# Acculturation and Acculturative Stress: Links to Mental Health and Learning Outcomes

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# Agenda

- ▶ Defining and Measuring Acculturation and related variables

- ▶ Influence on Academic/Social-Emotional Outcomes and Help-seeking Behavior

- ▶ Relevant Studies
  - ▶ Arab-American Adolescents (age 11-18) and Parents
  - ▶ Latina/o College Students (undergraduates in HSI)
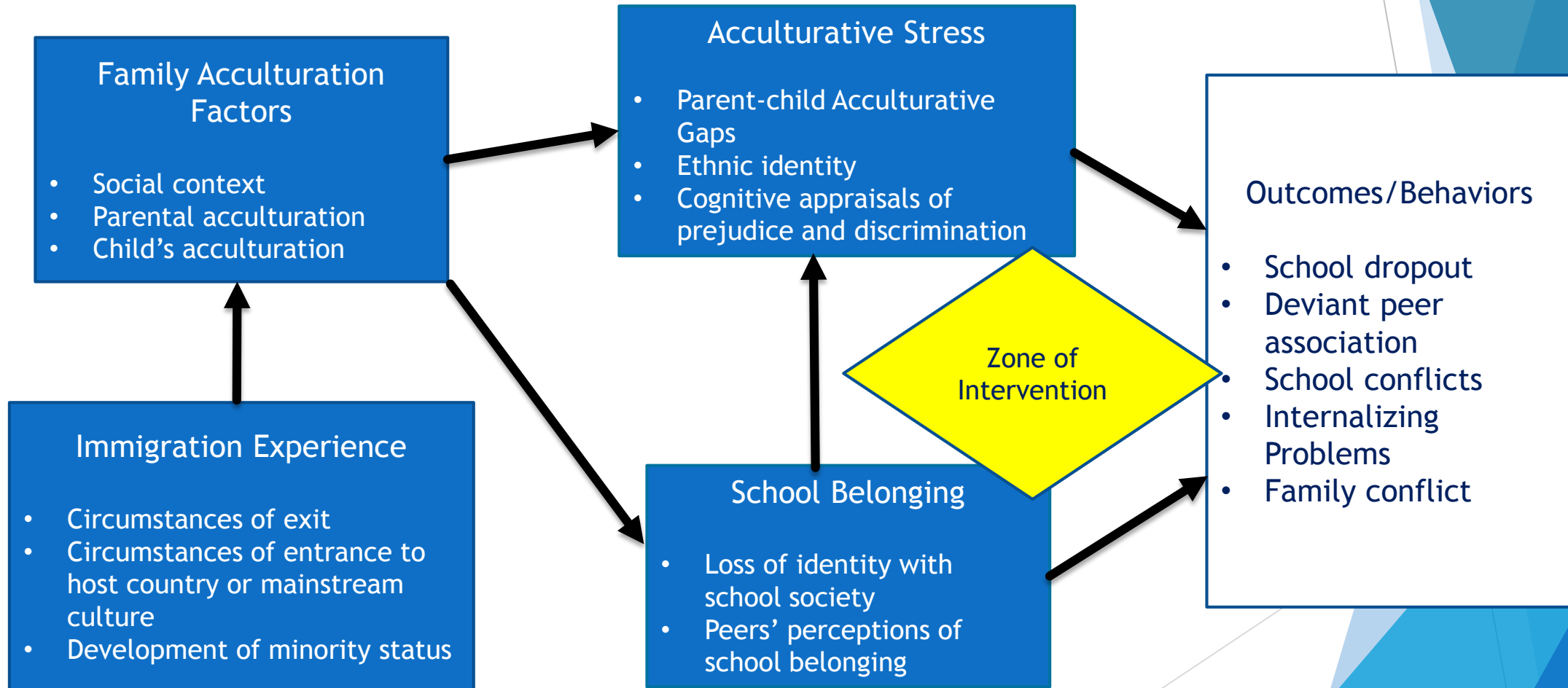
- ▶ Future research

# Why Important?

- Immigrants constitute more than ½ the student body of public schools in urban areas (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

- Implications in identity formation and psychological development (e.g., internalizing and externalizing behaviors)

- Impact with family relations (e.g., parents) and school belonging (e.g., peers)

