

# On Customer Hostility

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# Hostility In work places ...A lot of Concepts ...

Most Research  
Within  
Organizations

Anger ... Aggression  
... Violence ...  
Harassment ...  
Deviance ... Bullying  
Contempt ... Irritation  
.. Rudeness ...  
Incivility



**Regarding  
CSR's**

**Survey Research**

**→ Very High Frequencies  
... 70% of employees once a week**

**Experimental Research**

**→ Reliance on predetermined forms  
→ Strong Detrimental Effects on  
Employees**

**(Rafaeli et al, JAP, 2012;  
Miron-Spektor et al, JAP, 2011)**

**Weiss, Cropanzano, Beal:**

Affective Events are Tasks that  
Require Work

**In Theory:  
Bad Emotions Can  
Hamper Behavior**

**Baumeister (1998)**

Cookies or Radishes?  
Self is a limited resource

**Gross, Richards**

**(1999, 2005)**

**Concealing bad  
feelings requires  
resources**



# Hostility in Customer Contact Center

בקשת הלקוח:

מנוי מספר 052-3256658 מדבר משה, הסיסמא שלי 5555. אני מס לחו"ל בשבוע הבא ומעוניין לפתוח את הקו שלי לחיג לוח"ל ולשירות הנדידה שלכם

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סיסמא 5555

תעודת זהות 6

מספר בית 96587

תאריך ההתחברות 24/01/2001

שימוש בדיבורית כן

Customer request

Employee Task:  
Updating details



Rafaeli et al, Journal of Applied Psychology, (2012)

# Customers Hostility Manipulation

Polite Customer	Angry – Rude Customer
<p><u>My home phone</u> number changed. Need to <u>update</u> it please. My number is 03-7526654. Thank you very much, George Ashley.</p>	<p>It's such a nightmare to reach you! Your service is just horrible. <u>Update my home phone</u> to 03-7526654. George Ashley</p>
<p>Hi please note my request to move me <u>to the weekend deal</u>. My password is "Friends". Thank you, Josh.</p>	<p>I am sick and tired of your lousy service. Move me <u>to the weekend deal</u>. Password is "Friends". Josh.</p>

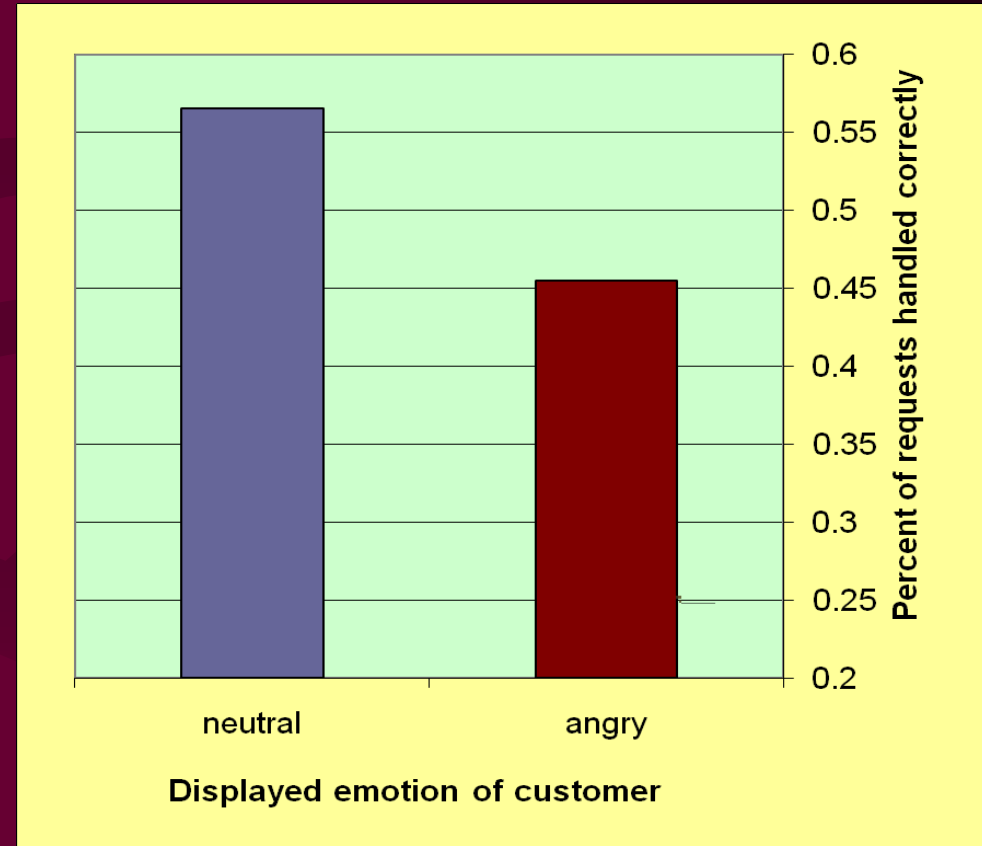
Rafaeli et al, Journal of Applied Psychology, (2012)

