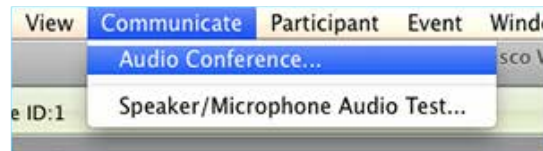# We Belong in School: Interventions to Promote Social Belonging for Educational Equity and Student Success
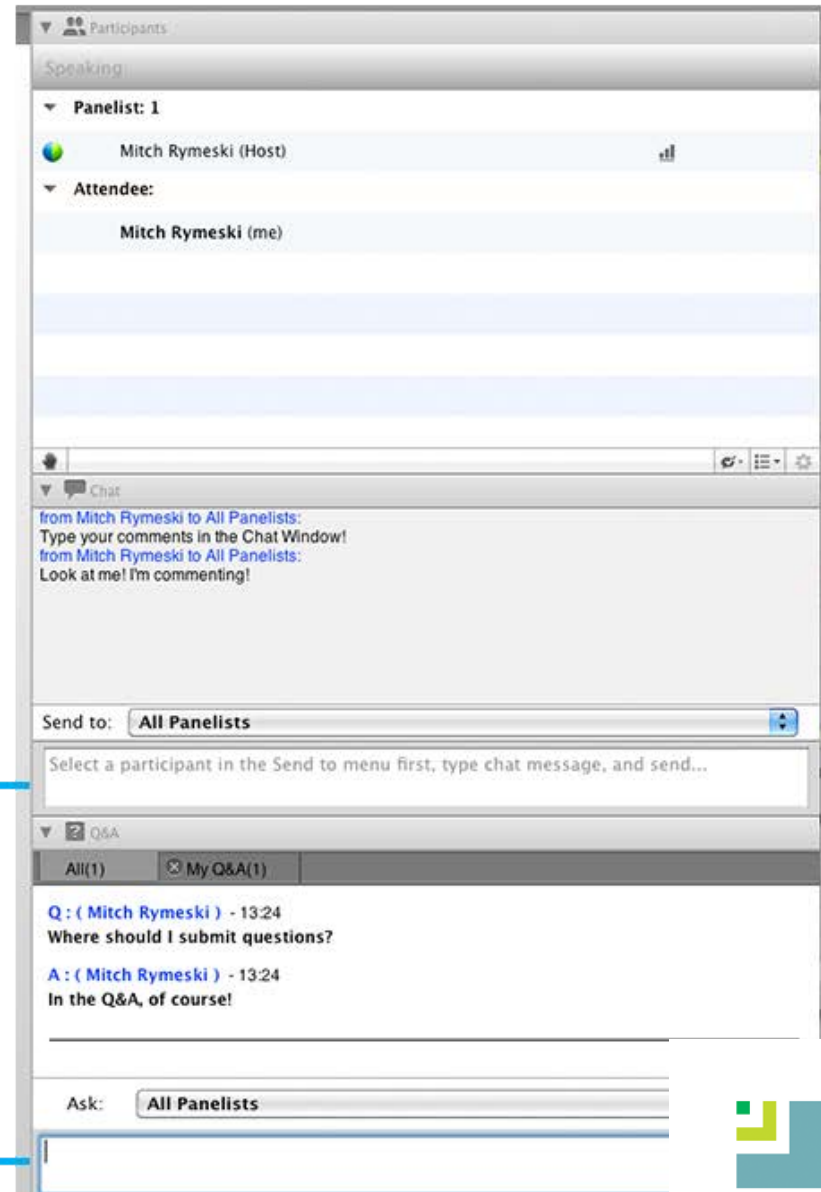
March 15, 2016

Using WebEx

To join the audio conference, locate the *Communicate* dropdown menu and follow the instructions for computer or telephone
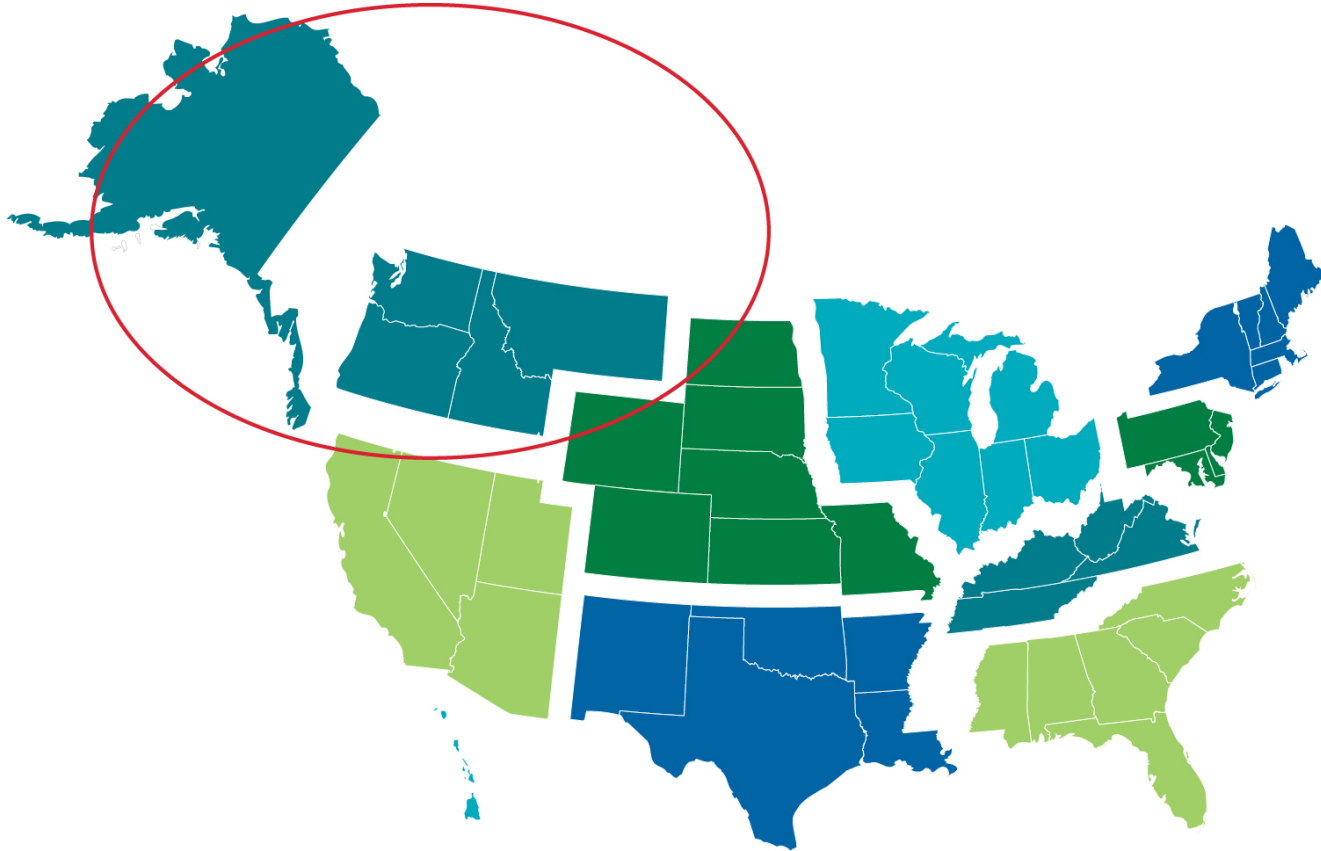
View	Communicate	Participant	Event	Windo
	Audio Conference...			sco V
e ID:1	Speaker/Microphone Audio Test...			

Type your **comments** in the *Chat Window* —

Type your **questions** in the *Q&A Window* —

▼ 👥 Participants

Speaking

▼ **Panelist: 1**

🌐   Mitch Rymeski (Host)

▼ **Attendee:**

   Mitch Rymeski (me)

▼ 💬 Chat

from Mitch Rymeski to All Panelists:
Type your comments in the Chat Window!
from Mitch Rymeski to All Panelists:
Look at me! I'm commenting!

