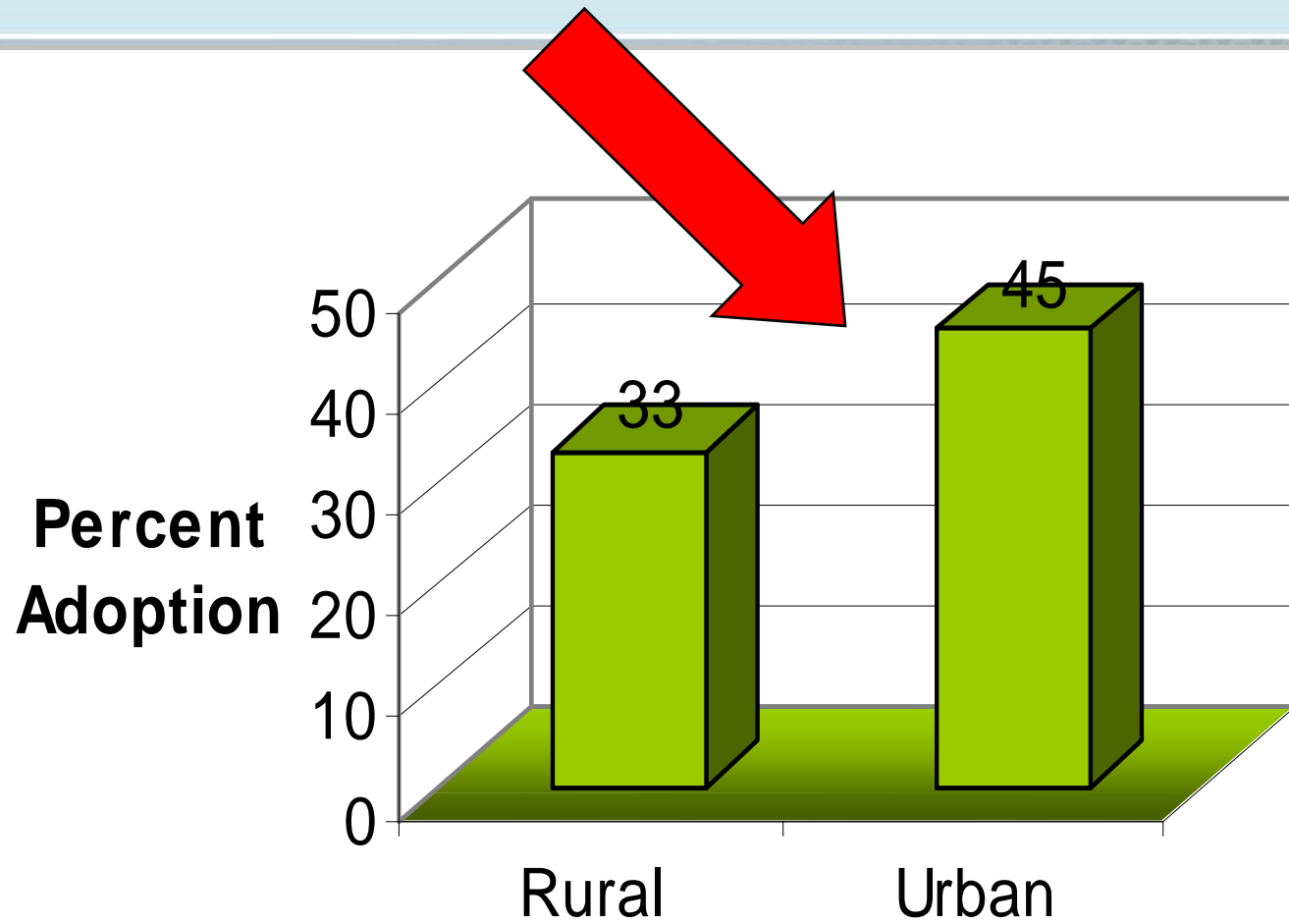


Closing the Rural Broadband Gap: Rural Broadband Mythbusters

**Robert LaRose, Ph.D., Michigan
State University
www.msu.edu/~larose/ruralbb**

The Broadband Internet Gap



Source: Pew Internet, 2005

The Problem

- Low household density
- Public access is limited
- Limited competition
- Rural technology solutions needed
- Rural broadband myths