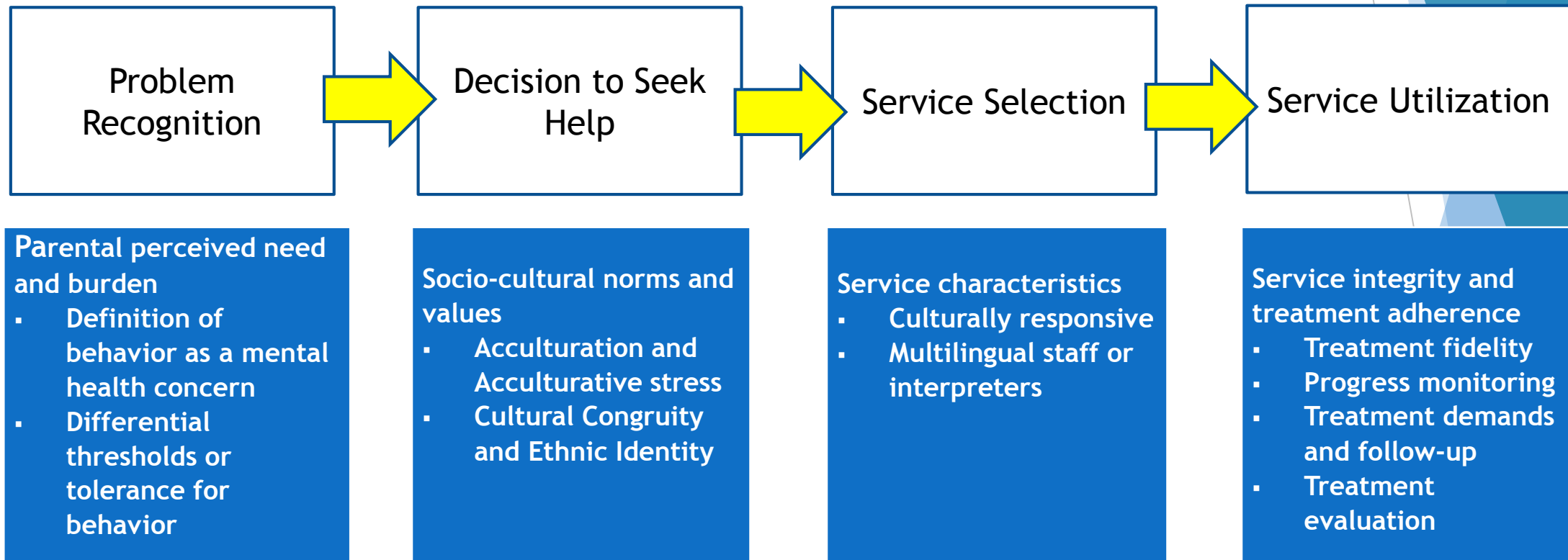- More emphasis on this topic within counseling and not school psychology literature.

# Acculturation and related terms

▶ Acculturation is a process in which individuals adapt to a new culture, as their believes, values, and behaviors may change as a result of this contact.

▶ Parents and children who experience acculturation are likely to undergo the process differently depending on external factors (e.g., community, school, employment) or internal factors (e.g., ethnic identity, stress).

▶ Acculturative Stress (Berry, 2006)

▶ Cultural congruity, match, saliency, continuity (Allen & Boykin, 1992; Leong, 1996; Ogbu, 1982; Sirin et al., 2013)

# Socio-cultural model explaining mental health needs of immigrant students



**Family Acculturation Factors**

- Social context
- Parental acculturation
- Child's acculturation

**Immigration Experience**

- Circumstances of exit
- Circumstances of entrance to host country or mainstream culture
- Development of minority status

**Acculturative Stress**

- Parent-child Acculturative Gaps
- Ethnic identity
- Cognitive appraisals of prejudice and discrimination

**School Belonging**

- Loss of identity with school society
- Peers' perceptions of school belonging

**Zone of Intervention**

**Outcomes/Behaviors**

- School dropout
- Deviant peer association
- School conflicts
- Internalizing Problems
- Family conflict

Blanco-Vega, Castro-Olivo, & Merrell, 2008

# Parent Help-Seeking Behavior Model



(Eiraldi et al., 2006; Pham et al., 2010)

# First Study: Arab American Adolescents

- Few studies exploring acculturation of Arab American adolescents.

- Ajrouch (2000) described as "selective Americanization or acculturation" where adolescents embraced Westernized norms while retaining their heritage background.

- Muslim Arab American adolescents experience acculturative stress which predicted psychological problems (Goforth, Oka, Leong, & Denis, 2014).

