



**LOSING  
TO WIN**  
DISCUSSIONS OF RACE AND  
INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS

# Stereotype threat for the “scholar-athlete” in the classroom

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## Academic stereotypes about college-athletes

Research indicates that academic faculty and traditional student peers perceive college-athletes to be:

1. “The dumb jock”: less intelligent and prepared for college
2. “The unmotivated jock”: less motivated to earn a degree

Research question: Can reminders of the negative academic stereotypes reduce the academic performance of college-athletes in the classroom?

## How do negative stereotypes impact performance?

### *Stereotype Threat*

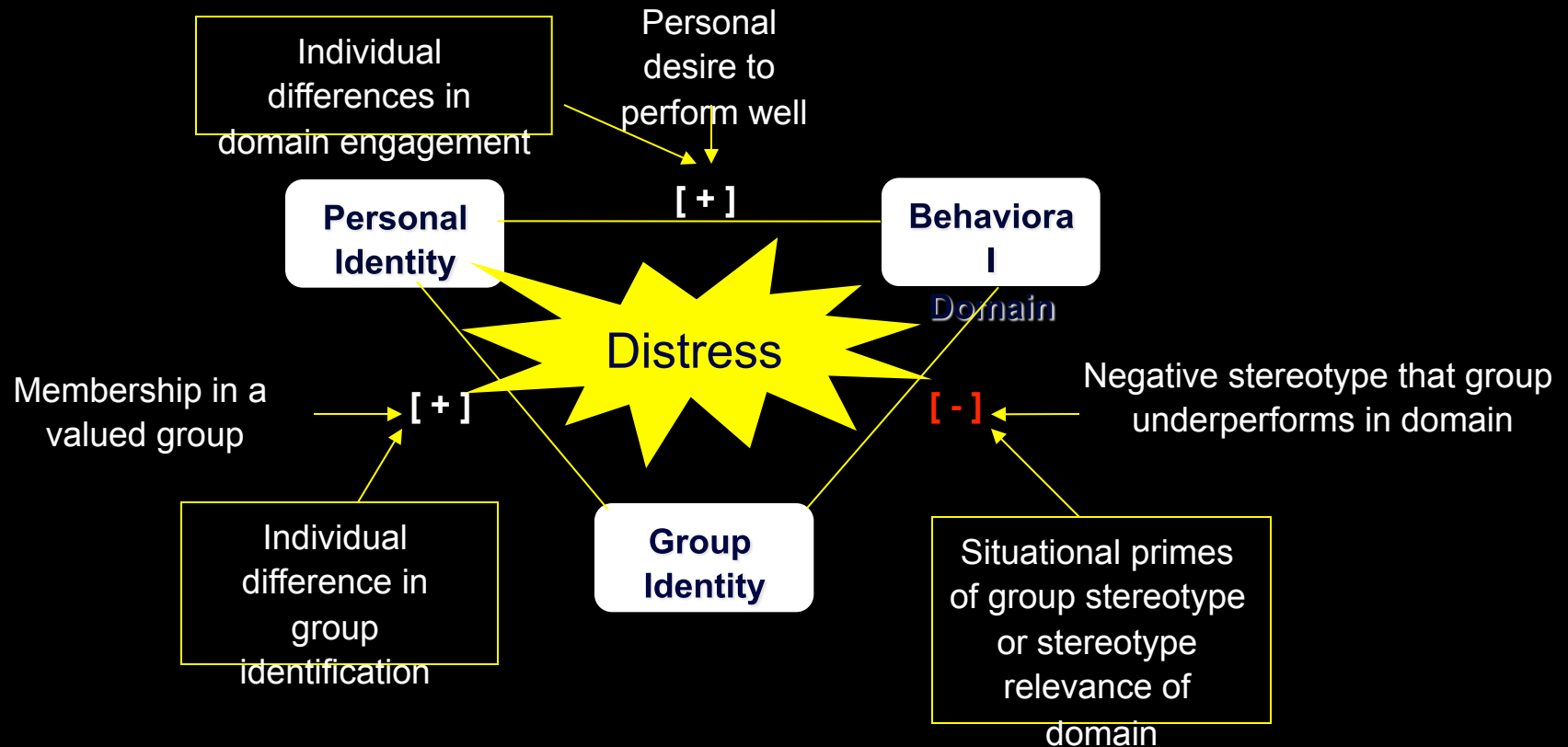
"It is this: the existence of (a negative) stereotype means that anything one does or any of one's features that conform to it make the stereotype more plausible as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one's own eyes. We call this predicament stereotype threat, and argue that it is experienced, essentially, as a self-evaluative threat."

