Balancing Opportunities for Personal, Civic, and Civil Discourse in Educational Settings

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Division 15, Presidential Address

The Intentional Stance

Beliefs

Desires

Action
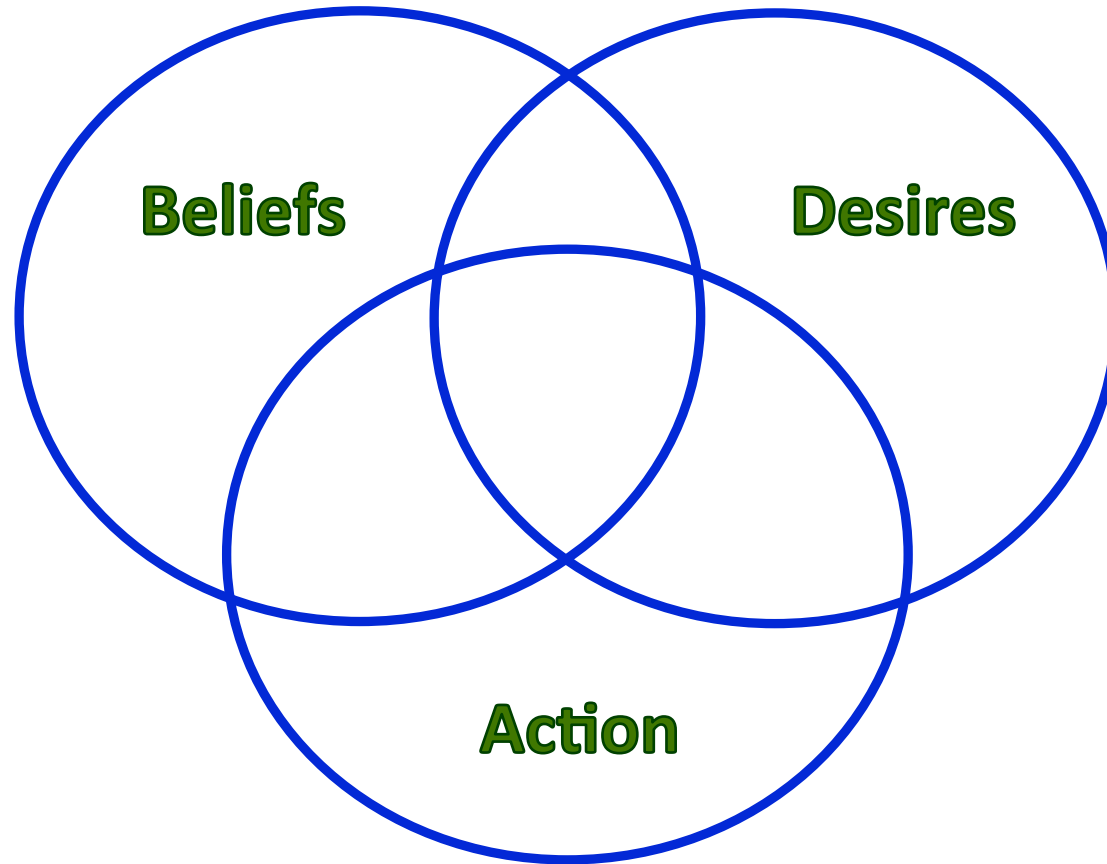
Dennett, 1989; Thorkildsen, 2013

How many of you can imagine universal moral principles when looking at this symbol?

How many of you see a way in which this symbol might be used to support a cause?

How many of you can imagine personal issues when looking at this symbol?

How can schools help adolescents and young adults situate themselves in public discourse?

How can we improve the ways in which we invite youth to participate in local, national, and transnational governance?

Civil Discourse
Civic Discourse
Personal Discourse

Personal Discourse

Activities that promote the acquisition of knowledge about well-being, opportunities for reflection, and modes of information sharing to enhance self-discovery and self-care.

Self-care
Interests
Talents or abilities
Identity

Consumers of research on motivation often assume that all references to the self-system reflect a unitary set of preoccupations.
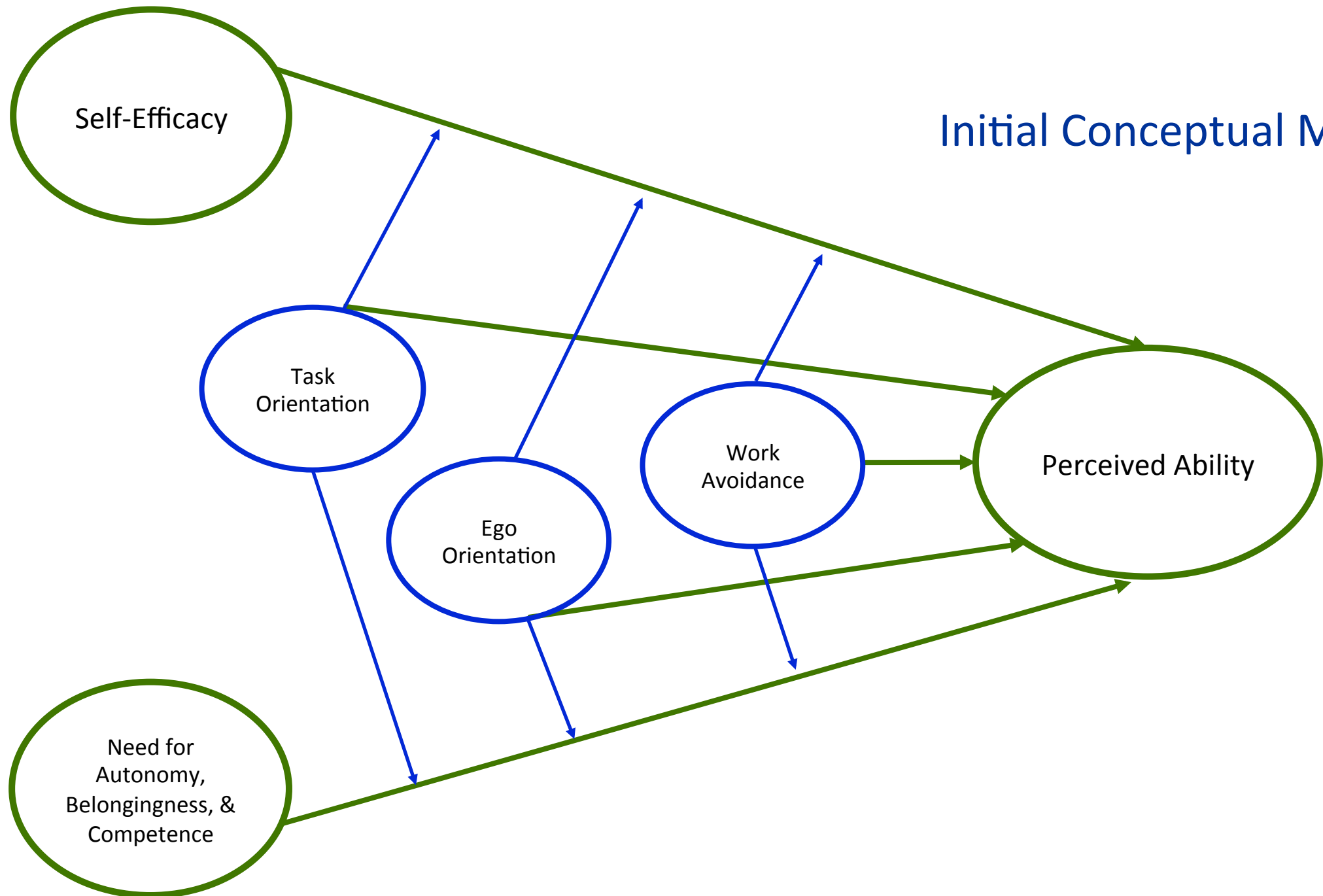
Why is this a mistake?

When adolescents and young adults convey their perceived ability, they are exploring the question…
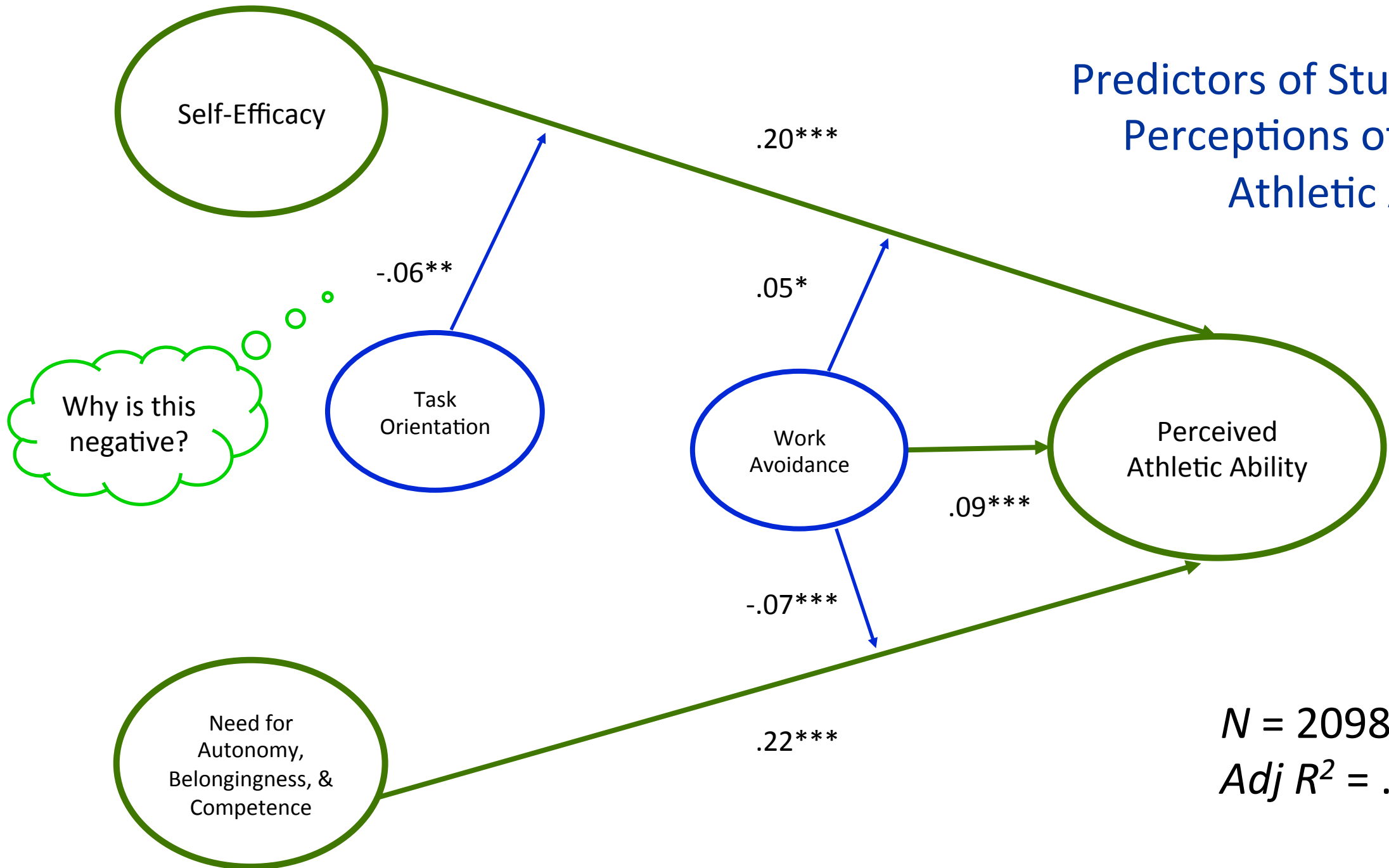
"Who are you?"

