

School Ethnic Diversity and Adolescent Psychosocial Risk

Sandra Graham

Department of Education, UCLA

Committee on the Science of Adolescence

May 28, 2009

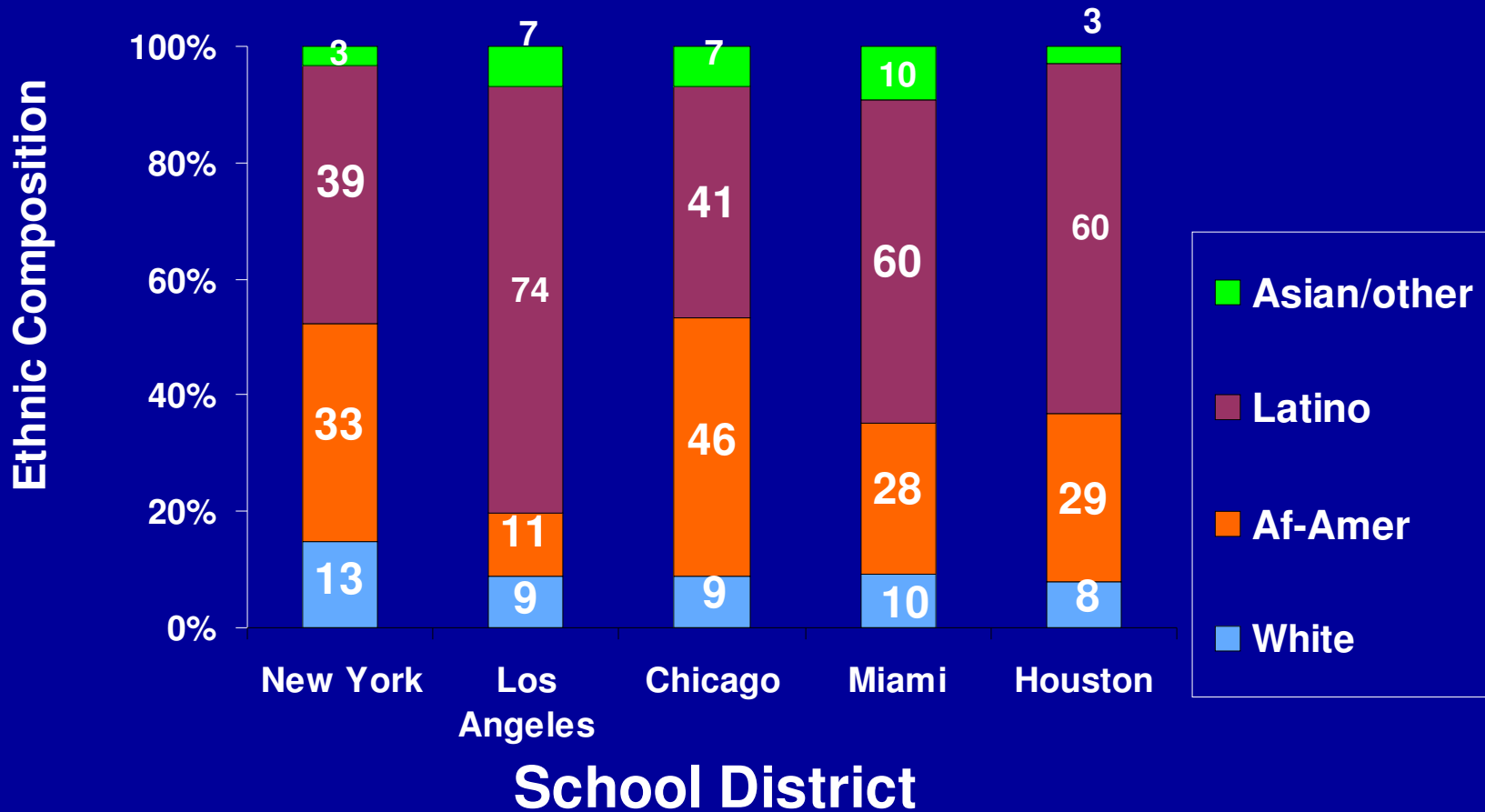
Goals of the Presentation

- Make a case for the importance of studying school racial/ethnic diversity as a contextual influence on adolescent psychosocial risk
- In 4 areas:
 - experiences with peer victimization
 - navigating the transition to high school
 - coping with racial discrimination
 - psychosocial adjustment and the achievement gap
- With illustrations from the UCLA Peer Relations Project

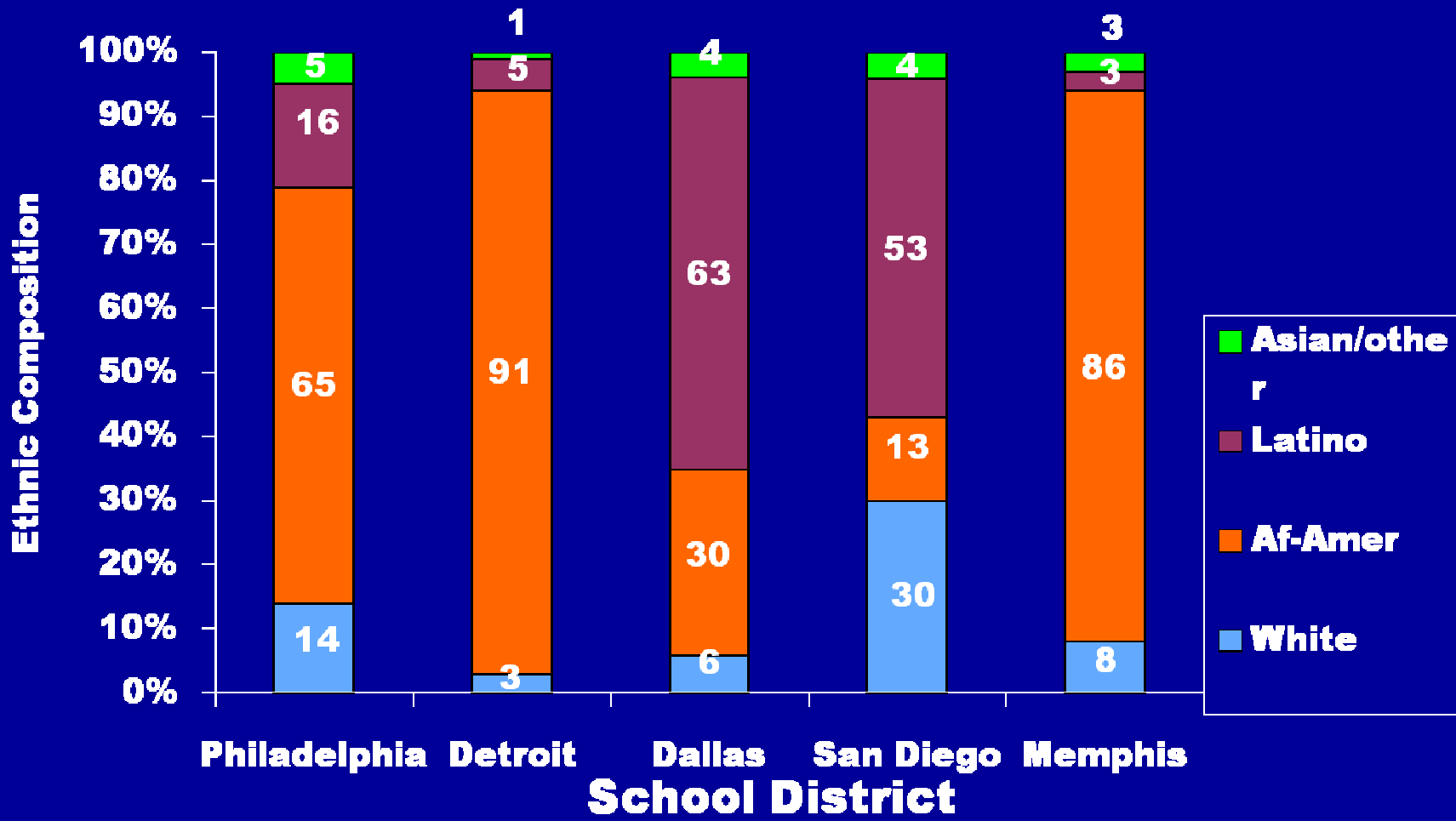
Changing Demographics of K-12 Population in the U.S.