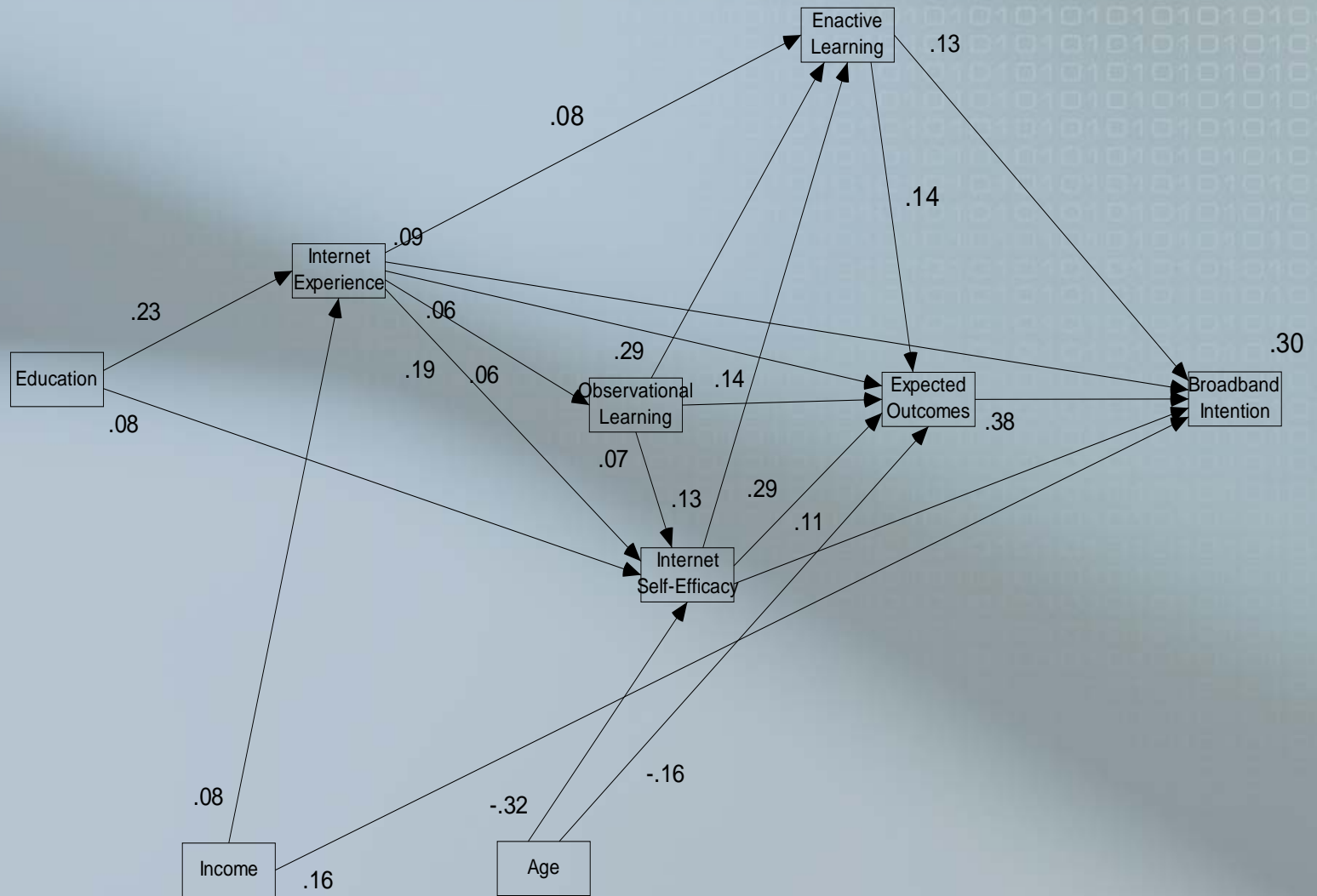
Rural Broadband Myths

- 1. Demography is destiny
 - Too old, uneducated, poor –GAO, 2006
- 2. Build it and they will come
 - Infrastructure investment is the answer
 - Let them use the library
- 3. The Digital Divide Is Natural
 - Broadband opens a new divide
- 4. Online Utopia
 - Online socializing builds social capital
 - Strengthens community attachment
 - Builds the economy

