

Adolescence, Peers, and the Challenges of High School

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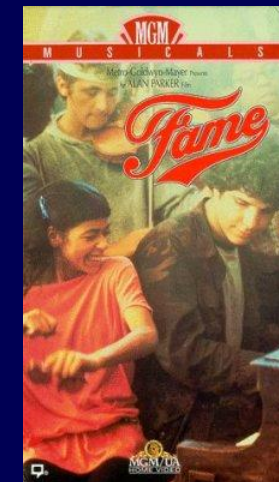
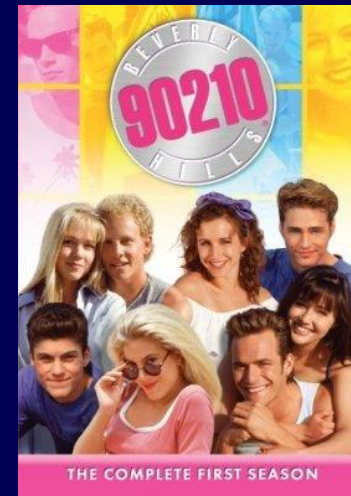
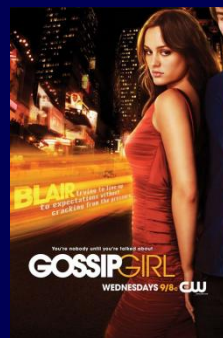
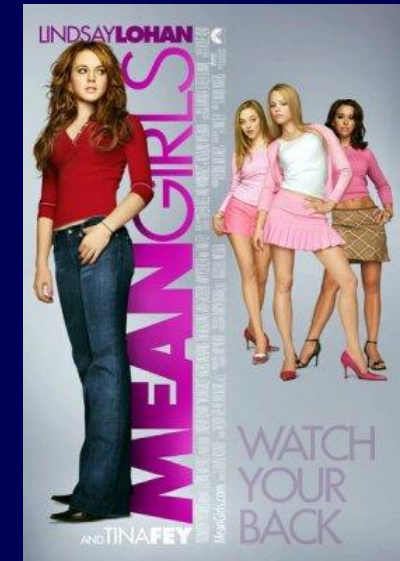
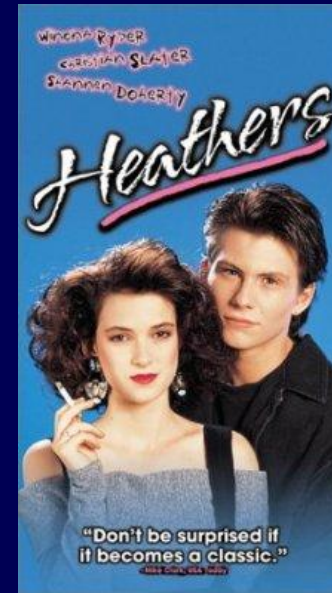
This research was supported by grants to the author from the William T. Grant Foundation and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Special thanks to Chandra Muller, Ken Frank, Catherine Riegler-Crumb, Barbara Schneider, Jane Brown, and my research assistants (Carey Cooper, Belinda Needham, Jennifer March Augustine, and Kurt Gore) for their help with and work on this project.



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High Schools & Adolescent Development



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Two Sets of Teenagers

Fitting In, Standing Out



- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)
 - 20,745 7-12th graders in 1995
 - 7,876 high school students in Waves I (1995) through Wave III (2001)
 - 51% female; 52% White, 17% Latino/a, 20% African-American, 8% Asian-American; average level of parent education of “some college”
- Identity and Social Relations Study
 - 32 9th-10th graders in two required, non-tracked classrooms in local high school (Lamar)
 - A public school with 2,209 students roughly replicating race/ethnic composition of Texas.
 - 55% male, 45% female; 44% White, 33% Latino/a, 15% African-American, 7% Asian-American; the average level of parent education was 3.3, which represented some college

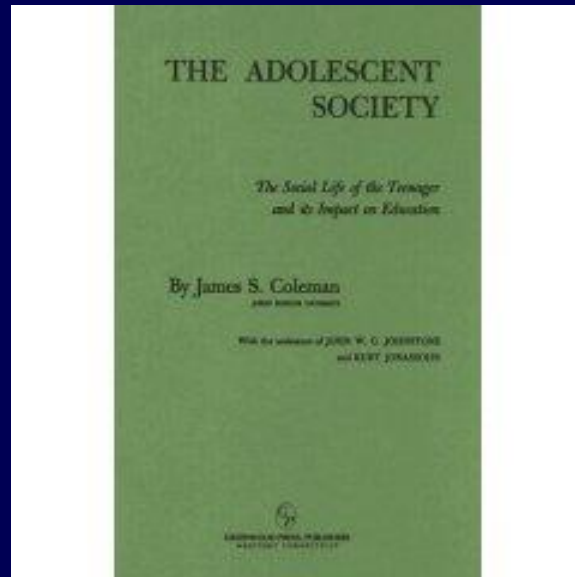


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Point 1

- The Social Dynamics and Pressures of High School Life Have Always Been Intense and Always Factored into the Academic Successes and Failures of American Teenagers



The Two Sides of High School

- Formal Processes and Informal Processes
 - Oh, people I meet, definitely (are the most important thing about school)...The school is just a big building with lots of people in it (Joshua, White 9th grader)
 - But it was a picture of Friday after school after the bell rang and just down that long hallway that leads to the theatre. It's just always packed with people. I think that's kind of -- like, that's just it...It's just one big thing. That's what kids kind of have to do. They have to be able to flow to everyone. (Christian, White 9th grader)



The Two Sides of High School



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Point 2

- Dramatic Changes in the U.S. Demography, School Organization, Information Technology, and Economic Structure Have Intensified the Consequences of the Social Side of Schooling for How Teenagers' Lives Turn Out