Initial Conceptual Model

Associations Between Self-Focused Measures

	Ego-orientation
Sports self-efficacy	.16
Athletic needs	.28
Perceived athletic ability	.14
Perceived academic ability	.08
N= 2098	

Bandura, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Nicholls, 1989; Thorkildsen et al., 2011

How Task Orientation Moderates Students' Perceptions of Their Athletic Ability
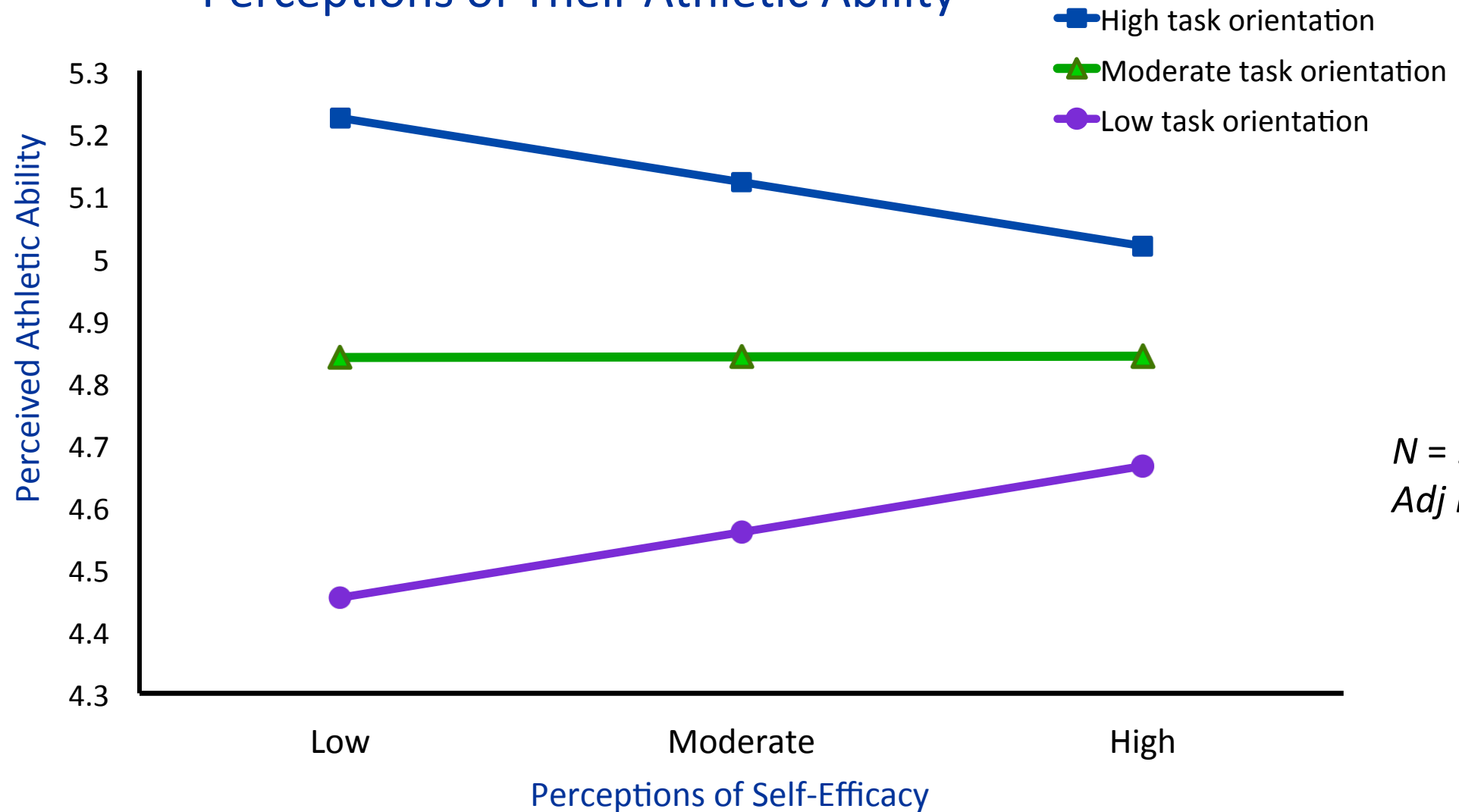
N = 2098
Adj R^2 = .12

Predictors of Students' Perceptions of Their Academic Ability
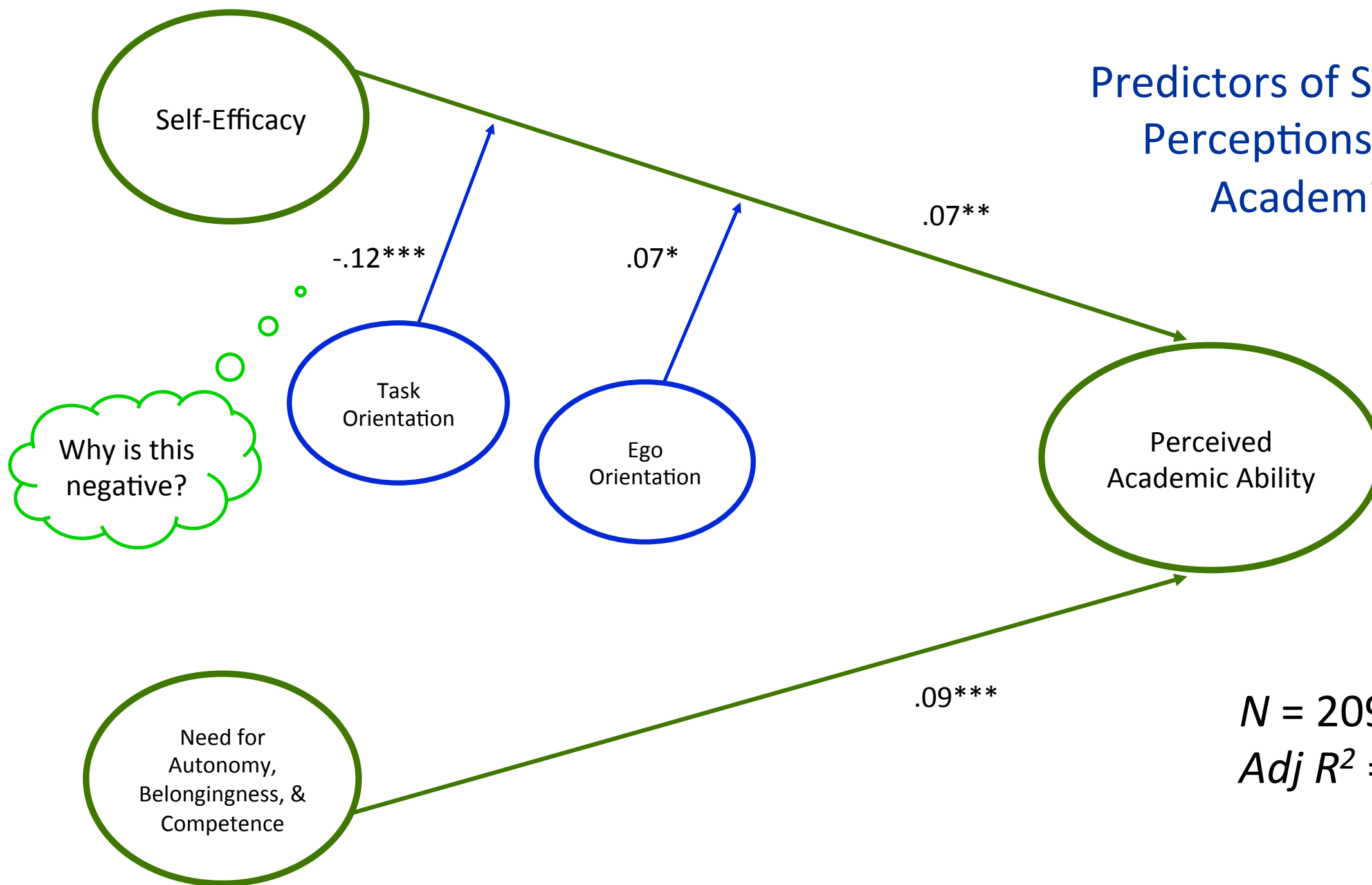
N = 2098
Adj R² = .03

