Insidious Assumptions: Pluralistic Ignorance in the Classroom

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Session Overview

- ✧ What is pluralistic ignorance?
- ✧ The consequences of bad assumptions.
- ✧ Why we still have hope!
- ✧ Does ignorance influence students?
- ✧ Is ignorance related to performance?
- ✧ What can we do about it?

Questions?
I'm confused, but everyone else seems to understand

I don’t feel the way everyone else seems to
Pluralistic Ignorance

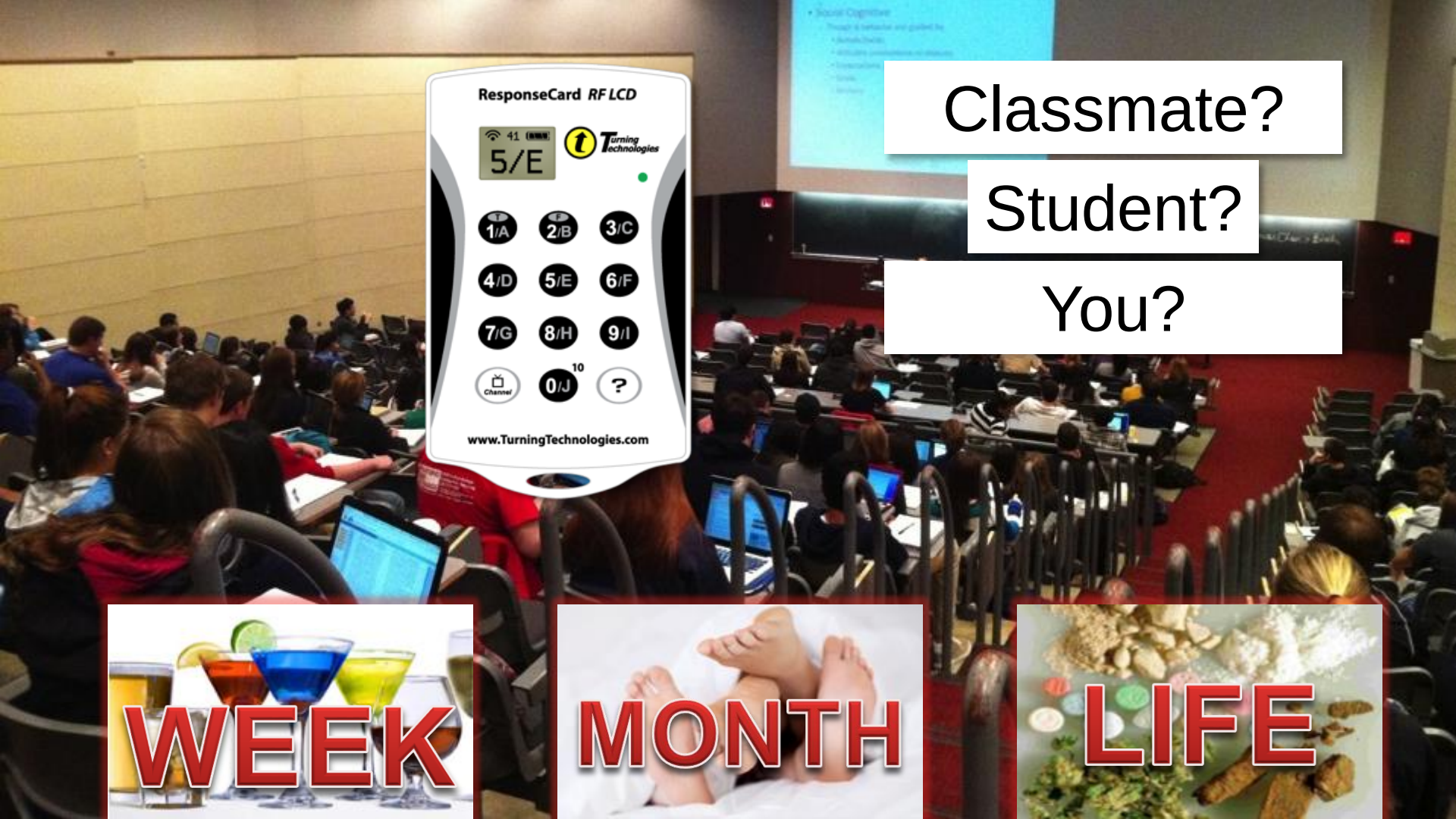
Everyone else was getting drunk…
… and having sex
Last Friday Night?