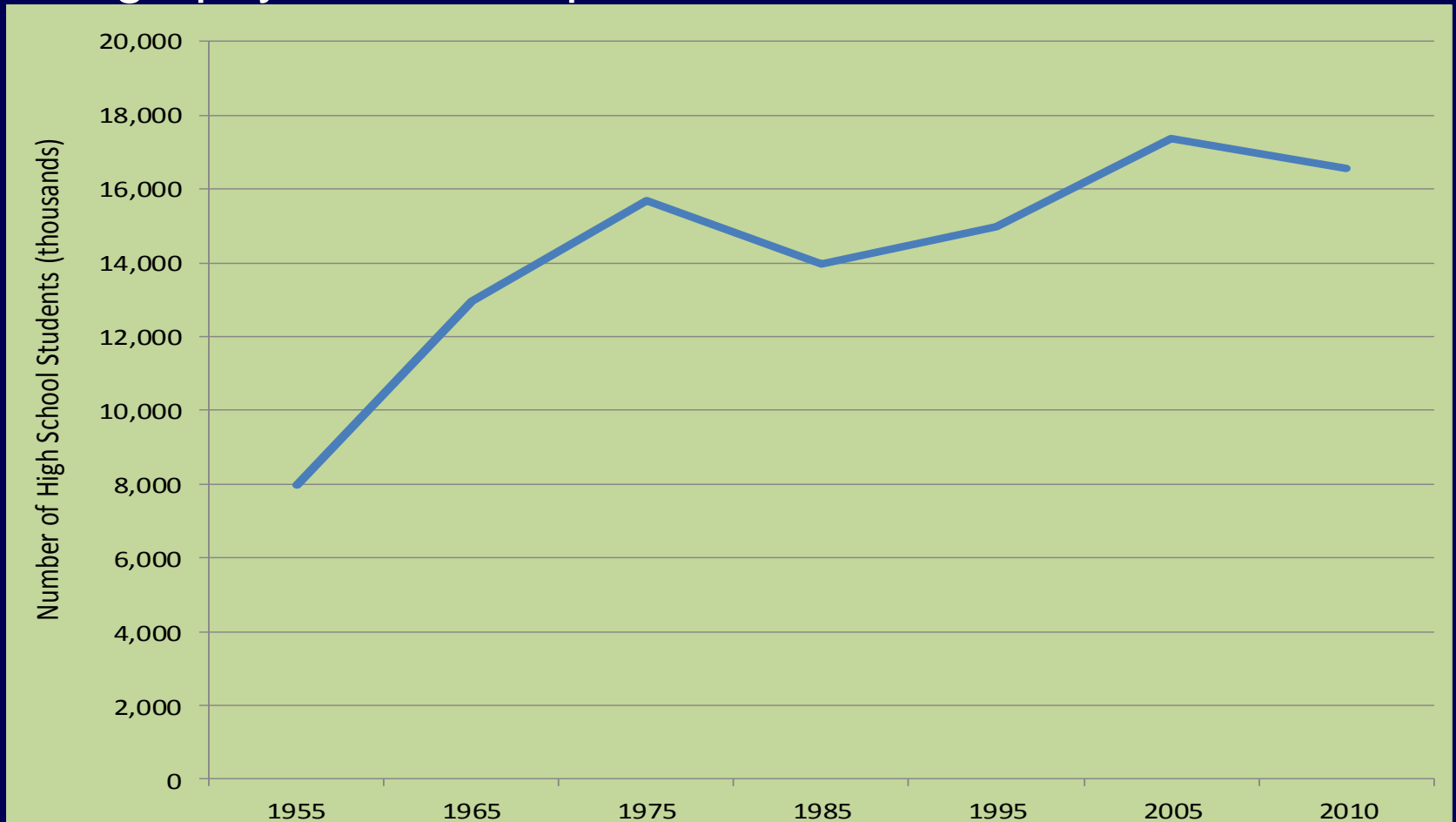


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The Larger Context

- Demography of Teen Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

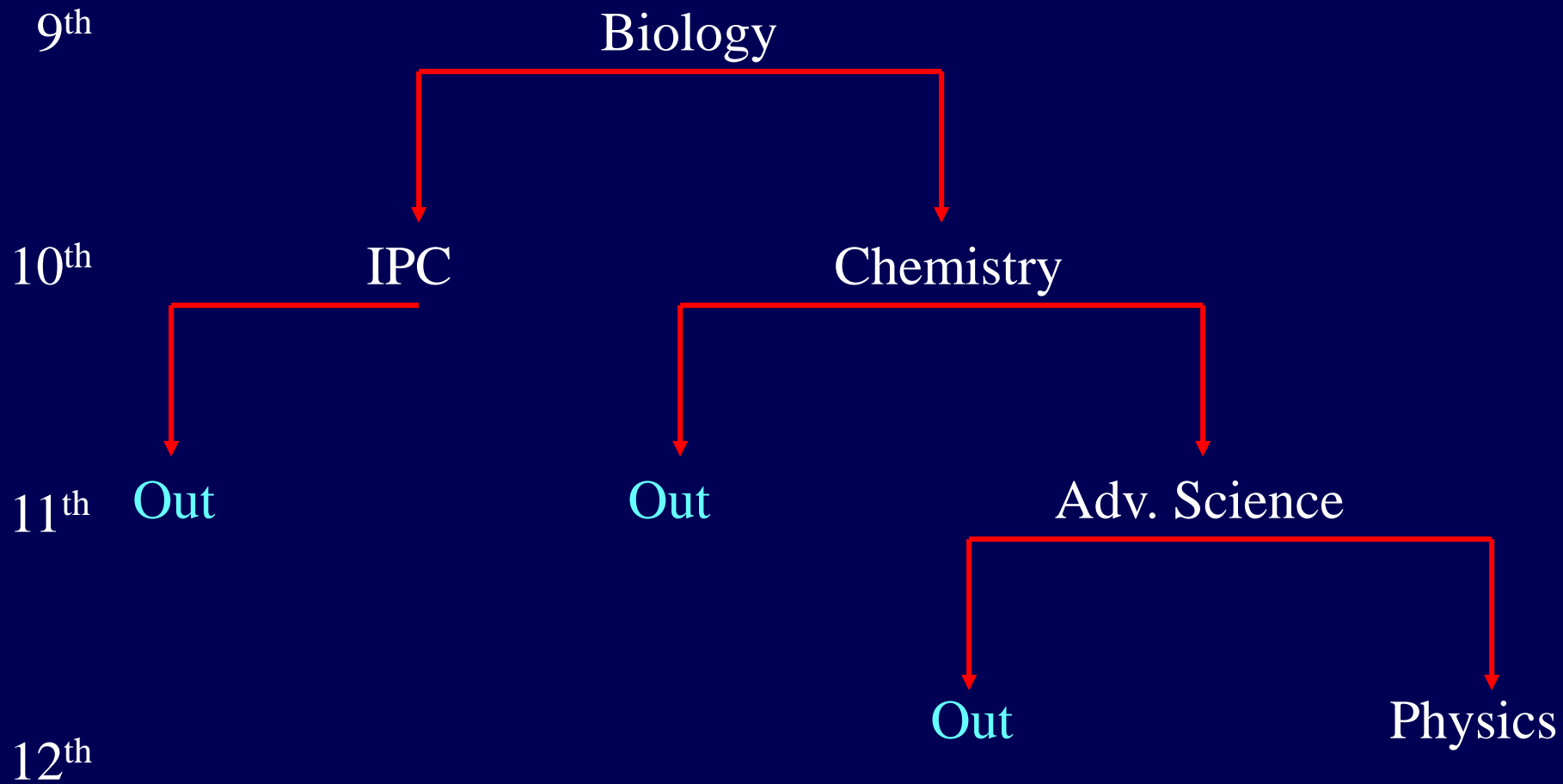
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The Larger Context