How Task Orientation Moderates Students' Perceptions of Their Academic Ability
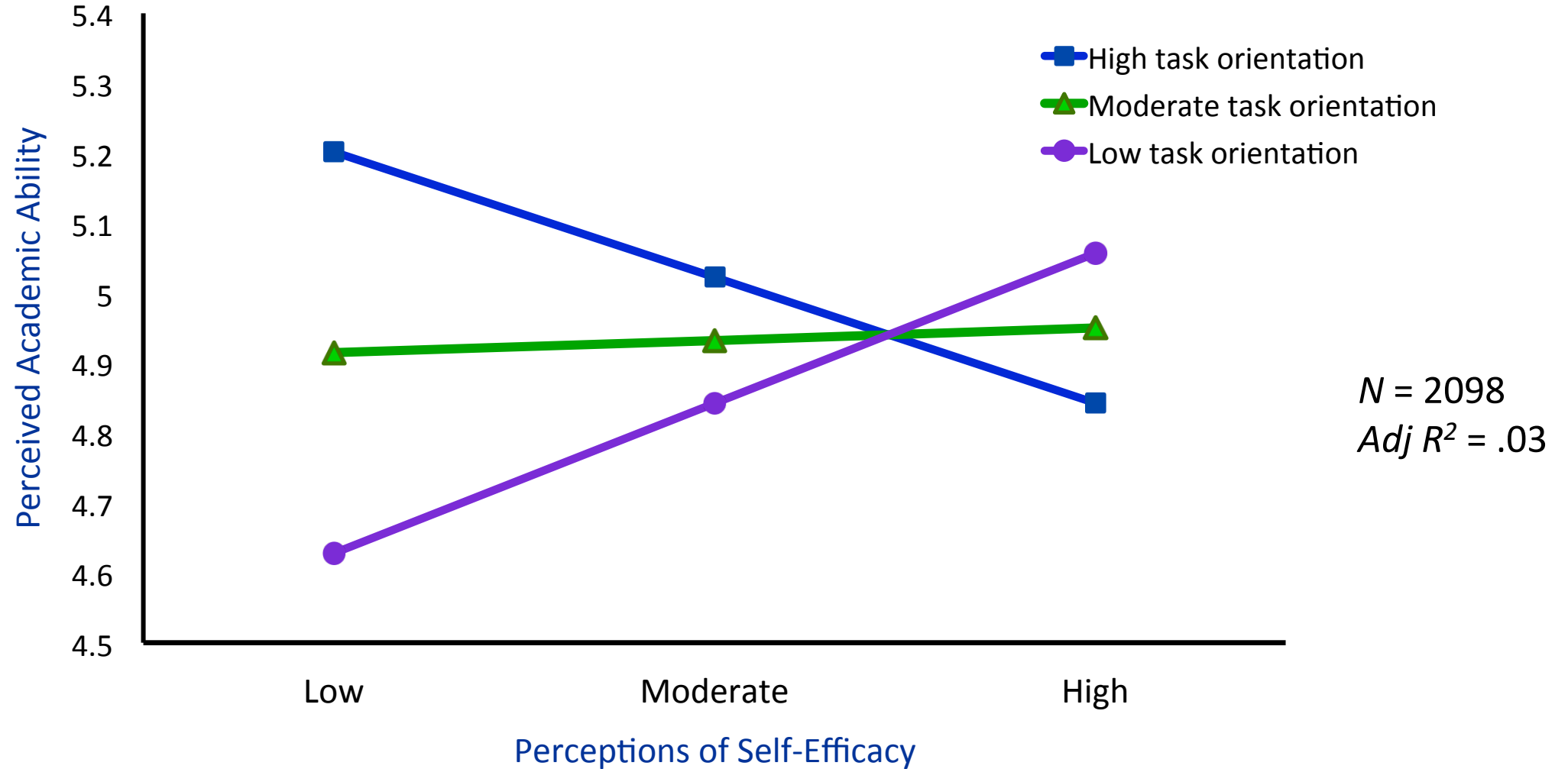
"Who do you want to be?"

To explore vocational potentials, youth benefit from opportunities to compare their talents and interests with those commonly valued in public discourse.

Percent of Talents Endorsed by Age Group
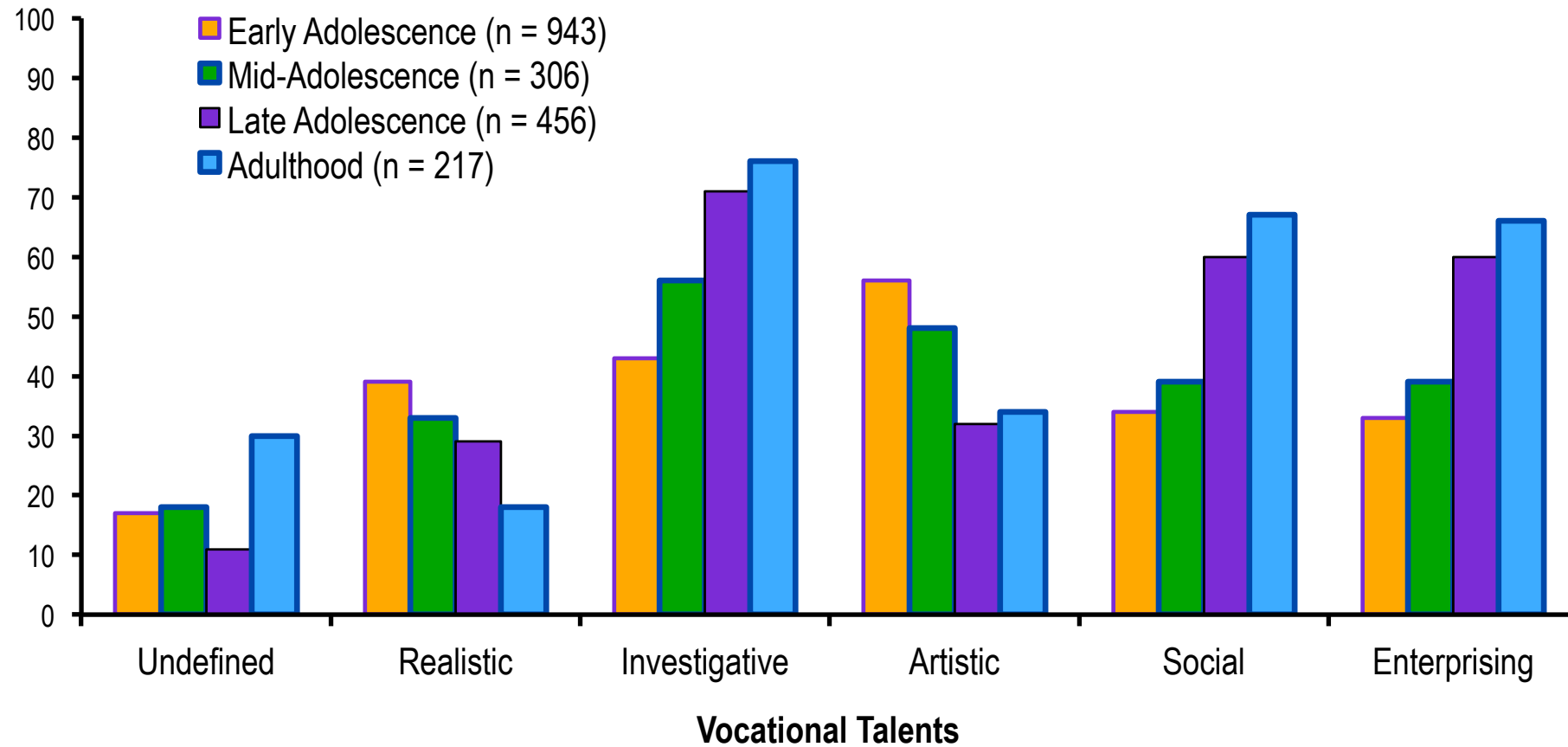
Age group differences were significant at p<.001

Percent of Career Pathways Endorsed by Age Group

Legend:
- Early Adolescence (n = 943)
- Mid-Adolescence (n = 306)
- Late Adolescence (n = 456)
- Adulthood (n = 217)

X-axis (Career Aspirations): Undefined, STEM, Social Services, Arts, Business
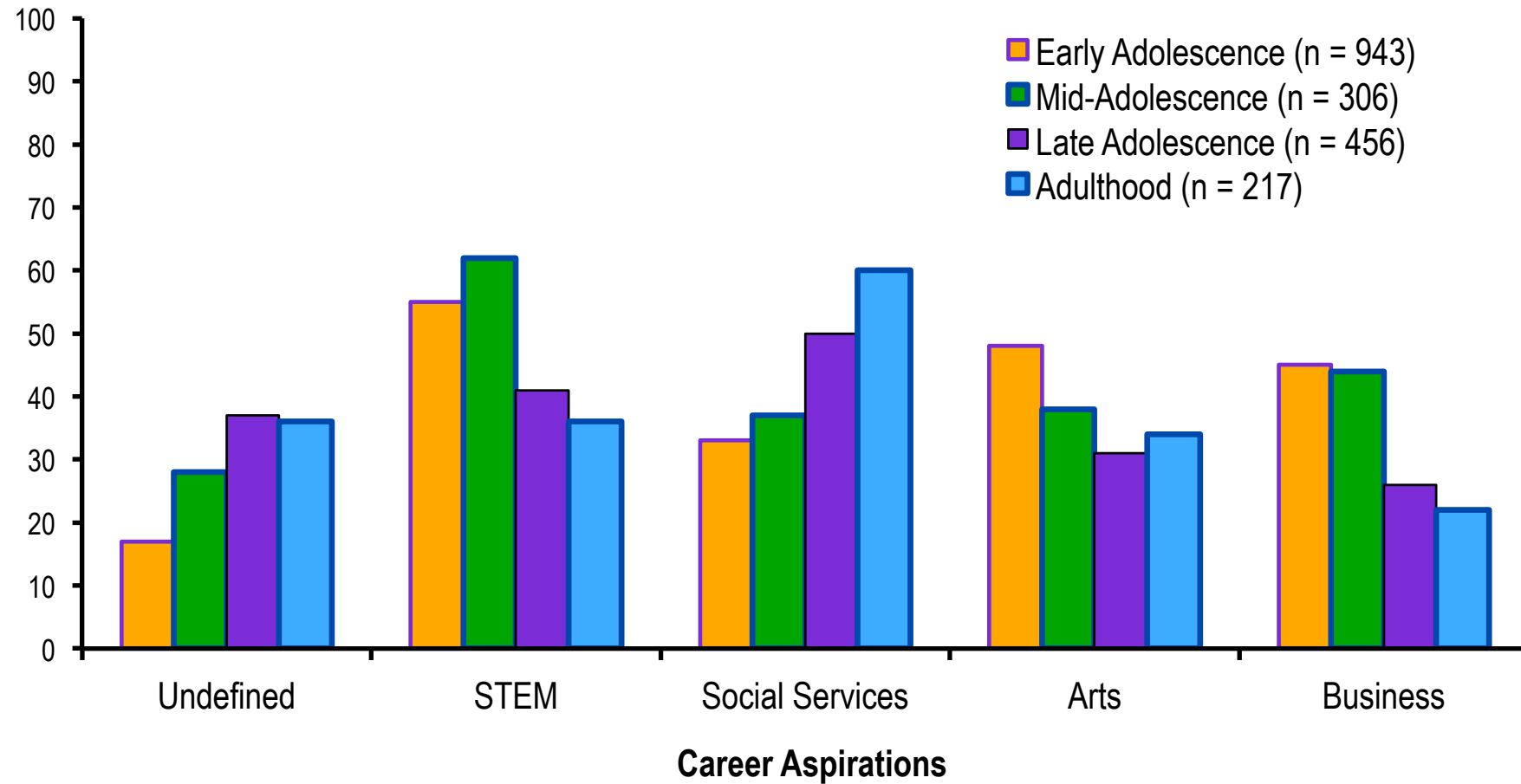
All age group differences were significant at p<.001

