

Who is advised to prioritize prestige? The role of social identity in influencing advice in the presence of tradeoffs

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Introduction

Across three preregistered studies (total N = 3721), we explore how an advisee's identity influences whether they are advised to prioritize prestige and career advancement over other job attributes. We suggest advisors rely on stereotypes to infer an advisee's preferences, and as a result, perceive some attributes to be more 'identity-relevant' (i.e., systematically valued) by marginalized advisees (e.g., workplace diversity for Black advisees). In the presence of identity-relevant tradeoffs, marginalized advisees are less likely to be told to prioritize prestige.

Hypotheses

- H1:** Advisors are significantly more likely to deprioritize prestige when advising marginalized identities
- H2:** This effect is only present when the tradeoff involves an identity-relevant attribute

Methods

Study 1: Lab-in-Field Study (N = 519)

- Working professionals advised a (supposedly real) student deciding between a high-prestige/unpaid offer (Internship A) or a low-prestige/paid offer (Internship B).
- IV: Advisee economic background
 - Low-income – "As a low-income student..."
 - Not low-income – "Although I'm not a low-income student..."
- DV: "To what extent do you believe [the advisee] should accept Company A's offer?" on a 7-point scale

Study 2: Prolific Study (N = 971 White participants)

- MBA student faced a choice between a senior (Offer A) or junior manager position (Offer B).
- IV: 2 (Advisee race) x 2 (Tradeoff type)
 - Advisee Race: Black or White student
 - Tradeoff type: job location or workplace diversity
- DV: "How likely are you to tell [the advisee] that he should accept Company A's offer?" on a 7-point scale

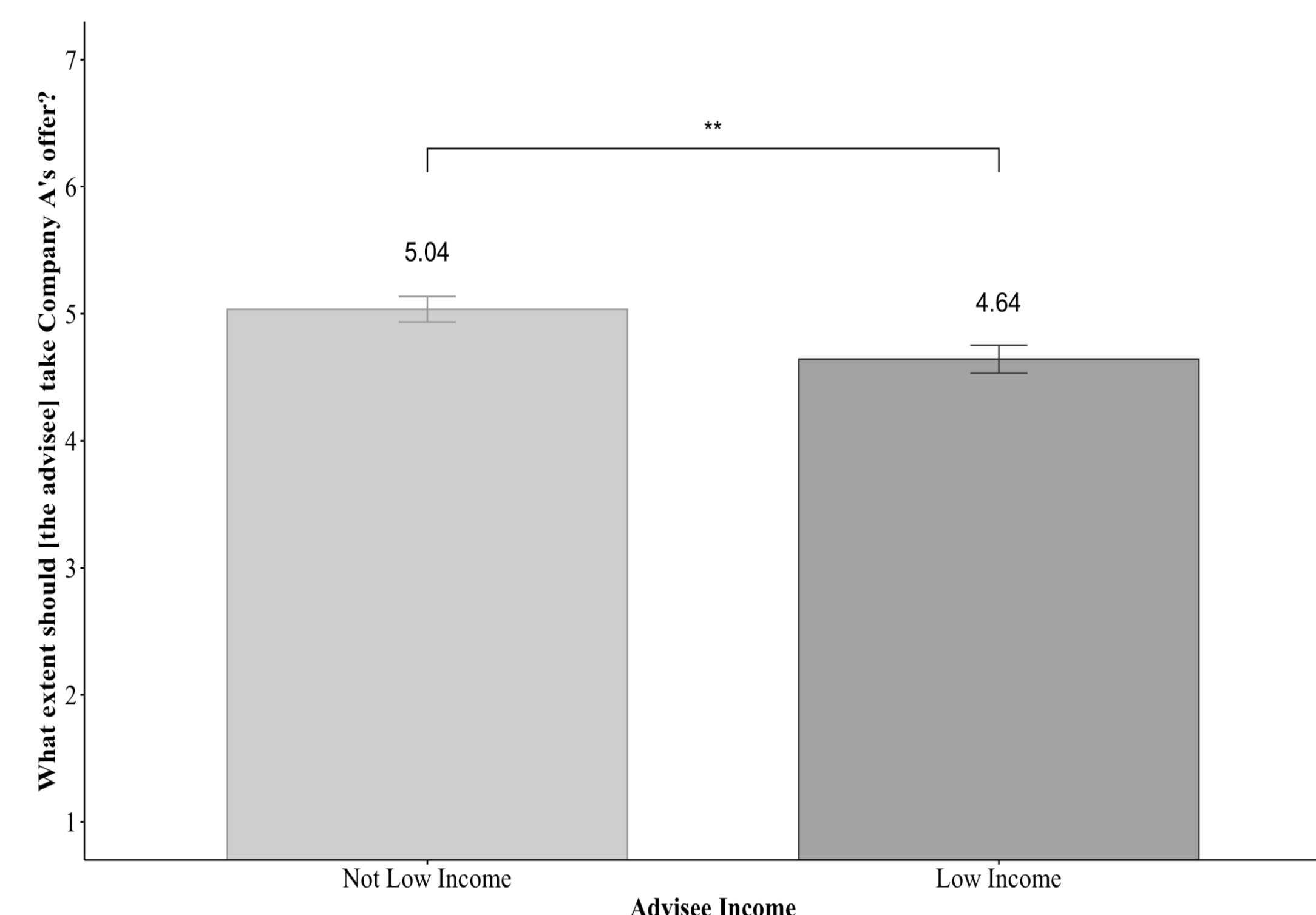
Study 3a & 3b: Prolific Studies (N = 1211 & N = 1020)

