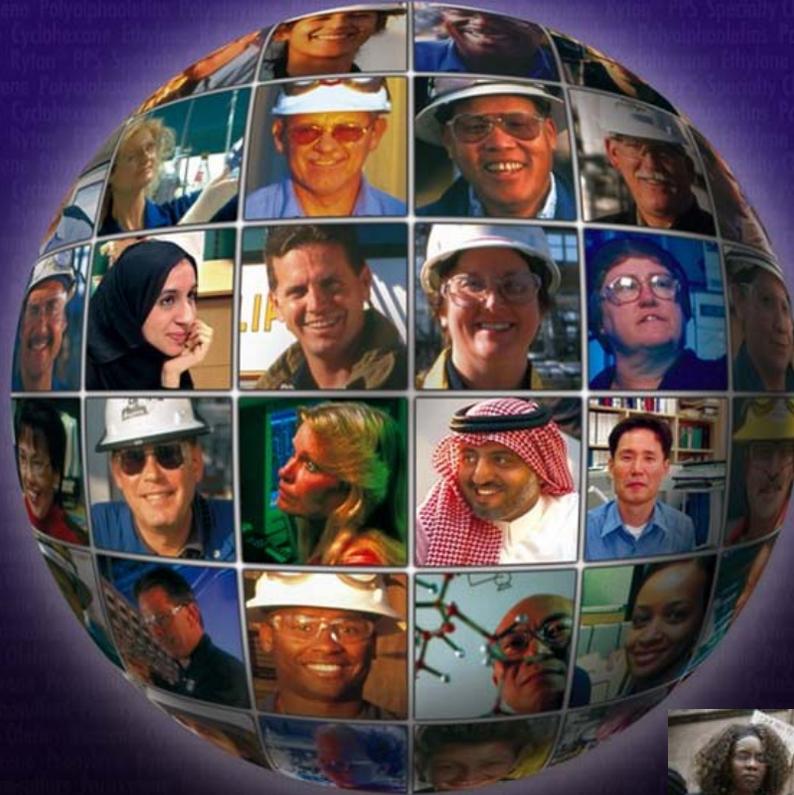
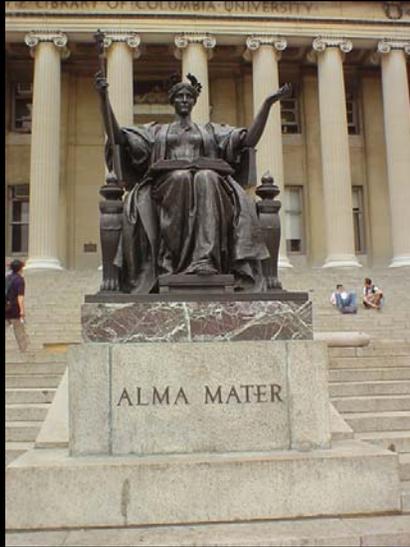


Combating the Negative Effects of Stereotypes: Improving Minority Performance with a Values- Affirmation Intervention

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The Project of Inclusive Leadership



Research Questions

- What are the consequences of contending with bias, discrimination and stereotypes on performance, motivation and leadership aspirations?
- How can we reduce these negative effects in “real time” in organizational settings?

Two psychology claims

- Social identity (e.g., race, gender, age, religion) plays a central role in intellectual performance, motivation, and leadership aspirations.
- In situations in which individuals could be treated in light of a negative stereotype about their group, **people experience stress**.
- One way to reduce stress is to provide opportunities for people to **affirm their values** (shore up self-integrity, remind them they are good and worthy people).

Stereotype Threat

“Members of stereotyped groups are especially wary of situations in which their behavior can confirm that their group lacks a valued ability. The extra pressure caused by the fear of reinforcing this negative stereotype can interfere with academic performance.”

(C.M. Steele & Aronson, 1995)

Stereotype Threat

African Americans



Academic performance

Women



STEM subjects

Latinos



Academic performance

Economic disadvantage



Academic performance

White males



In comparison to Asian males in STEM subjects

Older adults



Memory tasks

A Third Claim

- Social identity (e.g., race, gender, age, religion) plays a central role in intellectual performance, motivation, and leadership aspirations.
- In situations in which individuals could be treated in light of a negative stereotype about their group, **people experience stress.**
- One way to reduce stress is to provide opportunities for people to **affirm their values** (shore up self-integrity, remind them they are good and worthy people).

