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Spring 4-8-2022

## **Exploring Needs and Experiences of AAPI Faculty, Staff, and Students on US College Campuses: Leadership Communication, Sense of Belonging, and Campus Member Wellbeing**

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*Southern Methodist University*

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*Exploring Needs and Experiences  
of AAPI Faculty, Staff, and  
Students on US College Campuses:  
Leadership Communication, Sense  
of Belonging, and Campus Member  
Wellbeing*

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DR. PIYAWAN CHAROENSAP-KELLY

Southern Methodist University





*“In academia, or a professional setting, the racial issues are implicit. You cannot really articulate it, but you can feel how others are treated differently...”*

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# Research Background

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Where am I coming from?

- Originally from Thailand
- Joined SMU in August 2020
- Became part of SMU's newly found AAPI faculty and staff group (AAPASA)
- Proposed a research plan for assessing needs of SMU AAPI community to present to SMU administration



*My first PhD semester*



**Baruch** | **CU**  
COLLEGE | **NY**

 CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
**FULLERTON**

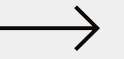
**OU**

**SMU**<sup>®</sup>



# Cross-University Collaboration

- 
1. Baruch College, CUNY, New York
  2. California State University, Fullerton
  3. Oakland University, Michigan
  4. Southern Methodist University, Texas



# Overview

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- What research are we doing?
- What have we found so far?
- What are takeaways?



# Research *Goals*

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## UNDERSTAND

Experiences and needs of Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders (AAAPI) in US higher education

## IDENTIFY

Individual, peer, and institutional factors relevant to enhancing AAAPI experiences

## INFORM

University administrators of ways to support AAAPI and potentially other marginalized groups



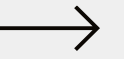
# Research *Methodology*

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- Online survey
- Nov 2021 – Mar 2022
- 508 campus members across the USA who identify as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander (AAAPI)
  - Students (34%)
  - Staff (24%)
  - Faculty (23%)
  - Alumni (14%), and
  - Mixed group (7%)