Steele & Aronson (1995)

# An integrated model of stereotype threat

(Schmader, Johns & Forbes, Psych Bulletin 2008)

Stereotype threat is a perceived imbalance between three sets of cognitions:

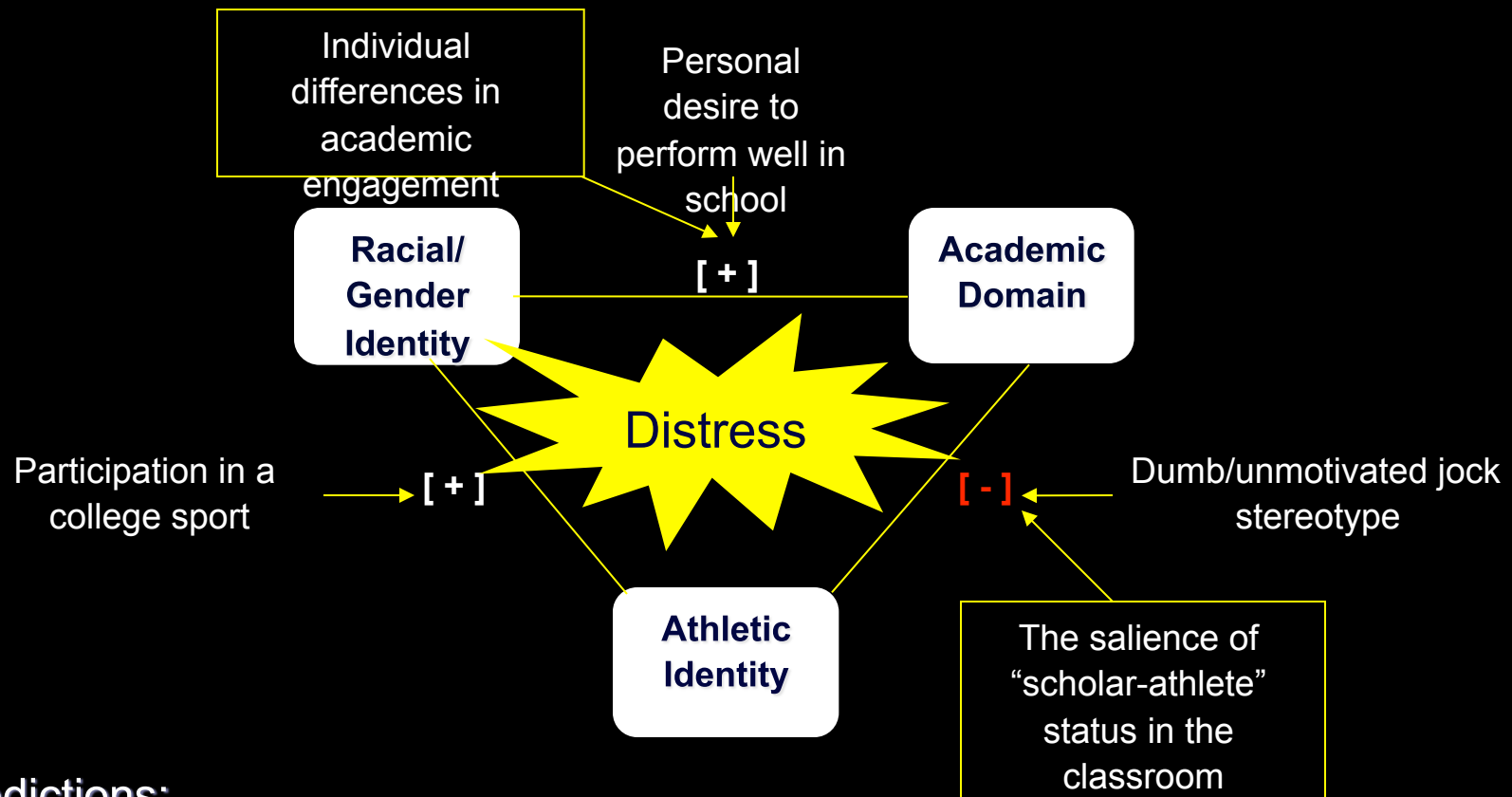


Perception of the imbalance between cognitions is moderated by individual difference and contextual factors