Perkins & Berkowitz (1986)

“Getting 'drunk' frequently is ok because it is an important part of the college experience”

Perkins & Berkowitz (1986)

“Getting 'drunk' frequently is ok because it is an important part of the college experience”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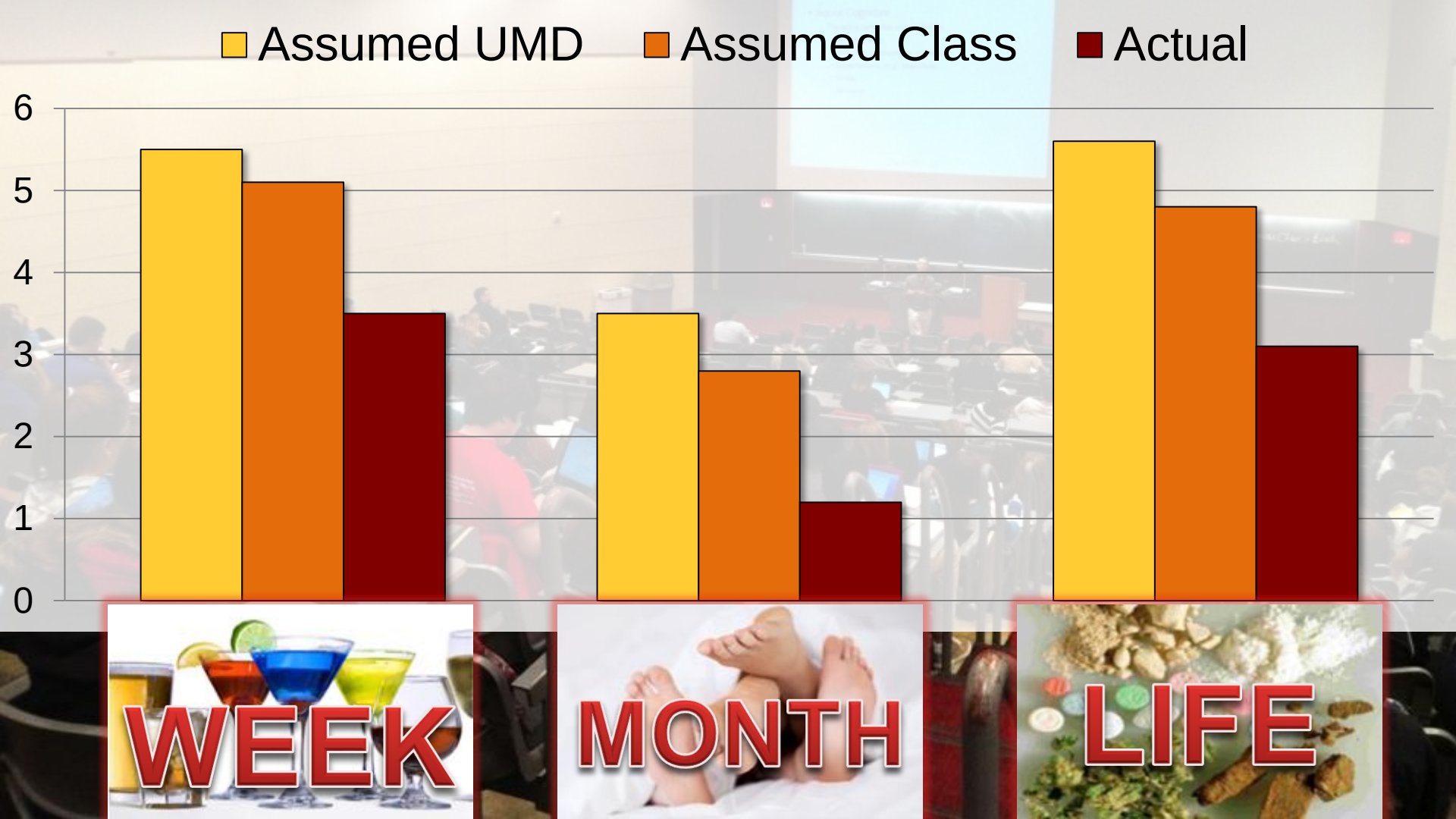
Classmate?
Student?
You?
WEEK
MONTH
LIFE