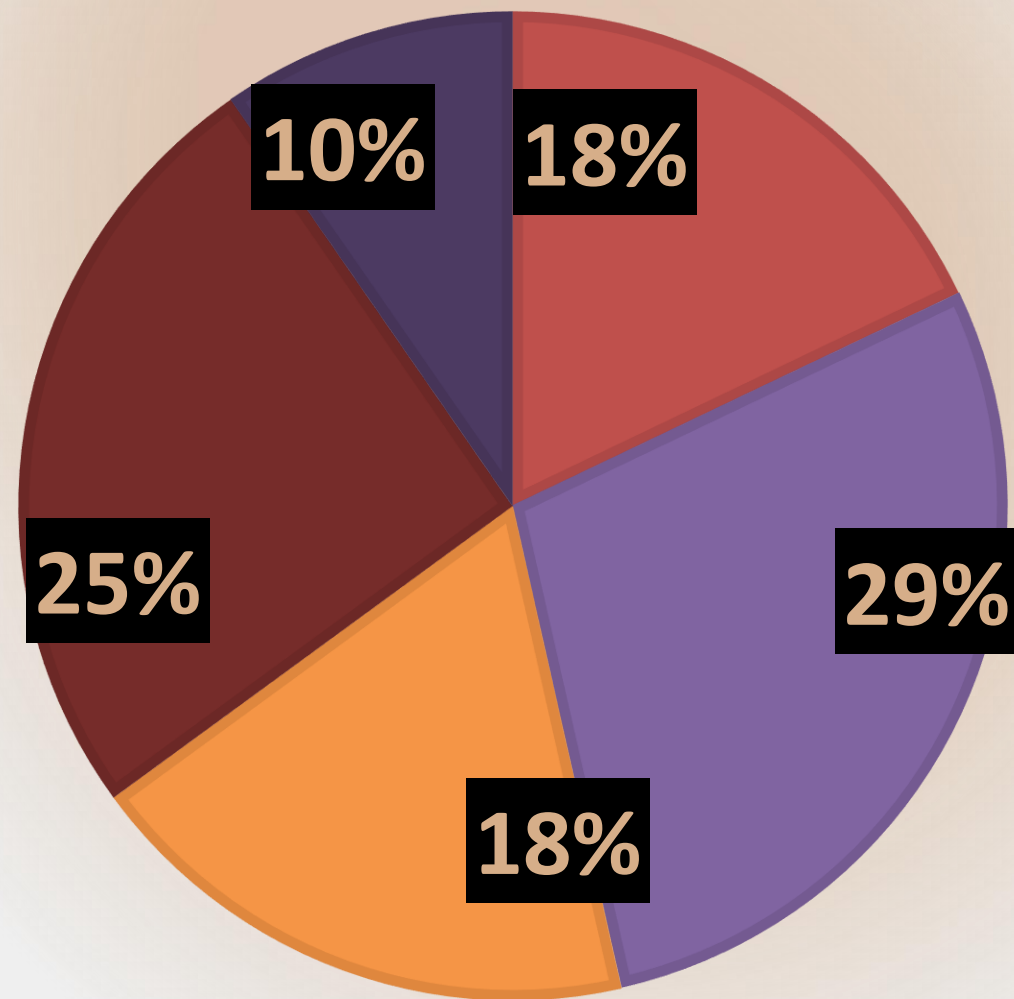


# Participants



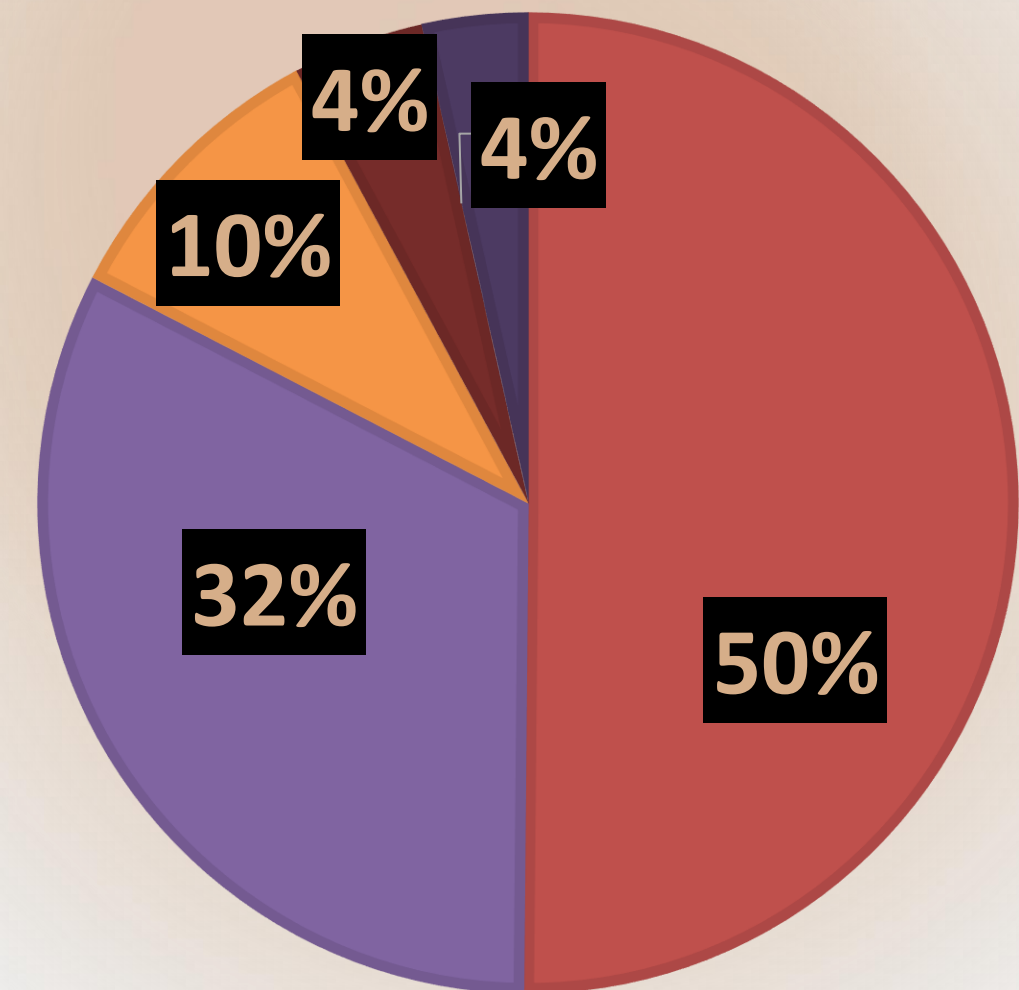
## UNIVERSITY

■ Baruch ■ CSUF ■ OU ■ SMU ■ Others



## FAMILY ORIGIN

■ East Asia ■ Southeast Asia  
■ South Asia ■ Mixed





# Participants

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## Age

Average: 29.14  
Range: 18-68

## Gender

Female: 51%  
Male: 42%  
Others: 7%

## Length of Membership

< 1 year: 5%  
1-2 years: 21%  
3-4 years: 32%  
5-6 years: 14%  
7-8 years: 13%  
9 years+: 8%

# General Racism

Perceived racial insensitivity or negative comments regarding one's ethnicity from faculty, staff, or students

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*"I have experienced racial insensitivity from faculty."*



# Perpetual Foreigner Racism

The stereotypical perception that an ethnic minority will always be seen as foreign in the US

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*"You are told that you speak English so well."*



Across universities, participants experienced *perpetual foreigner racism* at a significantly higher rate than *general racism*.

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PFR  $m = 3.03$ ,  $sd = .96$ ; GR  $m = 2.71$ ,  $sd = .92$ ,  
 $t = -9.15$ ,  $df = 49$ ,  $p < .001$

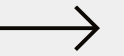




Student participants perceived  
*perpetual foreigner racism*  
significantly more than those in  
the mixed group.

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Students:  $m = 3.10$ ,  $sd = .92$ ; mixed group:  $m = 2.49$ ,  $sd = 1.10$ ;  $F(3, 422) = 3.90$ ,  $p = .009$



# Recent Racist Incidents

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*“The most recent incident was last year when someone was passing by me on campus and coughed close to me and muttered COVID under his breath.” -  
**Chinese-American Student***

*“...My director told me to not put my name on a document supporting new AAPI efforts for fear of ‘backlash’.” – **Korean-American Student/ Staff***

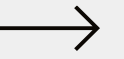


# Perpetual Foreigner Racism

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*“I feel as though my accomplishments are boiled down to the fact that I am Asian-American; my hard work and commitment is being diminished and my success is attributed to nothing but my race.”*

# What variables predict *sense of belonging* and *psychological distress*?



Which is the strongest predictor?



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## INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

- Leadership Communication
- Climate of Respect
- AAPI Representation



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## AAAPI COMMUNITY FACTOR

- Community Resilience  
(support within AAPI community)