Send to: **All Panelists**

Select a participant in the Send to menu first, type chat message, and send...

▼ ❓ Q&A

All(1)   ⊗ My Q&A(1)

Q : (**Mitch Rymeski**) - 13:24
Where should I submit questions?

A : (**Mitch Rymeski**) - 13:24
In the Q&A, of course!

Ask: **All Panelists**

REL Northwest

Today's Presenters

Dr. Shannon Davidson
Facilitator
REL Northwest

Dr. Karyn Lewis
Presenter
REL Northwest
and Harvard
Strategic Data
Project

Dr. Dave Paunesku
Presenter
Stanford PERTS

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Research Overview
- Keynote Presentation
- Q&A
- Wrap Up

Objectives

- Define social belonging

- Introduce the research linking social belonging to academic outcomes

- Discuss empirically supported interventions that promote belonging

- Suggest resources and information to use in your educational setting

What Is Belonging?

Feeling like an accepted, valued, and legitimate group member

Why Does Belonging Matter?

Belonging is a fundamental need

- Constantly monitor belonging status
- Sensitive to even very subtle indicators that belonging is being threatened

Why Does Belonging Matter?

Exclusion is painful and has many negative consequences
- Psychological consequences
  - Sadness, anger
  - Decreased self-esteem
  - Impaired self-regulation
  - Poorer cognitive functioning
- Physical consequences
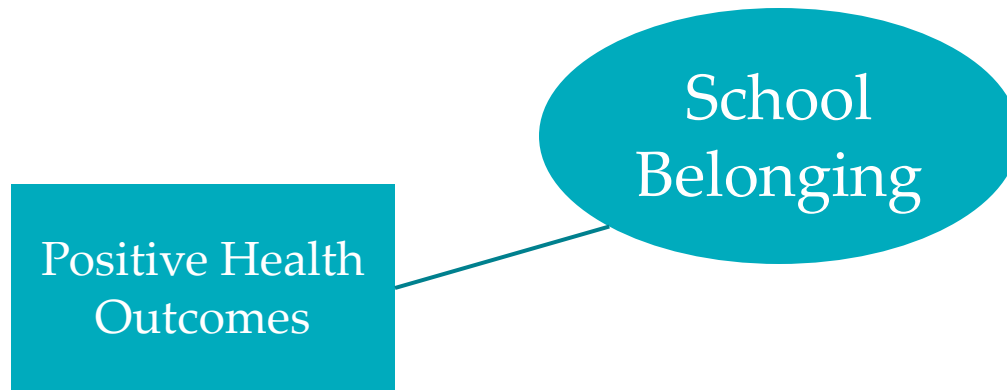 - Loneliness poses the same health risk smoking, drinking, and obesity

Belonging in Academic Contexts

- Education is rich with complex social interactions and relationships

- Belonging is useful for understanding young people's experiences and outcomes in academic contexts

Belonging in Academic Contexts

School Belonging

Positive Health Outcomes

Decreased:

- Substance use
- Early sexual initiation
- Violence
- Suicidal ideation
- Disordered eating

Belonging in Academic Contexts

School Belonging

Positive Health Outcomes

Positive Academic Outcomes

Decreased:
- Substance use
- Early sexual initiation
- Violence
- Suicidal ideation
- Disordered eating

Increased:
- Self-efficacy
- Motivation
- Attendance
- Persistence
- Achievement

When Does Belonging Matter?

It matters across a person's lifespan, with some particularly important moments

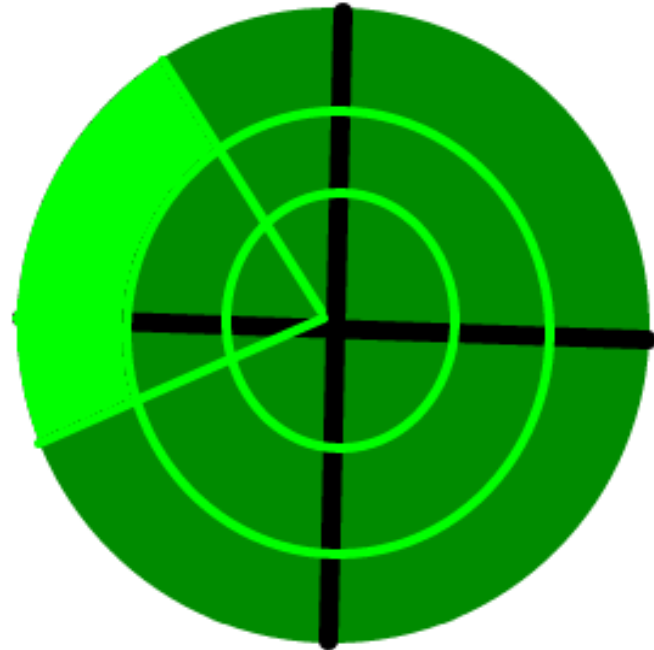- Adolescence
- Times of transition

Do I belong here?

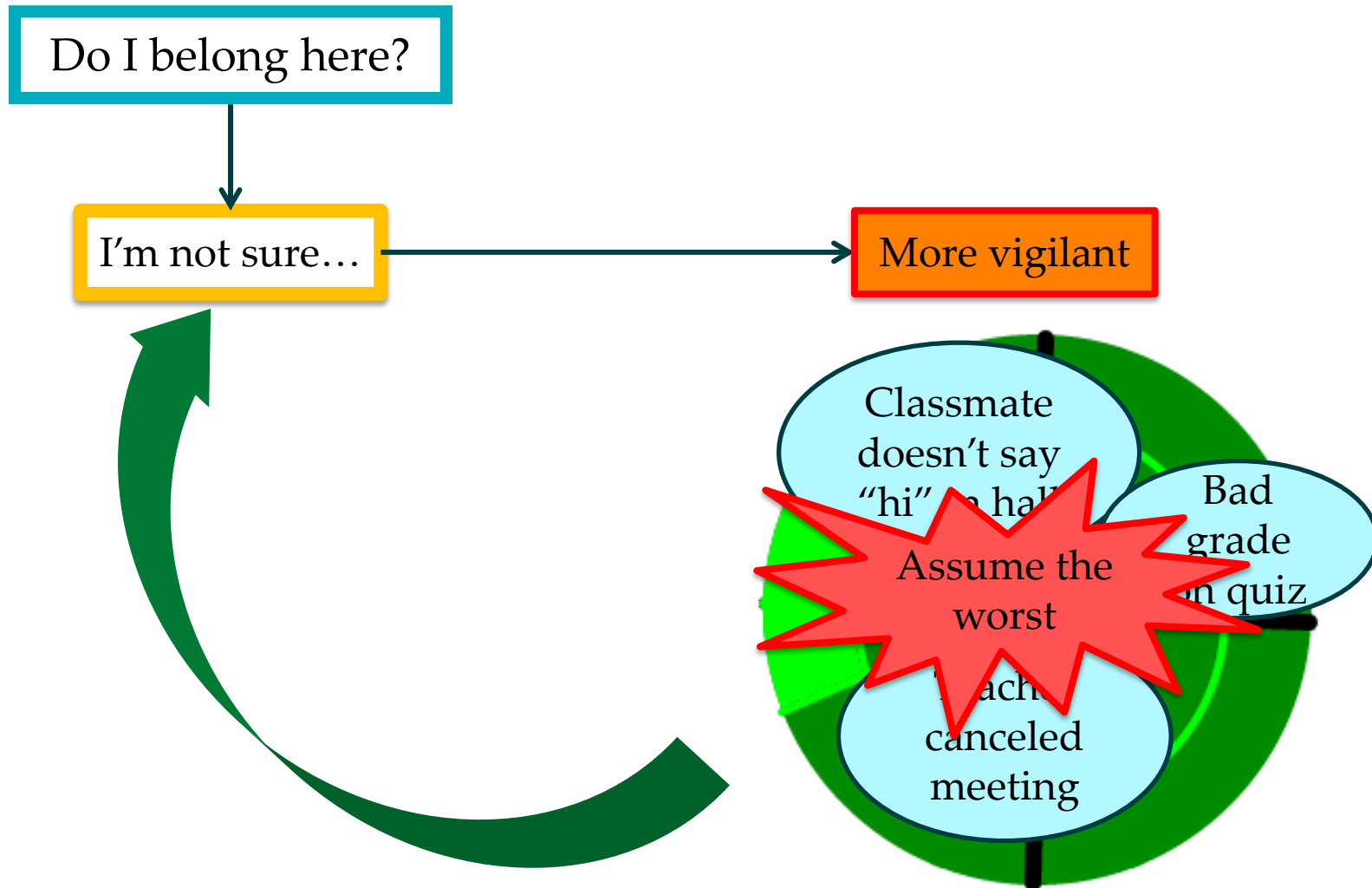# Belonging in Academic Contexts

Do I belong here?

