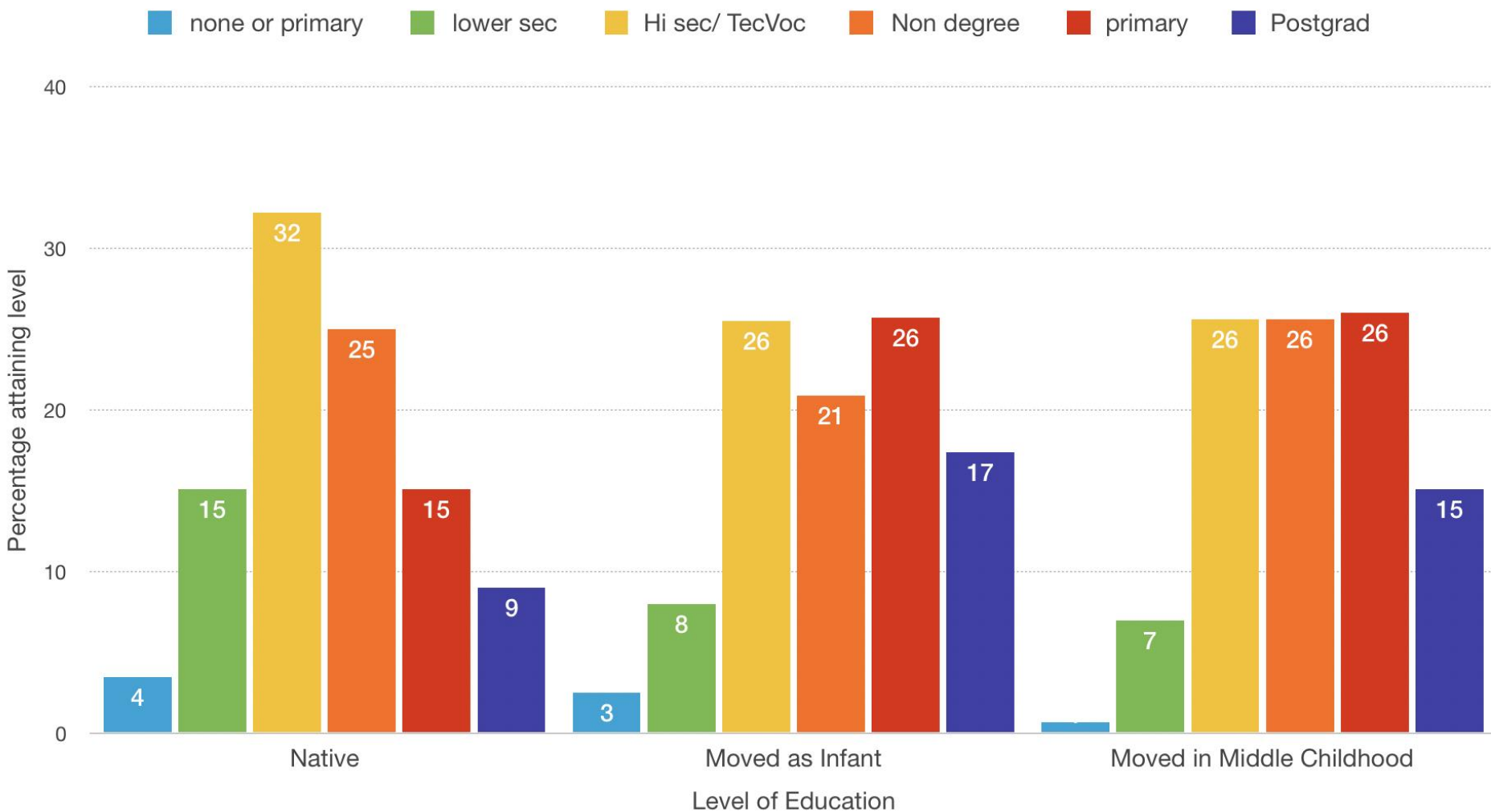
Demographics: Social Class



Demographics: Household Type



Demographics: Mother's