

Social Identity, Stigma, and Performance

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Theoretical Questions

- How social identity affects motivation and performance

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 - Identity X Situation interaction story

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- Applying knowledge of process to produce change
 - Context of the problem of under-performance

Theoretical Questions

- How social identity affects motivation and performance
 - Identity X Threat interaction story

- Applying knowledge of process to produce change
 - Context of the problem of under-performance
 - Racial achievement gap

Research Topics

Laboratory and field studies addressing:

- How central is social identity to self-view; and does this centrality affect educational outcomes?
- How does social identity affect the feedback interaction?
- Conceptual model, larger-scale intervention

I. How central is social identity to self-view? Does this centrality affect educational outcomes?

Social Identity Threat

Threats to social identity and health (Cole, Kemeny, & Taylor, 1997)

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Stereotype Threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002; Cohen & Steele, 2002)

Fear of personally confirming a negative stereotype about one's group

General process

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General process

Collective Threat (Cohen & Garcia, 2005)

Fear that another member of one's group could confirm a negative stereotype

Collective Threat Experiment

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Female math majors randomly assigned to condition:

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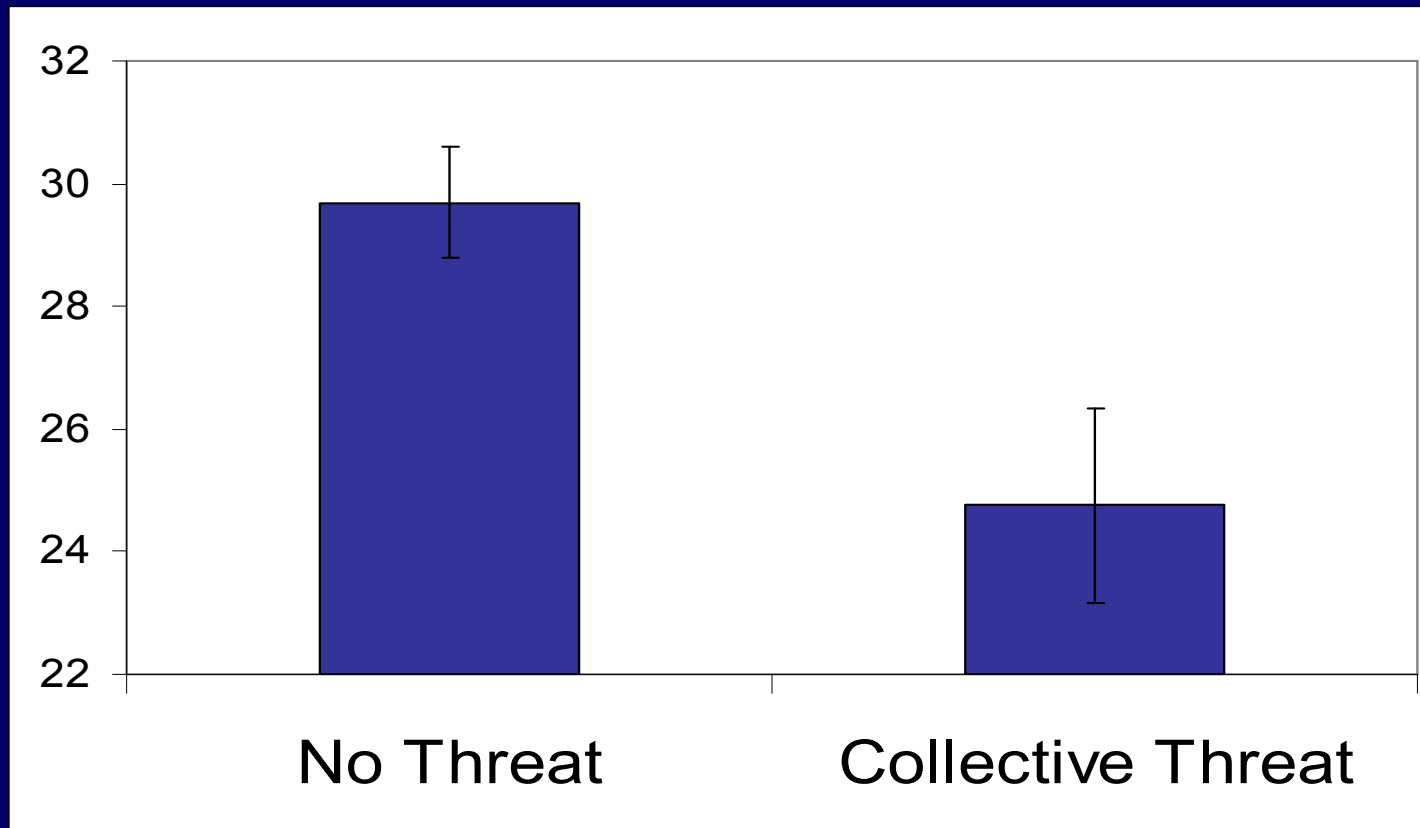
1. Collective threat condition—saw another woman given math test

Collective Threat Experiment

Female math majors randomly assigned to condition:

1. Collective threat condition—saw another woman given math test
2. No threat condition—saw another woman given math puzzles

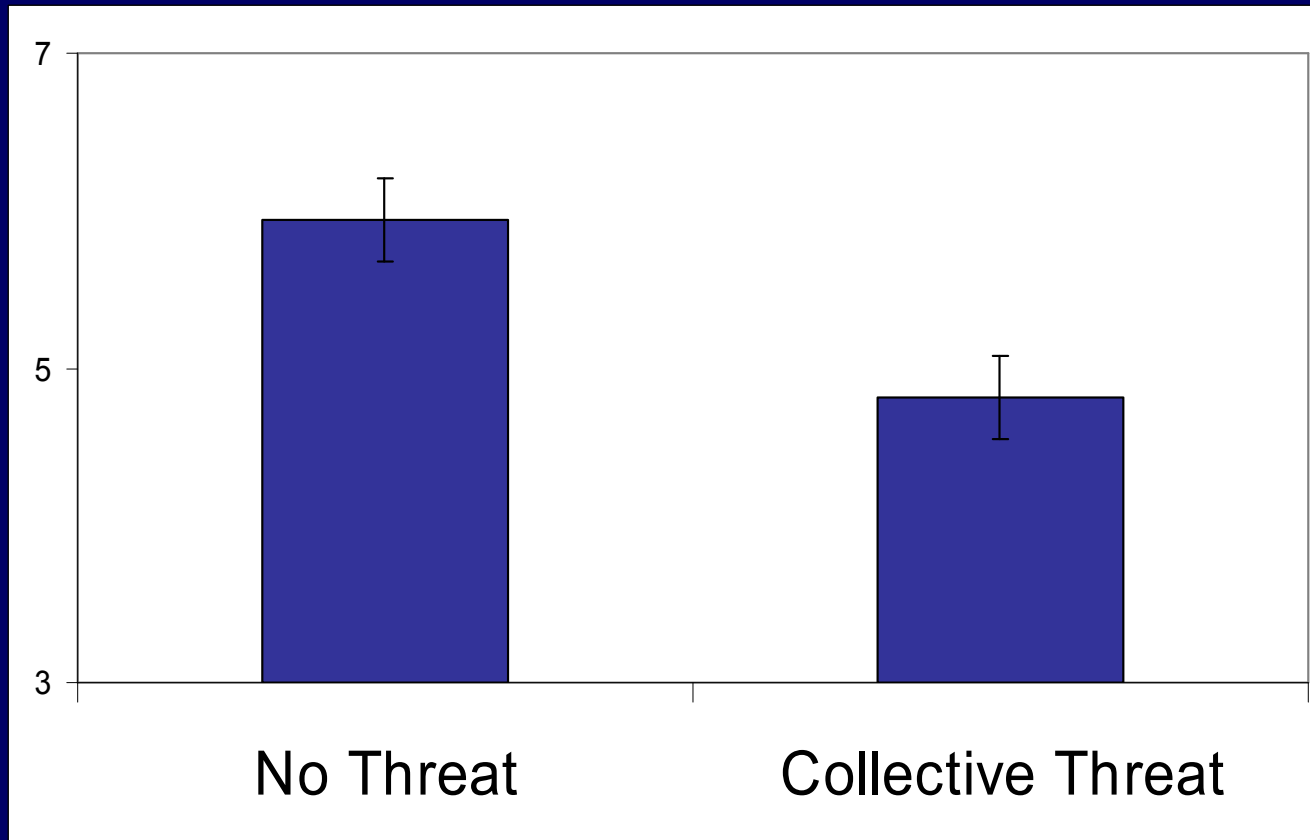
State Self-Esteem (Female Math Majors)



Scale range: 6-42

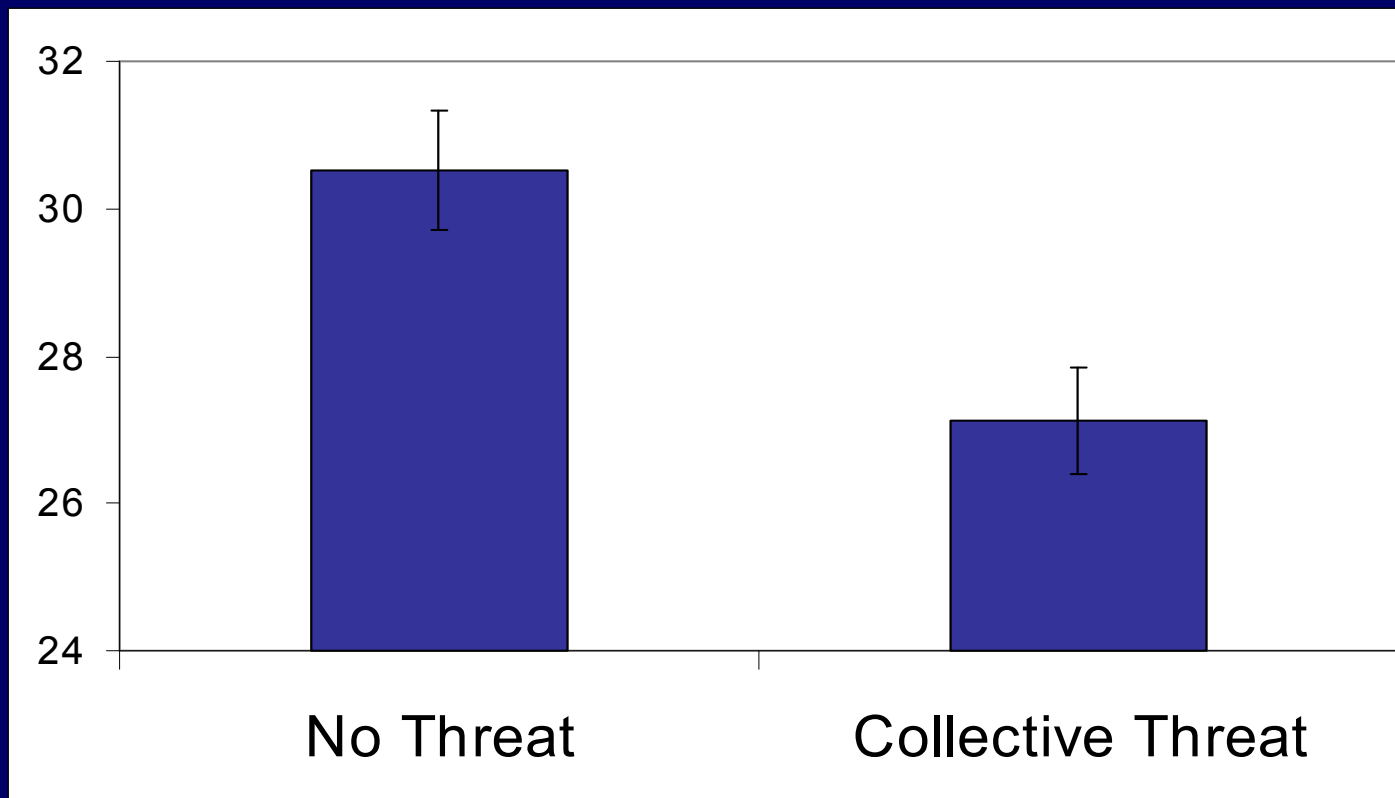


Math Self-Efficacy (Female Math Majors)