I'm not sure…
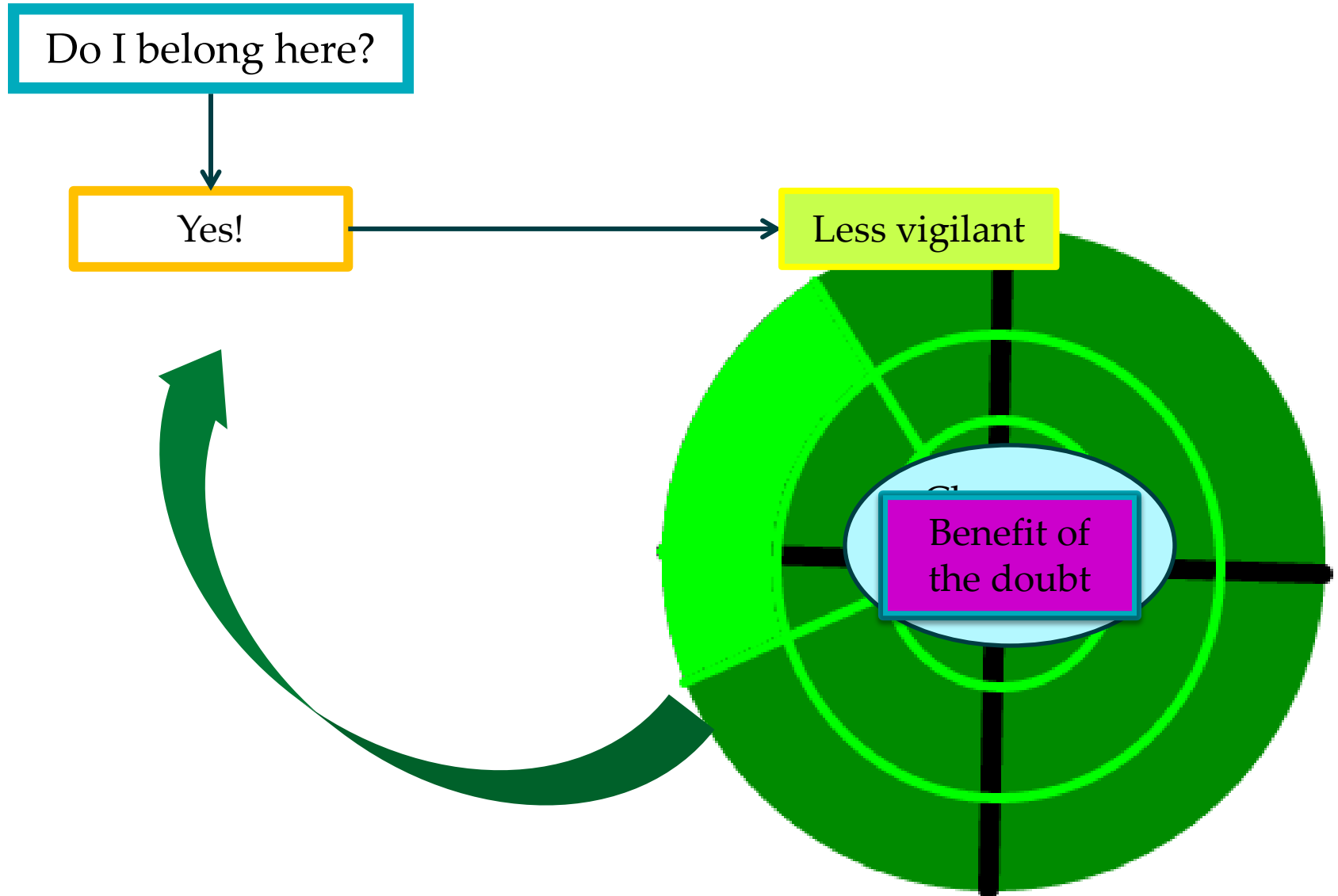
More vigilant

Belonging in Academic Contexts

Do I belong here?

I'm not sure…

More vigilant

Classmate doesn't say "hi" in hall

Bad grade on quiz

Assume the worst

canceled meeting

Belonging in Academic Contexts

Do I belong here?

Yes!

Belonging in Academic Contexts

Do I belong here?

Yes!

Less vigilant

Benefit of the doubt

Outline

1. Why should educators focus on belonging?

2. Three research-based strategies for improving belonging.

Why focus on belonging in school?

Why focus on belonging in school?

Belonging is a fundamental human need

Why focus on belonging in school?

Belonging is a fundamental human need

Educators' decisions affect students' belonging

Why focus on belonging in school?

Belonging is a fundamental human need

Educators' decisions affect students' belonging
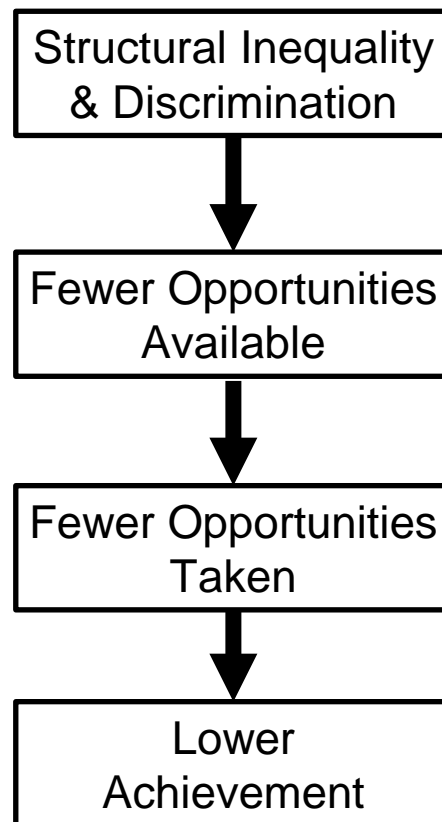
Belonging gaps reinforce achievement gaps

Explaining Achievement Gaps

- Structural inequality, e.g.,

  - Family income (more $ on learning, better schools)

  - Parental education

  - Social networks

- Discrimination

MIND THE GAP

@pertslab

From Inequality to Underperformance: A "Direct Path"