highest level of educational attainment

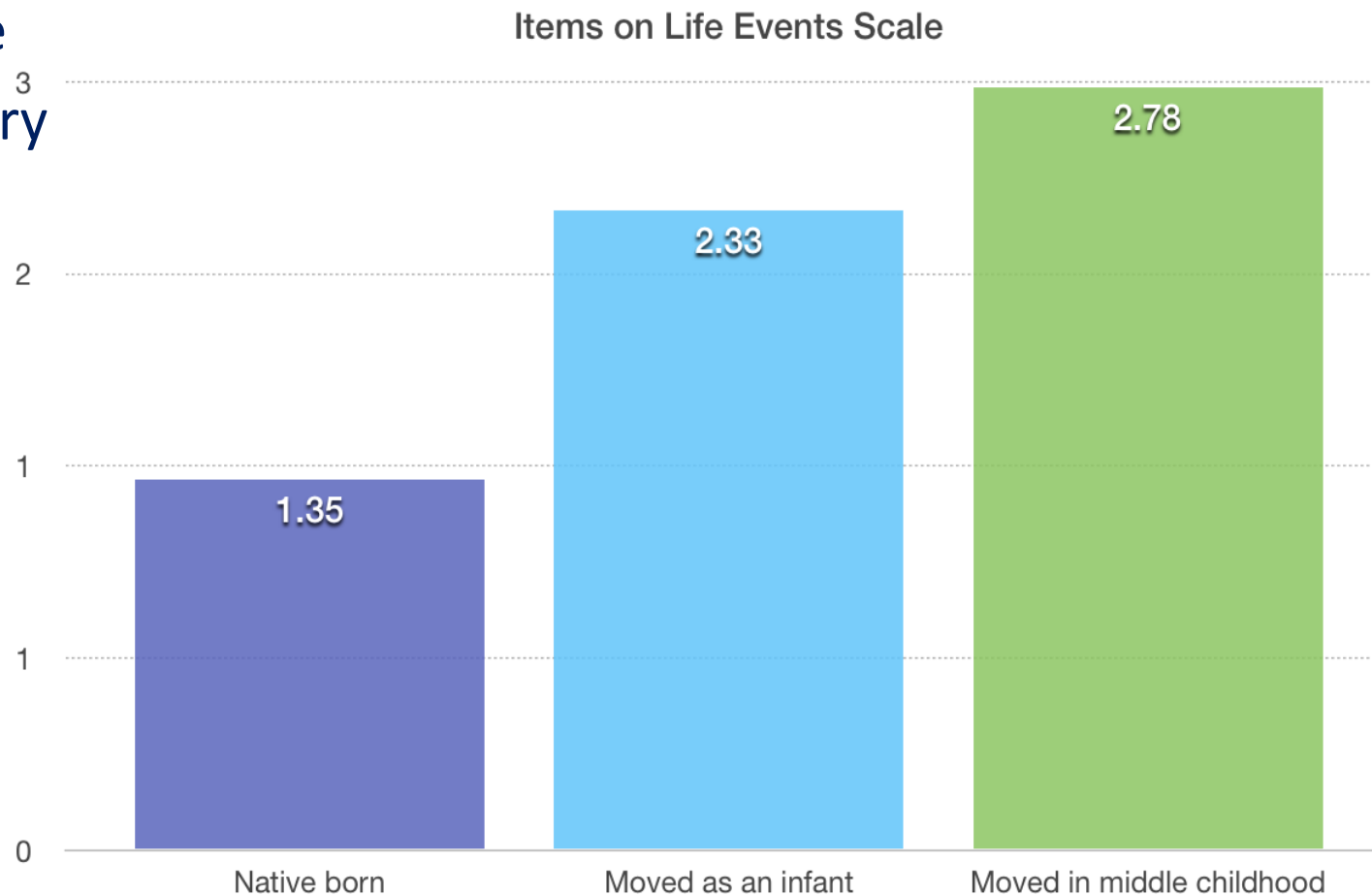


Results: Life Events Scale

Two moving Qs:

