

# From Hurt to Healing: Self-Compassion, Activism, Spirituality, & Post-traumatic Growth in Sexual Violence Survivors of Color in India & the U.S.

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# OVERVIEW



Theory & Background



Current Study



Method



Results



Discussion & Implications



Future Directions

# POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH (PTG) THEORY

Definition: **Positive psychological changes** that can occur when struggling w/ challenging life events (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

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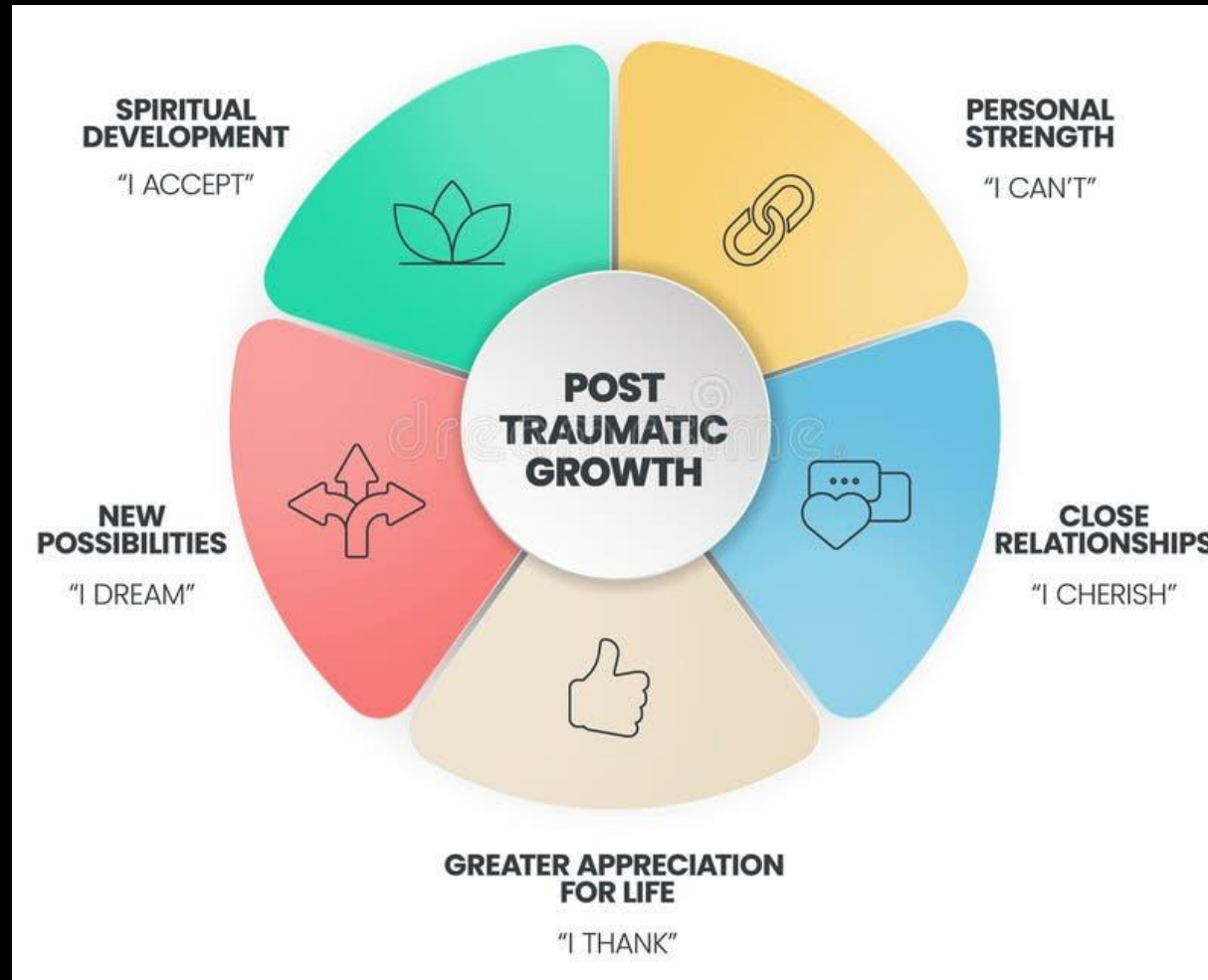
**A transformation in functioning** (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Tedeschi et al., 2018).

A light yellow arrow pointing downwards from the second box to the third box.

Sexual violence survivors → **deeper empathy** & newfound passion for **advocacy work** (Tedeschi, 1999; Unutkan et al., 2024).



# POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH (PTG) THEORY



(Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996)

# BACKGROUND

Why 🇮🇳 & 🇺🇸?