Percent of Job Interests by Self-Reported Vocational Talent Profiles
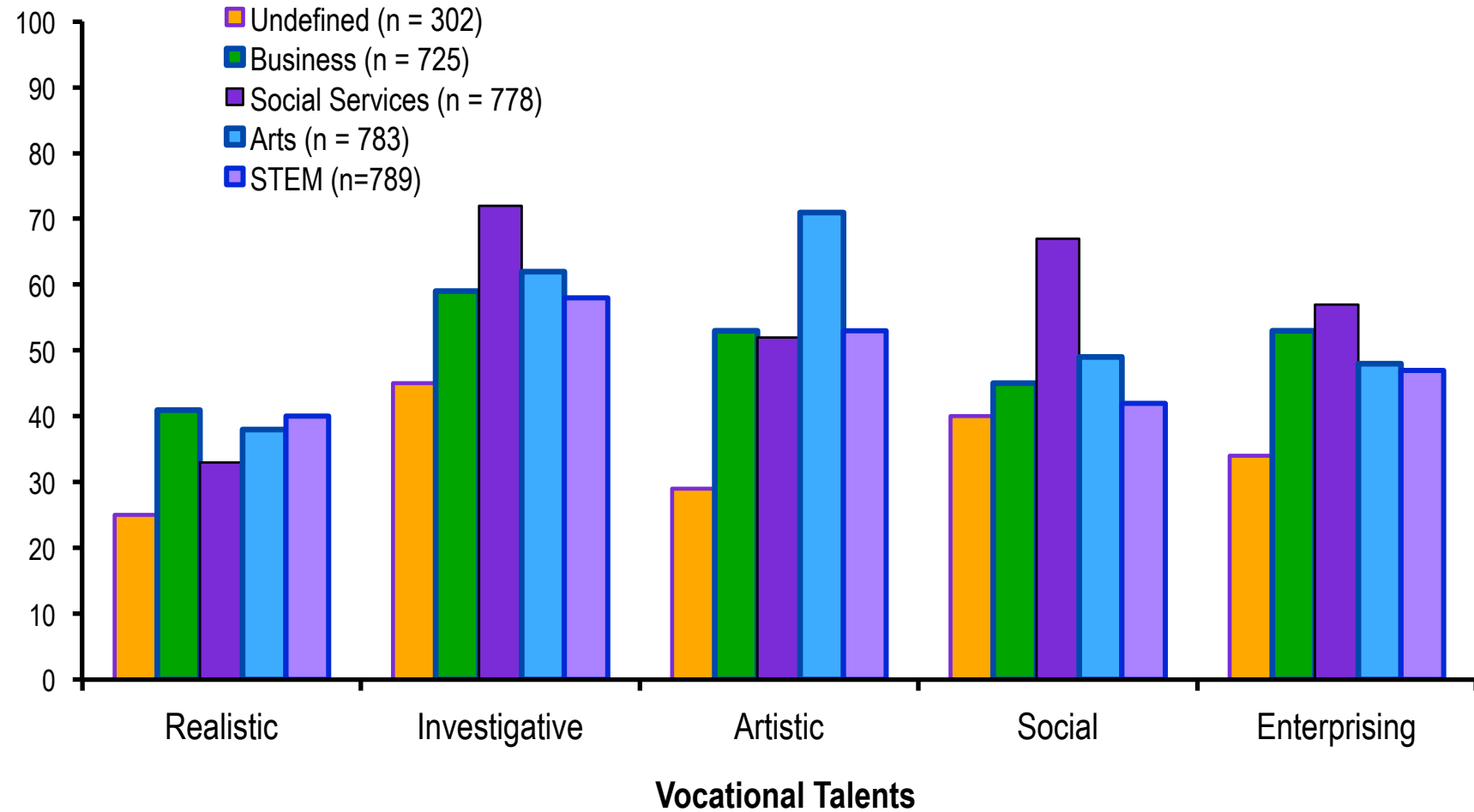
"Who should you try to be?"

Regular conversations about different virtues and opportunities to align beliefs, desires, and actions help youth strengthen their character.

Virtues Associated with Character

Caring

Confident

Dependable

Fair

Integrity

Principled

Thorkildsen & Golant, 2008; Walker & Pitts, 1998

Percent of Moral Virtues Endorsed by Age Group
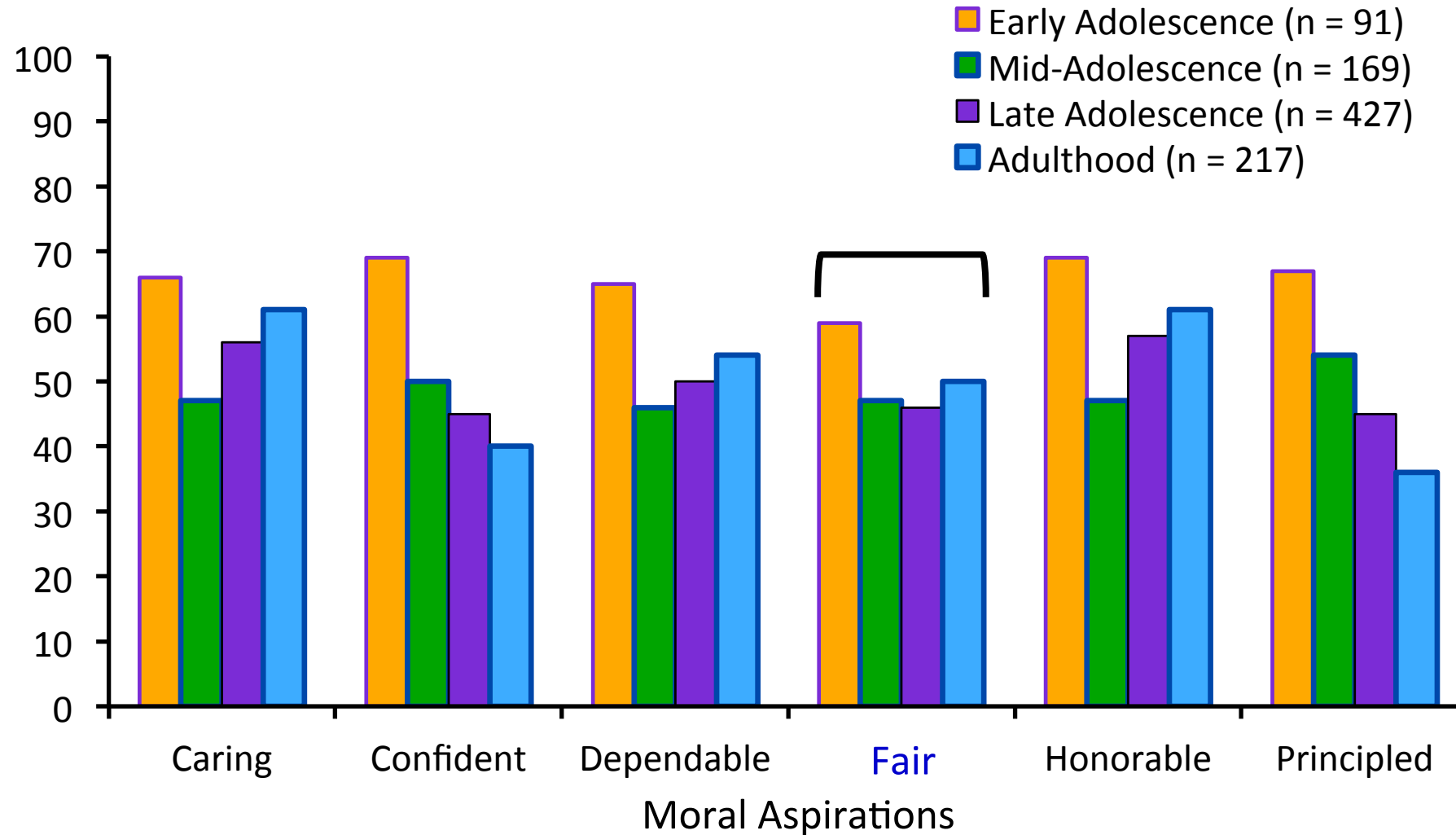
Adolescents need solitude for personal growth.

Many have trouble balancing this need for solitude with increasing pressures to participate in local and global activities.

Larson, 1990, 1995; Larson, Moneta, Richards, & Wilson, 2002; Larson, & Verma, 1999

Too much solitude and emphasis on personal discourse can make it hard for youth to break away from self-focused ruminations.