Reducing Threat: Affirmation Interventions

Self-affirmation (Steele, 1988; Sherman & Cohen, in press; Martens, Johns, Greenberg, & Schimel, 2005)

Reminder of source of self-worth (e.g., important value)

Reduces psychological threat

Group affirmation (Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005; Sherman & Kim, 2005)

Reminder of important group or group attribute

Reducing threat with self and group affirmations

- **Black and white undergraduates take a 3 sections of Math GRE Test.**
- **Affirmation instructions:**

Control

Write about value
unimportant to someone
else

Self-affirm

Write about value
important
to you

Group-affirm

Write about value
important
to your GROUP

- **Measure test performance: number of questions correct given number of questions attempted**

Participant-generated responses

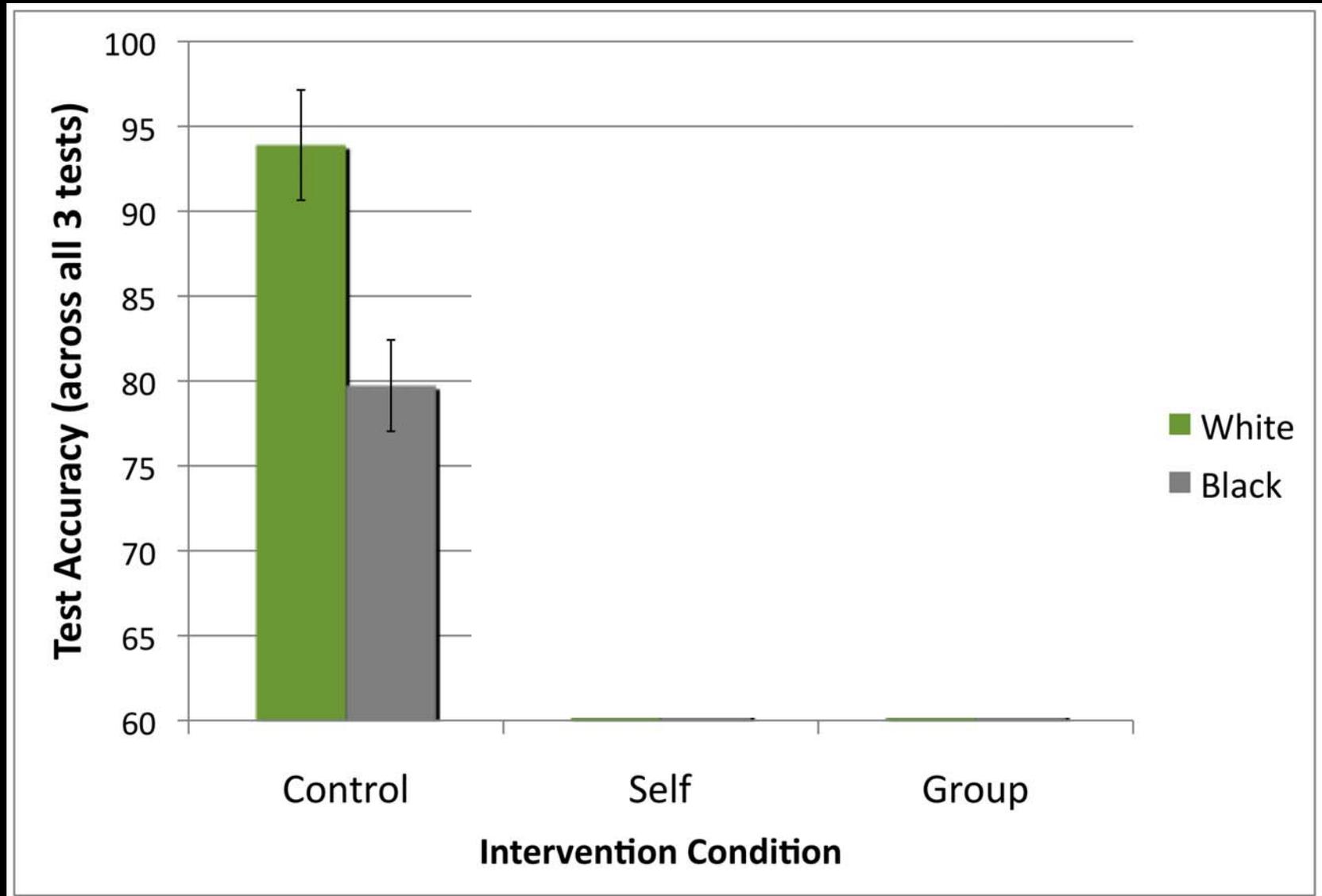
Self-affirmation—African American participant

“Music and art are important to me on a very personal level because they are the things I use to keep my head on straight, vent my emotions and frustration, and I am rarely without them. I cannot imagine what a different person I would be without my headphones on.”