- Participants imagined facing a career tradeoff paralleling those in Studies 1 and 2 (e.g., prestige/pay, prestige/workplace diversity) and receiving advice about how to proceed.
- IV: 2 (Advisee identity) x 3 (Advice received)
 - Advisee Identity (Matched Based on Self-Reported Identity)
 - 3a -- Advisee Economic Background: Low- or High-income
 - 3b -- Advisee Race: Black or White
 - Advice Received
 - Take Internship A (Prestige-prioritizing)
 - Take Internship B (Identity-prioritizing)
 - No Advice (Control)
- DV: "Which Internship are you inclined to choose?"
 - 0 = Internship B ~ 100 = Internship A

Results

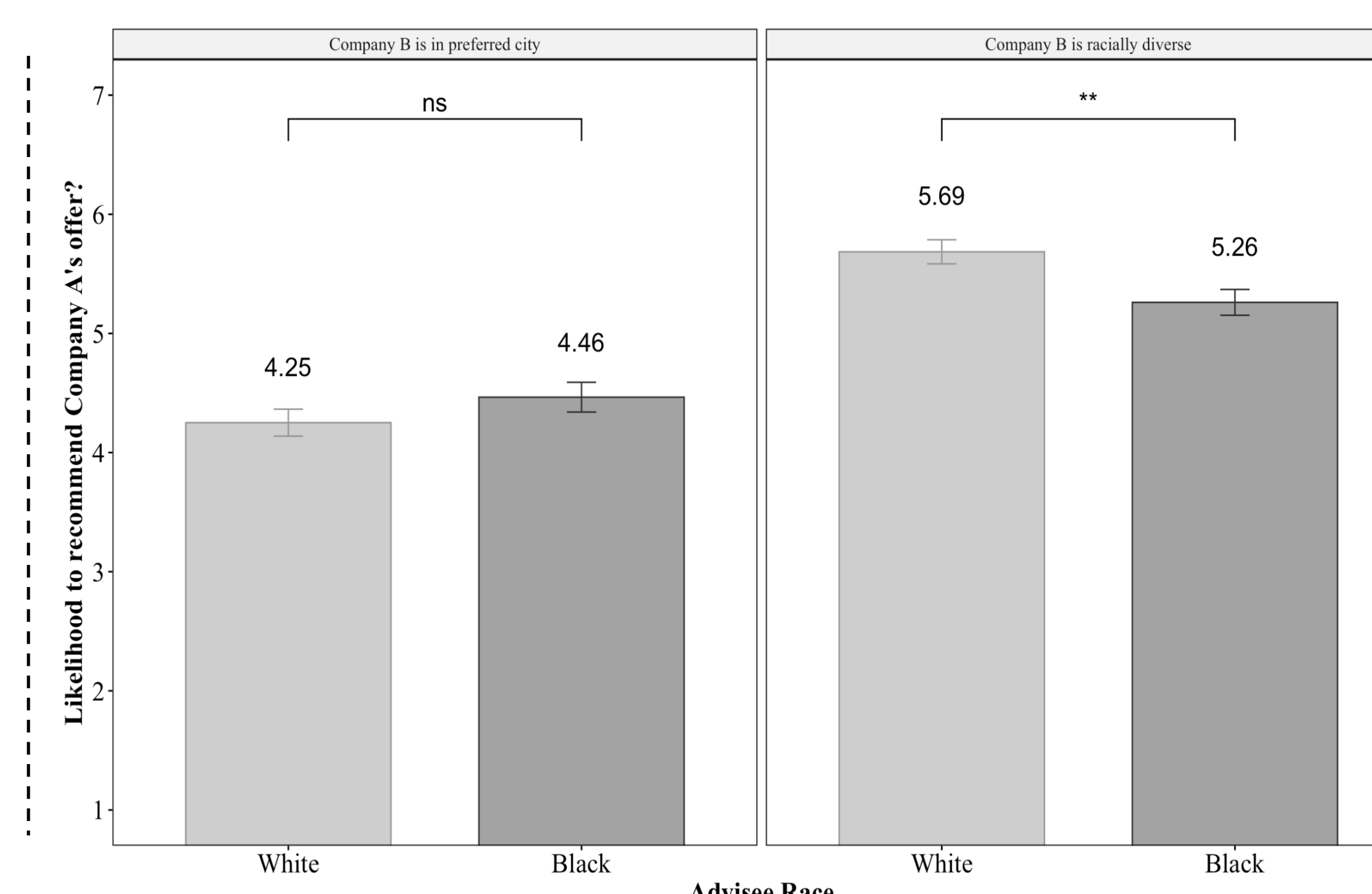
Study 1

Advisors are significantly less likely to recommend the prestige-prioritizing offer when advising a low- vs. not low-income student ($p = .008$).