Yet, most individuals can easily name multiple ways in which they move beyond personal discourse to participate in society at large.

Civic Discourse

Activities that promote a particular cause, political stance, or positions on important public issues

Identifying and promoting a cause
Skills of persuasion
Skills of addressing areas of weakness/harm

A Five C's Model of Civic Engagement

Competence

Confidence

Connection

Character

Caring

Bowers, Li, Kiely, Brittian, Lerner, & Lerner, 2010

Youth join society by participating in existing community-based organizations such as those designed to preserve natural resources....

...or rebuild blighted areas in local neighborhoods.

Schools can foster civic discourse and support adolescents' engagement by....

Forming arts partnerships,
Fostering critical literacy,
Respecting multiple abilities, and
Including families in educational activities.

Camacho, Cambray-Engstrom, Laurel, Passi, & Thorkildsen, 2015

Civil Discourse

Focuses on human rights and universal moral principles as these restrict the potential influence of any one person or ideology.

Serves regulative and communicative functions via
    Public opinion
    Cultural codes
    Specific social practices

BETTER OUTCOMES

Sample activities include…

Identifying basic human rights.

Exploring areas in need of social repair.

Evaluating the policies and procedures of institutions that regulate public discourse.

Discovering ways to respect the welfare of all persons.

Participating in symbolic dialogues.

Discourse in the civil sphere is comprised of three basic dimensions

Relational ties

Institutional structures

Personal motives

*Alexander, J. C. (2006). **The civil sphere.** Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.*

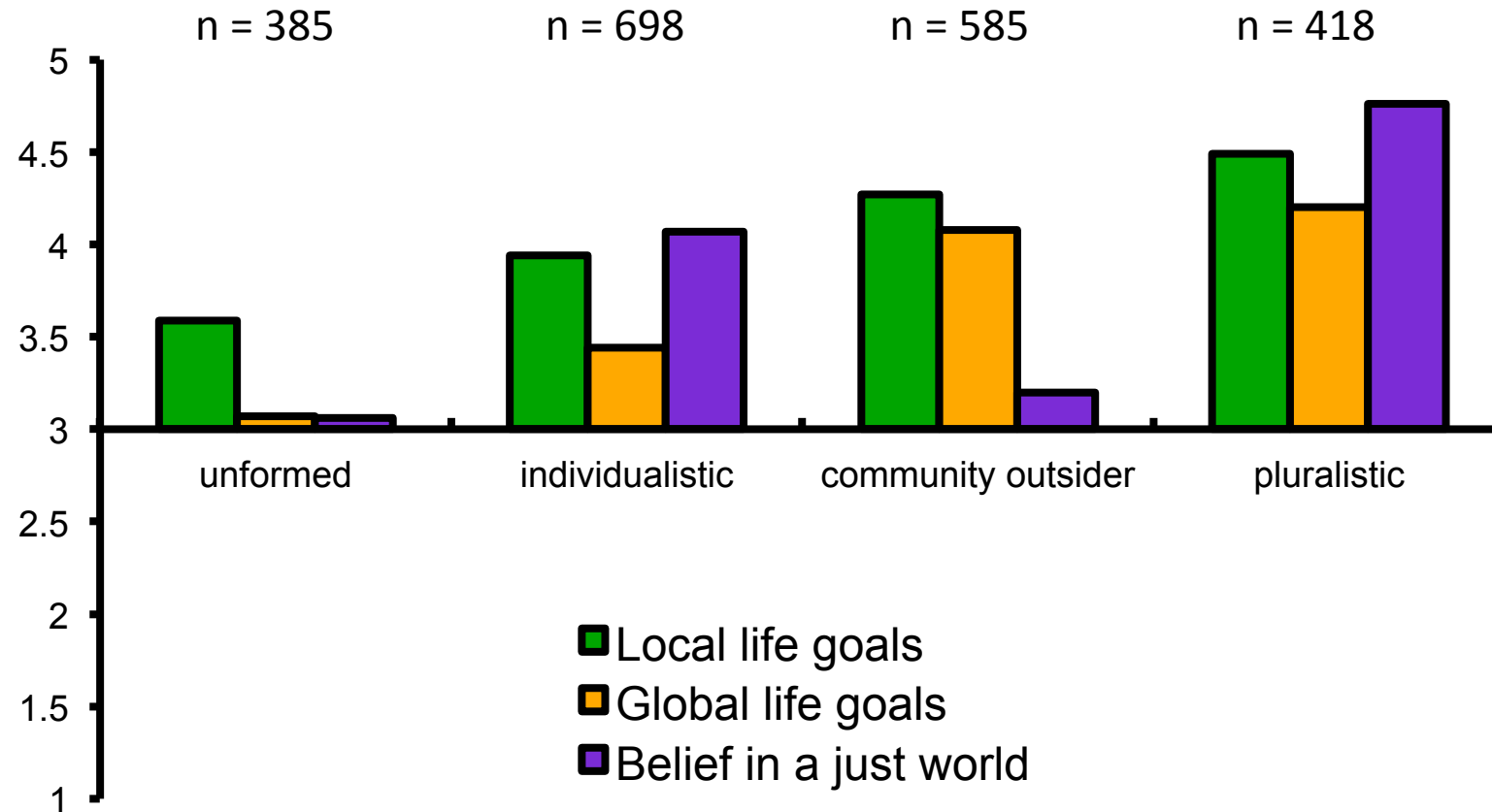People form solidarities as they endeavor to build a just world.

Ideally, civil discourse is comprised of the respect, criticism, and civility needed to identify and critique such solidarities.

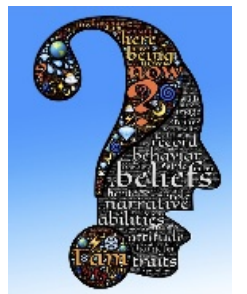People who function in anti-civil or pre-civil ways and are ultimately excluded from conversations about how society functions.

Validation of Civil Identities

n = 385   n = 698   n = 585   n = 418

unformed   individualistic   community outsider   pluralistic

■ Local life goals
■ Global life goals
■ Belief in a just world

Thorkildsen, Golant, & Cambray-Engstrom, 2008; Thorkildsen, Mitchell, & Driver, 2015

Relational Ties

Social media offer a multitude of opportunities for social participation.

Sites such as Facebook, Instagram, or Google+ play an increasingly important role in civil discourse.

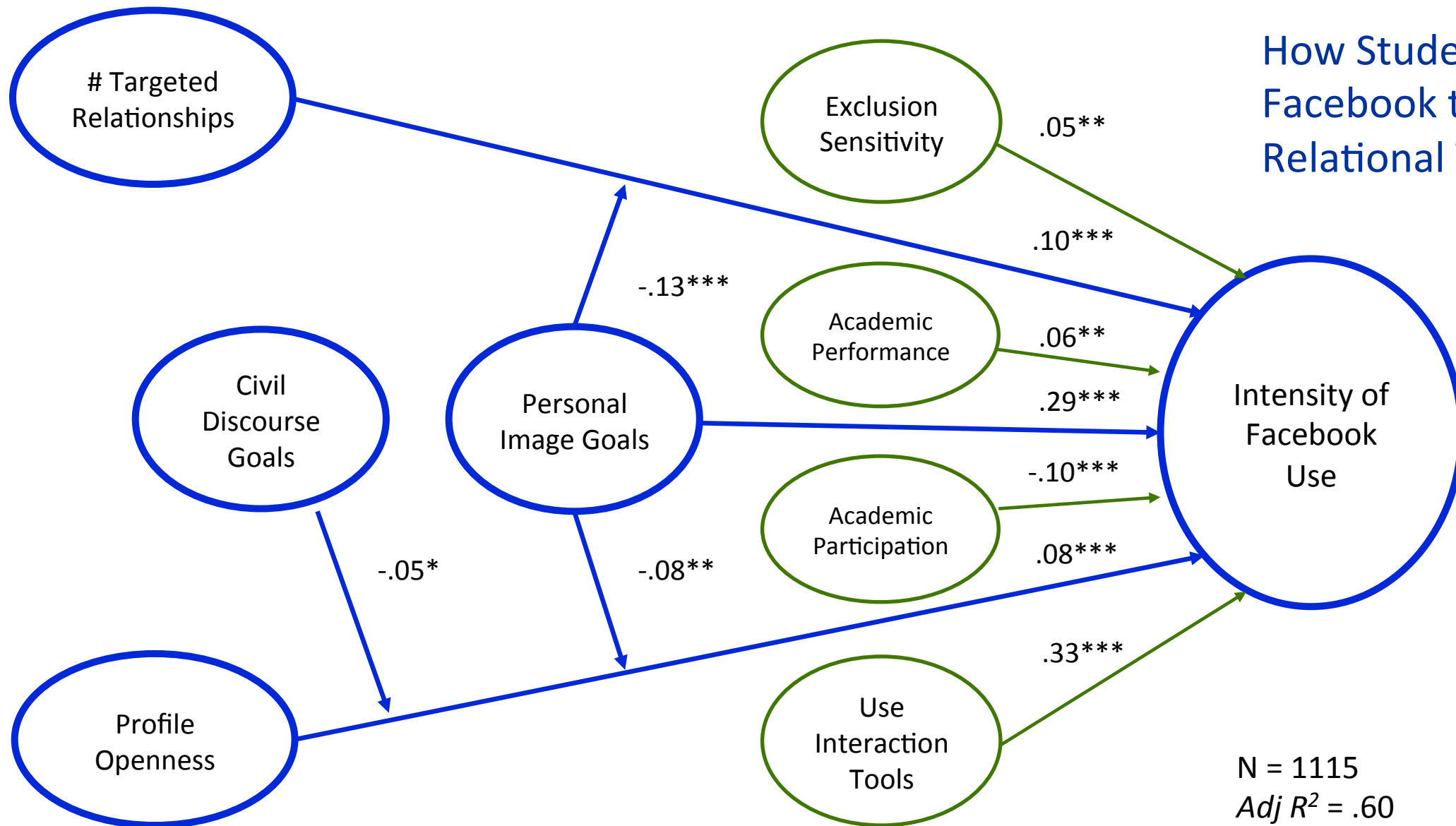What are the qualities of adolescents' online conversations?

