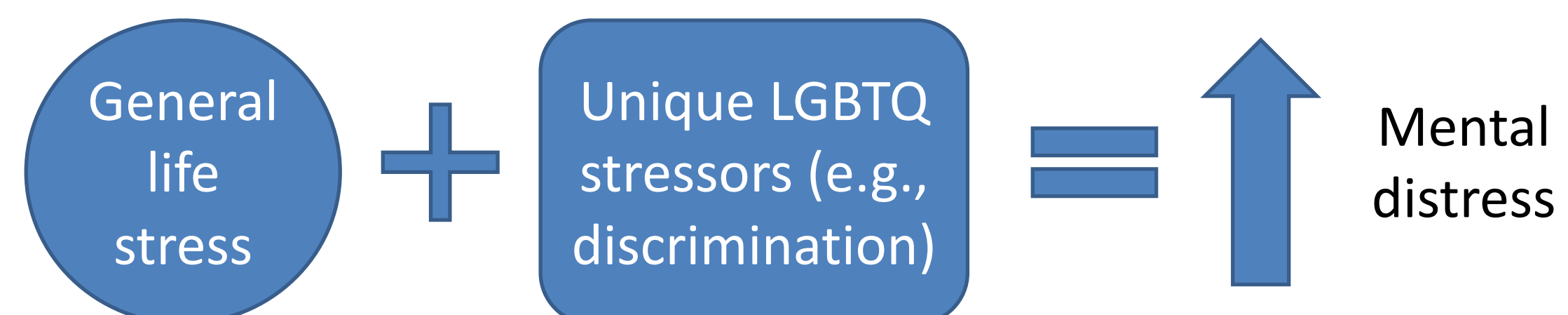


BACKGROUND

- LGBTQ youth experience disproportionately high rates of anxiety and depression relative to non-LGBTQ youth.
- Minority stress theory attempts to explain this increased risk of mental illness



- LGBTQ-affirmative cognitive behavioral therapy (Pachankis et al., 2022) — which uses the Unified Protocol for the Transdiagnostic Treatment of Emotional Disorders (Barlow et al., 2010) as a foundation — attempts to directly reduce maladaptive responses to minority stress (including anxiety and depression).
- However, this treatment was developed and tested primarily with adults.