- **India:** ↑ rape (~90 daily in 2022) (NCRB, 2022) & rich religious diversity.
- **U.S.:** Diverse population; women of color ↑ sexual violence, e.g., 48% Mixed-race vs. 28.1% White women experienced rape (Basile et al., 2022).

## Self-compassion:

- Promotes PTG via positive reframing & meaning-finding (Wong & Yeung, 2017).
- Counters harmful cognitive patterns w/ kindness & self-understanding (Neff, 2003; Wu, 2024).



# BACKGROUND

## Activism:

- Meaning-finding & channeling pain → purpose-driven action (Guggisberg et al., 2021).
- Channels self-compassion into actions that promote growth (Fields et al., 2020).



## Spirituality:

- Source of strength, new perspectives, & deepen connections—integral parts of PTG (Mushonga et al., 2021).
- Framework for self-compassion: Kindness ↓ shame & guilt → positive change (Skalski-Bednarz & Toussaint, 2024).

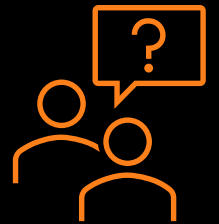


# CURRENT STUDY

## Research Questions:

**RQ1 & 2:** Diff. b/w survivors in India & the U.S. (1) as well as between South Asian & Black survivors (2) in terms of self-compassion, activism, spirituality, & PTG?

**RQ3:** Diff. b/w the age (childhood, adolescence, adulthood) at which a survivor experiences sexual violence & their amount of PTG?



## Hypotheses:

**H1:** Survivors that have ↑ self-compassion will have ↑ PTG.

**H2:** Survivors that have ↑ activism (2a) & ↑ spirituality (2b) will have ↑ PTG.

**H3 & 4:** Activism (3) & spirituality (4) will positively mediate the link b/w self-compassion & PTG.





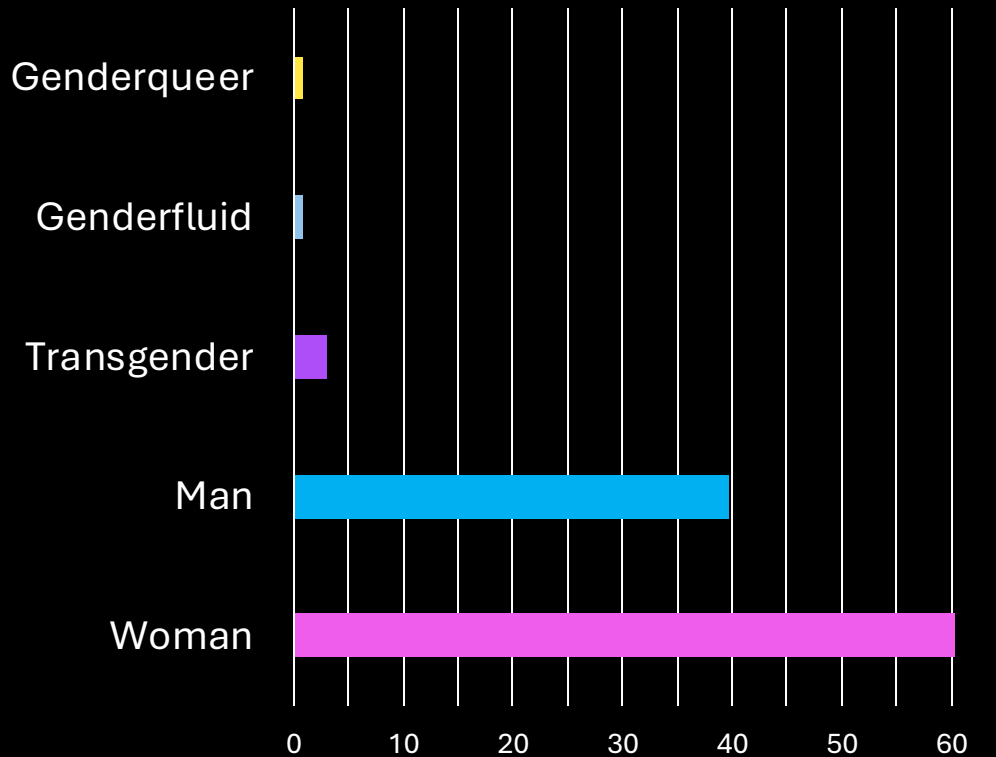
The illustration depicts a collaborative data analysis environment. A central circular interface with concentric rings and radial lines is the focal point. Five individuals, dressed in red shirts and dark trousers, are engaged with this interface: one stands at the top holding a laptop, another on the left is seated with a laptop, a third on the right is seated with a tablet, and two others on the left are standing and pointing at the interface. The scene is surrounded by various data-related icons: speech bubbles, document icons, and cloud icons with yellow arrows indicating data flow. In the bottom right corner, there is a stack of blue books, the top one labeled 'DATA', with a line graph and a bar chart spread out in front of them. The entire scene is set against a solid blue background.