Personal image and civil discourse goals but not civic discourse goals helped to explain the intensity with which participants used Facebook.

Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, & Hudiburgh, 2012

How Students Use Facebook to Form Relational Ties

Targeted Relationships

Exclusion Sensitivity .05**

.10***

Civil Discourse Goals

Personal Image Goals

Academic Performance .06**

.29***

-.13***

-.05*

-.08**

Academic Participation -.10***

.08***

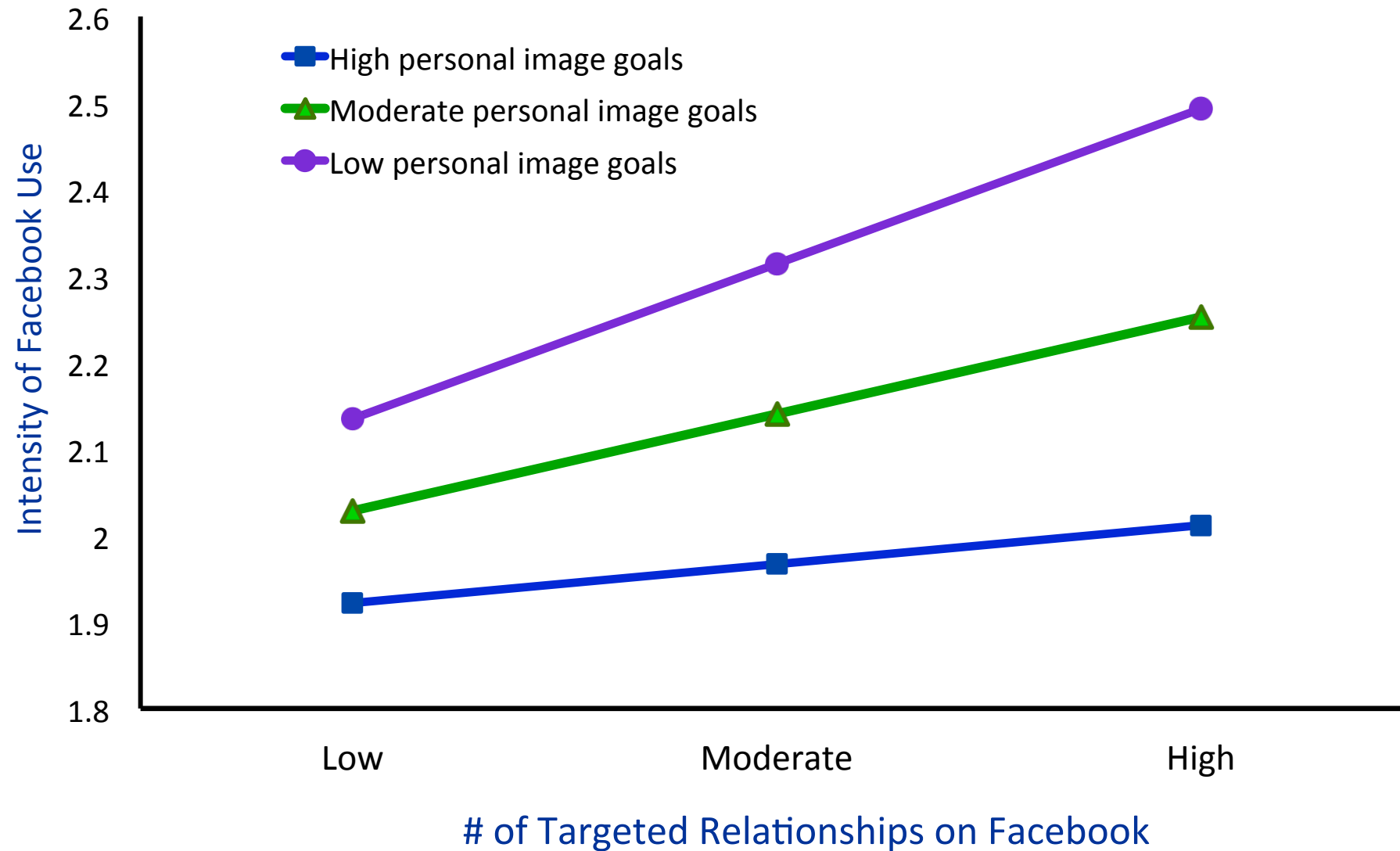Profile Openness

Use Interaction Tools .33***

Intensity of Facebook Use

N = 1115
Adj R² = .60

Thorkildsen & Xing, in press

Number of Targeted Close and Casual Relationships by Personal Image Goals

Intensity of Facebook Use (y-axis): 1.8, 1.9, 2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6

Legend:
- High personal image goals
- Moderate personal image goals
- Low personal image goals

# of Targeted Relationships on Facebook (x-axis): Low, Moderate, High

Profile Openness by Personal Image Goals

Legend:
- High personal image goals
- Moderate personal image goals
- Low personal image goals

Y-axis: Intensity of Facebook Use (1.9 to 2.8)

X-axis: Profile Openness (Low, Moderate, High)
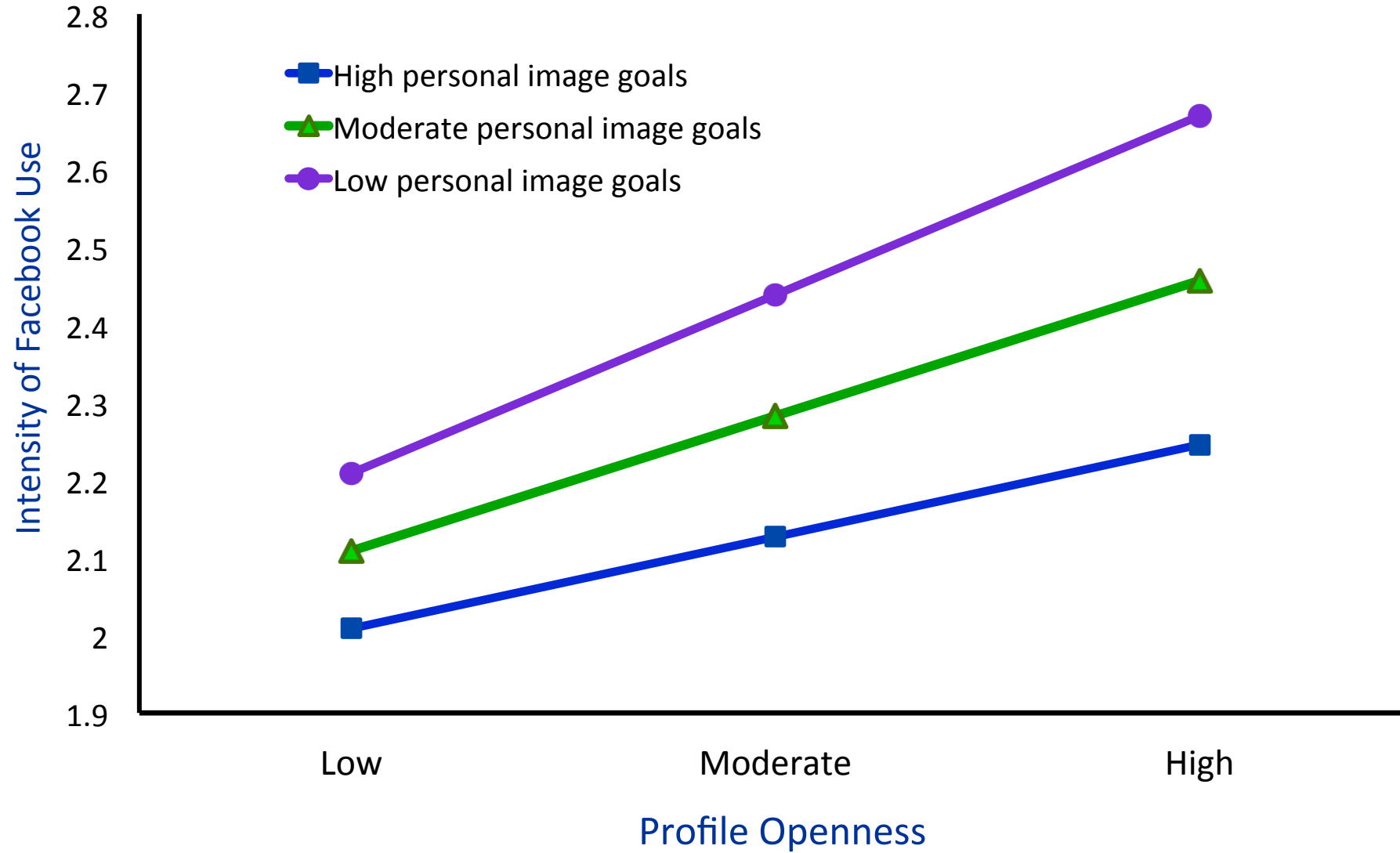
Profile Openness by Civil Discourse Goals
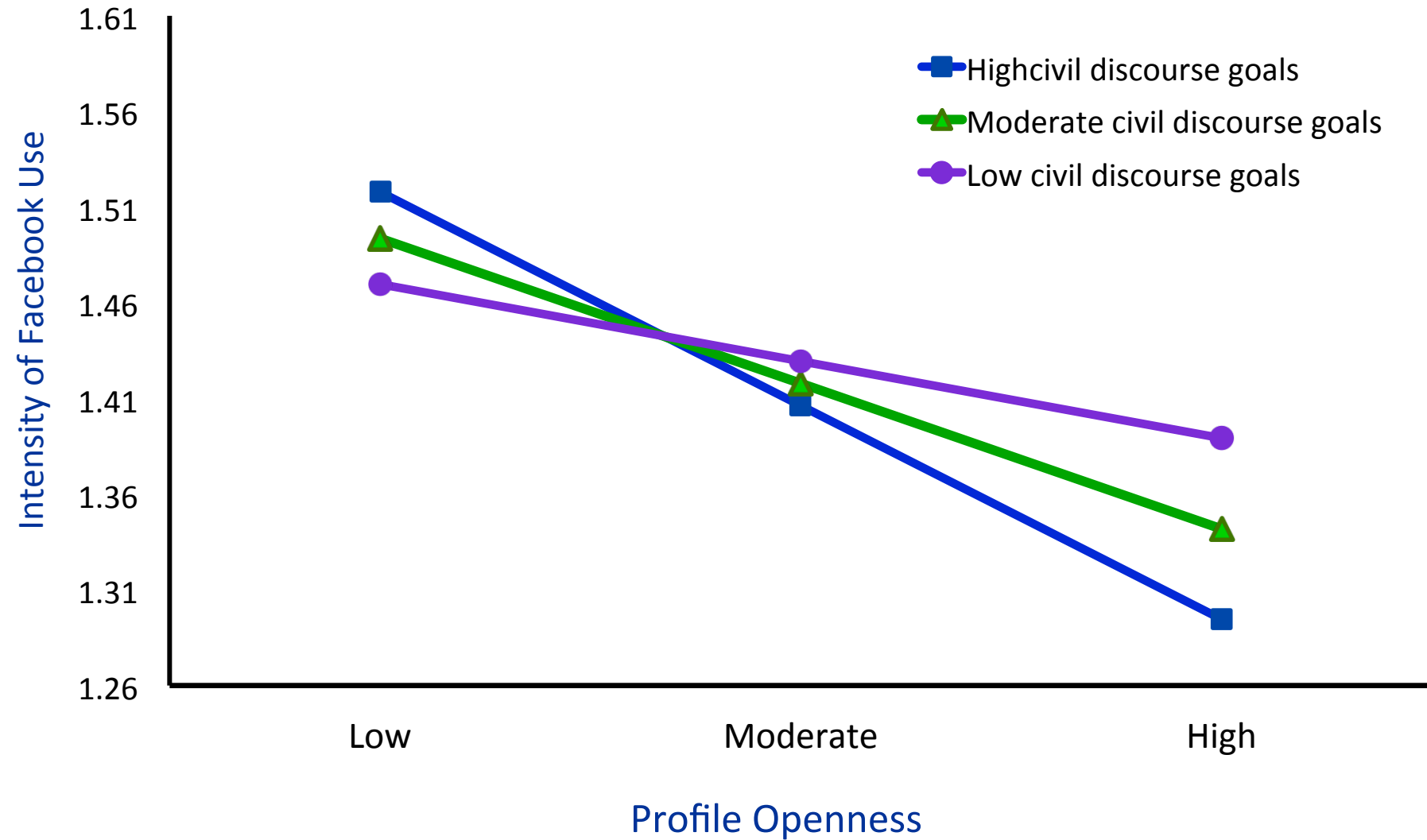
Adolescents primarily use Facebook to project their personal identities into the world at large.