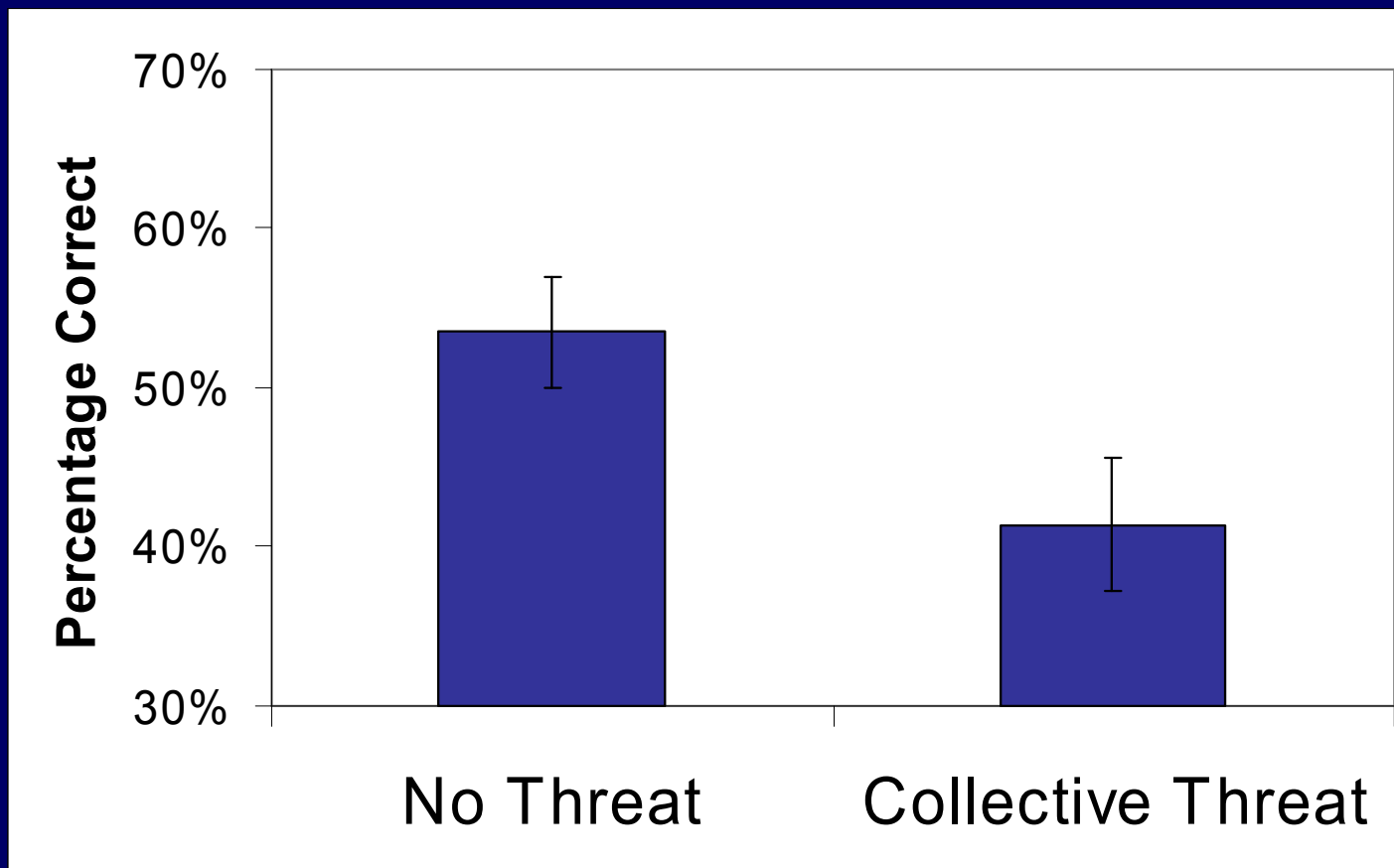
Scale range: 1-7

Replication with African American college students: State Self-Esteem



Scale range: 6-42

Test Performance (African American college students)



Collective Threat: Implications

- Social identity central to self-view
- Broadens scope of social identity threat

**II. How does social identity affect
feedback interaction?**

How does social identity affect feedback interaction?

Mentor's Dilemma (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999; Cohen, 2008)

How to provide critical feedback without undermining recipient's motivation

How does social identity affect feedback interaction?

Mentor's Dilemma (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999; Cohen, 2008)

How to provide critical feedback without undermining recipient's motivation

Dilemma acute when providing feedback across group lines

Mentor's Dilemma

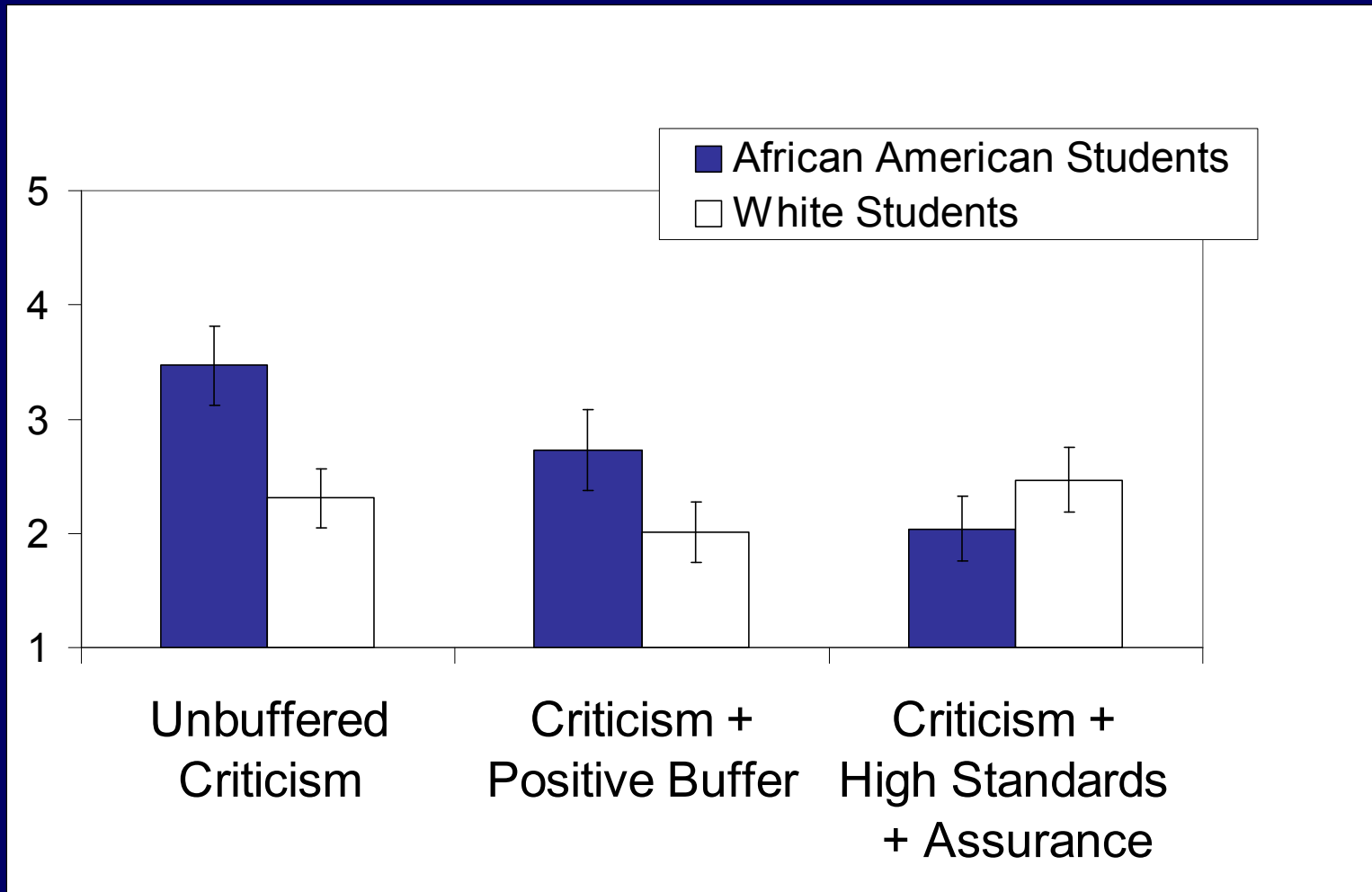
- African American undergraduates and White undergraduates wrote essay.
- Photo appended to essay.
- Received critical feedback, ostensibly from White professor.

Mentor's Dilemma

Three experimental conditions:

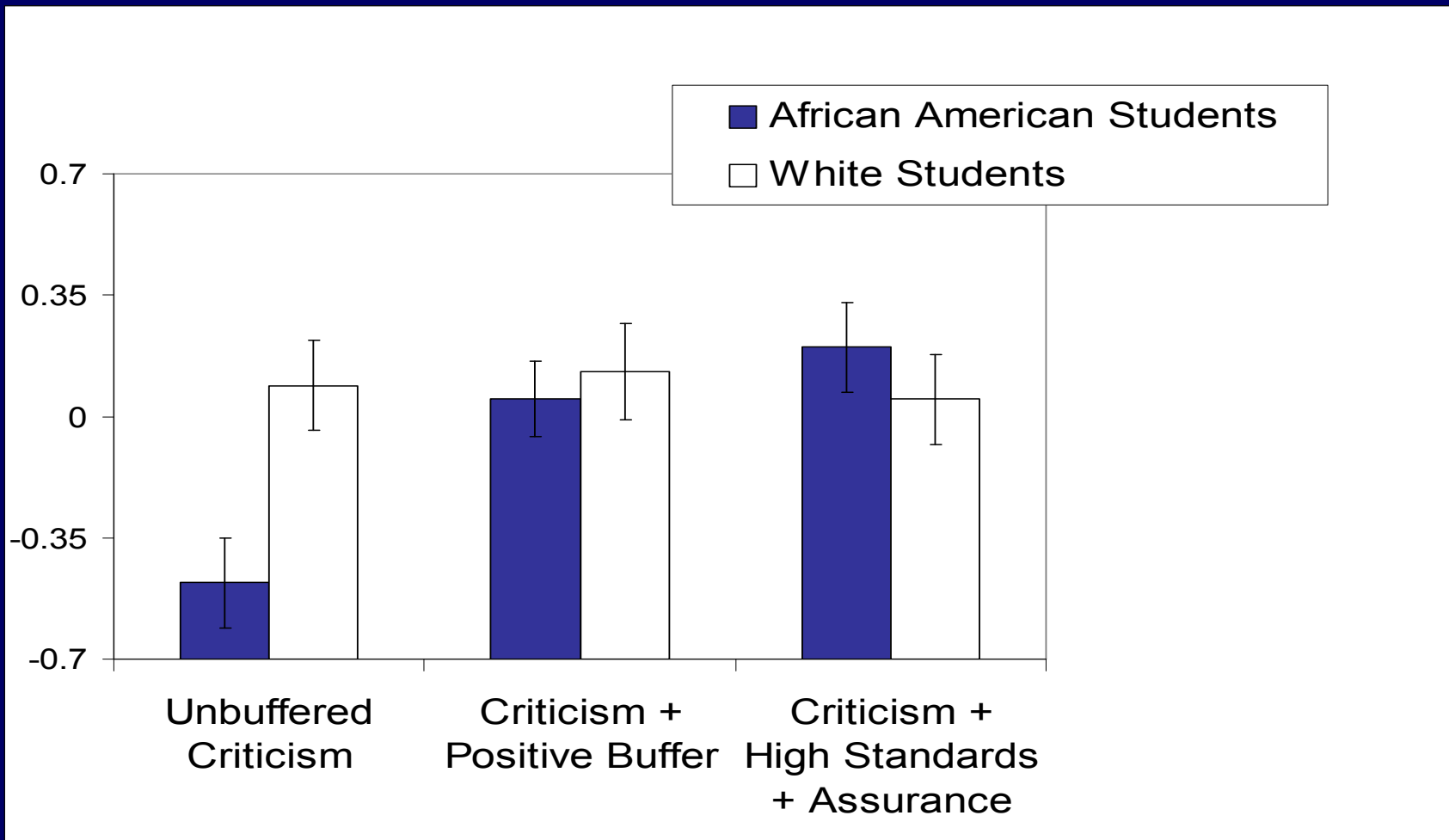
1. Unbuffered Criticism
2. Criticism + Positive Buffer
3. Criticism + High Standards + Assurance

Perceived Evaluator Bias

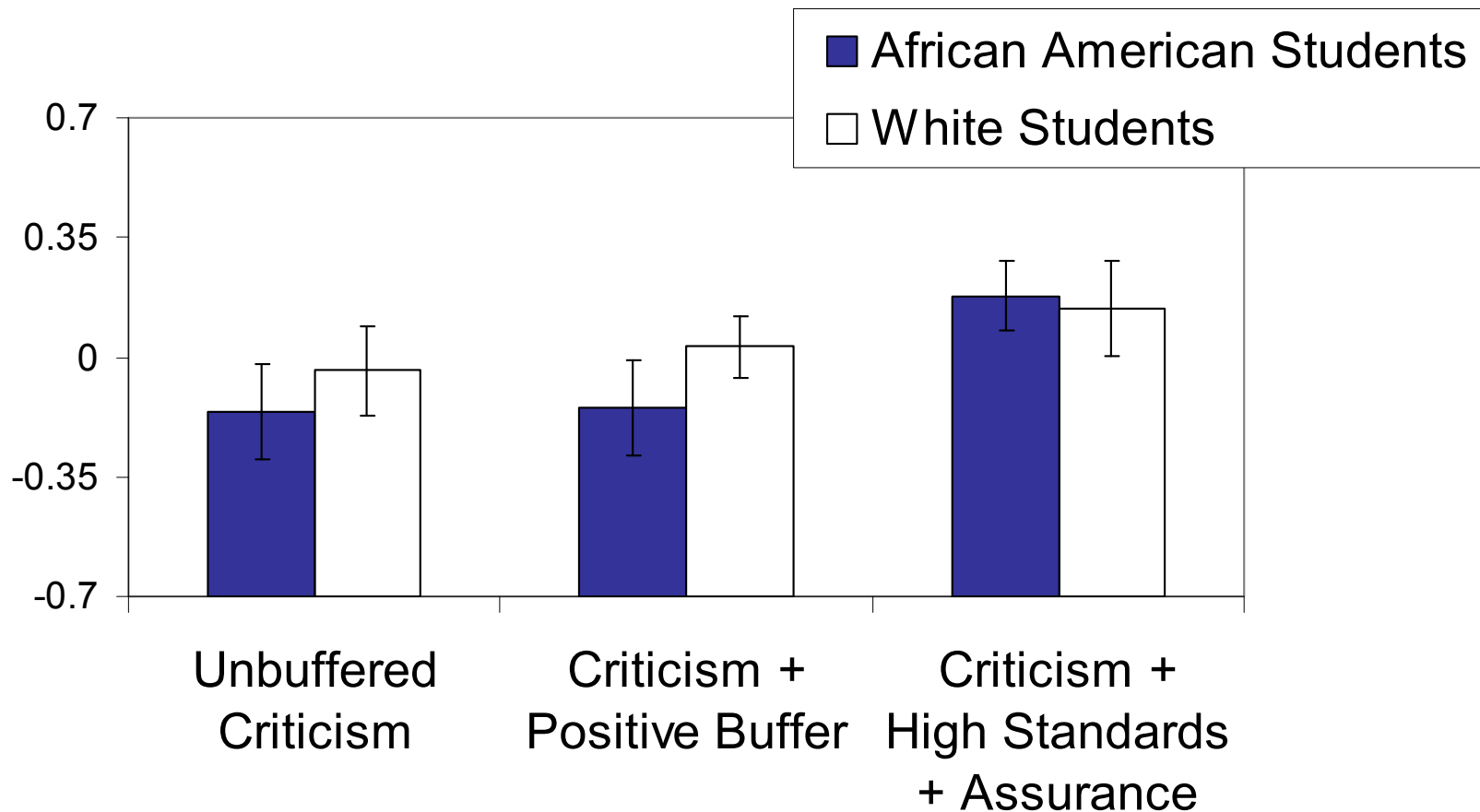


Scale range: 1-7

Motivation to Revise Essay (Standardized Composite)