- Similarly, a recent study by Rasmi, Chuang, and Hennig (2014) found that emerging adults who were more oriented to their heritage culture than their parents demonstrated ethnic identity conflict.

# First Study Purpose

1. Examine the associations between acculturation gap (i.e., differences in parents' and adolescents' adaptation to the MC and/or maintenance of the HC), acculturative stress, parent–child conflict, and behavioral problems in a sample of Arab American families

2. Determine whether this acculturation gap predicted adolescent behavior problems.

3. Explore whether parent–child conflict mediated the relation between acculturative stress and behavior problems of adolescents.

# Study Participants

- Participants: 76 adolescents (35 male, 41 female) between the ages 11 and 18 ($M$ = 14.67 years, $SD$ = 2.00 years).
    - Approximately 42% spoke mostly English,
    - 41% spoke both English and Arabic equally,
    - 9% spoke mostly Arabic
    - 4% English Only
    - 2% Arabic only
- 88% of the adolescent participants were first generation.

- 46 parents participated in the study, with 69% ($n$ = 34) identified as fathers, and 31% ($n$ = 15) identified as mothers.
- Parents also had varying levels of language proficiency: 41% spoke English and Arabic equally, 26% spoke mostly Arabic, 11% spoke only Arabic, 4% spoke mostly English, and 4% spoke only English.

# Study Measures

▶ *Parent Demographic Questionnaire.* A 15-item questionnaire asking for information such as age, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, length of residence in the United States, and language spoken at home.

▶ *Adolescent Demographic Questionnaire.* 10-item questionnaire asking adolescent's age, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, preferred language at home, parent conflict, and peer ethnic group.

▶ *Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA).* 20-item bi-dimensional measure of acculturation that assesses heritage (HC) and mainstream (MC) orientations (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). 9-point Likert-type scale. Items include social relations, values, and adherence to traditions.

  ▶ *VIA-A (American or mainstream orientation)*

  ▶ *VIA-H (Heritage culture orientation)*

# Study Measures

▶ *Parent-Child Conflict Question* – One item asking how often family members disagree or have conflict.

▶ *Societal, Academic, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale: Children's Version (SAFE-C).* A 36-item rating scale measuring acculturative stress with 3 subscales. 6-point Likert. Composite Score only used.

- ▶ General Social Stress
  - ▶ *"It's hard for me to talk to new kids."*
- ▶ Process Oriented Stress
  - ▶ *"People think I am shy, when I really just have trouble speaking English"*
- ▶ Perceived Discrimination Stress
  - ▶ *"Because of the group I am in, I get the grades I deserve."*

▶ *Reynolds Short Form A of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale*

▶ *Achenbach Youth Self-Report (YSR)* - Raw score used

# Measuring Acculturation Gap

- 4 different acculturation gaps:
    - Adolescents are more acculturated than parents in the Mainstream (host) culture
    - Adolescents are less acculturated than parents in Mainstream (host) culture
    - Adolescents are more oriented to their Heritage culture than parents
    - Adolescents are less oriented to their Heritage culture than parents.

- Difference Method (parent score minus child score) – Most common method but difficult to use in regression analyses because it calculates both positive and negative scores.

- Interaction Method (parent score x child score) – Centering VIA scores from both parents and adolescents, enter in regression simultaneously with the main effects of both scores. It examines both main effects and direction.

# Results

▶ No significant differences found in the degree to which parents and adolescents experienced acculturation on mainstream culture $t(74) = -1.55$, $p = .13$, or heritage culture $t(74) = 1.13$, $p = .26$.

▶ BUT differences were found in the direction of the gap (greater percentage of adolescents with high MC; greater percentage of parents with high HC).

▶ Adolescents' low HC orientation predicted adolescent behavior problems (p <.05).

▶ Adolescents with low HC and parents with high HC = more adolescent behavior problems.

▶ Adolescent-reported parent-child conflict partially mediated the relation between acculturative stress and adolescent behavior problems.