# Employee Performance after Hostility

% requests handled correctly

	N	M	SD
Angry Requests	34	0.46	0.10
Affect Free Requests	35	0.57	0.12

$t = -2.05, p < .05$

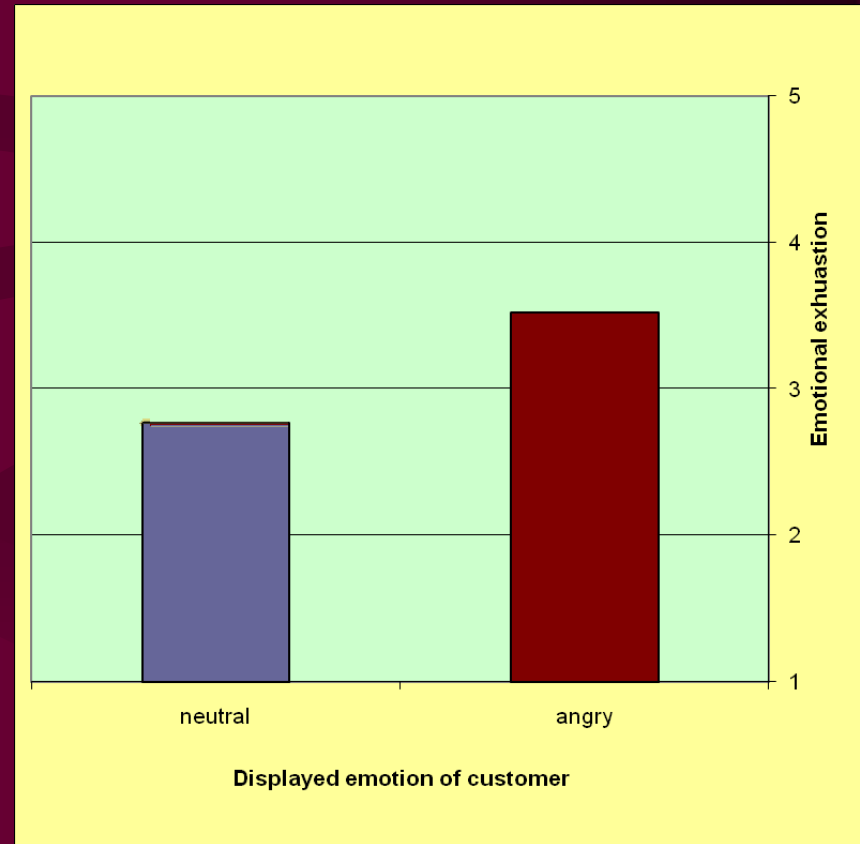


Rafaeli et al, Journal of Applied Psychology, (2012)

# Employee Fatigue after Customer Anger

Reported exhaustion  
(1-7 scale)

	N	M	SD
Angry Requests	34	3.52	1.18
Affect Free Requests	35	2.77	1.13
$t = 2.71, p < .01$			



Rafaeli et al, Journal of Applied Psychology, (2012)



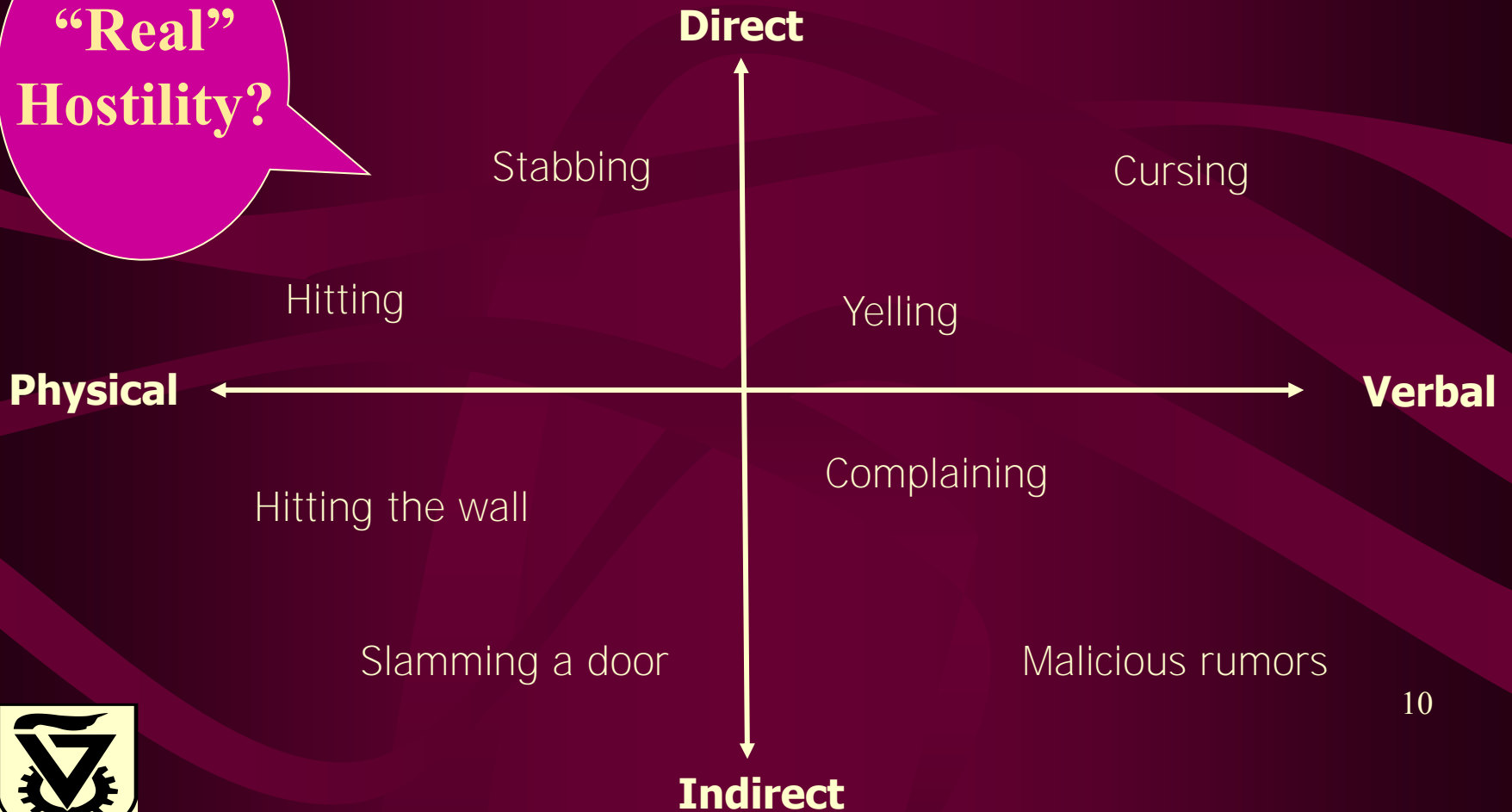
**Strong Effects  
of VERY  
Subtle  
Expressions**

