



# The Hubris Hypothesis: It's OK for you to brag if I don't suspect you're comparing yourself to me

Vera Hoorens & Carolien Van Damme

With thanks to:

Quentin Clemens, Wim van Brussel, Helene Vos

25 May 2018, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Association for Psychological Science  
24-27 May 2018, San Francisco



Self-superiority beliefs:  
We are (almost) all better than others...

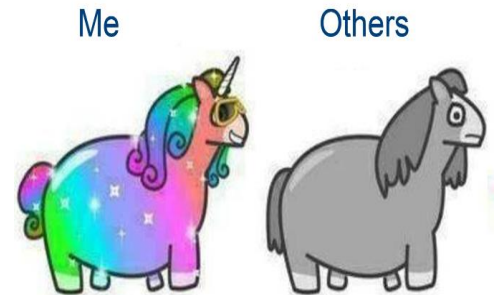
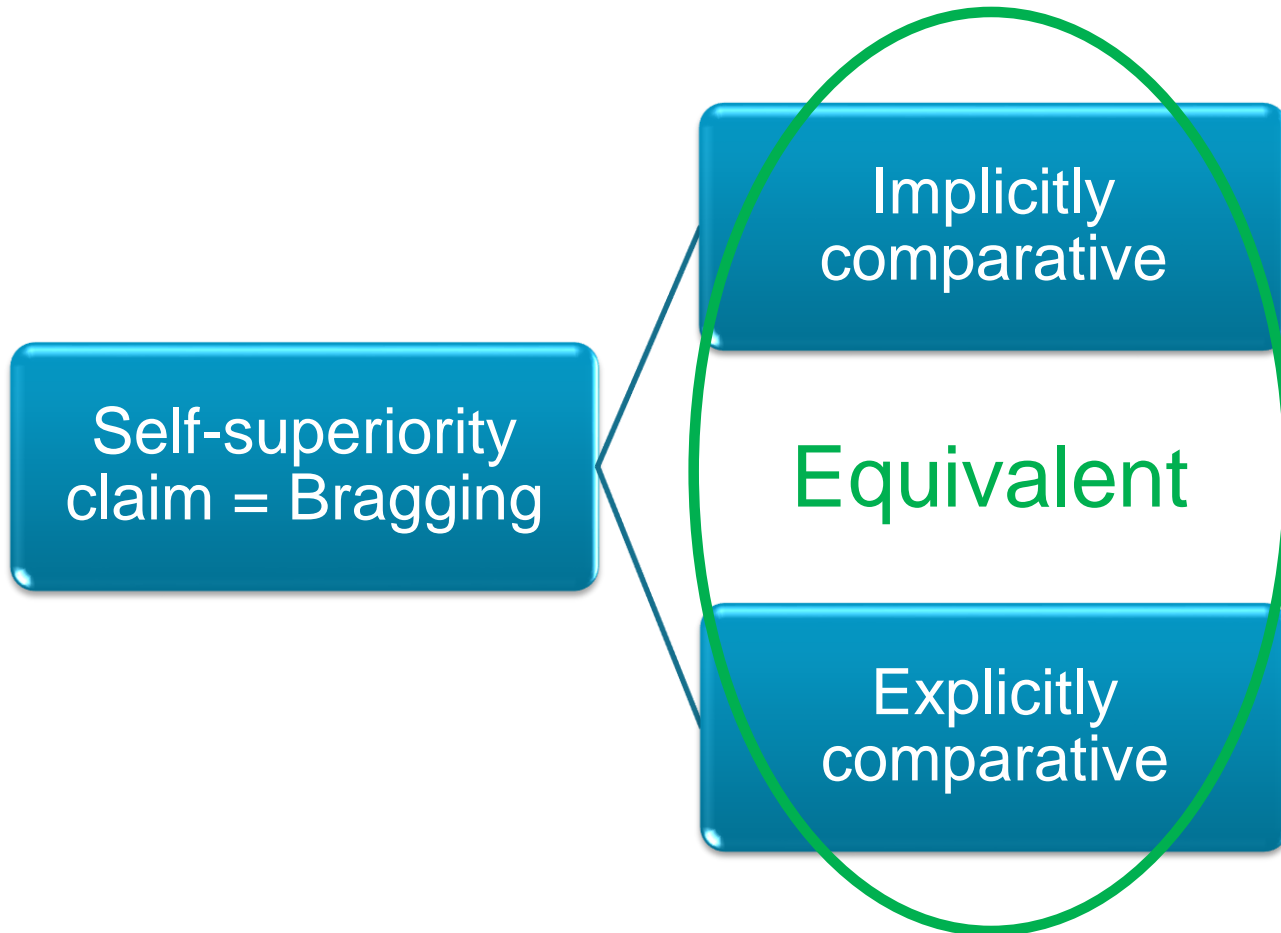
Me