**Table 3.** Acculturation Gap of Parents and Adolescents on American and Arab Cultural Orientations.

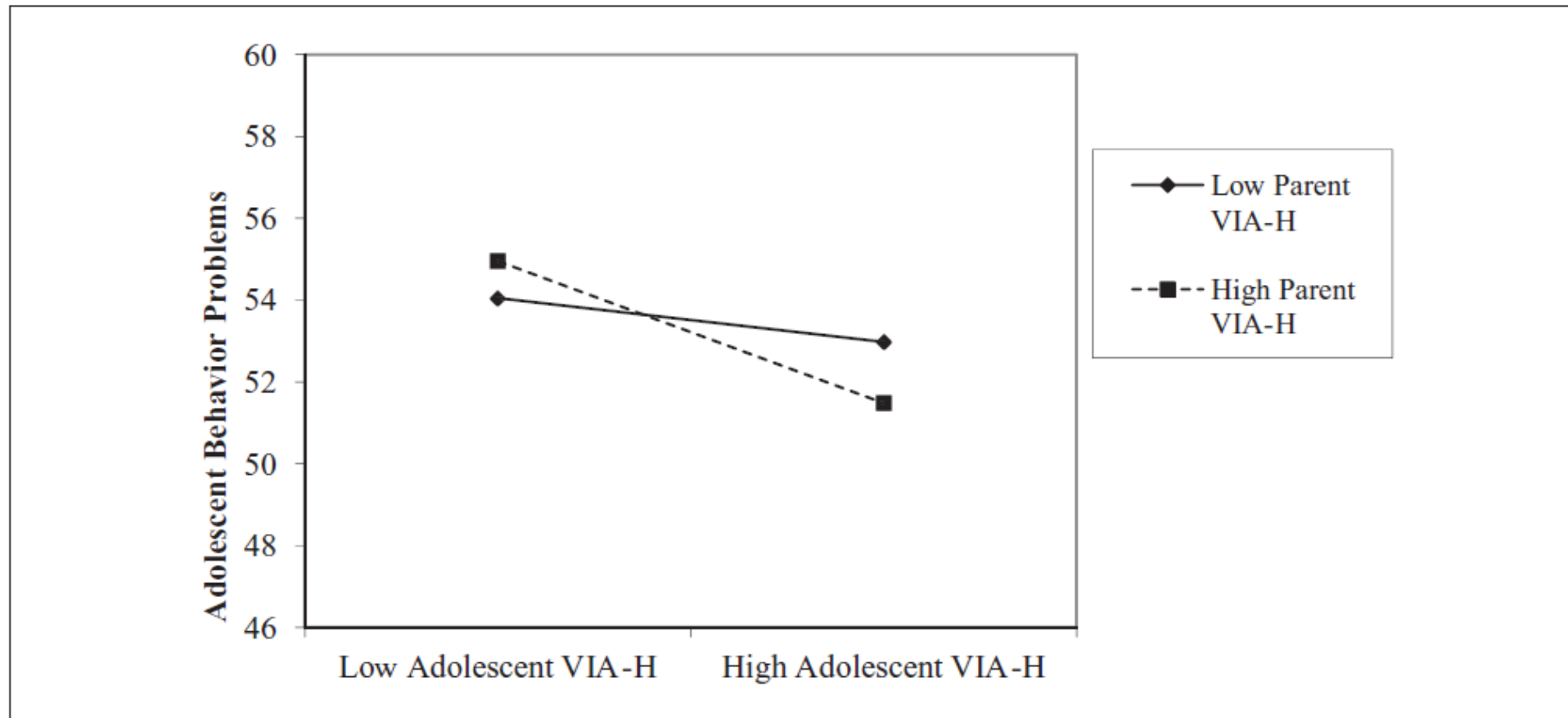| | Cultural orientation | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Direction of gap | American (%) | Arab (%) |
| Adolescent > Parent | 58.4 | 31.2 |
| Adolescent < Parent | 36.4 | 57.1 |