# METHOD

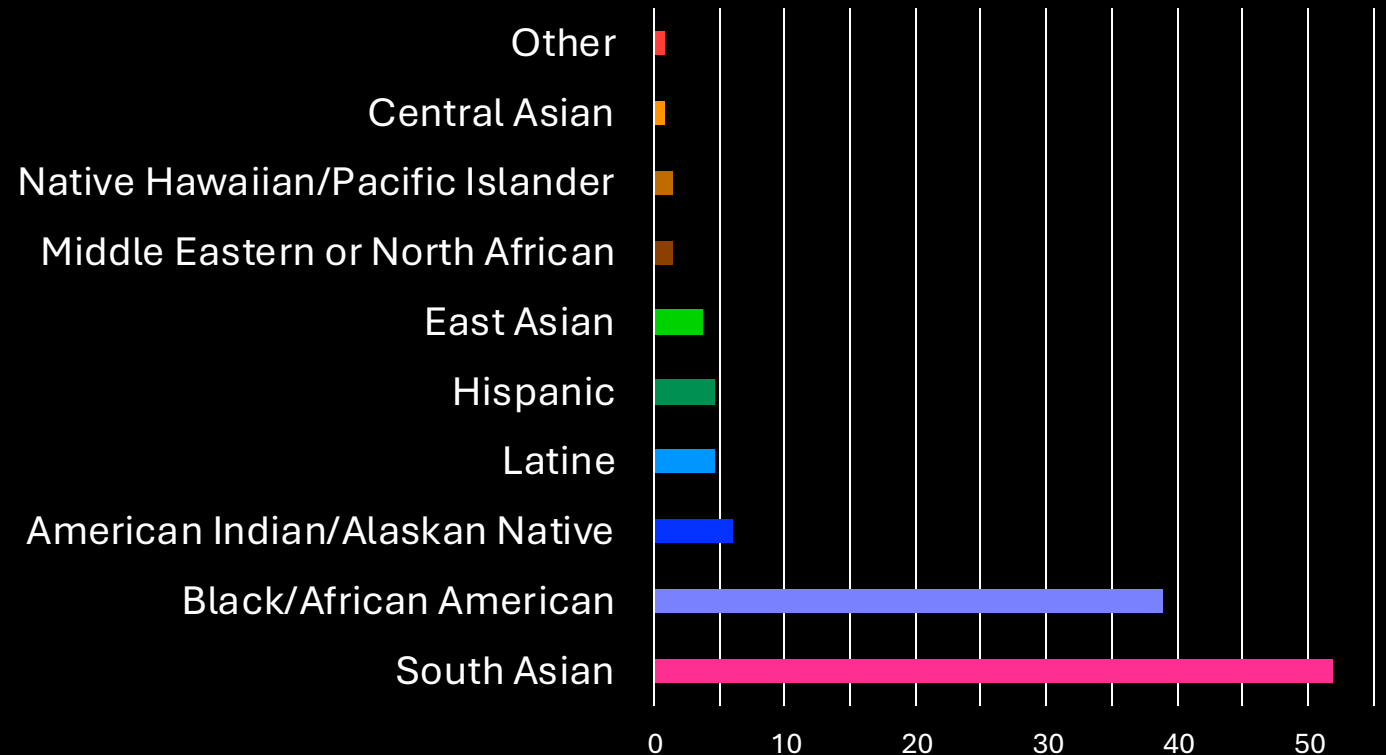


# Participants

## Gender



## Race/Ethnicity



$N = 131$  sexual violence survivors of color,  $M_{age} = 35.76$

$n = 72$  Indian  $M_{age} = 32.85$  &  $n = 59$  American,  $M_{age} = 39.31$

# Measures & Procedure



## **Self-compassion**

*Self-Compassion Scale  
Short Form (Raes et al.,  
2011)*



## **Activism**

*Anti-Sexual Assault  
Activism Scale  
