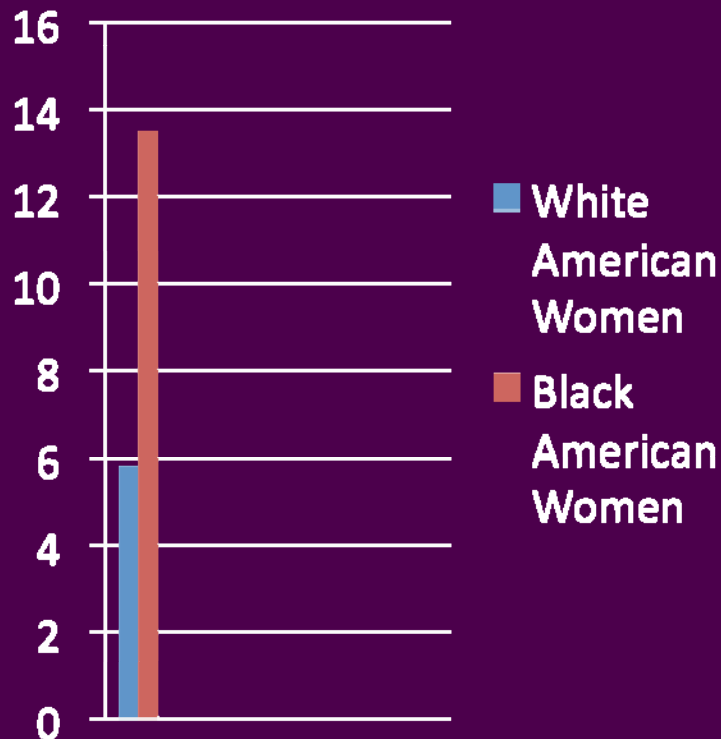


# Higher Status Boosts Mastery For White, Not Black, American College Women's Future Selves

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# Health Outcomes in Black vs. White American Women

Infant Mortality per 1,000 live births



(CDC, 2002)



# Explanations for Ethnic/Racial Health Discrepancies?

## Lower income

- Less access to resources such as healthcare
- Less access to information on health

## Lifestyle risk factors

- High rates of smoking among Black Americans
- Dietary habits

## Cultural mistrust of healthcare providers

- Noncompliance
- Less likely to see healthcare providers

## A Major Problem With These Explanations

Black American women  
from middle and upper classes  
have surprisingly high rates of  
infant mortality

What Accounts for Poorer Health  
Outcomes in Black American Women?



MASTERY

# Mastery

An overall perceived sense of  
**control** over one's life events

(Skaff et al. 1996)

- Can be addressed as hopelessness, helplessness, locus of control, powerlessness

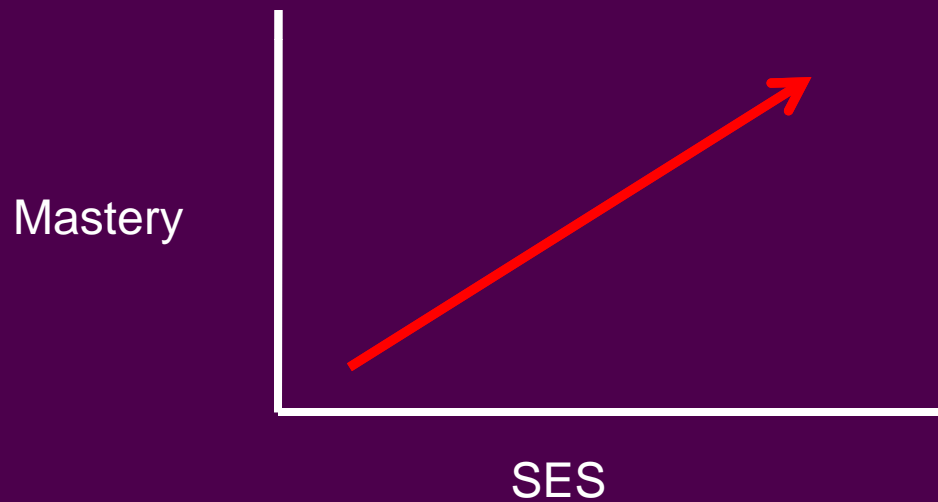
(Turner, Lloyd, Roszell, 1999)

# Mastery Orientation Scale (Pearlin, 1978)

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

- \_\_\_\_ 1. I have little control over the things that happen to me.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life.
- \_\_\_\_ 5. Sometimes I feel that I'm being pushed around in my life.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. What happens to me in the future mostly depends on me.
- \_\_\_\_ 7. I can do just about anything I really set my mind to do.