*No Differences between Mother-Child Dyads and Father-Child Dyads on VIA-A and VIA-H
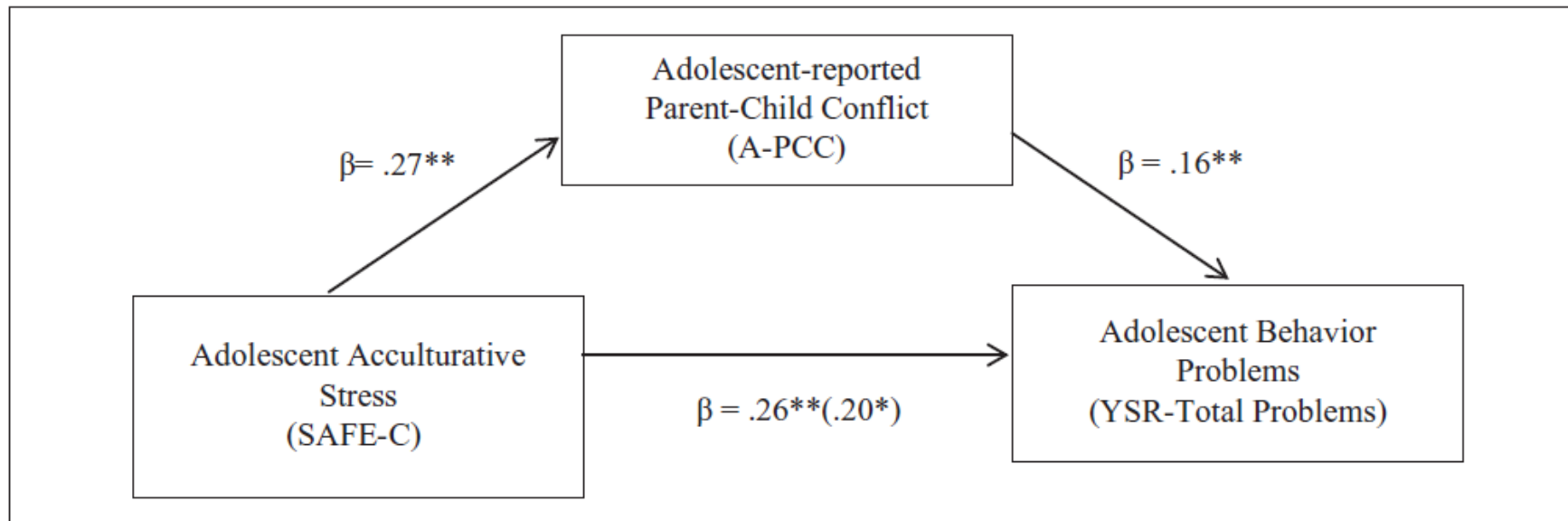


**Figure 2.** An estimated mediation model.

$*p < .05. **p < .01.$

# Measuring Acculturation



**Figure 1.** An interaction plot of adolescent and parent heritage cultural orientation on adolescent behavior problems.

*Note.* The figure shows unstandardized regression coefficients for adolescent- and parent-reported heritage cultural orientation and adolescent-reported behavior problems. All adolescents (including those with siblings) were included in these analyses. VIA-H = Vancouver Index of Acculturation–Heritage Scale.

# Implications

▶ Children did not differ significantly from parents on acculturation which may indicate that the community in which they live maintains heritage culture. More congruence than gap.

▶ High levels of heritage cultural orientation may suggest positive adjustment due to strong ethnic identity and sense of belonging in community.

▶ Explore family dynamics since parent-child conflict can exacerbate general stressors and acculturative stressors.

▶ Schools and communities can foster cultural identity development through family involvement, consultation, education of traditions or holidays (e.g., Ramadan), and fostering positive school climate, social-emotional learning, and behavioral support.

More info:  Goforth, A. N., Pham, A. V., & Oka, E. R. (2015). Parent-child conflict, acculturation gap, acculturative stress, and behavior problems in Arab American adolescents. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 46,* 821-836.

# Study 2: Latina/o students in HSI

▶ Academic persistence and college success of Latina/o students

▶ Six-year graduation rates are among lowest in nation for these students (48.7% who started in 2004) according to NCES (US DOE, 2011) compared to:

  ▶ 61.5% White/Caucasian

  ▶ 68.7% Asians

  ▶ 39.1% African-American/Black

▶ Cultural congruity may be a factor and was found to affect college adjustment for ethnic minority students in PWIs (Gloria et al., 2010).

▶ Definition of HSI does not convey any historical rationale that serve Latina/o students. Educational structure/curriculum of HSIs (alike to PWIs) are not adapted to better align with Latina/o culture (Catellanos & Gloria, 2007)

# Purpose of 2nd study

▶ Using a psychosociocultural (PSC; Castellanos & Gloria, 2007) theoretical framework on college persistence, we examined three sets of variables in relation to academic success and well-being.

▶ Examined effects of ethnic identity, cultural congruity, and low acculturative stress on emotional wellbeing and GPA of Latina/o students attending HSIs.

▶ Also explored academic self-efficacy and sense of belonging as mediating factors.