**Experiments Limit our Thinking  
What are Hostile Customer Behaviors in  
Real Life?**



# Types of Hostility

**“Real”  
Hostility?**



# Cultural Context of Hostility

MDS Dimensions of Hostility:

USA, Israel: Physical vs. Verbal

Pakistan: No such Distinction

Pakistan: Social exclusion IS Physical

USA: Social exclusion NOT Physical

Severance, ... Rafaeli et al, Journal of Organizational Behavior, (2013)

**Little  
About  
Actual  
Behaviors**

**“Low/  
Moderate  
Hostility”**

Study:

**Actual Customer Hostility Events**  
**Hospital Security Reports**  
**(462 events; 4 months)**

Freq.	Code	Severity
44	0	Staff Support
91	1	Patient Unrest
151	2	Violating Order
50	3	Verbal
54	4	Physical Assault
72	5	Emergency Button



6/11/2013

Measuring  
Extremes  
may miss  
the point ...

## Observing Customer Hostility ...

- ..... Observations, Interviews, Security Reports, Literature ...
  - Stores, Banks, Service Stations, Hospitals



# Some Insights

- Customer hostility is out there;
  - Connected to “Events;”
- In the “air,” not necessarily b/c employees;
- Strong contagion effects between customers;
  - Can become a “constant” undertone;
  - Imposes costs on employees and organizations;



# Interpreting Events into Offense and Hostility Varies by Individual and Collective Self:

## Most Offensive Event ...

- USA: Harm to personal belongings
- Israel: Harm to personal network
  - Pakistan: Social exclusion

Severance, ... Rafaeli, et al, Journal of Organizational Behavior, (2013)

# “Minor” Hostile Behaviors

- Stand when seats are available;
  - Pace (back and forth);
- Frenetic actions (knuckles, drum fingers);
  - Complain (directly, into the air);
    - Sarcastic comments;
  - Swear (directly, into the air);
    - Pound (table, wall)





# Employee Targeted Behaviors

- Ignoring employee
- Stopping a walking employee
- Demanding a response from employee
  - Standing close to employee
  - Glaring at employee
- Standing in way of employee



# Study: Triggers of Hostility

- 350 Patients and escorts
- Surveys (wait-time, procedural justice, tendency to hostility)
  - Factor Analysis:
    - Minor Hostility
    - More Serious Hostility



