

# Pathways to Thriving in Students of Color



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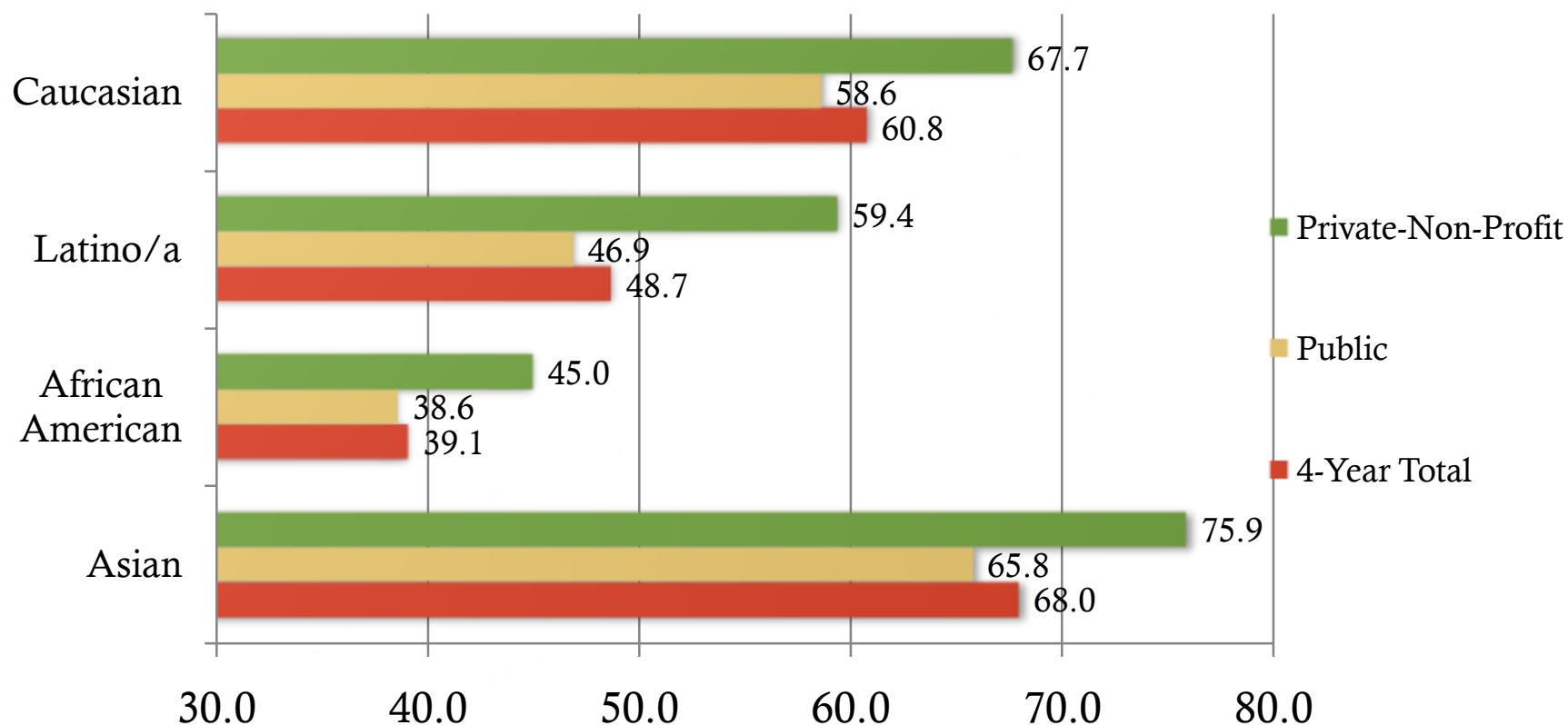
**Azusa Pacific University**

National Association of Student Personnel  
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# Are You a Survivor or a Thriver?



# Graduation Rates by Ethnicity



Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (February, 2011). *Enrollment in postsecondary institutions, fall 2009; graduation rates, 2003 & 2006 cohorts; and financial statistics, fiscal year 2009.*

# Approaches to Student Success



- Behaviors that lead to learning outcomes
- Institutional supports for engagement
- Programs and services
- Entering student characteristics predictive of success
- Individual motivation and psychological processes that lead to engagement behaviors



# Positive Psychology

The Fulfilled Individual  
The Thriving Community

# A Shift in Perspective



**FROM**

**Surviving**

**What is not very  
changeable about people**

**Who you are and where  
you've been**

**Target the weakness and fix  
it**

**Failure prevention**

**TO**

**Thriving**

**What can be changed**

**Who you can become and  
where you're going**

**Target the talent and build  
on it**

**Success promotion**



# Goal of the Study

To determine the unique predictors and pathways to thriving among African American and Latino/a college students in four-year institutions



# Conceptual Framework

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*Flourishing* =  
Emotional Vitality  
+  
Positive Functioning

(Keyes, 2002, 2003; Keyes & Haidt, 2003)



# Definition of Flourishing

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Rising to meet life's challenges

Involved in healthy relationships

Engaged and productive

Looking beyond oneself to the greater  
good of others

(Keyes & Haidt, 2003)

# Flourishing College Students



- Flourishing is independent of gender, parent educational attainment, or academic achievement.
- Measures of student engagement are predictive of flourishing.
  - Academic challenge
  - Active/collaborative learning
  - Enriching educational experiences
  - Supportive campus environment

(Ambler, 2006)

# Bean & Eaton's (2000) Model of Student Persistence

- Psychological processes that promote academic and social integration and contribute to student persistence:
  - Attitudes → behavior
  - Coping mechanisms (approach-avoidance)
  - Self-efficacy
  - Locus of control/attributions
- **Students who persist are those who are most able to interact effectively within the campus environment in ways that strengthen their self-efficacy and control**

# Why “Thriving”?

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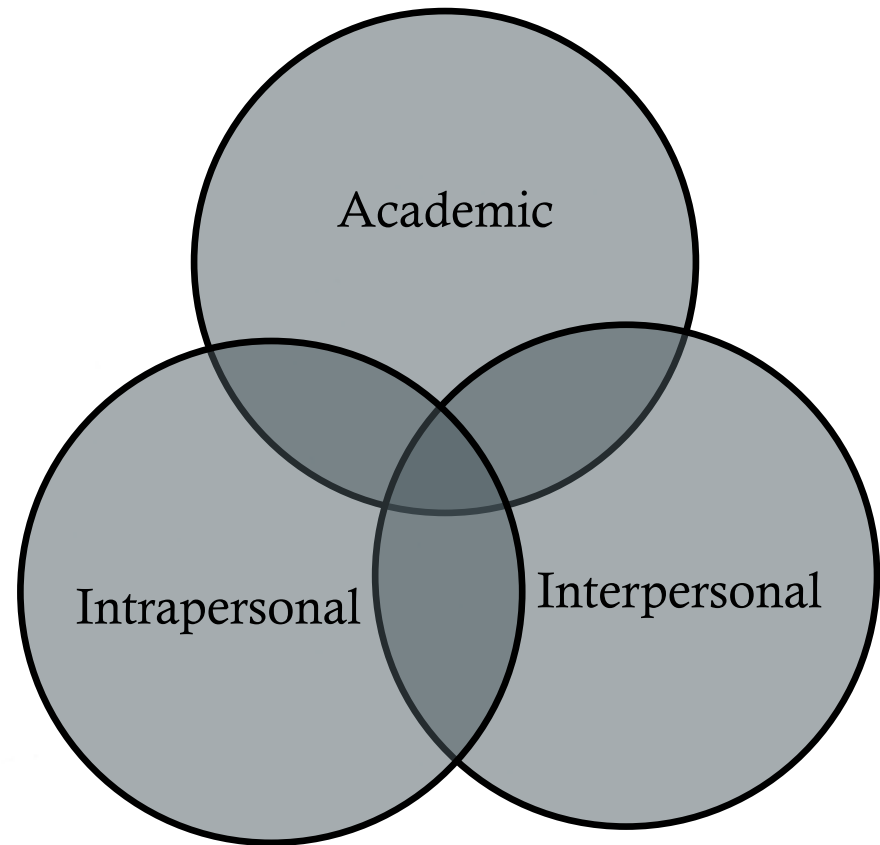
Goes beyond psychological well-being  
inherent in flourishing

More holistic construct that adds

- Engaged learning and academic success
- Citizenship and openness to diversity



# THRIVING



# Criteria for Including a Construct

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Measurable

Empirically connected to student  
success

Malleable (state vs. trait)