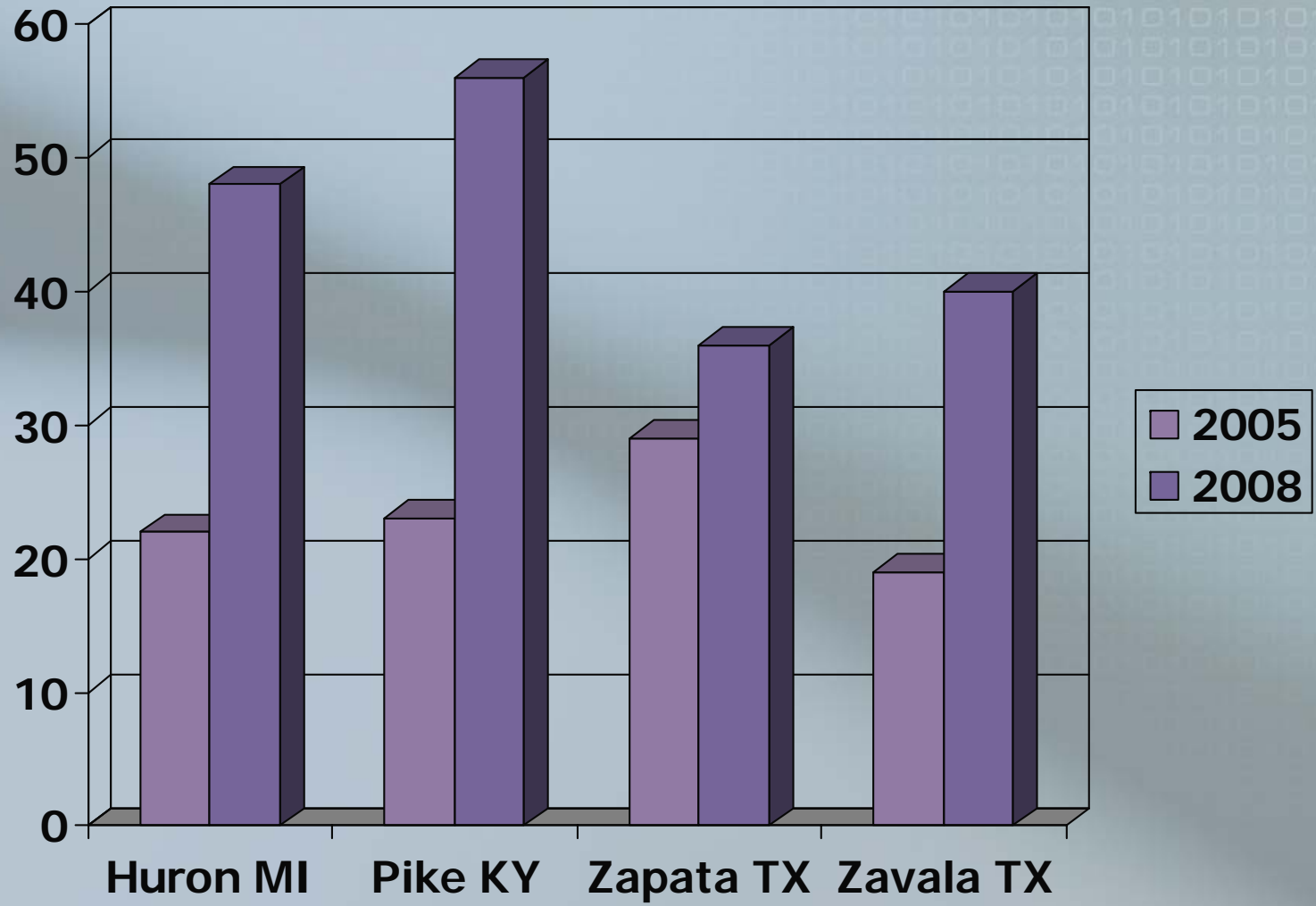
Research Methods

- “Natural” field experiment
 - USDA funded
- RUS- funded broadband grants
- Pre-post surveys of households
- Pretest in spring 2005
 - Huron County, MI
 - Pike County, KY
 - Zapata & Zavala County, TX
- Posttest in spring 2008