- Reorganization of American Education

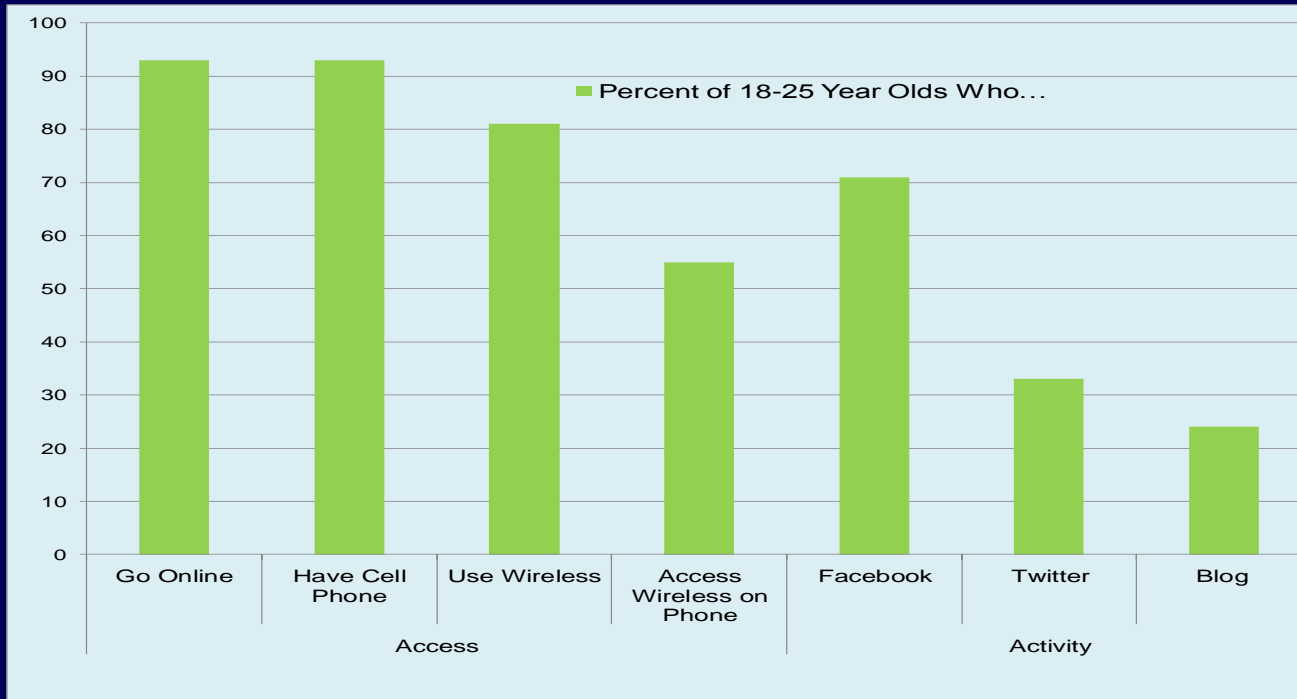


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The Larger Context

- Explosion of Information Technology



facebook



myspace.com
a place for friends

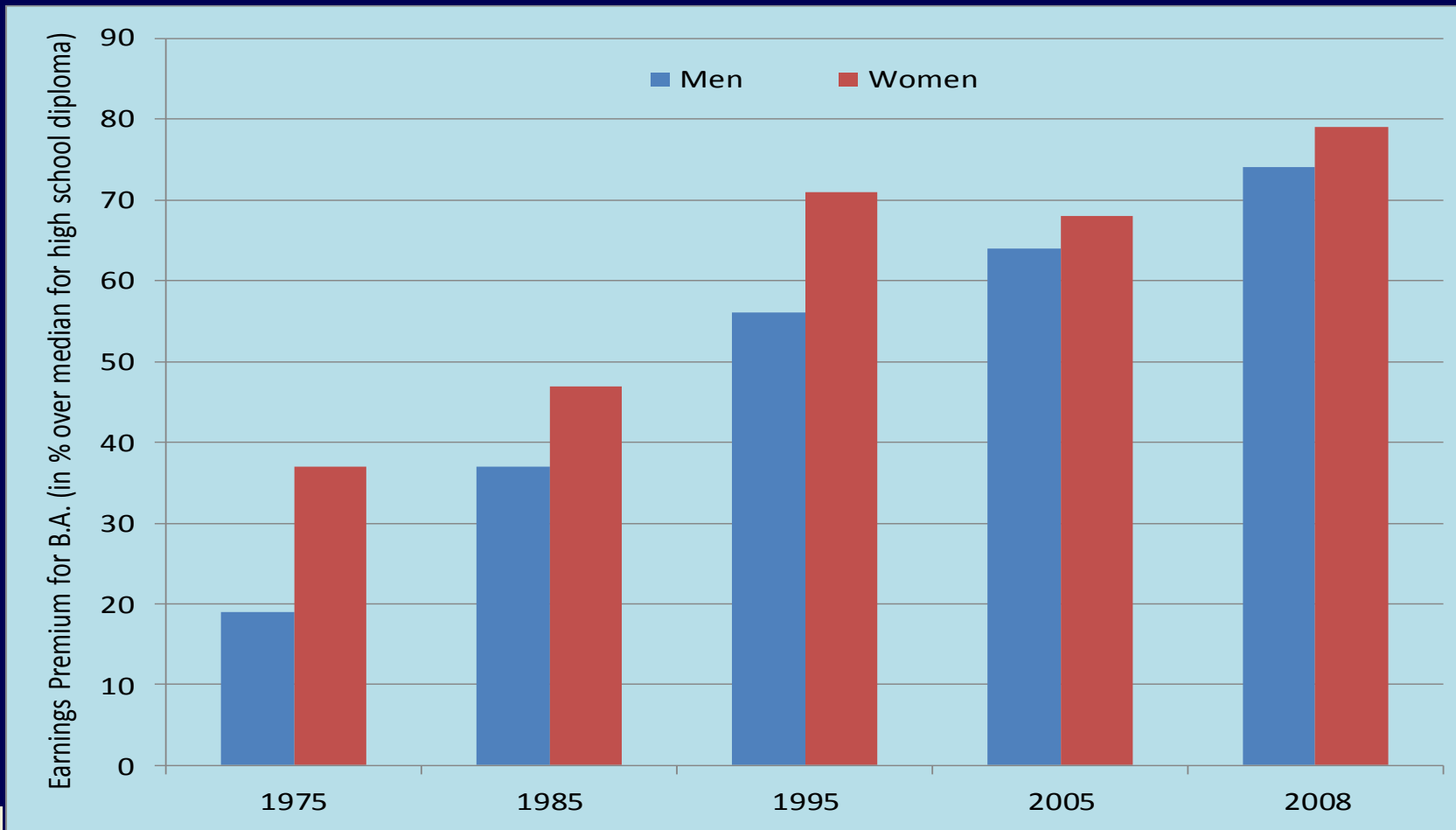


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Source: Pew Internet and American Life Project

The Larger Context

- Restructuring of Global Economy



Point 3

- Reforms and Interventions Designed by Adults to Serve Teenagers and their Schools are Hamstrung if They Do Not Recognize and Reflect The Evolving Reality of the Link between Informal and Formal Education



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Adult Actions

- The Limitations of Focusing on Bad Peers
- Real Vulnerabilities of Well-Intentioned Policies
- If we have to choose between focusing on the informal or formal processes of education, then we should focus on the latter in order to have the *biggest* impact. Yet, who says that policies have to focus on one or the other?



From General Model to Specific Topic



- Contextualize it within major macro-level trends that converge in the current historical moment
 - Intensification of social problems
 - Changing the scope of consequences
 - Filtering out of effects to long term
- Shift attention away from the “good crowd vs. bad crowd” dichotomy and towards the process of social adaptation to high school peer cultures more generally



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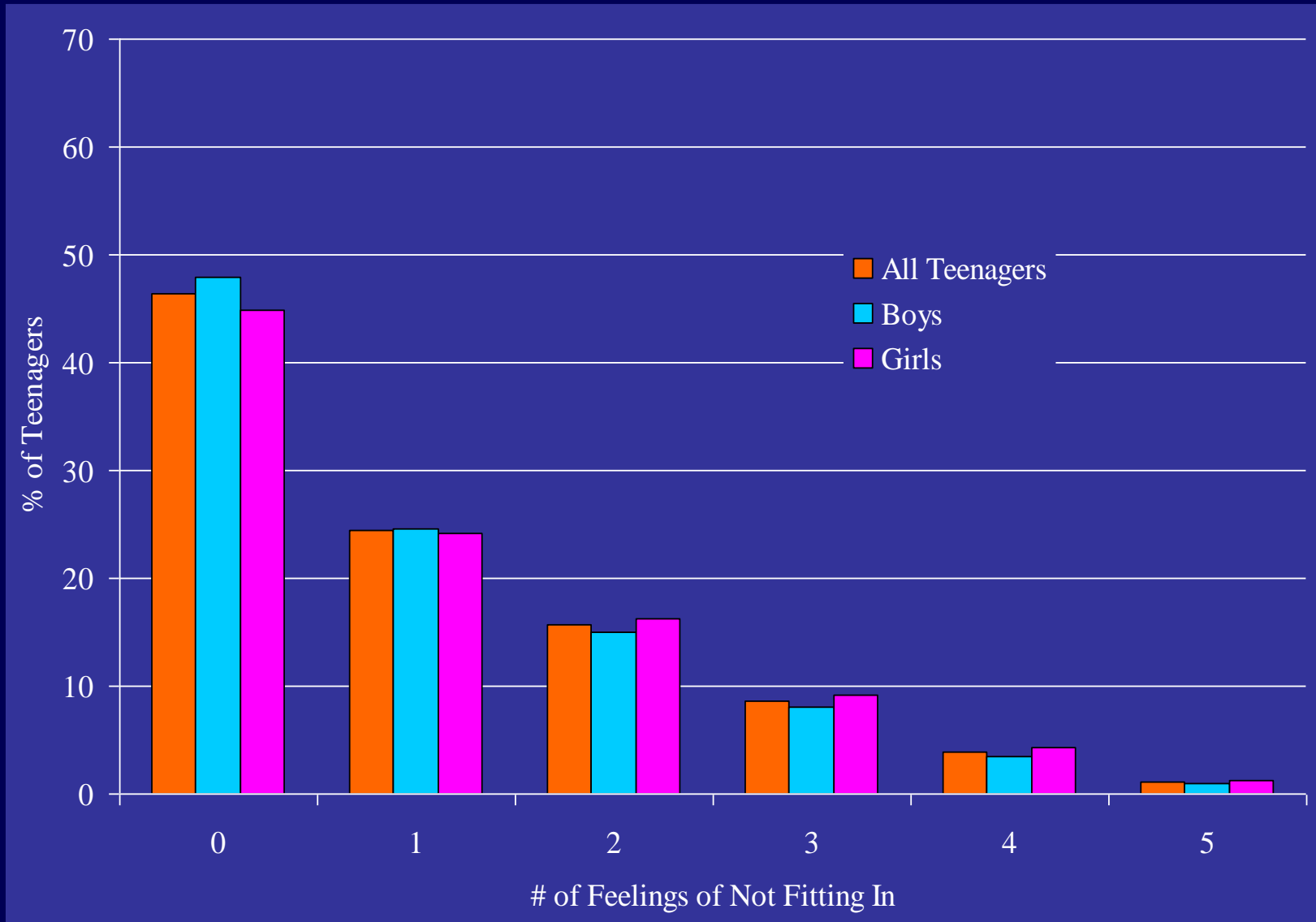
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Not Fitting In at School