▶ These psychosocial variables have been found to mediate the effects of parent involvement and culturally responsive teaching in Latina/o middle school students (Chun & Dickson, 2011)
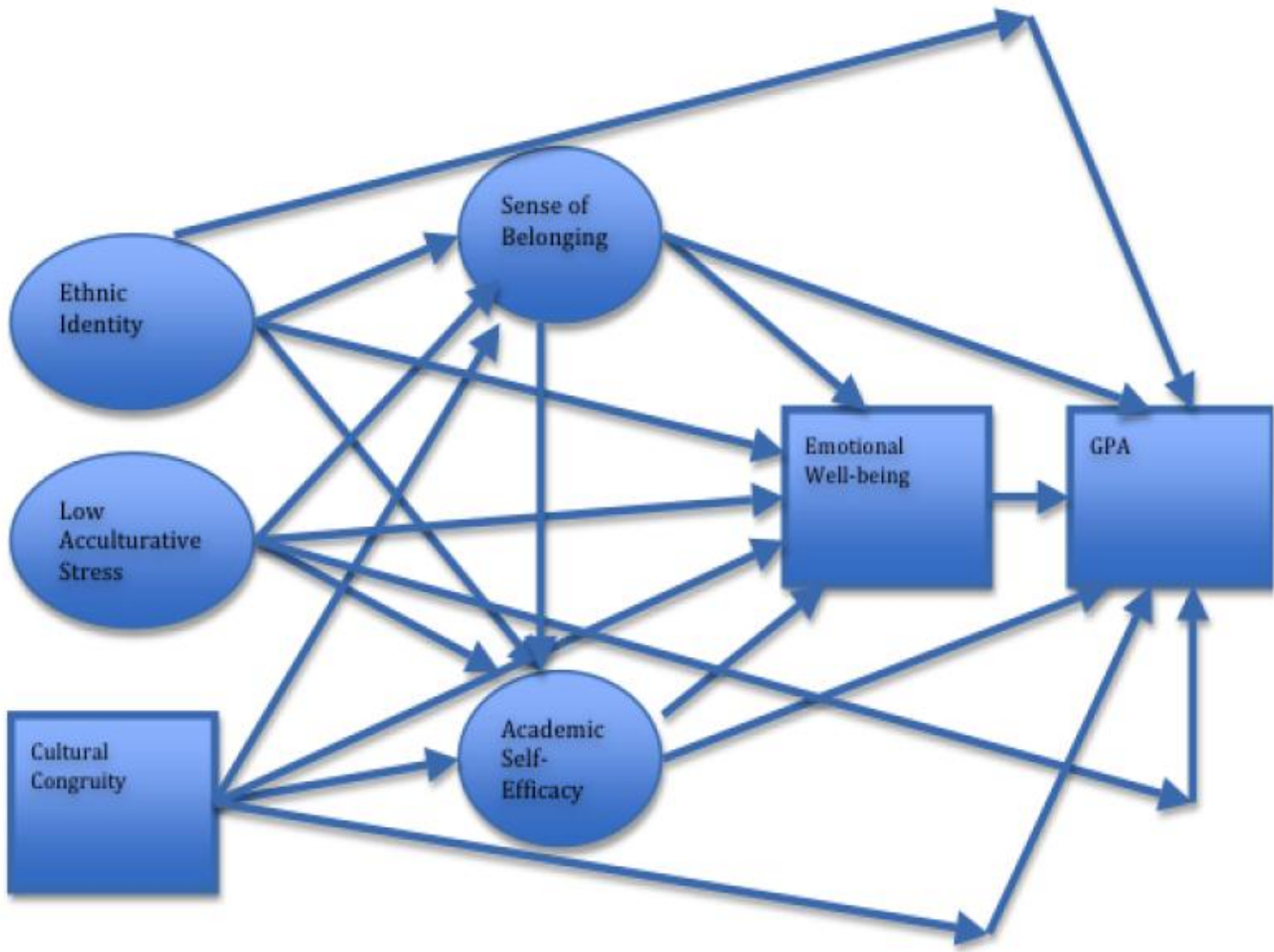
Figure 1 Proposed Structural Model

# Study Participants

- 289 undergraduate students who identified as Hispanic (71% female)

  - Mean age is 22 years old, range from 18-53 years

  - 46% Mexican American, 50% Hispanic other.

  - 60% third generation or higher, 30% second generation

  - 30% have at least one parent with a college degree or higher, 33% have at least one parent with only a high school diploma or GED, 17% have at least one parent who does not have high school diploma.