	1968	1998	2008
White	80%	67%	57%
African-American	14%	17%	17%
Latino	5%	14%	20%
Asian/other	1%	5%	6%

Ethnic Composition of the 5 Largest Central City School Districts



...and the next 5 largest



I. Ethnic Diversity and Peer Victimization

- Imbalance of power
- Intention to cause harm



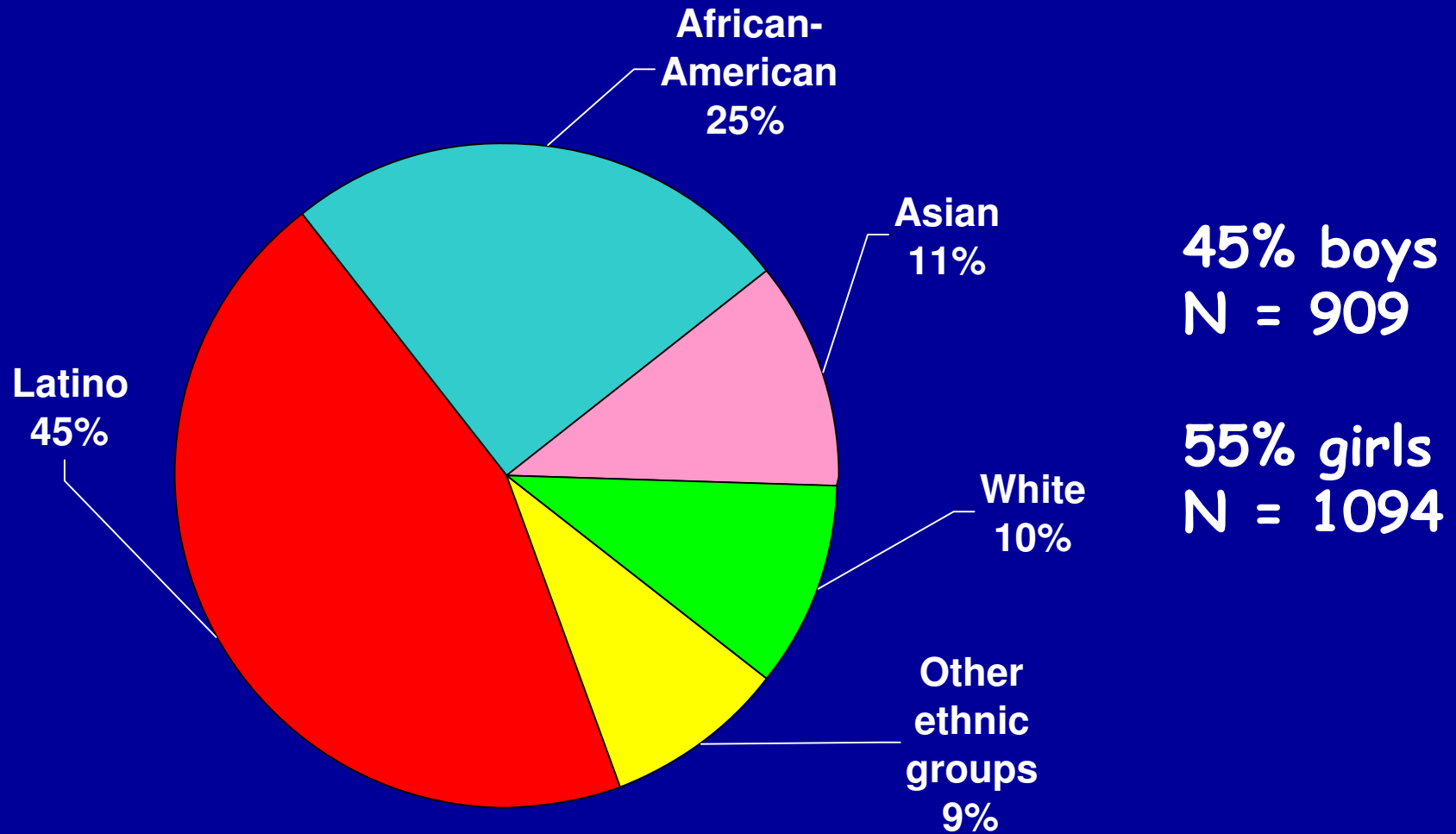
Peer Victimization: How widespread? According to national surveys...

- 70% of middle and high school students have experienced bullying at some point
- 20-40% report having bullied or been part of bullying during the school year
- 27% report being harassed for not conforming to sexually stereotypical behavior
- 5-15% of youth are chronic victims
- 7-12% are chronic bullies

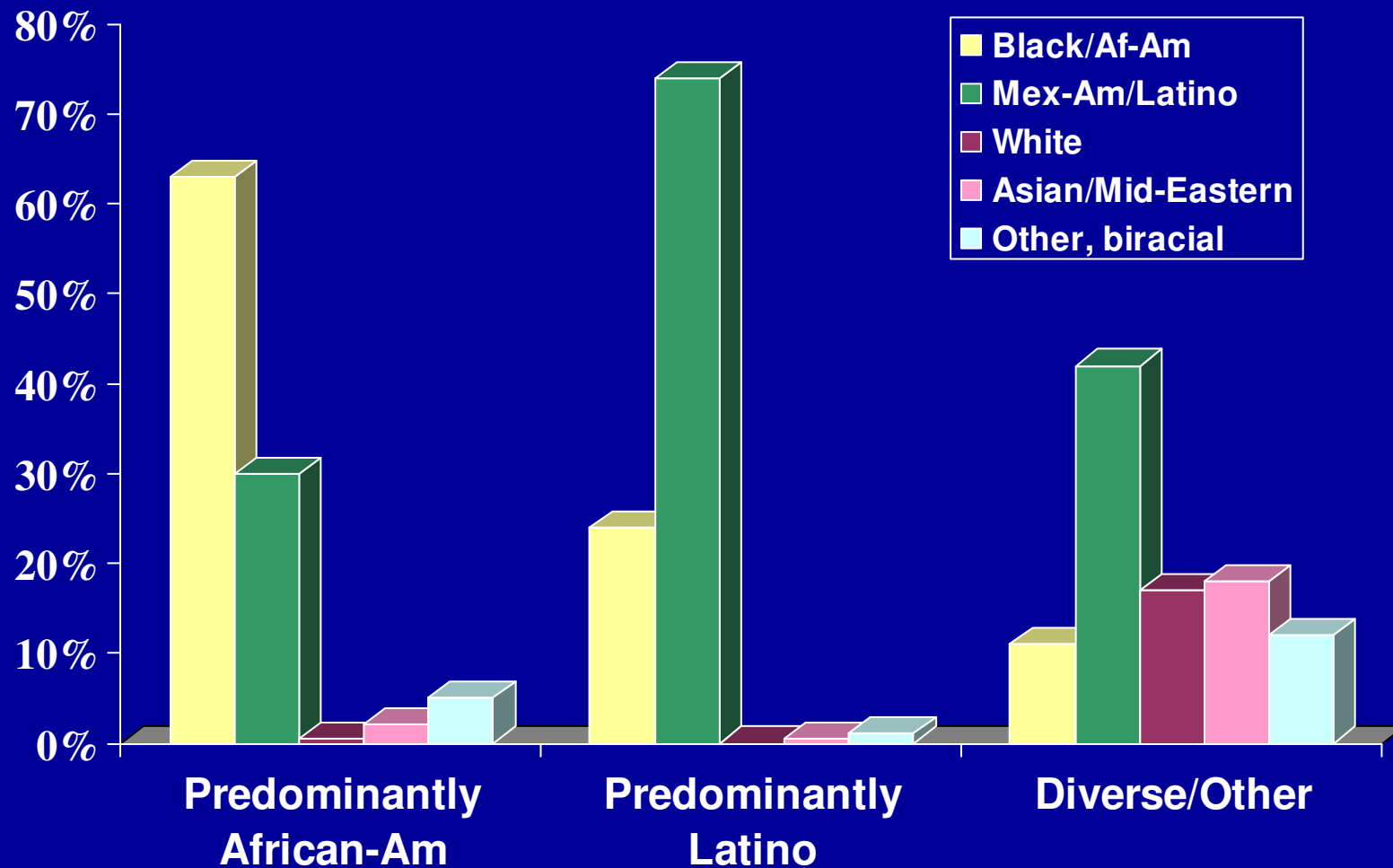
Peer Victimization: How serious?