They may also assume that civil discourse occurs among individuals who know one another.

Educators can help youth learn how to build stronger relational ties with others on Facebook and institutions of the civil sphere.

Education is a basic human right, and schools are institutions of the civil sphere that serve the communicative function.
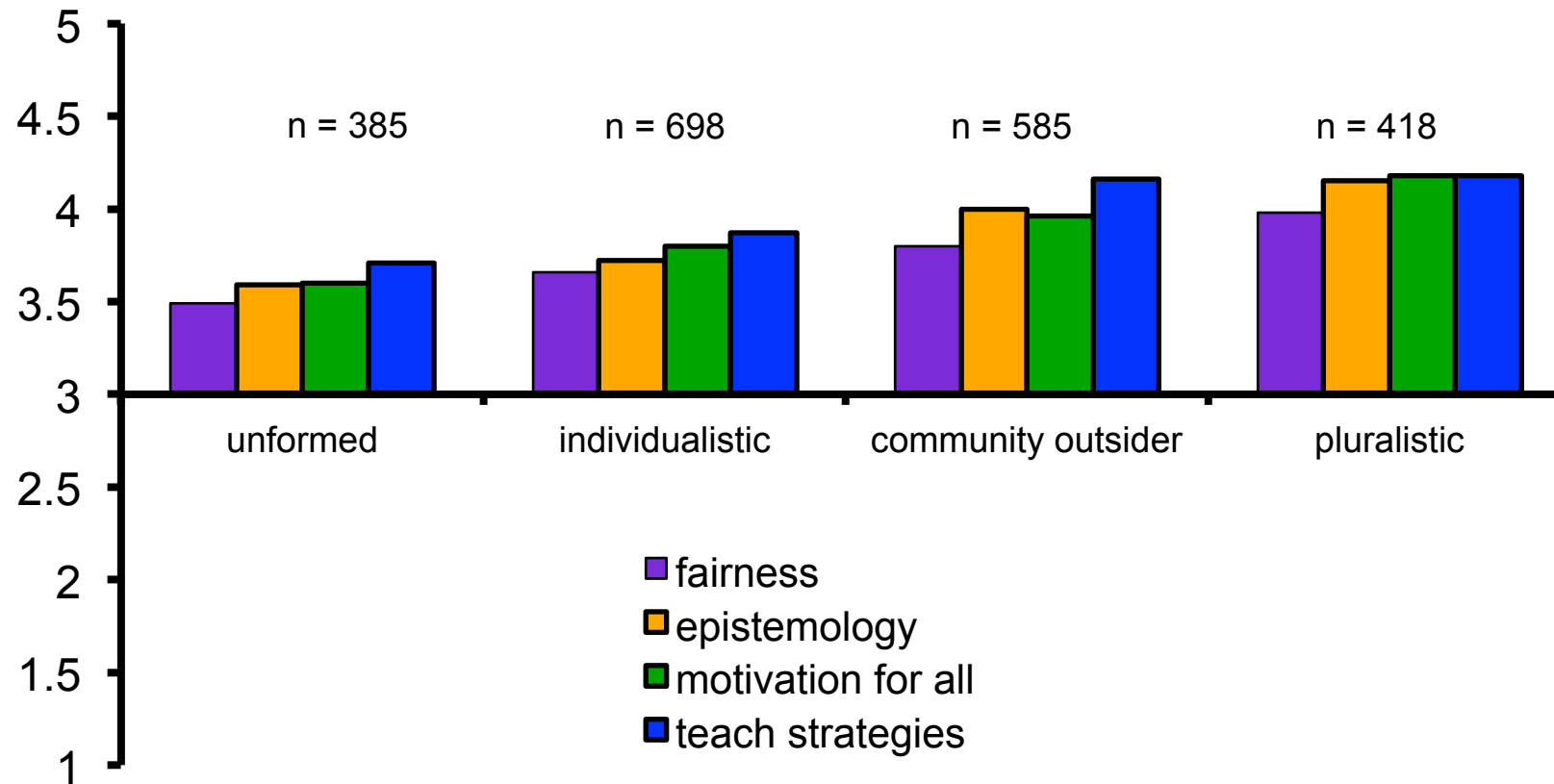
~schools teach the skills necessary for participation in civil discourse.

~educational policies reveal how and why individuals sustain or fail to sustain a commitment to justice.

Thorkildsen, Golant, & Cambray-Engstrom, 2008

Students' Ideal School Beliefs by Civil Identity Profile

Beliefs associated with each civil identity profile were significantly different from the others, $F_{(3, 2070)}$ = 8.49, p<.001, η^2 = .012, obs. power = .994. Ideal school beliefs also differed by age group such that youth in early adolescence reported less favorable beliefs than those in other age groups, $F_{(3, 2070)}$ = 18.96, p<.001, η^2 = .027, obs. power = 1.00.
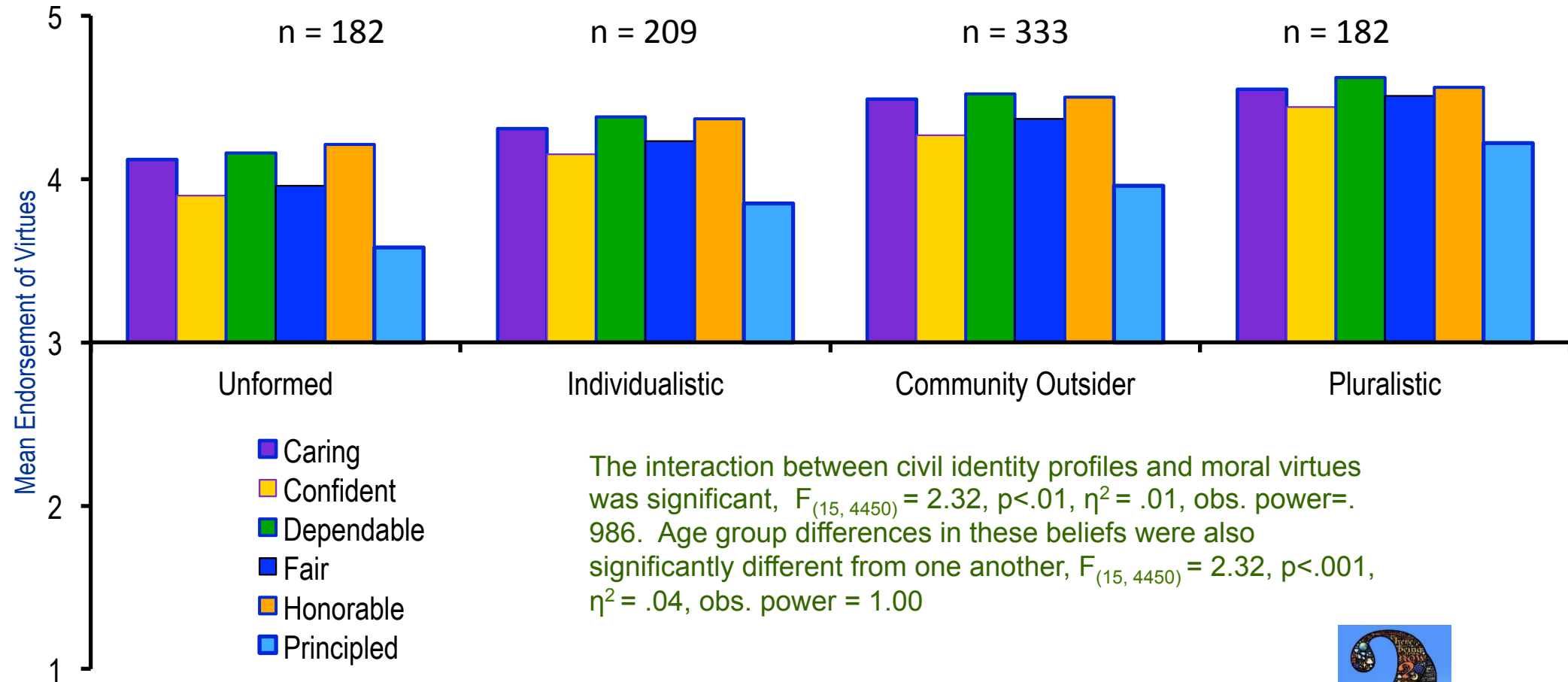
Personal motives that align with civil discourse are typically associated with those aligned with universal moral principles.