(Swanson &  
Szymanski, 2021)*



## **Spirituality**

*Spiritual Well-Being  
Scale Short (Cotton  
et al., 2005)*



## **Post-traumatic Growth**

*Stress-Related Growth  
Scale-Revised (Boals &  
Schuler, 2018)*

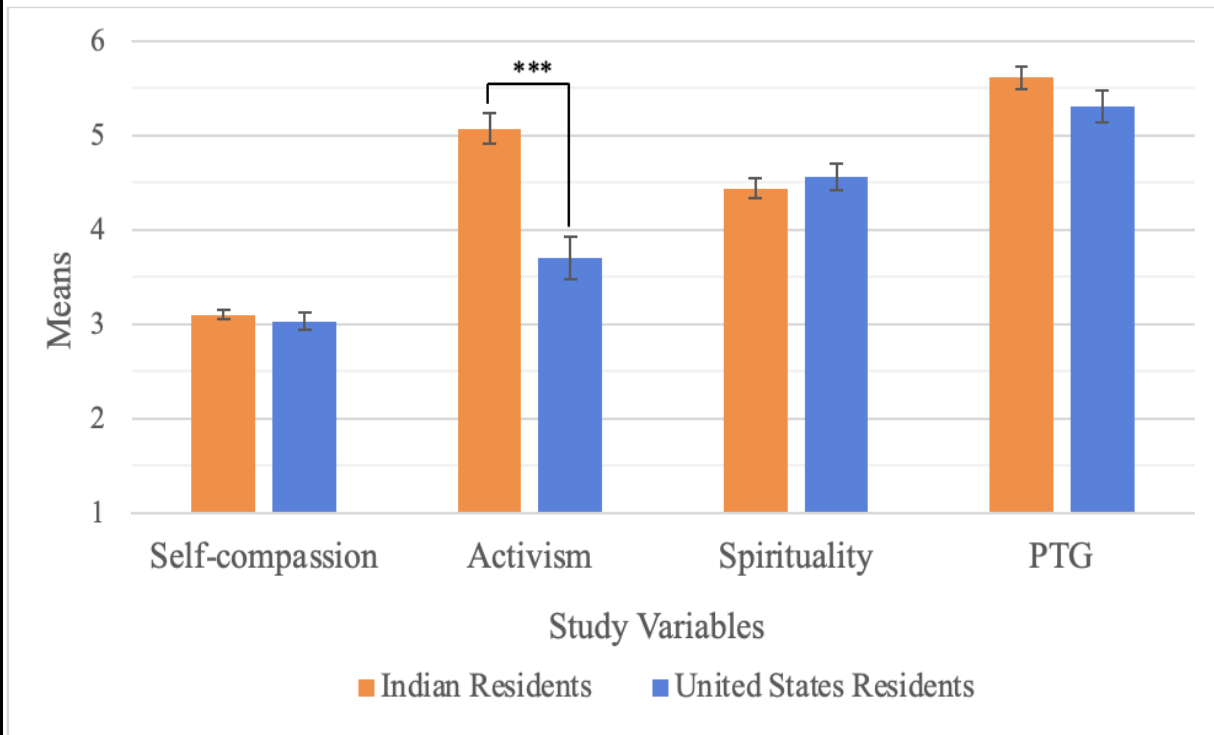
- Participants were recruited via Cloud Research where they completed an online survey on self-compassion, anti-sexual violence activism, spirituality, & PTG.