- 8-15 year olds rank bullying as more of a problem in their lives than violence
- 5th-12th graders are more concerned about emotional maltreatment and social cruelty from peers than anything else
- Some school shootings of the 1990s have been linked to a history of peer abuse
- Designated a Public Health Concern by AMA

Full Sample Demographic Data (N = 2003)



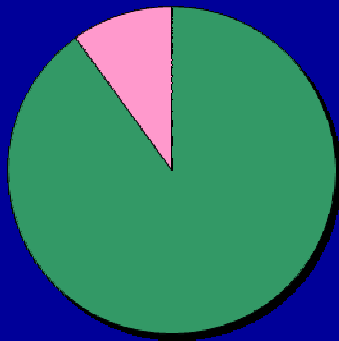
ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION BASED ON SCHOOL TYPE



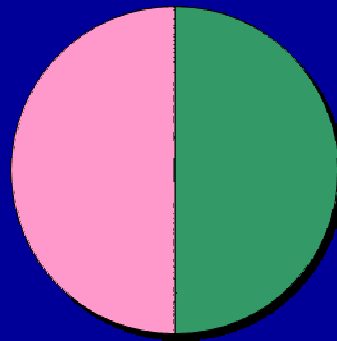
Diversity Index

Diversity index (Simpson, 1949) = $1 - \sum_{i=1}^g p_i^2$

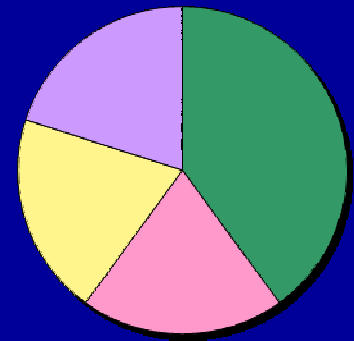
3 Hypothetical Examples:



$$1 - (.90^2 + .10^2) = .18$$



$$1 - (.50^2 + .50^2) = .50$$



$$1 - (.40^2 + .20^2 + .20^2 + .20^2) = .72$$

ETHNIC DIVERSITY

At the classroom level:

D_c ranges from 0 to .77 ($M = .48, sd = .22$)

At the school level:

D_c ranges from .06 to .71 ($M = .48, sd = .19$)

PERCEIVED VULNERABILITY

- **Self-perceived victimization**
- **Loneliness**
- **Self-worth**
- **Perceived school safety**

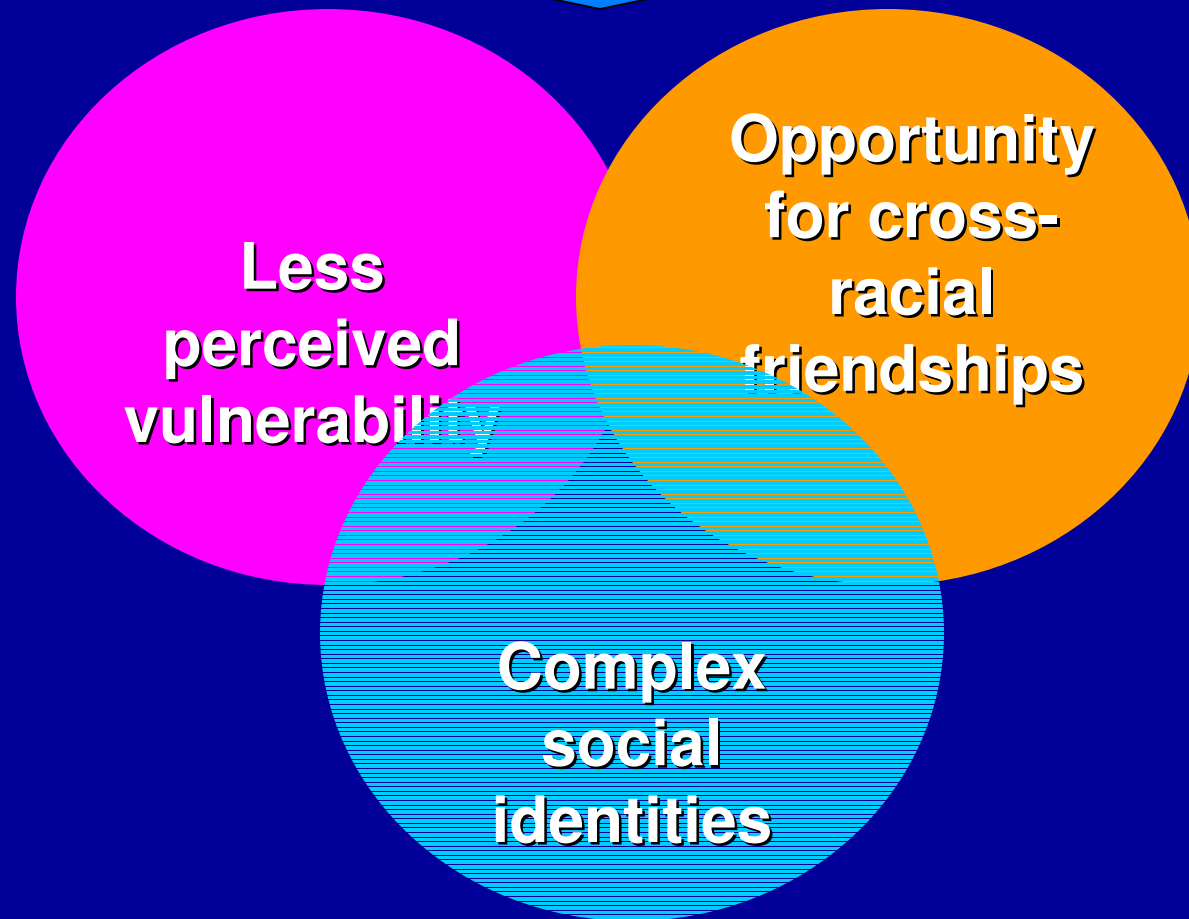
FALL of 6th grade

Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham,
(2006)

First Take Home Message

Students feel less vulnerable in diverse schools because there is a greater balance of power among different racial/ethnic groups, suggesting that greater ethnic diversity may buffer some of the normative challenges of early adolescence.

Ethnic diversity promotes...



