



# Strong African American Families Program (SAAF): The Science and Implementation Approach

Gene Brody, PhD  
Christina Grange, PhD



NIDA Blending Addiction and Science  
Treatments Conference  
June 3, 2008



# SAAF's Goal

---

To build on the strengths of African American families that make their children less likely to get involved in problems, particularly alcohol and substance use, that face today's youth.

# History of the Center

---

- **1988**
  - Longitudinal, developmental research with rural African American families launched
- **2000**
  - Translation research: “If you want to understand something, try to change it.”
  - The Strong African American Families Program
- **2004**
  - Genetics × Environment Initiative
    - Research consortium developed
      - Philibert, Beach, Todorov, and Brody
    - Protocol for collecting genetic data from rural African Americans developed
    - Pilot study conducted

# Overview of Rural African Americans in the South

---

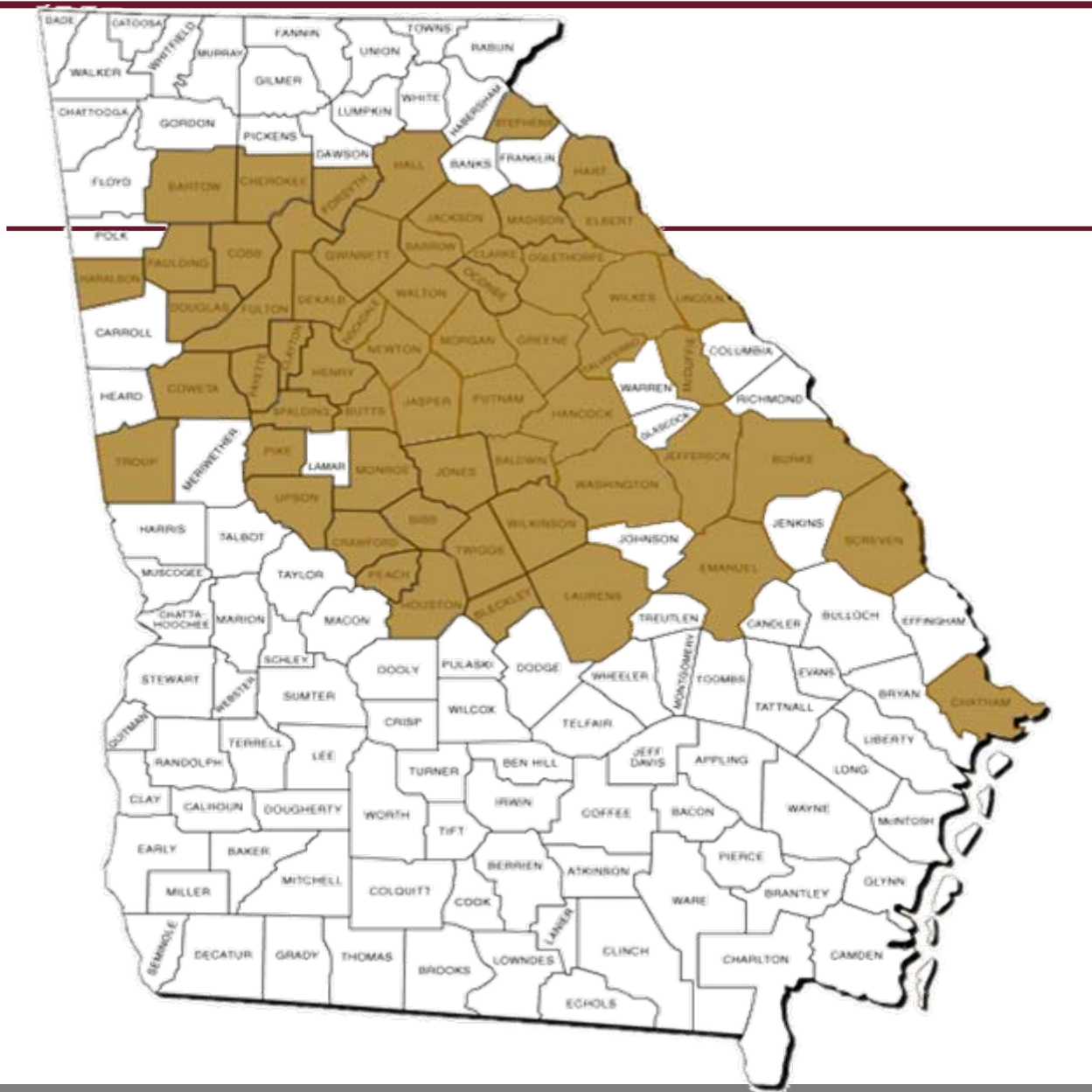
- **African American population: 49%**
  - Living in poverty: 29%, compared to 17% of overall population
  - Mean weekly wage: \$471
  - Median annual household income: \$21,245
  - Adults with < high school education: 45%
  - Single-woman-headed families: 48%
  - Unemployment
    - Men, 34%; women, 41%