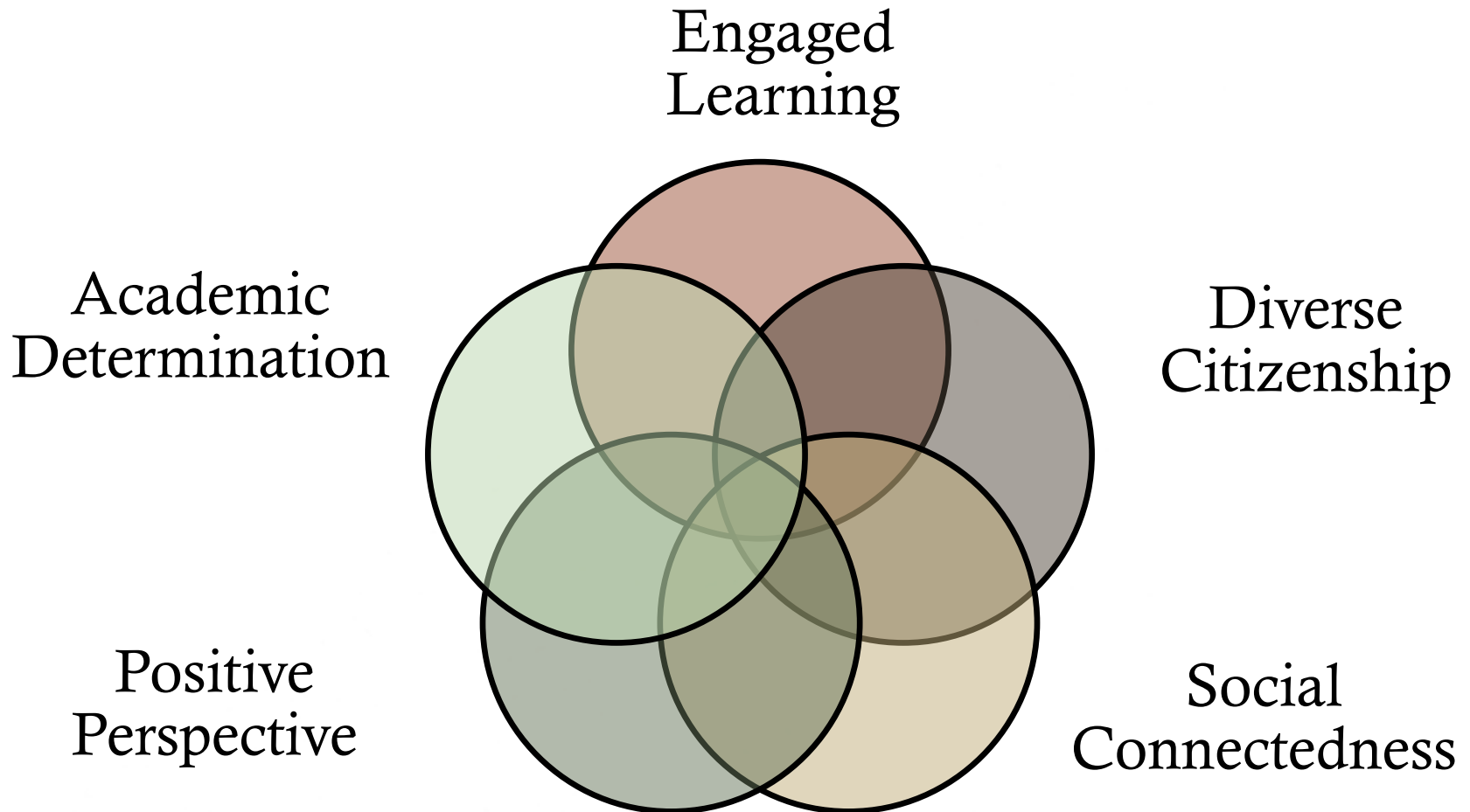
Interventions make a difference

# The Thriving Quotient (TQ)

- TQ was constructed from public domain instruments with proven validity and reliability that were adapted for college students after input from student focus groups
- 25-item instrument with responses ranging on a 6-point Likert-type scale of *1=strongly agree* to *6 = strongly disagree*
- Coefficient alpha = .89
- Confirmatory factor analysis: five-factor model with a higher-order latent construct of thriving



# The Thriving Quotient



# Five Factors of Thriving

## ACADEMICALLY:

- **Engaged Learning**
  - Meaningful processing, focused attention, active participation in the learning process
- **Academic Determination**
  - Self-regulated learning, effort, coping skills, goal-directedness (hope)

## INTERPERSONALLY:

- **Diverse Citizenship**
  - Making a contribution, appreciation of differences, growth mindset
- **Social Connectedness**
  - Positive relationships and access to friendships

## INTRAPERSONALLY:

- **Positive Perspective**
  - Optimism and subjective well-being

# Research Question

What predicts thriving in college students?

Are the pathways to thriving different across student ethnic groups? How are they different?



# Methods

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- 53 four-year colleges and universities (35 private and 18 public) administered the Thriving Quotient
- Surveys were administered on-line – response rates varied considerably and averaged 12%
- Final sample consisted of 5117 participants with complete data
  - 69% female
  - 21% first-generation
  - 85% Caucasian

# Methods: Structural Equation Modeling

- Measurement Model (CFA)
  - five-factor model is an excellent fit
  - $X^2 (257) = 2747.67$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .956, and RMSEA = .042
  - Schreiner, McIntosh, Pothoven, & Nelson (2009)

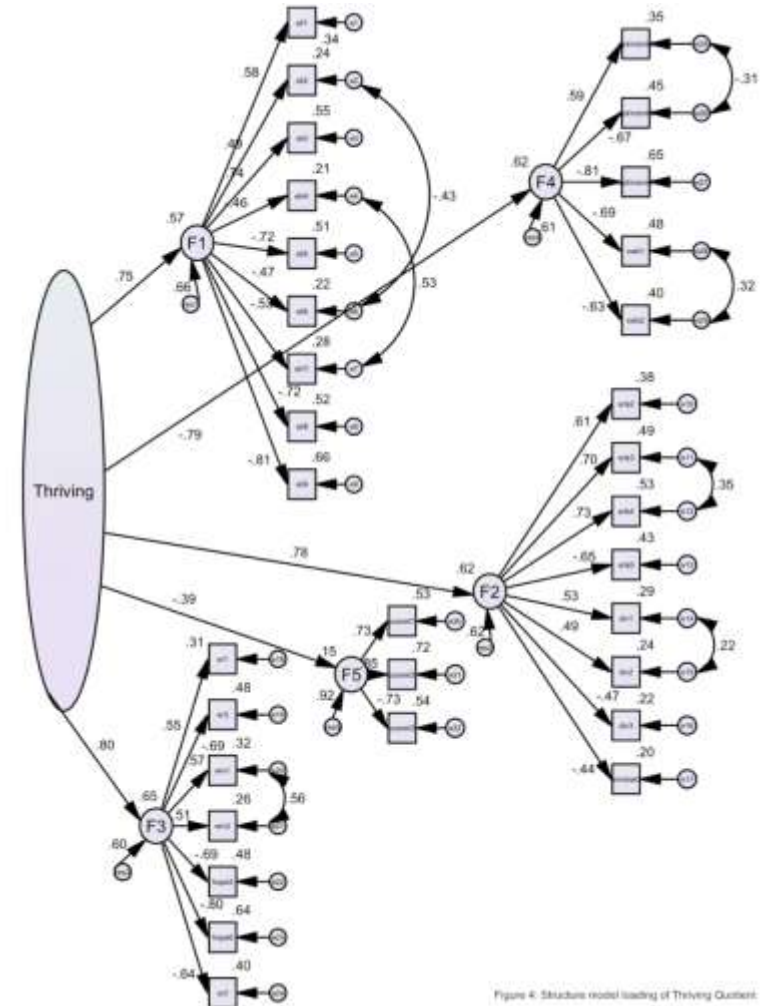
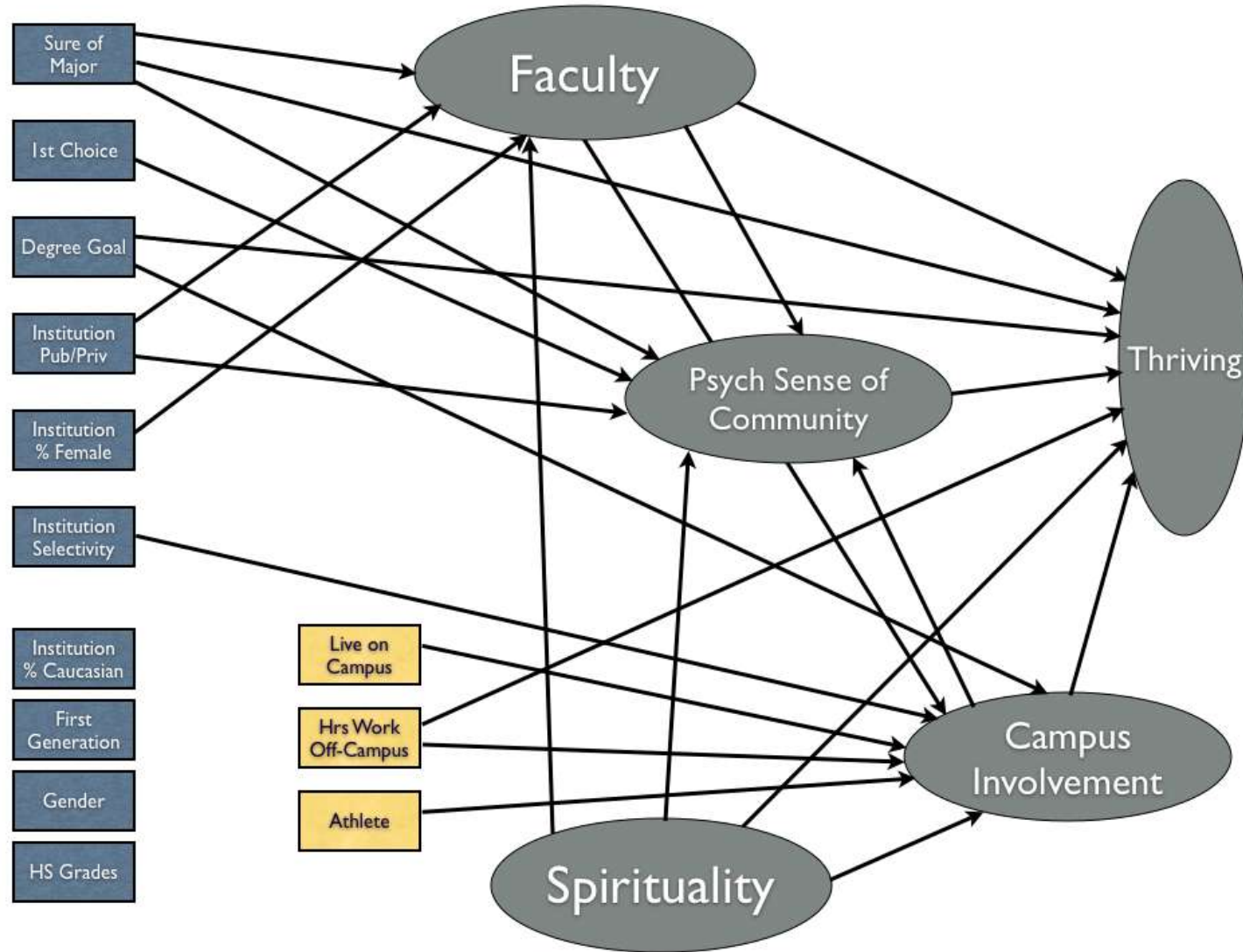
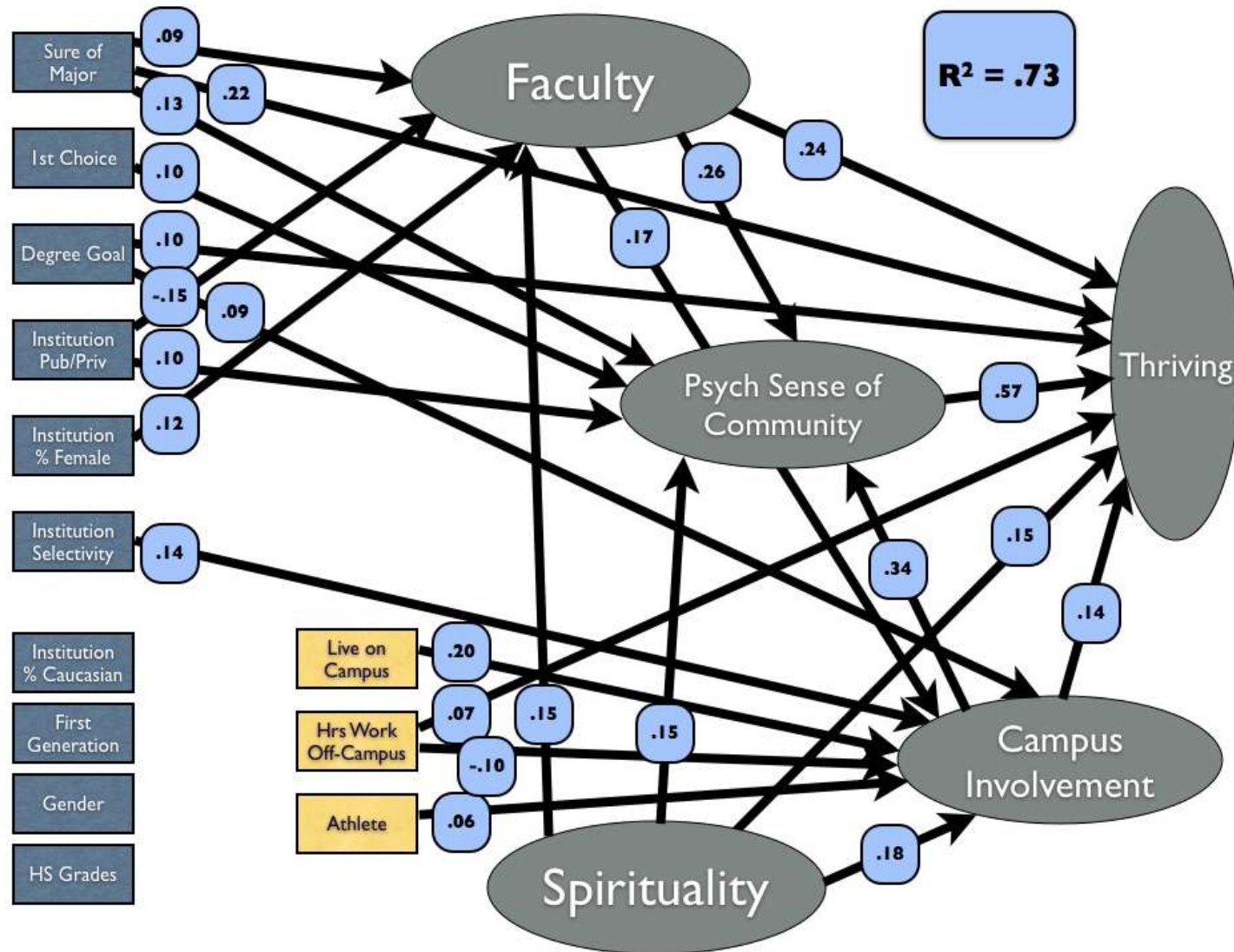