Less
perceived
vulnerability

Opportunity
for cross-
racial
friendships

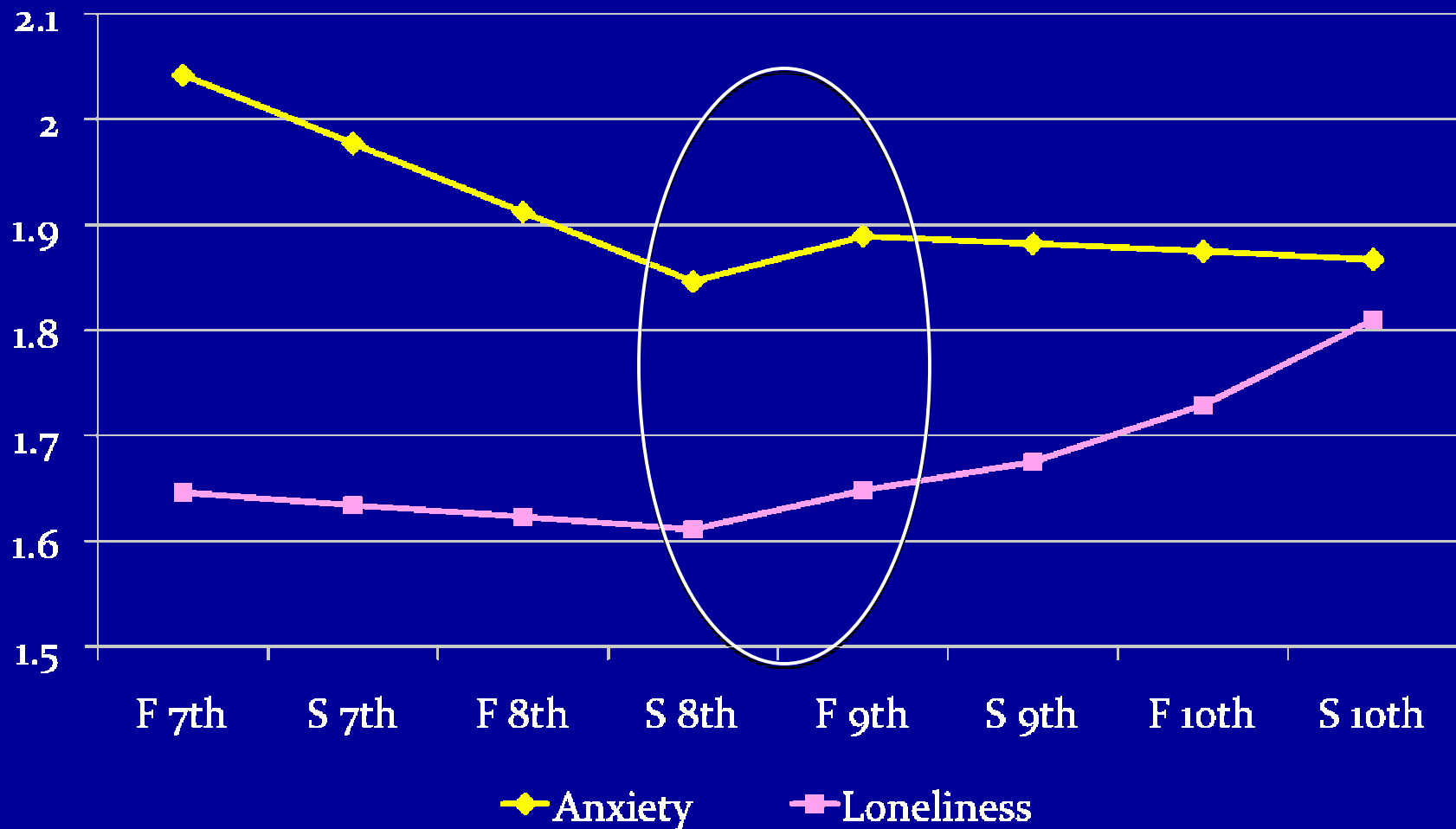
Complex
social
identities

II. Ethnic Diversity and the Transition to High School

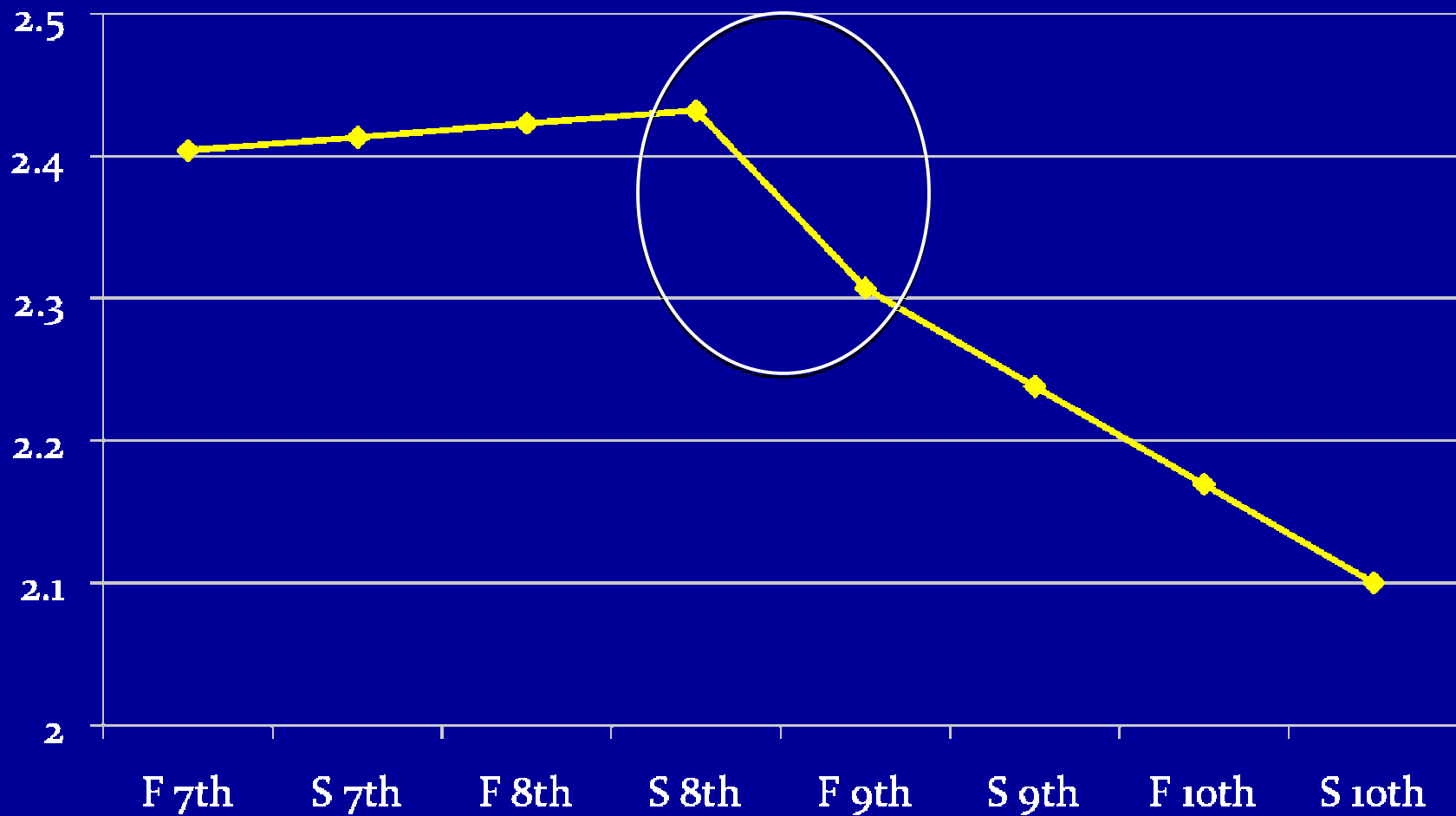
The High School Transition Experience

- Larger schools and student enrollments
- Changing relationships with teachers and other school staff
- Increased school turbulence
 - Inadequate supplies, teacher turnover
- Changing academic demands and pressures
 - Class rank, exit exams, graduation requirements