Openness to Writing (Standardized Composite)





Mentor's Dilemma

- Replications

Generalizing to the classroom

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- Randomized, double-blind field experiment in middle school (Cohen, Purdie-Vaughns, Garcia, & Apfel, in preparation)

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- Collaborative project with teachers
 - Developed Hero Essay curriculum component
 - Middle-school students received structured feedback on essay; then revised it

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Mentor's Dilemma: Implications

- Racial and gender divides afford mistrust
- Situational cues can mitigate mistrust
- Relationship between trust and motivation

Research Questions

- How central is social identity to self-view; does this centrality affect educational outcomes?
(Collective Threat)
- How does social identity affect feedback interaction?
(Mentor's Dilemma)
- Conceptual model, larger-scale intervention

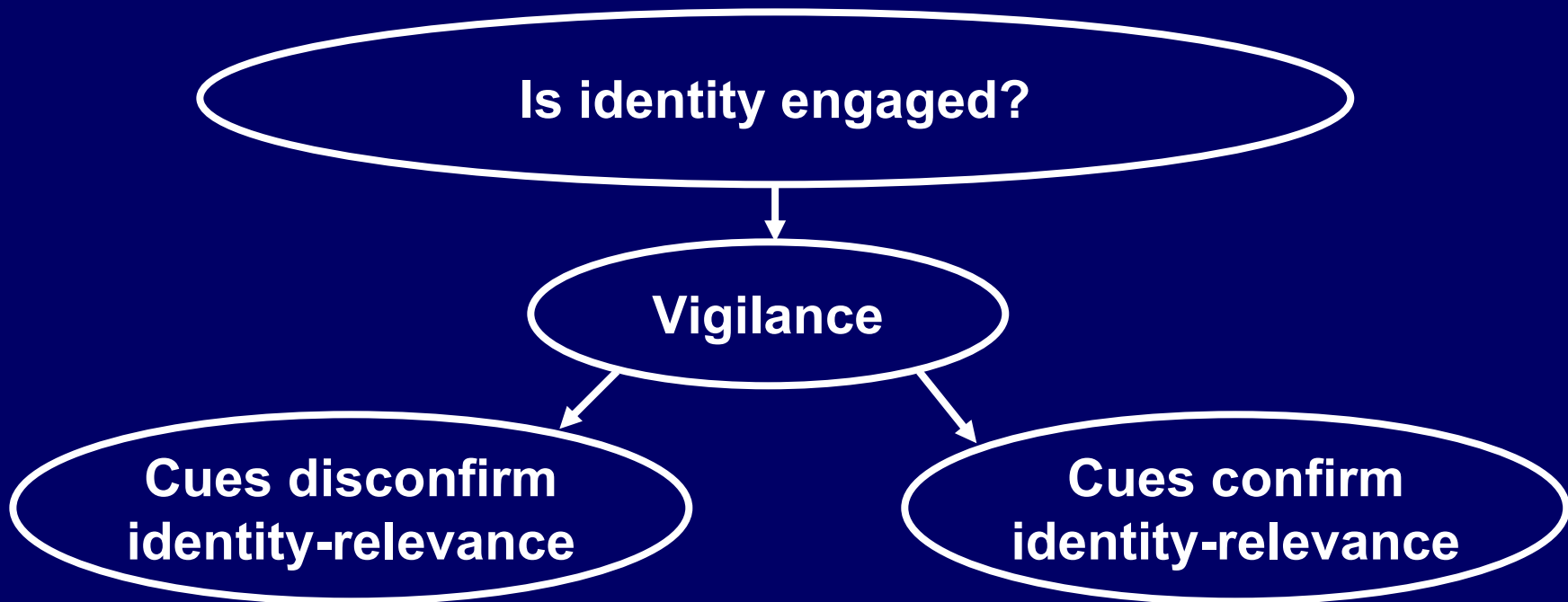
Is identity engaged?

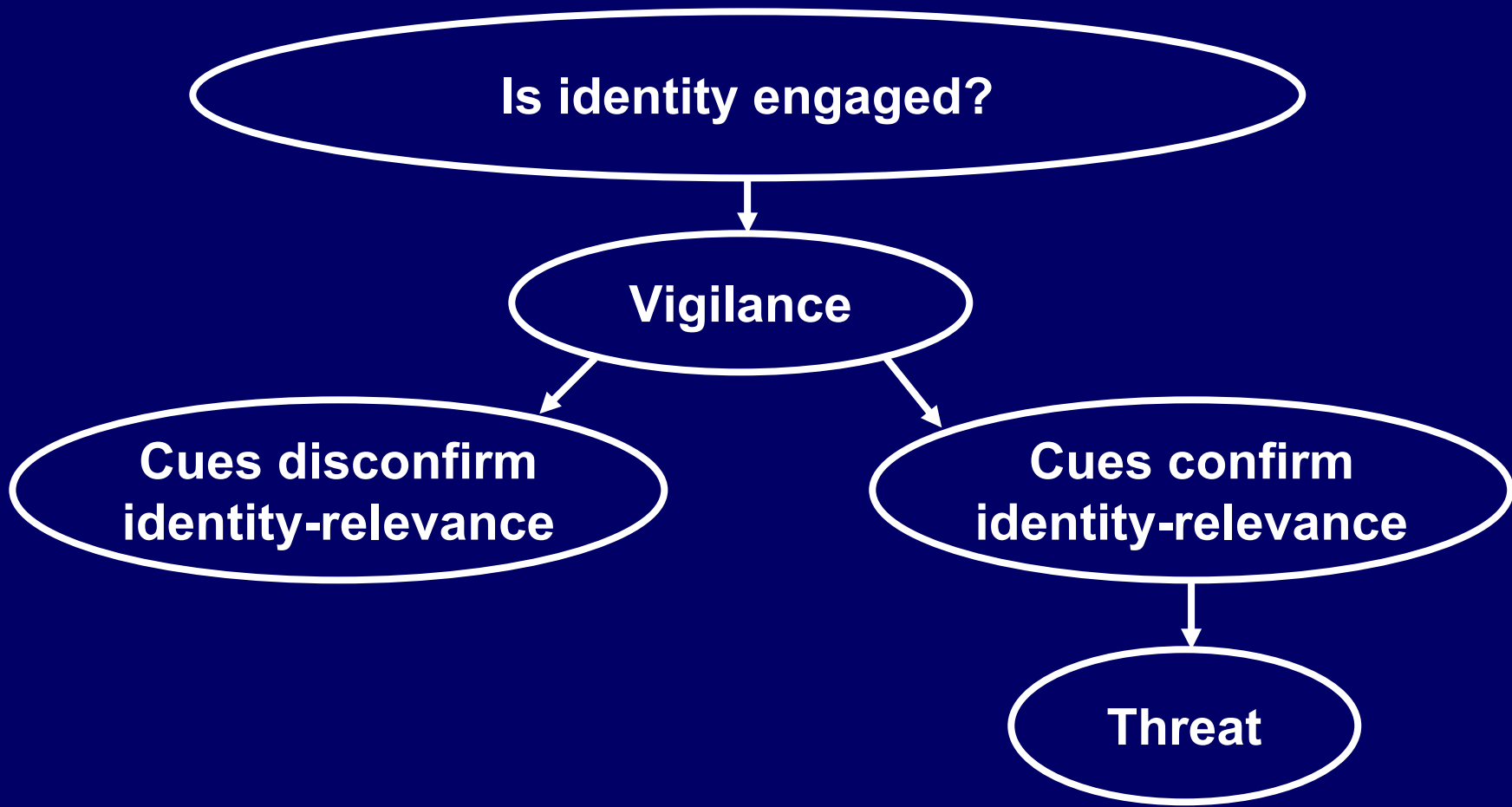
Identity Engagement Model, Cohen & Garcia (2008), Cur. Dir. in Psy. Sci.