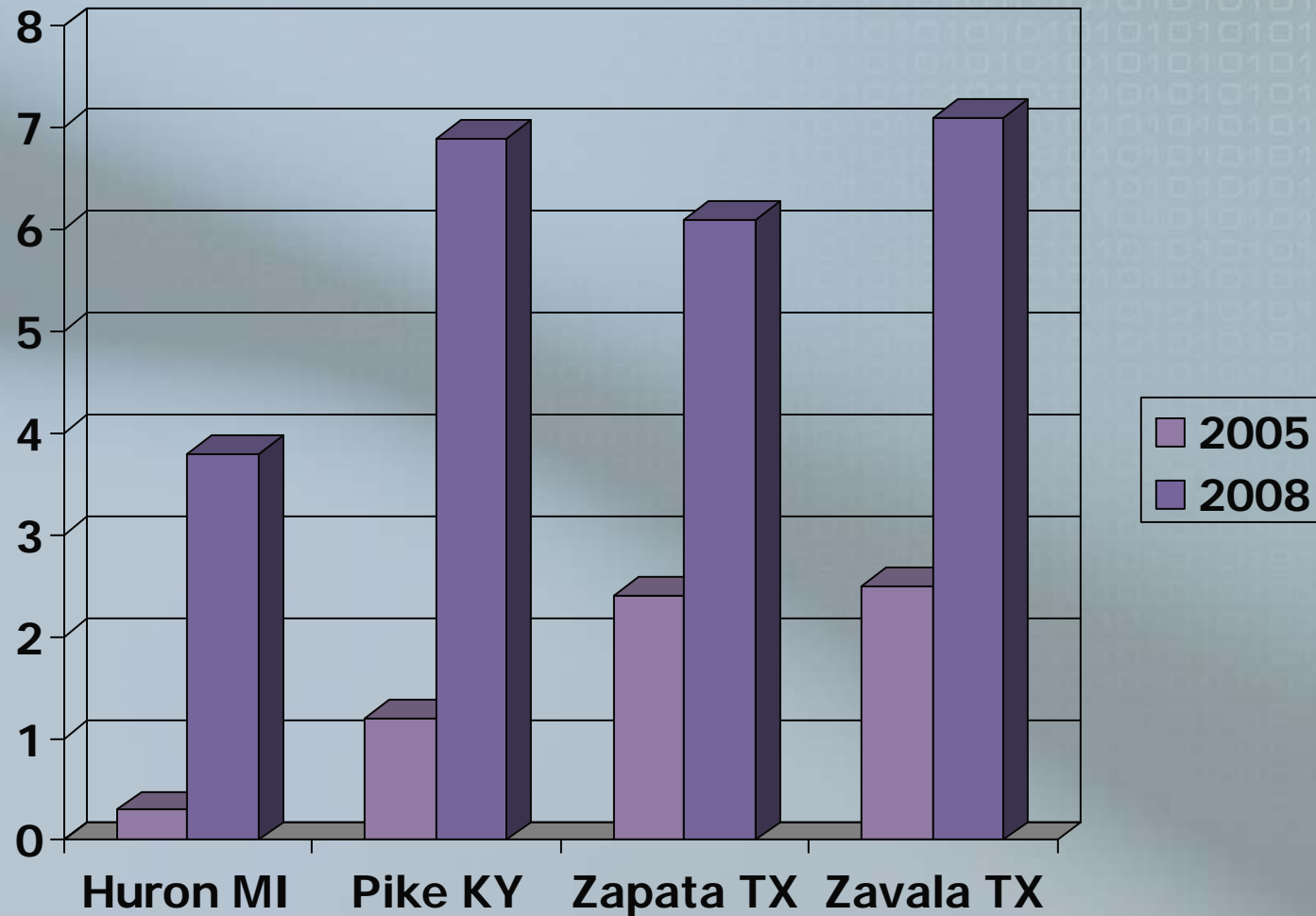
Myth 1: Demography Is Destiny