Figure 4: Structure model loading of Thriving Questionnaire

# Structural Model

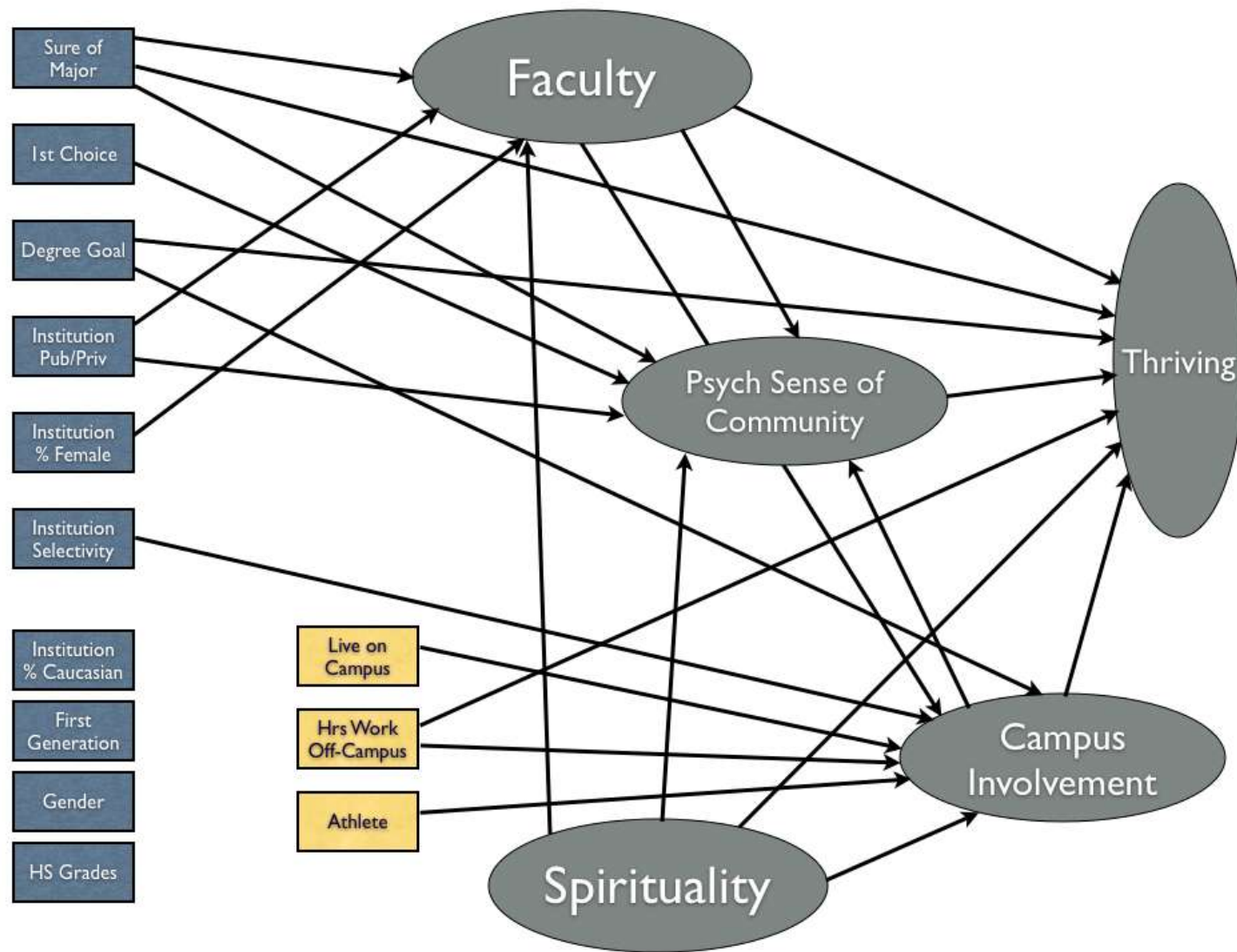


# Caucasian Students

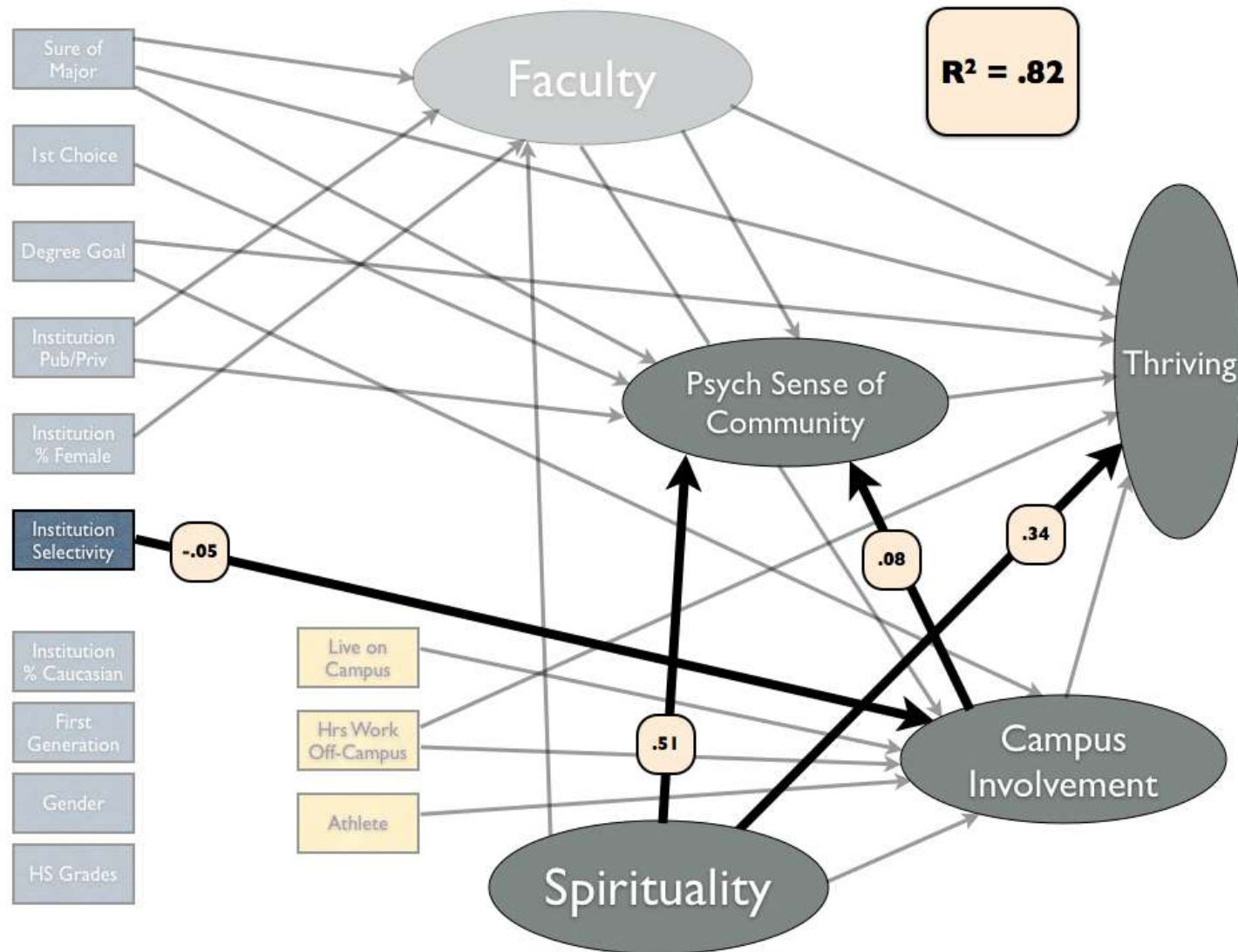




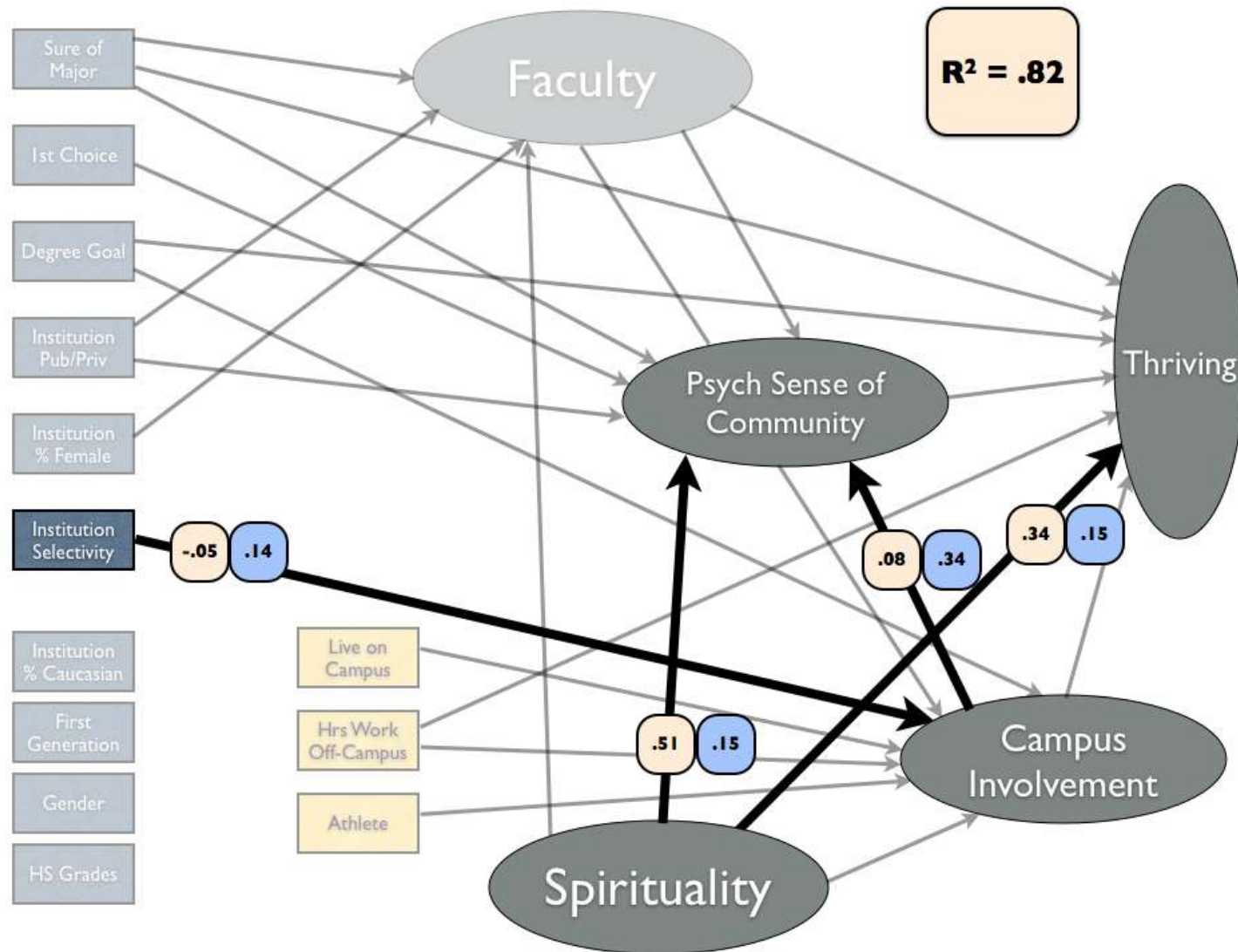