# A model of academic stereotype threat among college athletes

(Stone, Harrison & Motley, under review)

## The academic trifecta of imbalance for college athletes:



### Predictions:

1. Cues that explicitly link their dual status as "student" or "scholar" and "athlete" in the classroom will activate the imbalance that causes stereotype threat.
2. Threat response moderated by individual differences in academic engagement.

## Which college-athletes are most vulnerable to stereotype threat in the classroom?

### Female college-athletes:

- have the best academic stats (classroom, graduation)
- have fewer opportunities to turn "pro" after college (Coakley, 2004)

### African American college-athletes:

- Racial identity adds an additional burden to experience as students on campus (Gaston, 1986; Martin & Harris, 2006; Singer, 2008)
- Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Lawrence (2010):
  - believe that professors and traditional students apply the “dumb-jock” stereotype more to them than to White college-athletes
  - report that White college-athletes receive more forgiveness and leniency from professors and traditional classmates
  - feel strong pressure to prove that they belong in class

# Stereotype threat among female college-athletes

Harrison, Stone, Shapiro, Yee, Boyd & Rullan (JSSI, 2009)

88 college-athletes at the University of Arizona and Arizona State University

- 45 males (football, basketball, baseball, track, golf)
- 43 females (basketball, softball, track, tennis, golf)

Participated with traditional students in a study on test-taking

Had 55 minutes to complete a test of 40 verbal analogy items drawn from the SAT and GRE (1 to 5 ratio)

Stereotype Threat Manipulation: Identity primed on the cover page of the test



## Verbal Analogies Test Version 1.1

### Neutral Identity Prime:

If you are a research subject, please indicate below:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a research-participant.

### Athletic Identity Prime:

If you participate in Division I intercollegiate sports, please indicate below:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am an athlete.

### Scholar - Athletic Identity Prime:

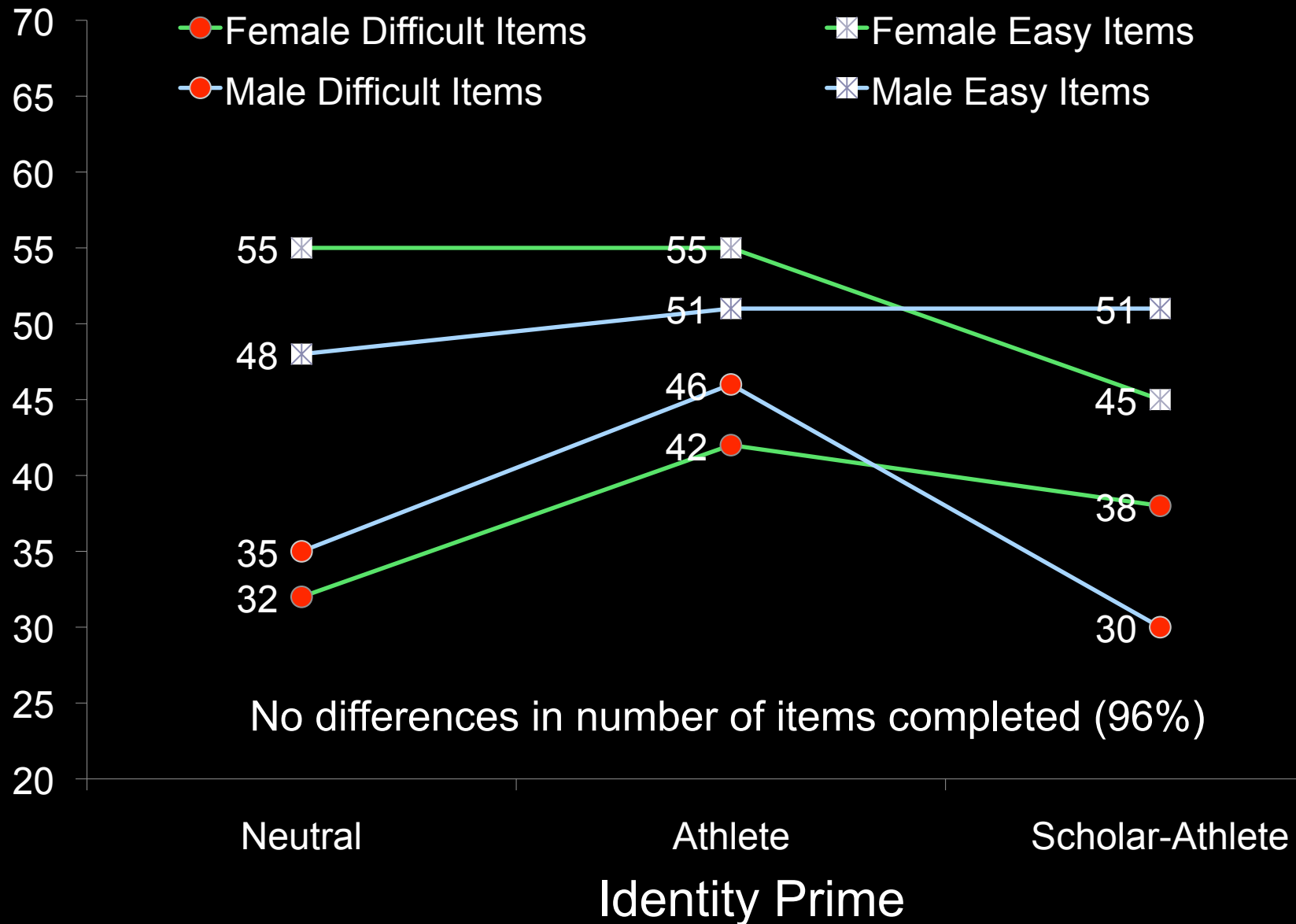
If you participate in Division I intercollegiate sports, please indicate below:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a scholar-athlete.