Assumed UMD
Assumed Class
Actual
6
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WEEK
MONTH
LIFE

ALIENATION

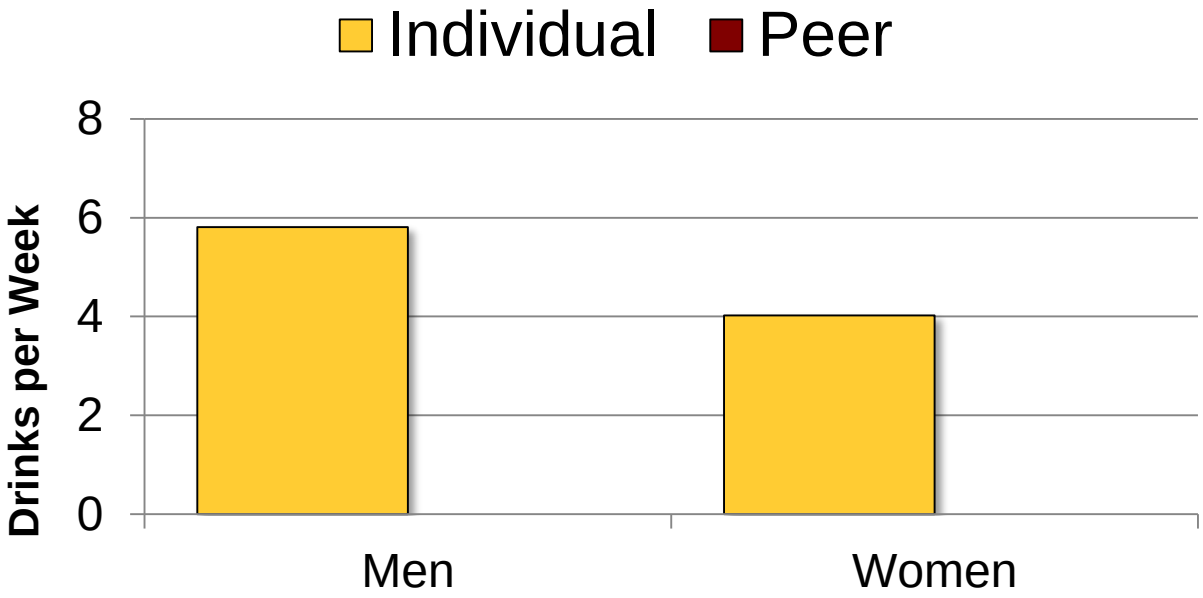
ASSIMILATION

Combating Ignorance

(Schroeder & Prentice,1998)

- ✧ **Peer-focused:** show data on ignorance
- ✧ **Individual-focused:** responsible decisions