- Accumulation of feelings of not fitting in at school...
 - Feeling rejected
 - Feeling unwanted
 - Having trouble getting along with others
 - Not feeling close to others at school
 - Not feeling a part of things
- Perceptions vs. Reality



Feelings of Not Fitting In, by Gender



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The Potential Consequences of Not Fitting In

Perceived Social
Marginalization



Fewer Valued
Courses and Grades



Lower Odds of
College-Going



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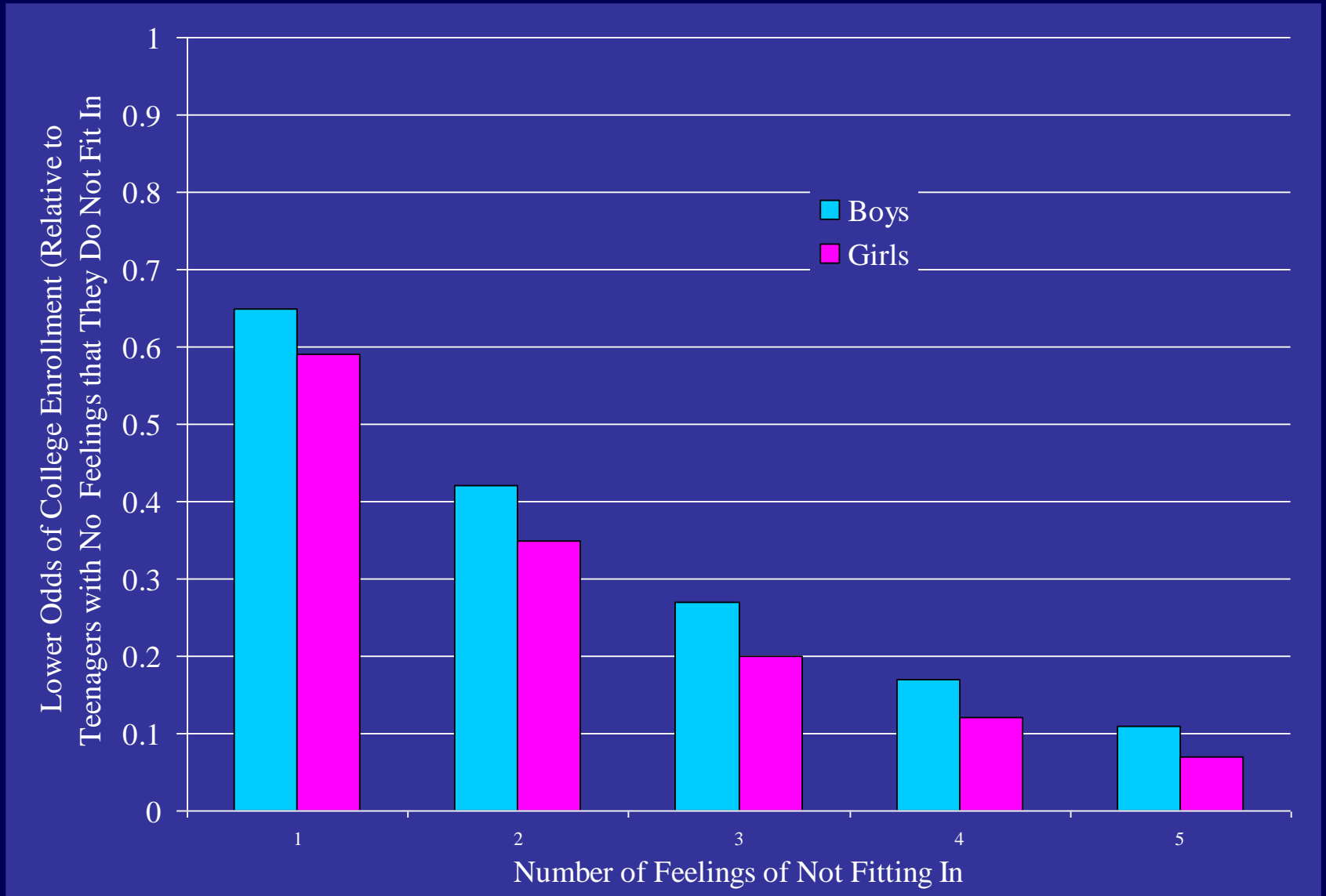
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Key Constructs

- *College-Going*: Enrolled in or had graduated from four-year college in Wave III
- *Academic Progress*: By end of high school, had a cumulative g.p.a. of 3.0 or better, had accrued math credits beyond Algebra II, and had accrued science credits beyond Chemistry
- **Observable Confounds**
 - Objective social status (e.g., number of peer nominations)
 - Academic background (e.g., PVT, entry level academic status)
 - Prevailing peer values in school (e.g., mean g.p.a.)
 - Developmental stage (e.g., age, grade)
 - Demographic characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, immigration status)
 - Parents' characteristics (e.g., marital histories, educational attainment)
 - School structure/composition (e.g., sector, size, racial composition)
- **Unobservable Confounds**



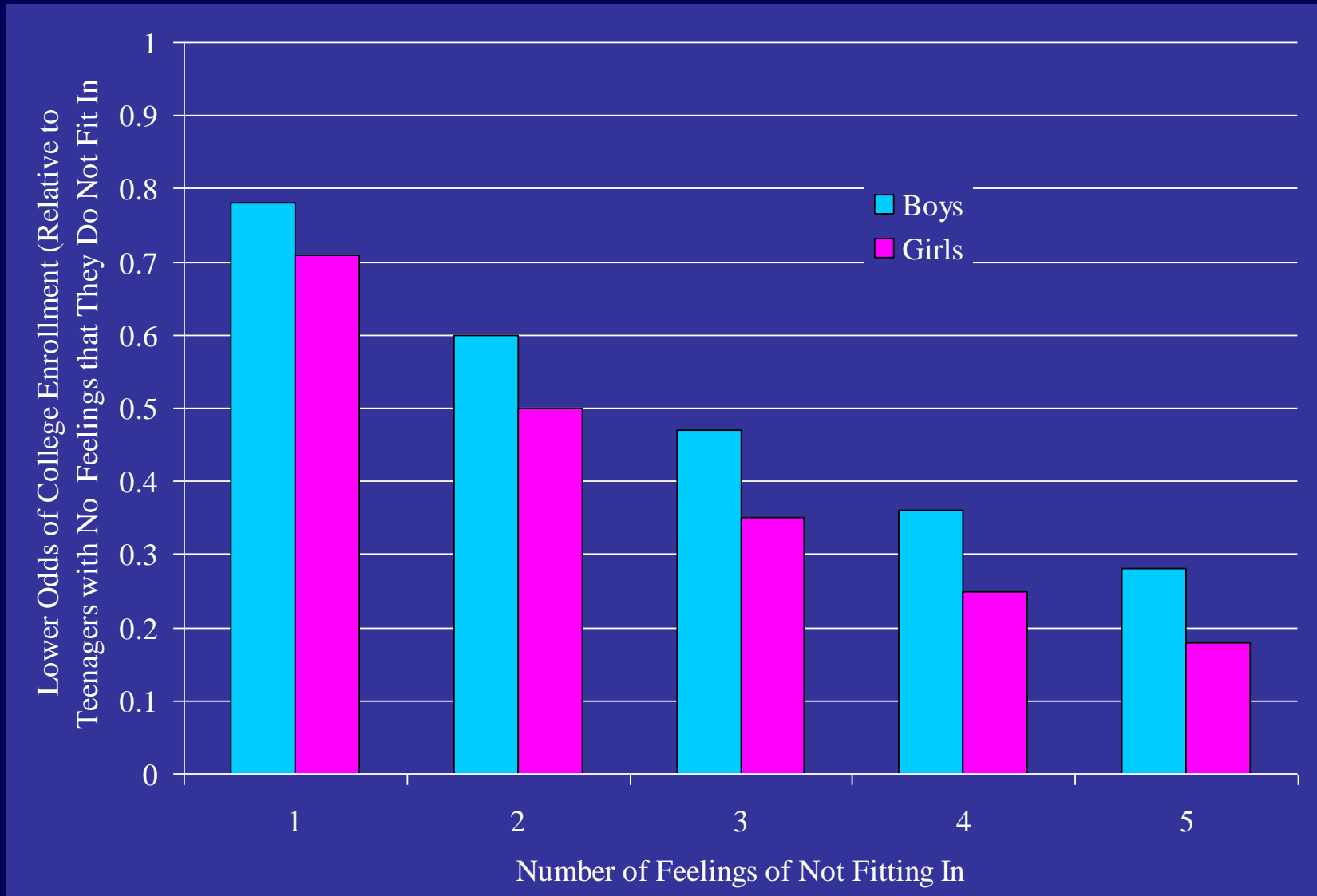
Lower Odds of College-Going by Feelings of Not Fitting In