# African American Students



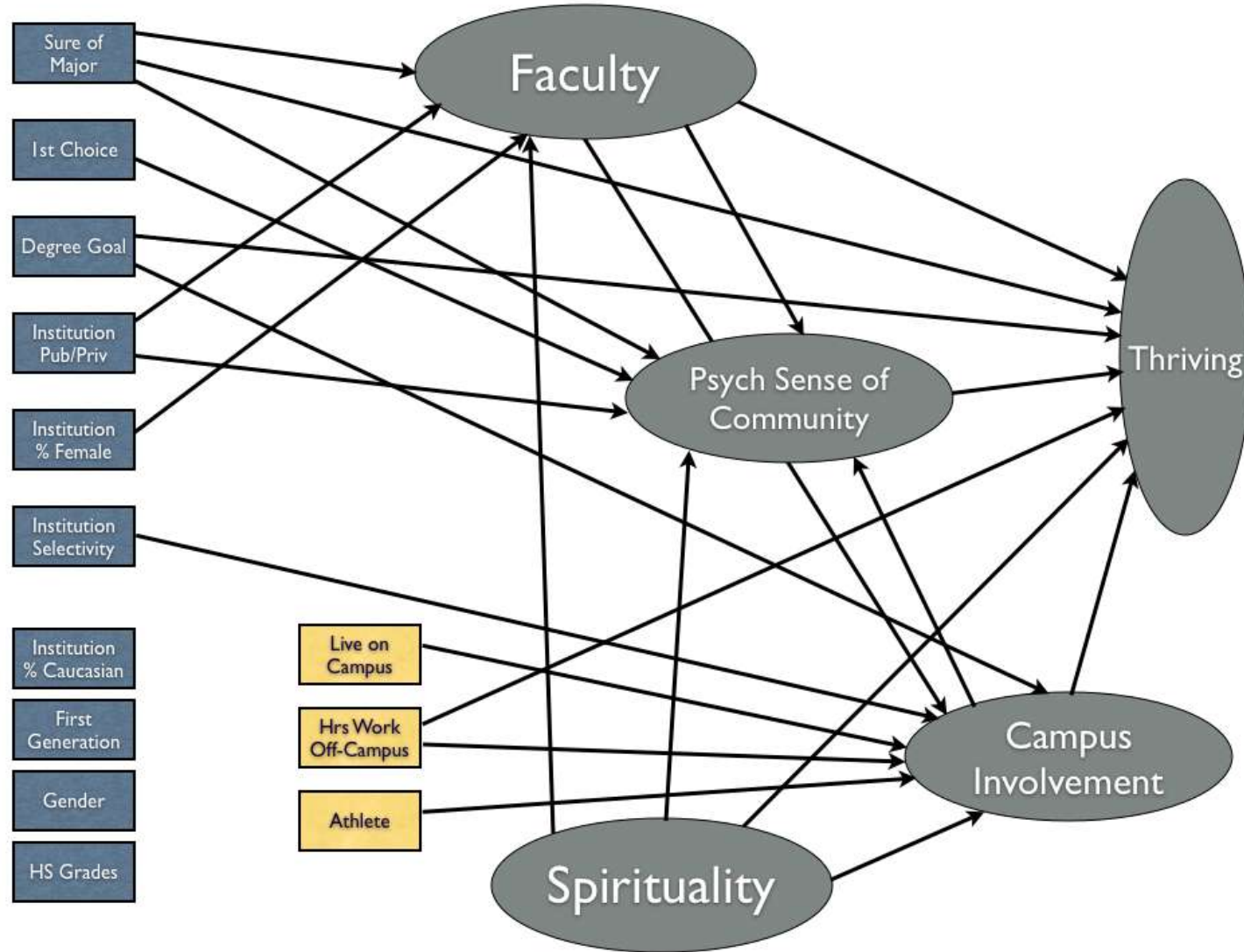
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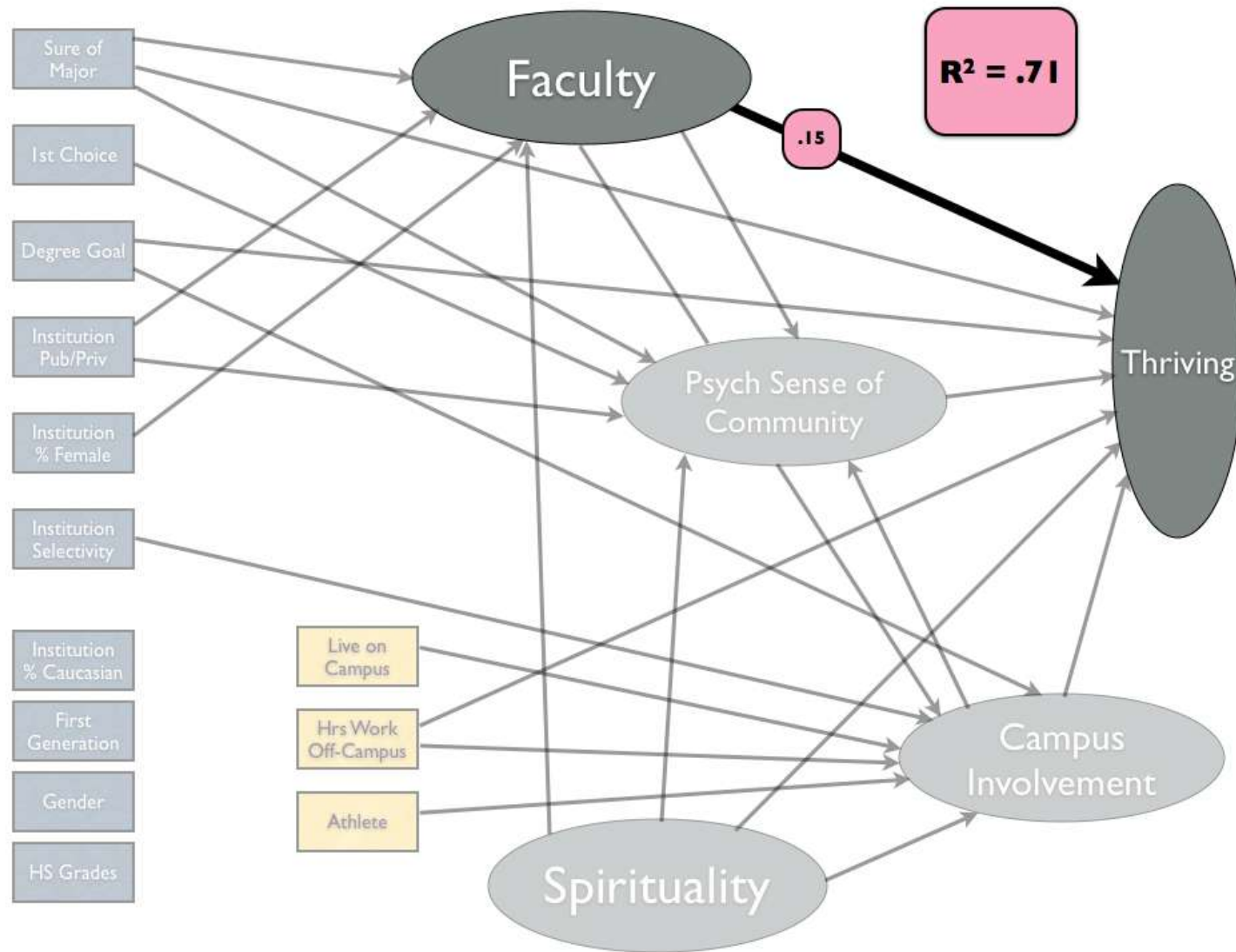
# African American Students