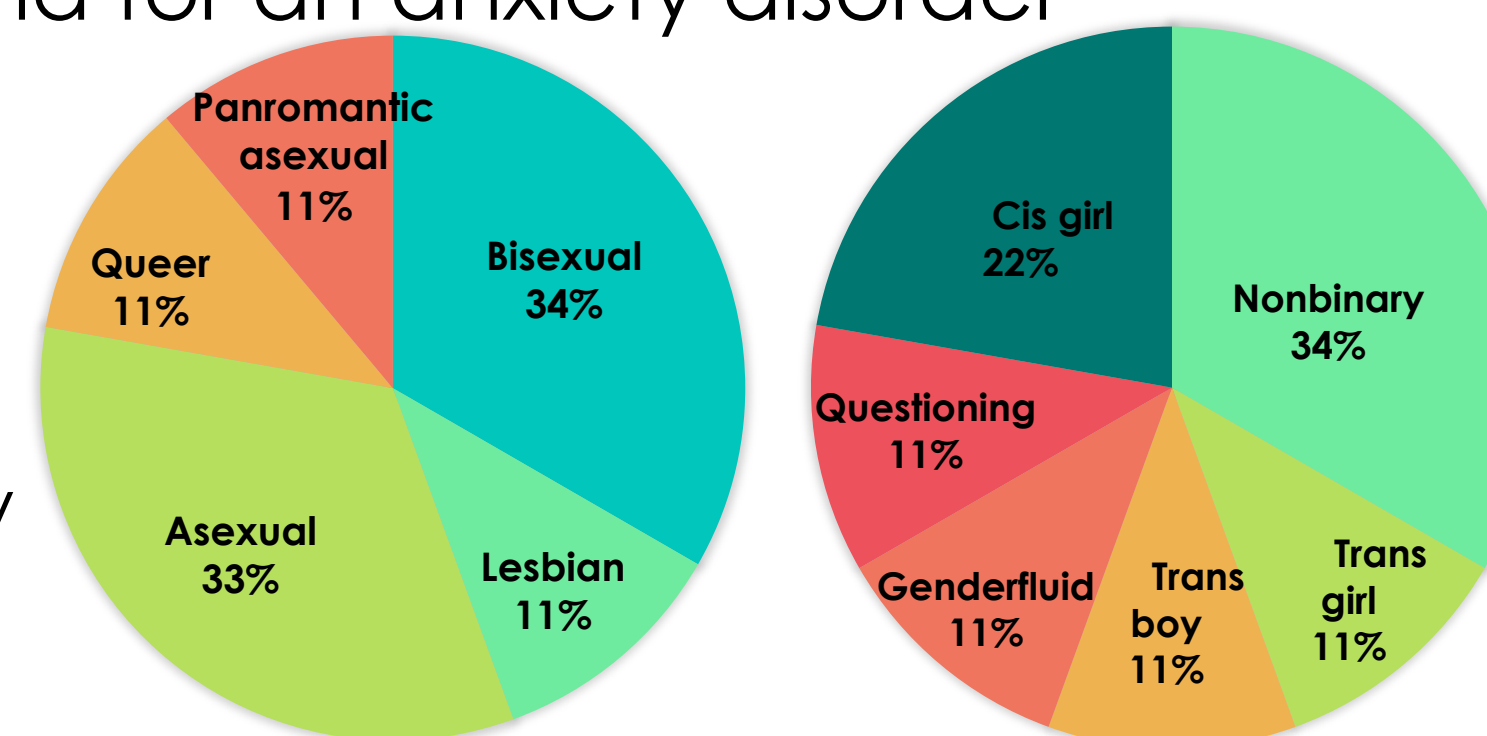
Present study

- The study aim was to adapt and pilot this treatment with a sample of LGBTQ youth, and to assess its acceptability.

METHOD

- 9 LGBTQ youth from 3 states (NY, CT, NJ) recruited online
- 12-16 years ($M=14.11$, $SD=1.17$)
- 100% met DSM-5 criteria for an anxiety disorder

- 56% Social anxiety
- 56% GAD
- 33% OCD
- 22% Specific phobia
- 11% Separation anxiety

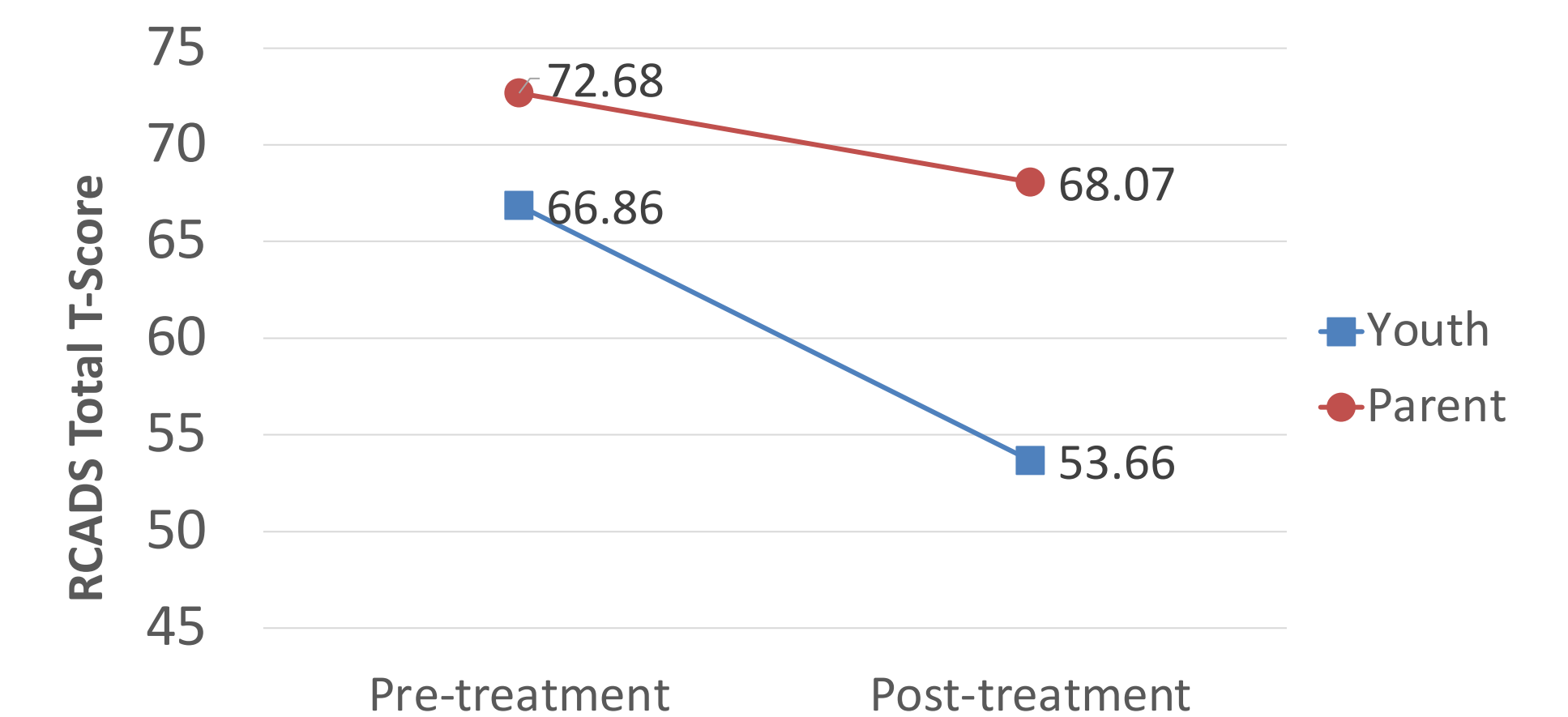


- 44% MDD
- Participated with parent consent
- Youth attended 10 weekly 90-minute Zoom group therapy sessions facilitated by a licensed clinical psychologist
- Youth and parents completed pre- and post-treatment and weekly post-session measures
 - Treatment acceptability: AFFIRM Acceptability Questionnaire [AAQ]; Acceptability of Session Questionnaire [ASQ]
 - Clinical symptoms and impairment: Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale [RCADS]; Top Problems