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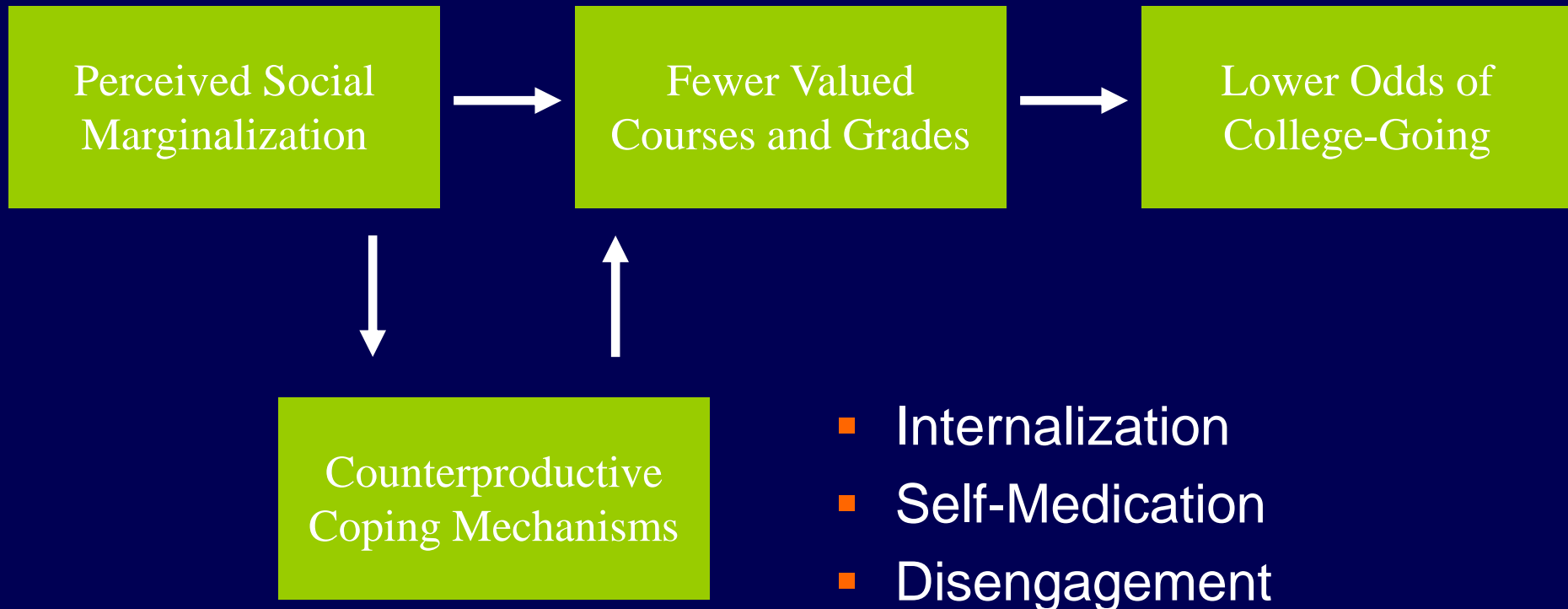
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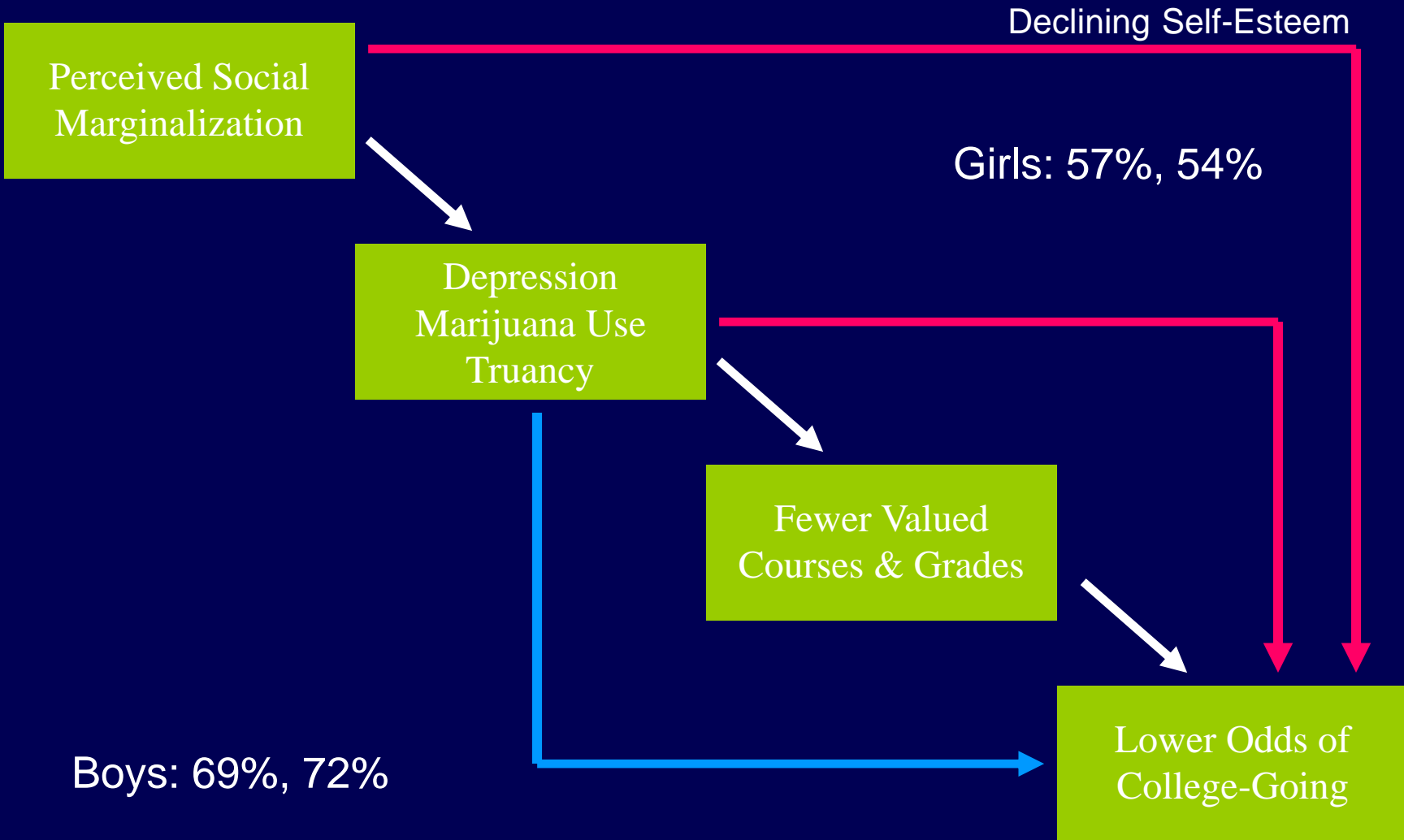
Understanding Why Fit is Linked to Academics



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General Patterns of Findings



