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## The Effects of Imagined Contact with Intersectional Identities

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# The Effects of Imagined Contact with Intersectional Identities



Alexandra L. Baker & Saaid A. Mendoza, Ph.D. | Providence College

## Introduction

### Research Question

- **How might imagined intergroup contact be best utilized as a bias-reduction strategy against those with intersectional identities?**

### Intergroup Contact

- Intergroup contact has been established as an effective method for reducing prejudice (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).
- Importantly, imagined scenarios can activate similar attitudinal processes to those of real-life situations (Garcia et al., 2002).
- Thus, imagined contact has been tested as a viable strategy for “treating” intergroup prejudice through the reduction of anxiety, much like exposure therapy (Birtel & Crisp, 2012).

### Intersectional Identities

- **Intersectionality** refers to how different aspects of one’s identity can be combined to produce unique forms of privilege and oppression (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013).
- **Intersectional Invisibility** refers to the the social disregard of individuals with multiple subordinate identities by the dominant majority (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).
- **Double Jeopardy** refers to the multiple layers of discrimination that can be experienced by intersectional individuals who have dual subordinate identities (Almquist 1975; Epstein 1973).
- Though these models appear contradictory, they both suggest that intersectional bias may be particularly difficult to combat.

### Study Overview & Hypotheses

- We examined the relationship between the salience of group identity and imagined contact type on intersectional identities.
- To test this, non-Black male participants were asked to imagine contact with a woman, Black individual, or Black woman.
  - **H1:** Imagining contact with the Black woman identity will lead to less bias against Black women, as opposed to imagining contact with either a woman or a Black individual.
  - **H2:** Imagining direct (i.e., personal) contact with an outgroup member will lead to lower levels of bias than imagining indirect (i.e., observational) contact.
  - **H3:** Imagined identity and contact type will interact, such that bias against Black women will be lowest when participants imagine direct contact with that specific group.

## Methods

### Participants & Design

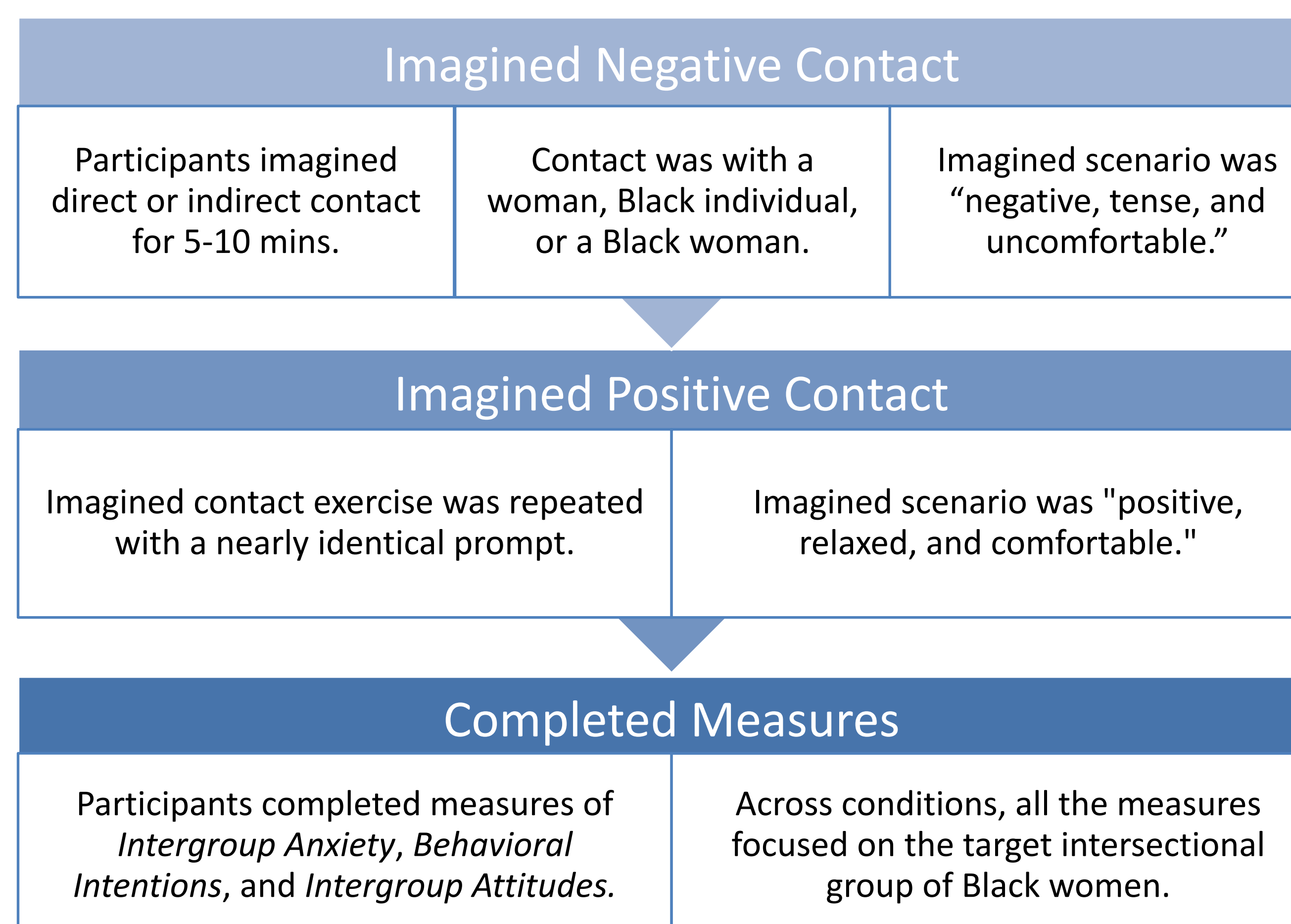
- $N = 116$  non-Black male participants (77.59% White,  $M_{age} = 39.58$ ) participated online via Amazon’s Mturk platform.
- 2 (contact: direct vs. indirect) x 3 (identity prompt: gender vs. race vs. intersectional) between-subjects design