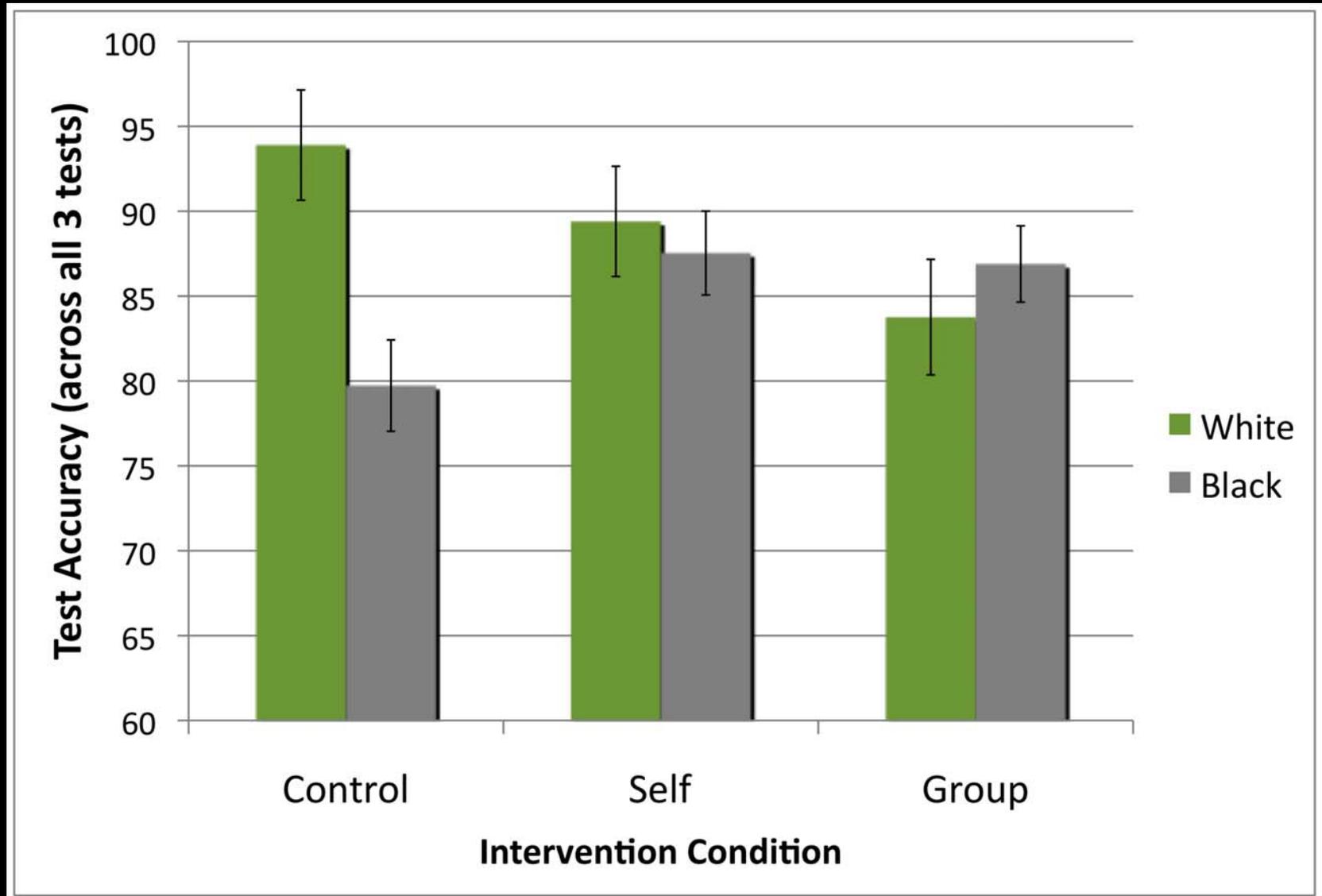
Group affirmation—African American participant

“There is ... a hierarchy in America, and-like it or not- my group isn't that high up.... Because of this, I feel obligated to do my best to try to push this group up the ladder.... You can say this is the most important group to me because I feel a duty & responsibility to it. There is no way of removing (even if I wanted to) myself from the group, so I feel a commitment to it.”

Test accuracy collapsed across three tests as a function of race and affirmation condition.



Test accuracy collapsed across three tests as a function of race and affirmation condition.



Self-Affirmation Field Experiment

- 7th graders in middle school research site
 - Age corresponds with downward performance trend in school, especially for minorities (Eccles, Lord, & Midgley, 1991; Simmons Black, & Zhou, 1991)
- Economically middle-class district
- Student body: 50% minority (African American), 50% European American; broad performance range represented

Self-Affirmation Field Experiment

- Conducted near beginning of school year
- Two experimental conditions

Control

Write about value
unimportant to someone
else

Self-affirm

Write about value
important
to you



[Affirmation Condition Worksheet:]

WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL VALUES?