# Overview of Rural African Americans in the South

---

- **Healthcare**

- 1 hospital per county in 20 counties
- No hospital in 2 counties



# Community Partnerships

---

- Community liaisons
- Community ambassadors
- Partnerships with
  - Schools
  - Faith-based organizations
  - Cooperative Extension Services

---

# A Randomized Prevention Trial of The Strong African American Families Program (SAAF)

# The Strong African American Families Program (SAAF)

- **Based on over a decade of research**
  - rural African American children
  - longitudinal pathways
    - competence
    - psychological adjustment
    - use of alcohol and other substances

# The Strong African American Families Program (SAAF)

- **Data from this research was used to:**
  - Identify prevention targets
  - Design prevention programs
  - Inform evaluation of SAAF

# SAAF Intervention: Implementation and Fidelity

- **Weekly meetings**
  - 7 consecutive weeks
  - at community facilities
  - two separate, concurrent, 1-hr sessions
    - parents
    - youth
  - joint parent-youth session, 1 hr
  - 14 hrs of prevention training provided

# Randomized Prevention Trial

---

- **667 African American families**
  - mothers
  - 11-year-olds
- **from rural Georgia**
- **369 participant families**
- **298 control families**

# Randomized Prevention Trial

---

- **Assessments**
  - Pretest
  - Posttest
    - 3 months after intervention ends
  - Follow-up
    - 24 months after intervention ends
  - Data collection
    - in-home using laptop computers

# How is SAAF Unique?

---

- Highlights strengths of African American families and communities
- Celebrates the diversity of African American families
- Builds Black Pride
- Grounded in 10 years of research with African American families

# Elements of SAAF Implementation

---

- Funding
- Facilitators
- Location
- Recruitment
- Childcare
- Transportation
- Incentives
- Meals or Snacks
- Scheduling
- Registration and Fees
- Equipment
- Certificates

# Youth Creed

---



We are strong, young African  
Americans.



We are making good decisions so we  
reach our goals.

# Youth Session Goals (1-4)

---

1. Visualize dreams for the future
2. Understand the importance of avoiding drug use
3. Understand normal development and learn how to deal with temptation for early sex
4. Identify risky situations and how to deal with pressures and temptations

# Youth Session Goals (5-7)

---

5. Learn specific steps for handling peer pressure and understand concerns of parents/caregivers
6. Learn skills for acting assertively in difficult situations
7. Understand the qualities of good friends and SAAF Session review

# Youth Activity Demonstration

---

Session 5 – Peer Pressure Resistance

**Road Signs and Situation Cards**

Session 5 – Family Communication &  
Relationship Quality

**Why Parents/Caregivers Do the  
Things They Do**

# Parent Creed

---



African American parents and caregivers  
are strong and caring.

We show love and set limits.

We are helping our children become  
responsible young adults.

# Parent Session Goals (1-3)

---

1. Identify goals for youth and how best to support them as they become more independent
2. Understand the value of consistently enforcing household rules according to severity of behavior
3. Clarify the importance of everyday routines and encouragement of good behavior

# Parent Session Goals (4-7)

---

4. Learn ways to help youth succeed in school
5. Understand the prevalence of risk and how to protect against risk involvement
6. Discuss ways to handle discrimination and build positive racial pride
7. Focus on
  - a. Maintaining closeness as youth grow
  - b. Using community resources to raise strong youth

# Parent Activity Demonstration

---

## Session 6 – Racial Socialization **Matching Views to Actions**

# Family Creed

---

African-American families care about each other and have fun together.