# Latino/a Students

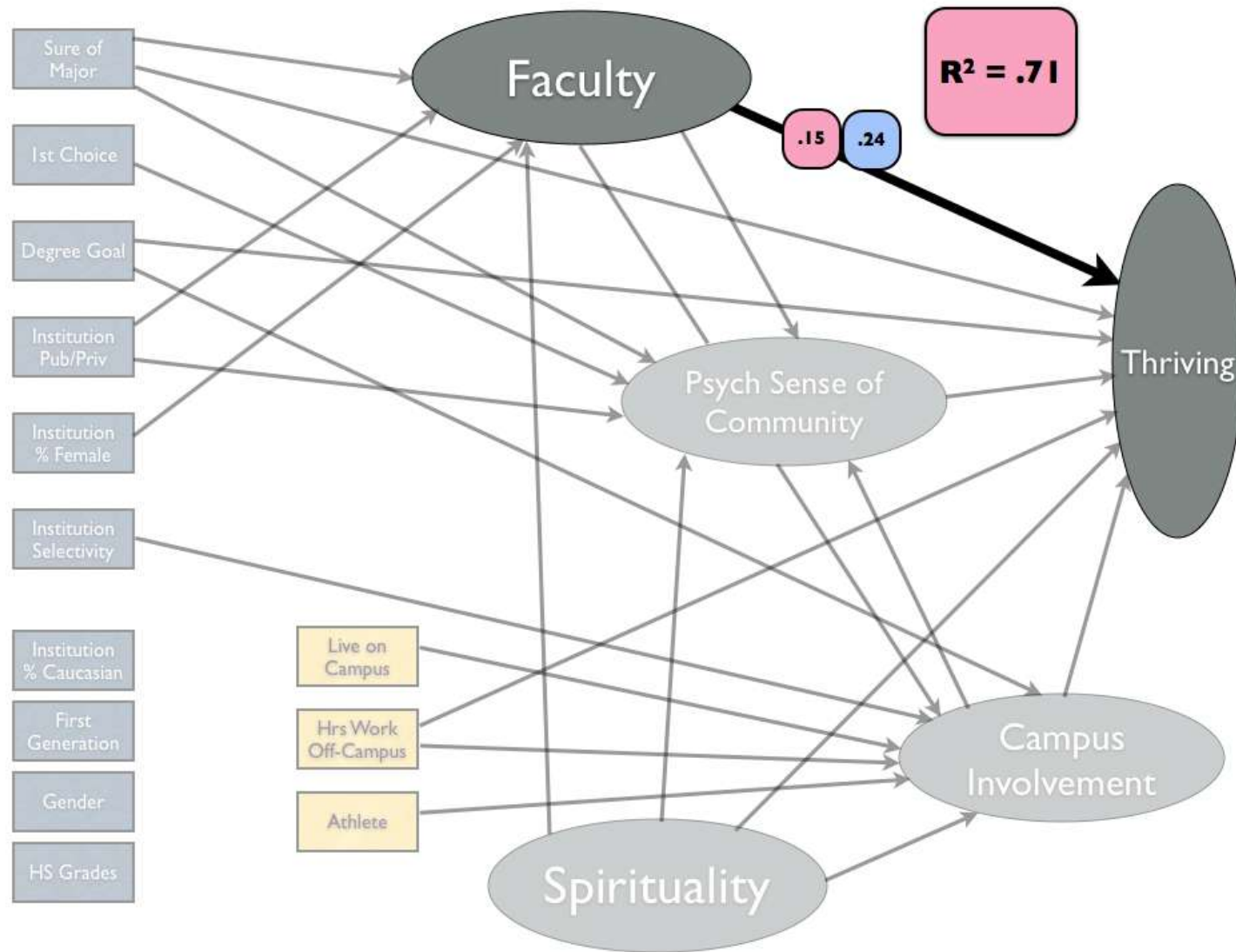


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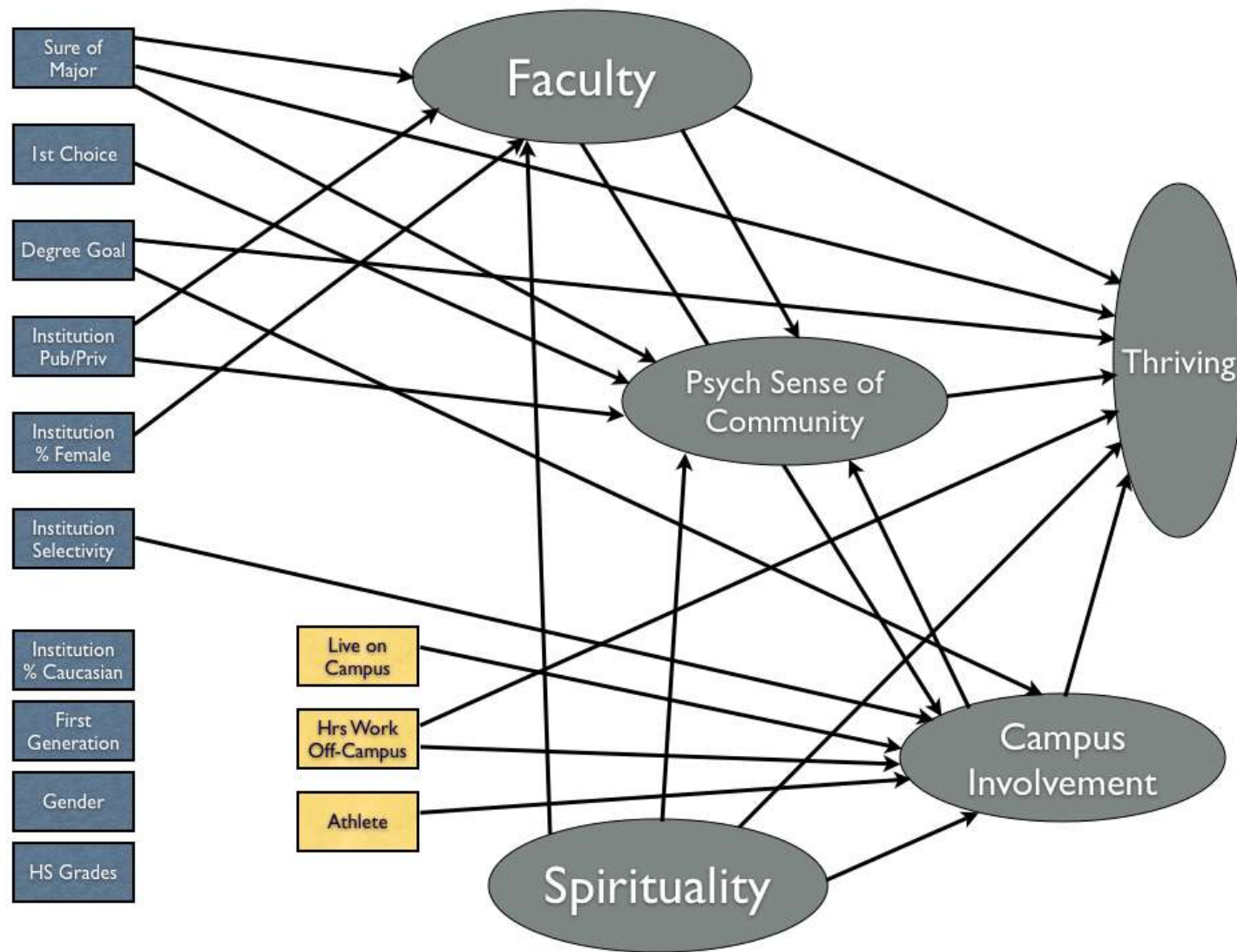