The **most** important values to me are: (circle two or three)

Athletic Ability

Being Good at Art

Creativity

Independence

Living in the Moment

Membership in A Social Group

(such as your community, racial group, or school club)

Music

Politics

Relationships with Friends or Family

Religious Values

Sense of Humor



Affirmation Intervention

- Series of structured writing assignments administered over two years

- Drawing on psychological research, the exercises encourage the following elements in students' responses:
 - Value choice
 - Focus on intrinsic (vs. extrinsic) sources of affirmation
 - Self-assertion

- Exercises are timed to occur at important evaluative or stressful moments throughout school year (e.g., tests, times of high stereotype threat as assessed by questionnaires)

Excerpts from self-affirmation exercises

"[Art] is important to me because it makes me feel calm. When I'm very upset, like I'm going to cry I sit down and start listening to music or start drawing a picture."

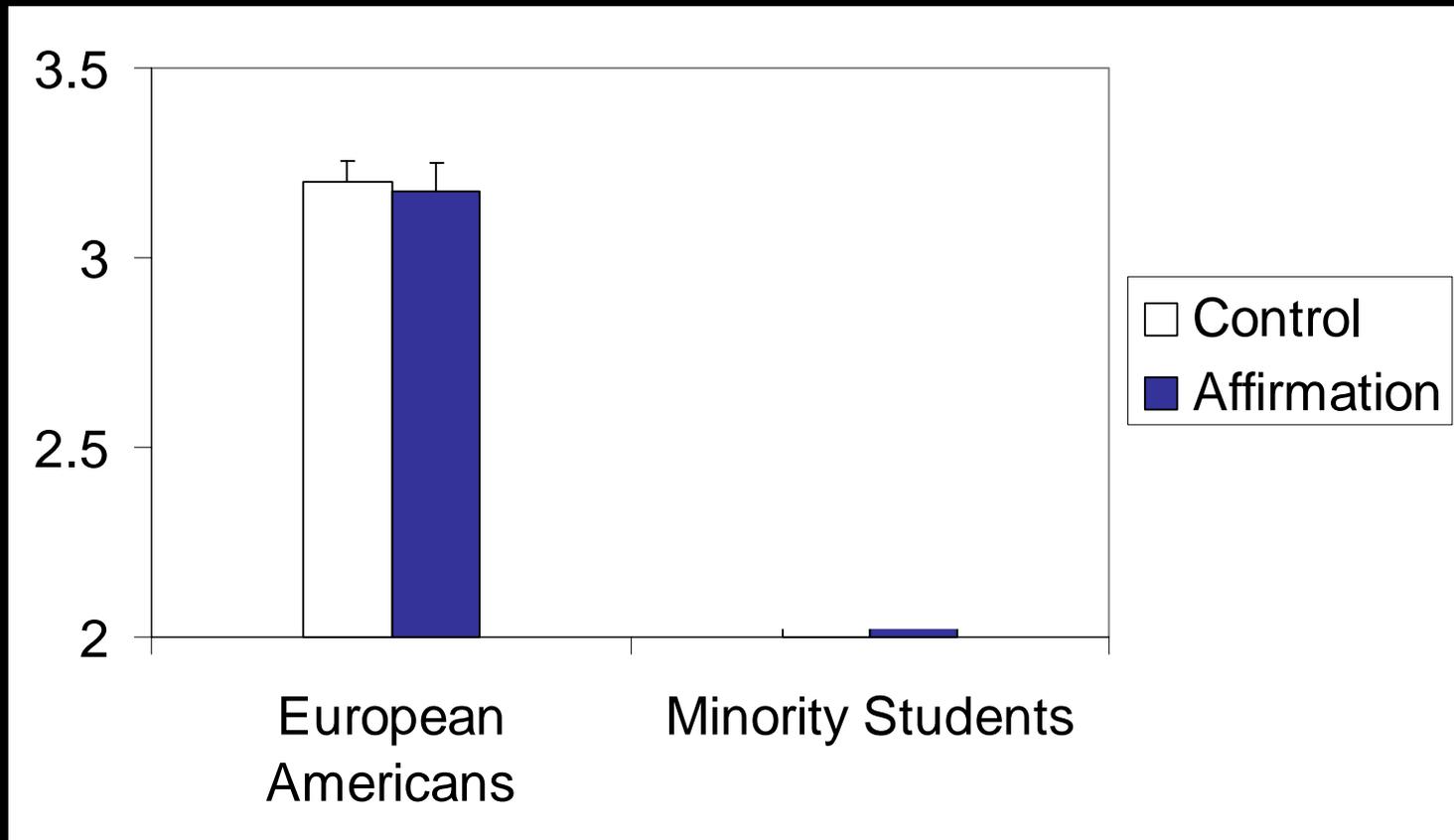
"If I didn't have creativity, I'd be bored out of my mind."

"If I didn't have my family, I [wouldn't] be raised right and if I didn't have my friends I would be a boring person. If I didn't have my religion, I wouldn't know what to do, I would be lost."

