

# Peer Acceptance and Motivation as Mediators of the Relationships between Students' Social and Academic Competencies

Shawn L. Carlson

North Dakota State University




# Constructs

- Academic competence
- Social skills
- Peer acceptance
- Academic motivation
- Theoretical Framework:
  - Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017)
  - Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001; 1977)



# Research Questions

- (1) Controlling for sex and SES, does peer acceptance in the classroom and academic motivation mediate the relationships between children's social skills and their math and reading competencies across time?
  - (2) Controlling for sex and SES, does motivation mediate the relationship between peer acceptance and math and reading competencies?
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# Recruitment & Participants

- ▶ Data come from Early Risers preventive intervention program study
  - ▶ 5 public elementary schools- 2 controls and 3 randomly assigned
- ▶ **142** children participated in the current study
  - ▶ Ages 5-7
  - ▶ 93.7% White, majority middle class



# Measures

- ▶ Academic Competence Evaluation Scale-Teacher Form (ACES; DiPerna & Elliott, 1999; 2000)
  - ▶ “Please rate the student’s academic skills in comparison with the grade-level expectations at your school”
- ▶ Behavior Assessment System for Children-Second Edition, Teacher Report Scale (BASC-2-TRS; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004)
  - ▶ Social Skills subscale



## Measures (cont.)

- ▶ Sociometric data was collected from participants and from their classmates to obtain a peer acceptance score
  - ▶ Liked most nominations minus liked least nominations
- ▶ ACES Teacher Form (DiPerna & Elliott, 1999; 2000)
  - ▶ Motivation subscale



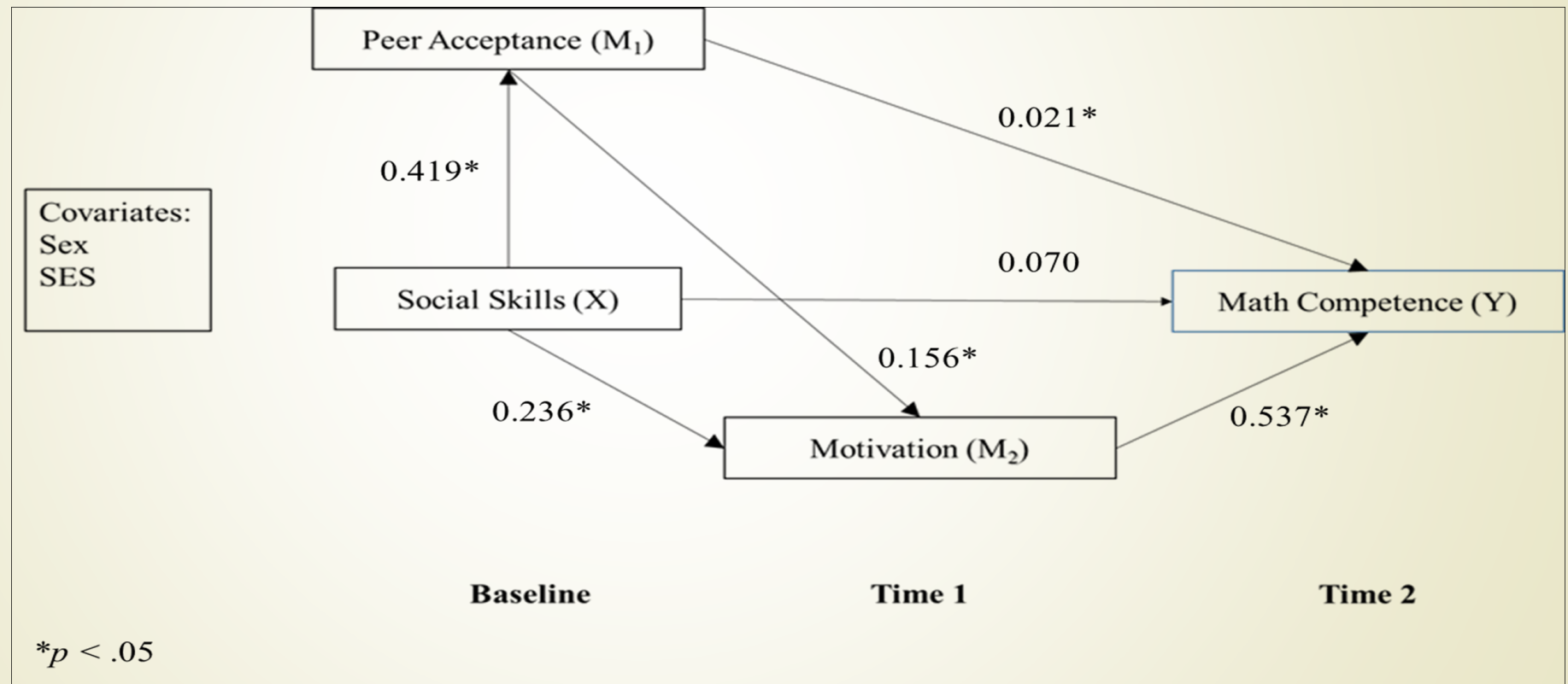
# Analyses

- ▶ 3 waves: Baseline data collections occurred in the spring; Time 1 and Time 2 occurred in the fall and spring, respectively, of the next academic year
- ▶ Longitudinal path analyses with Mplus
- ▶ Estimates of indirect effects and their standard errors were calculated using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations
- ▶ Sex and SES were controlled