We are making a difference in the world.



# Family Session Goals (1-3)

---

1. Focus on building positive relationships and enhancing parental involvement
2. Develop a shared understanding of family rules and values
3. Understand how to increase communication about sex and understand stress that family members face

# Family Session Goals (4-7)

---

4. Identify ways to cope with stress and work toward goals
5. Develop a family plan for handling temptation and peer pressure
6. Discuss potential situations involving racism and identify strengths of African American families
7. Work to understand family strengths by creating a family tree

# Family Activity Demonstration

---

Session 6 – Racial Socialization  
**Family Discussion on Difficult  
Situations**

# Who Can Implement SAAF?

---

- ✓ Schools
- ✓ Churches
- ✓ Youth groups
- ✓ Family agencies
- ✓ Community groups that work with families

# Who Can Implement SAAF?

---

## Primary Qualifications

- Experience working with youth & families
- Completed post-secondary education (Associate's or Bachelor's degree, or technical training)
- Ability to adopt a strength-based orientation
- Comfort discussing race-related issues and ability to help others feel comfortable

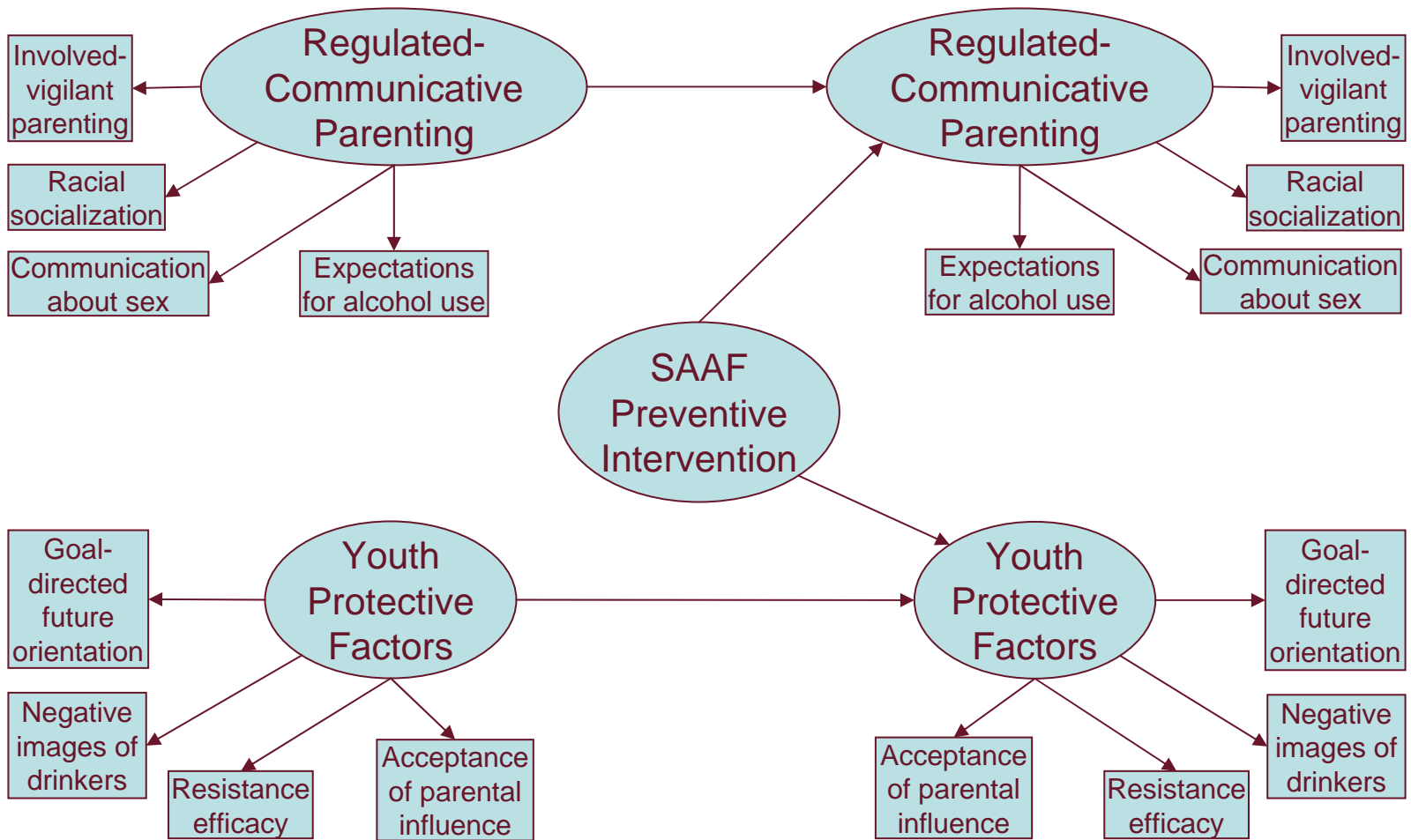
# Who Can Benefit From SAAF?