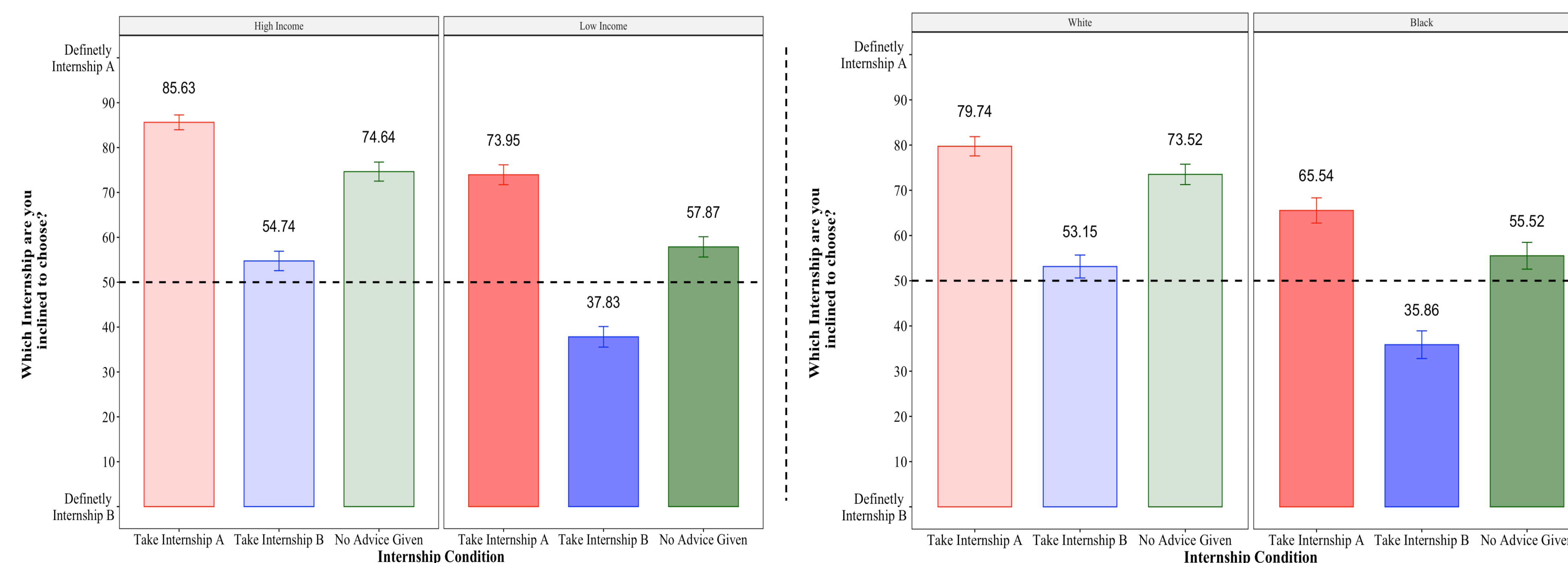
Study 2

Advisors are less likely to recommend the higher status position to Black advisees *only* when the tradeoff involves an attribute perceived to be identity-relevant (i.e., workplace diversity), interaction ($b = -0.64, p = .005$).



Study 3a & 3b

Advisees from marginalized backgrounds are significantly less certain about their career choice at baseline (see dark vs. light green bars; $p < .001$). Thus, differences in advice can lead to preference reversals for marginalized identities (see dark red vs. dark blue bars).



Additional Findings

- When advising marginalized group members facing identity-relevant trade-offs, advisors are more likely to avoid giving any prescriptive advice at all.
- We did not find moderation by advisor economic background in Study 1
- Preliminary analyses suggests this effect is mediated by the weight advisors put on each attribute (e.g., pay and prestige), which varies significantly based on advisee identity

Key Takeaways

- Across both advisee SES and race, we find that **advisors are less likely to recommend options that maximize prestige and career advancement when advising marginalized group members**
- We introduce a novel construct**—an 'identity-relevant attribute', or a trade-off dimension stereotyped as particularly valuable or necessary for members of a marginalized group—and demonstrate that the tendency to de-prioritize prestige when advising marginalized group members is **moderated by whether the other tradeoff dimension is perceived as identity-relevant**
- Advisees from marginalized backgrounds can exhibit preference reversals based on the advice they receive, suggesting **this effect may contribute to labor market segregation.**