4 to 6 weeks later



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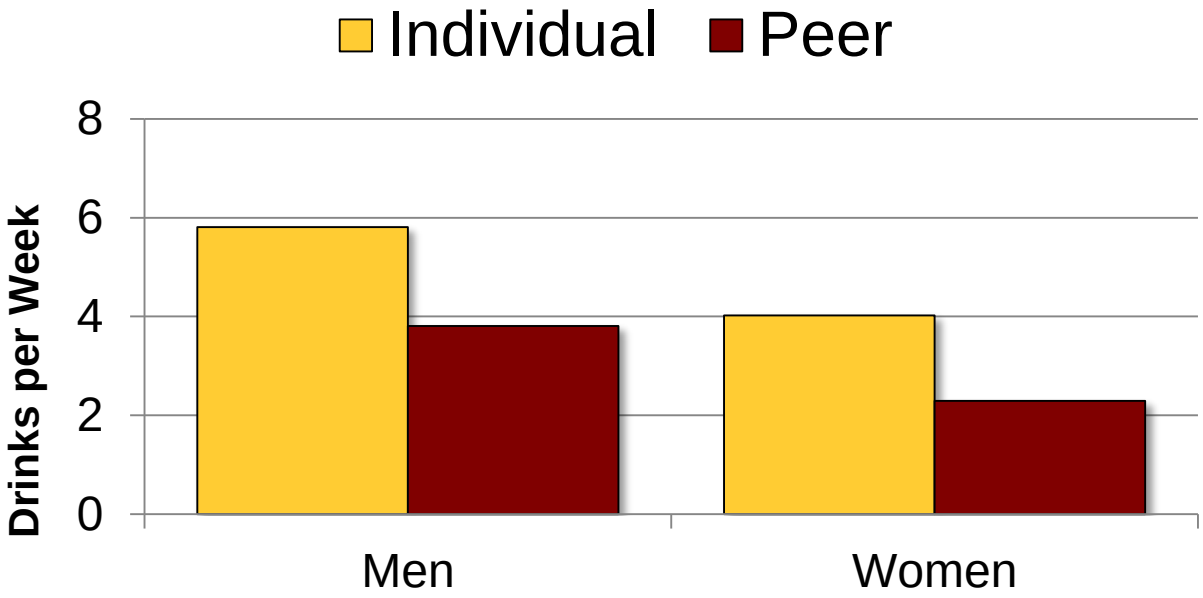


Research Questions

- ✧ Are students ignorant?
- ✧ Related to exam performance?
- ✧ What drives relationship?
- ✧ Can intervention help?

Do students evidence pluralistic ignorance in study behavior estimation?

STUDY 1

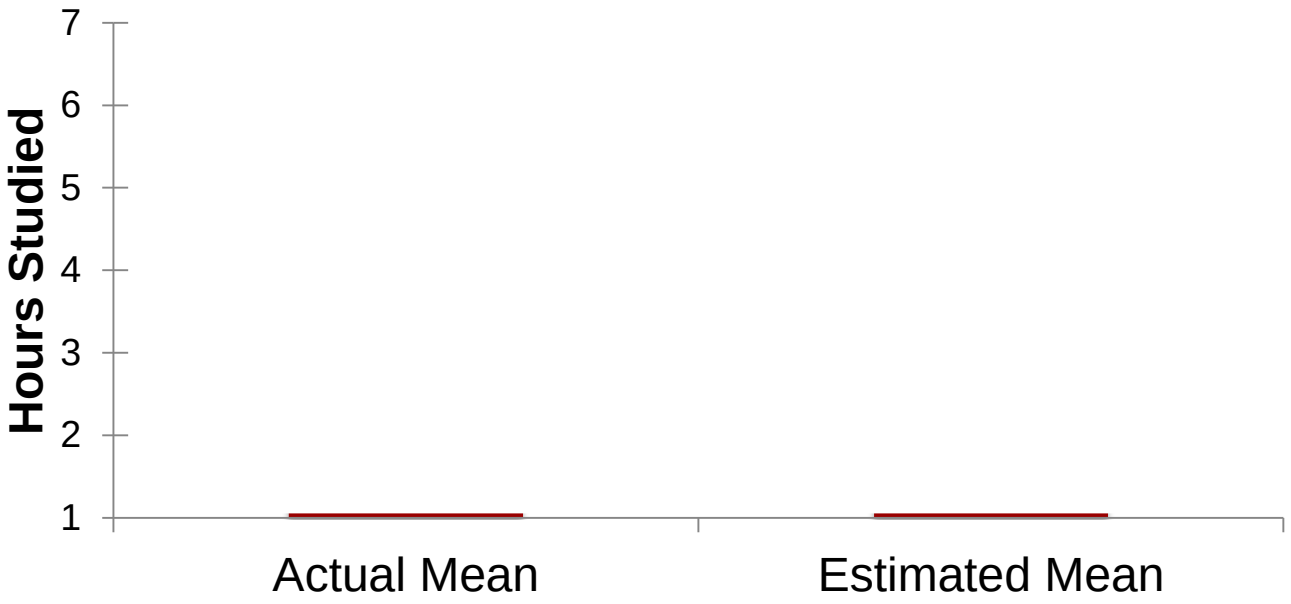
Testing Ignorance

- Fall 2014 Social Psychology (*N* = 117)

- Before exam 1 – “How many hours…
  - Did you study for exam?”
  - Did average student in this class study for exam?”