Test Performance Measure: Percentage of correct answers on the easy (SAT) and difficult (GRE) verbal analogies



Results: Percentage of correct answers on test items  
Gender X Identity Prime X Item difficulty interaction,  $p = .02$



## Stereotype threat among

### Academically Engaged African-American college-athletes

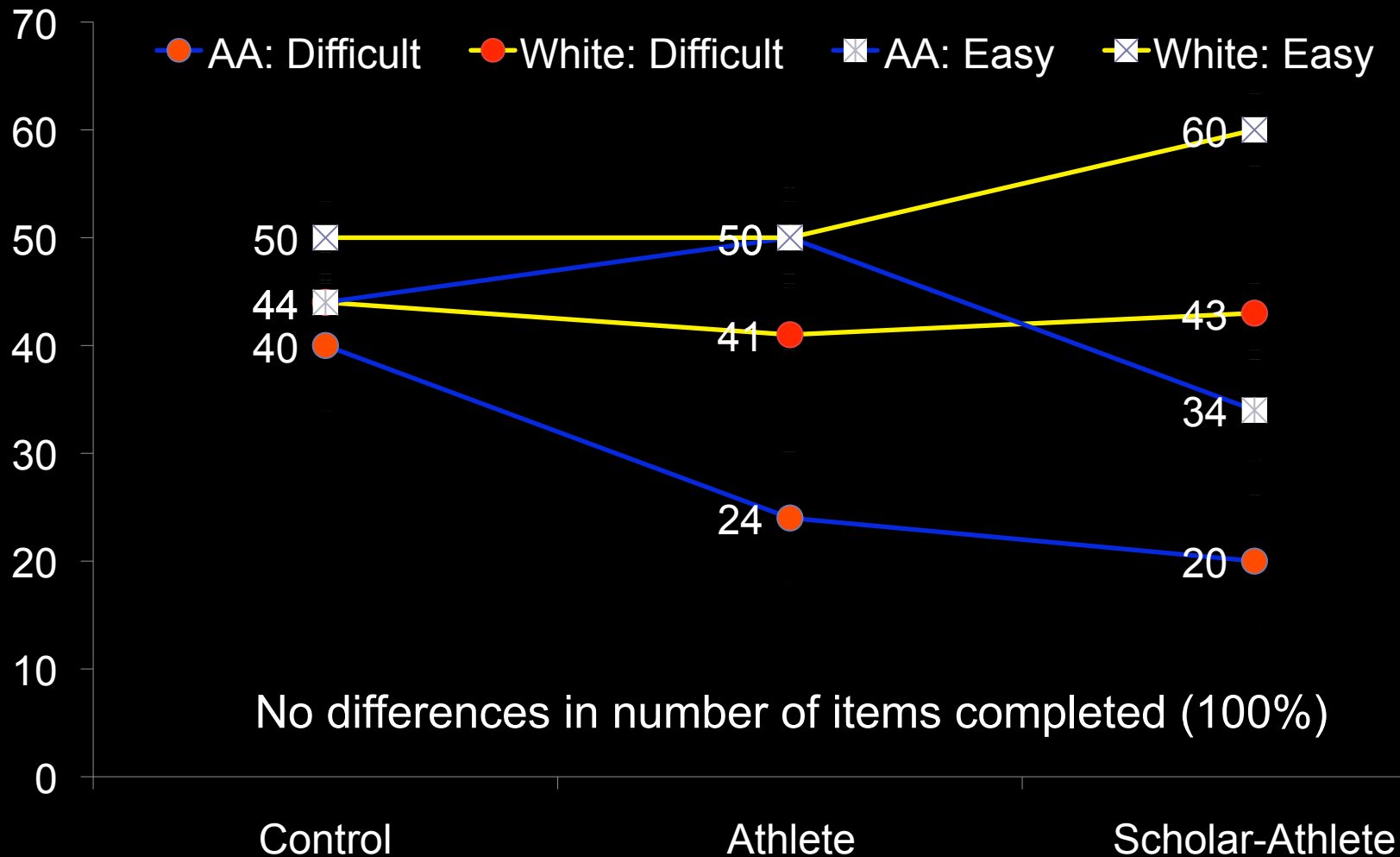
Stone, Harrison & Motley (under review)