# Results

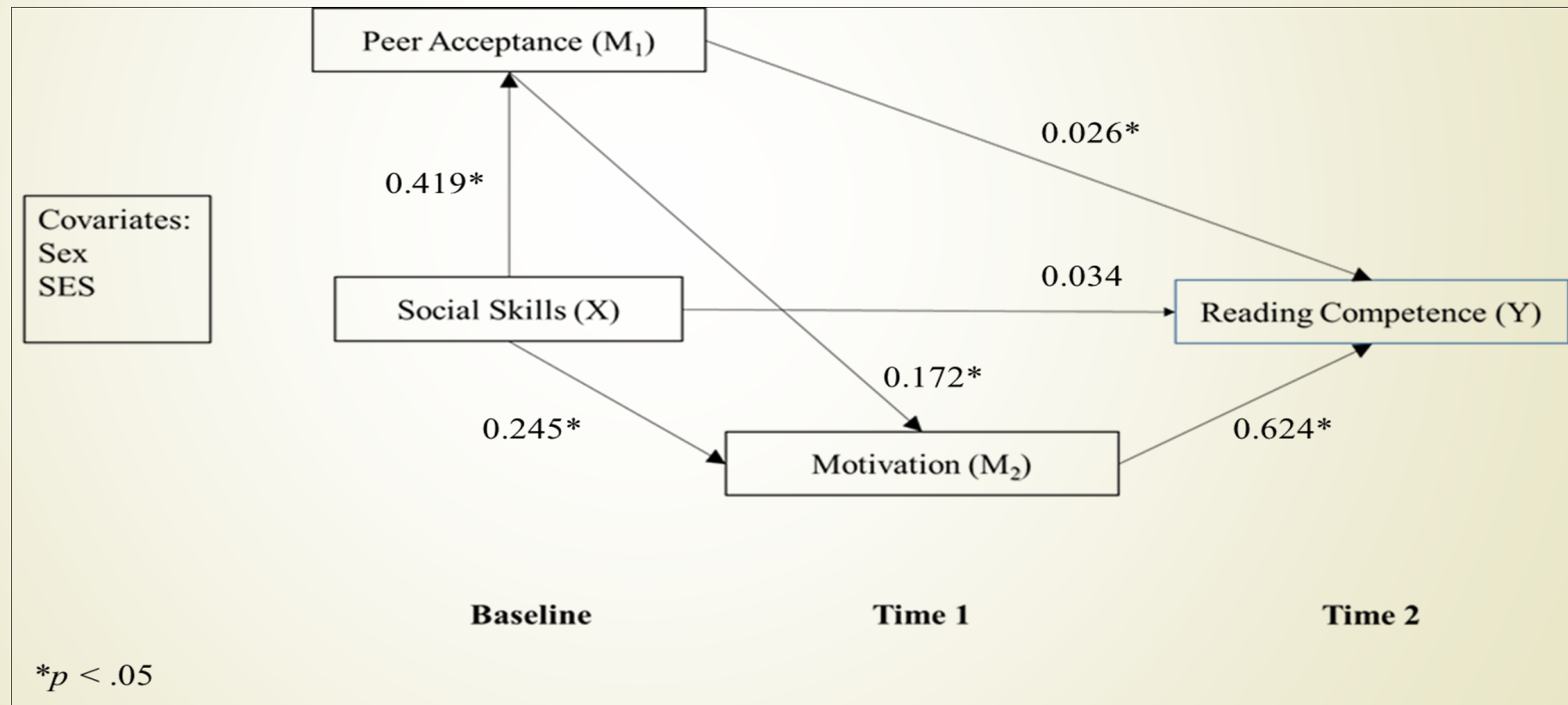
Figure 1. Path Diagram with Math Competency as the Outcome.  $*p < .05$






## Results (Cont.)

Figure 2. Path Diagram with Reading Competency as the Outcome.  $*p < .05$





# Discussion

- ▶ Peer acceptance and motivation as sequential mediators
  - ▶ Study confirms the importance of social skills to academic achievement in the classroom, specifically for early elementary students
  - ▶ Evidence from this study and others make it clear that not only should teachers focus on academics in the classroom, but also on social-emotional learning (SEL)
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# Future Directions and Implications

- ▶ Future Directions:

- ▶ A more comprehensive longitudinal design is needed
- ▶ Other mediators should be tested (e.g., academic self-concept)

- ▶ Implications:

- ▶ Curriculum standards should incorporate more rigorous requirements for SEL
- ▶ Tailor prevention intervention programs to specifically focus on ways to promote peer acceptance