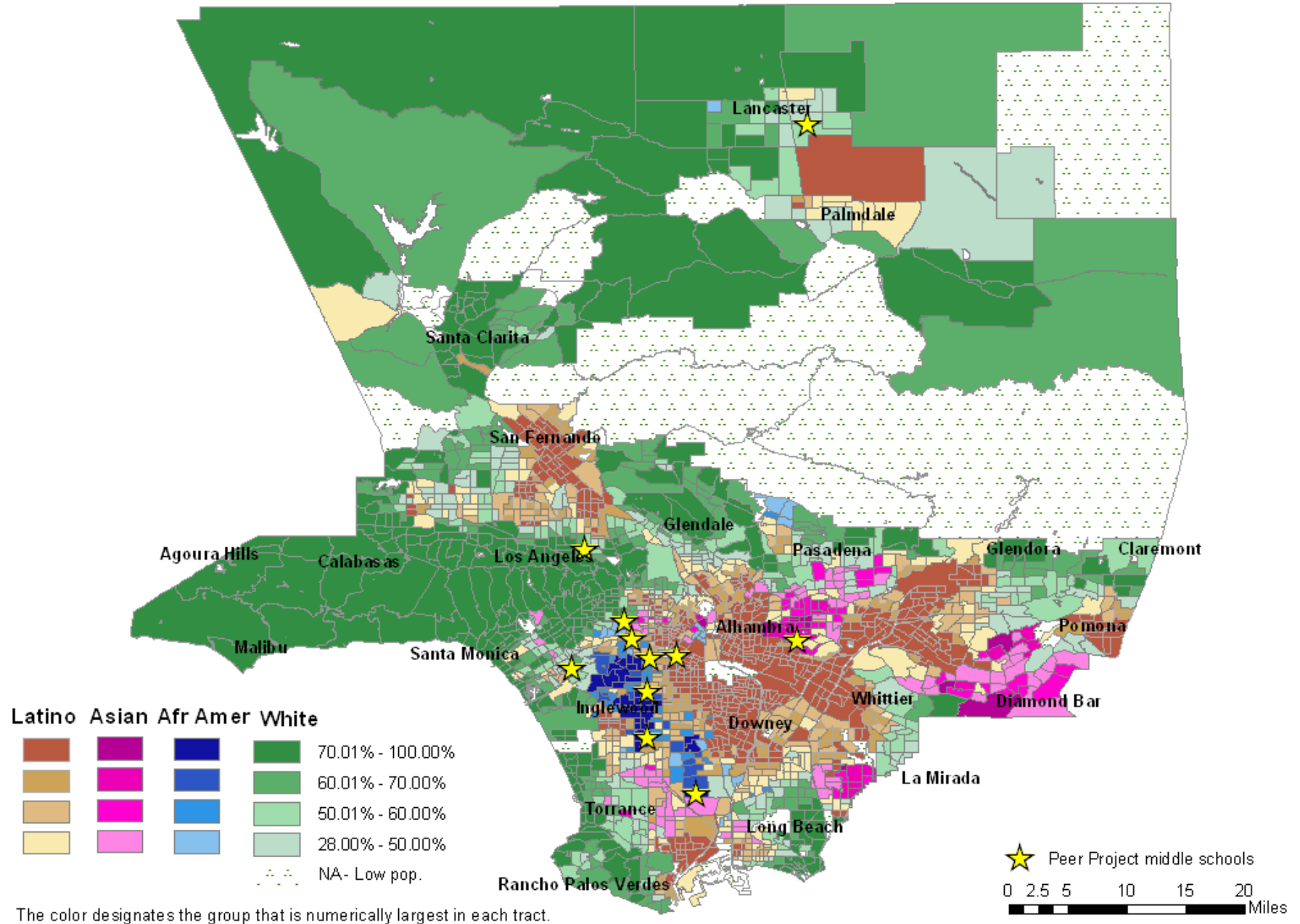
Psychosocial Functioning



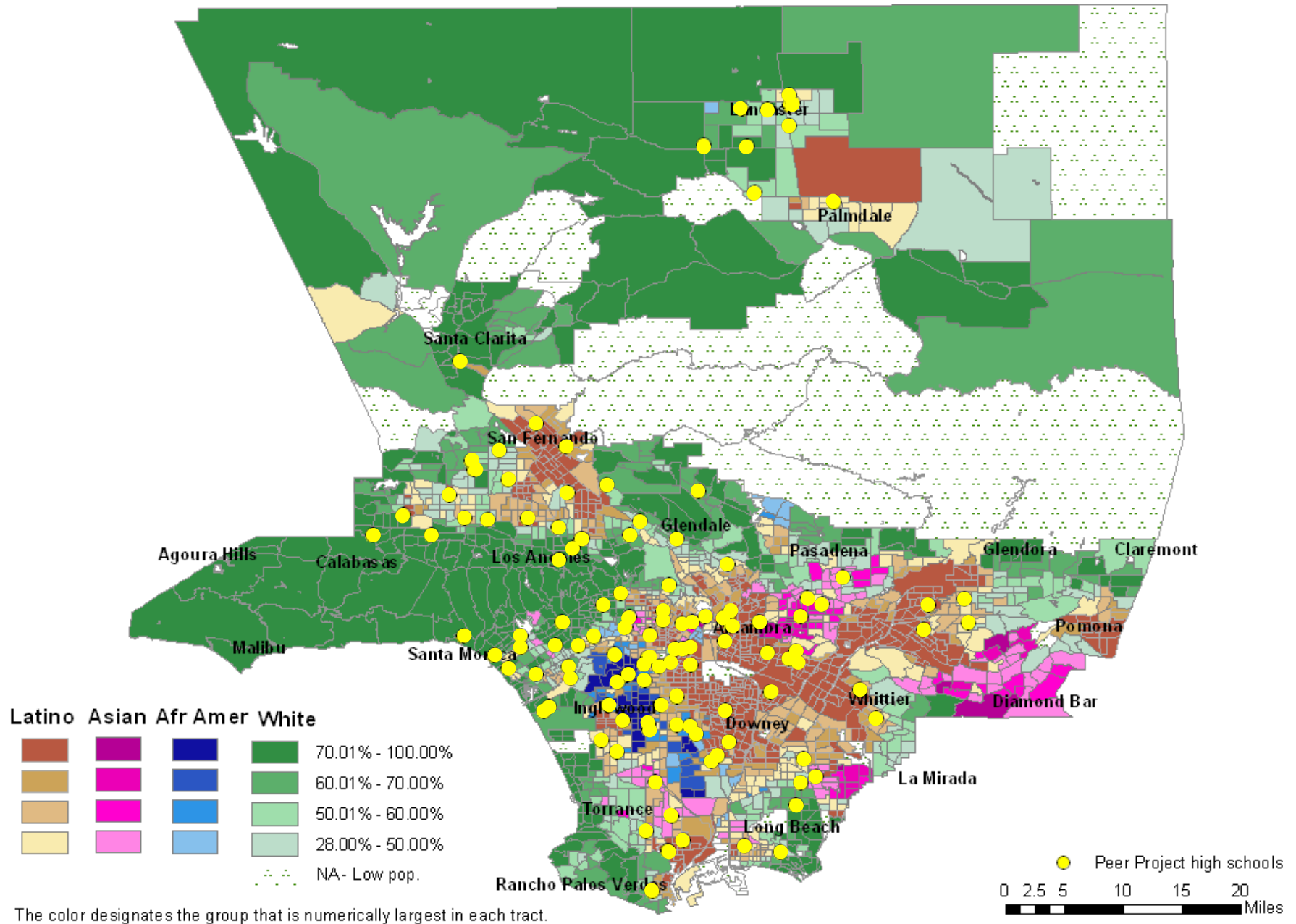
Grade Point Average



Peer Project Middle Schools and Neighborhood Predominant Ethnic Group



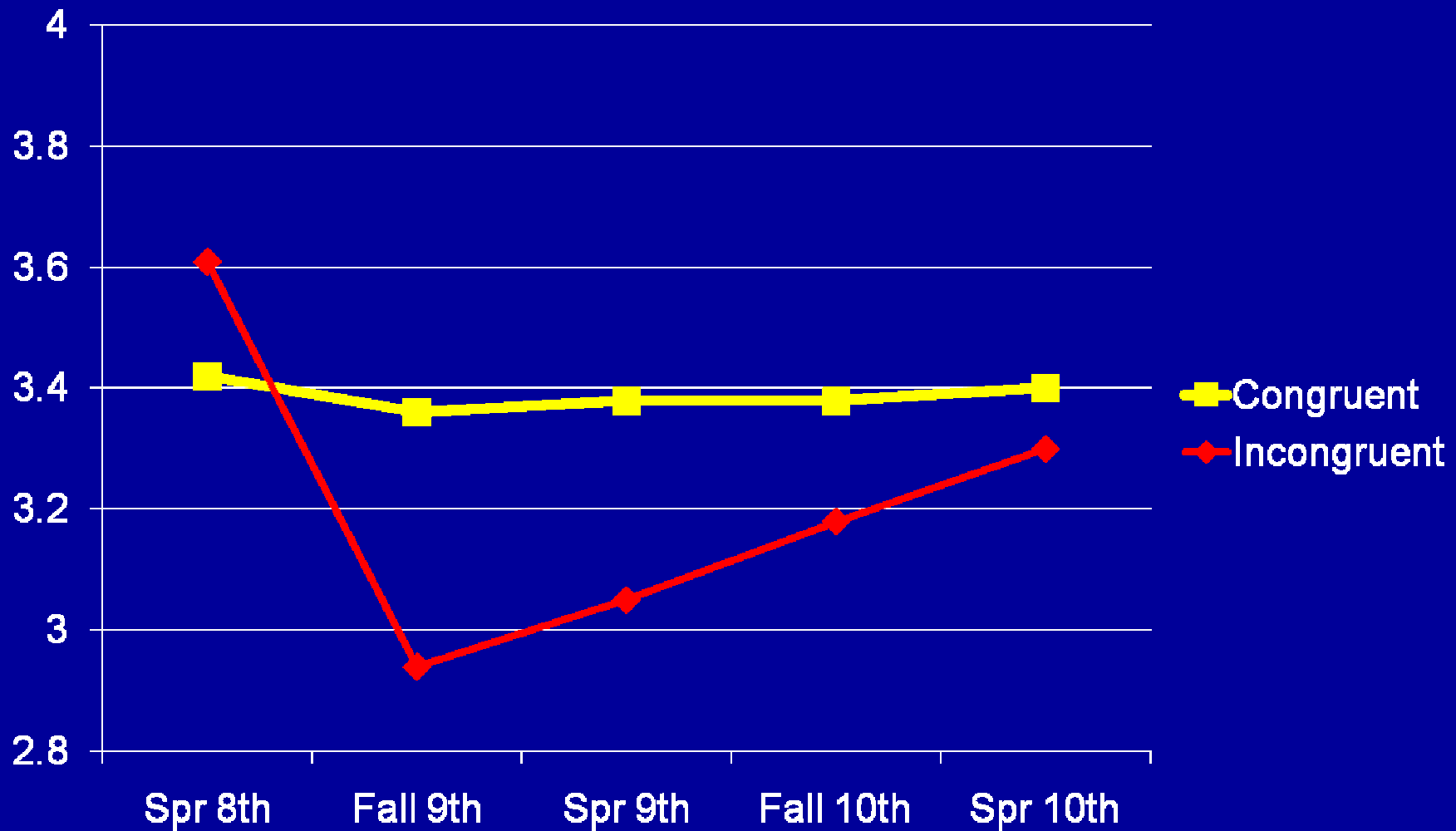
Peer Project High Schools and Neighborhood Predominant Ethnic Group



The color designates the group that is numerically largest in each tract.