- 151 college-athletes at the University of Central Florida:  
Football, track, basketball, rowing, baseball, soccer, softball and golf
  - 40 AA males, 35 AA females, 38 White males, 35 White females
- Completed the Academic Disengagement scale:
  - "No academic test will ever change my opinion of how scholarly I am"
  - "How I do academically has little relation to who I really am"
  - "I really don't care what tests say about my academic ability"
  - (1-7 scale,  $\alpha = .63$ ,  $M = 3.59$ ,  $Sd = 1.34$ )
- All completed the same testing procedures as in Harrison et al. (2009)

## Results: Percentage of correct answers on test items

Engagement X Race X Identity Prime X Item difficulty interaction,  $p = .006$

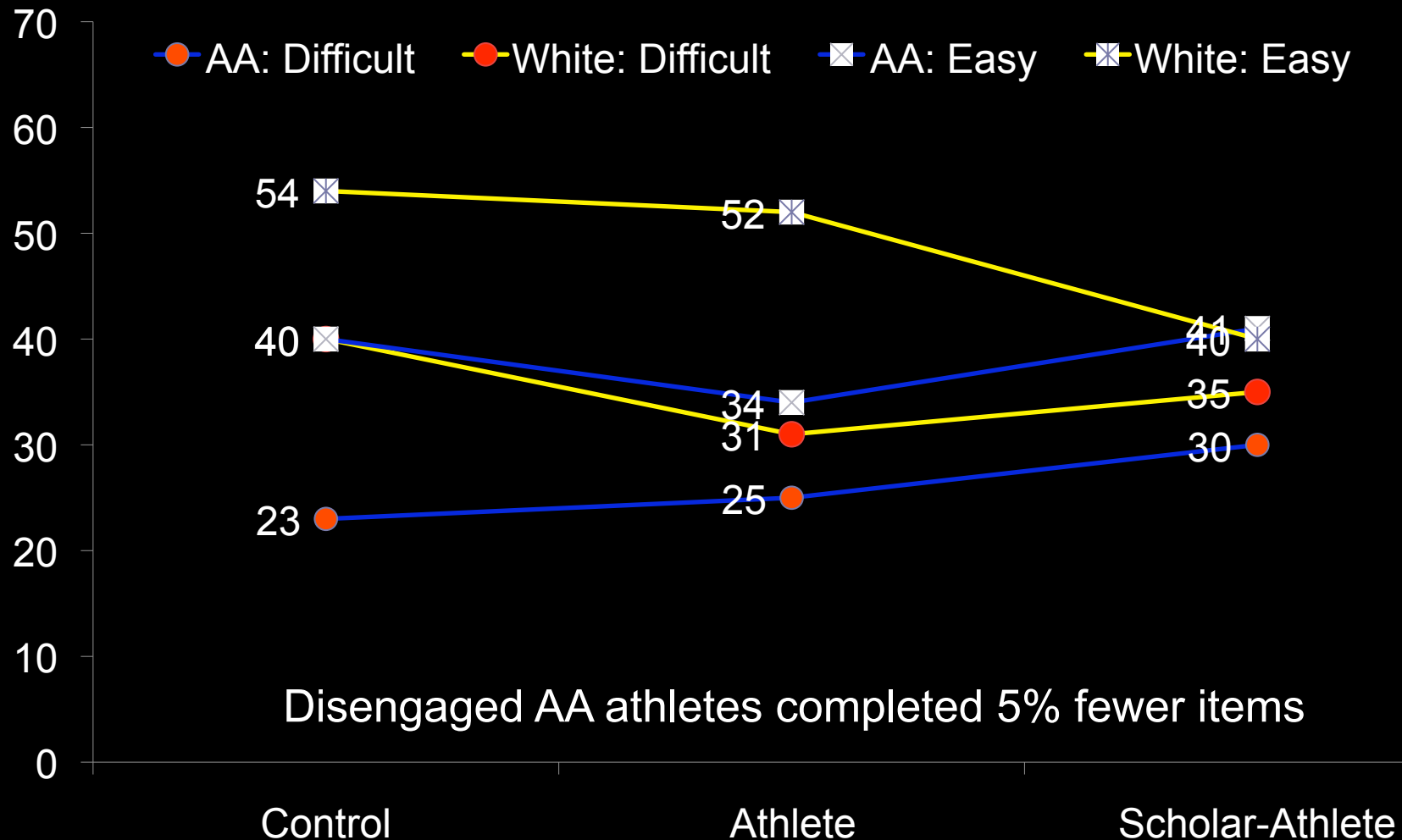
Academically Engaged Athletes,  $p = .03$



## Results: Percentage of correct answers on test items

Engagement X Race X Identity Prime X Item difficulty interaction,  $p = .006$


Academically Disengaged Athletes,  $p = .18$



## Conclusions:

### Stereotype threat for college-athletes in the classroom

- Negative stereotypes about college-athletes can reduce their achievement in academics:
  - When negative stereotypes are brought to mind in an academic performance context:
    - By direct reference to athletic status (Yopek & Prentice, 2005)
    - By subtle cues that link their academic and athletic identity (e.g., “student-athlete”, Harrison et al., 2009; Stone et al., 2011)
  - When achievement in academics is important to their self-definition:
    - How do we help academically engaged college-athletes cope when threatened in the classroom?