  - 25% live at home with parents, 25% live on campus, 41% live off campus, 49% live with family members

# Study Measures

- Acculturative Stress (SAFE; Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987) Scale
  - 7-point Likert, *Attitudinal, Social, Environmental and Family Stress*; 21 items
  - Example: "Because I am different, I do not get enough credit for the work I do" (environmental)"

- Ethnic Identity (Ethnic Identification Subscale; EIS of the Social Identity Attitude Scale; Picho & Brown, 2011)
  - 7-point Likert; 4 items
  - Example: "I value my ethnic background"

- Cultural Congruity (The Cultural Congruity Scale; Gloria & Kurpius, 1996)
  - 7-point Likert; 8 items
  - Example: "I feel that I have to change myself to fit in the school."

# Study Measures

- Sense of Belonging (Modified Sense of Belonging Scale; Hurtado & Carter, 1997)
  - 4-point Likert Scale; 3 items
  - Example: "I see myself as a part of the campus community."

- Academic Self-Efficacy (Course Self Efficacy subscale from College Self-Efficacy Scale; Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, Kennel, & Davis, 1993).
  - 7-point Likert Scale; 9 items
  - Example: "How confident are you that you could successfully complete the following tasks: take good class notes"

- GPA (Semester Grade Point Average)
- Emotional Well-being (EWI; Frydenberg, Care, Freeman, & Chan, 2009)
  - 7-point Likert Scale; 6 items
  - Example: "How much of the time have you felt that the future looks hopeful and promising?

# Study Analysis and Results

▶ Developed a partially latent structural model

  ▶ 4 latent factors (i.e., acculturative stress, ethnic identity, sense of belonging, and academic self-efficacy)

  ▶ 3 observed variables (i.e., cultural congruity, emotional wellbeing, and GPA).

  ▶ The model fit indices of the modified model demonstrated good fit to the data: $x^2$=233.66 (df=101), CFI=.953, RMSEA=.068, and SRMR=.058.

  ▶ 9 paths out of 18 were significant (see Figure)

▶ For mediation analyses, bootstrapping methods were used

  ▶ 6 paths had significant indirect effects on emotional wellbeing

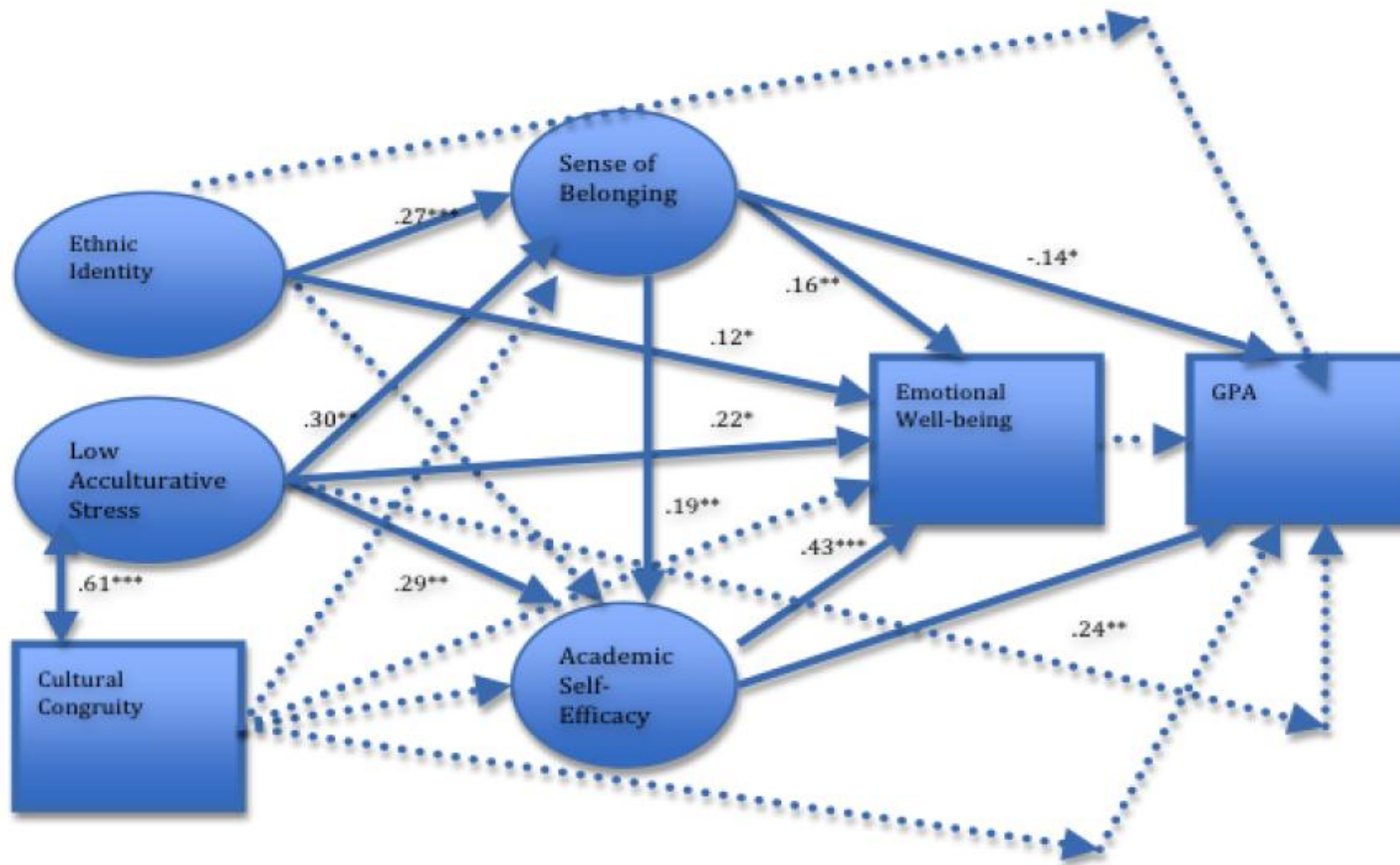  ▶ 2 paths were identified to have indirect effects on GPA.