School Belonging: Incongruent/congruent breakdown by grade for African Americans

School Belonging across the high school transition: African Americans



Second Take Home Message

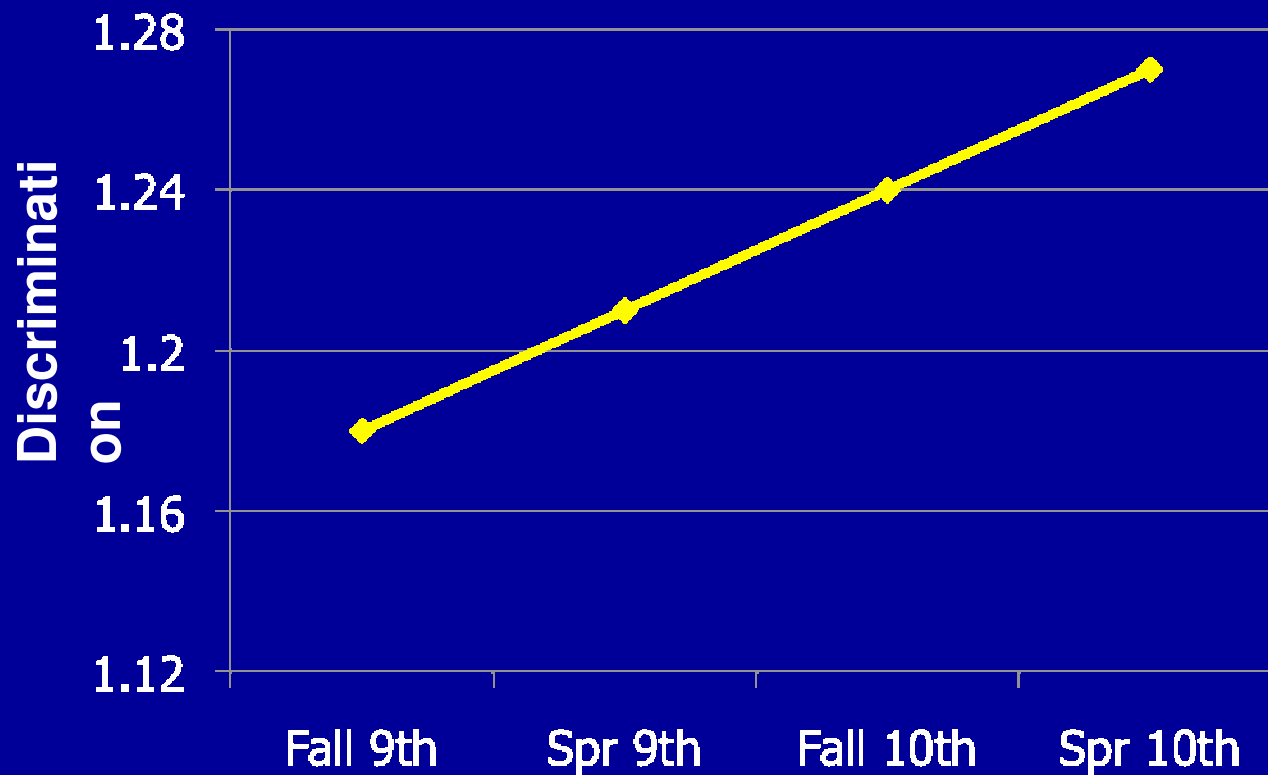
Even in ethnically diverse schools a critical mass of same-ethnicity peers is important to reduce adjustment disparities, especially across school transitions.

III. School Diversity and Racial/ethnic discrimination

Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination during adolescence...

- Is common and largely school-based
- Increases over time?
- Has detrimental consequences
 - For mental health
 - For academic motivation
 - For school achievement?

Does perceived discrimination change across the first 2 years of high school for Latino youth?



Benner & Graham, under review

What are the correlates of discrimination?

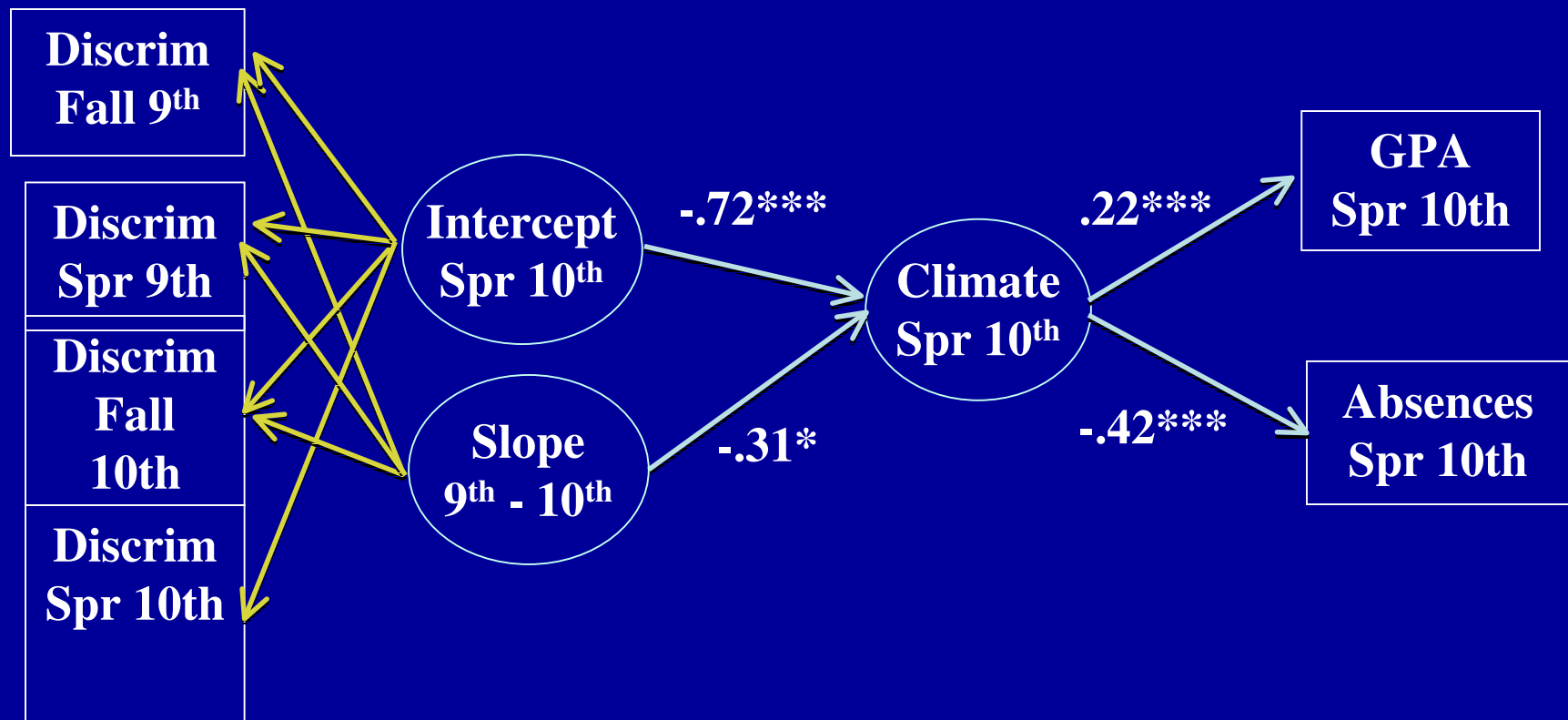
§ Discrimination across time

- Boys↑ at faster rates than girls
- Students in highly diverse schools↑ at faster rates than those in less diverse schools

What are the correlates of discrimination?

- § More discrimination in spr 10th grade for:
 - Boys
 - Primary language brokers
- § And in schools with:
 - Fewer same-ethnicity peers
 - More diverse student bodies
 - Less diverse teaching staffs

Does school climate mediate the discrimination-outcome link?



$\chi^2 (69) = 152.9, p < .001; CFI = .954$

Third Take Home Message

Experiences with discrimination are a risk factor for poor school achievement. School ethnic diversity may increase that risk (the critical mass), but teacher ethnic diversity may buffer it.

III. Psychosocial adjustment and the achievement gap

Achievement Gap in Reading and Math (from NAEP, 2008)

- **Black – White in Reading**
 - 21 points behind at age 13, 29 pts at age 17*
- **Black – White in Math**
 - 28 pts at age 13, 26 pts at age 17
- **Latino-White in Reading**
 - 26 pts at age 13, 26 pts at age 17
- **Latino-White in math**
 - 23 pts at age 13, 21 pts at age 17
- *Each point = about 1/10 of a school year's worth of learning