---

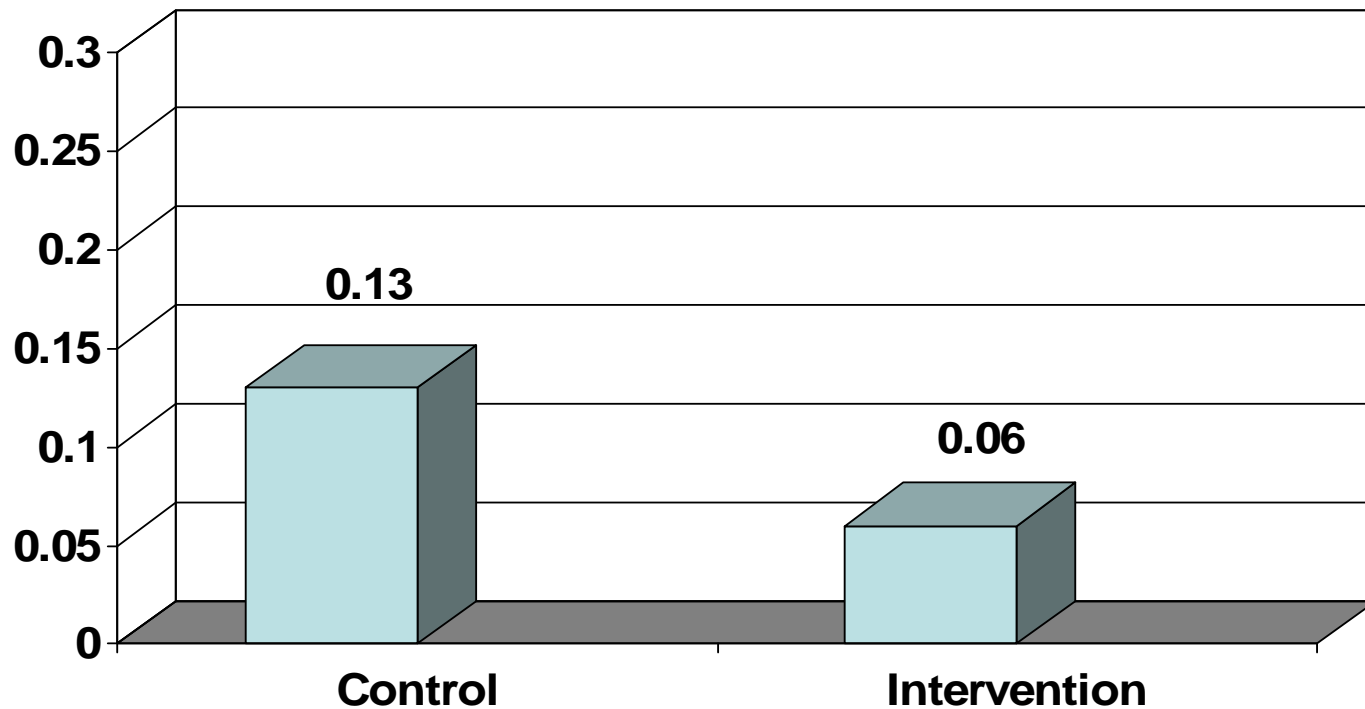
- Families with African American or mixed-ethnicity children
- Single-parent families
- Two-parent families
- Blended families
- Foster families
- Families with grandparents as caregivers