# SES and Mastery



(Turner, Lloyd, & Roszell, 1999)



# The Current Study

## SES and mastery

- Black and White American women

## Experimental method

- Causality

# Participants & Method

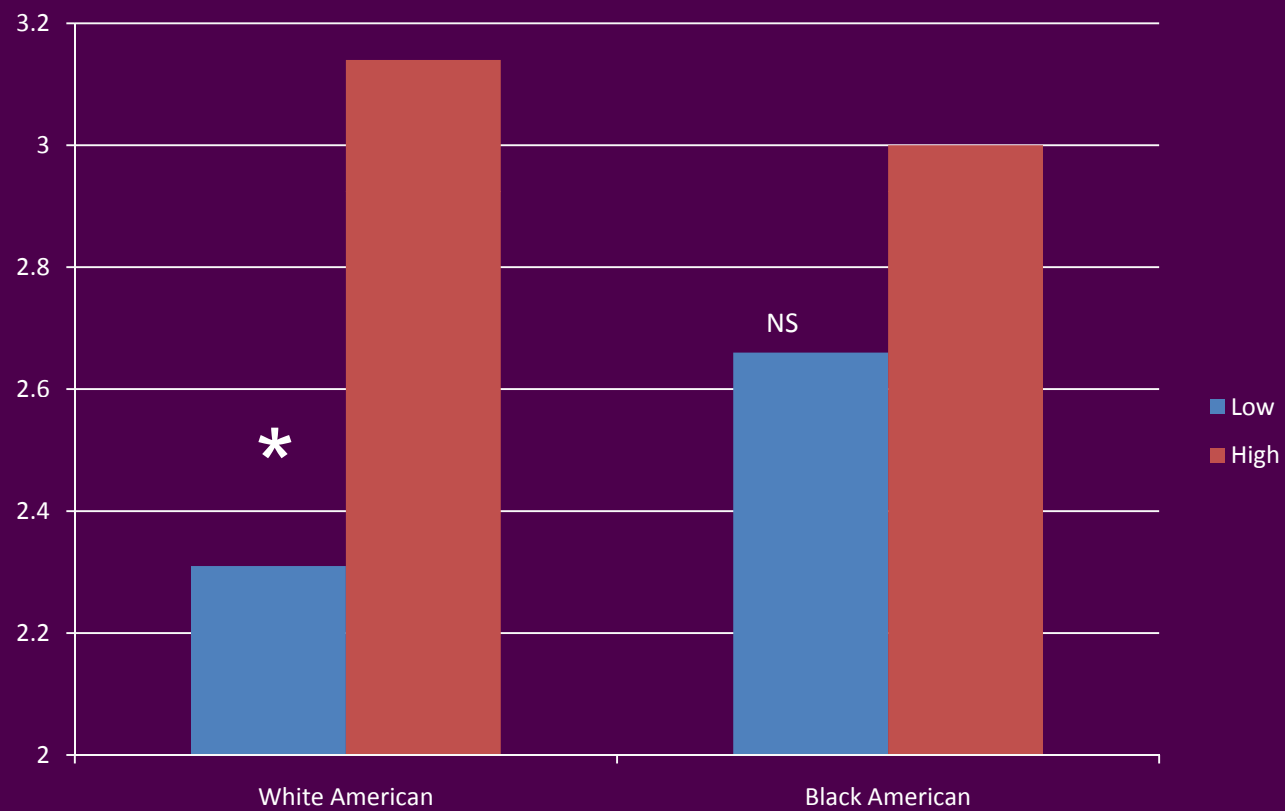
## Participants

- N = 42
- Smith College students
- About evenly divided between Black American and White American women