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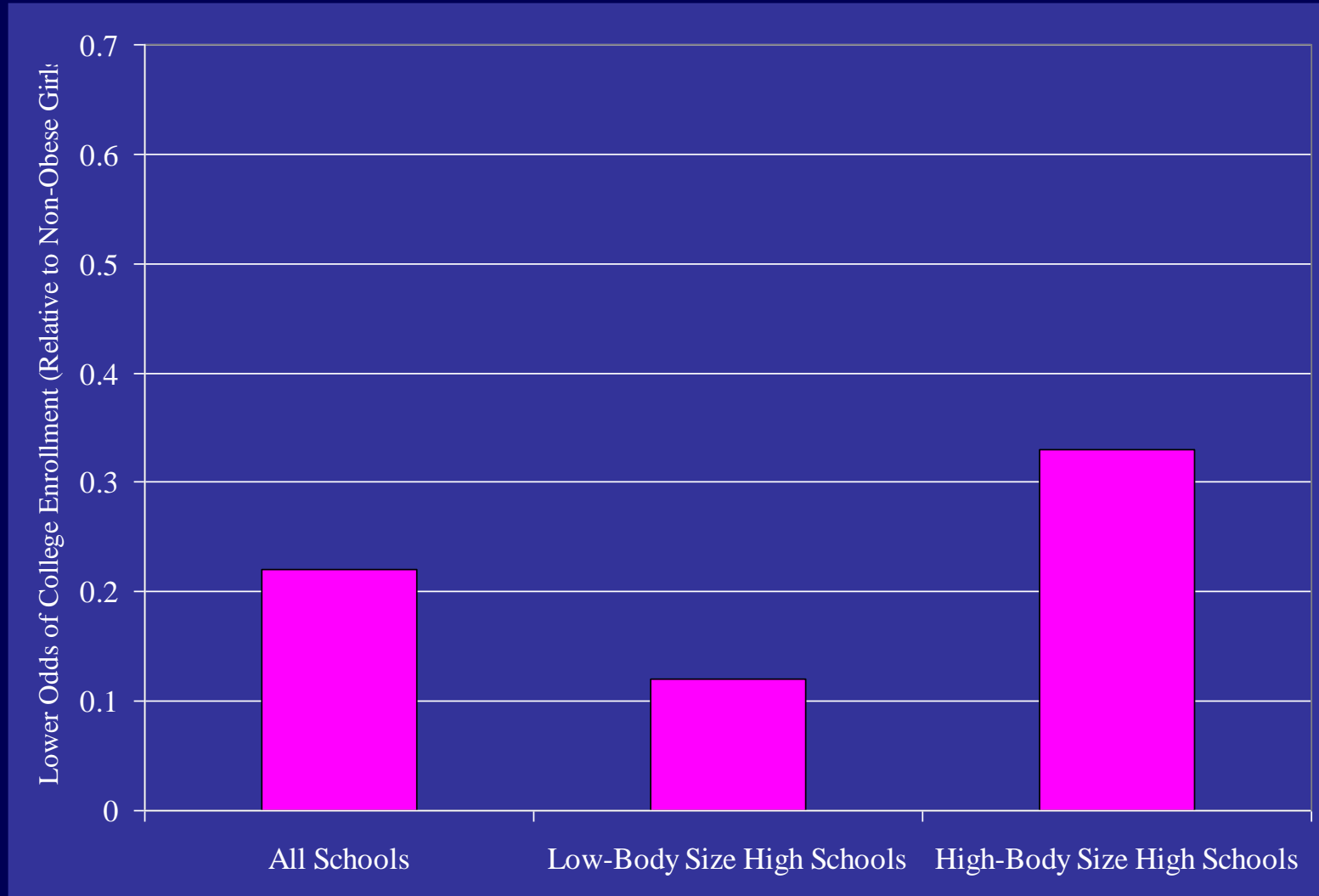
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Who Feels As Though They Do Not Fit In

- Stigma as a Theoretical Starting Point
- Historically Stigmatized Segments of Teenage Population
 - Obese youth (11% of sample with BMI for age/gender > 95th percentile)
 - Gay/lesbian youth (7% of sample reporting same-sex attraction)



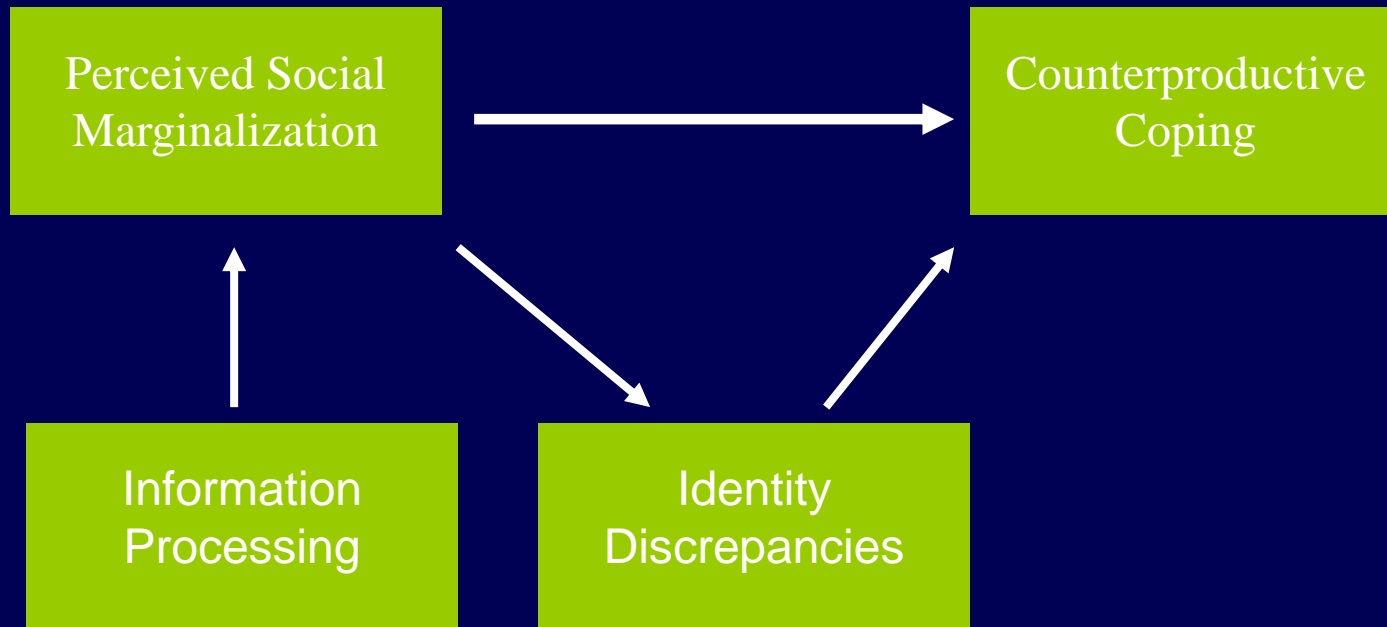
Lower Odds of College-Going Associated with Girls' Obesity



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Digging Deeper



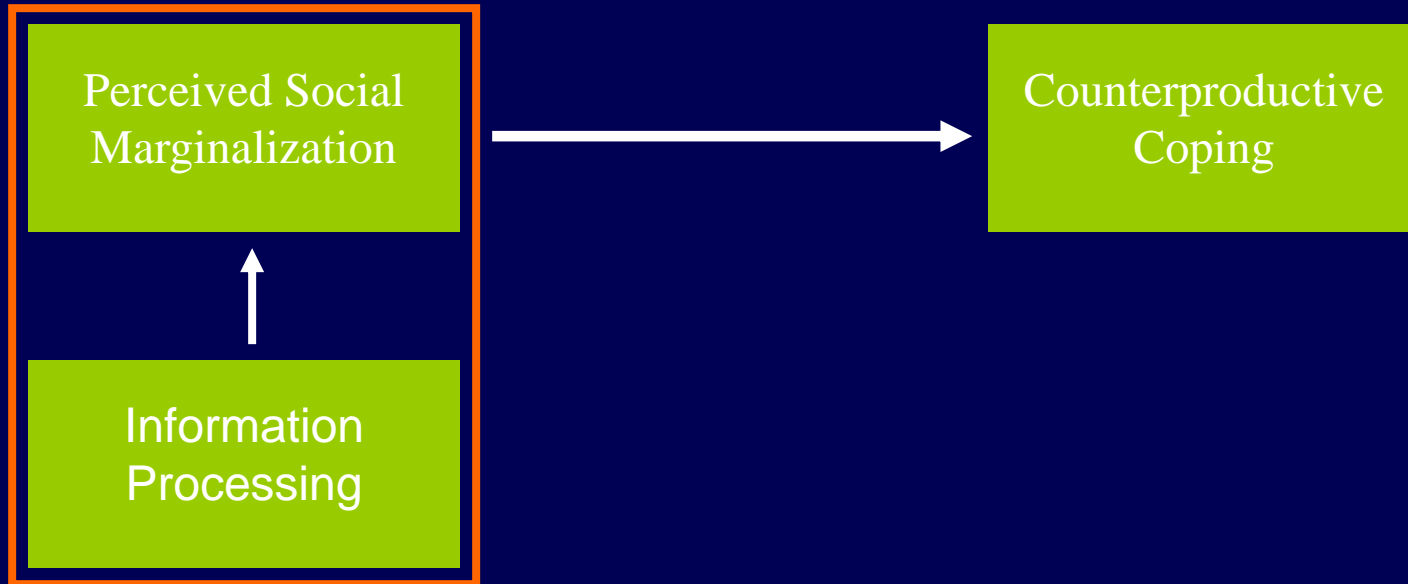
- How are Feelings of Not Fitting In Activated in School?
- Why Does the Activation of Such Feelings Matter?