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Structural Inequality │
│     & Discrimination    │
└───────────┬─────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│    Fewer Opportunities  │
│        Available        │
└───────────┬─────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│    Fewer Opportunities  │
│          Taken          │
└───────────┬─────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│         Lower           │
│      Achievement        │
└─────────────────────────┘
```

From Inequality to Underperformance: An "Indirect Path"

@pertslab
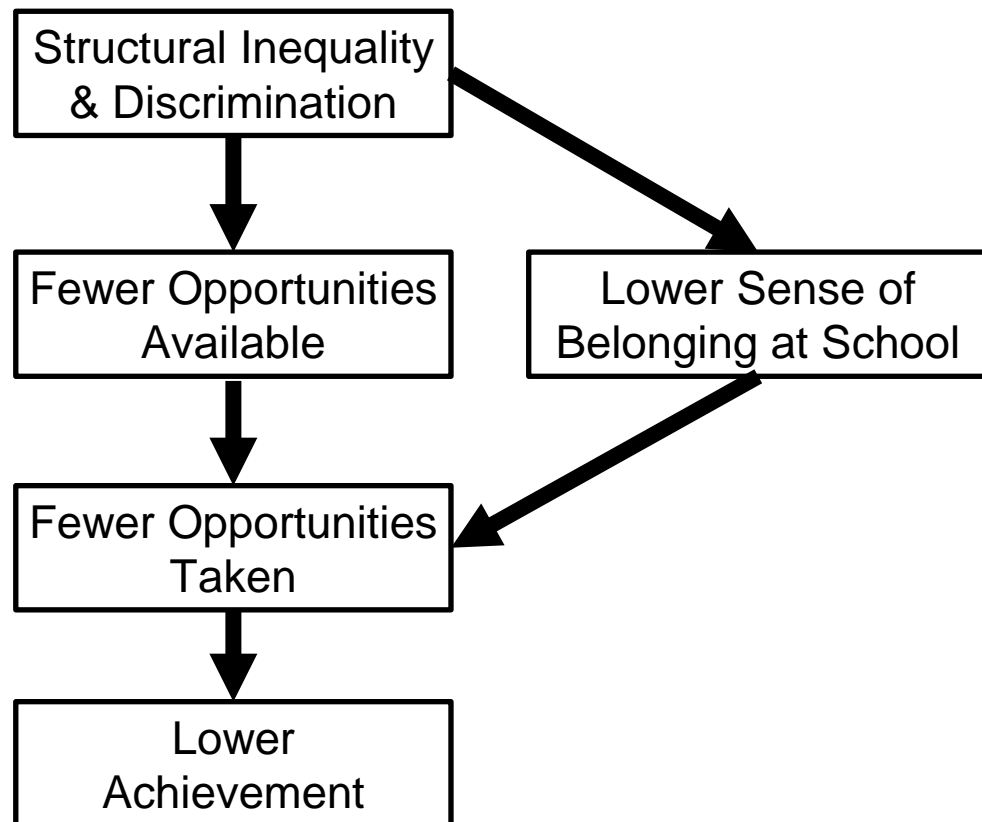
My experiences at Princeton have made me far more aware of my "Blackness" than ever before . . . no matter how liberal and open-minded some of my White professors and classmates try to be toward me, I sometimes feel like a visitor on campus; as if I really don't belong . 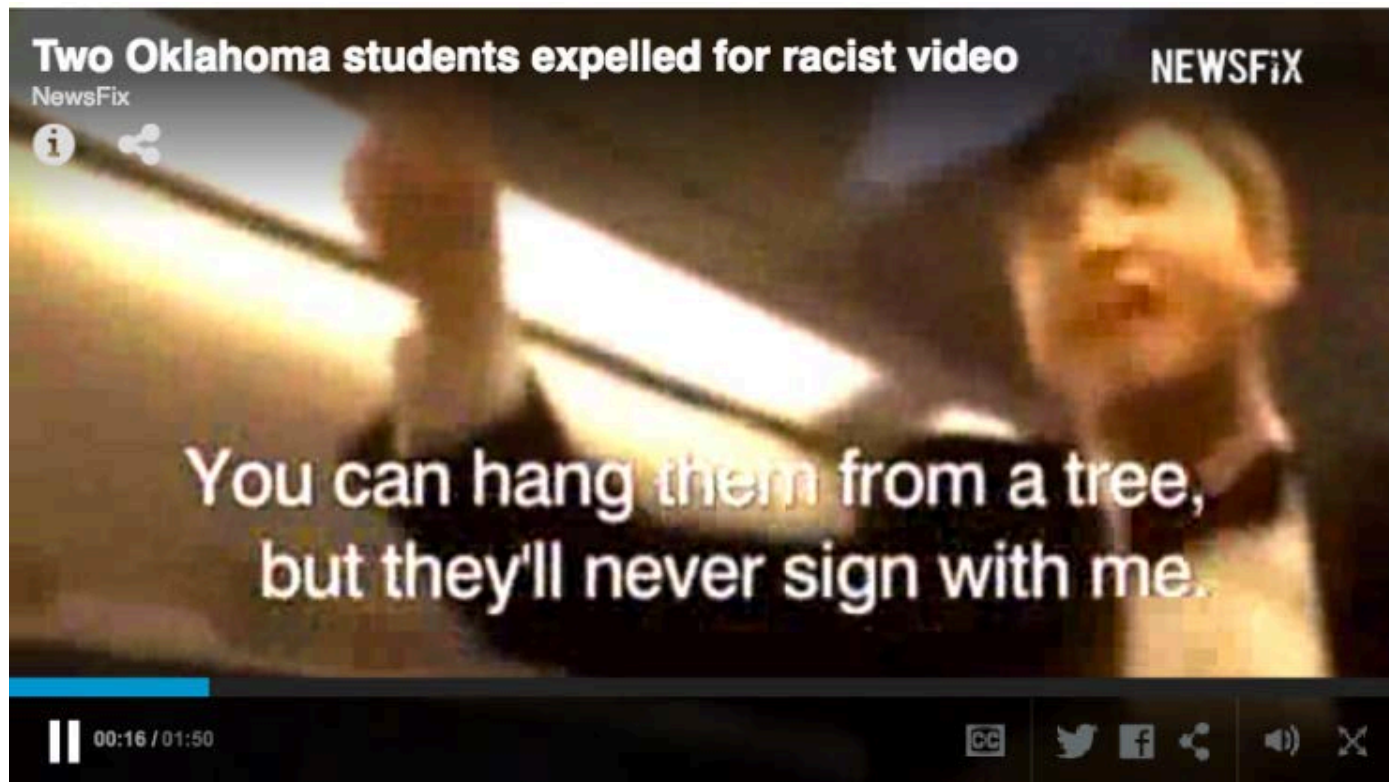. . It often seems as if, to them, I will always be Black first and a student second. - Michelle Robinson (1985)

Rudy Mendoza-Denton

Former Ole Miss student sentenced to six months for putting noose around statue

Two Oklahoma students expelled for racist video
NewsFix

NEWSFiX

You can hang them from a tree, but they'll never sign with me.

00:16 / 01:50

When we're uncertain of our belonging, our attention is drawn to negative interpretations of **ambiguous social cues**

584 Black high school graduates
who were accepted to college were asked
if they agree with the statement:

"Sometimes I worry that
I will not belong in college"

The more Black high school
graduates agreed that:

"Sometimes I worry that
I will not belong in college"

The less likely they were to be a
fulltime college student 6 months later.
(Even controlling for GPA, SAT, gender)

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How can we reduce students' belonging concerns?