# RESULTS

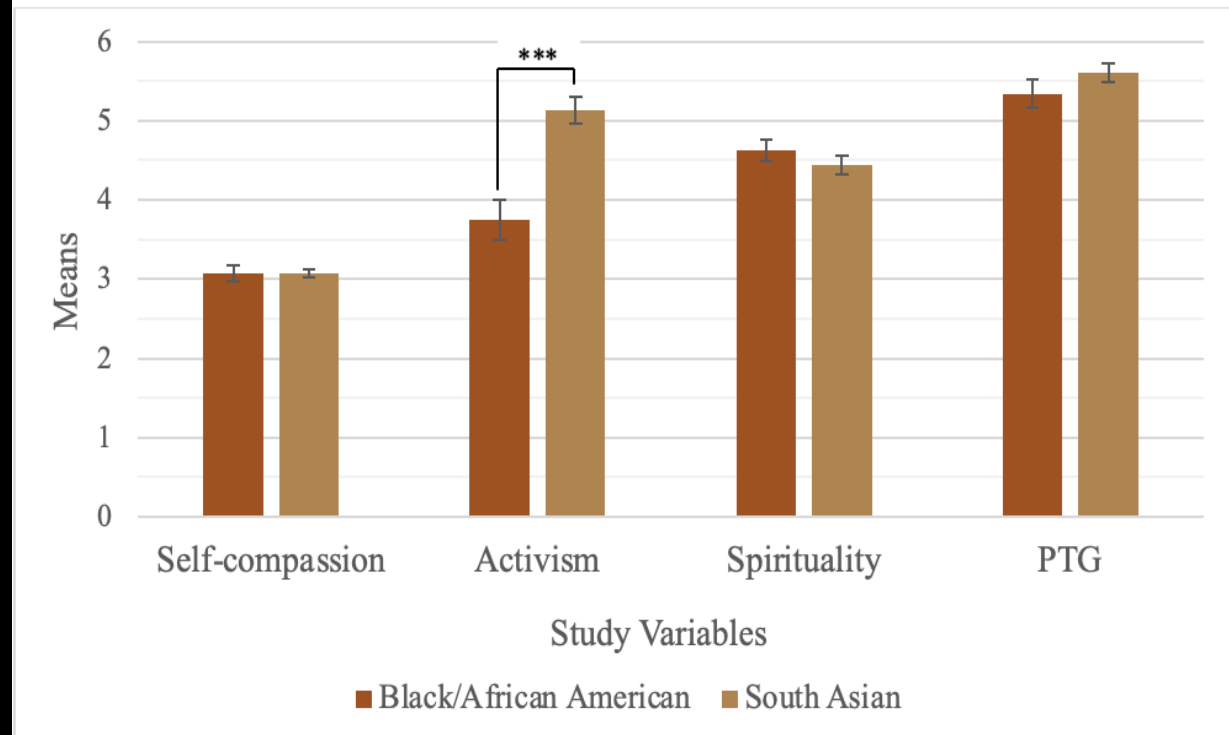
# Independent T-tests

*Means in Indian and United States Residents for Study Variables*



Note. \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

*Means in Black/African Americans and South Asians for Study Variables*

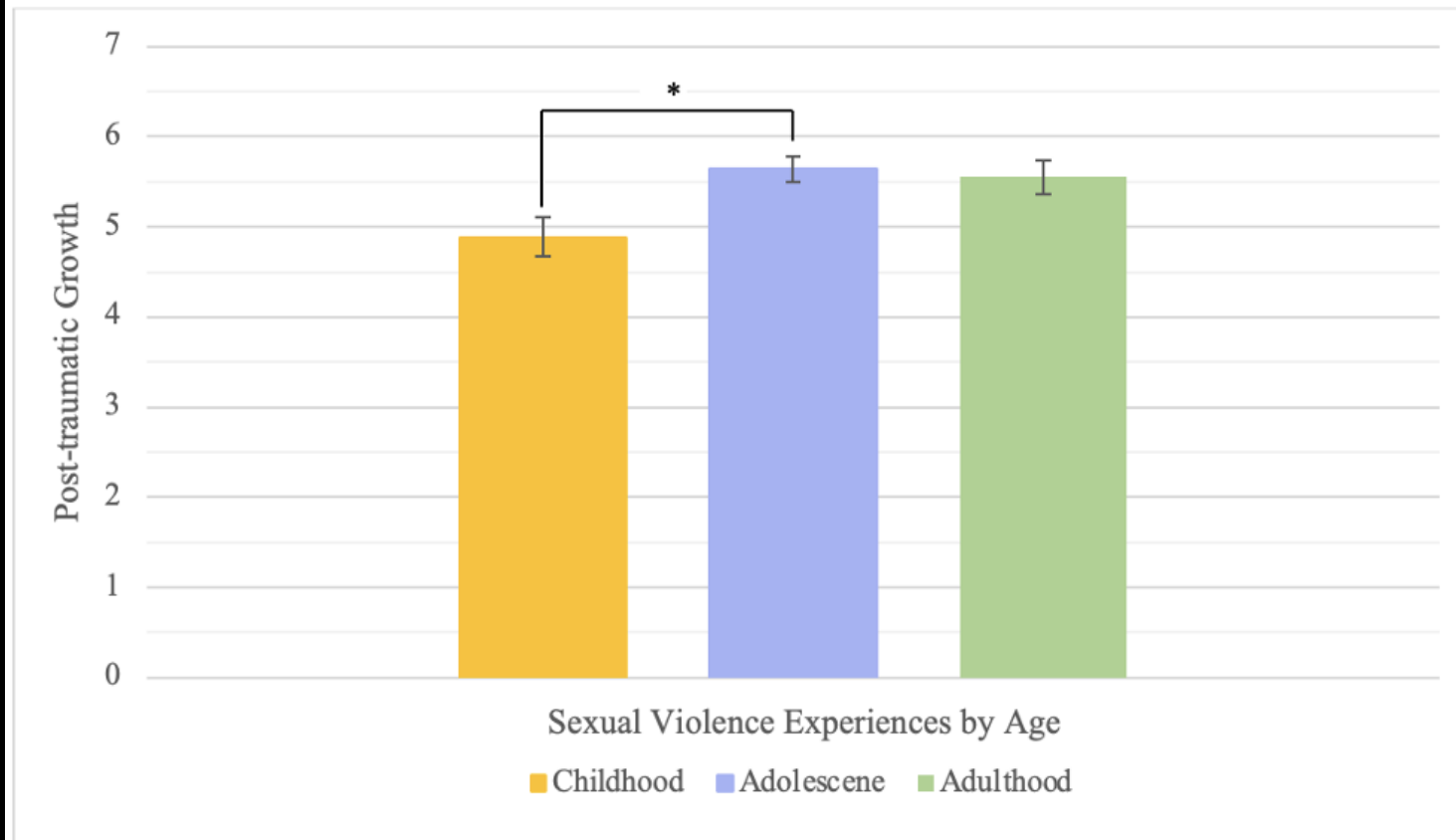


Note. \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



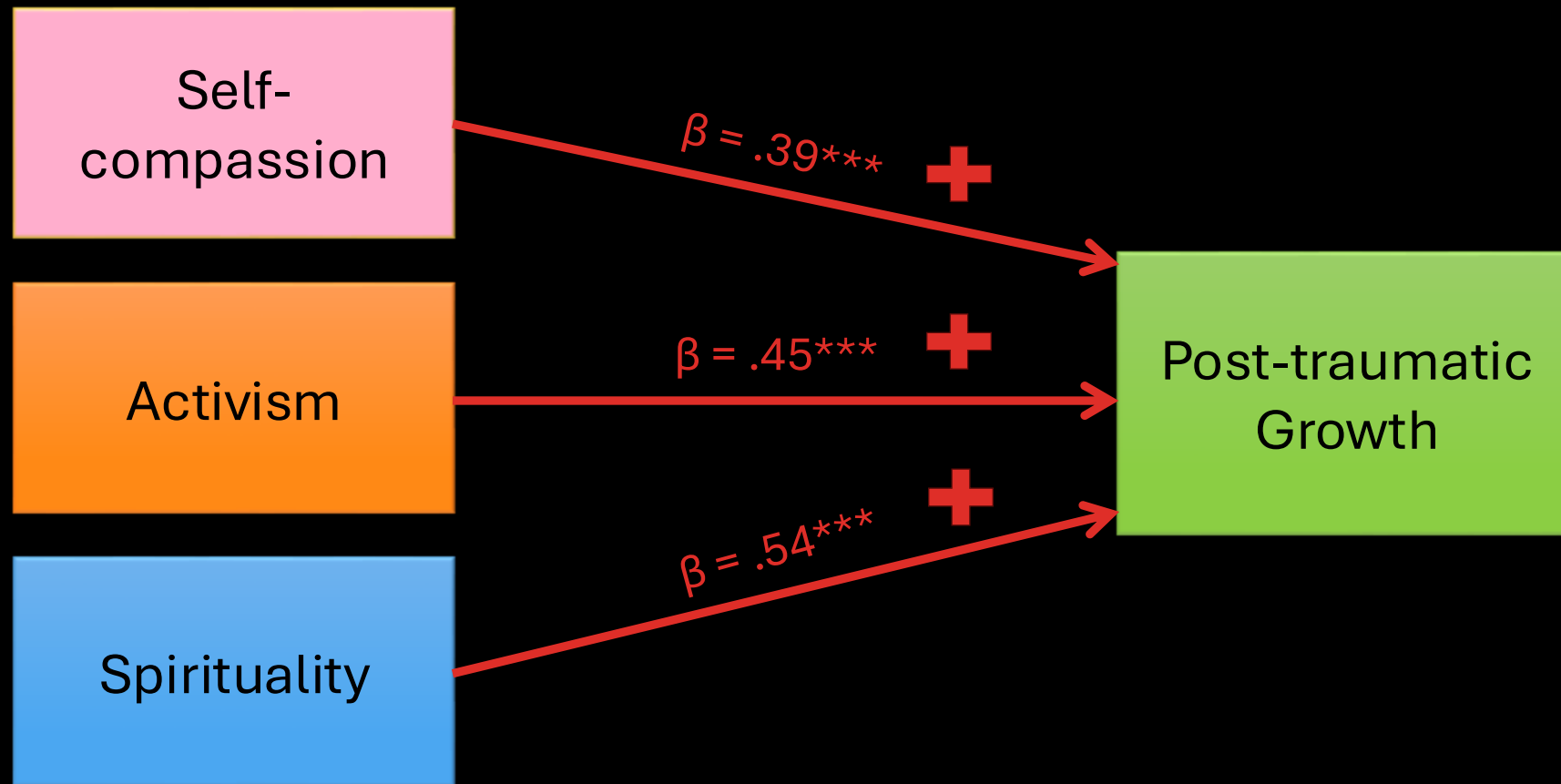
# One-way ANOVA

*Post-traumatic Growth in Survivors Experiences of Sexual Violence by Age*



*Note. \* $p < .05$ .*

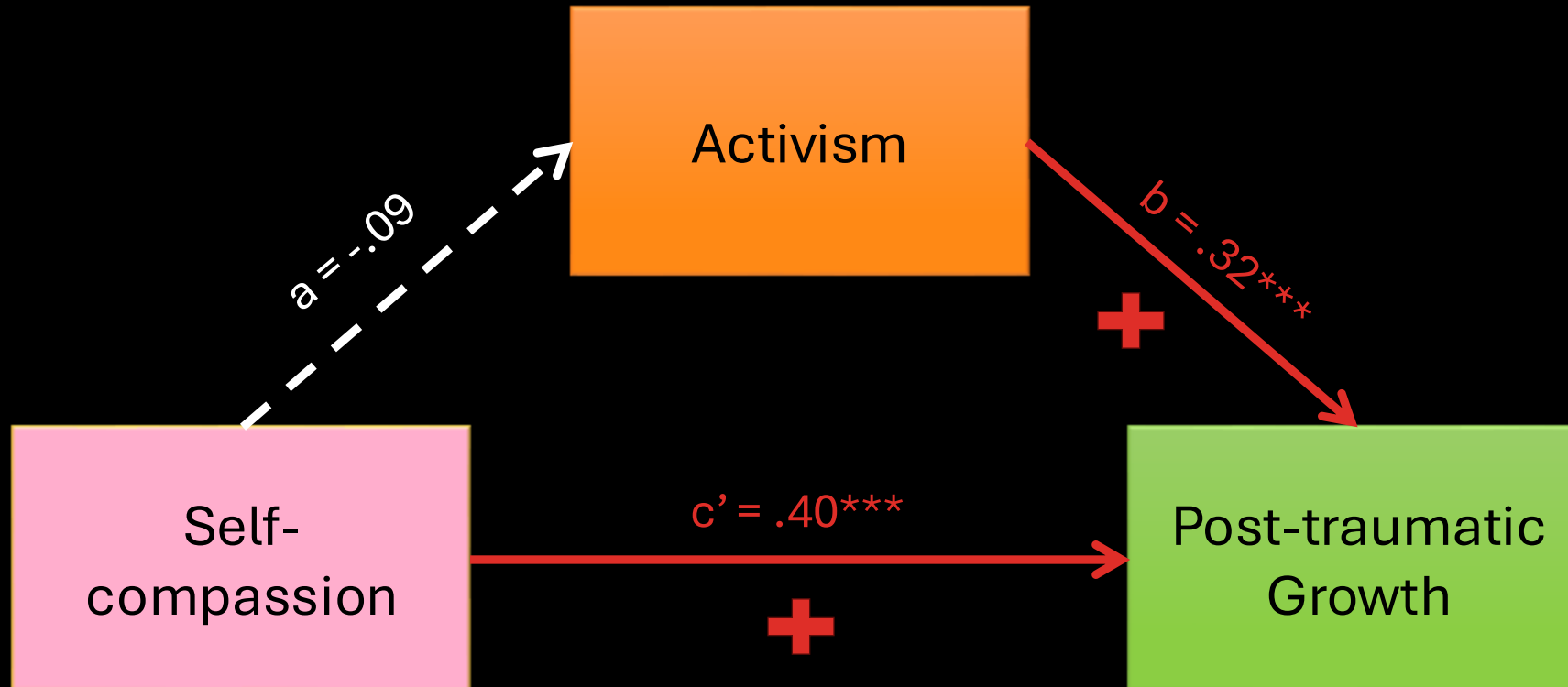
# Regression



Note.  $\beta$  = regression coefficient