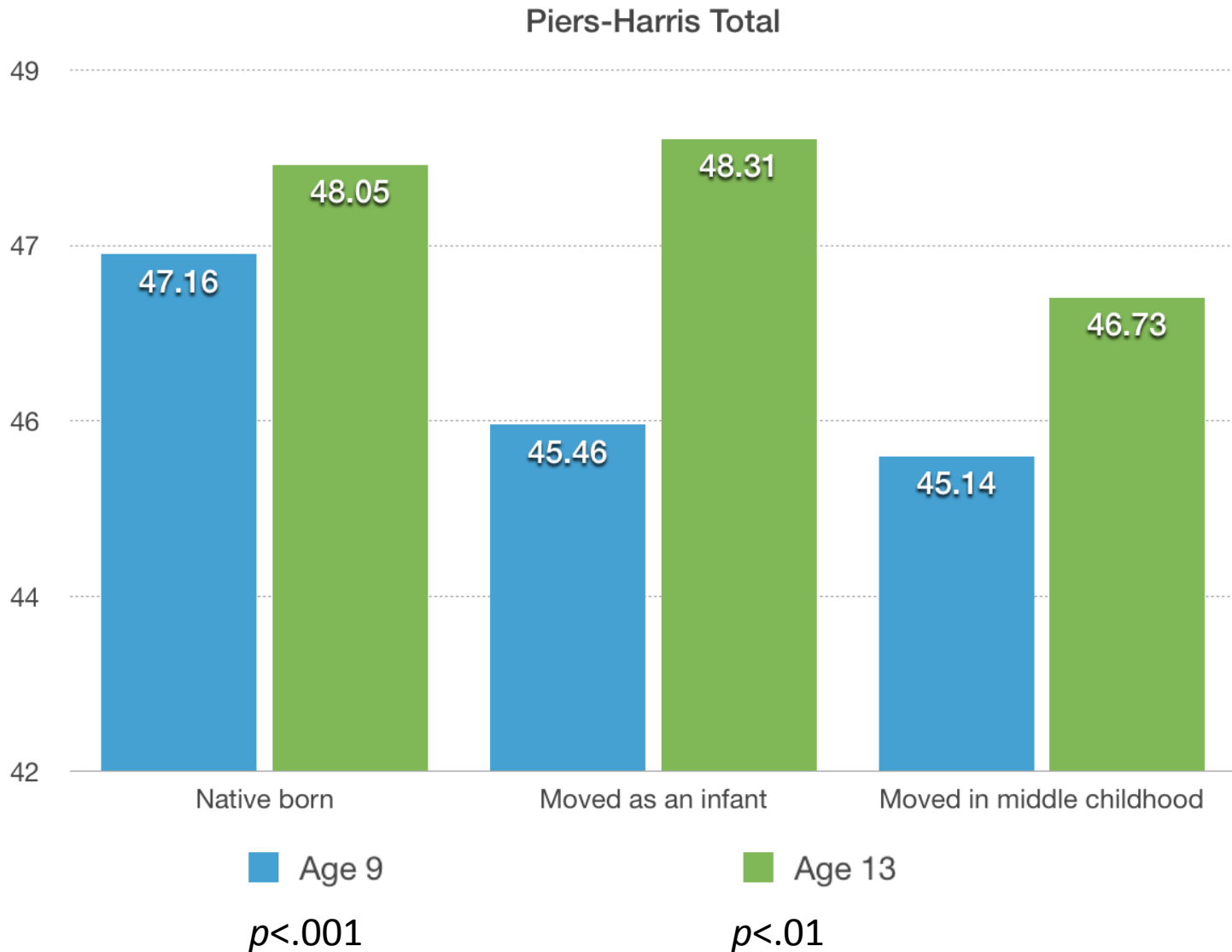
→ Moving house

→ Moving country



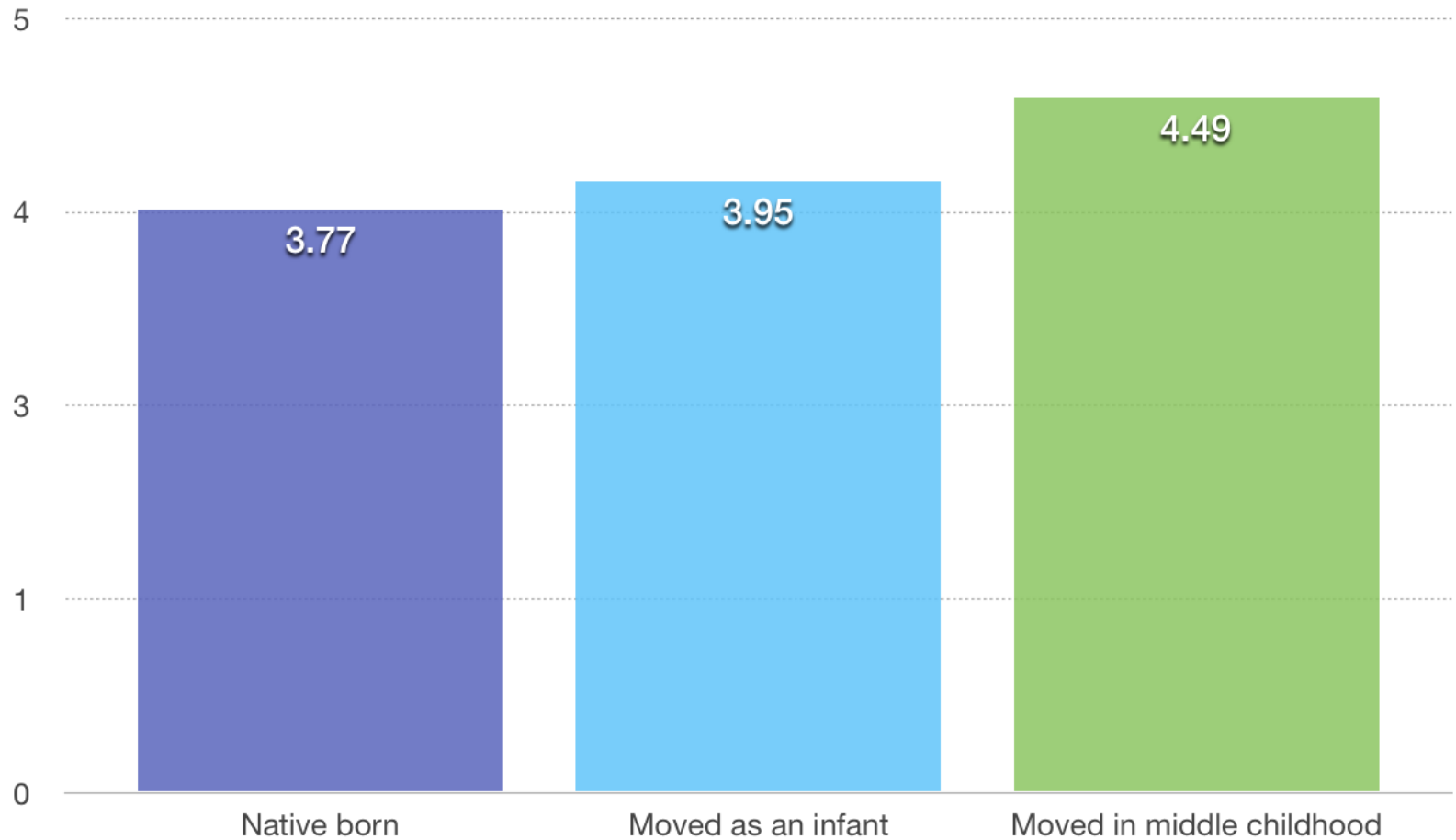
$p < .001$

Results: Self-Concept



Results: Mental Health Difficulties (age 13)