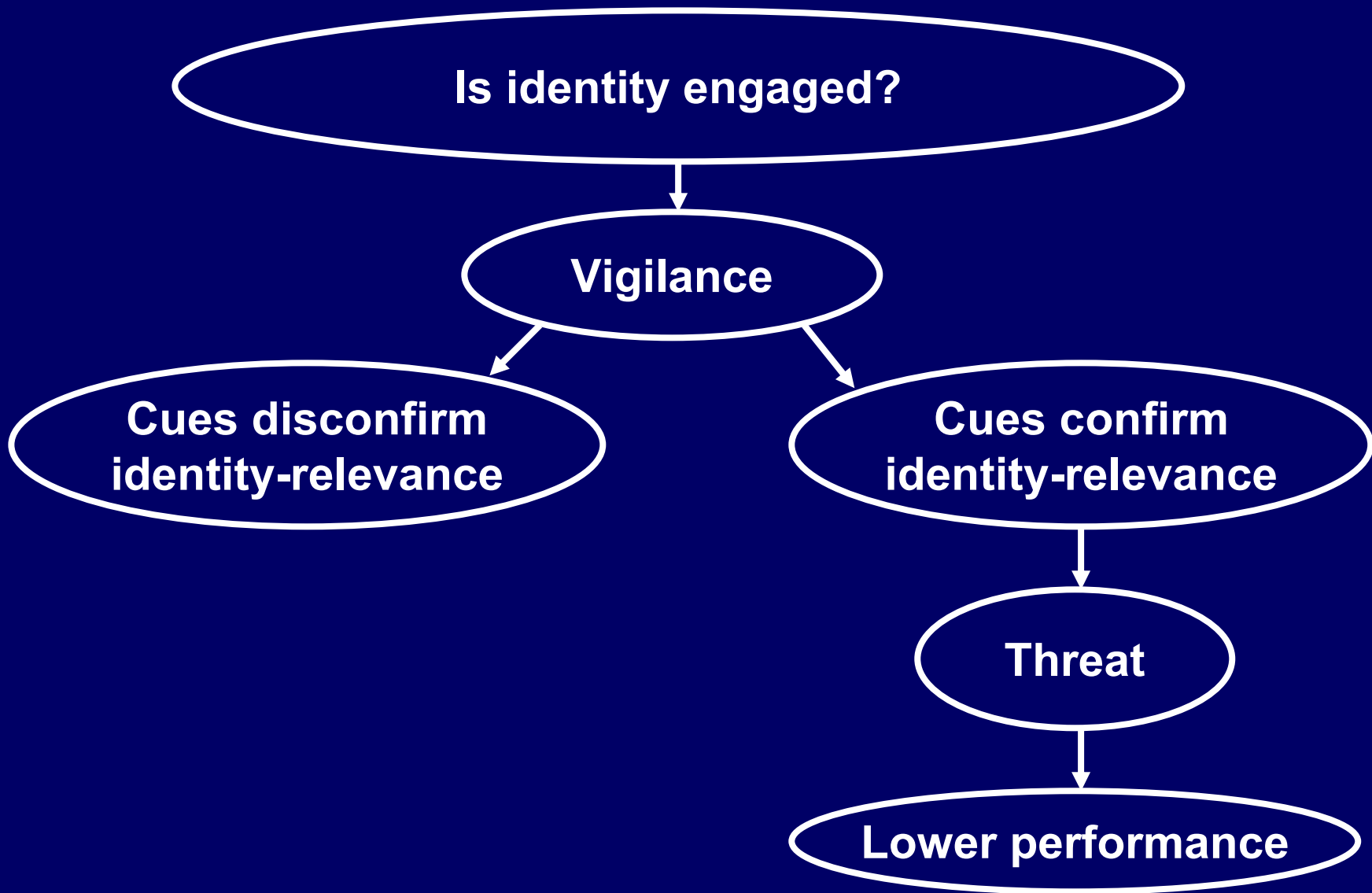
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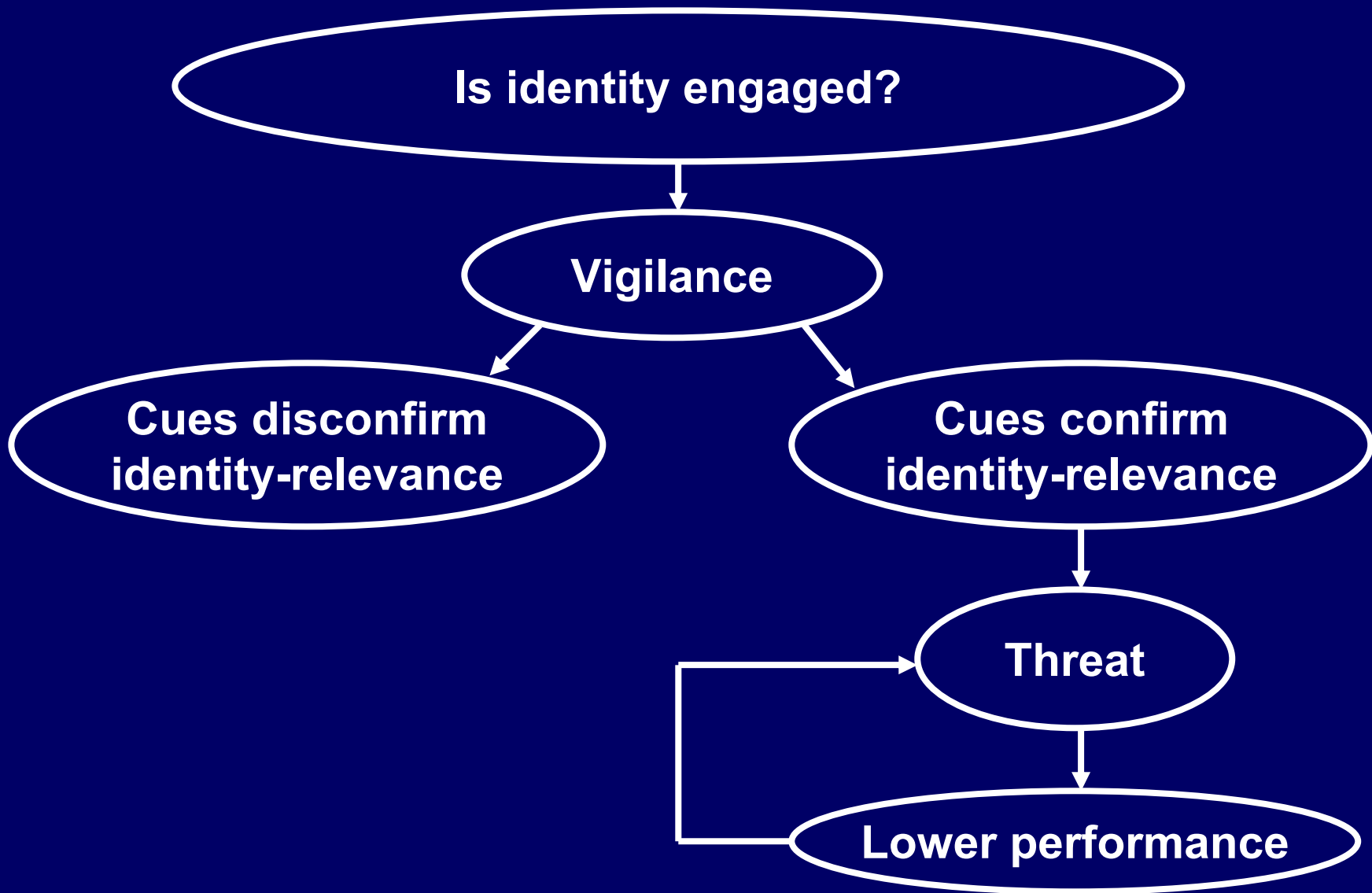
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graph TD; A([Is identity engaged?]) --> B([Vigilance]);
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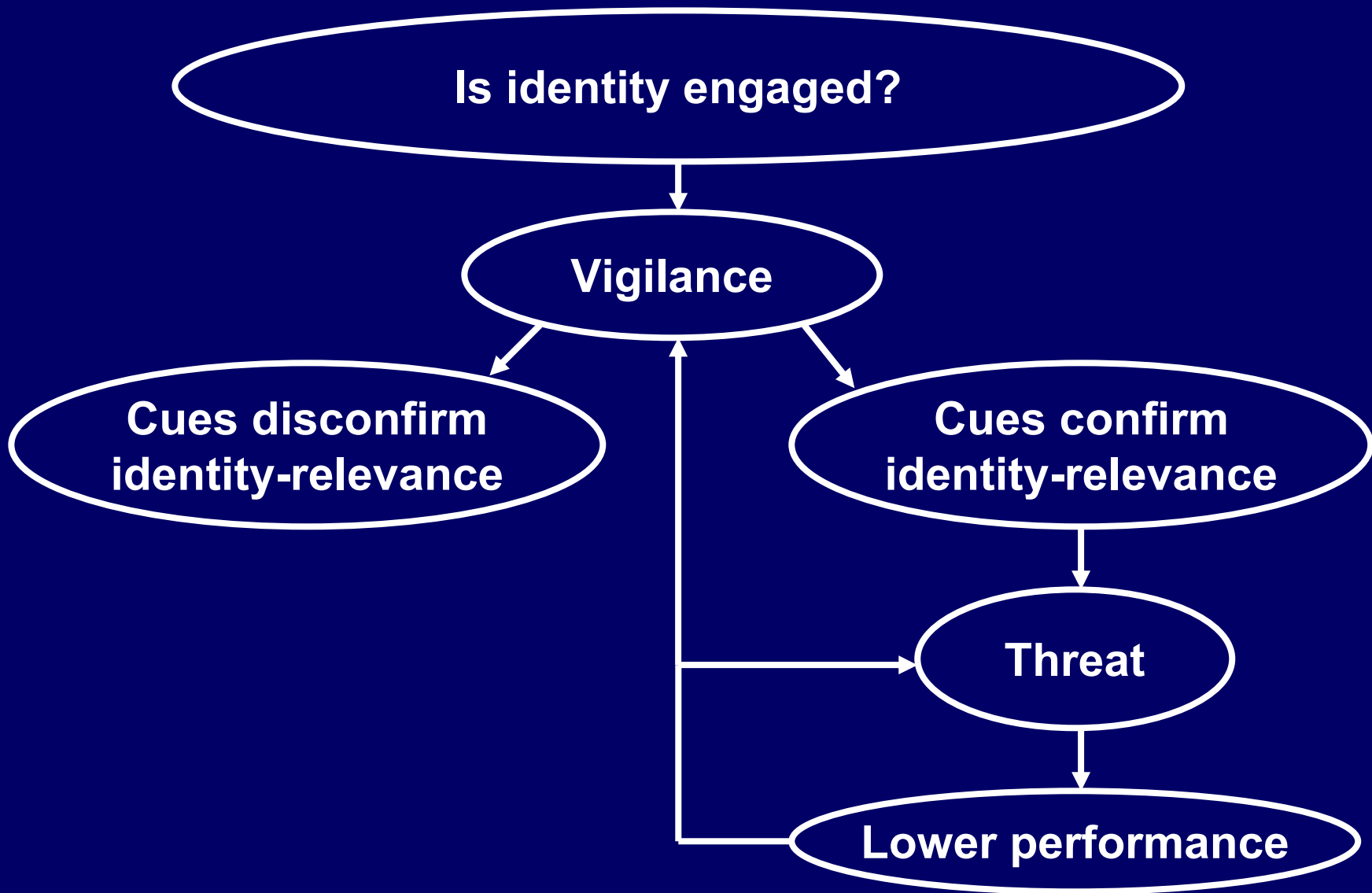
Vigilance