End-of-quarter course grade

(After 1 treatment)

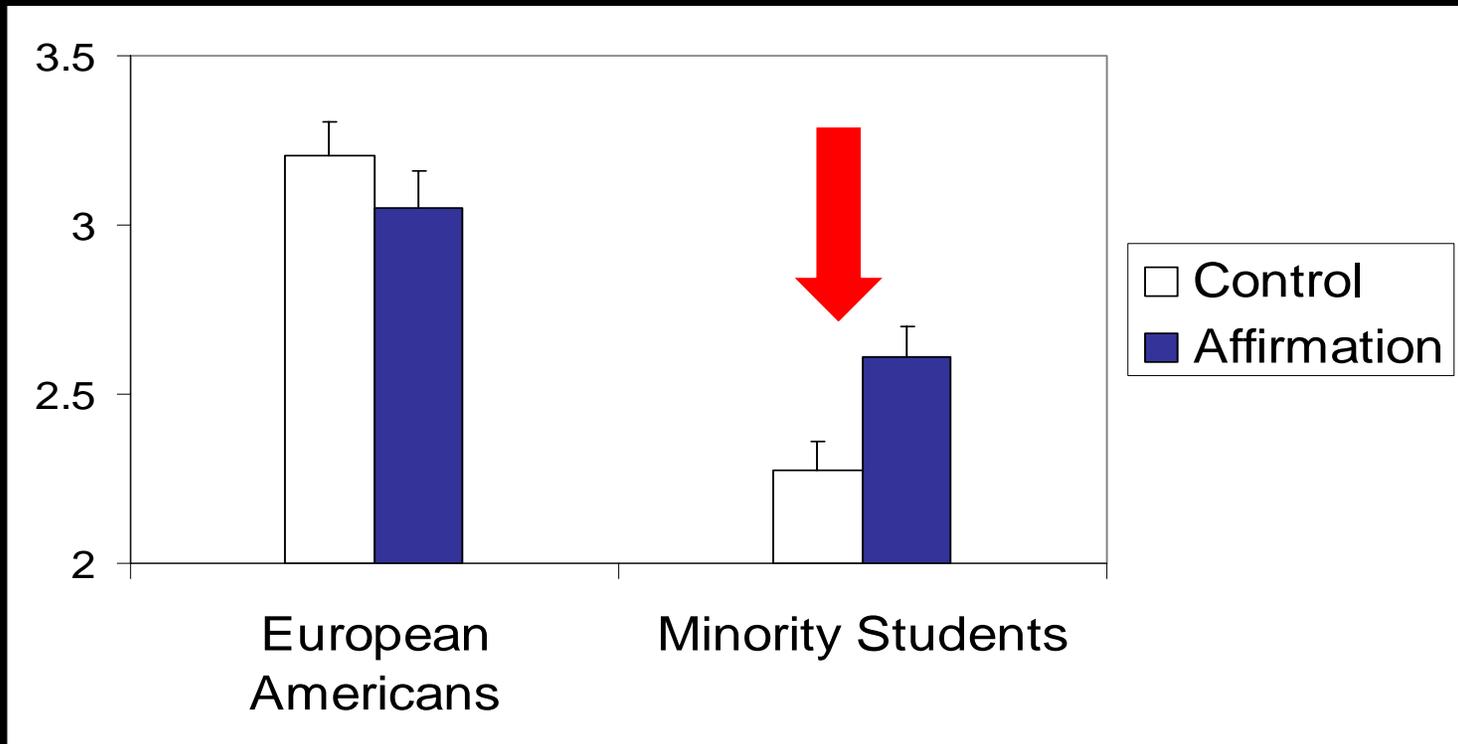
(Adjusted for teacher, baseline performance within-race)