# Self-Report of Hostility

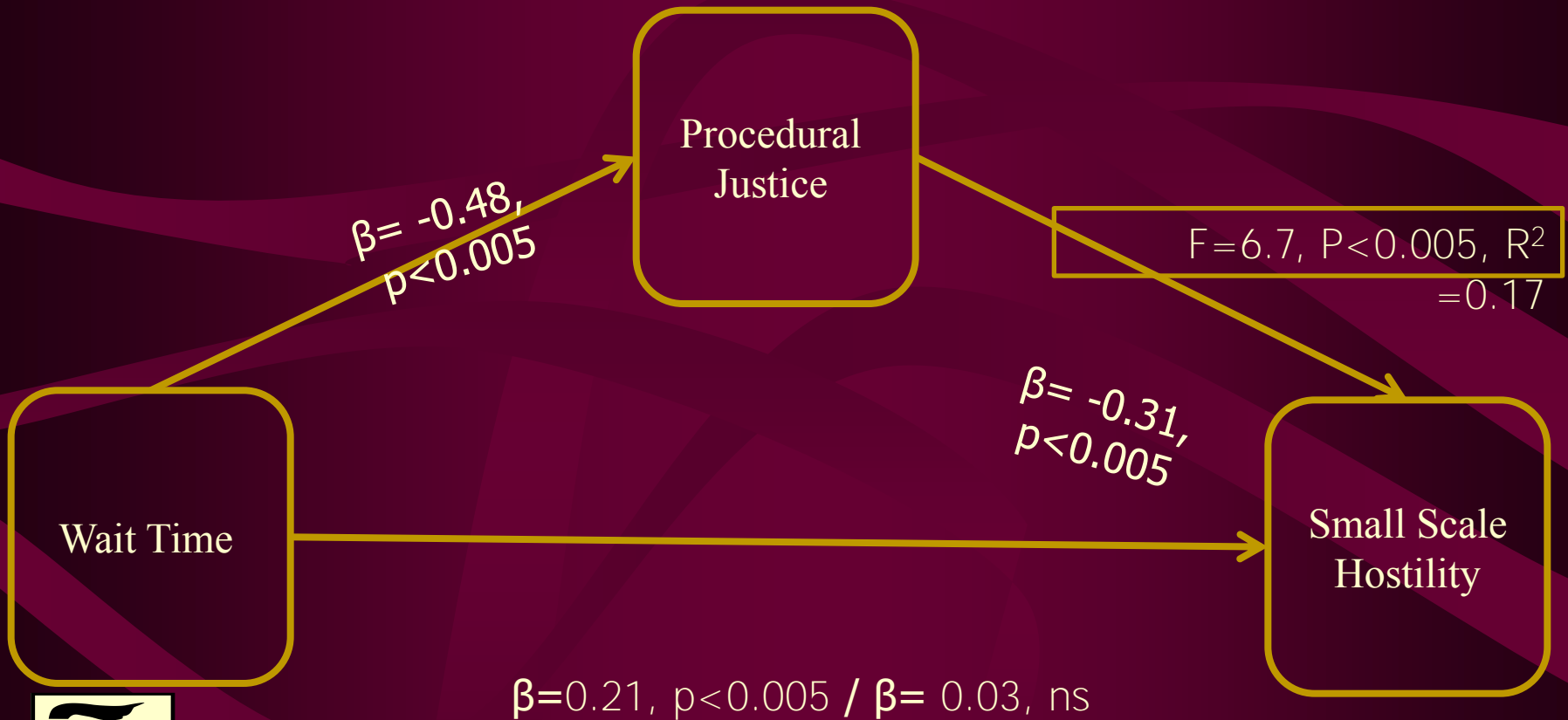
- “I currently feel like...” (5 point scale)
  - Factor Analysis: Two factors
- Only A has real variance (Alpha=.82)  
(Mean Factor B=1.67, SD=1.26)

”I would currently like to ...”	Hostility A	Hostility B
Stopping a staff person	<b>.691</b>	.075
Speaking Aggressively	<b>.578</b>	.510
Yelling	<b>.533</b>	.454
Entering office without being called	<b>.764</b>	.133
Slamming a door	.255	<b>.800</b>
Pounding on a table	.202	<b>.843</b>
Cursing	-.060	<b>.770</b>