## Method

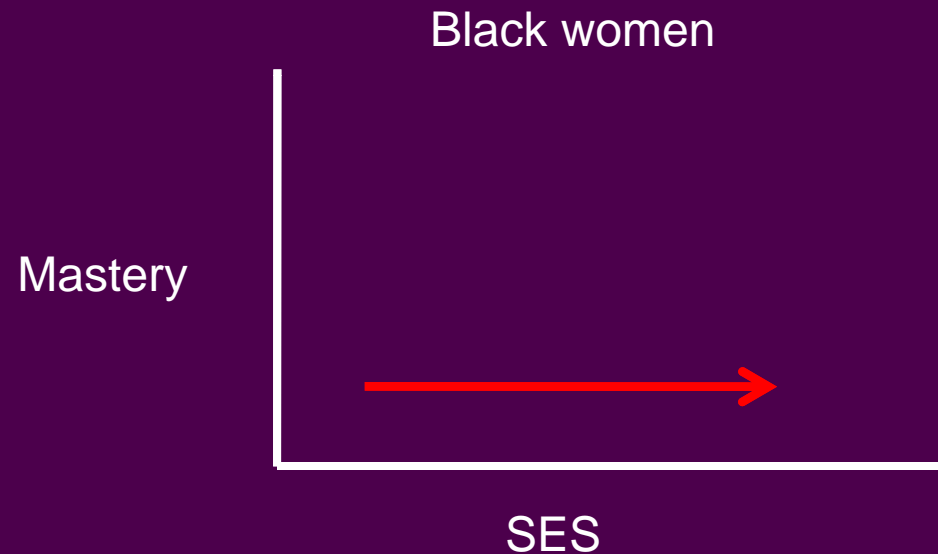
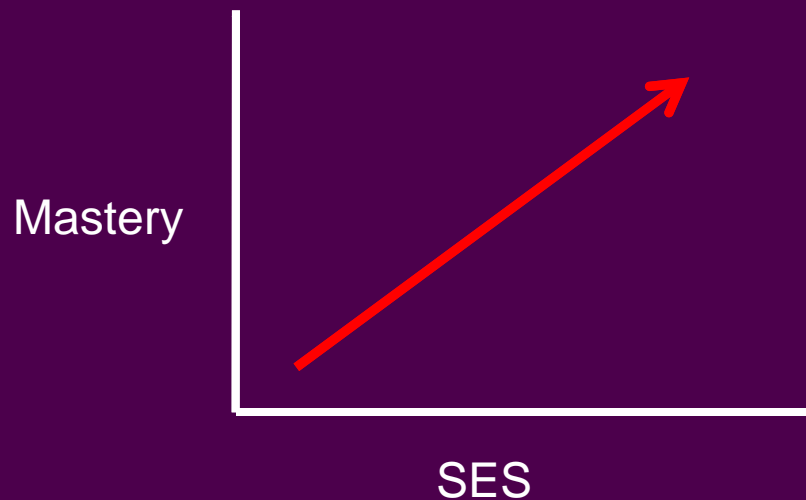
- Imagined one's future as low or high social status
- Measured mastery using Mastery Orientation Scale (Pearlin, 1978)

# Results



# SES and mastery

## White vs. Black American women



# Why are these results important?

- A low sense of mastery among high-status Black women is a potential contributor to Black-White health disparities
  - For the general population, a higher SES predicts a higher sense of mastery, and therefore better health outcomes, but this is not true for Black women
- Poorer health outcomes for Black Americans cannot be explained solely through lower socio-economic status

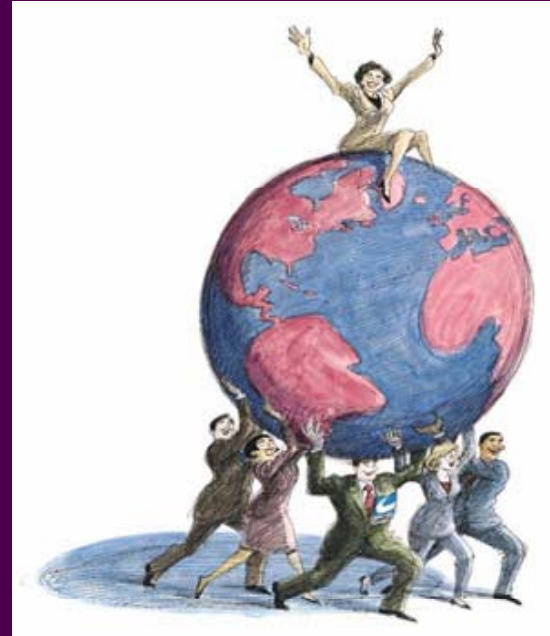
## Future Research

- To what extent does a sense of mastery affect overall health outcomes?
- Would this study yield the same results if conducted in an environment that is not primarily White (like Smith)?

# References

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THANK  
YOU



Any Questions?