Others



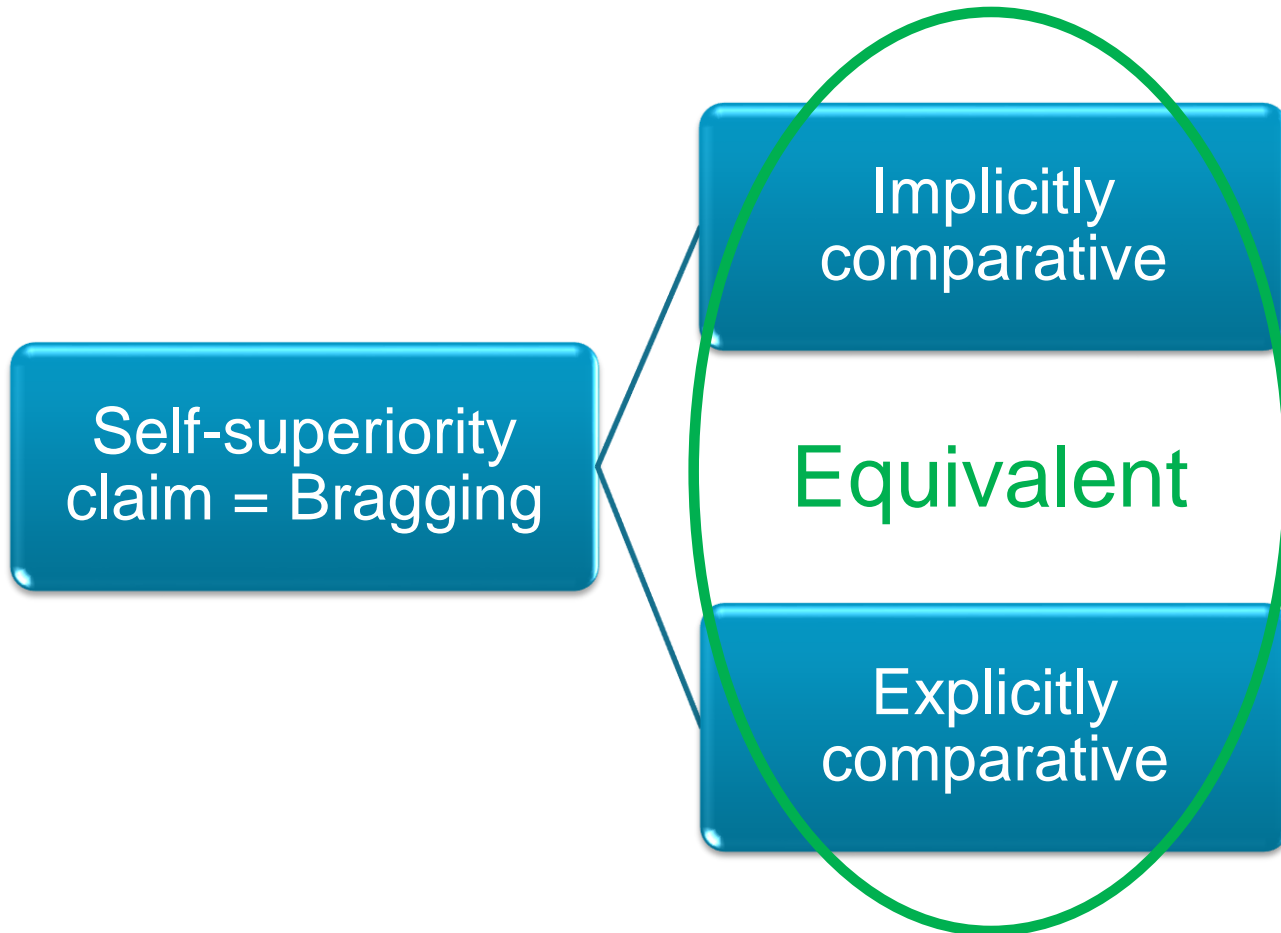
# Expressing one's superiority to others



Hoorens, Pandelaere, Oldersma, & Sedikides (2012)  
Hoorens, Van Damme, Helweg-Larsen, & Sedikides (2017)  
Van Damme, Deschrijver, Van Geert, & Hoorens (2017)  
Van Damme, Hoorens & Sedikides (2016)

# Expressing one's superiority to others

But observers...



Hoorens, Pandelaere, Oldersma, & Sedikides (2012)  
Hoorens, Van Damme, Helweg-Larsen, & Sedikides (2017)  
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# Why? The hubris hypothesis

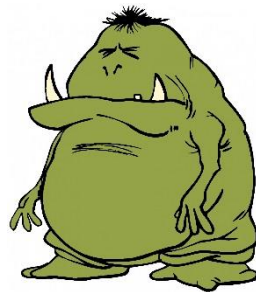
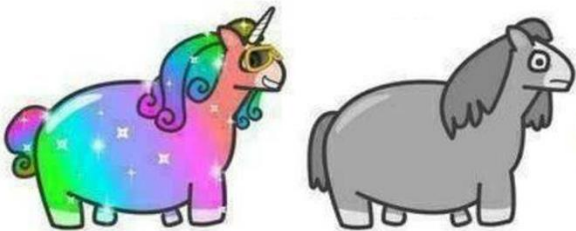
Explicitly  
comparative  
bragging:  
social  
comparison  
'in your face'

Inferred  
negative  
view of  
others

Inferred  
negative  
view of  
observer

Dislike  
Rejection  
Attribution  
undesirable  
traits

Me > Others



Van Damme, Hoorens, & Sedikides (2016)

# Questions

Explicitly  
comparative  
bragging

Observers cannot  
ignore social  
comparison

Observers seem  
not to be among  
the 'others'

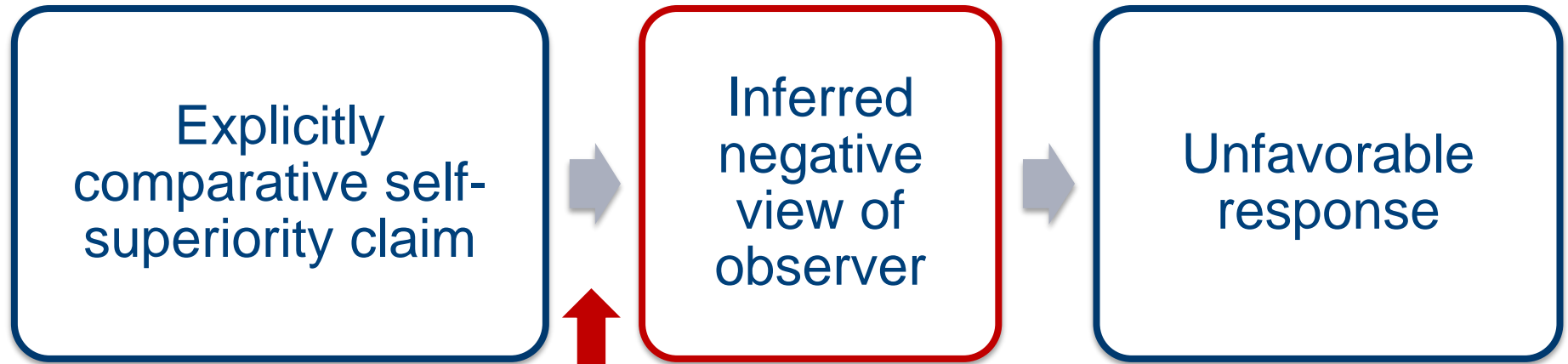
Observers  
know/suspect  
that they are  
among others



Do observers believe that the bragger  
wishes to convey this view of others?