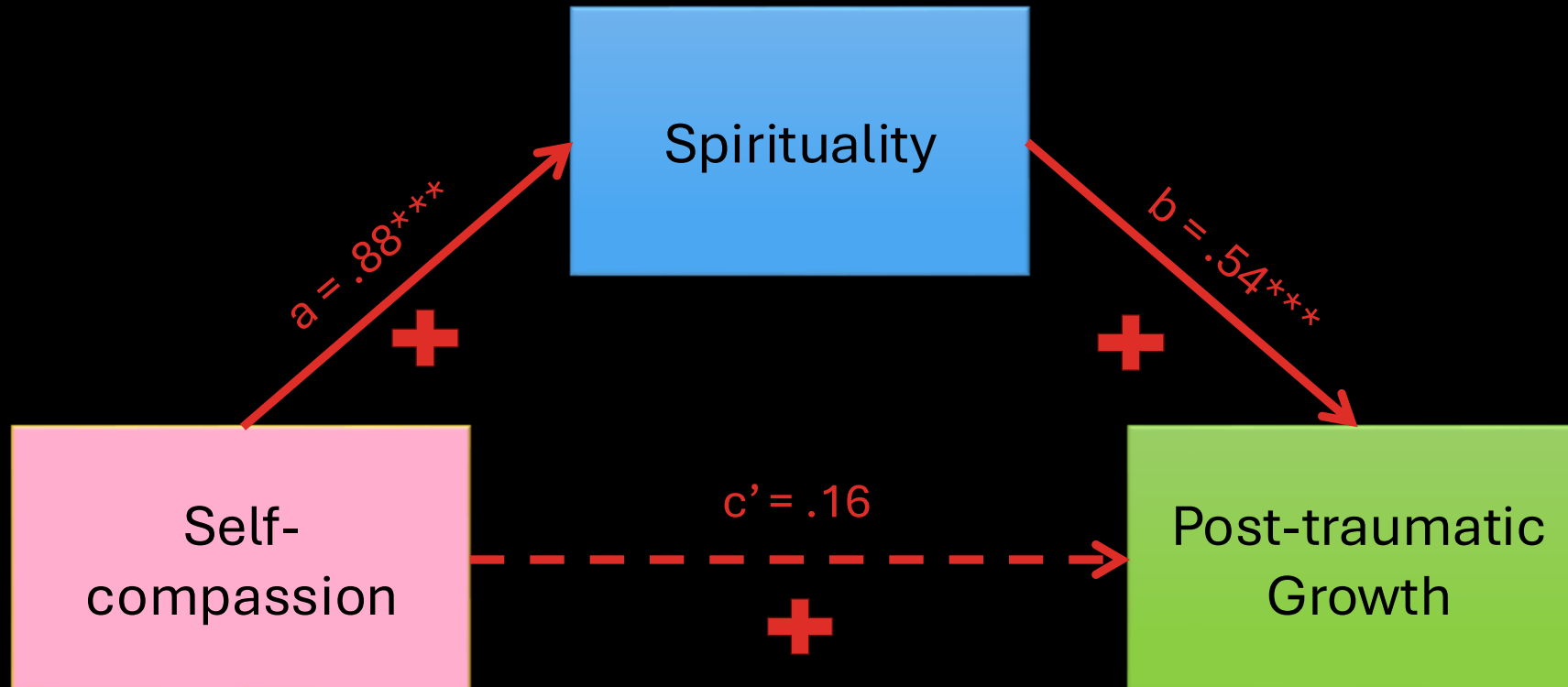
\*\*\* $p < .001$

# Mediation: Not Significant



*Note.*  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$  and  $c'$  are path coefficients representing unstandardized regression weights.  $***p < .001$

# Mediation: Significant



*Note.* a, b, c and c' are path coefficients representing unstandardized regression weights. \*\*\* $p < .001$



# DISCUSSION

Diff. in activism possibly reflect sociocultural diff.

- Consistency in self-compassion, spirituality, & PTG amounts suggests their universality.

Adolescents ↑ developed cognitive abilities.

- Positive changes → 2 weeks after assault for mostly White women (Frazier et al., 2001).

Cognitive processes in self-compassion & spirituality maybe self-focused.

# IMPLICATIONS

Advocacy therapy +  
Racial justice (Roberts, 2023).

Self-compassion &  
spirituality interventions  
↑ PTG across races.

Childhood survivors →  
structured meaning-  
making therapy.

Policy recommendations

Organizations → address  
intersectional barriers to  
advocacy

# FUTURE DIRECTIONS



Mixed methods



Longitudinal studies



In-depth interviews + focus groups

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My Friends &  
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The background of the slide features a stack of several notebooks with various colored covers (red, yellow, blue) and a portion of a laptop keyboard visible in the upper right corner. The entire scene is dimly lit, creating a professional and academic atmosphere.

# SUPPLEMENTARY SLIDES

# Regression

**Table 8**

*Regression Coefficients of Self-compassion, Activism, and Spirituality on Post-traumatic Growth*

Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	$R^2$
Self-compassion	.81	.39***	.17	.15
Activism	.31	.45***	.05	.21
Spirituality	.64	.54***	.09	.29

*Note.* \*\*\* $p < .001$ .