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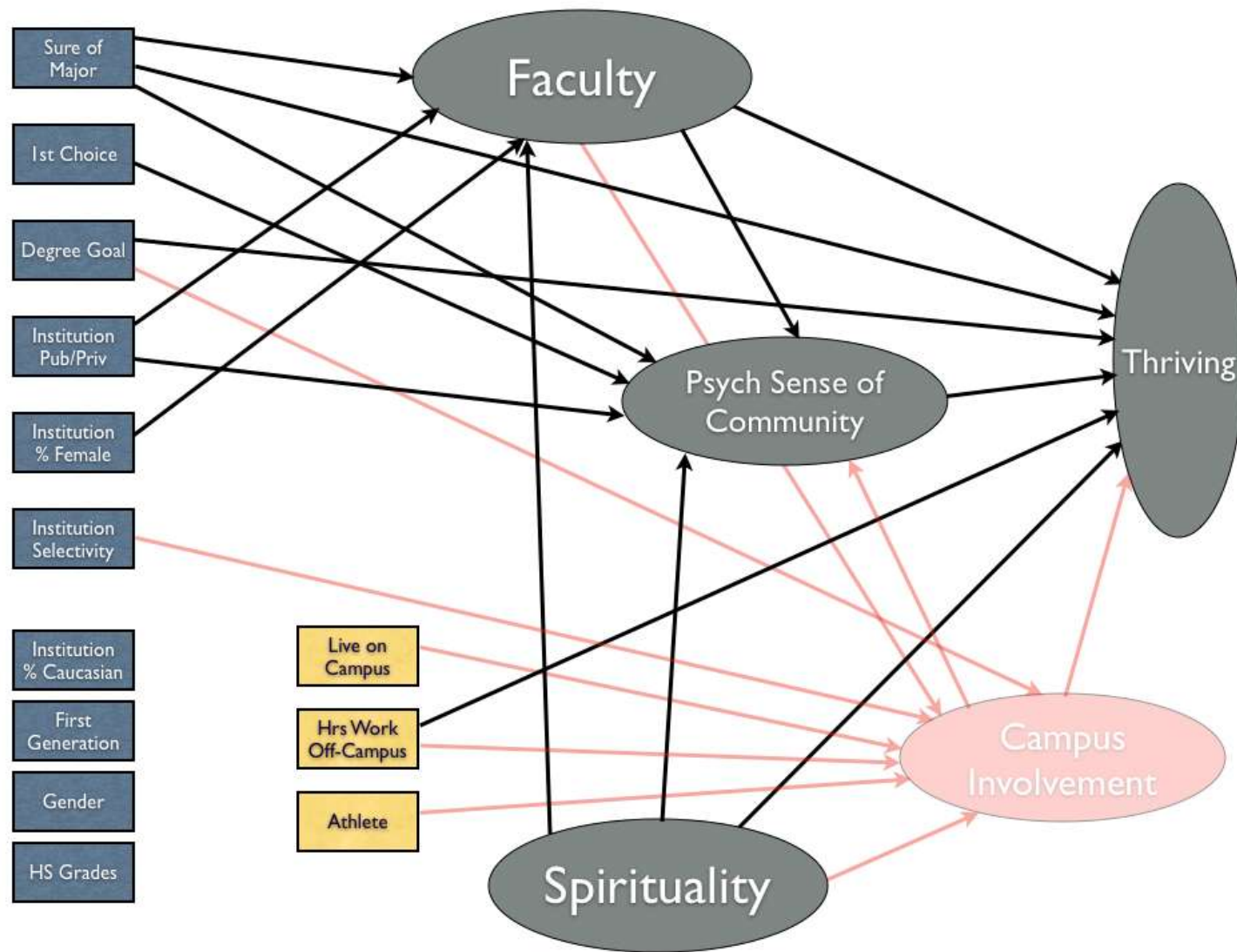