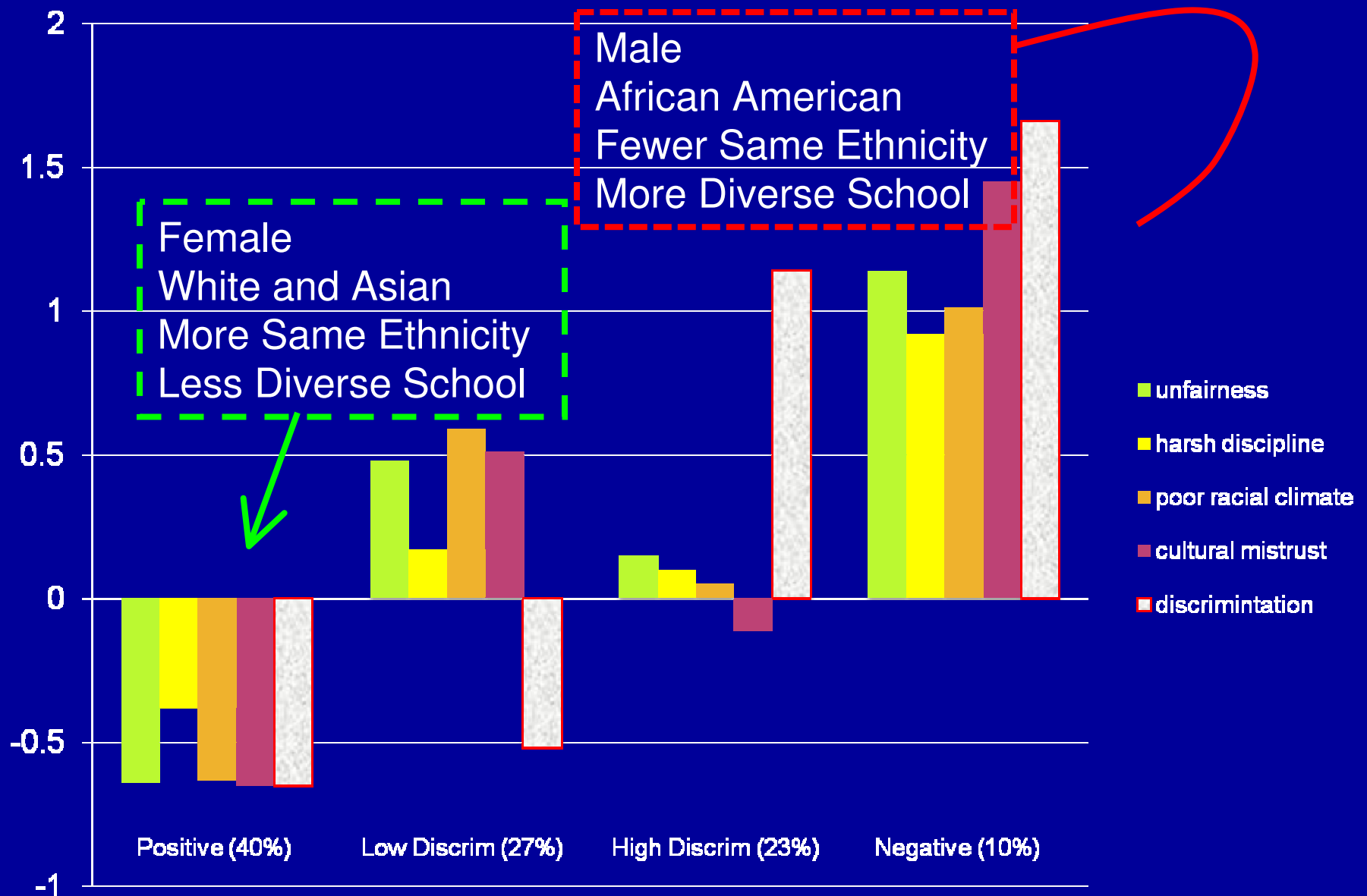
World Views

- A person's core assumptions and beliefs about the way the world works
 - what is or ought to be
 - what's good and bad, desirable or undesirable
- Interpretive lens a person uses to understand their own reality
- Have motivational significance

World Views about how race and ethnicity work in the world (of school)

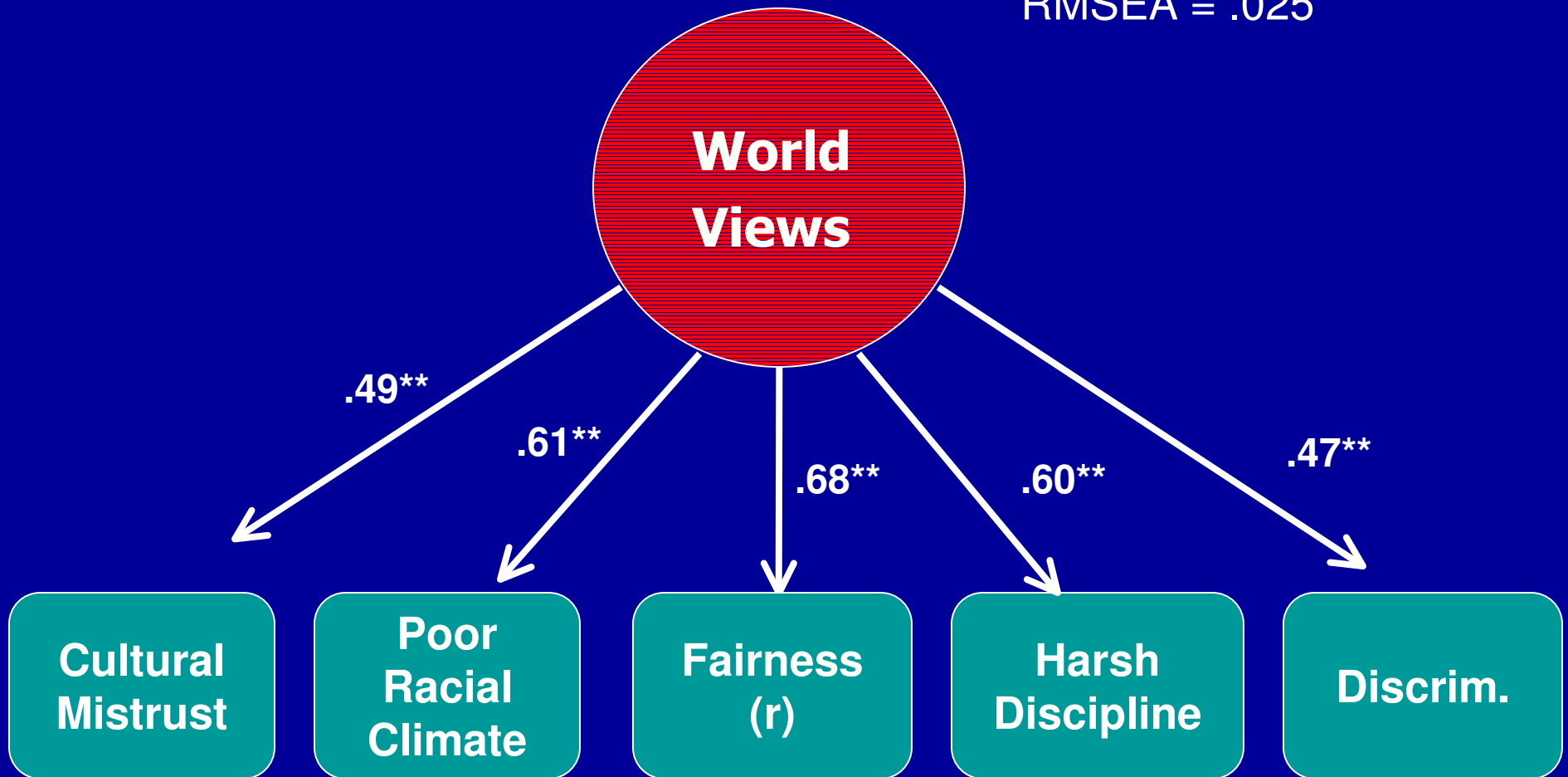
- cultural mistrust
- perceived racial climate
- fairness of school rules
- harshness of discipline
- racial/ethnic discrimination at school