# Results: Waiting Causes Hostility

226 patients / families



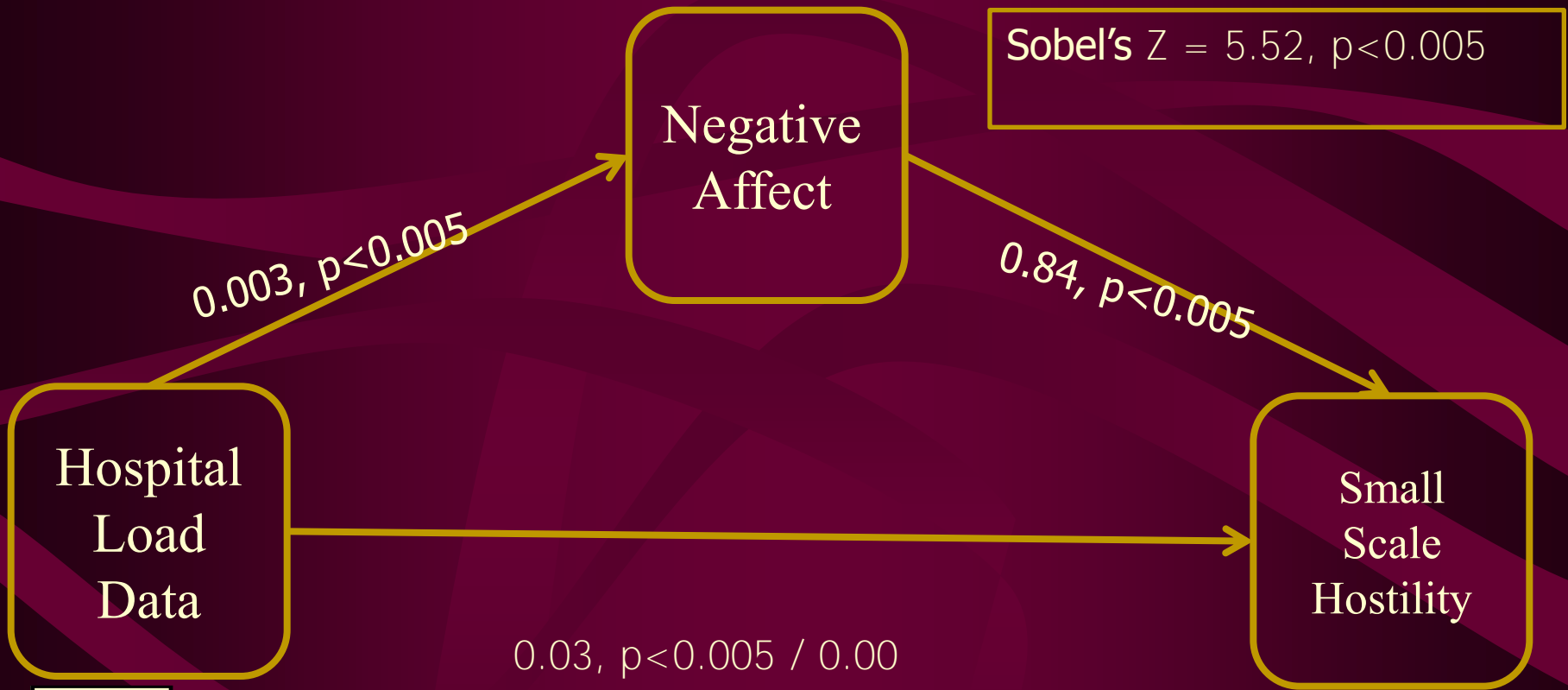
# Study: Load, Affect and Hostility

- 226 Patients and families
  - Hospital Load Data
- Matched with Surveys of Emotion and Hostility