# African American Model

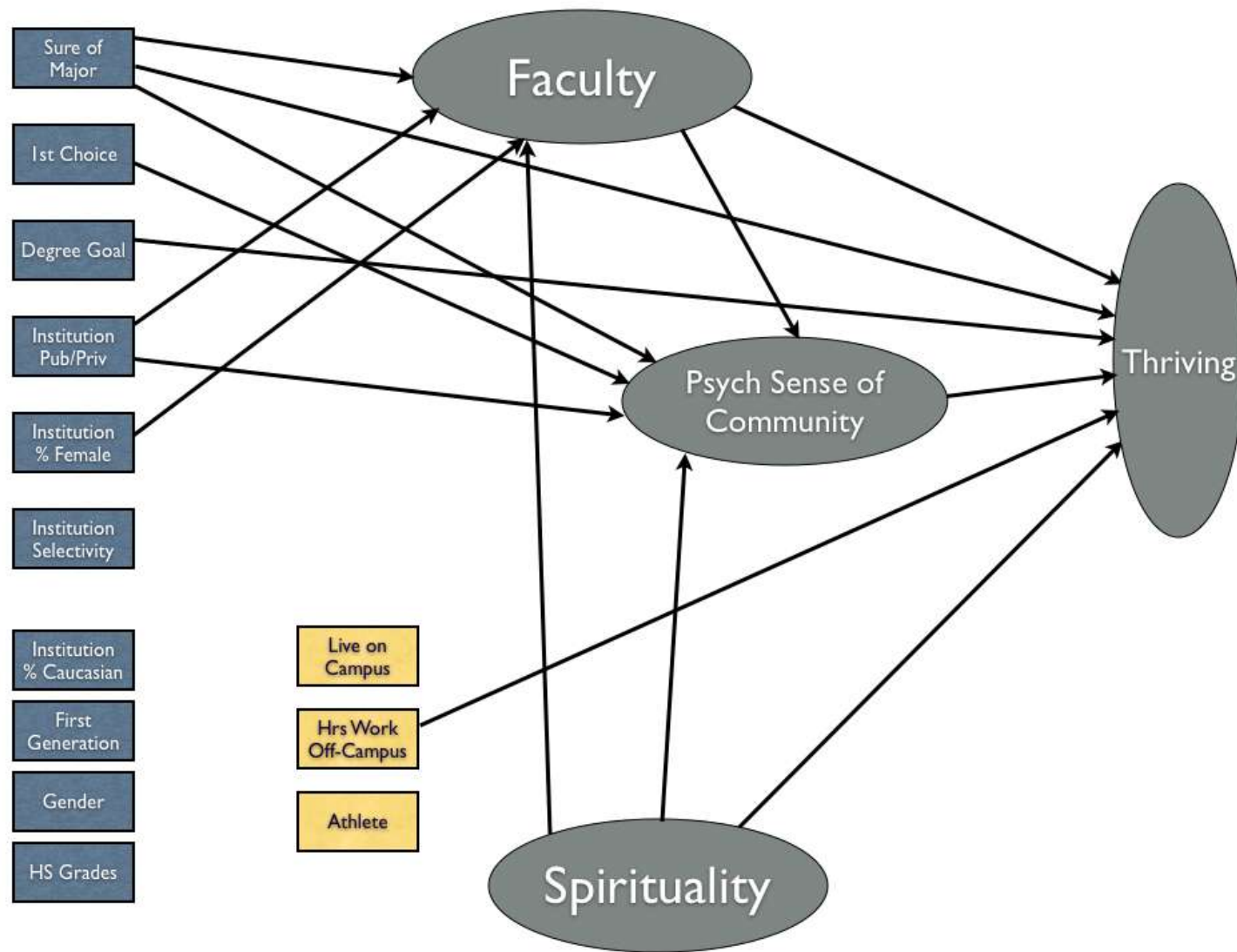




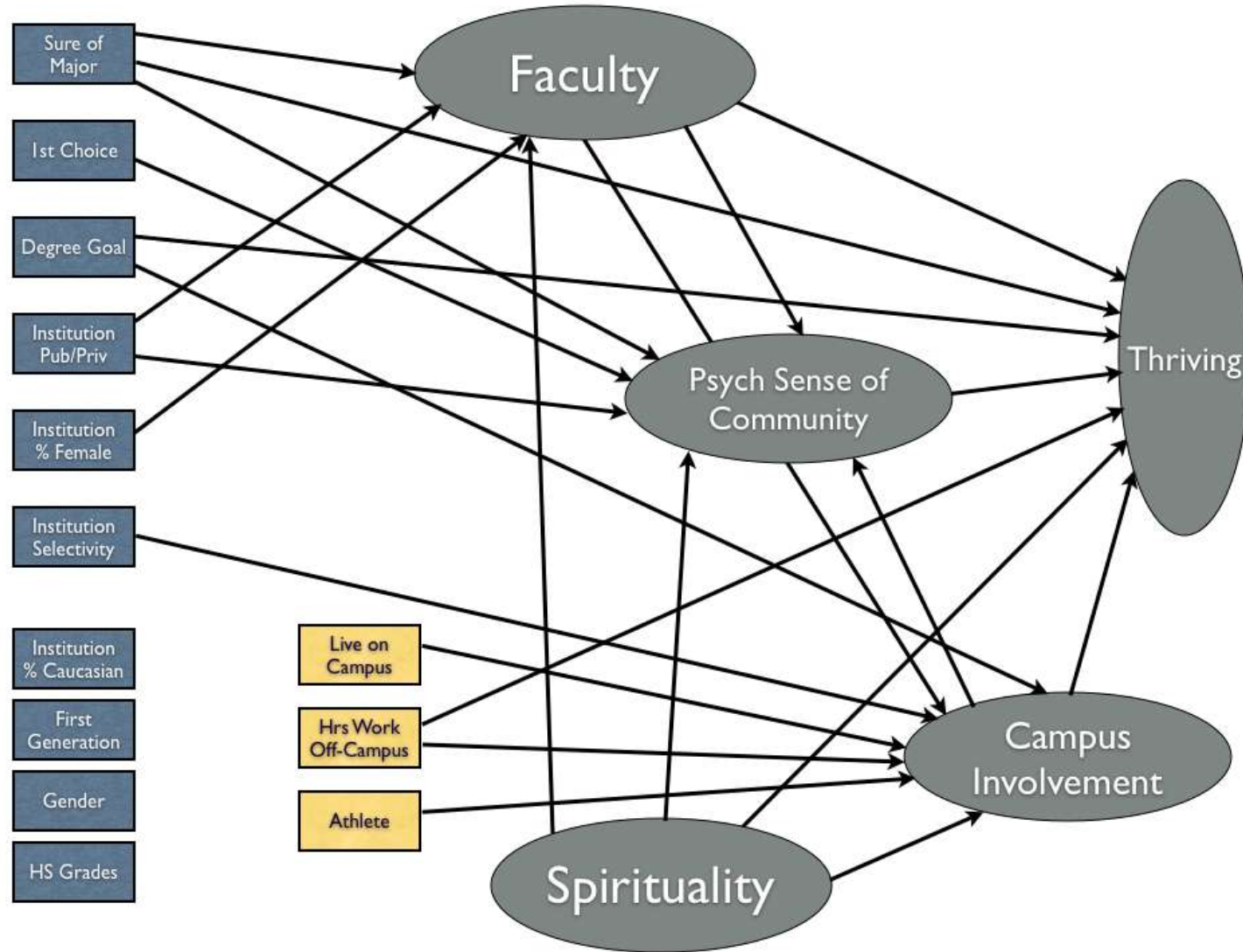
# African American Model



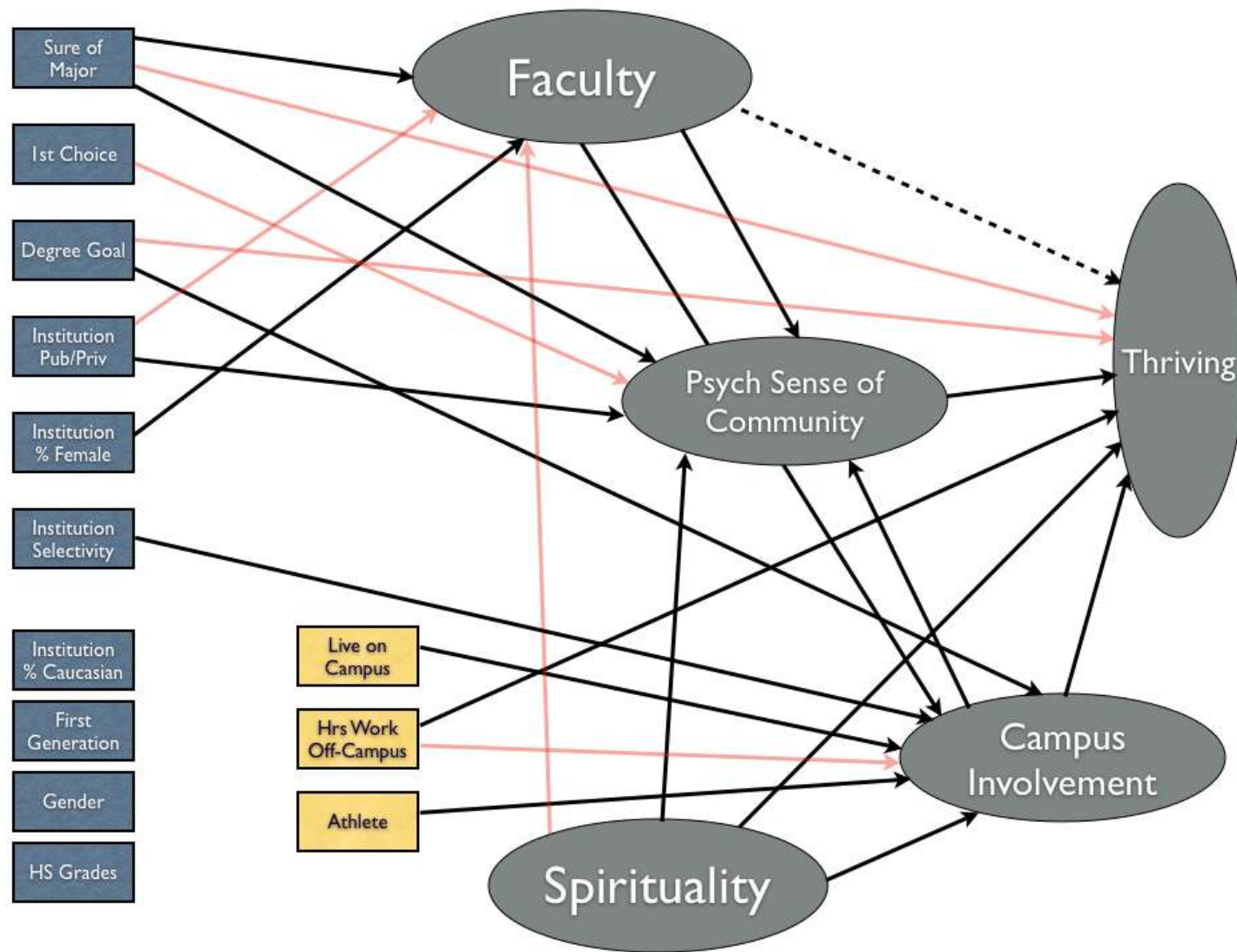
# African American Model



# Latino/a Model

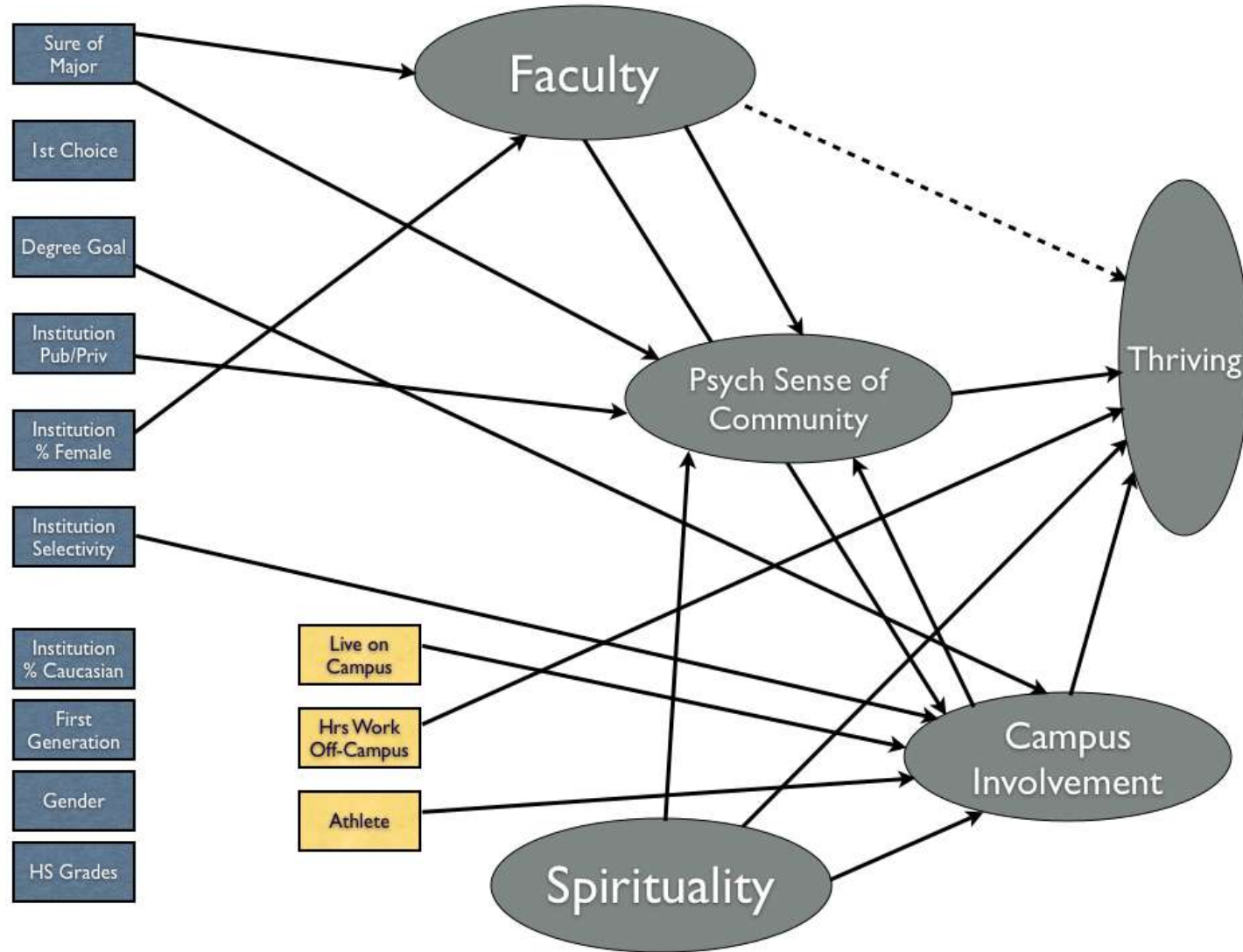


# Latino/a Model





# Latino/a Model





## African American Students

**Spirituality is the major contributor to their sense of community and to thriving**

**Campus involvement is defined primarily by involvement in ethnic organizations—but still does not contribute significantly to sense of community or thriving**