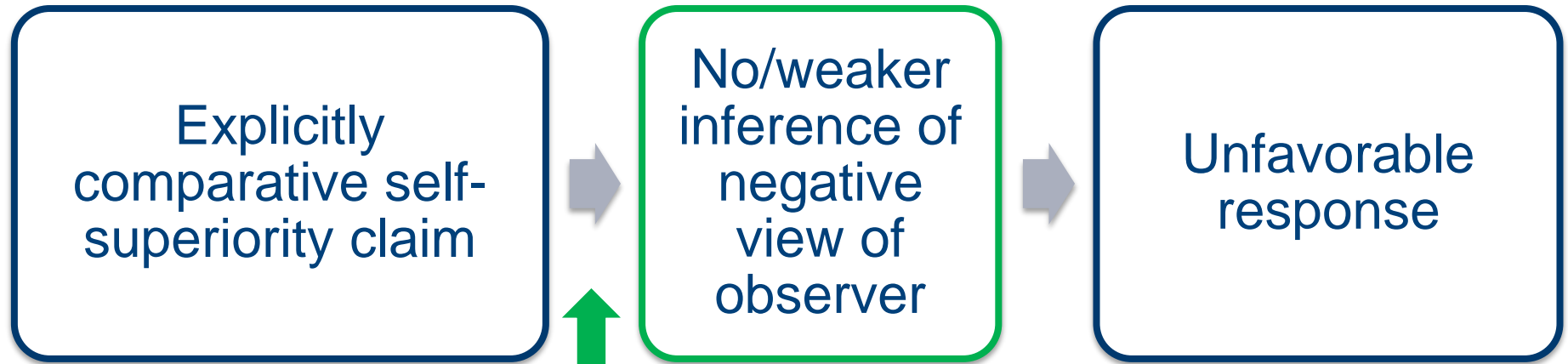
# Studies 1-2: prediction



If others =



# Studies 1-2: prediction

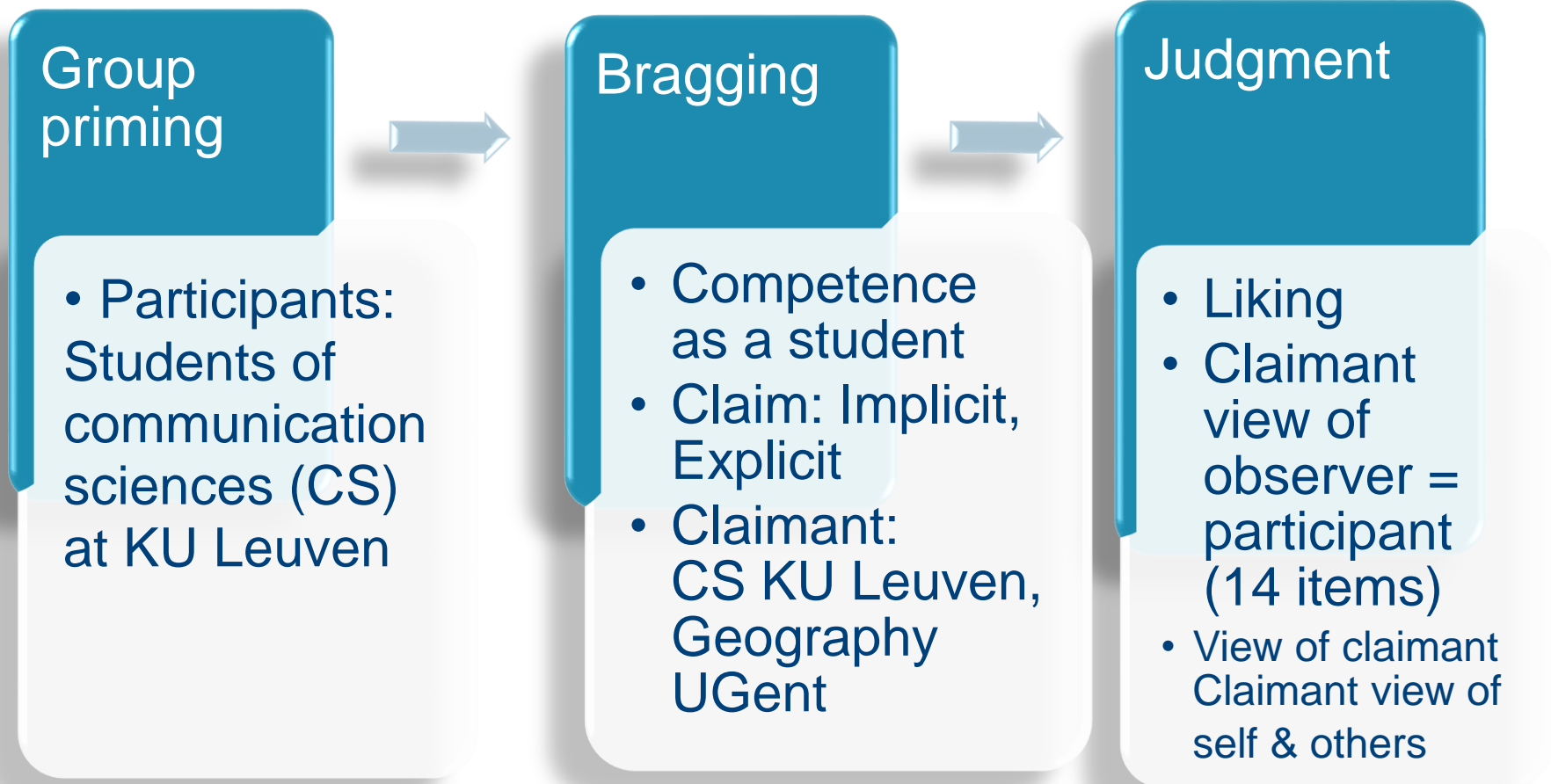


If others =





# Study 1: Real-life groups / Competence claims



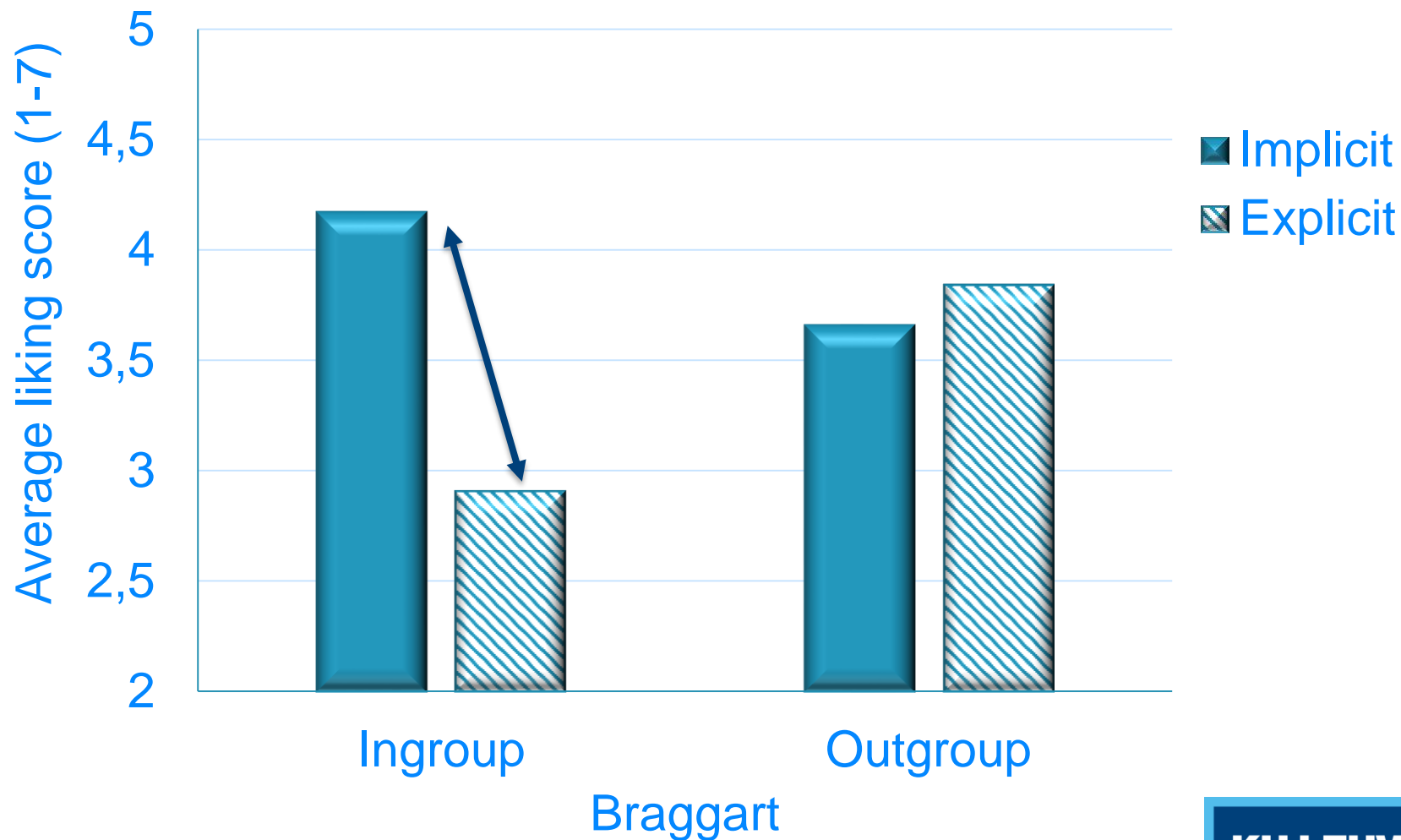
NOTE: elements in smaller font are not being focused upon in this talk

# Explicitly comparative bragging [ingroup, outgroup]

I think I handle my studies in [communication sciences at KU Leuven, geography at Ugent] **better than others** [...]. If I **compare myself to other students from my field** I may well say that I'm **more** organized and diligent and that I have **more** insight.