RESULTS

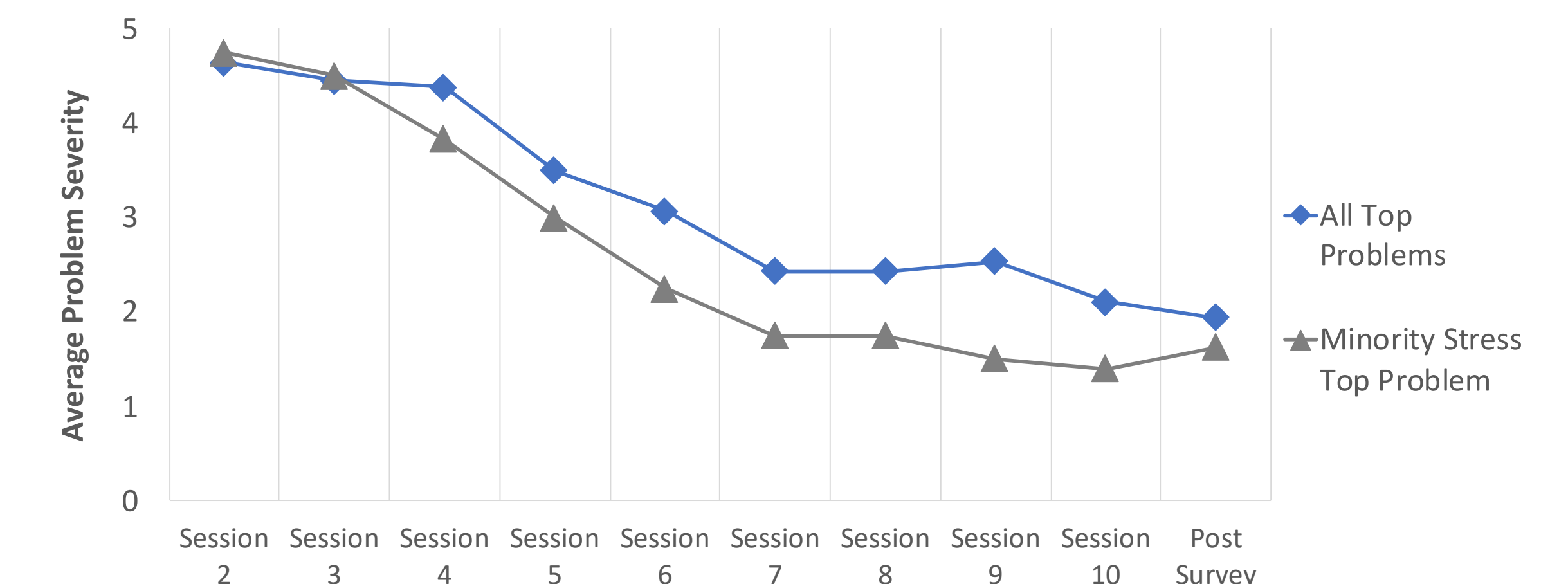
Clinical symptoms [RCADS]

↓ from pre to post



Impairment [Top Problems]

↓ across sessions



TREATMENT ADAPTATION

- Switched out the adult Unified Protocol materials with the adolescent version of the Unified Protocol (Ehrenreich-May et al., 2018), including addition of family handouts
- Developmental adaptation of minority stress content (e.g., focus on school stressors)
- Addition of identity exploration activity (Gender Unicorn)
- Addition of weekly introduction to LGBTQ role models (Queeroes)
- Use of group format to increase social connection



RESULTS

Acceptability of Program [AAQ]

- Youth: $M=3.38$, $SD=0.74$
- Parents: $M=3.75$, $SD=0.46$

Acceptability of Sessions [ASQ]

- Highest total acceptability score: Session 9 — *Situational Exposures* ($M=4.28$; $SD=0.49$)
- Highest ratings for content being useful to youth: Session 8 — *Assertiveness* ($M=4.75$; $SD=0.50$)
- Highest ratings for relevance to youth's lives: Session 2 — *Introduction to LGBTQ-Related Stress* ($M=4.80$; $SD=0.45$)

Poster presented at the 2023 Anxiety and Depression Association of America annual conference in Washington, D.C.

DISCUSSION

- Initial results suggest that LGBTQ-affirmative group CBT
 - is acceptable to adolescents with anxiety and/or depression, and
 - is associated with reductions in clinical symptoms as well as impairment.
- Future research in more diverse samples should compare this adapted LGBTQ-affirmative CBT intervention to existing treatments to assess its efficacy in improving LGBTQ youth's mental health and reducing impairing responses to minority stress.