**Satisfaction with faculty interaction contributes more to thriving than seen in Latino/a students**

# Latino/a Students

**Faculty interaction** is less predictive of thriving in Latino/a students than in Caucasian students.

**Campus involvement** matters more

**Major certainty** and **degree aspirations** do not contribute to thriving

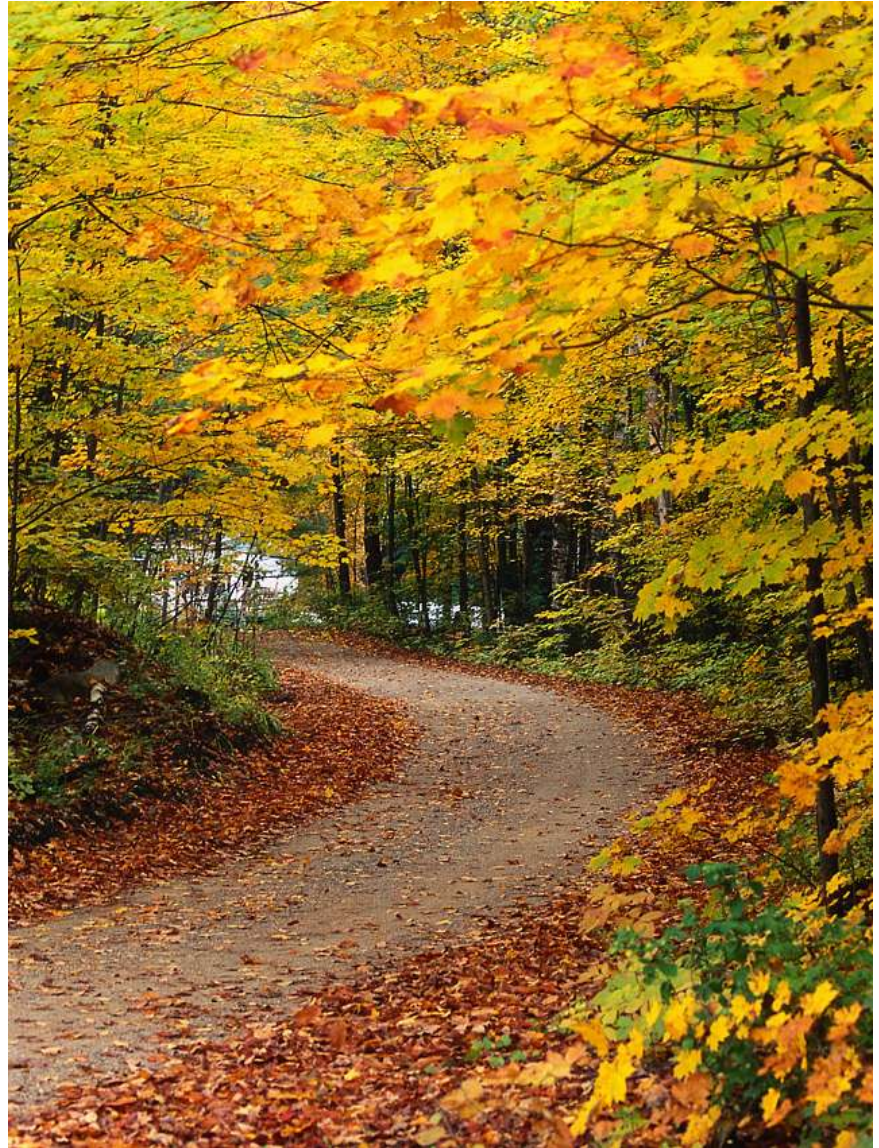




# Summary of Findings

The “pathway to thriving” exists for all students but there are stronger factors for each population

Pathways that offer the most potential impact for students of color include spirituality, faculty interaction, and sense of community.



**Sense of community** is the single largest contributor to thriving for all student groups.

**Spirituality** is the greatest contributor to thriving in African American students.





**Campus involvement** does not contribute to thriving in African American students at all, but contributes to thriving in Latino/a even more than in Caucasian students.

**Faculty interaction** contributes significantly less to thriving for Latino students.





## Implications for Practice

# Campus Involvement

How could we design campus activities and events so that they are more appealing and better meet the needs of students of color?



# Faculty Interaction

How could faculty  
interactions with  
students of color be  
more rewarding?



# Spirituality

What could we do  
to encourage and  
support  
spirituality in  
students of color?





# Psychological Sense of Community

What could we do to help students of color feel more welcome and experience a sense of belonging on campus?



# Group Dialogue

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- How could we design campus activities and events so that they are more appealing and better meet the needs of students of color?
- How could faculty interactions with students of color be more rewarding?
- What could we do to encourage and support spirituality in students of color?
- What could we do to help students of color feel more welcome and experience a sense of belonging on campus?

# Campus Involvement

Needs assessment of campus activities and events that interest students of color

Students of color as peer leaders

Ethnic group organizations that incorporate issues of meaning and purpose



# Faculty Interaction

First-year seminars –  
instructor as advisor

Research partnerships (paid)

Faculty advisors for student  
organizations

Faculty development or  
advisor training

Faculty-in-residence

Faculty mentors



# Spirituality

Activities that foster  
meaning and purpose

Role models and mentors

Faculty and staff willing  
to engage in dialogue

Activity fairs that include  
faith-based organizations



# Psychological Sense of Community

Peer mentoring programs

Campus and community  
resources for ethnic  
students

Themed housing

Living-learning  
communities

Ethnic group centers and  
support networks





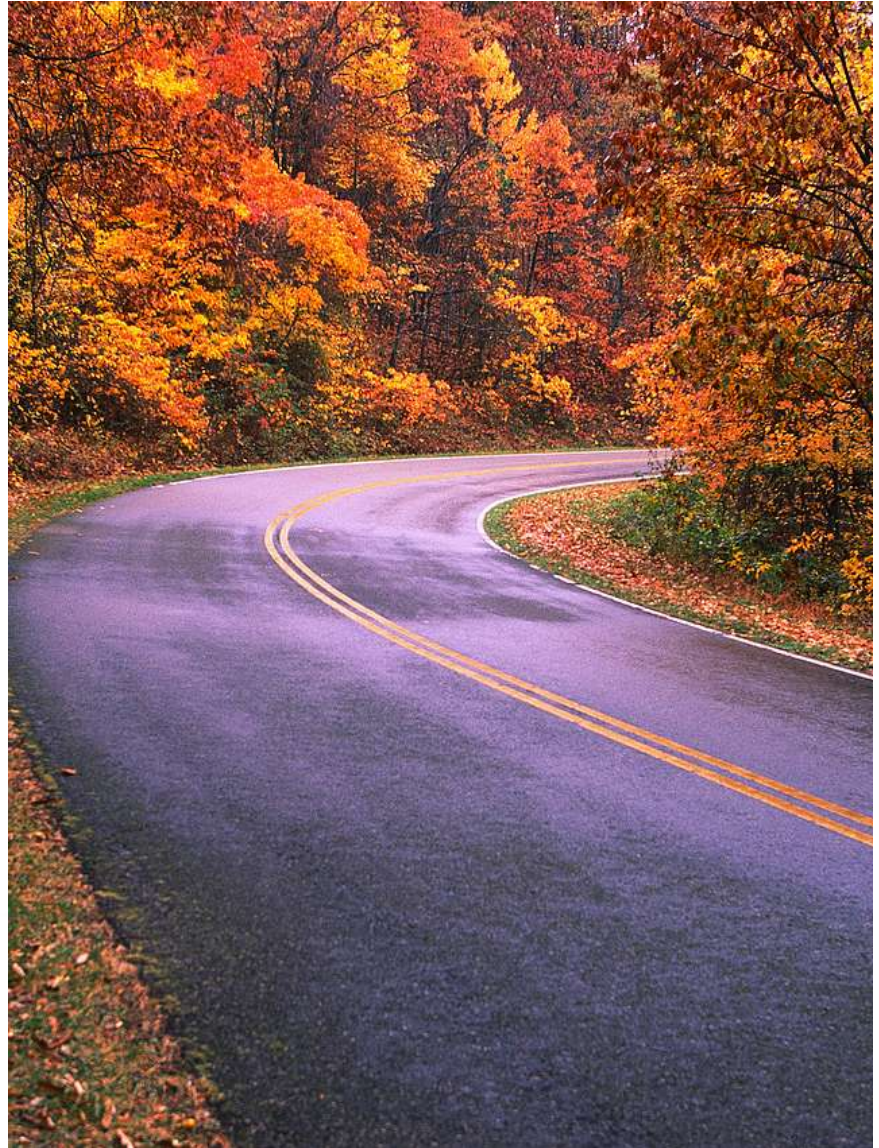
# Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Major limitation: Sample  
was mainly female and  
Caucasian

Areas for further research:

- Controlled studies of  
specific interventions

- Longitudinal student  
thriving research







# **Join us for the 2011 Thriving Project!**

**[www.ThrivingInCollege.org](http://www.ThrivingInCollege.org)**

# Questions?