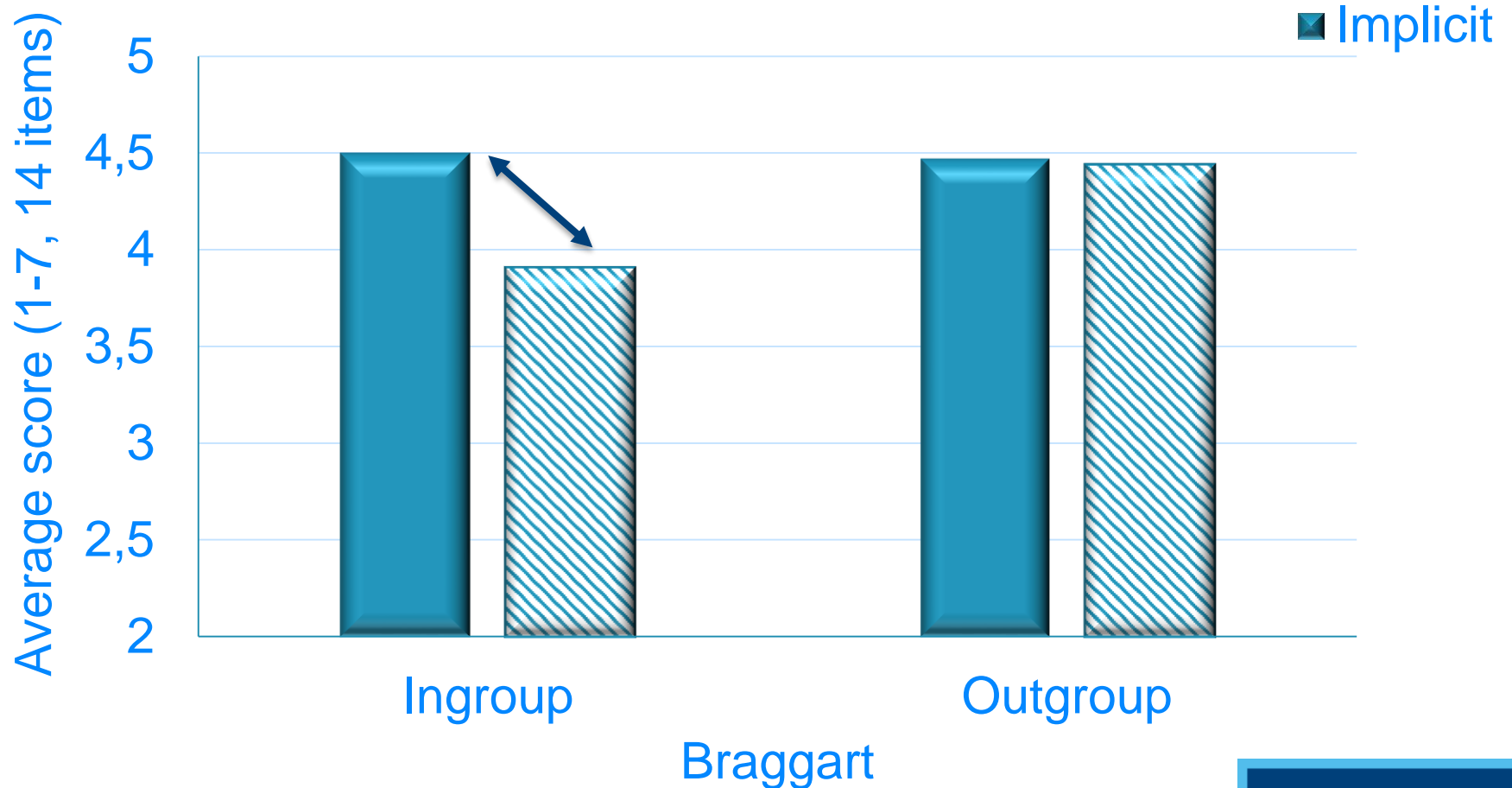
# Study 1: Liking

Interaction claim & group,  $F(1, 105) = 4.87$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{part}} = .04$



# Study 1: Inferred view of observer

Interaction claim & group,  $F(1, 105) = 5.51, p = .021, \eta^2_{\text{part}} = .05$



# Study 2: Minimal groups / Warmth claims

## Group created

- Bogus personality test
- '2 clusters: A & B'
- P in 'A'

## Bragging

- Warmth
- Claim: Implicit, explicit
- Claimant: A, B

## Judgment

- Cf. Study 1

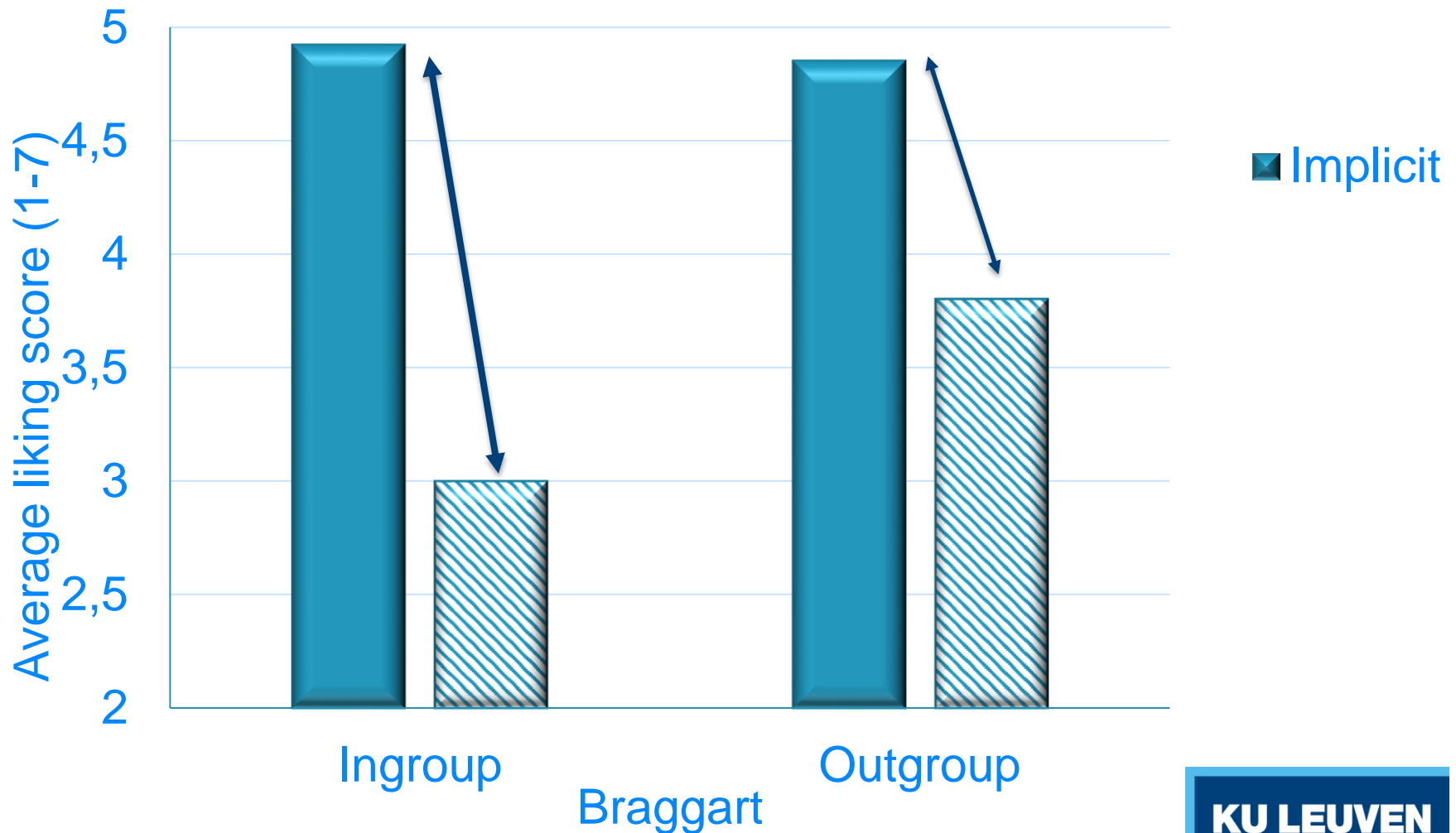
# Implicitly comparative bragging [ingroup, outgroup]

As a Cluster [A,B] person I consider myself a warm person. [...] I'm spontaneous and interested in what other people have to say. If I look at myself as a Cluster [A,B] person, I find myself friendly and pleasant to be around.