# Load Causes NA and Hostility

226 patients / families

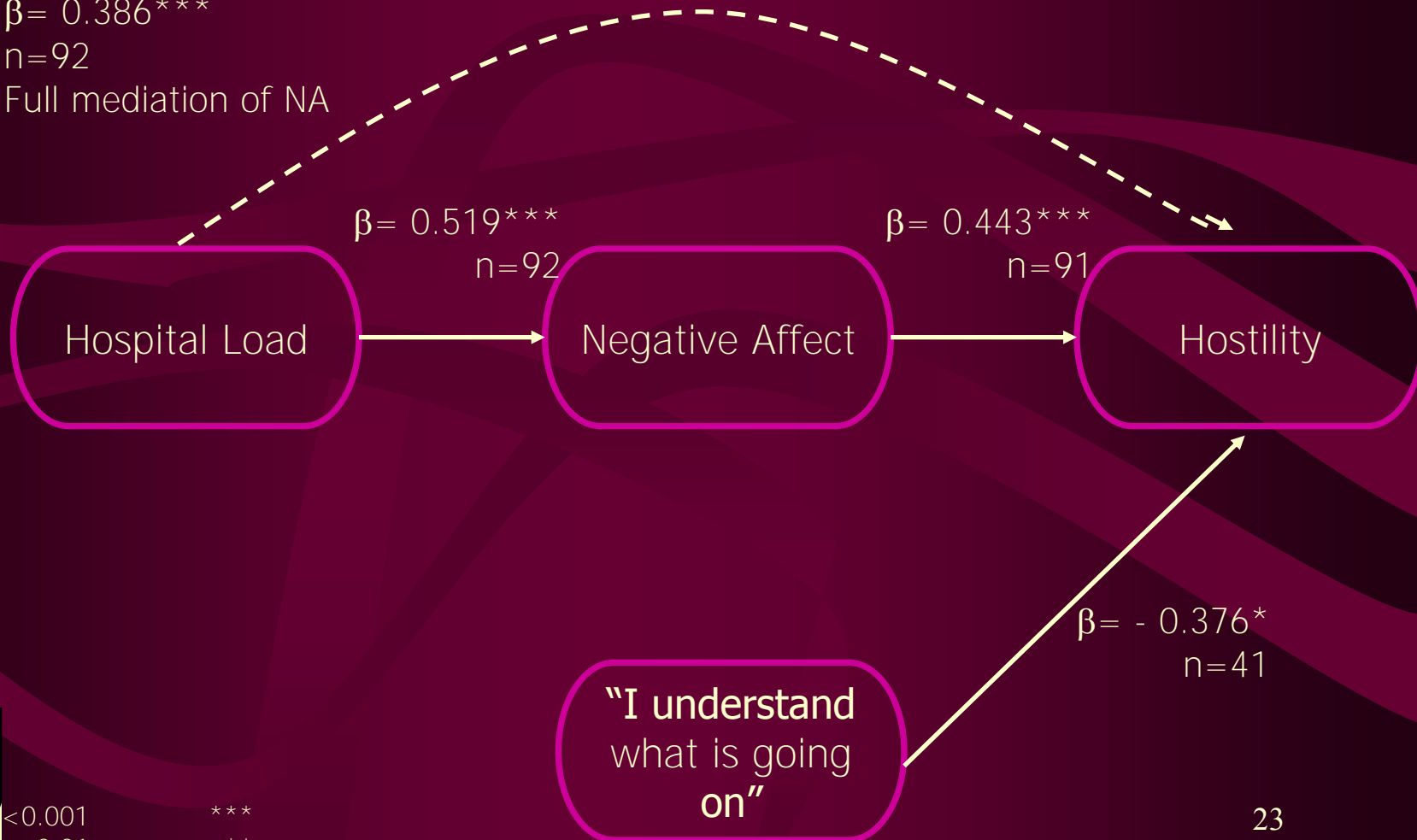


# Study: Load, Affect and Hostility

$\beta = 0.386^{***}$

n=92

Full mediation of NA



<0.001  
p<0.01  
p<0.05

\*\*\*  
\*\*  
\*

# Observing Hostility in Context

- Employees oblivious to many “hostile” events (Habituation?);
  - “Low-level” hostility taken for granted;
  - Only “Real Threats” taken seriously;





# **Study: Employee Habituation to Hostility**

Employees Read Transcripts of Hostile /  
Non-Hostile Customers.

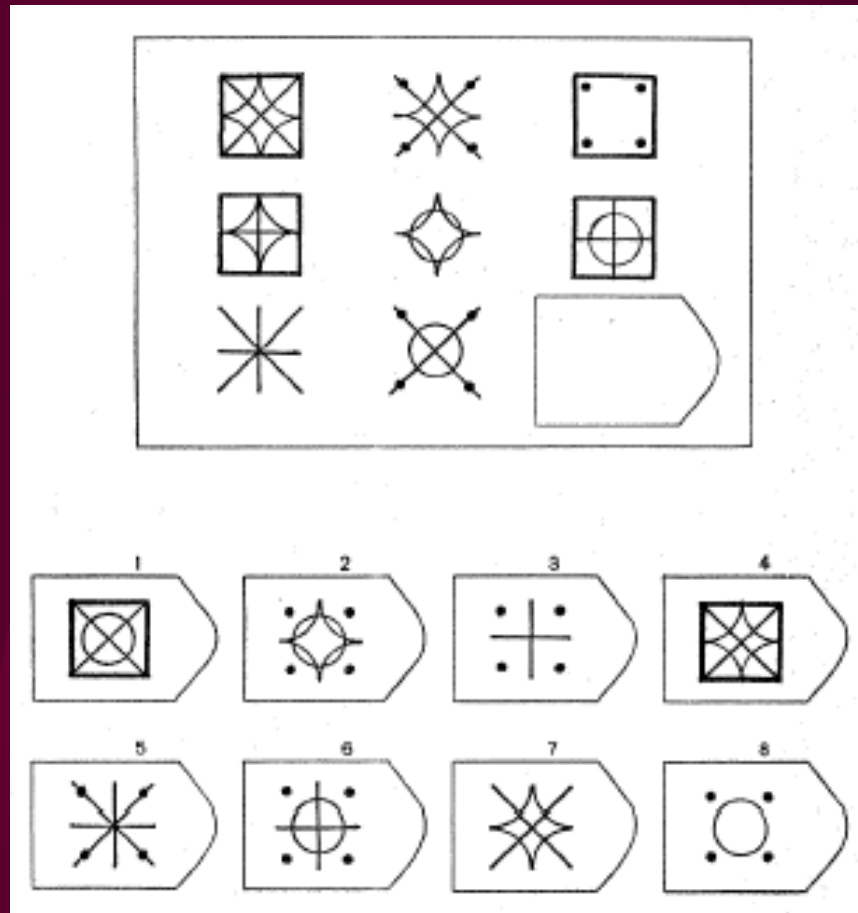


# Others' Hostility

Hostile	Affect-Free
<p><u>Customer:</u> I am having reception problems with my phone.</p>	
<p><u>Employee:</u> Perhaps you have a problem when you are in an area with no reception?</p>	
<p><u>Customer</u> It happens all the time! I need to know your problems? I am in all sorts of areas. Your service is so bad!; your technicians are lousy! Every time a new problem pops up?</p>	<p><u>Customer</u> I don't know but I think it happens all the time. I am in all sorts of areas. There should not be such reception problems. It seems to be anywhere I happen to be.</p>