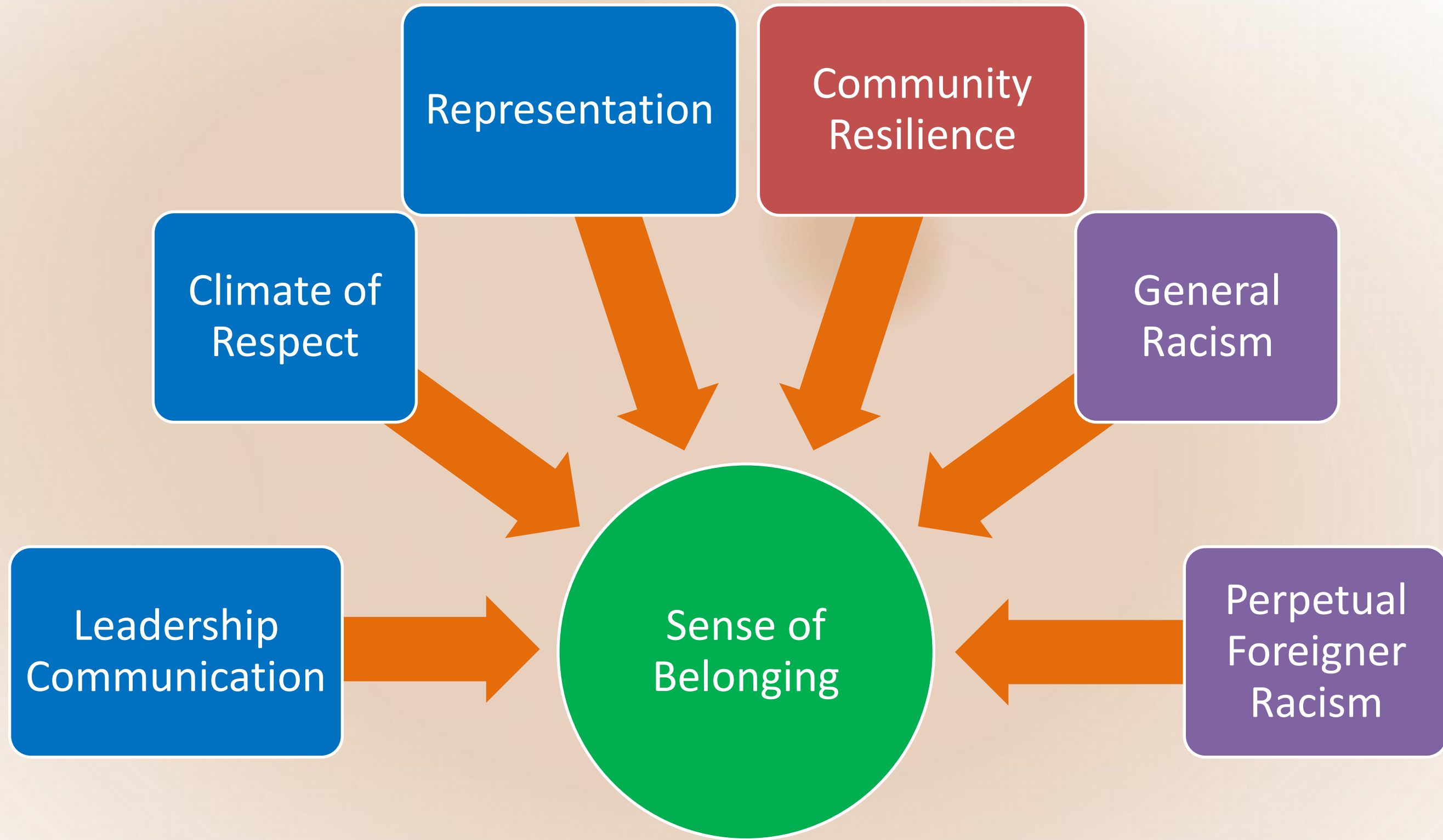


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