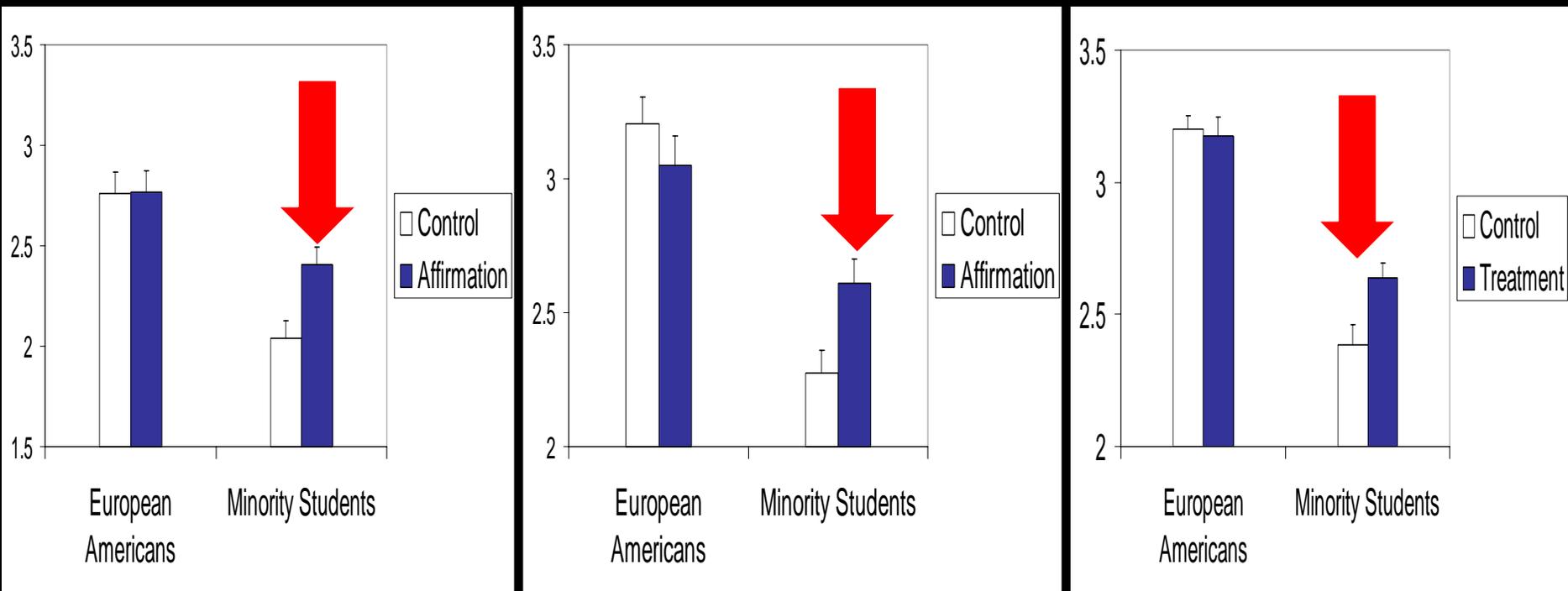
End-of-quarter course grade: Replication

(After 2 treatments)

(Adjusted for teacher, baseline performance within-race)