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How Feelings of Not Fitting In are Activated in School



■ Externally Generated Sources of Information

- Peers
- Family
- Media

■ Self-Generated Sources of Information

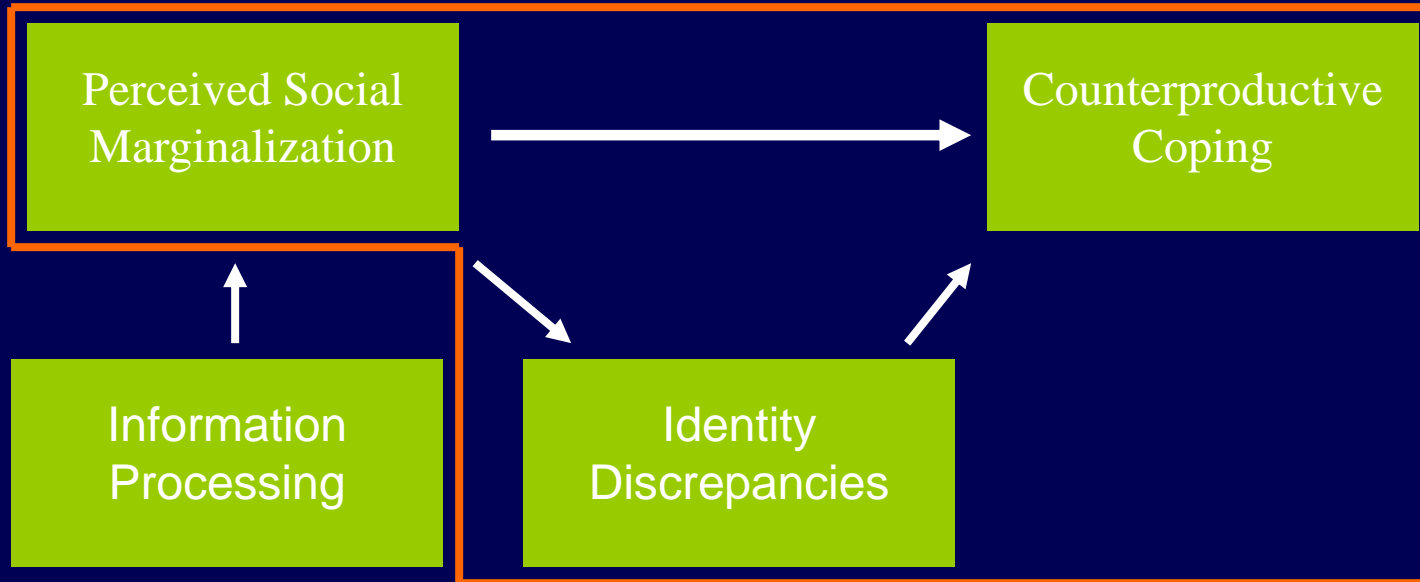
- Social comparison with idealized peers, LCD peers, and siblings



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Why Activation of Feelings of Not Fitting In Matters



- Identities as Social and Multifaceted
- Actual/Ideal and Actual/Ought Discrepancies
- Spoiled Identities



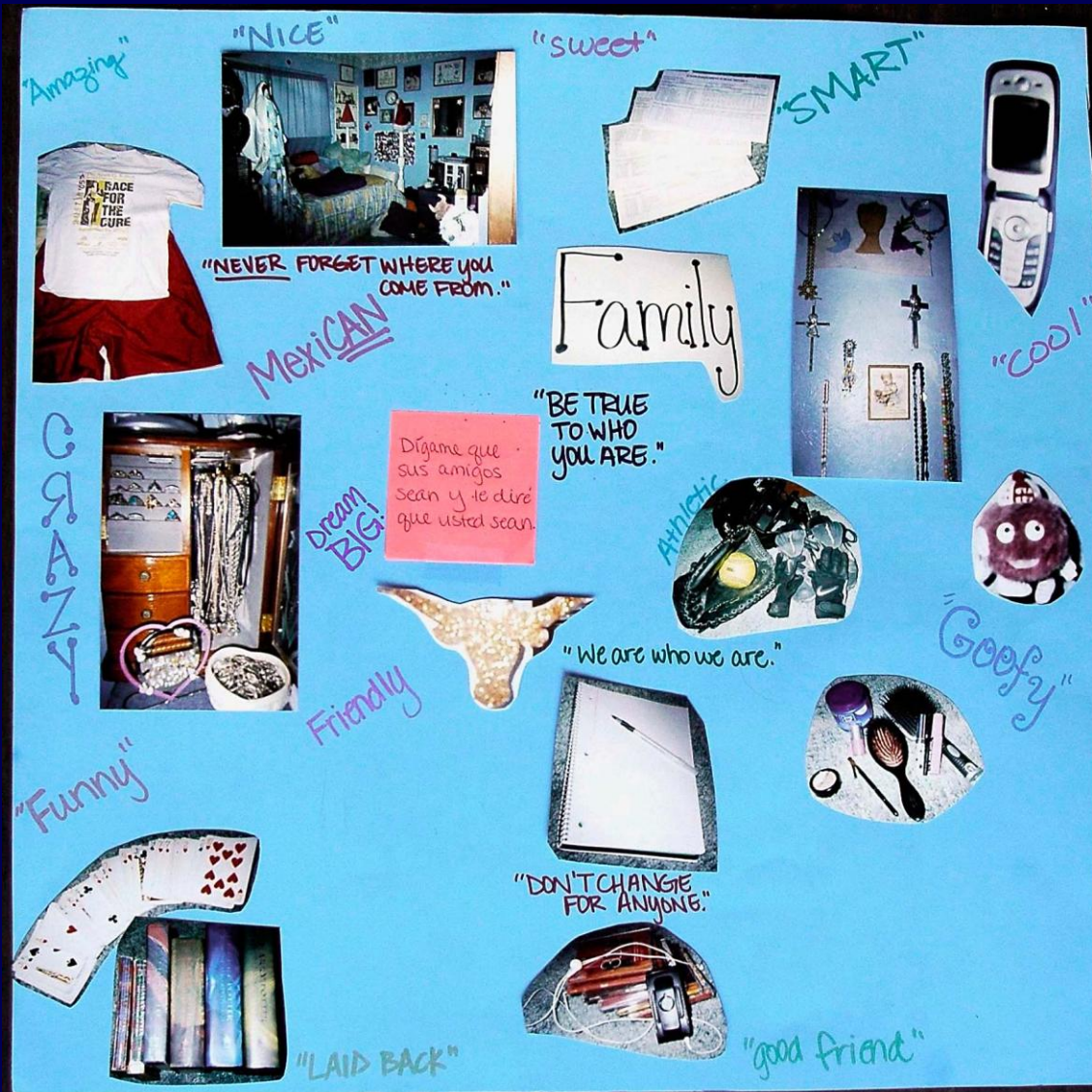
Who Lizzie Is



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Who Juanita Is



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Social Feedback in Friendship Group

■ Idealization

- We're all different, like I said, but we complement each other and we're all just fine with each. It's like, don't change who you are. (Juanita, Latina 9th grader)
- They know who I am. I don't have to worry...they know who I am. So, I don't have to try to like show anything or prove anything. (Ali, Middle Eastern 10th grader)

■ Backdoor Feedback

- They would get their point across] joking about it, like making it seem like good fun. (James, Latino 10th grader)
- If my friend says "You can do better"...then that is more helpful. That helps a lot. (Madeline, White 10th grader)



That Larger Band of Peers

- Bigger than Cliques, Smaller than Student Body
 - Crowds, status groups, etc.
 - The “hey, how are you, nod in the hallway group of people” (Madeline, White 10th grader)
 - PLUs
- The Danger Zone



Tools of the PLUs

- Subtle Yet Intentional Actions
 - Private talk directed outwards
 - Double speak
 - Compliment implying the opposite
 - The Look or lack thereof
 - Because you can know in your head, like you have a feeling that they are talking about you like that, but you might not know. With a guy, he's telling you straight up. Like, you know he told you that. But with a girl, it's like, did she just say that? I mean, wait a minute. (Miguel, Latino 9th grader)
- Non-Targeted Actions that Hit Bullseye
 - Overheard conversation
 - Comments to third person



From Cooper, a White 9th Grader

Subject: I guess...I have an idea of something, but I can't really put it into words. Hmm.