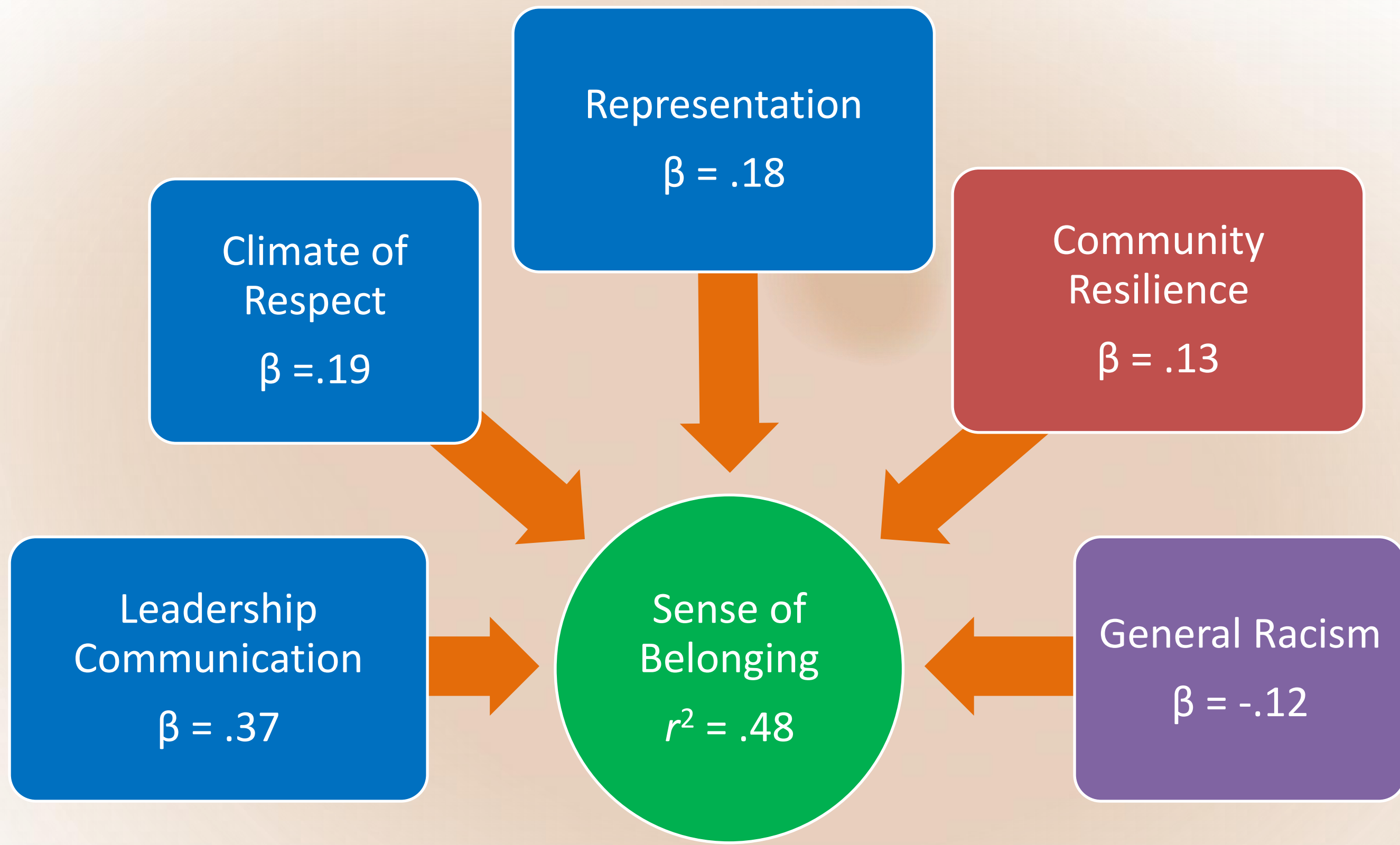
## INDIVIDUAL FACTORS (Perceived Racism)