Bolstering Belonging

Provide a positive narrative for setbacks

Foster respectful, trusting relationships

Help students relate to school

Provide a positive narrative for setbacks
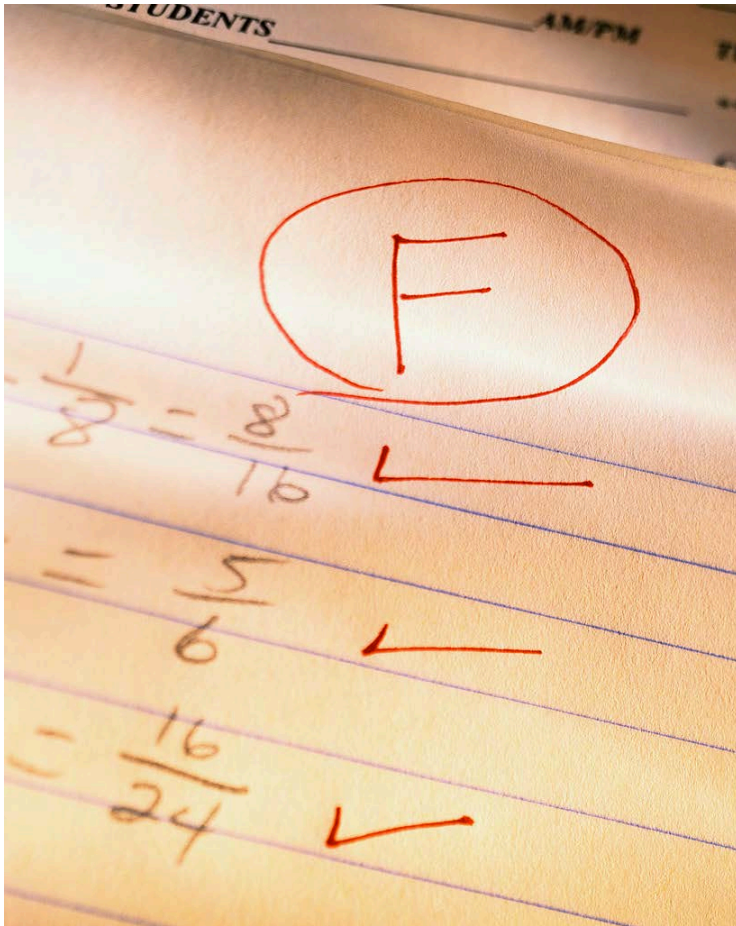
Why did you get a bad grade?

You're stupid and won't ever succeed in school.

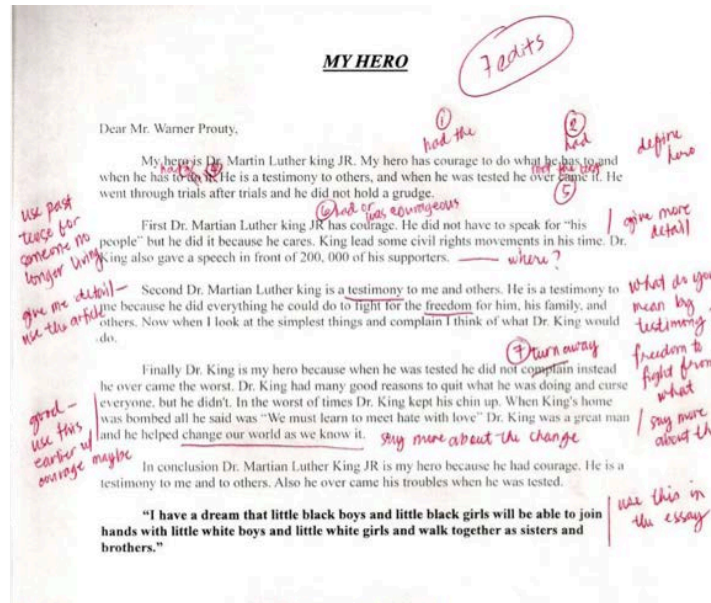You haven't learned the right study strategy yet.

Why weren't you invited to the party?
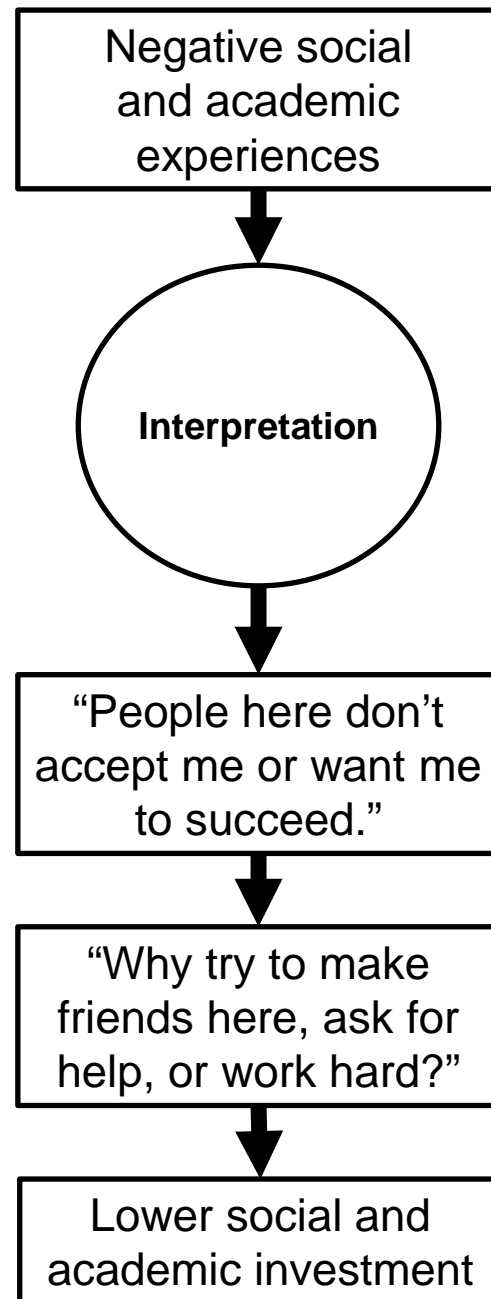
They hate you.

They were too shy to ask.

Why did your instructor criticize you?

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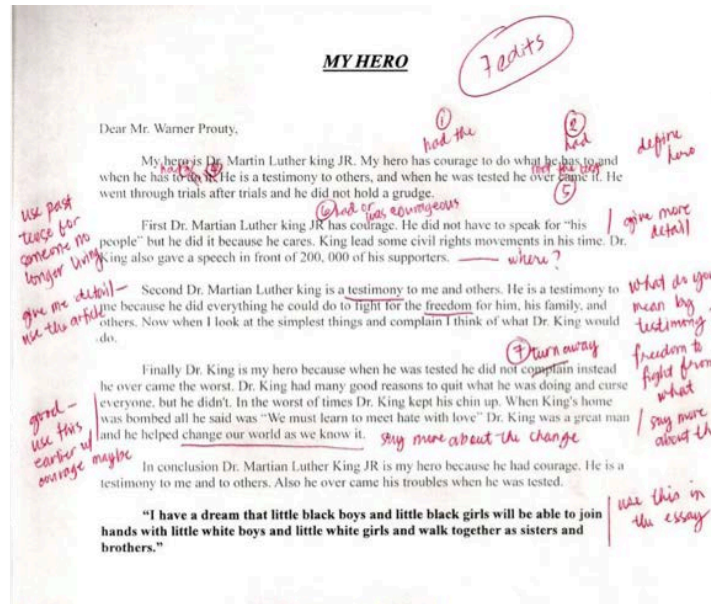
Why did your instructor criticize you?

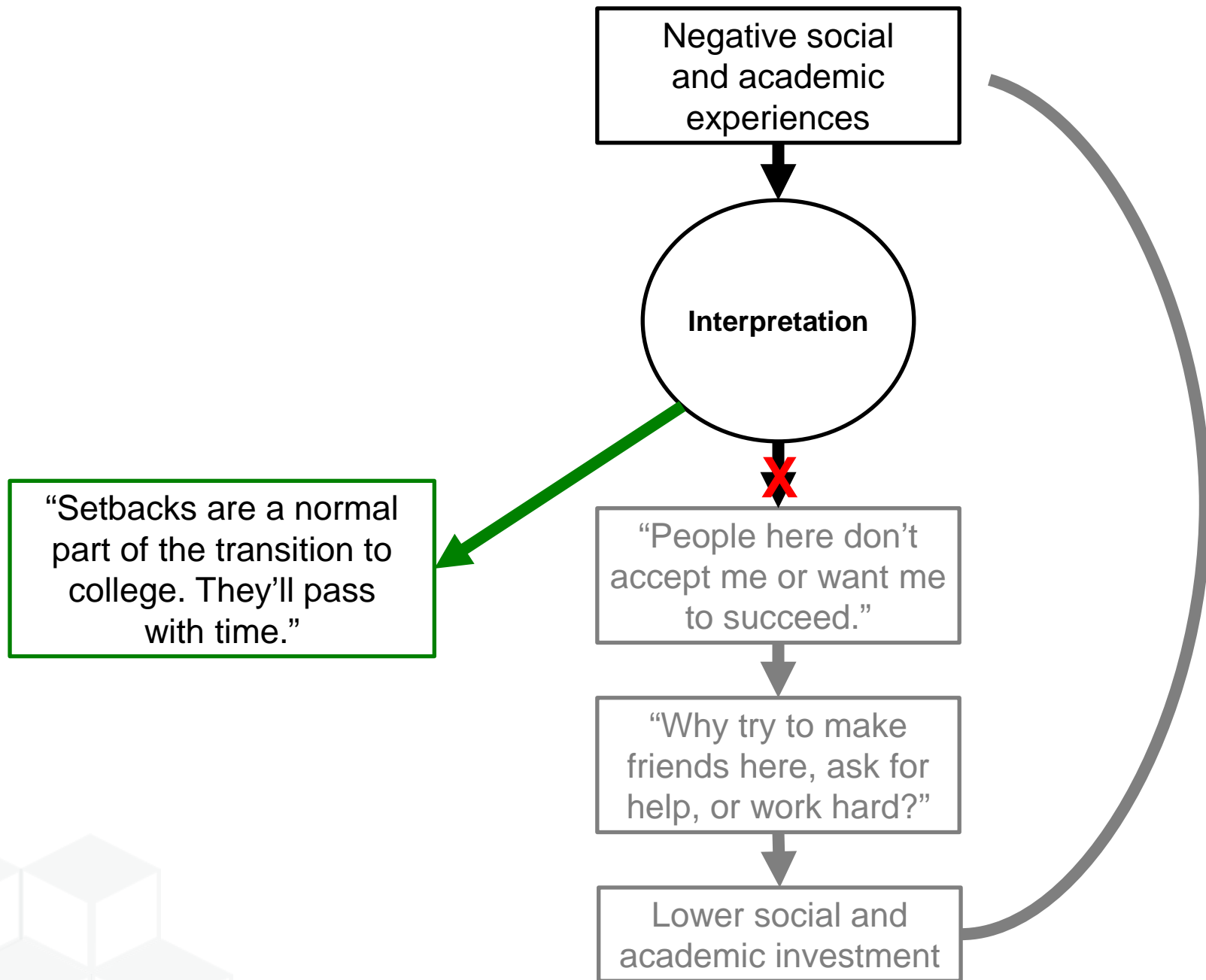He thinks all [Black, Latino, low-income, female] students are less capable.

Negative social and academic experiences

Interpretation

"People here don't accept me or want me to succeed."

"Why try to make friends here, ask for help, or work hard?"

Lower social and academic investment

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Social Belonging Intervention

Goal: Provide a positive narrative for setbacks

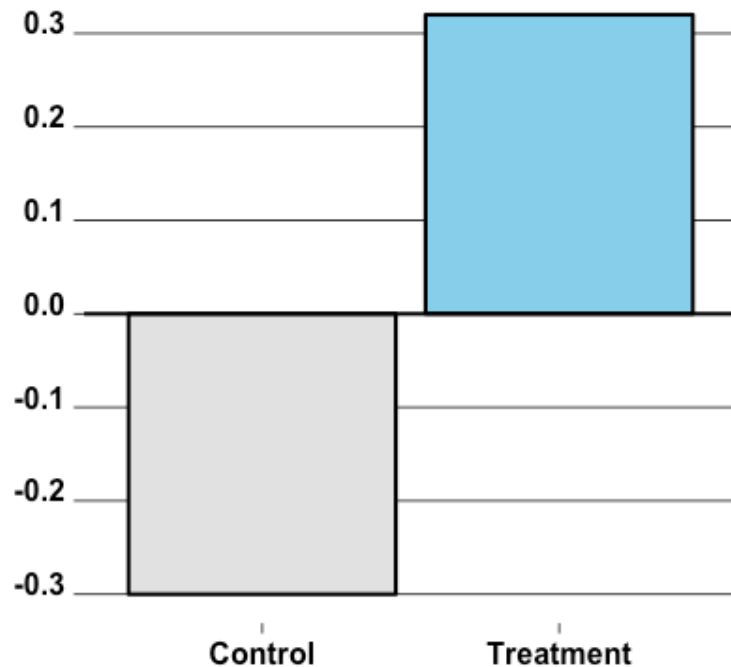Testimonials from upper-year students covey:

Everyone worries at first about whether they belong in college but, with time, they start to feel at home

Example Testimonial

When I first got to [school name], I worried that I was different from other students. Everyone else seemed so certain that they were right for [school name], I wasn't sure I fit in. Sometime after my first year, I came to realize that many people come to [school name] uncertain whether they fit in or not. Now it seems ironic – everybody feels they are different freshman year from everybody else, when really in at least some ways we are all pretty similar...