# Study 2: Liking

Main effect claim,  $F(1, 92) = 25.07, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{part}} = .21$

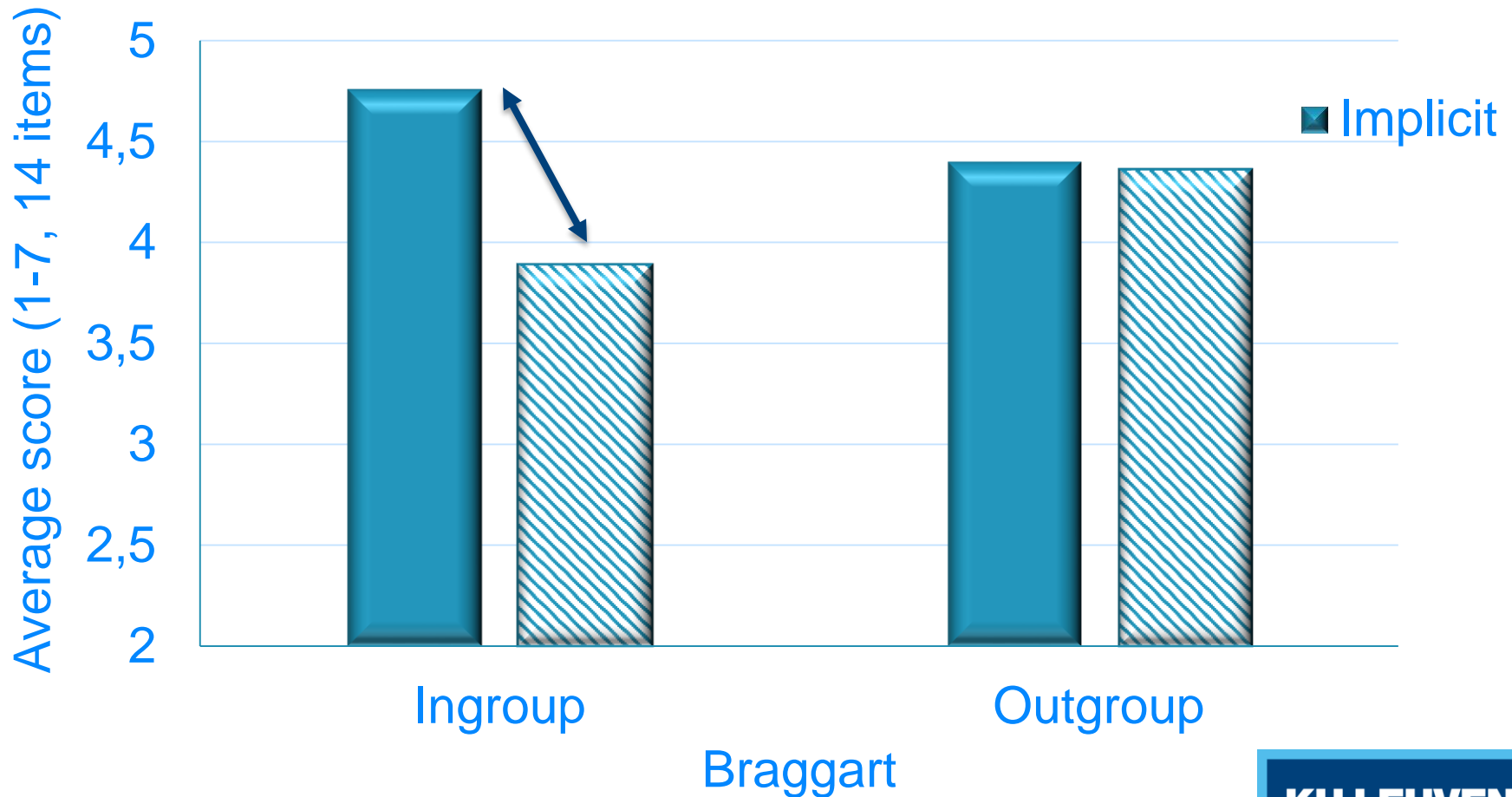
Interaction claim & group,  $F(1, 92) = 4.94, p = .029, \eta^2_{\text{part}} = .05$