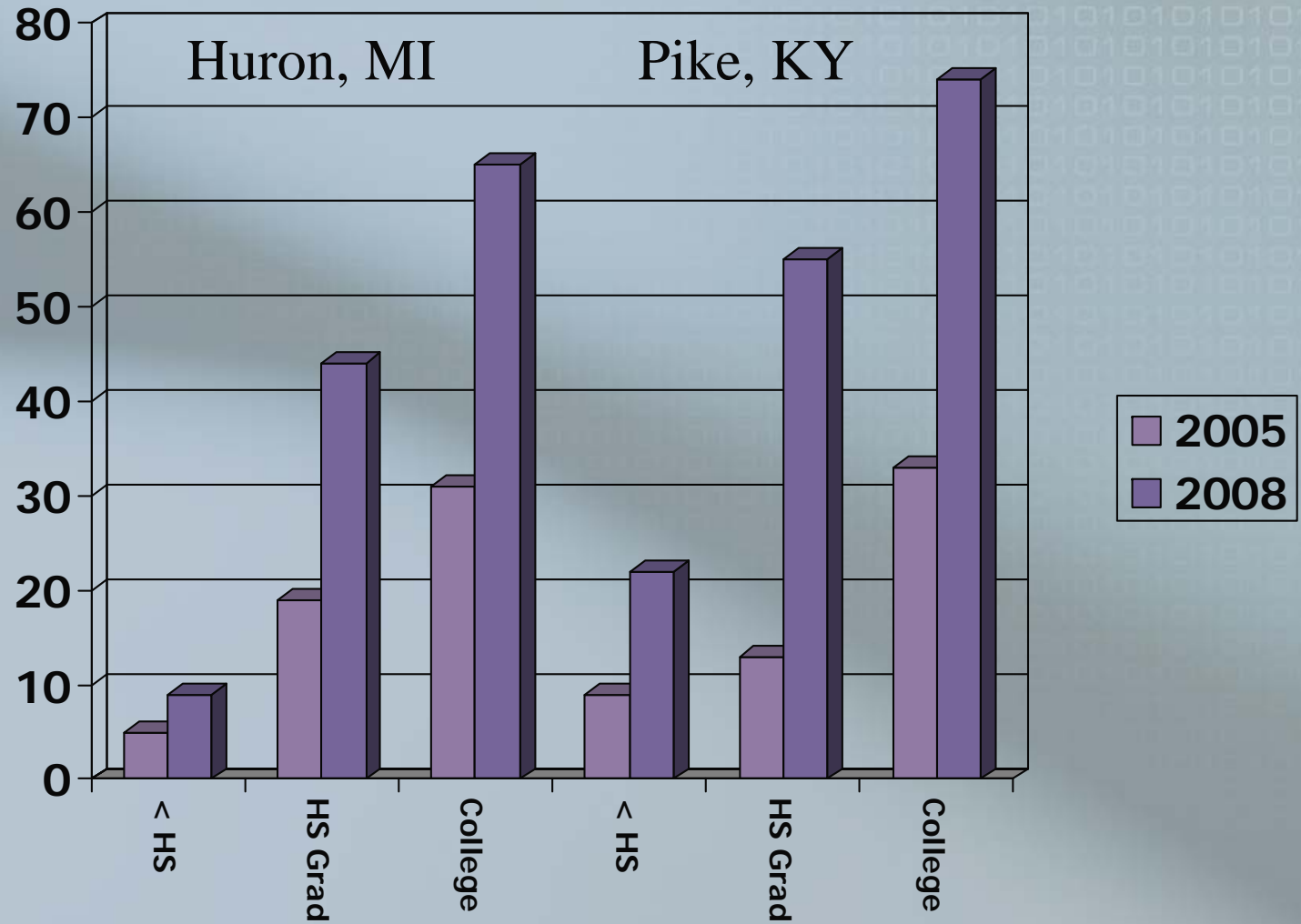
Myth 2: Build It and They Will Come: Home Broadband Penetration