Testing Ignorance

Do students show evidence of pluralistic ignorance in study behavior estimation?



$t(99) = 3.69$, $p < .001$

Related to own behavior?

$r(100) = .27$, $p < .01$

Discussion

- ✧ Consistent with P.I. model…
  - Students underestimate others' study time
  - Estimations related to own study behavior

Is pluralistic ignorance of study behavior related to exam performance?

STUDY 2

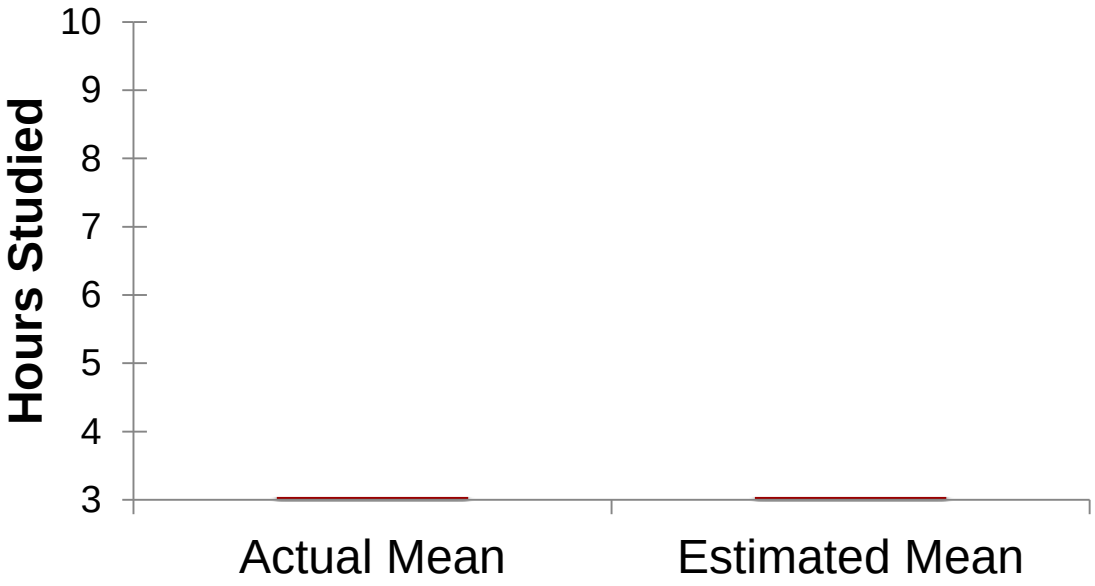
Testing Ignorance

- Spring 2015 Social Psychology (*N* = 114)

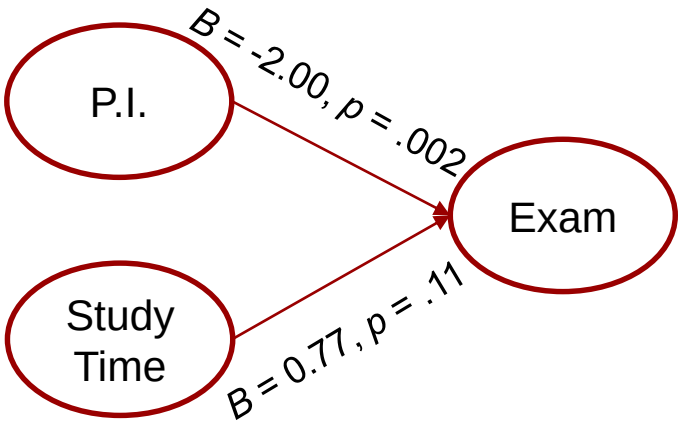
- Procedure
  - Similar to study 1
  - Collected & matched exam scores

Testing Ignorance

Is pluralistic ignorance of study behavior related to exam performance?



$t(93) = -1.87$, $p = .056$



$F(2,91) = 4.88$, $p = .009$, $R^2 = 0.10$

Discussion

- ✧ P.I. of study behavior related to exam perf
  - Pattern opposite expected
  - Study time and exam performance distinct constructs
  - Perceived lack of preparation?