# Study 2: Inferred view of observer

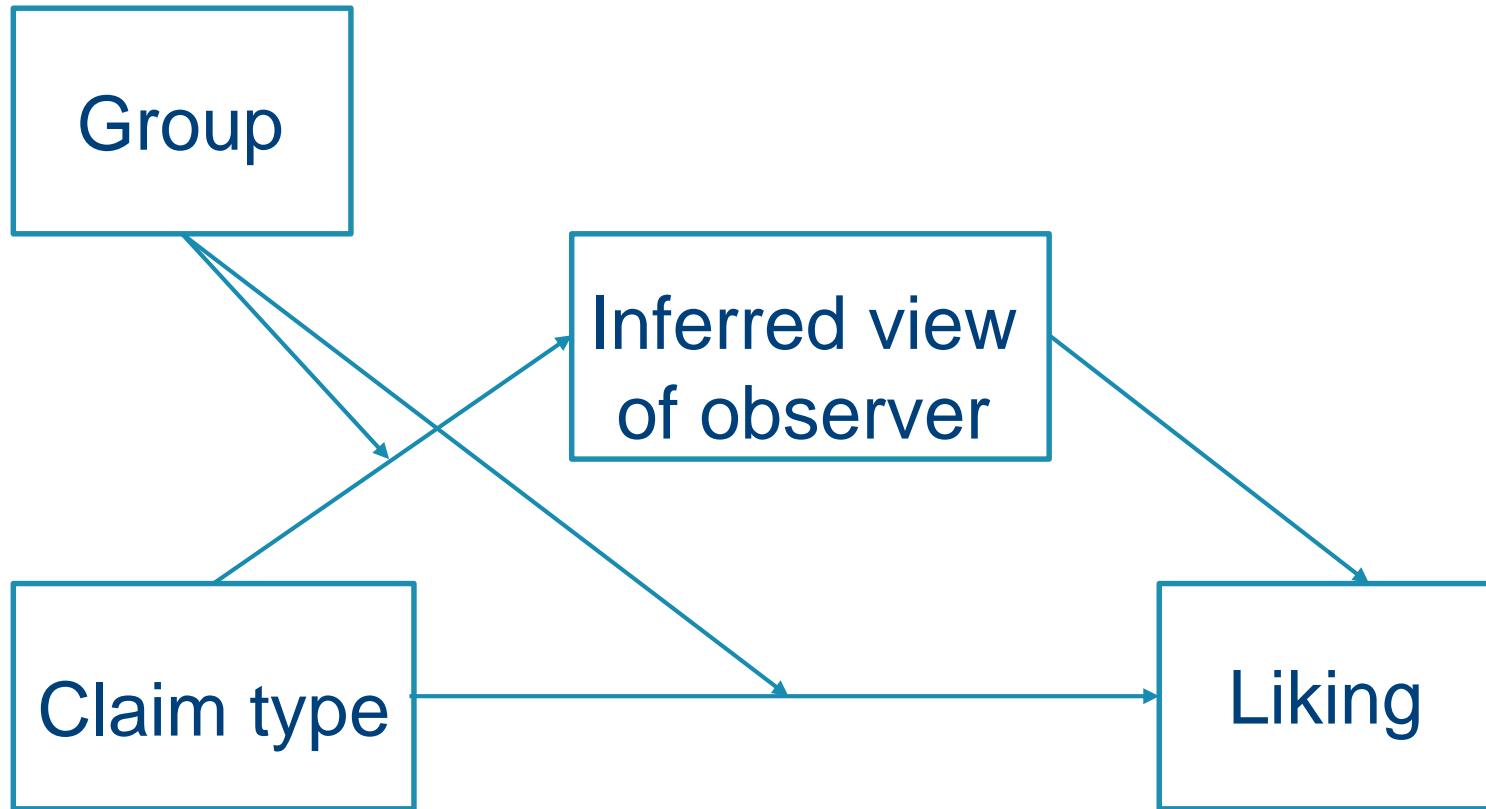
Main effect claim,  $F(1, 92) = 4.88, p = .030, \eta^2_{\text{part}} = .05$

Interaction claim & group,  $F(1, 92) = 7.32, p = .008, \eta^2_{\text{part}} = .07$





# Studies 1 & 2: Moderated mediation



Ingroup → indirect effect

Outgroup → no indirect effect

# Do observers believe that claimant *wants* to express a negative view of others/them? Study 3

## Self-superiority claim

- Claim: Implicit, explicit, explicit-compared-to-individual
- Domain: Friendship, Studentship



## Judgments

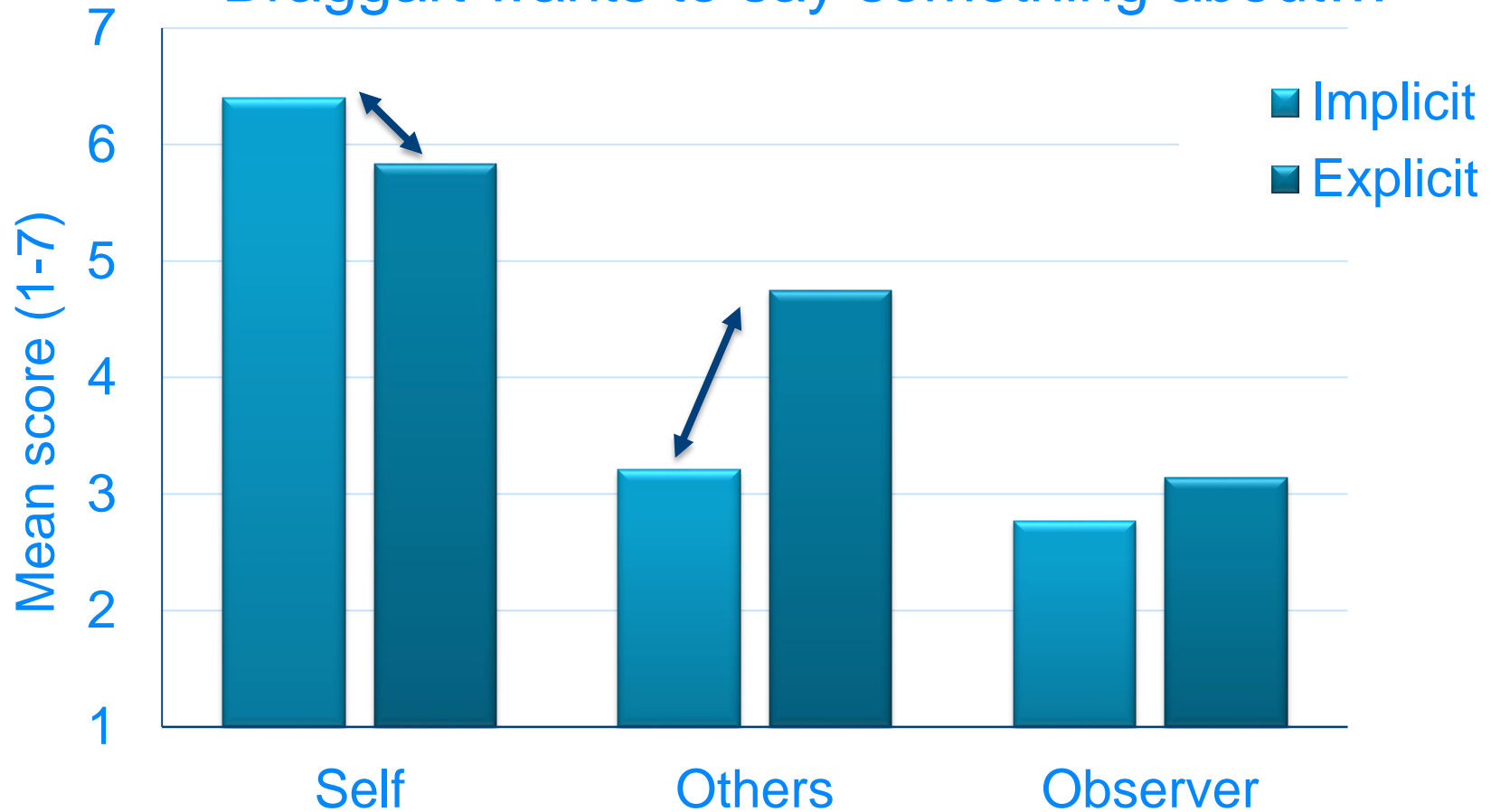
- How much does claimant wish to say something about self, others, you?
- Why this claim? 16 motives → 3 factors