Myth 2: Build It and They Will Come: Library Broadband Usage



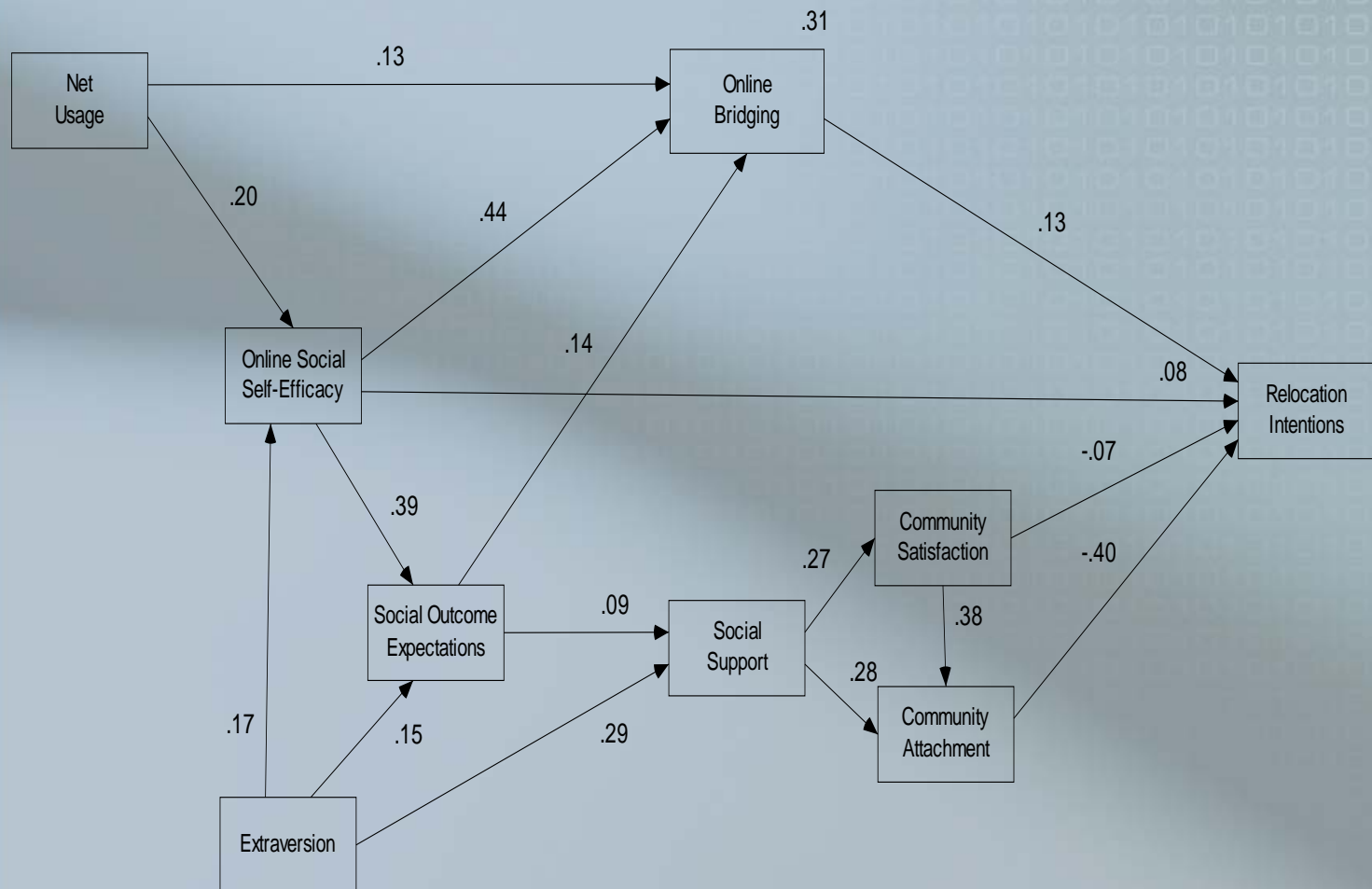
Myth 3: Digital Divide Is Natural: Home BB Penetration