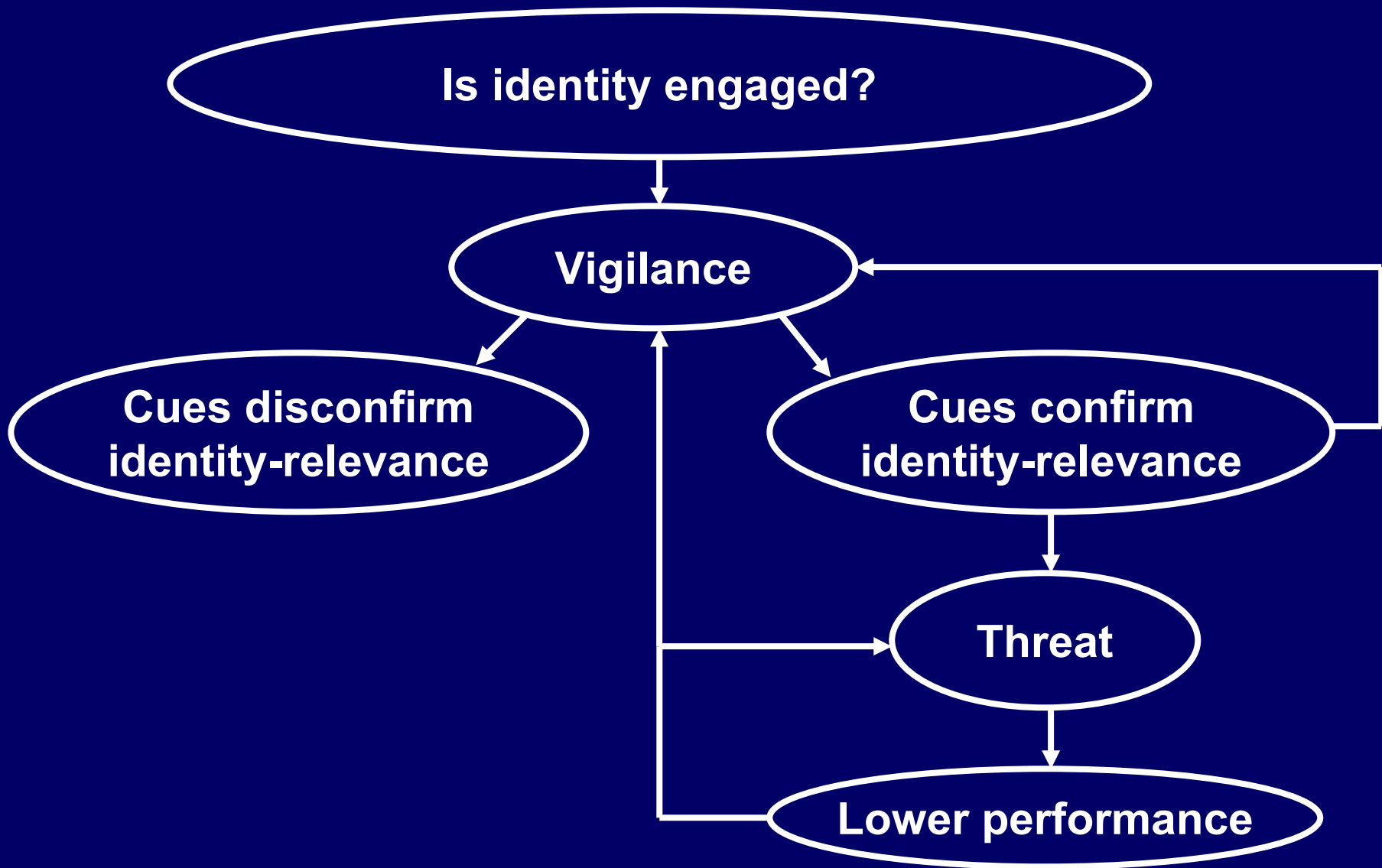


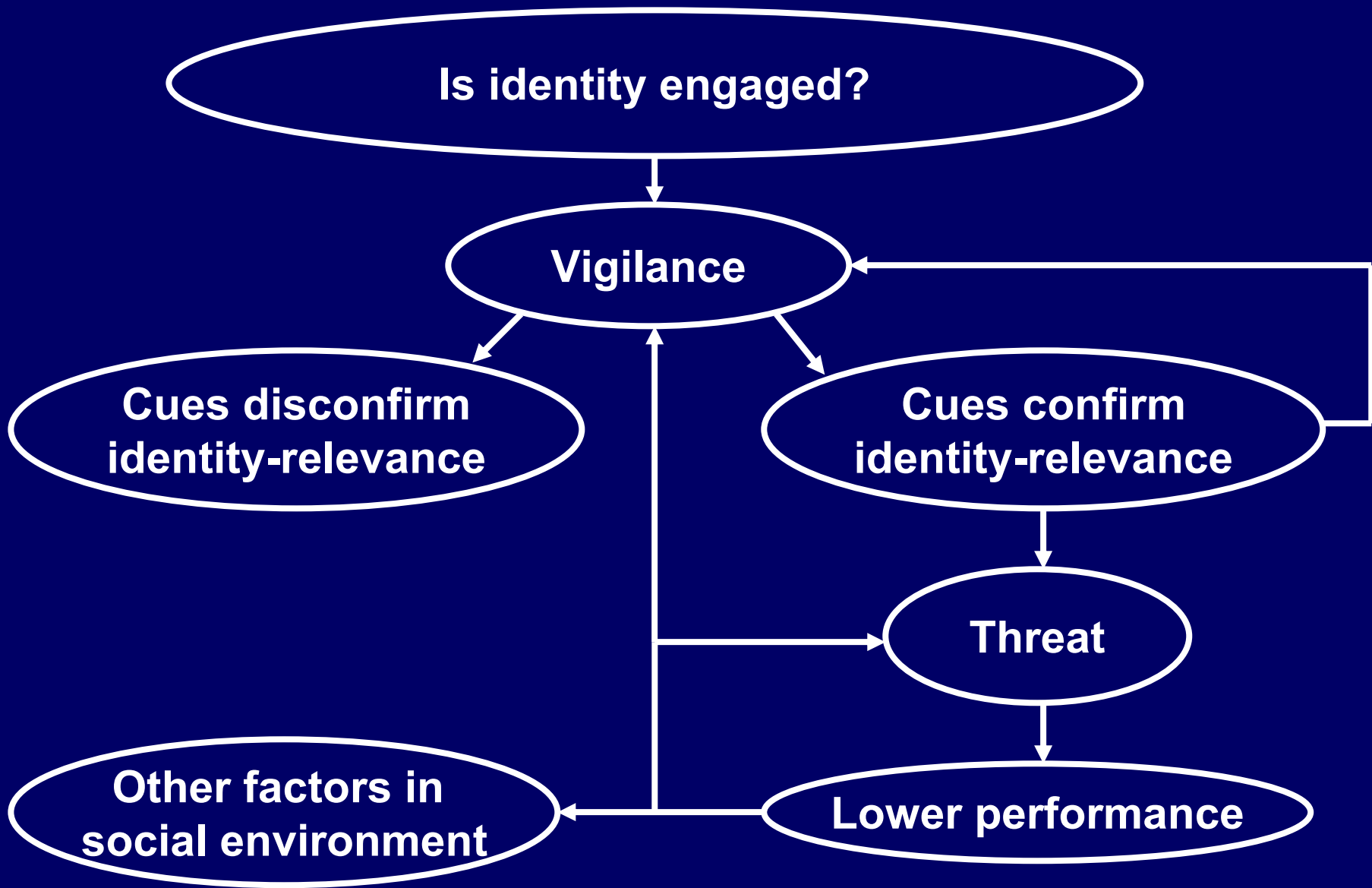


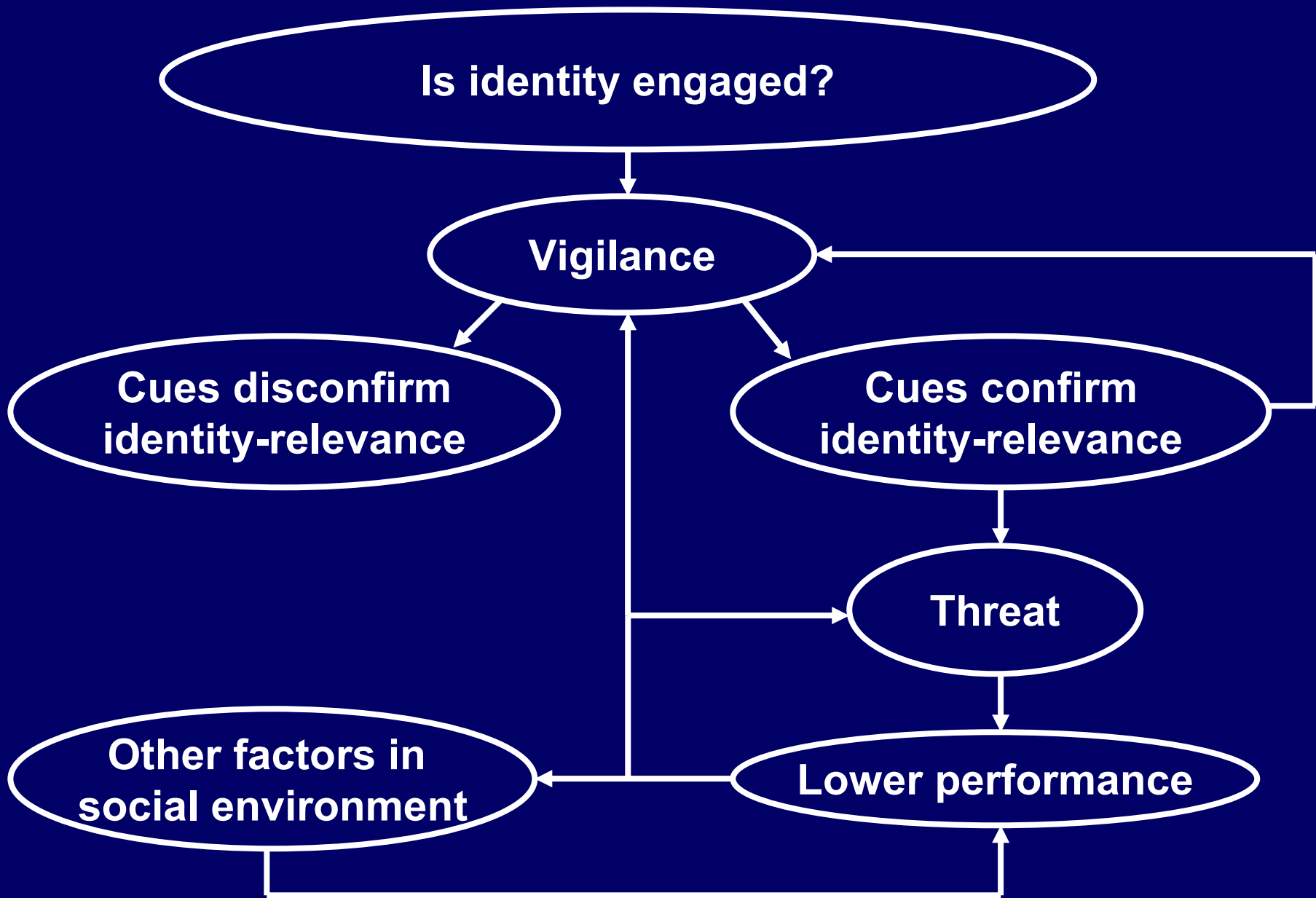


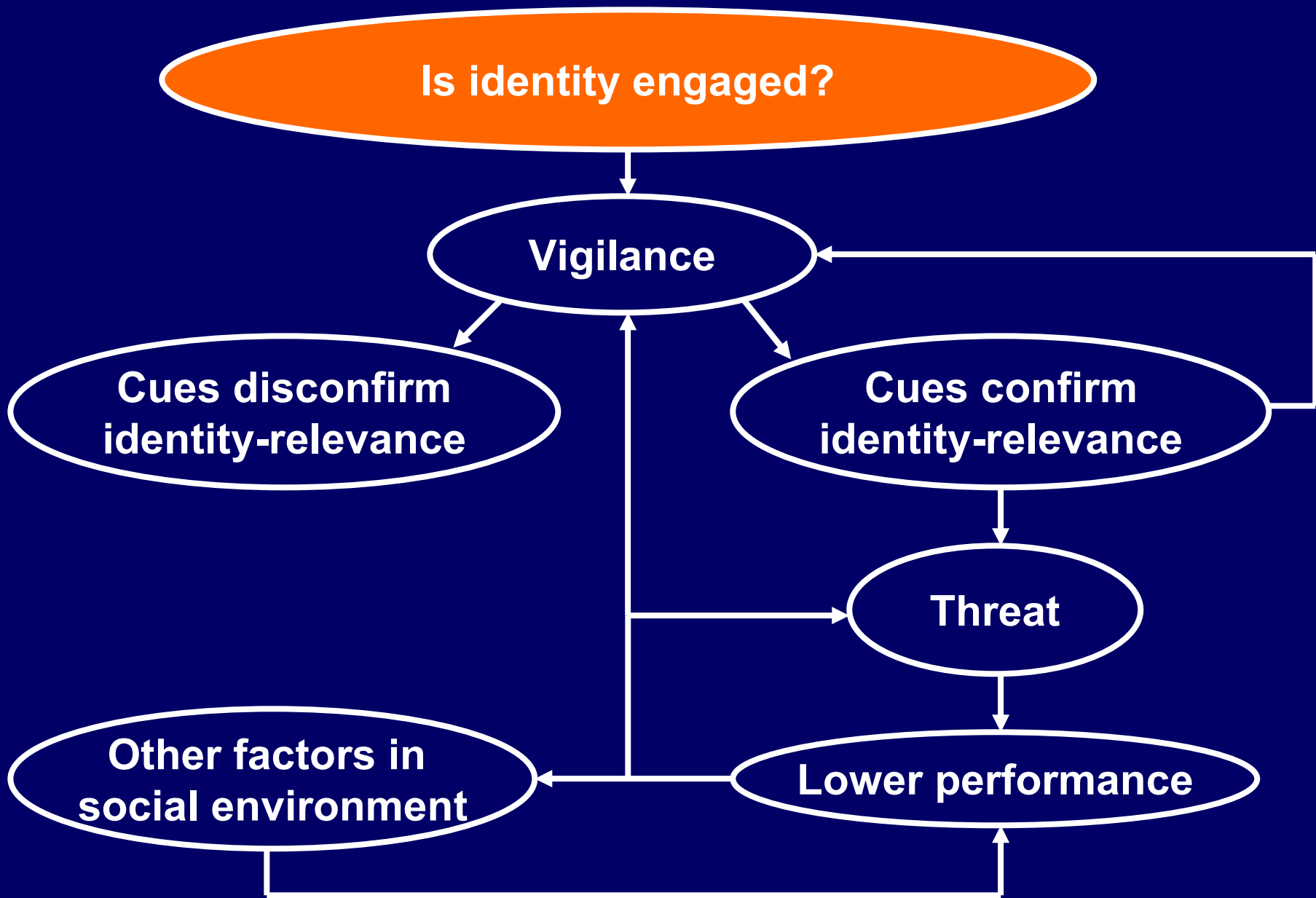


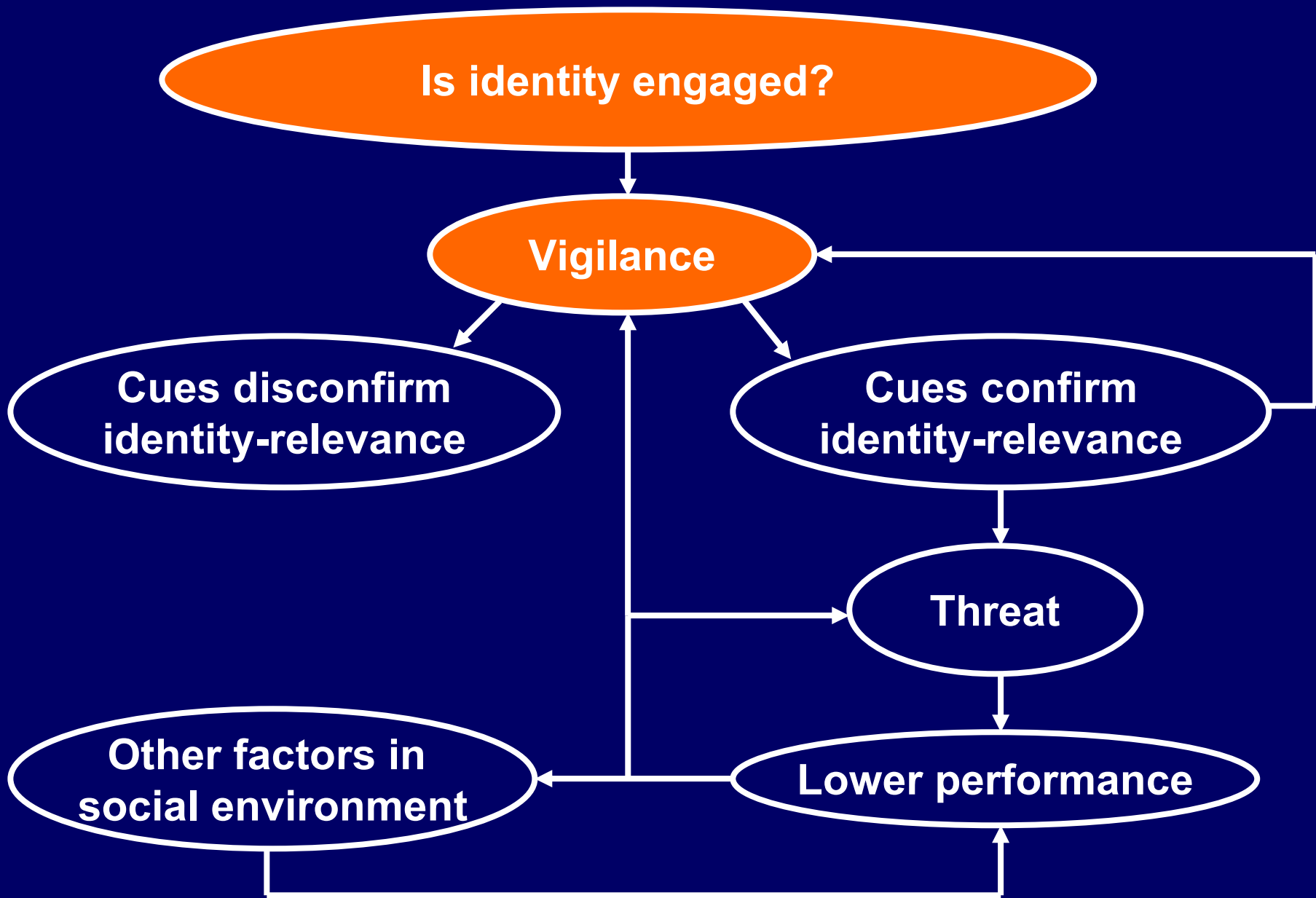


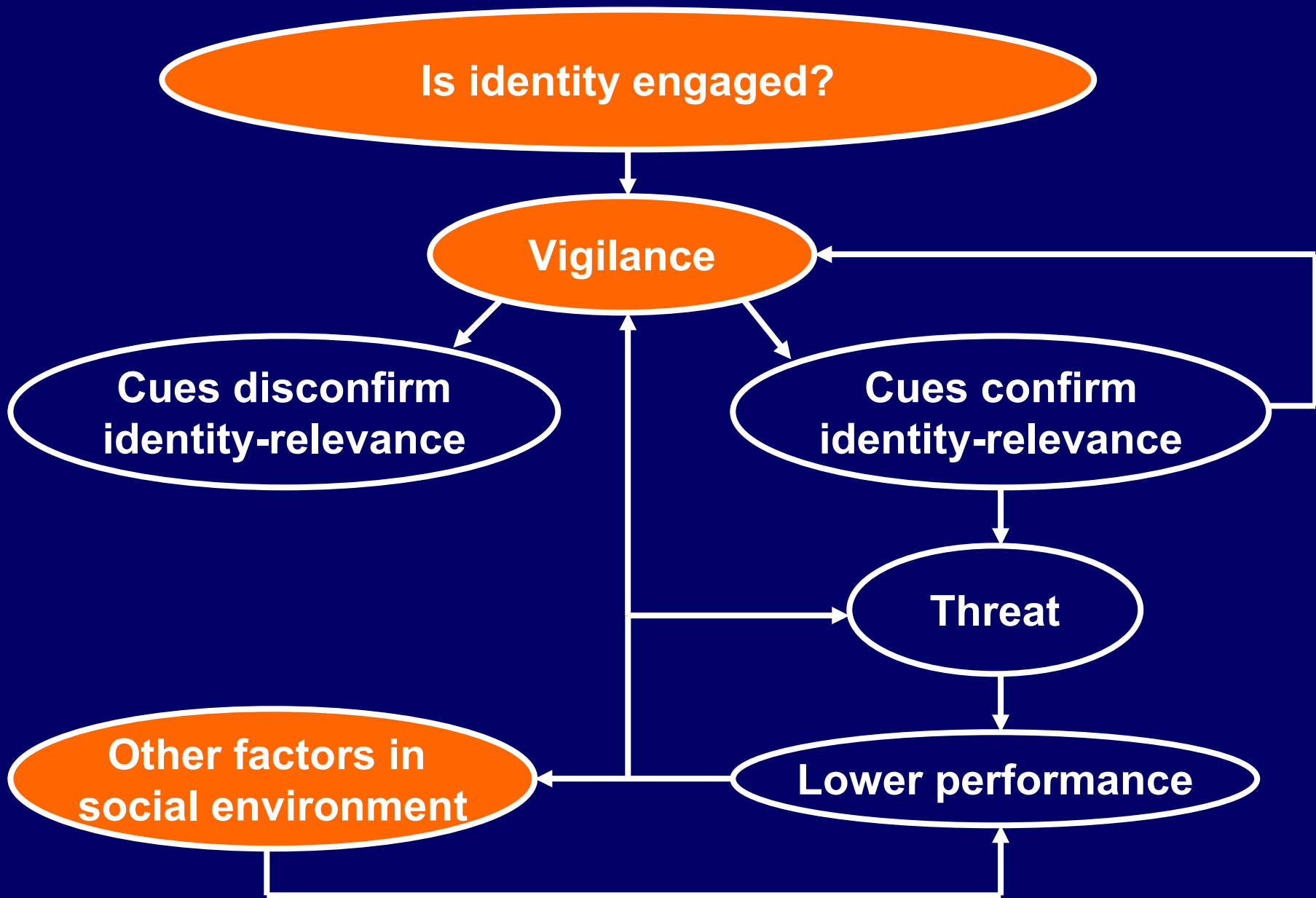


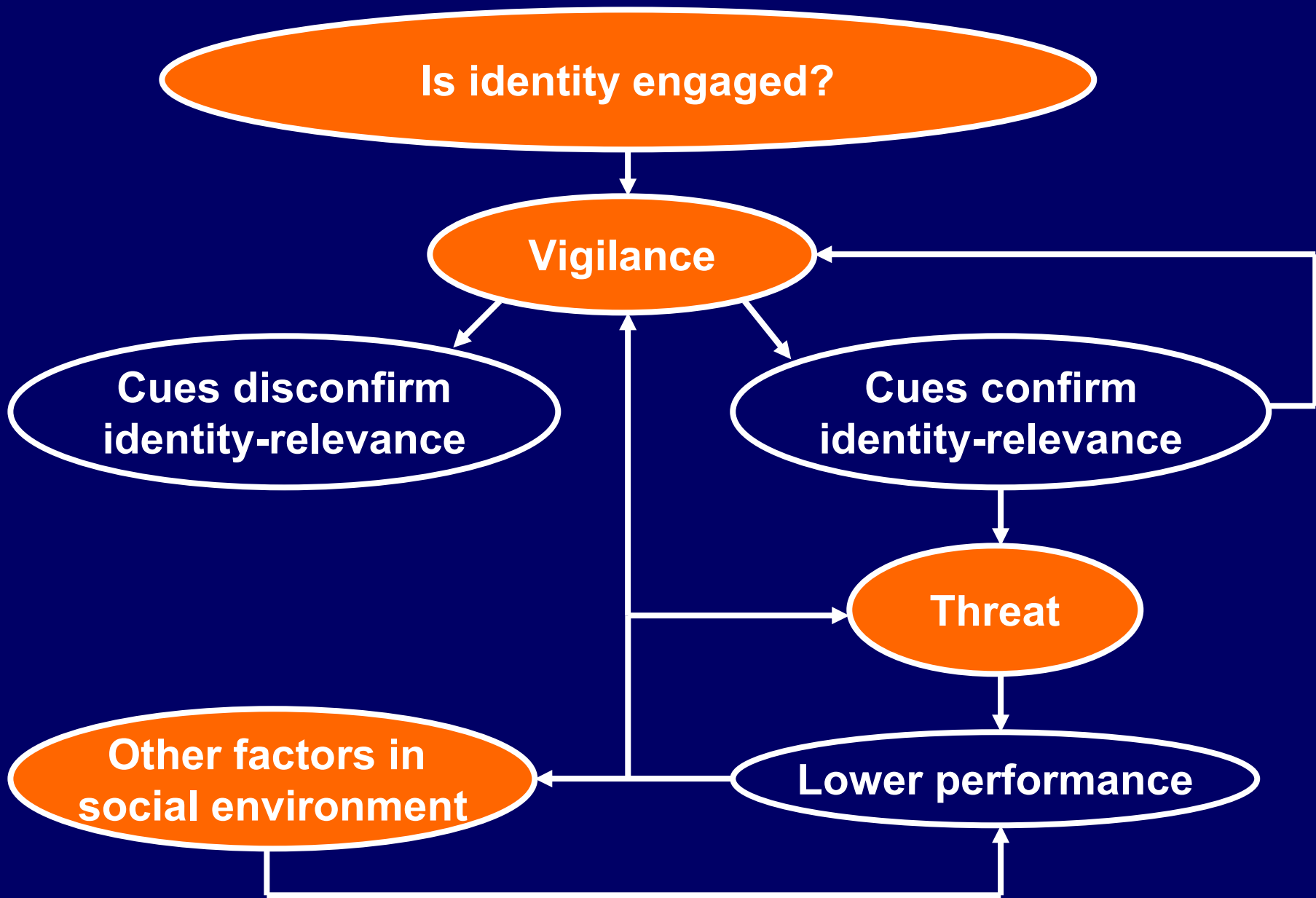












Reducing Threat: Self-Affirmation Intervention

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Self-affirmation (Steele, 1988; Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Martens, Johns, Greenberg, & Schimel, 2005; Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006)

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

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Expressive writing interventions tested in health contexts
(Pennebaker, 2001)

Self-Affirmation Field Experiment

- Middle school research site
- Partnership with teachers and administrators
- Worked with 7th graders— important time of transition (Eccles, Lord, & Midgley, 1991; Simmons, Black, & Zhou, 1991)
- Economically middle-class district
- Student body: 50% minority (predominantly African American), 50% European American