Negative social and academic experiences

Interpretation

"Setbacks are a normal part of the transition to college. They'll pass with time."

"People here don't accept me or want me to succeed."

"Why try to make friends here, ask for help, or work hard?"
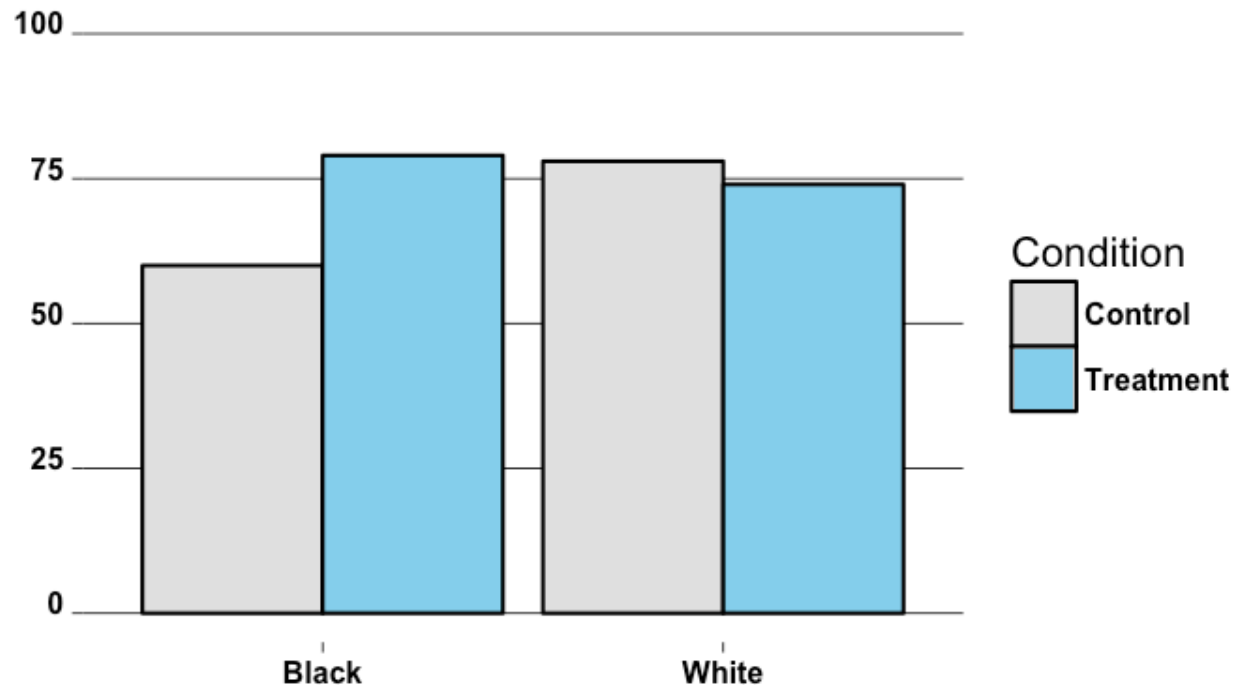
Lower social and academic investment
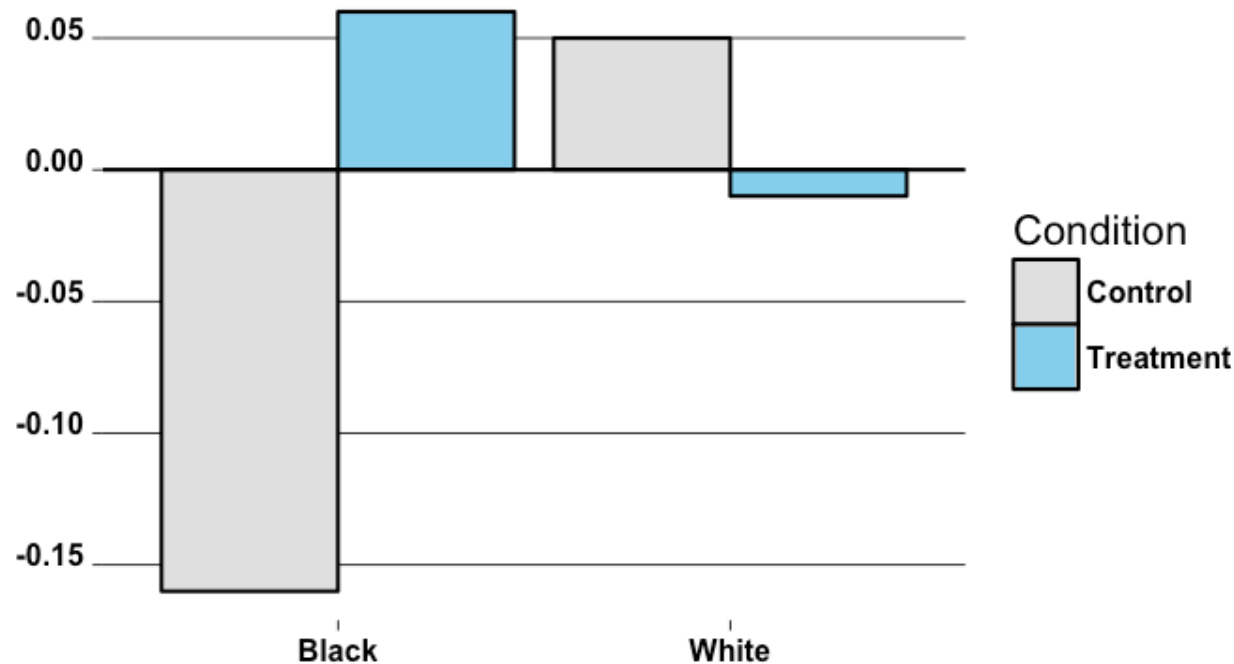
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Composite Achievement Behaviors

Standardized mean number of review sessions, office hours appointments, and study groups attended; e-mail queries sent to professors; hours spent studying and questions asked in classes.

Walton & Cohen, 2007

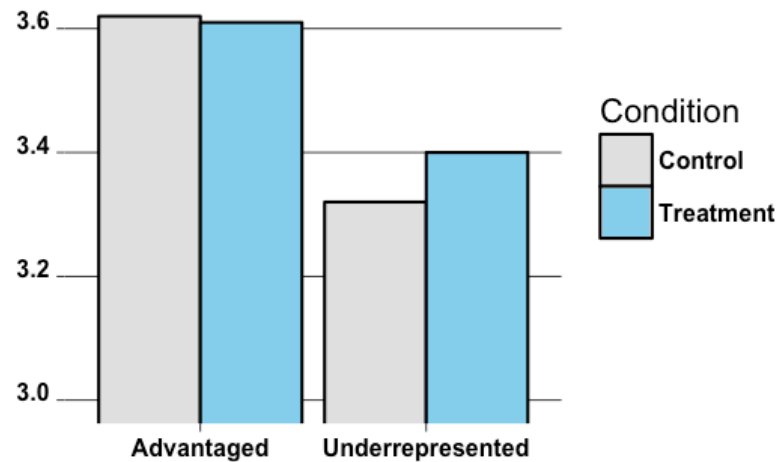# Self-Assessed General Health

Walton & Cohen, 2011

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Residual Post-Intervention GPA

Walton & Cohen, 2011

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Stanford University

N=1,592

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

N=8,251

1ˢᵗ Year Cumulative GPA

1ˢᵗ Semester Fulltime Enrollment

Yeager et al., in prep.

@pertslab
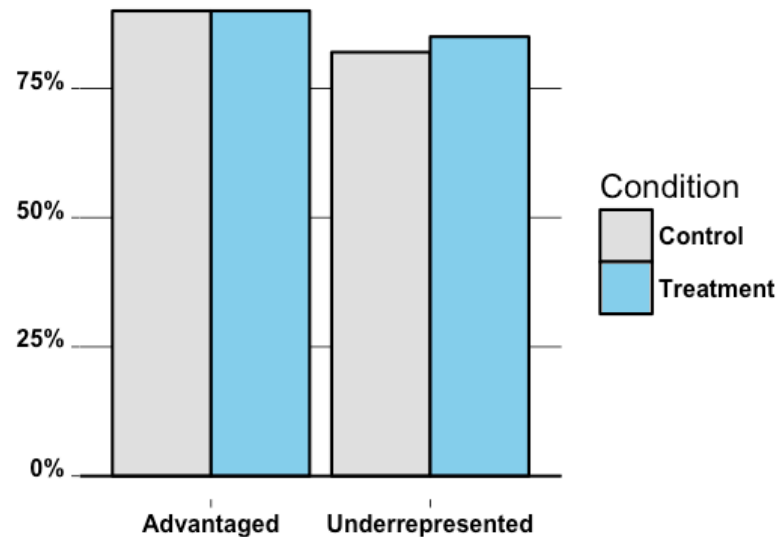
College Transition Collaborative, see perts.net/ctc

Provide a positive narrative for setbacks

Difficulty is normal: It's <u>not</u> a sign you don't belong.

Provide a positive narrative for setbacks

Difficulty is normal: It's <u>not</u> a sign you don't belong.

Mistakes are an important part of learning.

Provide a positive narrative for setbacks

Difficulty is normal: It's <u>not</u> a sign you don't belong.

Mistakes are an important part of learning.

Standards are high, and I know you can reach them.

Difficulty is normal: It's <u>not</u> a sign you don't belong.

Mistakes are an important part of learning.

Standards are high, and I know you can reach them.