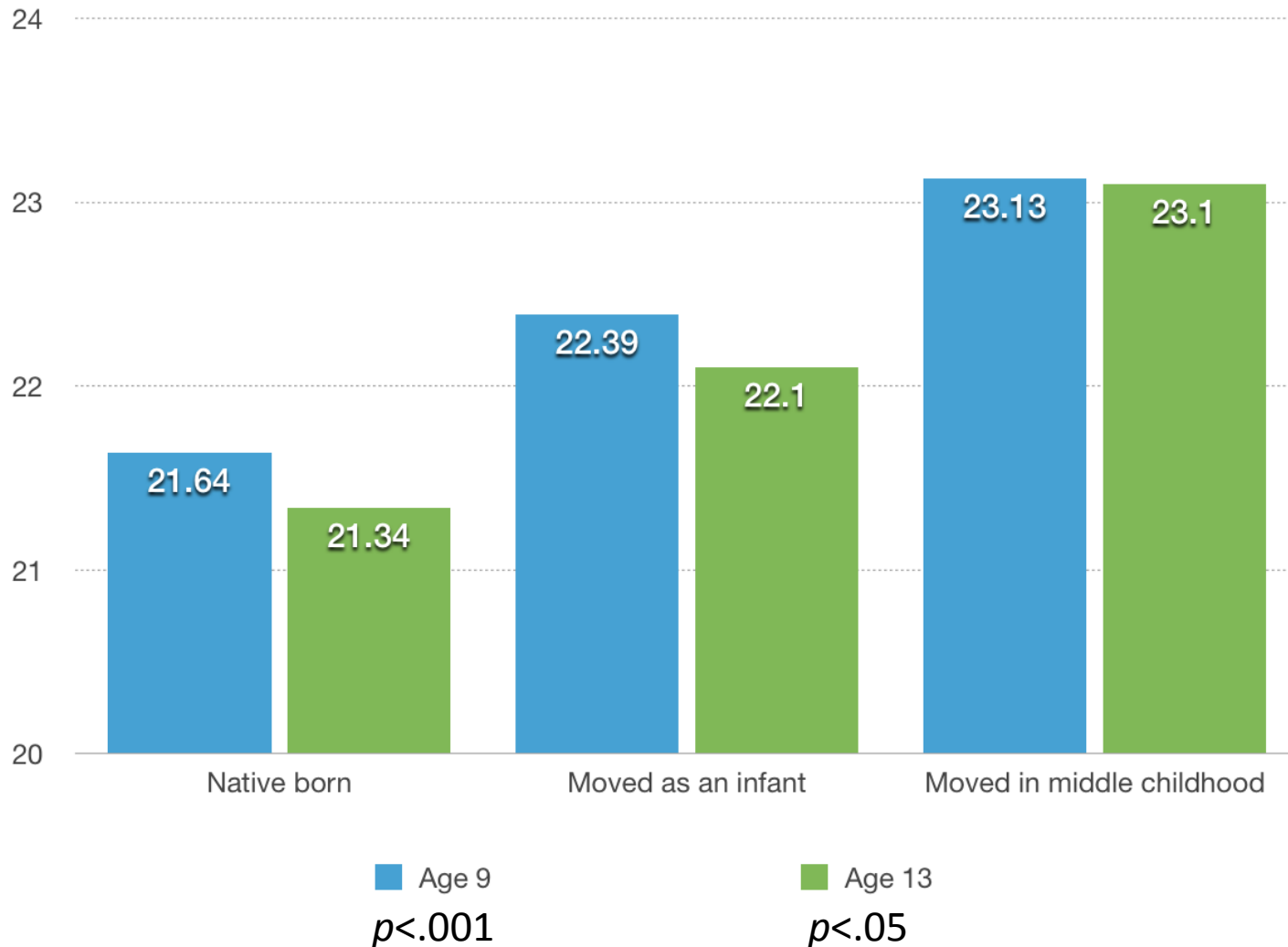
Short Moods & Feelings Questionnaire



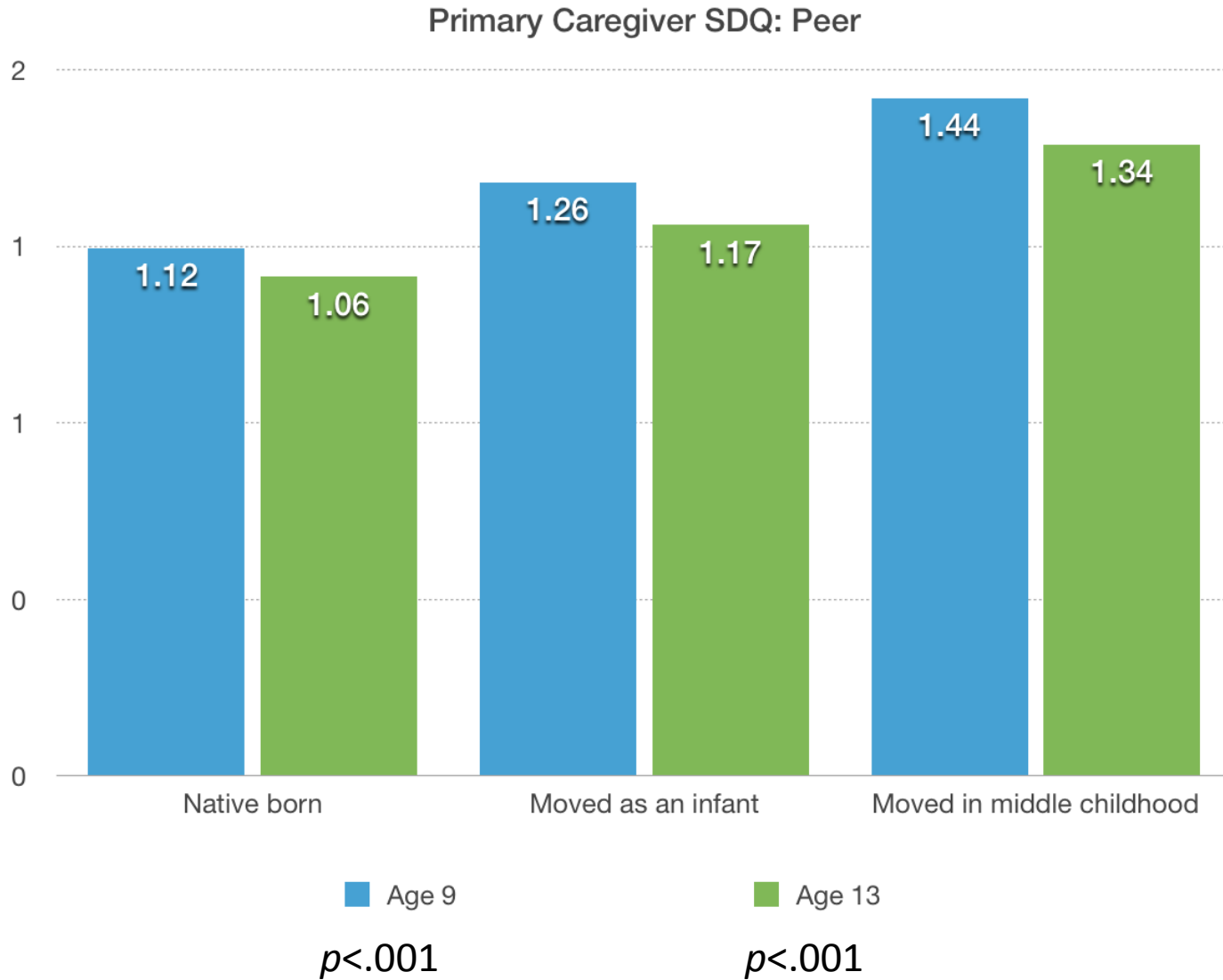
$P < .01$

Results: Parent Conflict

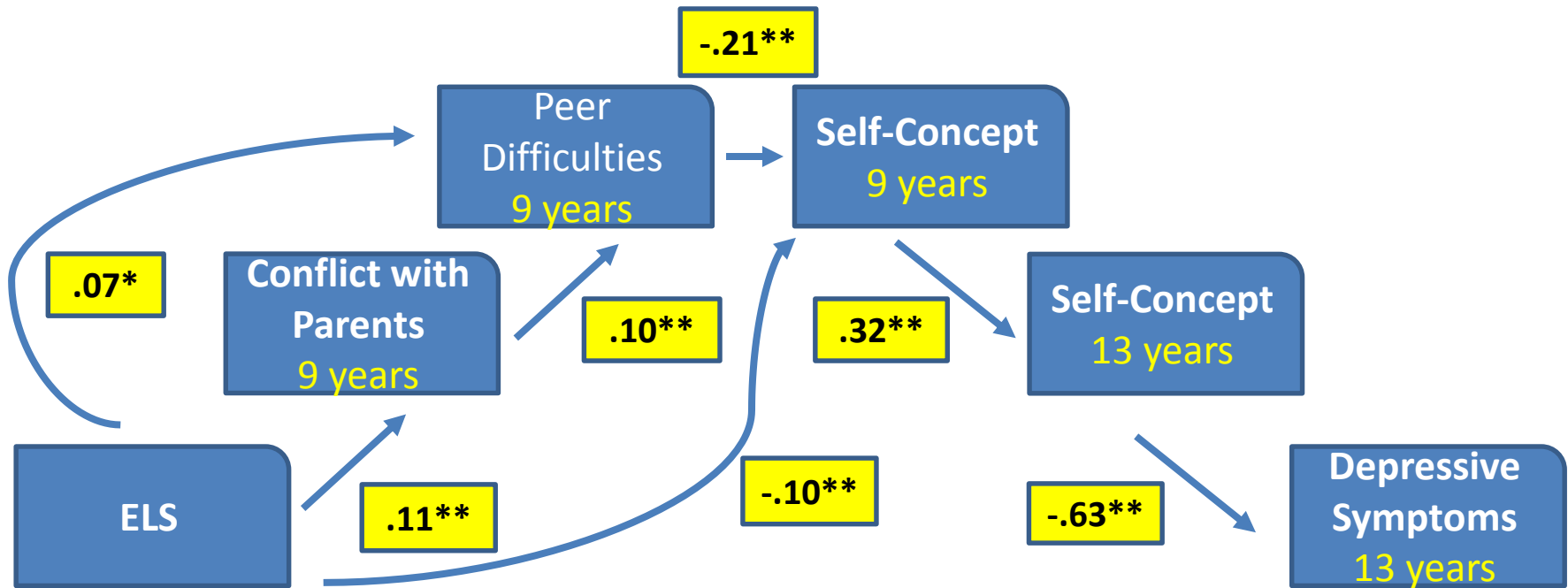
Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale:
Level of Conflict with Primary Caregiver



Results: Peer Difficulties



Results: How does ELS impact upon the parent and peer relationships of immigrant children? How do these relationships mediate the association between ELS and later mental health functioning?



- Total effect of X on Y: $b = .102$, $SE = 0.0383$, $p < .001$
- Direct effect of X on Y: $b = .056$, $SE = .0296$, $p = .0597$

43%

Discussion

- ❖ Our initial exploratory work suggests that age at time of immigration is important and that there is something unique about children who move when they are older.
 - ❖ Supports needed to foster adaptive parent/peer relationships in the time after migration
- ❖ Limitations:
 - ❖ Loss of diversity from immigrant group when only considering whether or not they were born in Ireland
 - ❖ Life events check list: 13 events which most likely cause stress to the child- but variance/ duration of these not included
 - ❖ Psychological wellbeing measured by Piers-Harris and SMFQ total scores
 - ❖ Relationship quality measured by relationship deficits (i.e. conflict with parents and peer difficulties)

Further Research

- ❖ Next phase of present study - Qualitative follow up
 - ➔ Perspectives of young adults who immigrated as children

- ❖ Future research:
 - Could examine sub-groups of the larger immigrant group (by ethnicity/refugee status/whether they can already speak English etc.)
 - Could further explore potential mediating or moderating factors in the relationship between immigration and mental health
 - Could select children from immigrant population who are doing particularly well in their teenage years – what factors are associated with positive outcomes?

Thank you!

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for any further information
or to request full list of references