Self-Affirmation Field Experiments

- Randomized, double-blind experiments

Self-Affirmation Field Experiment

- Interventions timed to occur at important evaluative moments (beginning of school year, test days)
- Structured writing assignment
- Two experimental conditions
 - Affirmation condition:
Students wrote about important value



[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



Excerpts from self-affirmation exercise

"[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."

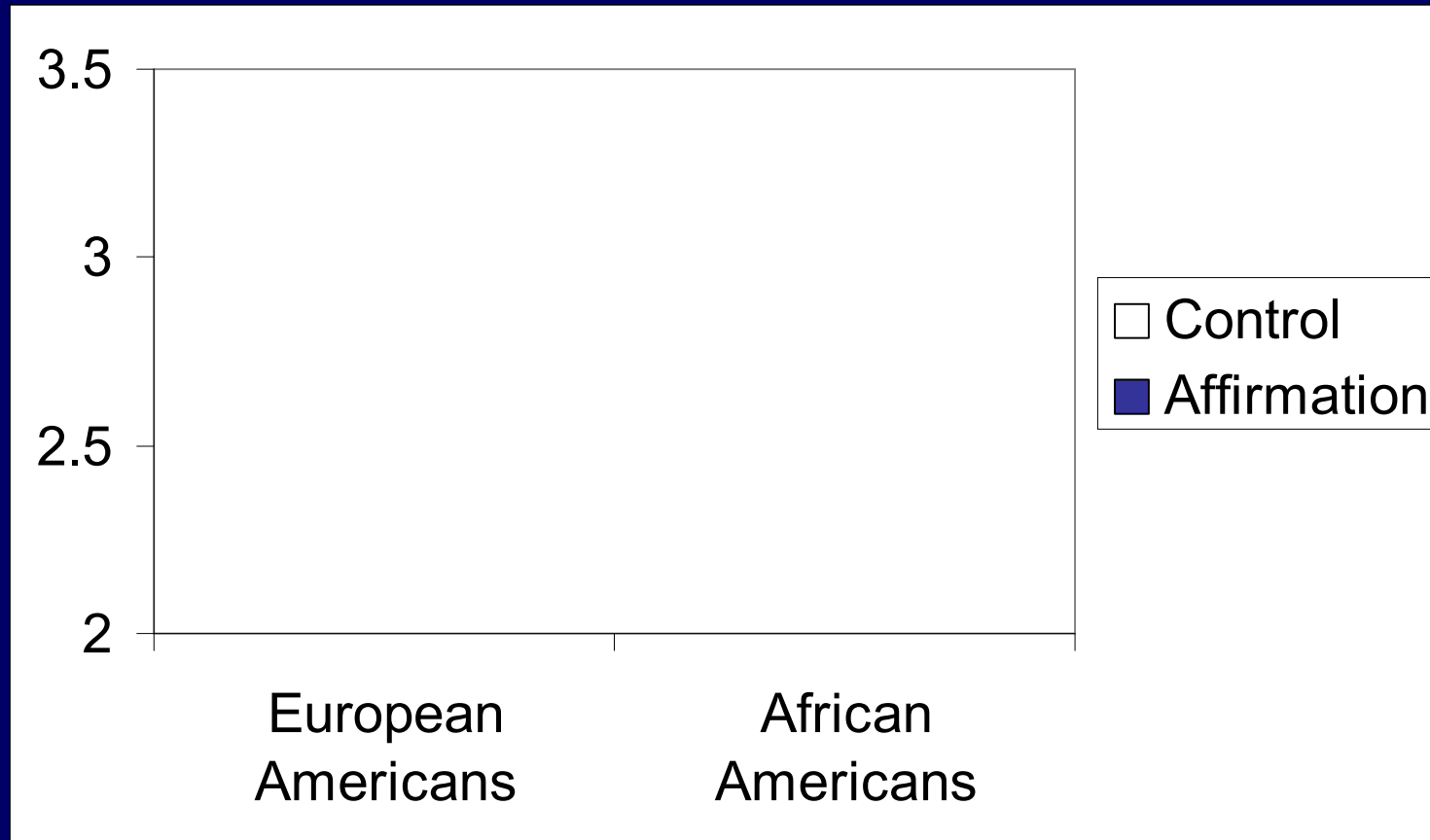
"If I didn't have creativity, I'd be bored out of my mind."

"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."

Self-Affirmation Field Experiment

- Interventions timed to beginning of school year and test days
- Structured writing assignment
- Two experimental conditions
 - Affirmation condition:
Students wrote about important value
 - Control condition:
Students wrote about unimportant value or alternative neutral topic

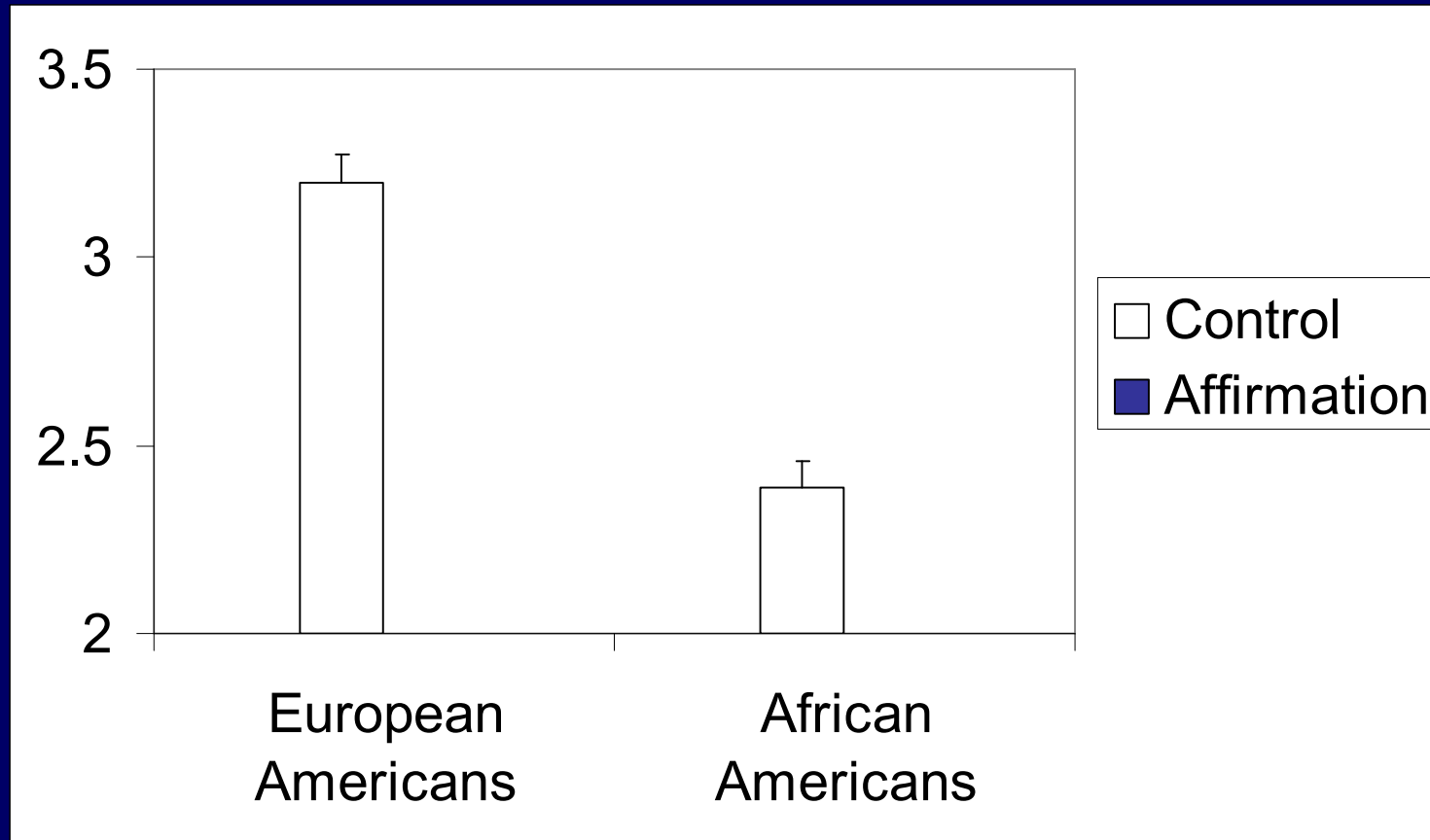
End-of-quarter course grade (After 1 treatment)