Interviewer: Would it be in relation to family or friends?

Subject: I think my parents want me to be something a little different, but I'm not sure what.

Interviewer: So you somehow get...

Subject: I don't know. Something. I don't know.

Interviewer: But you're not sure what exactly it is that they would want.

Subject: Right. I just think they think I'm too... I'm not even sure what they think I'm too much of, but it seems like it. I have a feeling. I've got a gut feeling.

Interviewer: Like you kind of sense something?

Subject: Yeah.

Interviewer: Huh. That's interesting. Like you sort of sense something is there.

Subject: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: But it's not like they've ever said to you...

Subject: Right.



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Why Information about Fit Matters

- Layers of Social and Institutional Identity
 - They, like, make up me...it's basically, like, they're, like, they make me who I am. (Madeline, White 10th grader)
 - Digame que sus amigos sean y le dire que usted sean. (Juanita, Latina 9th grader)
- The Trouble with Talking about Identity
 - I always be myself. I don't try and be anyone else...it never works out. So, it is, like, it doesn't really matter, because then you won't be happy if you try and be someone else. (Wes, White 9th grader)
 - Just confident in who I am. Able to stand up and say, "Yeah, this is me. Take it or leave it. (Juanita, Latina 9th grader)
 - I...what I believe in is just be who you are...I just don't feel that I should I be somebody else that other's want me to be. I just like to be who I am and if nobody likes it, then oh well. (Sylvia, Latina 10th grader)

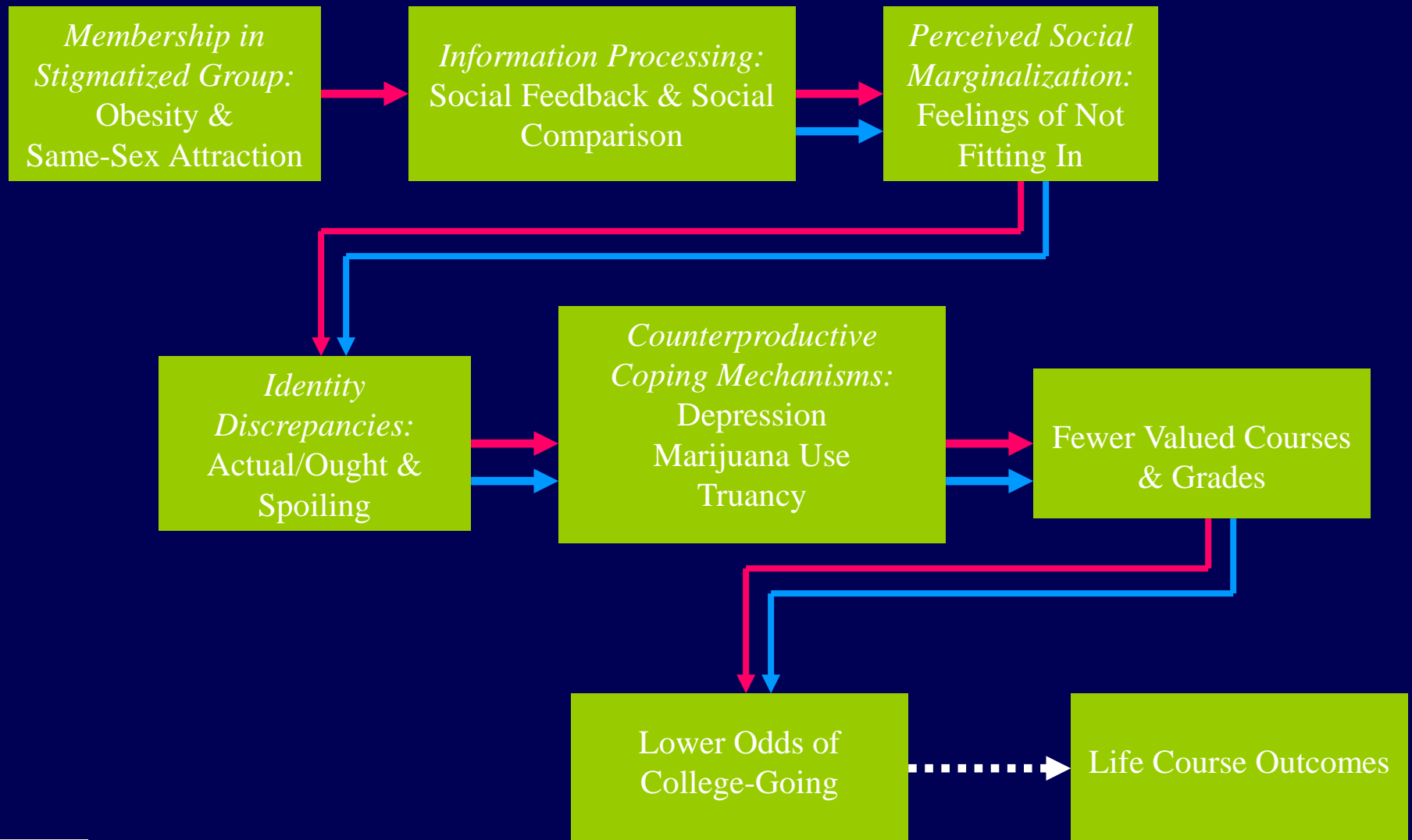


Identity Conflicts and Crises

- Actual/Ought Discrepancies
 - Feeling off in school
 - Blame vs. doubt
- Spoiled Identity
 - Efficiency within a vast market of relationships
 - Ali
- Coping
 - “Painful”, “awful”, “torture”, “unbearable”
 - Active responses
 - Self-selection



The Final Picture



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- The Social, Agentic, & Short-Sighted
- A Timeless Universal with Amplifiers

NEW YORK

Why You Truly Never Leave High School

New science on its corrosive, traumatizing effects.

By Jennifer Senior Published Jan 20, 2013



Sarah and Jim, 1988 & 2011.

For the past three years, Argentine photographer Irina Werning has been staging reenactments of old snapshots. The project, "Back to the Future," includes 270 photographs made in 29 countries.
(Photo: Irina Werning)

Throughout high school, my friend Kenji had never once spoken to the Glassmans. They were a popular, football-playing, preposterously handsome set of identical twins (every high school must have its Winklevii). Kenji was a closeted, half-Japanese orchestra nerd who kept mainly to himself and graduated first in our class. Yet last fall, as our 25th high-school reunion was winding down, Kenji grabbed Josh Glassman by his triceps—still Popeye spinach cans, and the subject of much Facebook discussion afterward—and asked where the after-party was. He was only half-joking.

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- Sources of Protection
 - Peers
 - Family
 - Adult Mentors
 - Religion
 - Sports and Activities
 - Special Interests
 - Future Orientation

- Patterns of Resilience (exception rather than rule)
 - Girls derived more protection from peer world and in relation to socioemotional rather than academic risks
 - Boys derived more protection from families and in relation to academic rather than socioemotional risks
 - Both derived some protection from school-sponsored programs



Acting

- Decomposing Population by Risk
 - Who is at risk when?
 - Reconceptualizing targeted groups
- What Schools Have to Offer
 - Getting services where they need to go
 - Expanding breadth of services
 - Making connections
 - Rethinking organization