### Manipulations: Contact and Identity

- All participants were instructed to imagine a negative, then a positive, intergroup interaction.
- **Contact:** Participants were asked to imagine having (*direct*) or observing (*indirect*) an interaction within a classroom setting
- **Identity:** The imagined interaction involved a conversation about gender with a *woman*, race with a *Black individual*, or intersectional topics with *Black woman*.

### Primary Measures

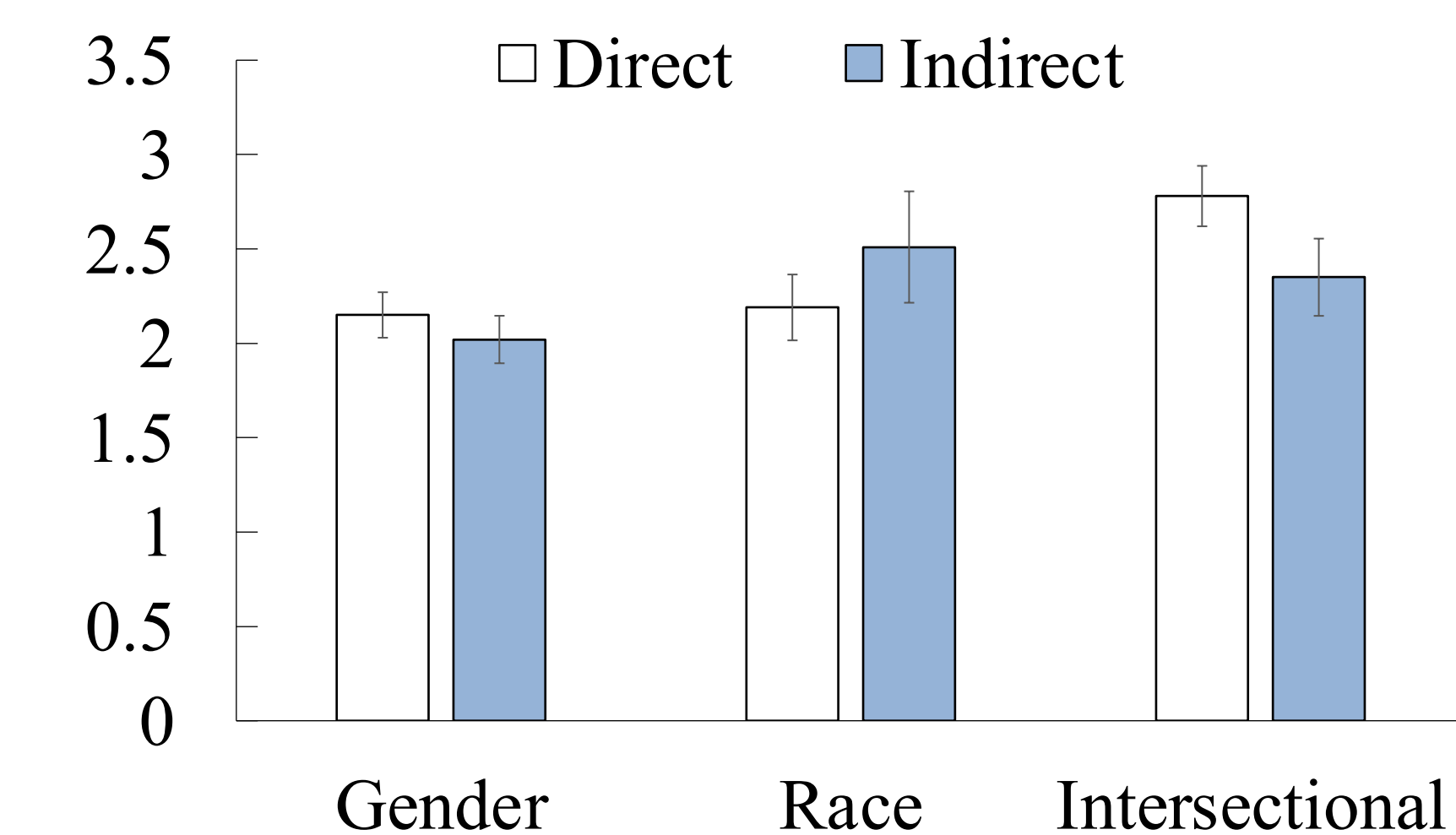
- **Intergroup Anxiety ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ):** How *careful, awkward, impatient, self-conscious, irritated, defensive, suspicious, happy* (r), *accepted* (r), *confident* (r), and *certain* (r) participants would feel interacting with Black women.
- **Behavioral Intentions ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ):** How willing they would be in the future to *engage with, seek out interactions with, learn about the lives and experiences of,* and *befriend* Black women.
- **Attitudes ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ):** How much they felt *suspicious/trusting, contemptible/respectable, negative/positive, hostile/friendly,* and *disgust/admiration, cold/warm* toward Black women.