# Problem Solving After Hostile Encounters

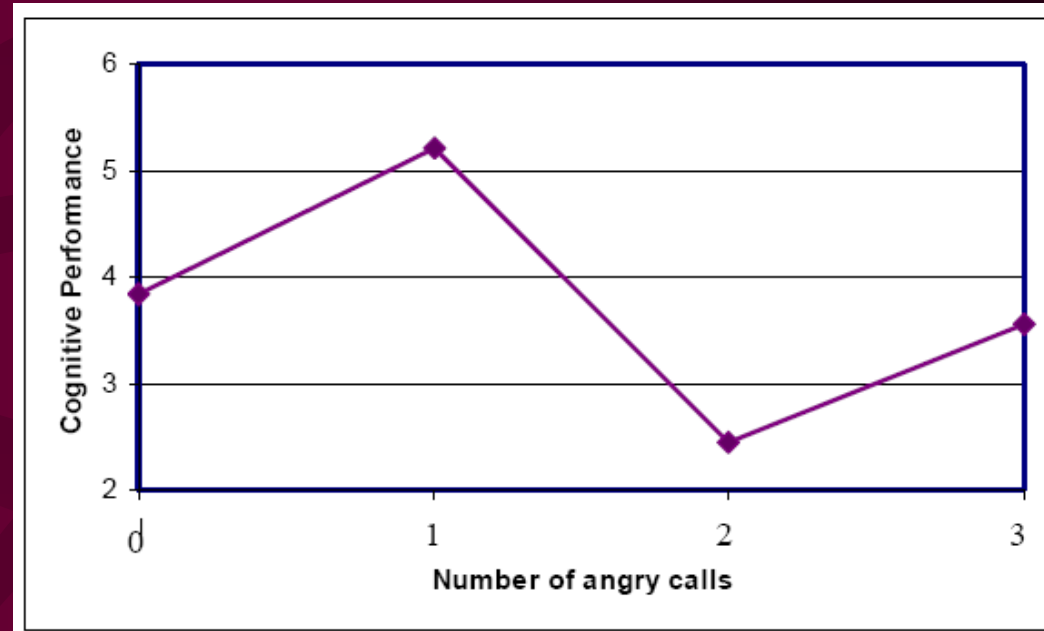
Raven's Matrices (8 minutes)



# No Hostile Cases Equal to 3 Hostile Cases!

**Mean Number of Problems Solved**

	N	M	SD
<b>0 angry calls</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>1.83</b>
<b>1 angry call</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>5.22</b>	<b>1.74</b>
<b>2 angry calls</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2.44</b>	<b>1.05</b>
<b>3 angry calls</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>3.56</b>	<b>1.40</b>



$(F(3, 140)=19.88, p<.000)$

# Study: Reactions of Hospital Staff to Hostility

- Scenarios:
  - Patient / Relative Hostility:
    - Stare, Yell, Pound
    - Older/ Younger Man
  - Employee Sense-making?
  - Employee Reactions?



## Cheshin, Rafaeli and Eisenman (2012)

### Employees Assess Event

- Is it actor's fault → Ignore
- Is it our fault → Give-in
- Is it **REALLY** dangerous  
→ Call security



# What Do We Learn?

- Frequent Events of “Minor” Hostility
  - Staff Used to ... so ignore or attend
- ➔ Where Does This Take the System?

## Escalated Hostility



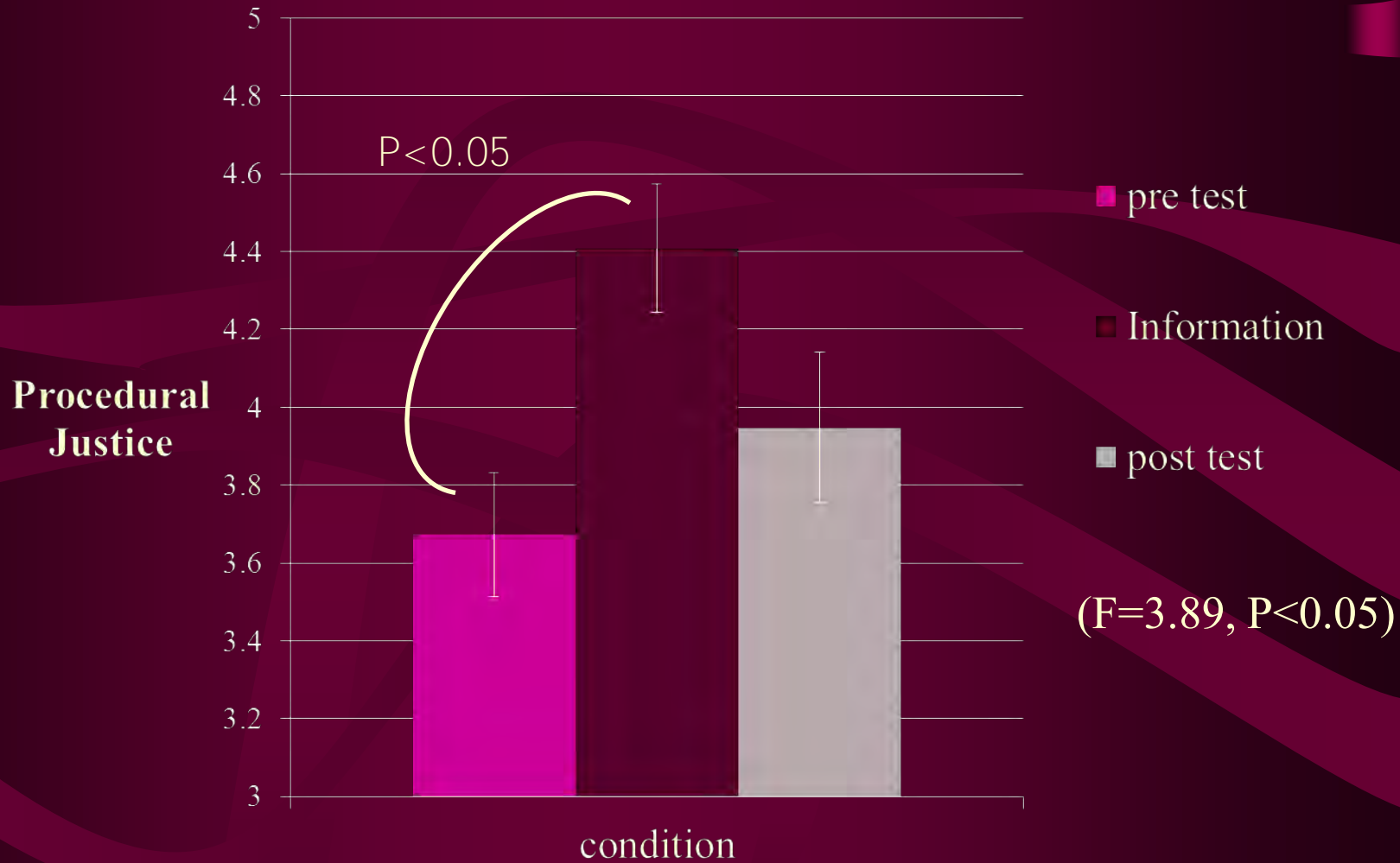
# Study: Cutting the Vicious Cycle?