Original Study and Two Replications

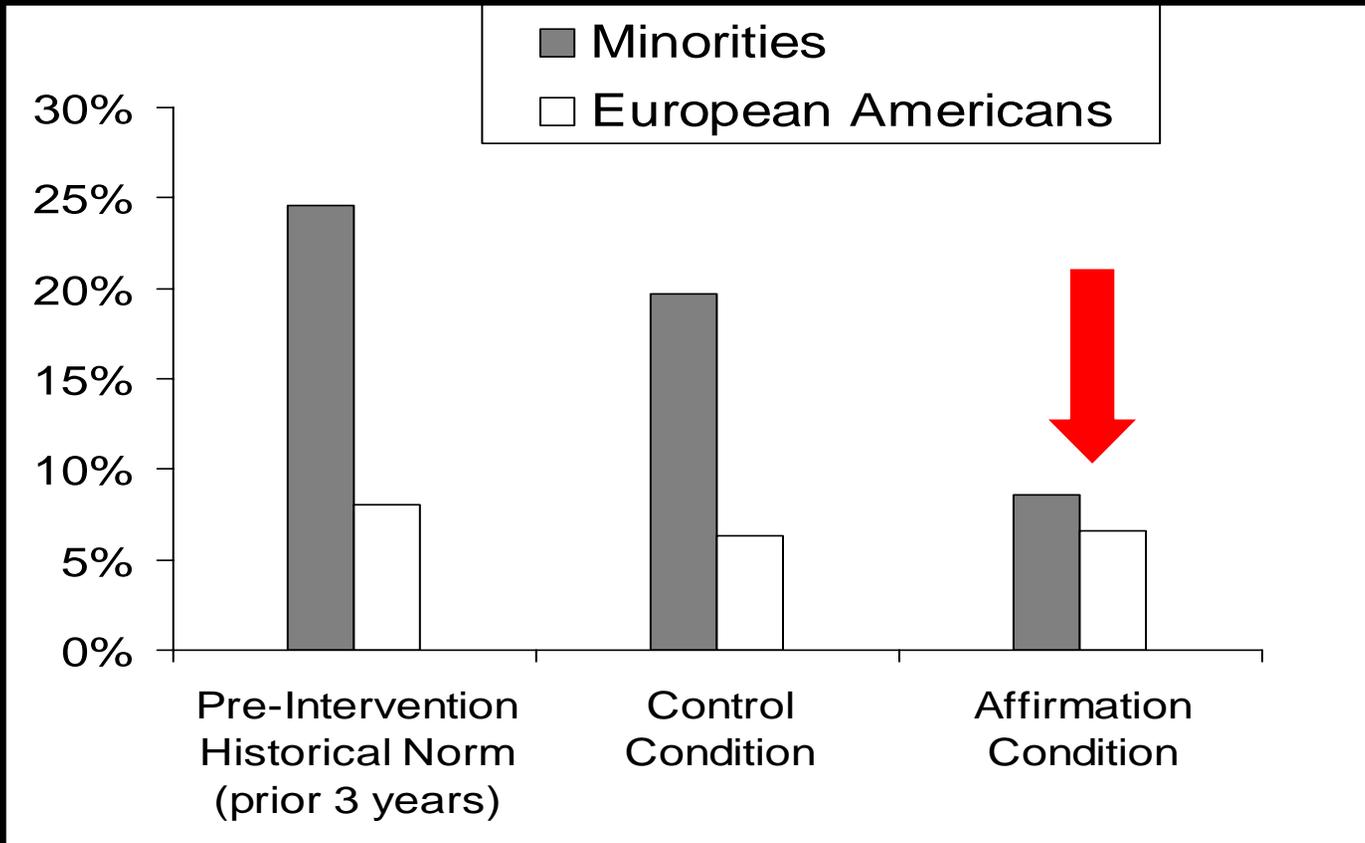


Study 1

Study 2

Study 3

Poor performance rate: Percentage of students receiving D or below in course



President Obama as source of affirmation

- 6th grade middle school students (Blacks vs. White).

- Obama Affirmation instructions:

Control condition

“Is it important to
You to be in good health?”

Affirmation condition

“Is it important to
you who won the
Presidential election?”

- Measure stereotype threat (8 items):

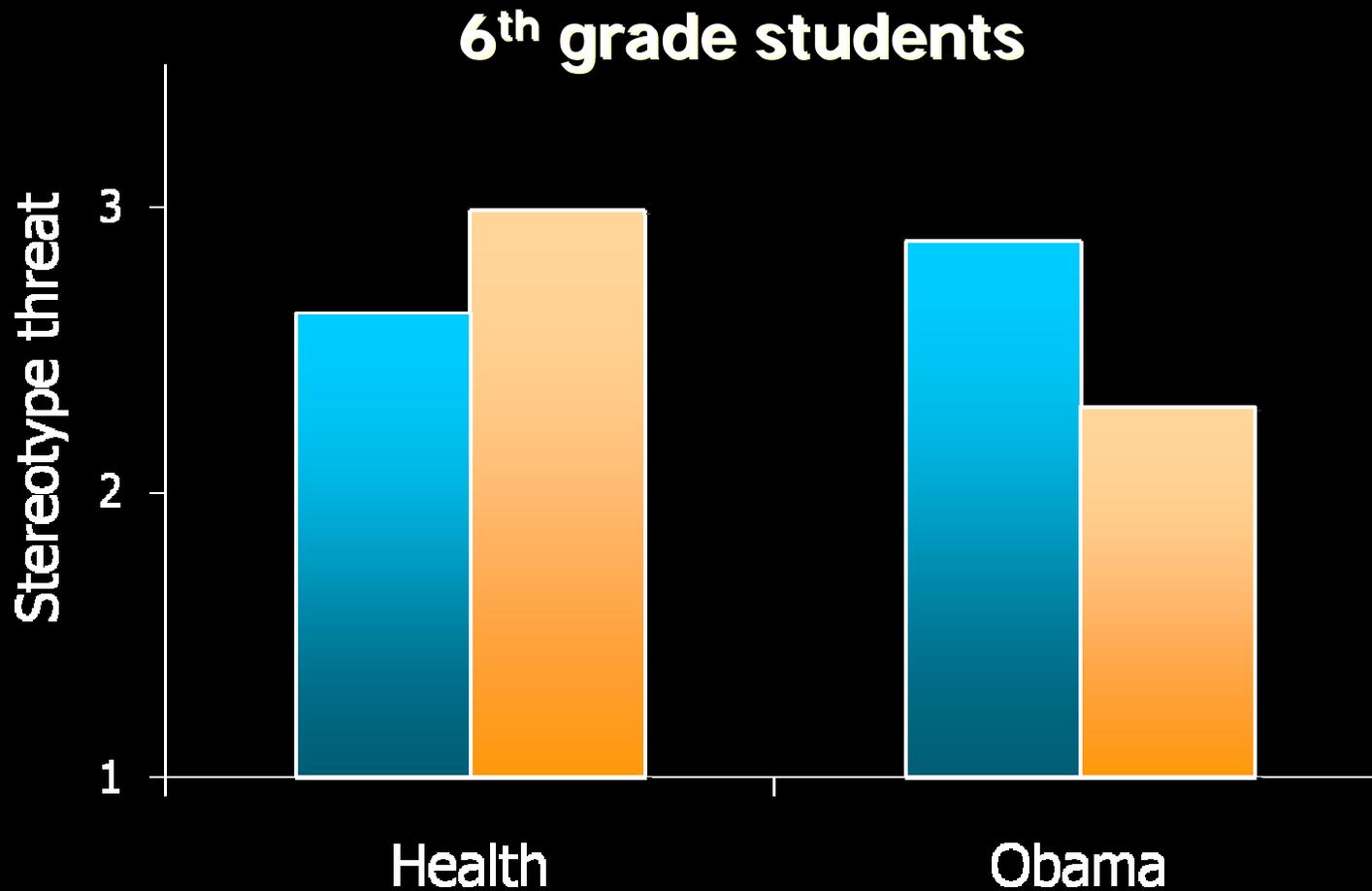
- Example: “I worry about how others will judge my performance based on the performance of other people in my group.”