Foster respectful, trusting relationships

Jason Okonofua

Respect Begets Respect?

Students imagined that they "disrupted class by repeatedly walking around to throw away trash."

Punitive Discipline Condition: Mrs. Smith gives you a detention and sends you to the principal's office.

Empathic Discipline Condition: Mrs. Smith asks you what's wrong and moves the trash can closer to you.

Respect Begets Respect

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, under review
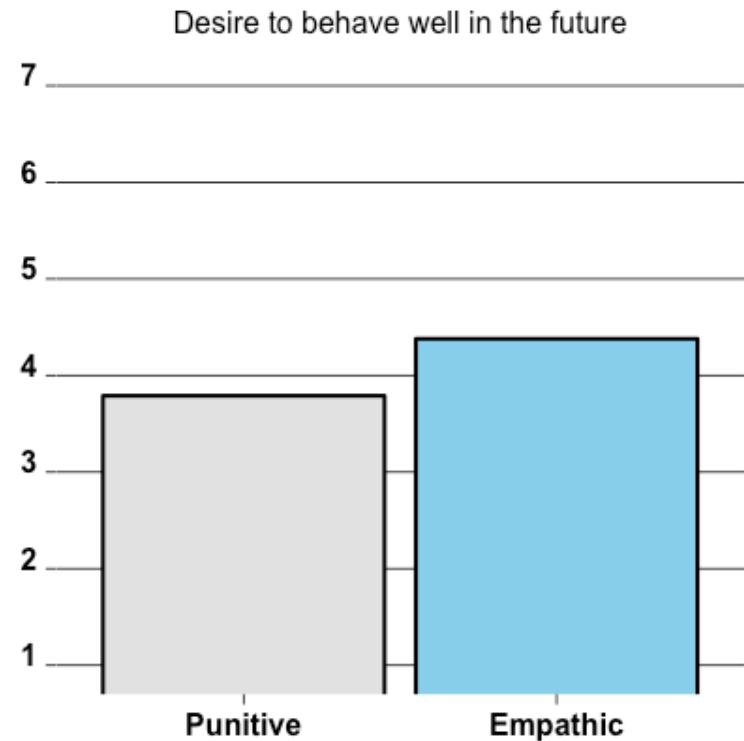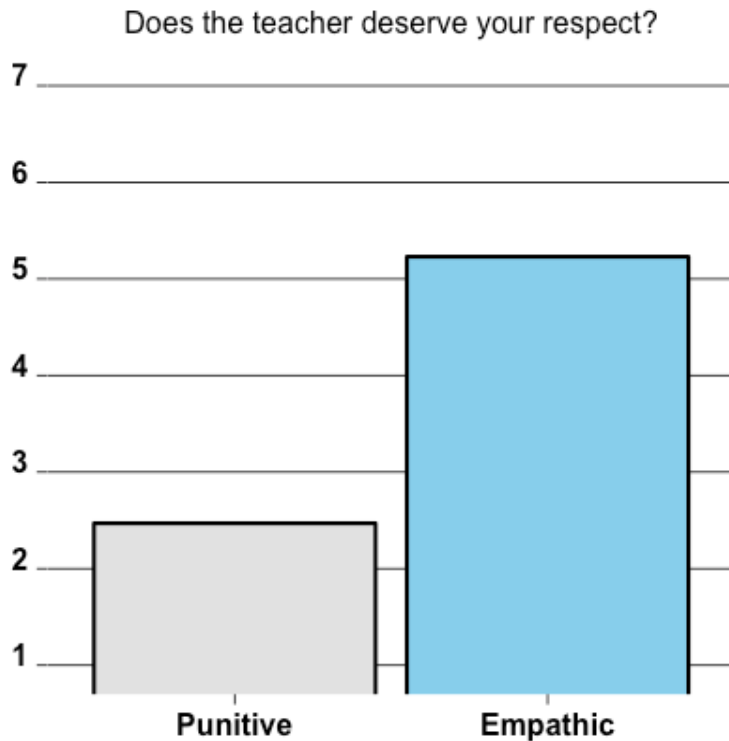
Empathic Discipline Intervention

"[the] social and biological changes of adolescence can make middle school students insecure…worries [about unfair treatment] can cause students to experience stress, to overreact, and sometimes to disengage from school

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, under review

Empathic Discipline Intervention

Value students' experiences in school.

Identify feelings that can cause misbehavior.

Sustain relationships when students misbehave.

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, under review

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"One day I got detention and, instead of just sitting there, my teacher talked with me about what happened. He really listened to me…It felt good to know I had someone I could trust in school."

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, under review

Study Design

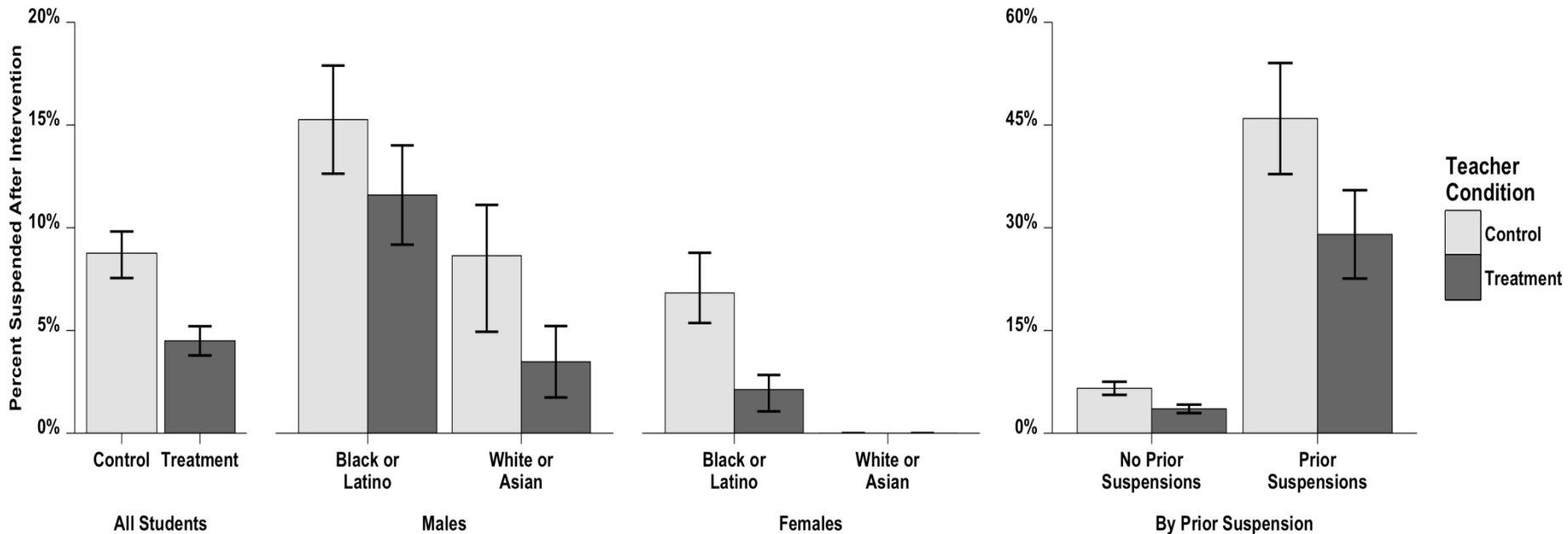31 middle school math teachers from 5 schools

Each teacher was randomized to

   Empathic discipline intervention

   Control condition (how to use technology in class)

Data collected from 1,580 students

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Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, under review

Reduced Suspensions