- Information on Service Process
- Posters and leaflets with hospital policies;
- Include average wait time (5 hours!)

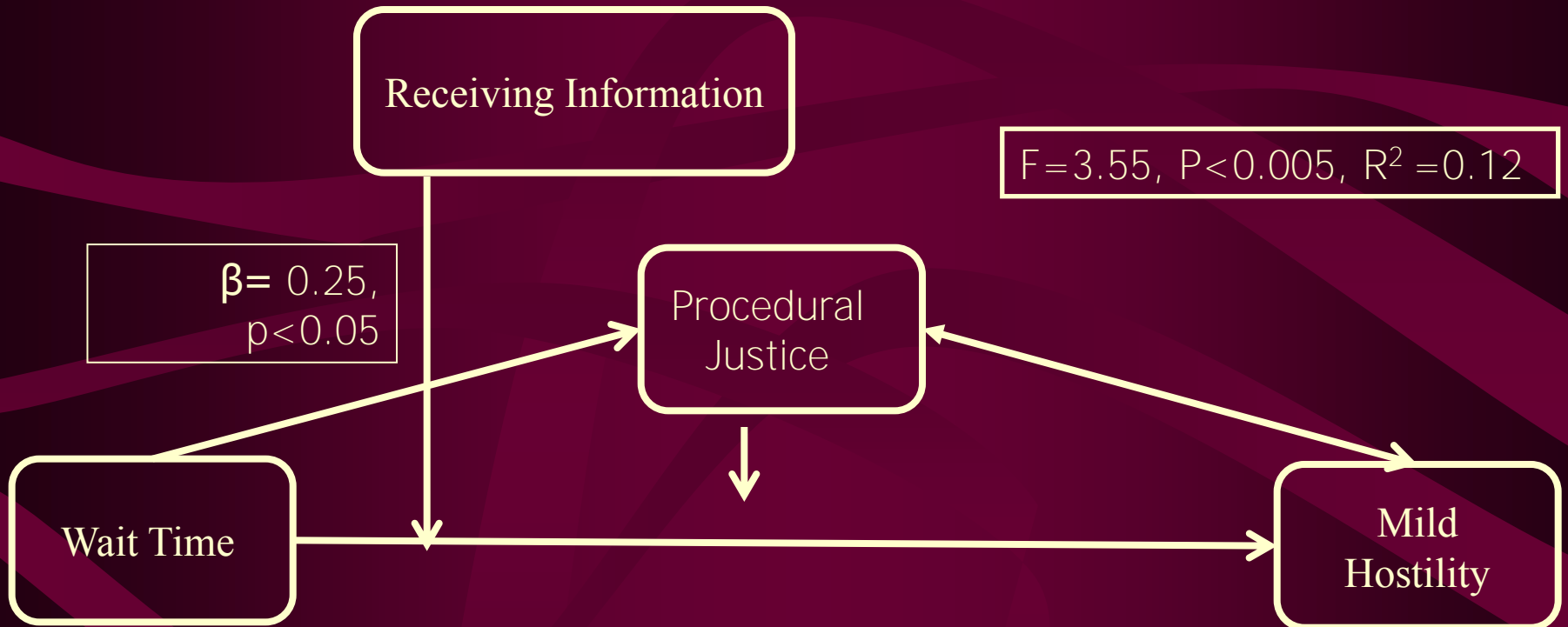




# Policy Information → Procedural Justice



# Wait Time X Policy Information $\rightarrow$ Mild Hostility



# Vicious Cycles of Hostility

- Operational factors  
(load, waiting, service needs)
- Staff ignoring of minor hostility  
(Habituation? Burnout? Save time)
  - Amplifies sense of injustice;
  - Aggravates hostility





**"Are there any questions?"**