- General racism
- Perpetual foreigner racism



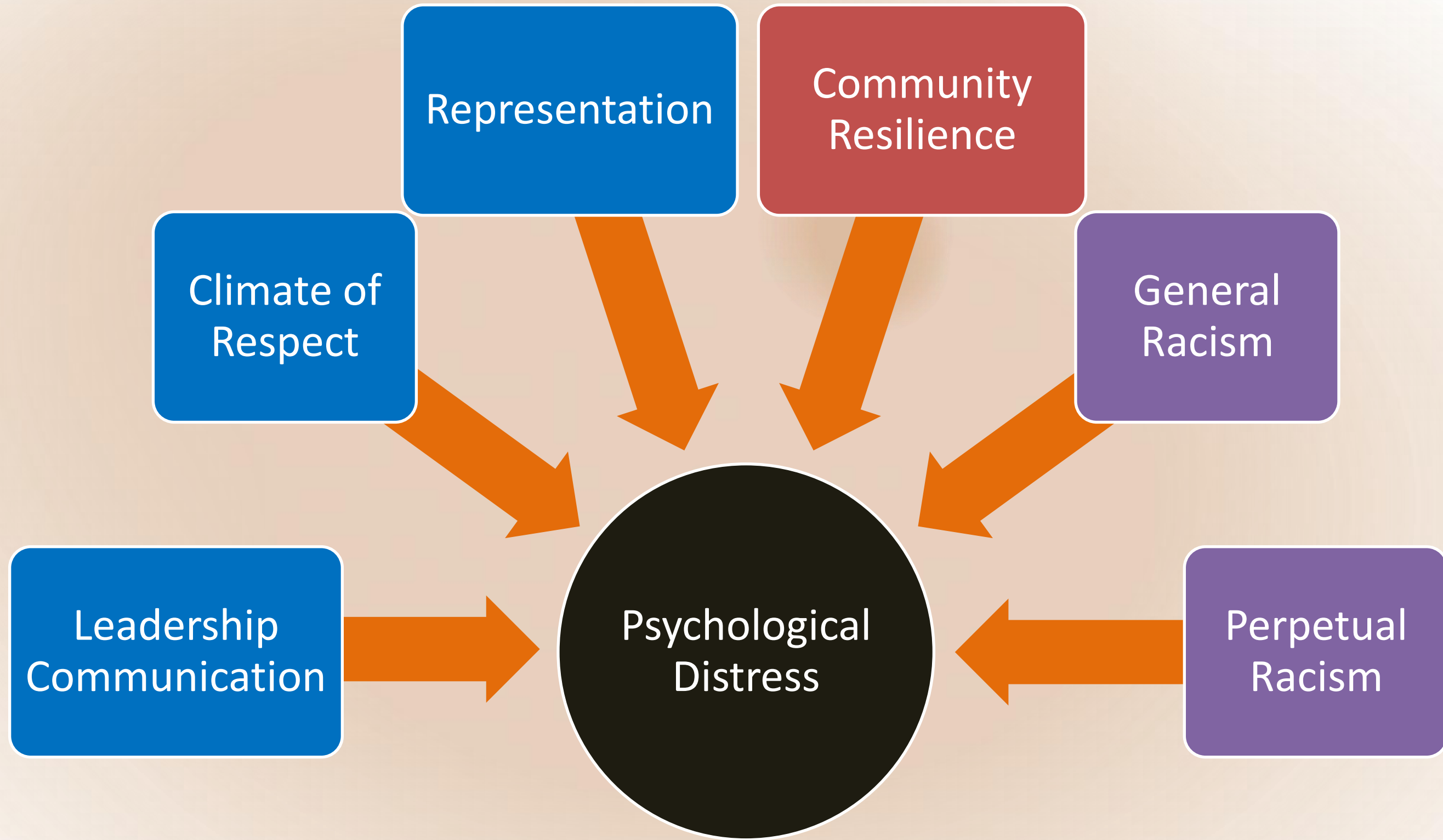


 Institutional    community    individual

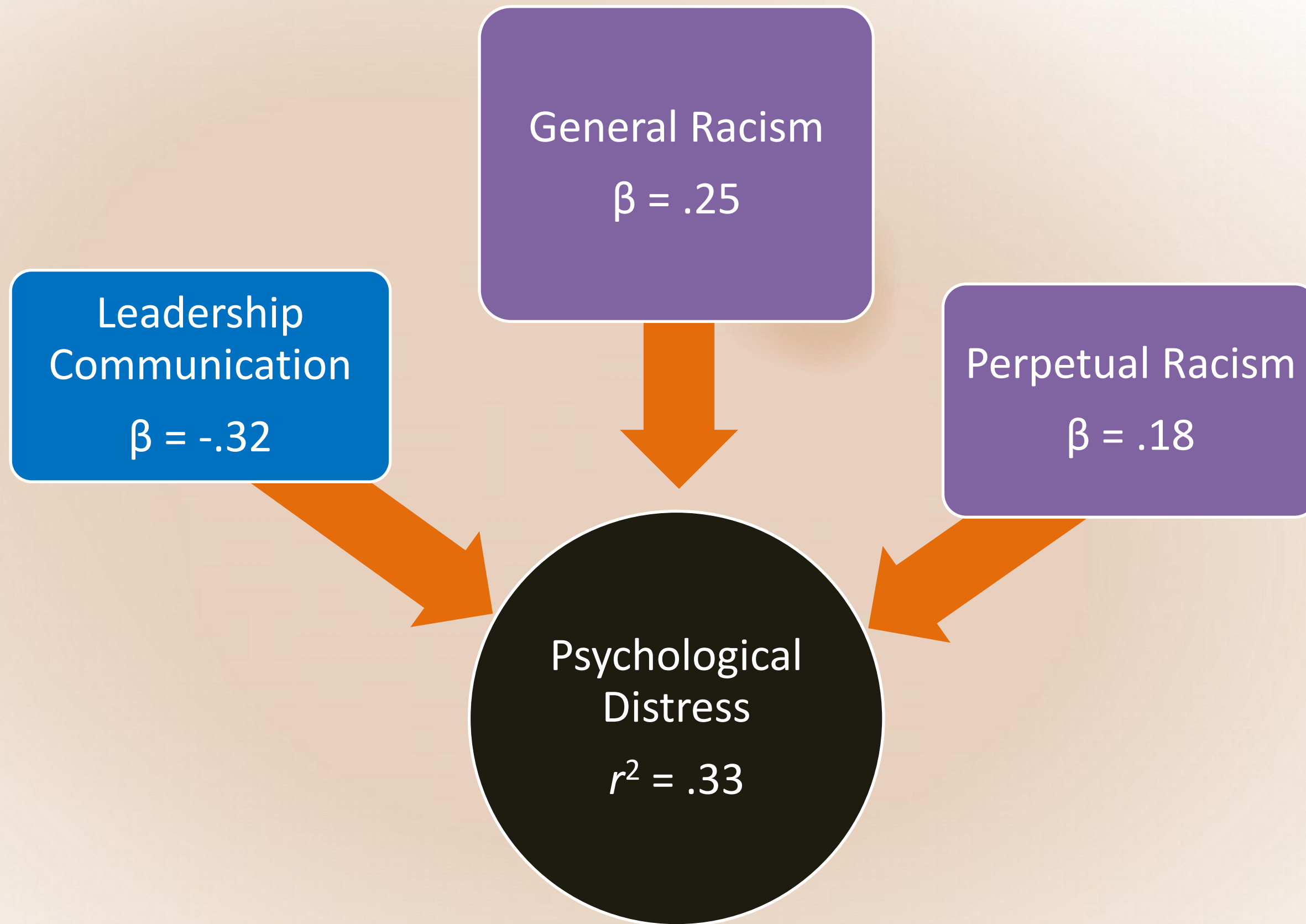


$F(6, 379) = 57.81, p < .001, r^2 = .48$

 Institutional  
 community  
 individual



 Institutional     community     individual



 Institutional  community  individual

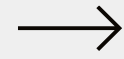
$$F(6, 378) = 31.12, p < .001, r^2 = .33$$





*Leadership communication* is the most significant predictor of higher sense of belonging as well as lower psychological distress.

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# What has your university done well?

- Acknowledgment of the impact of the pandemic on the AAPI community
- Start of support groups





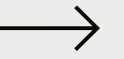
# What should be *improved*?

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- Provide more formal support
- Listen to the AAPII community







# Participant Suggestions

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*“Develop an Asian American Studies program, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Studies program, AAPI student resource center, and AAPI-specific retention and scholarship programs. Treat Asian international students as human beings instead of as sources of tuition and high test scores. Recruit and retain AAPI faculty and staff at all levels, including at the administrative and executive levels.”*



# Takeaways

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**01**

Recognize perpetual  
foreigner racism and its  
impacts.

**02**

Leadership communication is  
key to enhancing sense of  
belonging and mental health.

**03**

Tangible support from  
administration and  
collaboration with the  
community is critical.





*“In academia, or a professional setting, the racial issues are implicit. You cannot really articulate it, but you can feel how others are treated differently... It’s the systematic oppression.”*

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