Pretest

Posttest

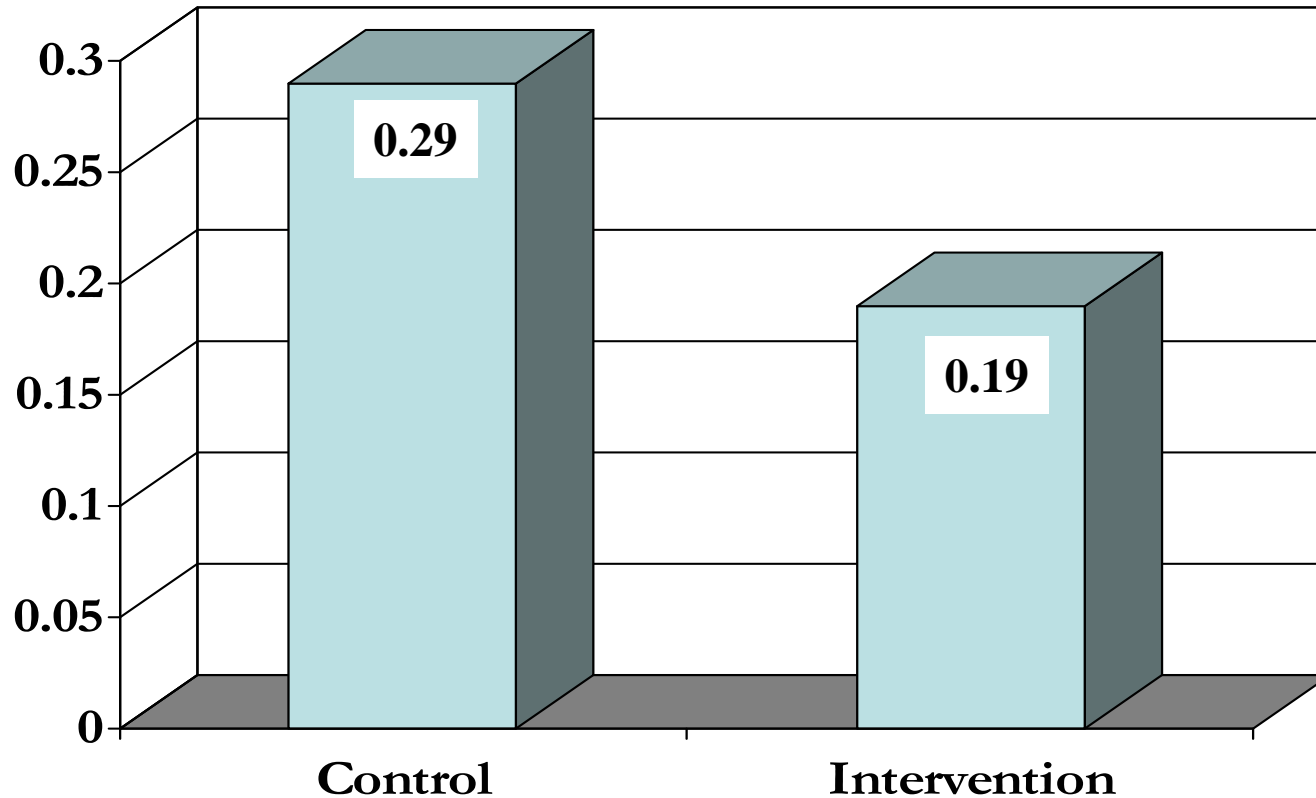


# New User Proportions for Alcohol Use at Posttest by Experimental Condition



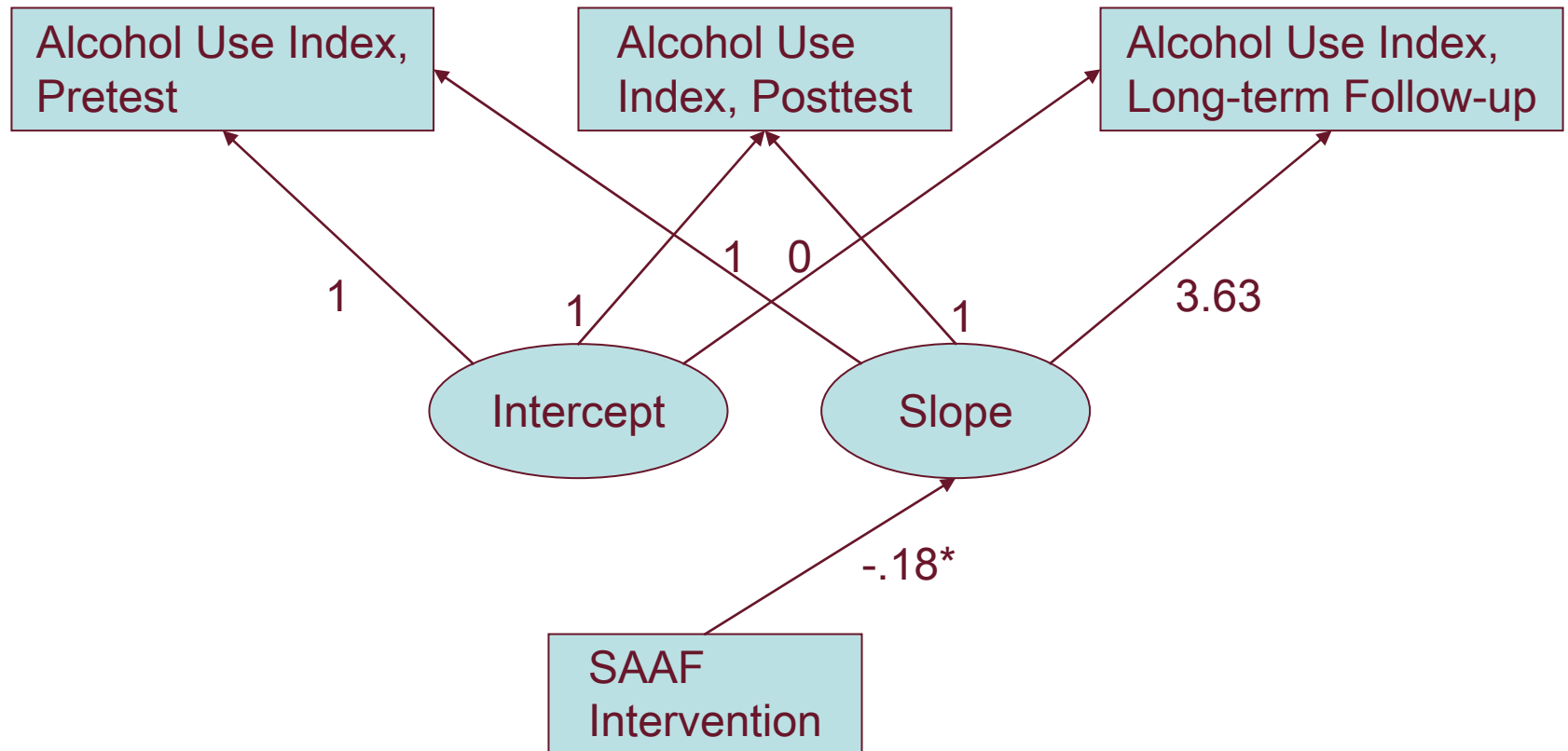
Z-score for testing proportions: 2.23 with  $p < .05$ . Relative reduction rate: 56.41

## New User Proportions for Alcohol Use at Long-term Follow-up by Experimental Condition



Z-score for testing proportions: 2.16 with  $p < .05$ . Relative reduction rate: 36.93