NOTE: elements in smaller font are not being focused upon in this talk

# Study 3: Results

Interaction claim & target,  $F(1, 284) = 17.02, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{part}} = .107$

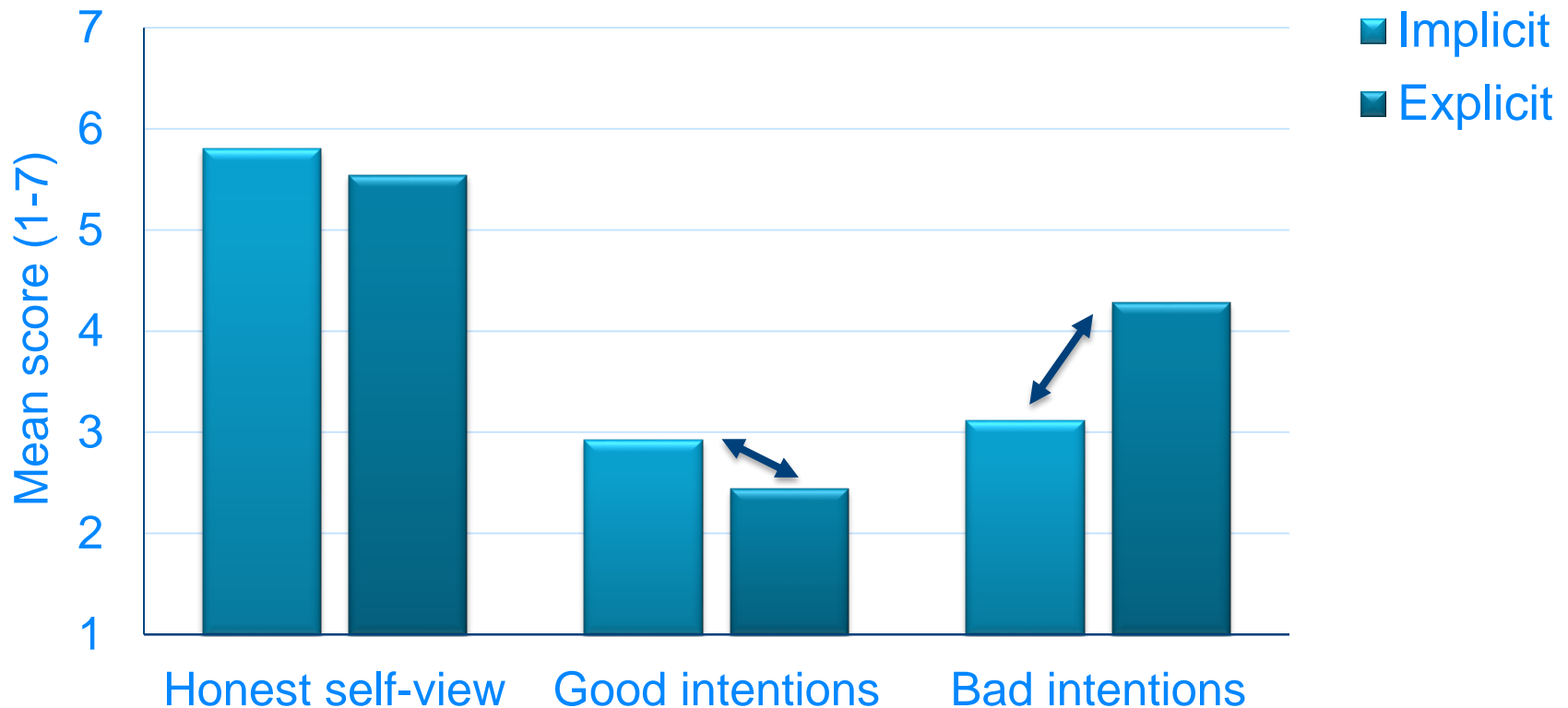
Braggart wants to say something about...



# Study 3: Results

Interaction claim & target,  $F(1, 284) = 25.58, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{part}} = .153$

## Inferred intentions



# Conclusion

Explicitly  
comparative  
bragging

Observers cannot  
ignore social  
comparison

Observers do believe that the bragger  
wishes to convey this view of others...

Observers seem  
not to be among  
the 'others'



Observers  
know/suspect  
that they are  
among others



# What not to answer at conferences

Sorry I missed your session. How did it go?

Well, if I compare it with other sessions, we had a larger and more attentive audience. No wonder, our research is exceptionally interesting and we presented it really well.

Perhaps try...

Well, if I compare it with the other sessions **that you had to miss**, we had a larger and more attentive audience. No wonder, our research is exceptionally interesting and we presented it really well.

Thank you for your attention!

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