## The role of stereotypes in the academic performance of college-athletes

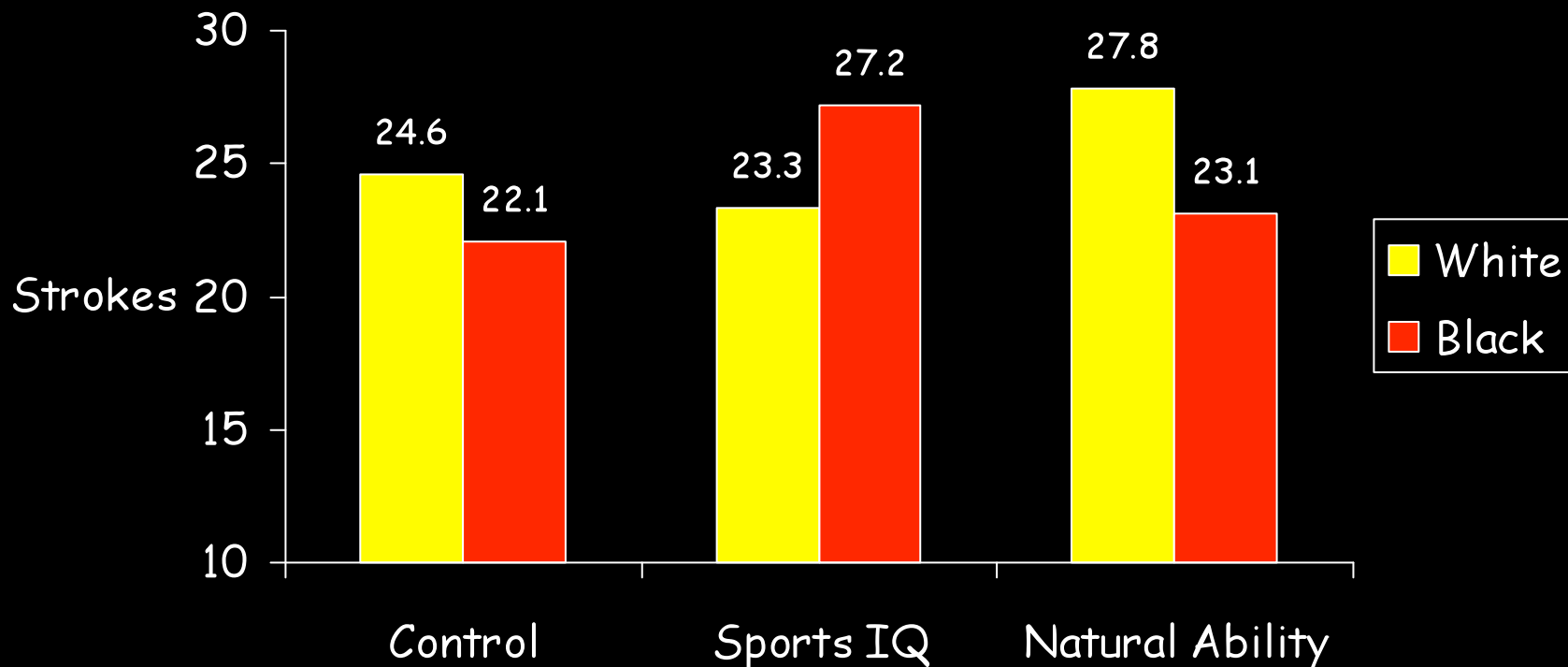
*"I am often asked if the term student-athlete is an oxymoron"*

Richard Lapchick, Ph.D.  
Director of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society  
1996

## Stereotype threat effects on performance in sports (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999, JPSP)

- Black / White male and female subjects played a laboratory golf course
- Performance framed as diagnostic of natural athletic ability, sports intelligence, or sports psychology (control)

DV: Strokes needed to finish the golf course (low = good)



## Racial Stereotypes About Athletes

Americans hold positive and negative racial stereotypes about Black and White athletes (e.g., Biernat & Manis, 1994; Sailes, 1996; Stone, Perry & Darley, 1997):

<u>Black Athletes:</u>	High Natural Athletic Ability (+) Low Sports IQ (-)
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<u>White Athletes:</u>	Low Natural Athletic Ability (-) High Sports IQ (+)
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Research question: Can negative stereotypes about Black athletes (Sports IQ) and White athletes (Natural Athletic Ability) have a negative impact on their performance in sports?



## "Sprinter deals with doubt"



Dave Kenyon, UofA track athlete

"I didn't even get recruited because I'm short and I'm white and I run the 400 meters," said Kenyon, ... "That's just being real. It's not a race thing."

"I feel like when guys line up against me that they don't even notice me because I'm White," said Kenyon... "But I do it, too, to other white quarter-milers. If I see other White quarter-milers, I don't even think of them as a threat."

According to Kenyon, race was not an issue before head coach Dave Murray's initial reaction.

"He comes in and looks at me, the next thing I know they all go into his office," Kenyon said. "Coach Murray was like, 'He's White.' Coach Harvey was like, 'Yeah, I know.' "

Source: Arizona Daily Star, May 29, 2002  
By Terrence Harris

## Professional athletes?

### Warren Moon, NFL Hall of Fame Induction Speech (2006)



- "A lot has been said about me as being the first African American quarterback into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. It's a subject that I'm very uncomfortable about sometimes only because I've always wanted to be judged as just a quarterback...."
- "I only played this game not for just myself, not just for my teammates, but I always had that extra burden when I went on that field that I had a responsibility to play the game for my people. That extra burden I probably didn't need to go out on the field with, because I probably would have been a much better player if I didn't have that burden. But you know what, I carried that burden proudly."