What drives the pluralistic ignorance-exam performance relationship?

STUDY 3

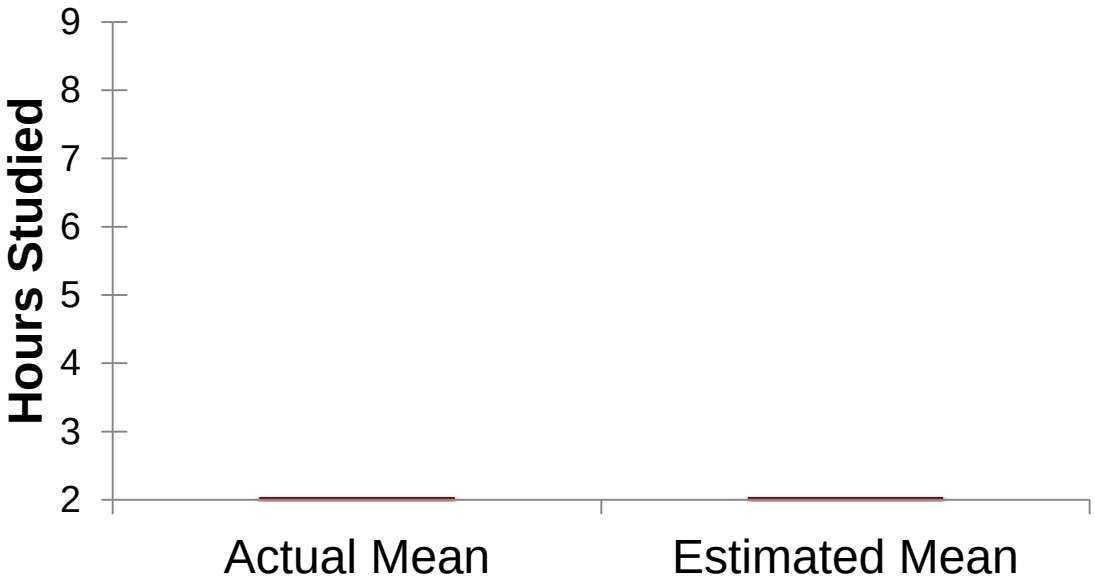
Testing Ignorance

- Fall 2015 Social Psychology (*N* = 119)

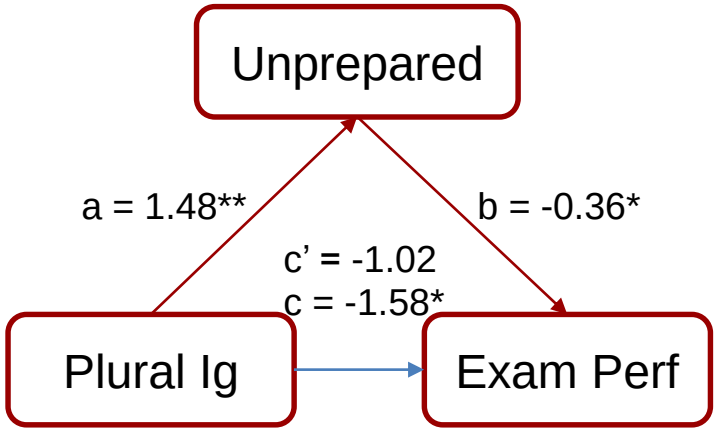
- Procedure
  - Similar to studies 1 & 2
  - Unprepared variable
    - “How prepared do you need to be to do well?” - “How prepared are you?”

Testing Ignorance

What drives the P.I. of study behavior & exam performance relationship?



$t(87) = -2.31$, $p = .02$



$F(2,85) = 4.06$, $p = .02$,
$R^2 = 0.09$

Discussion

- ✧ P.I. – exam performance mediated
  - Feeling unprepared driving relationship
  - Can typical P.I. intervention help?

Can an intervention reduce the P.I.-Exam performance relationship?