## Results & Discussion

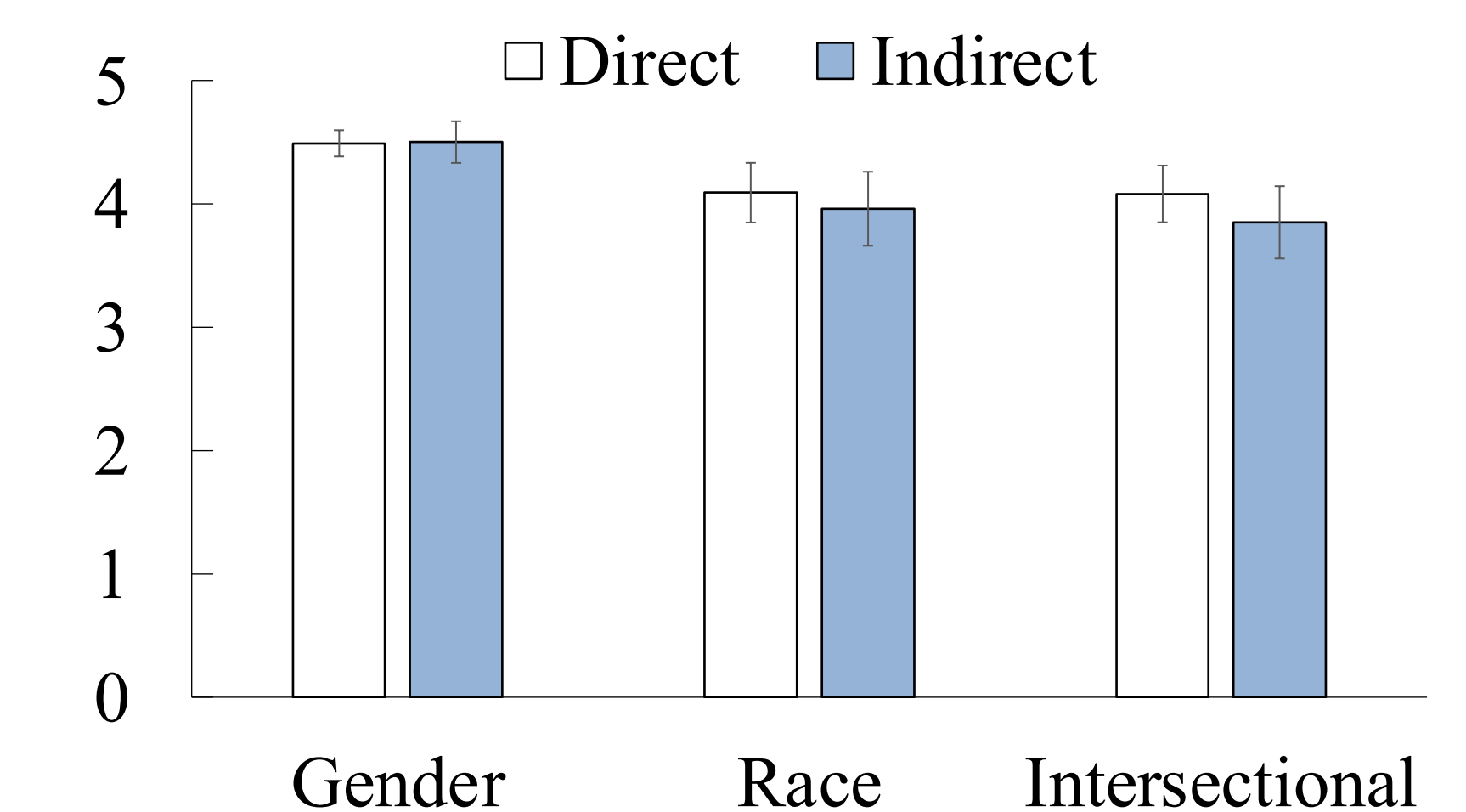
### Intergroup Anxiety

- **Identity Main Effect:** Gender prompt produced less anxiety than intersectional prompt, but similar level of anxiety compared with race prompt,  $F(2, 110) = 4.15, p = .018$ .
- No main effect of contact,  $F < 1$ , or interaction,  $p = .127$ .



### Behavioral Intentions

- **Identity Main Effect:** Gender prompt led to more favorable intentions than intersectional prompt, but were comparable to those in the race prompt,  $F(2, 110) = 3.58, p = .031$ .
- No main effect of contact or interaction,  $F_s < 1$ .



### Attitudes

- **Marginal Identity Effect:** Gender prompt tended to show more favorable attitudes than intersectional – but not race - prompts,  $F(2, 110) = 2.57, p = .081$ .
- No main effect of contact,  $p = .187$ , or interaction,  $F < 1$ .

### Implications & Future Directions

- Findings suggest that imagined contact may reduce intersectional bias when more positively stereotyped identity is activated.
- We found no differences between contact-type, but future work may seek to better distinguish the two set of instructions.
- Studies should examine moderators, such as motivations to control prejudice and participants’ own intersectional identities.