# Conditional Growth Curve Models, Alcohol Use



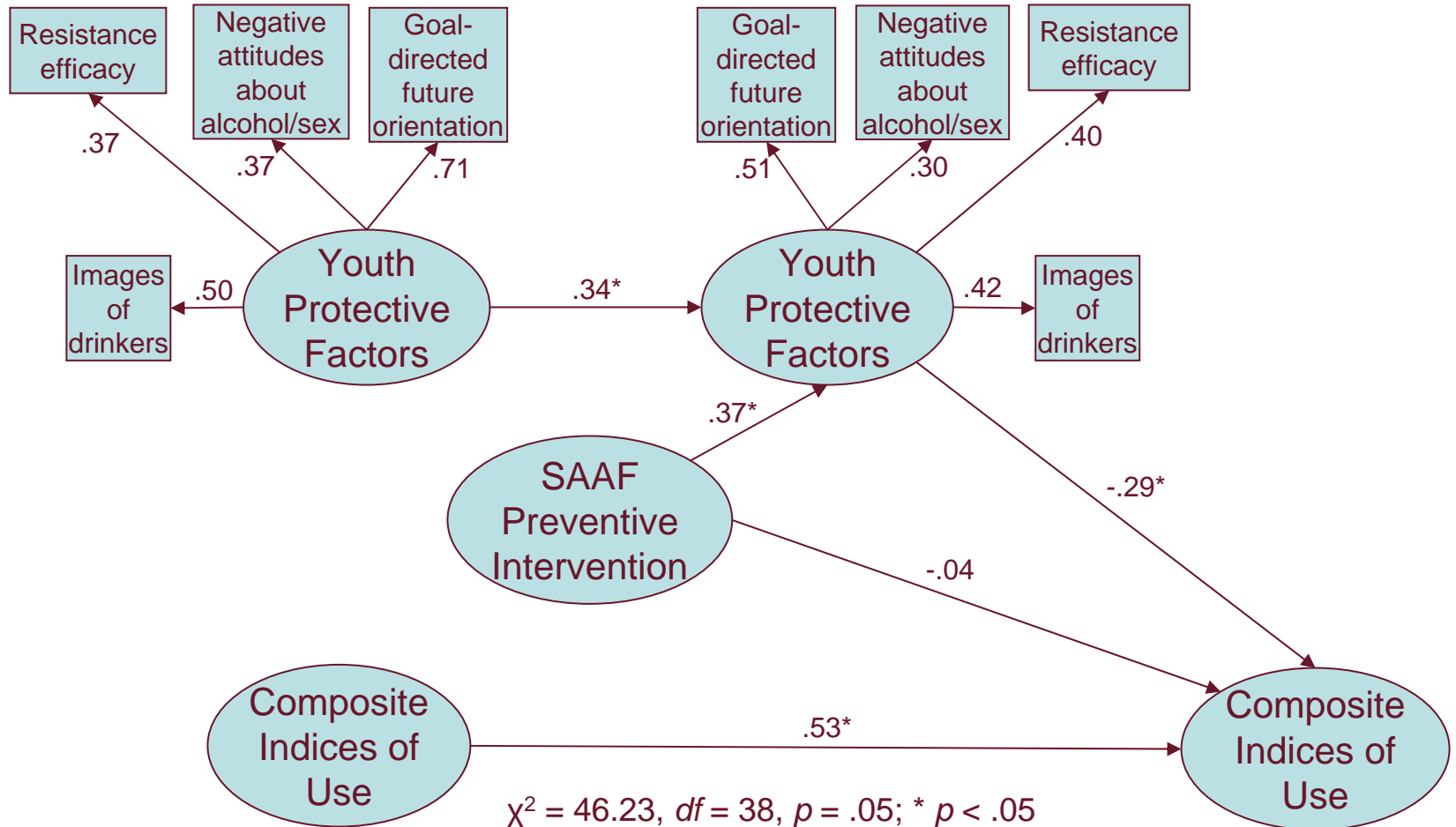
\* $p < .05$

# SEM Analysis

Long-Term Follow-Up

Pretest

Posttest



# Other Findings

---

- Do SAAF effects endure into high school years?
- What other outcomes are affected by participating in SAAF?
- Does participation in SAAF ameliorate genetic risk for substance use?

# Closing

---

- CFR's commitment to dissemination
- Question/Answer
- For additional information contact –  
cgrange@uga.edu  
(706) 425-3006