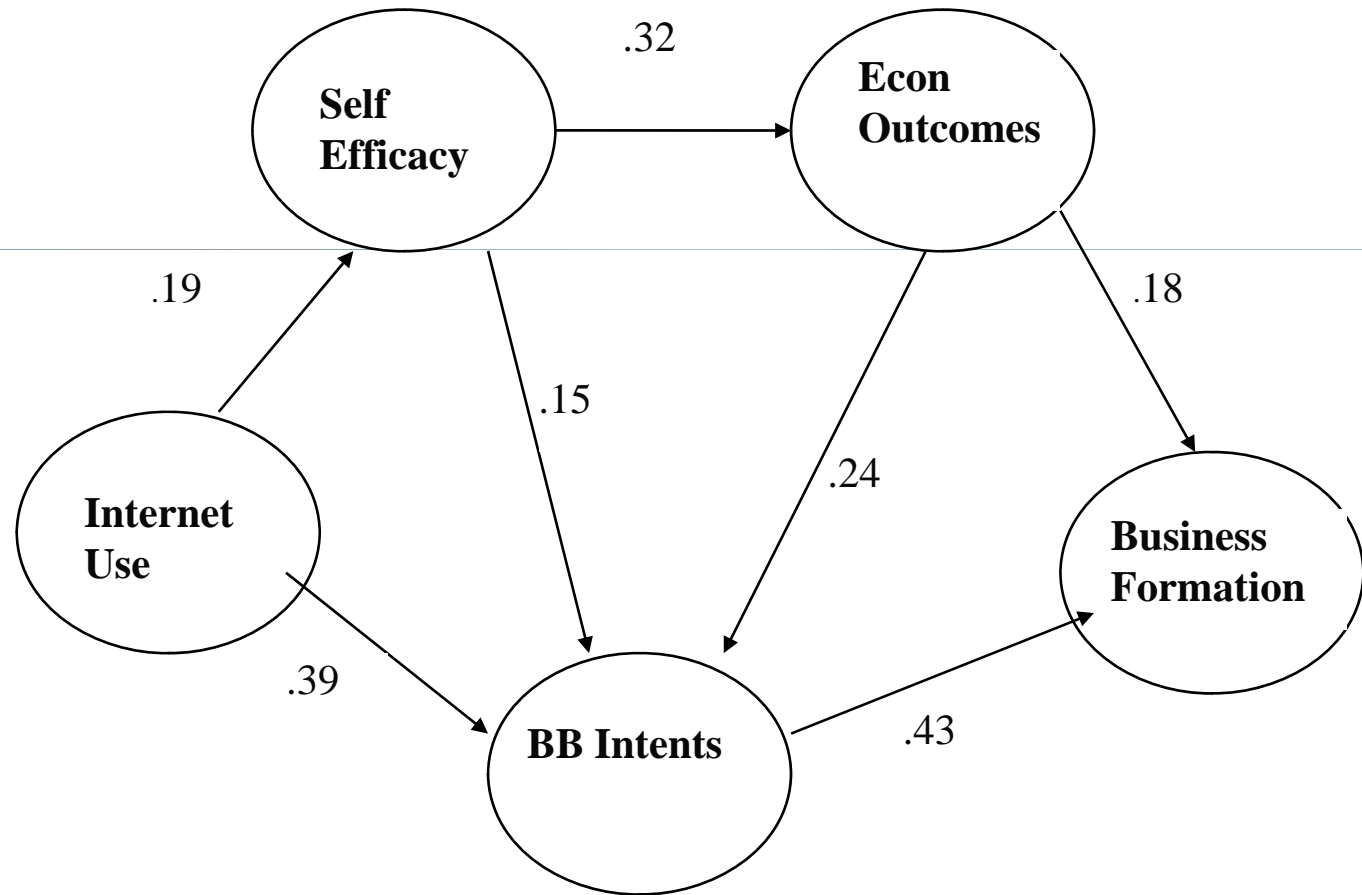
Myth 4: Online Utopia



Myth4: Online Utopia: The New Internet Paradox



Myth 4: Online Utopia: Economic Impacts



Agenda for Rural BB Development

- Social marketing for demand stimulus
 - Connect Kentucky model
- Develop local content
 - Access to means of production
 - Organize rural youth online
 - Build social capital *locally*
- Promote small business adoption
 - Workplace access + SOHO
 - For self-perpetuating development?
- <http://www.msu.edu/~larose/ruralbb>