Profile Analysis of World Views



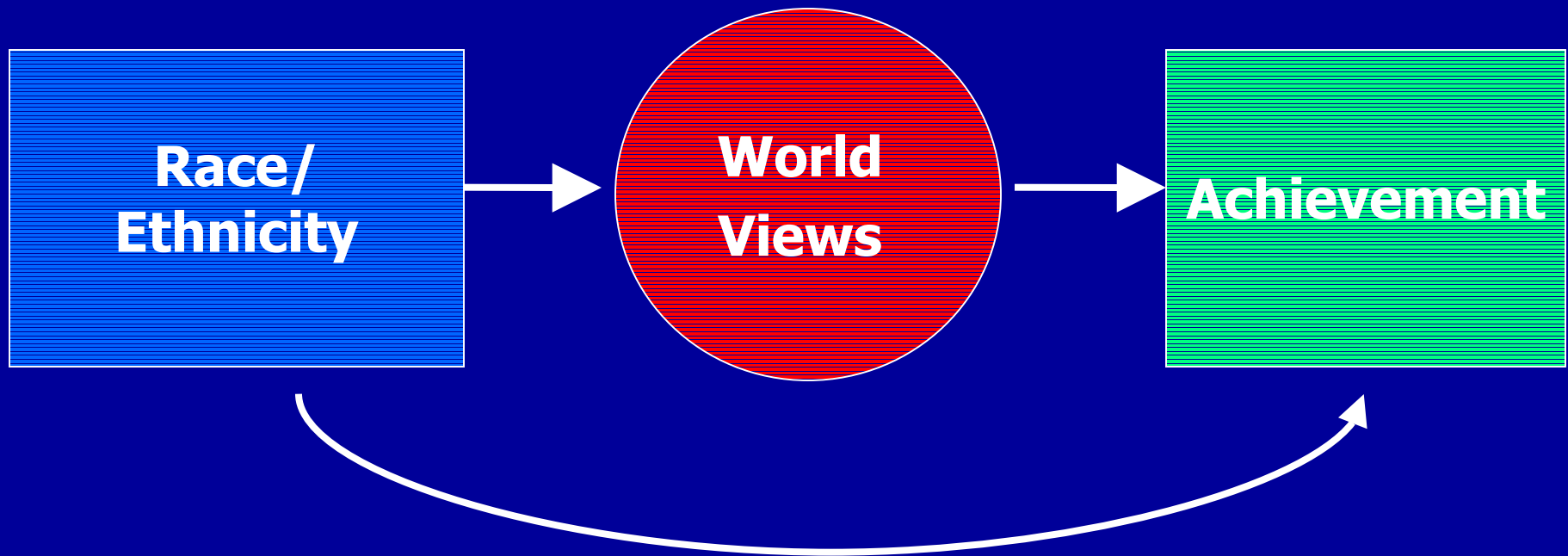
World Views as a Latent Variable

CFI = .99
RMSEA = .025

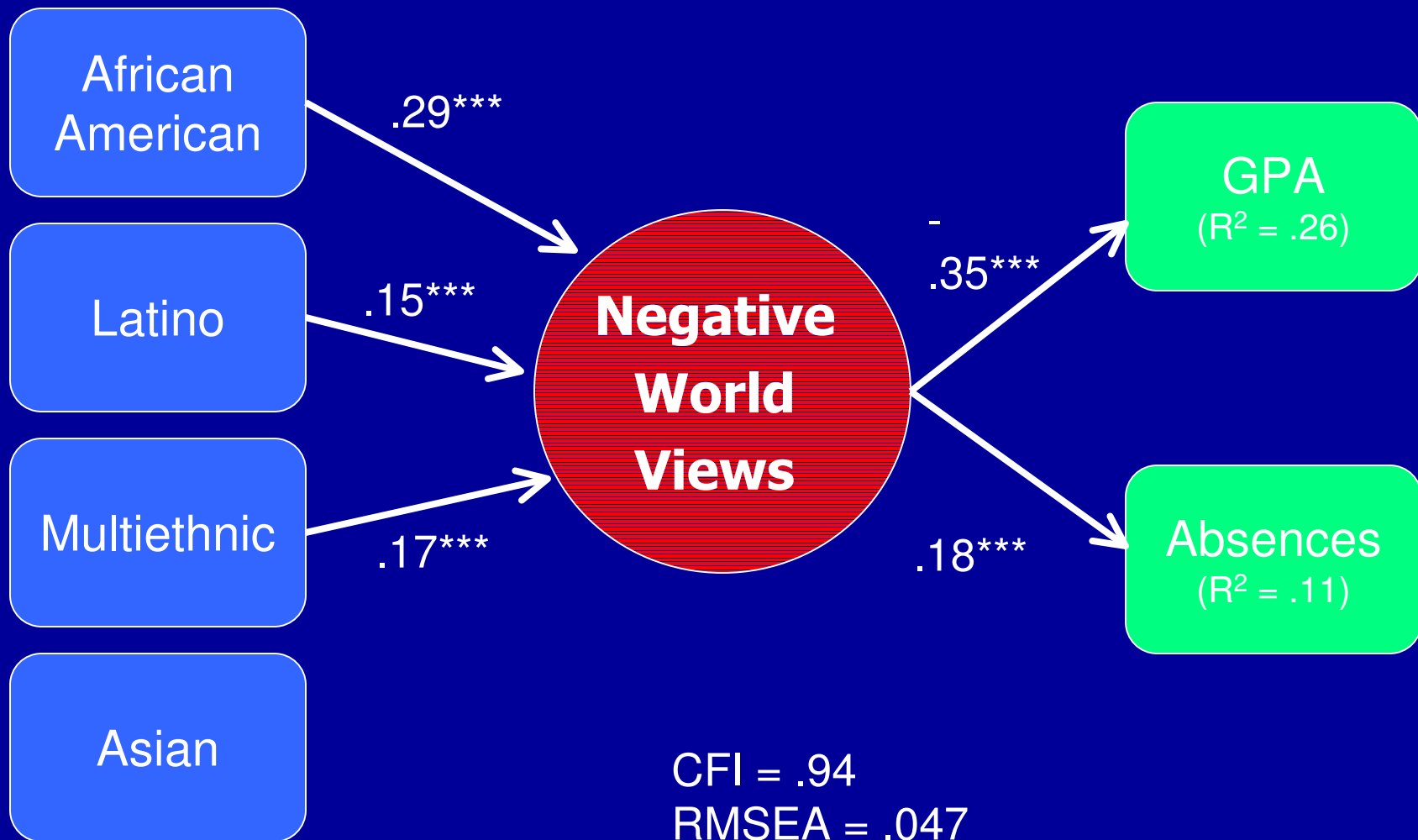


** $p < .01$

Conceptual Model

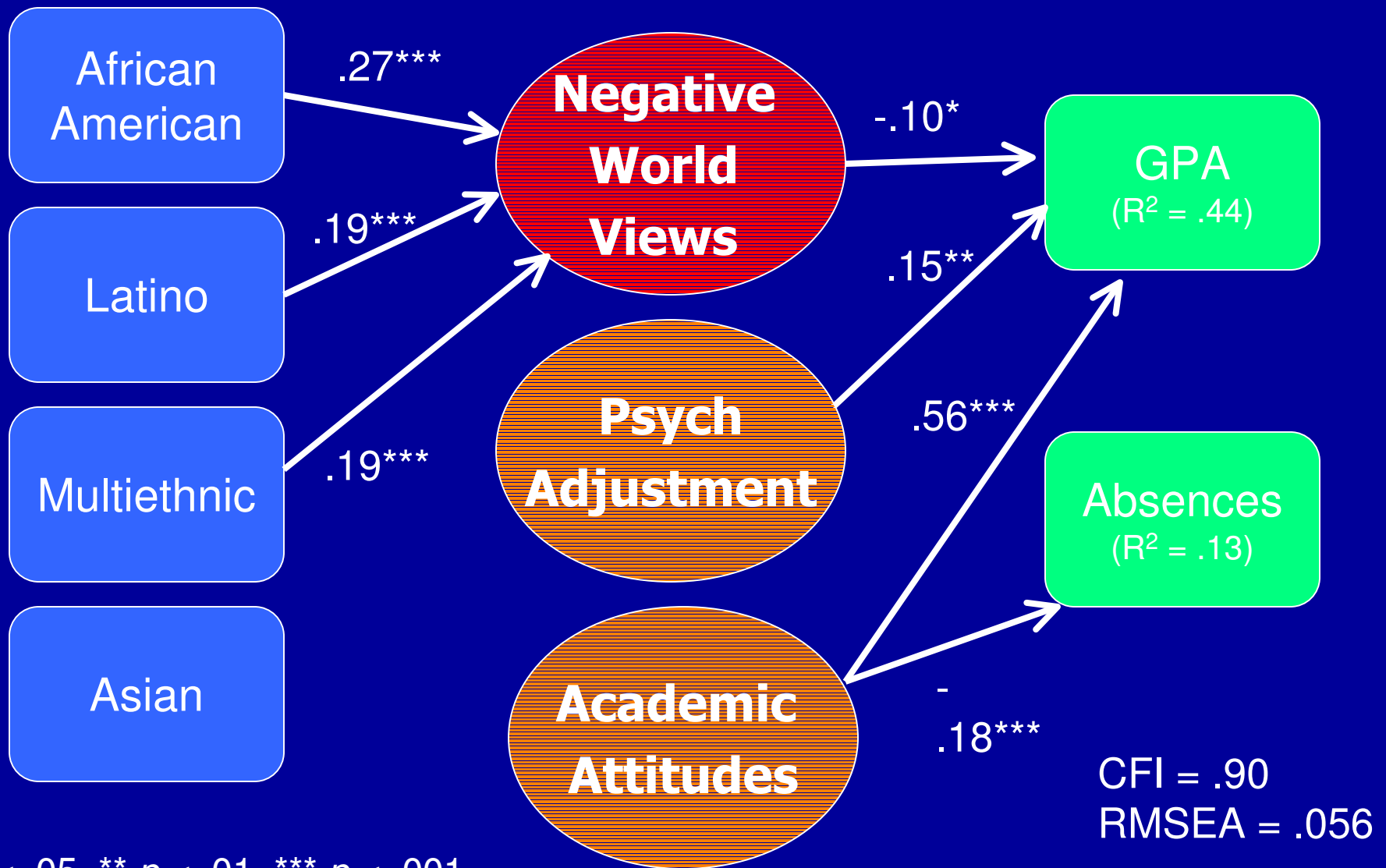


Mediation Model



*** $p < .01$

Mediation Model



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Fourth Take Home Message

Worldviews about race and schooling – in part shaped by school ethnic diversity – have motivational significance and may shed new light on the psychosocial factors associated with the achievement gap.

**Findings of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
Report on “The Benefits of Racial and Ethnic
Diversity in Elementary and Secondary Education”
October 2006**

- *“There are many things we need to do to address the (achievement) gap, but worrying about the racial composition of schools is not one of them”*

Conclusions

- Studying school diversity can aid our understanding of racial/ethnic disparities in psychosocial and academic outcomes.
- Reframe the question toward how school diversity promotes healthy development (and fewer disparities) rather than if it does.
- Address both the benefits and challenges of such diversity.