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Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, under review

Caring, trusting relationships

Listen to students: Show them authentic respect

Help students relate to school

Isaac Nieblas

"Learning about the Chicano revolution in the 1960s made me feel as though my concerns, my issues, my humanity were legitimate.

"I felt more enthused and I was having more conversations, because I knew that my people were just as smart as anyone else… Having that understanding revamped my perception of who I was as a person and as an intellectual being.

An Ethnic Studies Course Improves GPA and Attendance

Sample

1405 9th graders from 5 San Francisco high schools

Results

Assignment to course improved students'
  GPA by 1.4 points
  Attendance by 21%

Dee & Penner, 2016

Culturally Relevant Content

Teaching Tolerance

Facing History and Ourselves

Ask your students what they want to learn about!

When students feel like they belong, they are happier, healthier, and more academically successful. Let's help all students feel that way.

For recommendations, visit mindsetkit.org/belonging

When students feel like they belong, they are happier, healthier, and more academically successful. Let's help all students feel that way.

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Big thanks to

Greg Walton, Jason Okonofua, Jacquie Beaubien, Sarah Gripshover, Rachel Herter, Laura Stahl, David Yeager, and the Raikes Foundation.

PERTS

Q & A

Please type in questions you have for our panelists and researchers

Thank you!

We, and the U.S. Department of Education, value your feedback!

Please click [here](#) to take the survey.

The online survey is completely anonymous and takes less than five minutes. Thank you.

Contact Us

For more information, please contact:

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