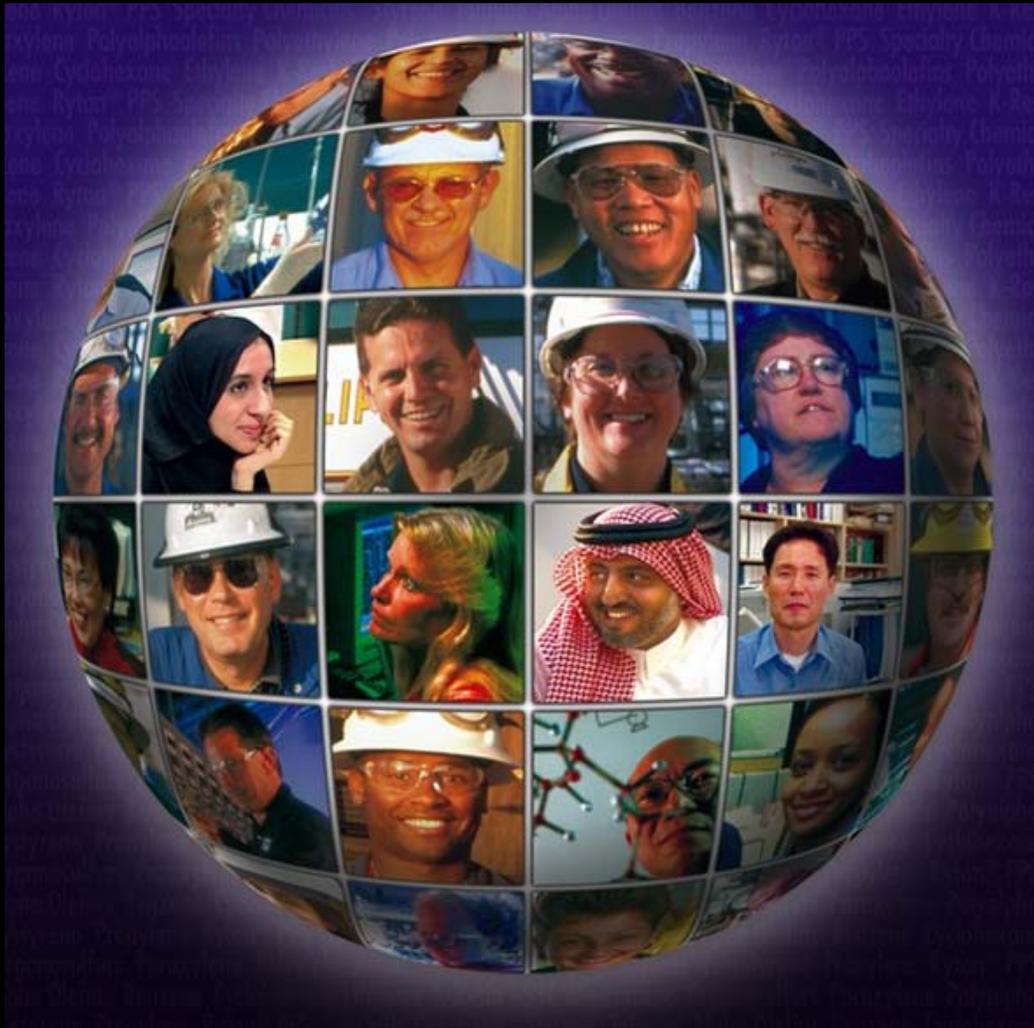
Excerpts from “Obama” exercises

“Barac Obama has shown that you can whatever you want no matter what Color you are...”

“Yes, it is important because it is the first AfricanAmerican president. Also, I didn’t get my hopes up for McCain because I think he might be two old...”

Stereotype threat as a function of student race and “Obama” affirmation condition.





Thank You

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