Covariates in analysis of each racial group: Prior performance, teacher

Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006, *Science*

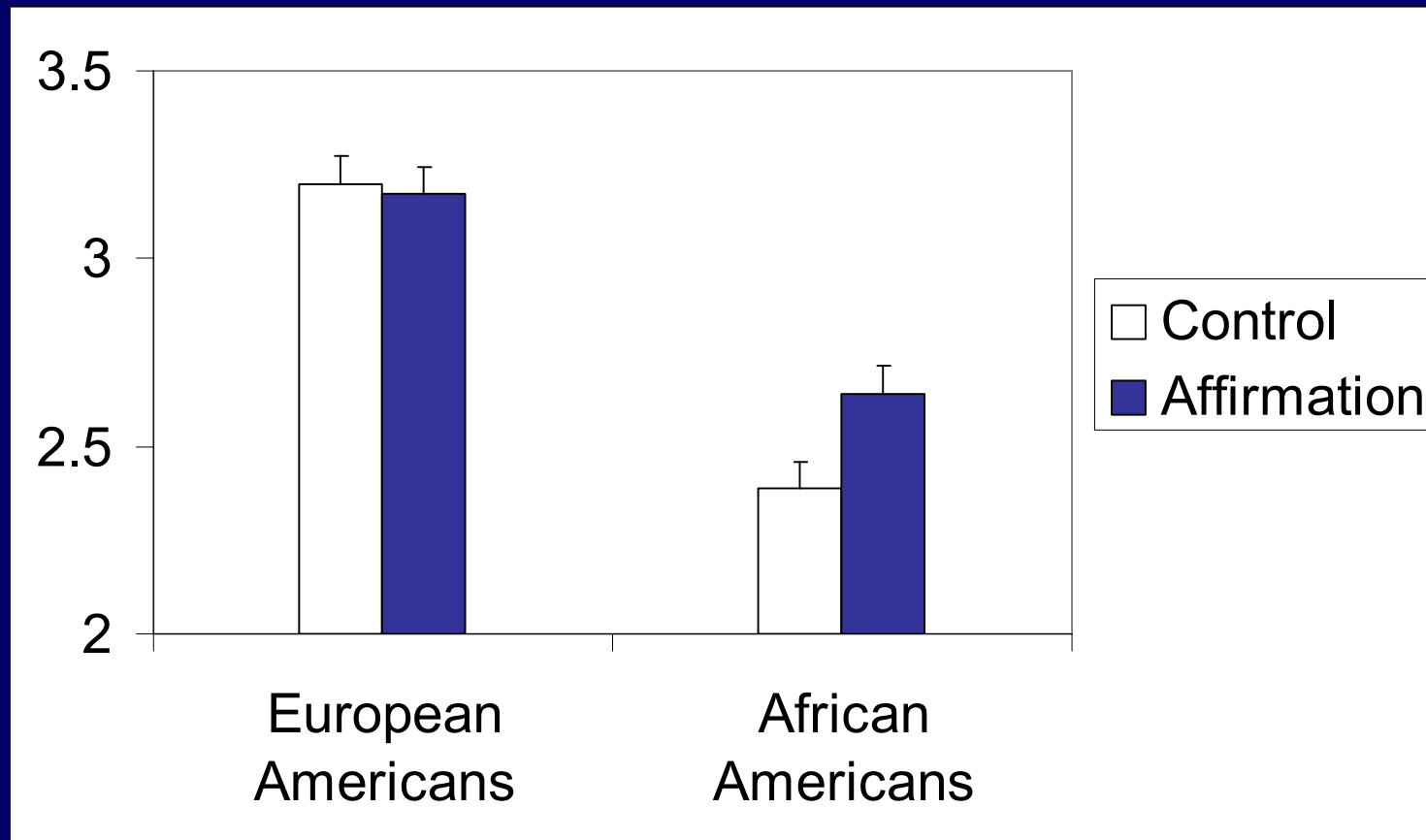
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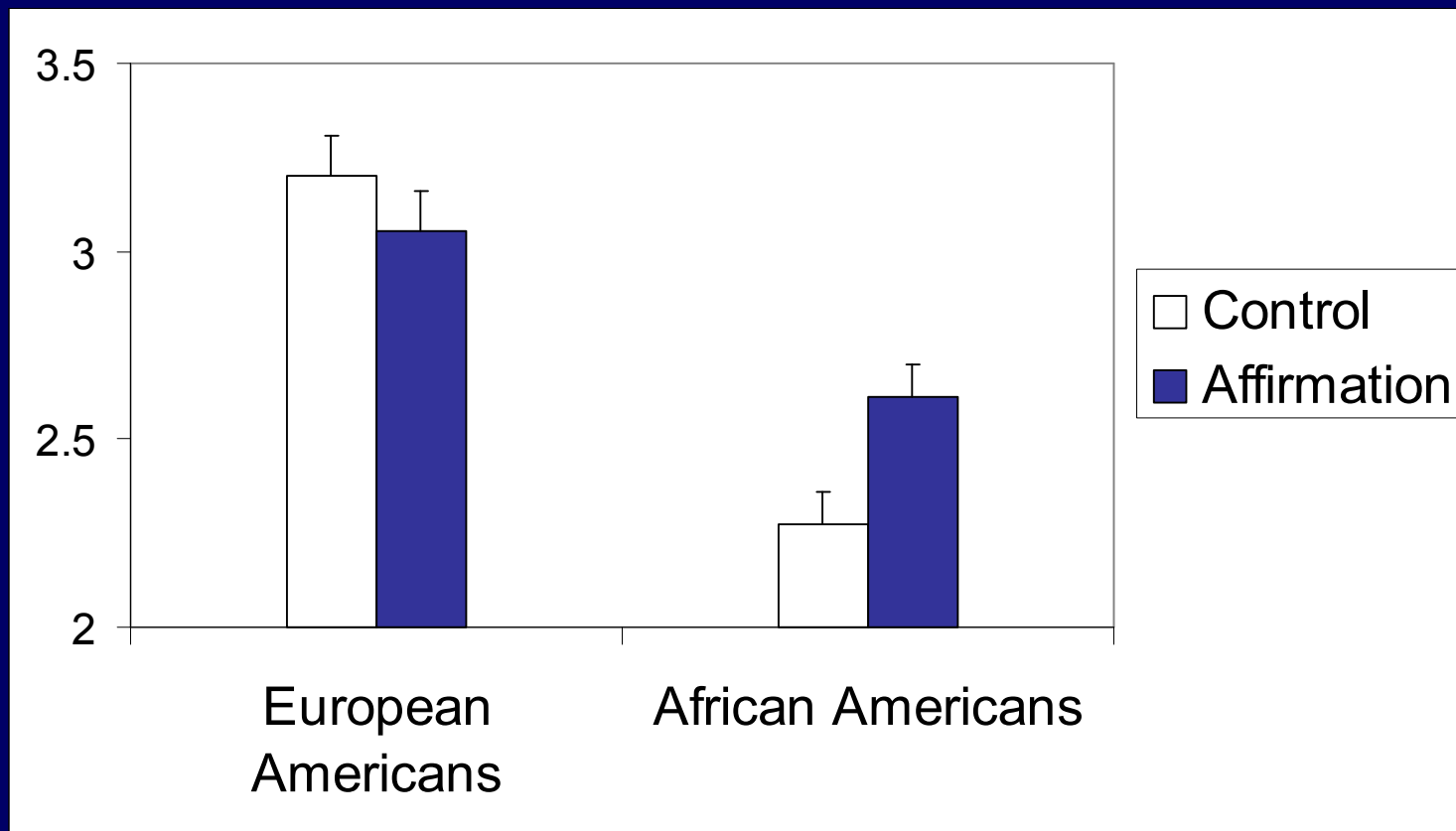
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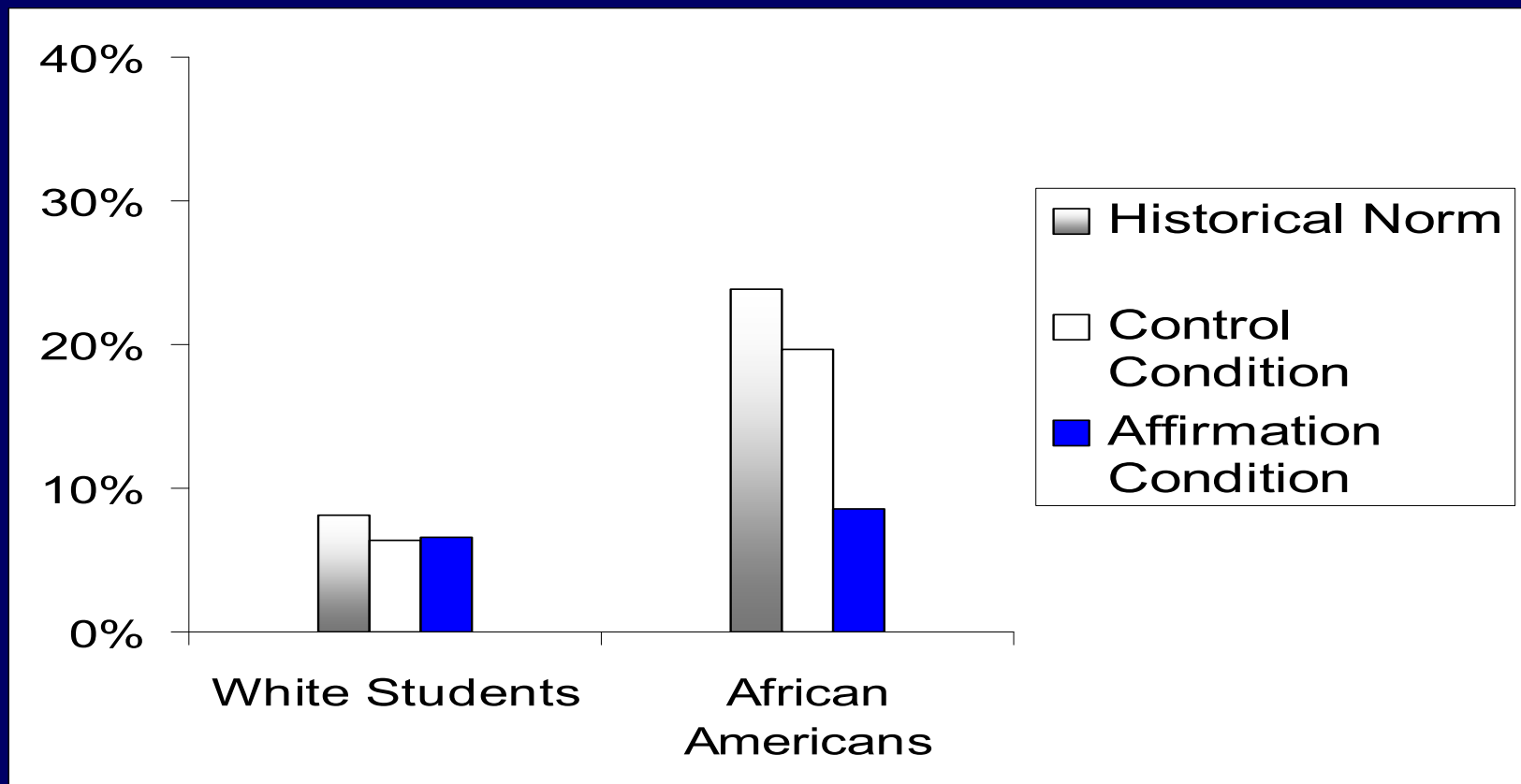
End-of-quarter course grade: Replication (After 2 treatments)



Covariates in analysis of each racial group: Prior performance, teacher

Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006, *Science*

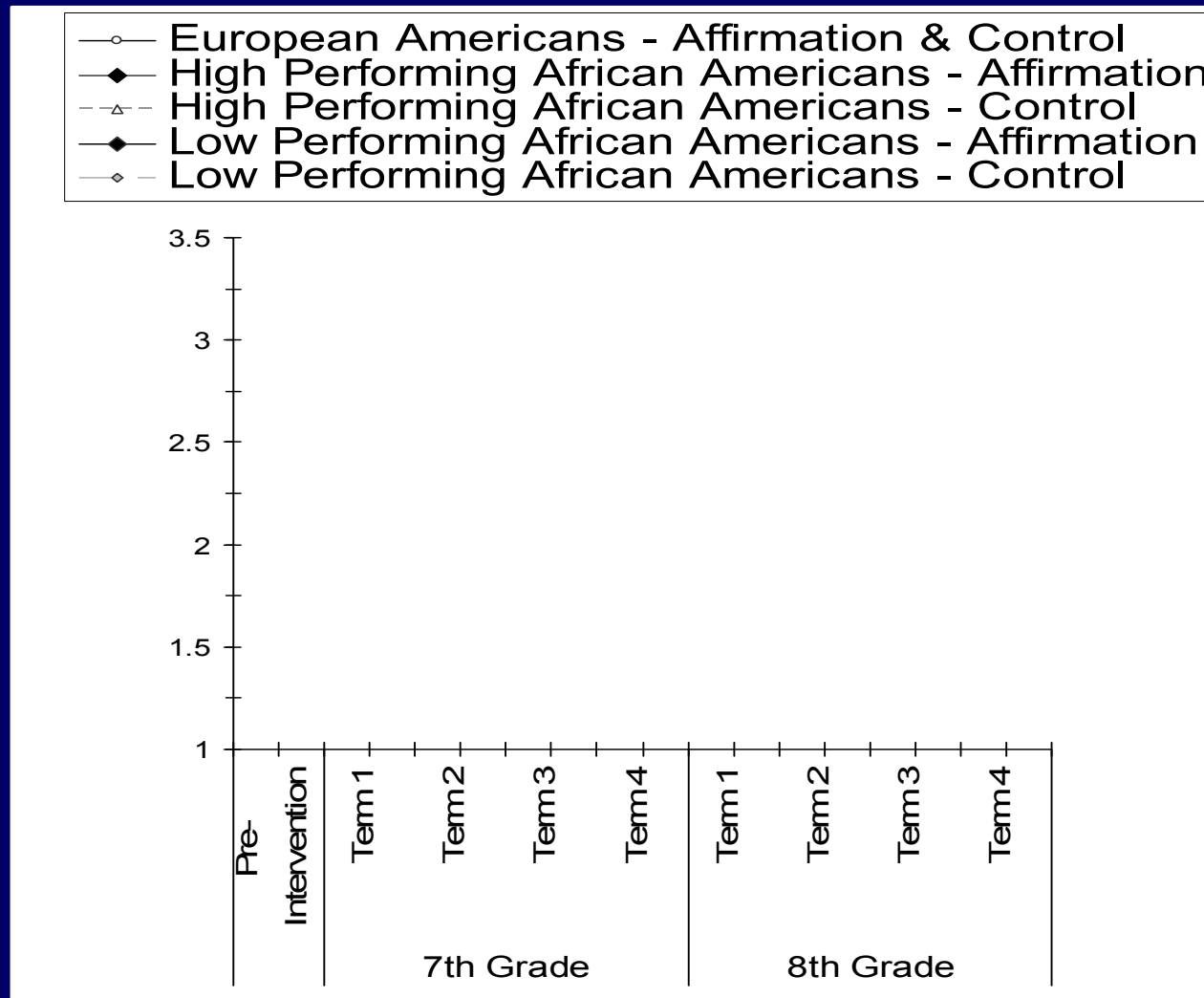
Poor performance rate: Percentage of students receiving D or below in course



Do intervention effects persist?