Figure 2 Supported Psychosociocultural Model
Dashed lines indicate insignificant relationships while solid lines indicate significant relationships.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

# Study Results and Interpretation

▶ Emotional well-being not significantly related to GPA.

▶ The proposed model explained
  ▶ 18% in the variance of Academic Self-Efficacy,
  ▶ 37% in the variance of Emotional Well-being and
  ▶ 8% in the variance of GPA.

▶ There were direct effects of ethnic identity and low acculturative stress on sense of belonging.

▶ Low acculturative stress was found to be significantly related with academic self-efficacy.

▶ The relation between ethnic identity and academic self-efficacy was not significant, which contradicts other studies (e.g., Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004). Ethnic identity affected GPA only via mediation of sense of belonging and then academic self-efficacy.

# Study Results and Interpretation

► The effect of cultural congruity on any mediator or outcome was not supported, which differs from previous studies based on samples of Latina/o college students in PWIs (e.g., Gloria et al., 2005)

► Significant correlation between low acculturative stress and cultural congruity (r =.61, <.001).

► The mediation effects of sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy were supported, in that both connect the effects of low acculturative stress and/or strong ethnic identity to college success (i.e., GPA).

► The relationship between academic self-efficacy and emotional wellbeing (i.e., the path coefficient .43) was much stronger than the relationship between academic self-efficacy and GPA (i.e., the path coefficient .24).

# Implications

▶ Latina/o students do experience acculturative stressors in HSIs, not just PWIs.

▶ Sources of these stresses are multifactorial.

▶ Emphasis on promoting academic self-efficacy AND sense of belonging which requires integration of social support/networks and academic services.

▶ University psychologists can expand their role to encompass mental health support for all students and not just those requiring support (e.g., LD).

▶ Fostering collectivistic relationships between faculty and students in classrooms (e.g., community of learners)

More info: Chun, H., Marin, M., Schwartz, J., Pham, A., & Castro-Olivo, S. (in press). Psychosociocultural structural models of college success among Latina/o students in Hispanic-serving institutions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education.*

# Future Research

- Examining acculturation factors among immigrant students here in MDCPS and FIU
  - Currently looking at language and acculturative factors (e.g., generational status, years in US) in elementary school students and academic performance.

- Adapting social-emotional curricula for elementary school classrooms (e.g., *Second Step, Incredible Years*)

- Examining barriers to treatment-seeking, and parent perceptions of psychopathology and treatment among culturally diverse/immigrant parents.

- Examining acculturation studies in School Psychology literature.

- Informing teachers, administrators and parents on being reflective of these issues as they relate to consultation processes.

# All done.

- Questions?? ☺