Civil virtues are enacted as basic human rights valued across communities and nationalities.

Coveted Moral Virtues by Civil Identity Profiles

The interaction between civil identity profiles and moral virtues was significant, $F_{(15, 4450)} = 2.32$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2 = .01$, obs. power=.986. Age group differences in these beliefs were also significantly different from one another, $F_{(15, 4450)} = 2.32$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .04$, obs. power = 1.00
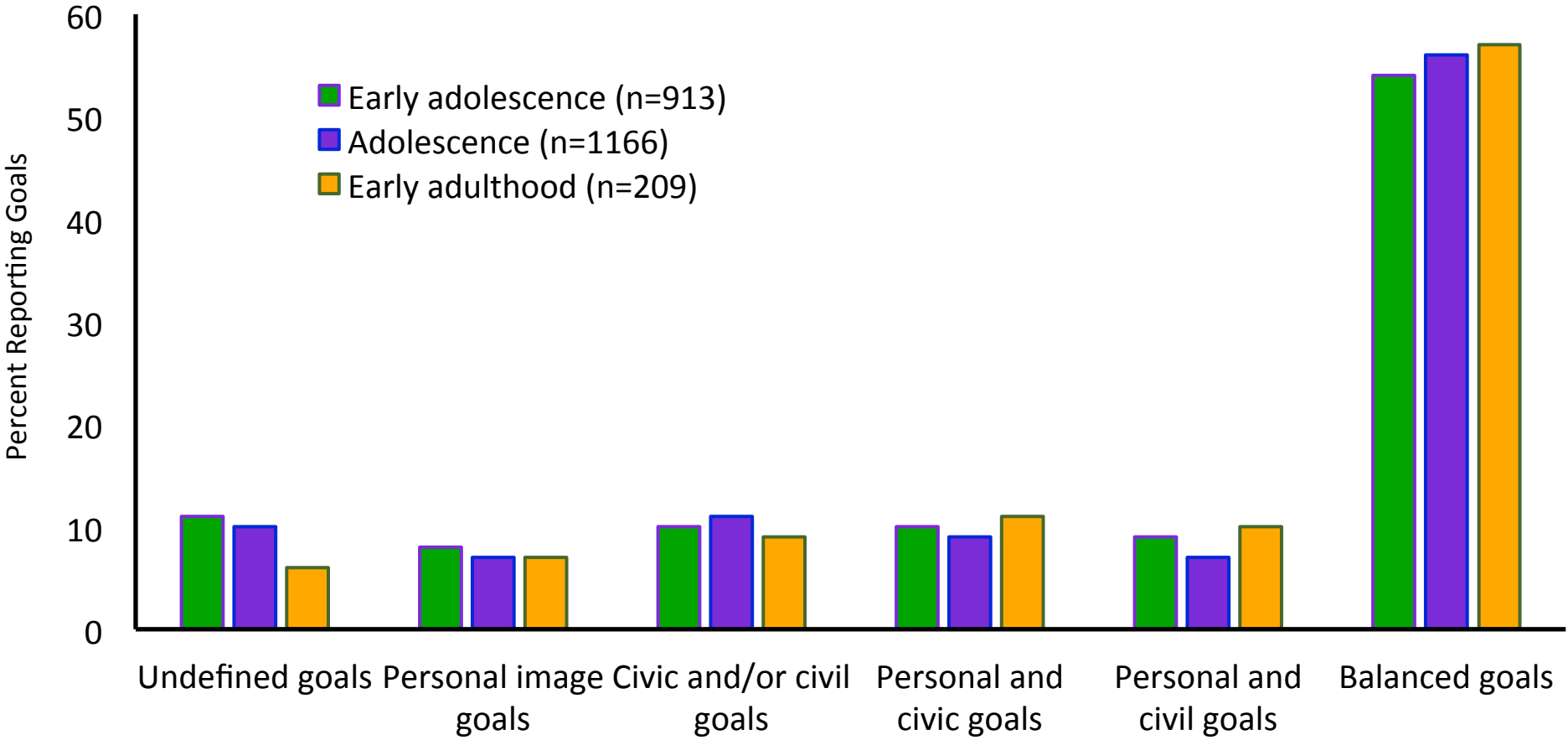
Balancing Life Goals
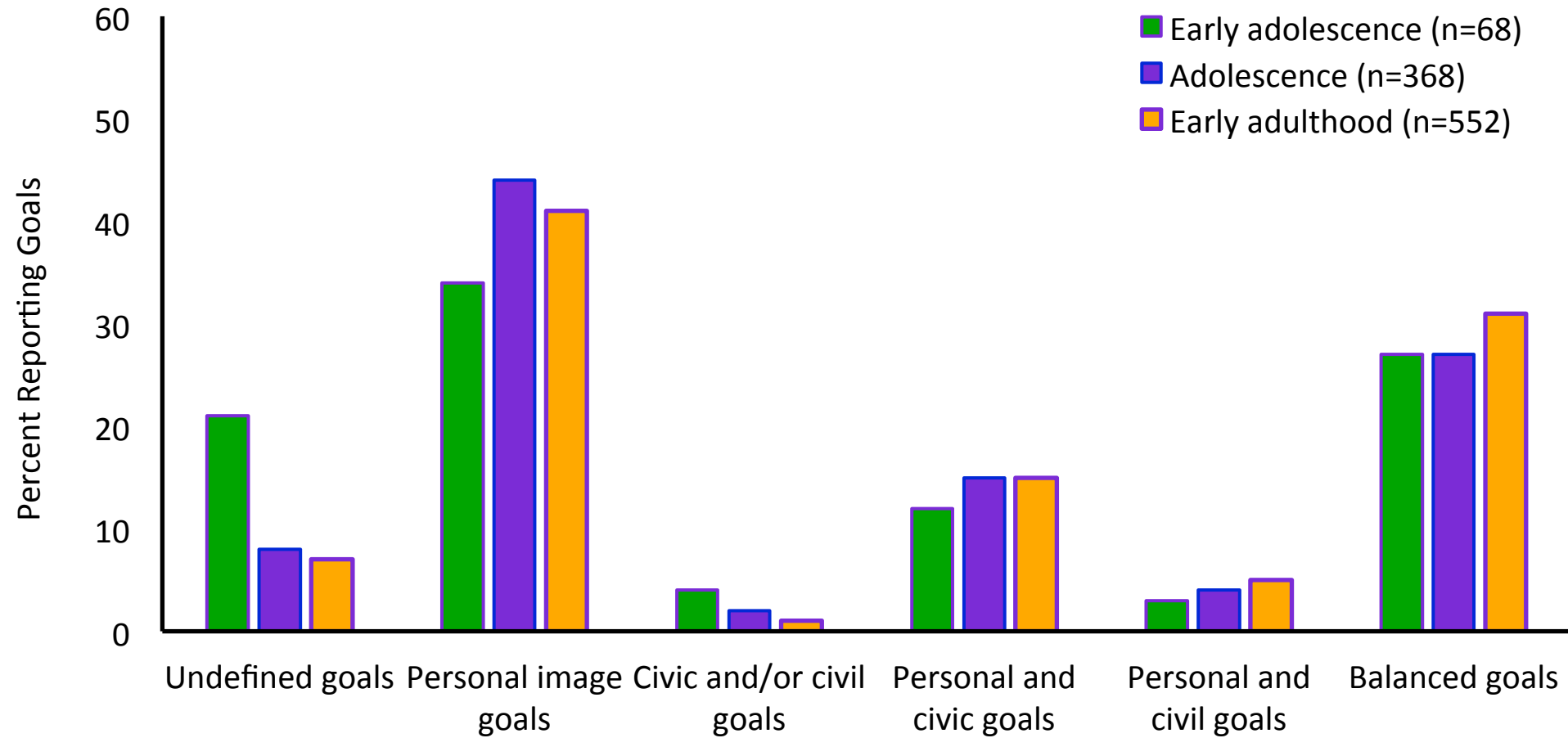
Keeping these tensions in mind, I have begun to ask how adolescents balance these competing agendas.

Continuing with our sport and Facebook projects, we asked how students respond to personal, civic, and civil goals.

How U.S. Adolescents Balance Their Involvement in Sports by Age Group

How U.S. Adolescents Balance Goals on Facebook by Age Group

Involvement in civil discourse requires a broader sense of identity than has been traditionally considered in schools-- one that includes an awareness of our dependence on relational ties, civil institutions, and personal virtues.

Take-Away Messages

Findings on how adolescents and young adults use their leisure time suggest that they <u>CAN</u> balance their life goals as they navigate the world of personal, civic, and civil discourse.

Not all youth are encouraged or expected to use these abilities.

Communities would be strengthened if adults and adolescents designed imaginative ways to use social media to promote particular causes and/or to advocate for human rights.

Involving youth in social governance has the added bonus of helping individuals find greater meaning in required schoolwork.

If done well, more youth can come to realize that everyone is continually expected to strengthen their intellectual abilities long after they leave formal schooling.

Thank you for listening!!!!!

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