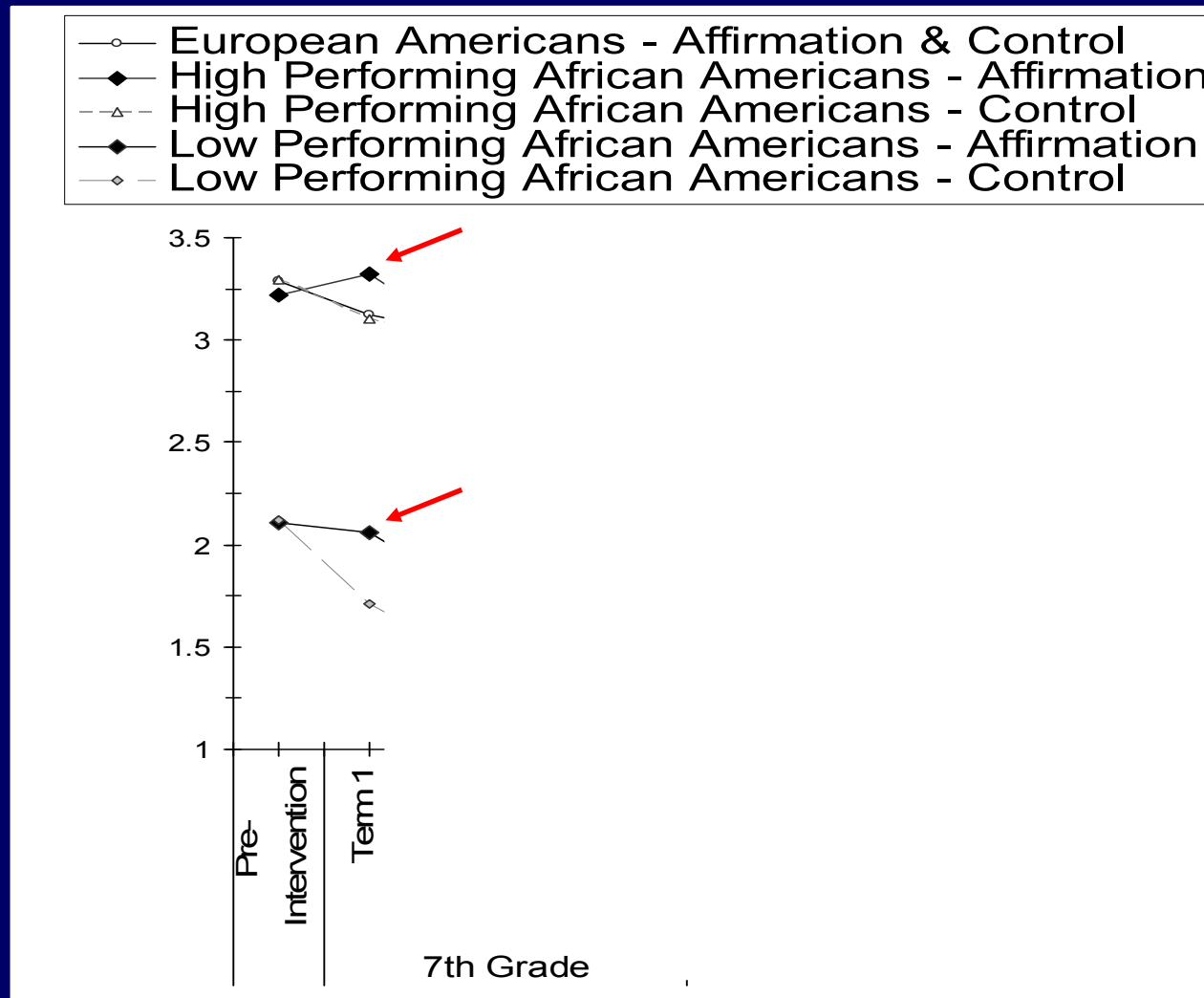
- Students given subsequent doses of affirmation or control exercises
- Followed for two remaining years of middle school: 7th and 8th grade

Affirmation effects on overall GPA for two years: By low versus high achieving minority students



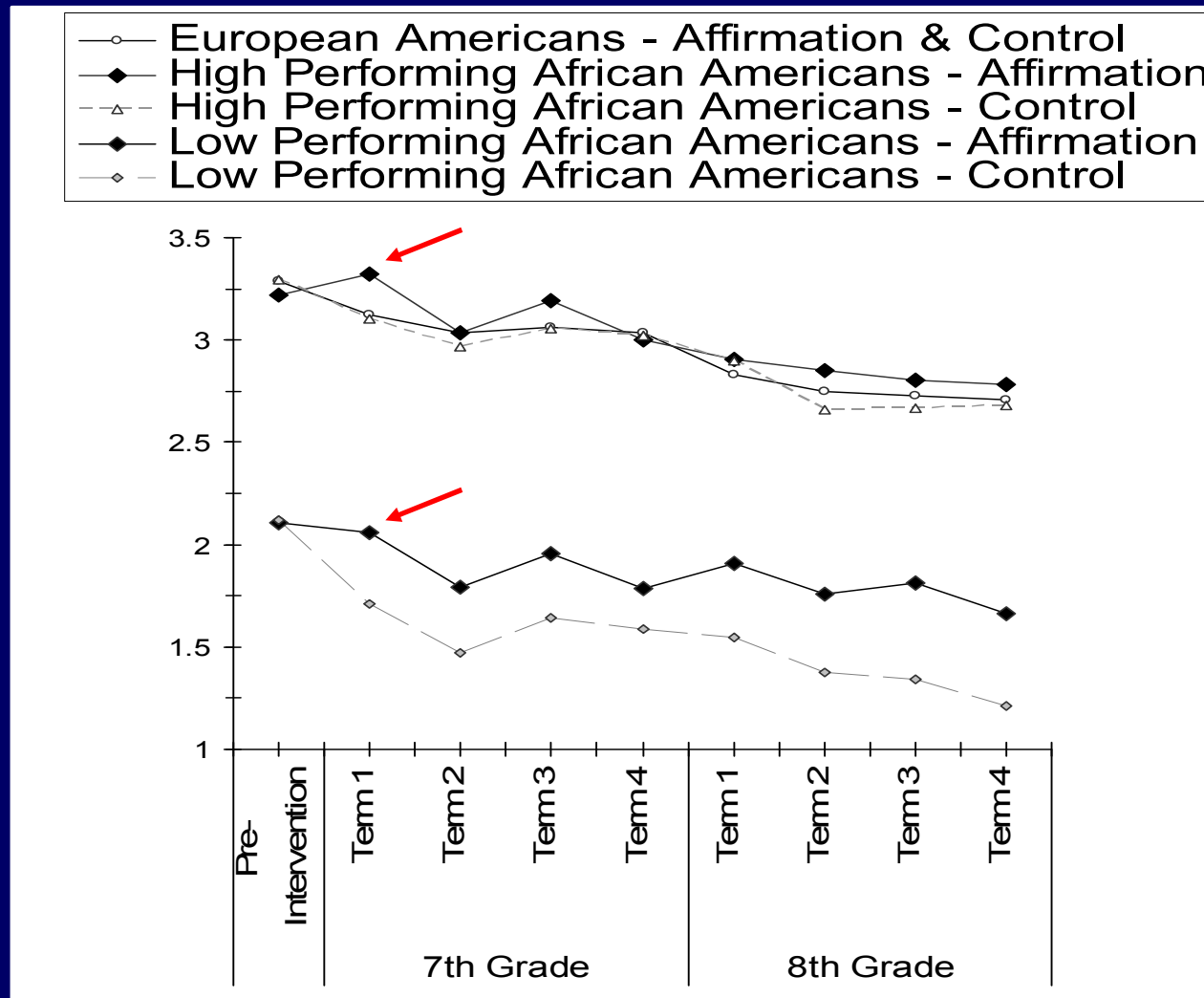
Cohen, Garcia, Purdie-Vaughns, Apfel, Brzustoski, 2009, *Science*

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Understanding intervention effects*

- Recursive processes
- Structural gateways

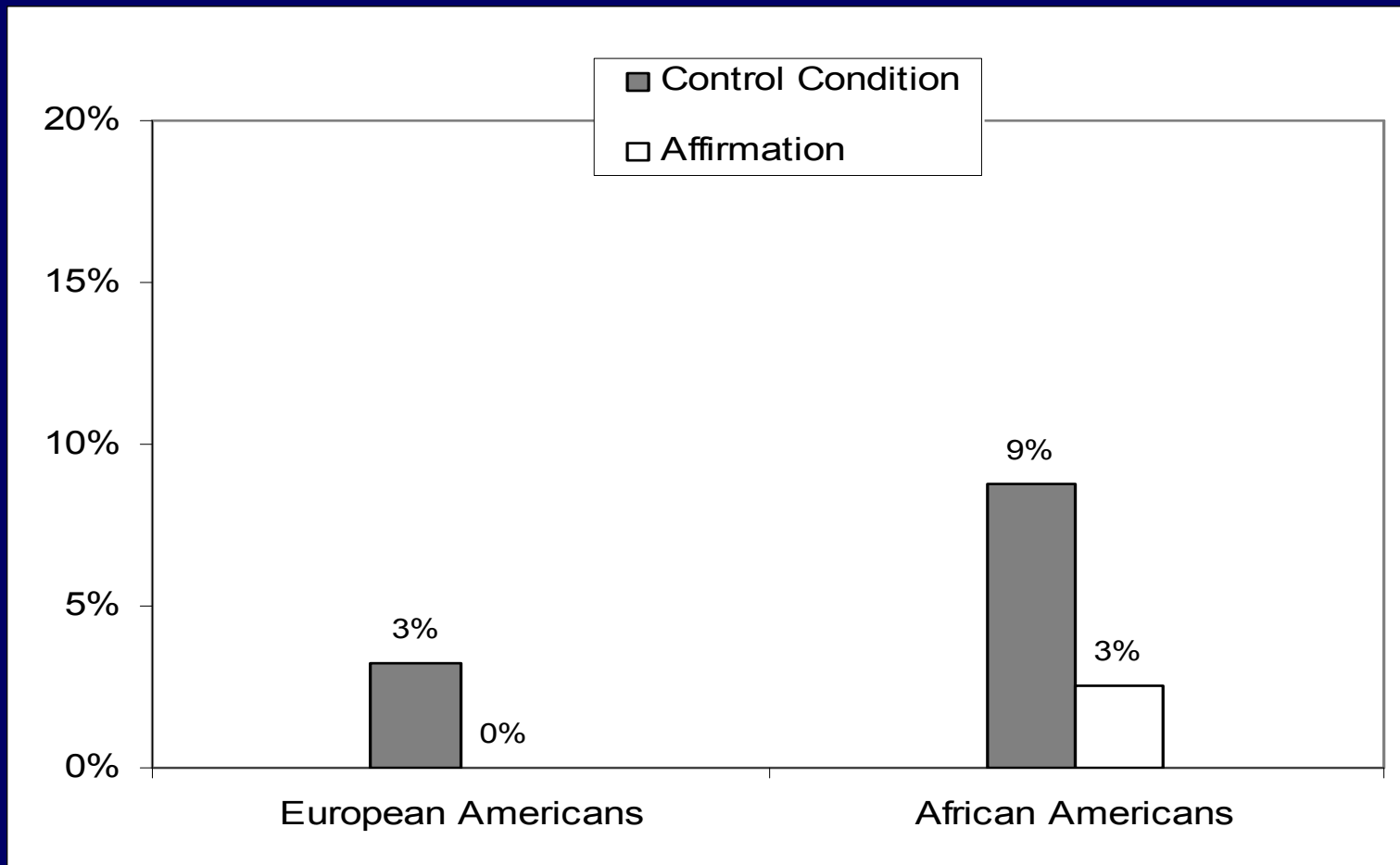
*Cohen, G. L., Garcia, J., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Apfel, N., & Brzustoski, P. (2009). Recursive processes in self-affirmation: Intervening to close the minority achievement gap.



Percentage of students classified as “at risk” after the intervention (enrolled in remedial program or retained in grade)

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■





Conclusions and Continuing Questions

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- Role of time

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- Structural and psychological interventions are complementary

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- Role of social identity in motivation and performance
- Role of time
- Structural and psychological interventions are complementary
- Implications for other domains of functioning



Research Team, Collaborators, and Contributors

Acknowledgments

Teachers, administrators,
and students at our
school sites

Research Collaborators

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