STUDY 4

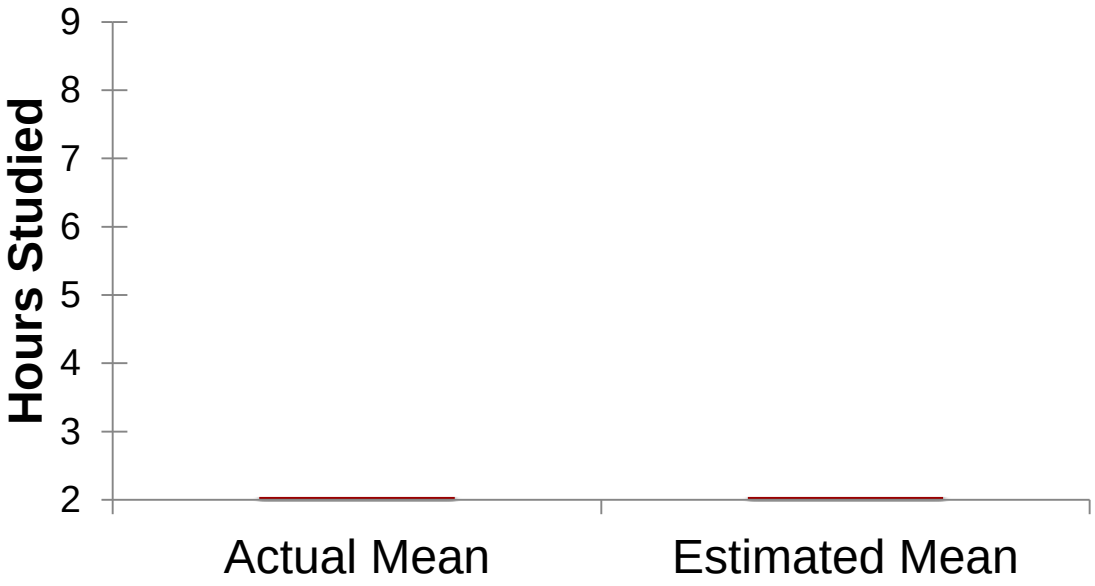
Testing Ignorance

- Fall 2015 Social Psychology (*N* = 119)

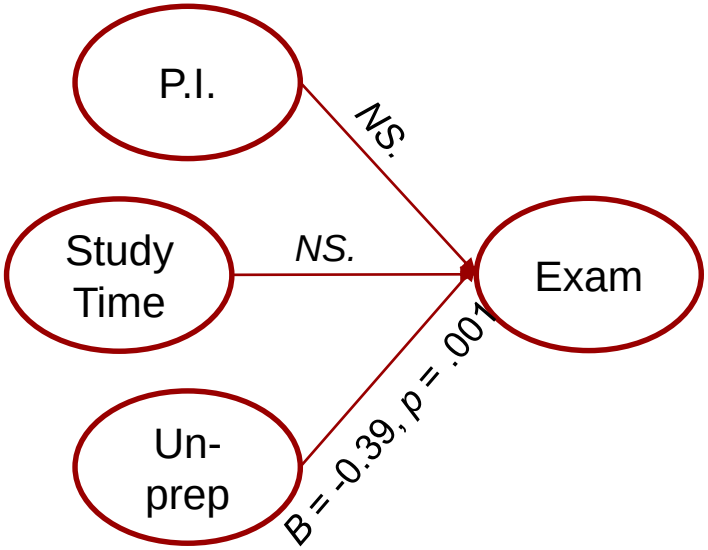
- Procedure
  - Intervention one-week before exam 2
    - Data on true mean
  - Other procedures same as study 3

Testing Ignorance

Can an intervention reduce the P.I.-exam performance relationship?



$t(102) = 0.24, p > .05$



$F(3,100) = 4.20, p < .01$

Discussion

- ✧ No Pluralistic Ignorance Effect
  - P.I. no longer related to exam performance
  - P.I. no longer predicted unpreparedness
  - Correlational Methods

What does this all mean?

CONCLUSIONS

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

What we know so far…

- Students underestimate others' study time
- Underestimation is related to exam performance
- P.I. → Feeling unprepared → performance
- Intervention eliminated ignorance

What can you do in your courses?

http://goo.gl/PhAZVs

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