Intersectionality of Race, Autism, and Anxiety in Marginalized Youth

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Background

- The prevalence of anxiety disorders diagnosed in autistic youth ranges from 42% - 79%[2]
- Non-White autistic youth often face a higher risk of anxiety due to experiences of racial discrimination and the intersectionality of race and autism[1].
- However, autism studies have historically and predominantly included White, male samples[3], highlighting a need to increase inclusion of Non-White individuals in autism and anxiety research.
- The lack of wide scale on Non-White studies may be due to:
  1. Difficulties with self-reporting
  2. Non-inclusive methods in participant recruitment
  3. Systematic disparities

Current Study

- Investigate the prevalence of anxiety symptoms in autistic and non-autistic youth in non-White vs. White populations and whether experiences of discrimination moderate the association between race and anxiety symptoms.
- **Hypotheses:** Non-White autistic adolescents will have higher rates of anxiety symptoms in comparison to their White counterparts and higher levels of discrimination in non-White youth will be associated with more anxiety symptoms.

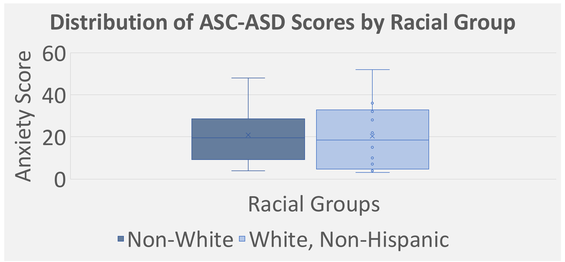
Participants

- **32, 11 – 14-year-olds** with either a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (autistic, *n* = 16) or without a diagnosis of ASD (non-autistic, *n* = 16).
- 37.5% of children in the study reported being White, Non-Hispanic (*n*=12*)* and 62.5% are Non-White.
- The average age of participants was 12.78 years.

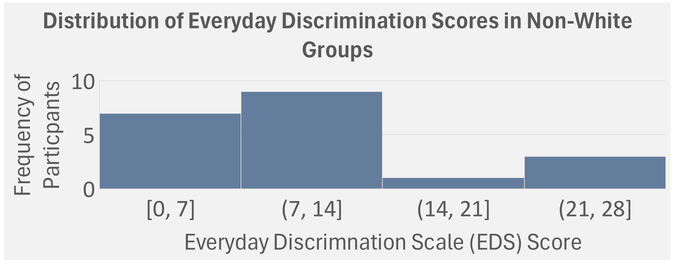
Methodology

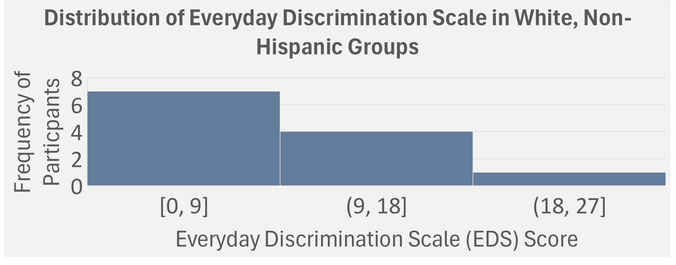
Methods

- Participants and their parents completed an in-person behavioral visit where they completed a multitude of surveys.
- **Anxiety Scale for Children** (ASC-ASD; Rodgers et al., 2016): The results of the survey were used to assess anxiety symptoms in participants.
  - The clinical cutoff of anxiety is a score ≥ 20.



- **Everyday Discrimination Scale** (EDS; Williams et al., 1997)**:** This survey was filled out by the parents of the participants and used to analyze the differing experiences of discrimination.



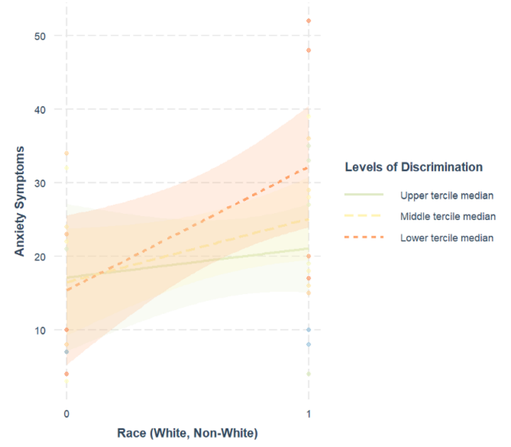


Analyses

- Independent samples *t*-test and regression analysis with race, EDS, and EDS x race in the model.

Results & Future Directions

- Results of an independent samples *t*-test indicated that marginalized adolescents reported higher levels of anxiety (*M* = 23.35, *SD* = 13.99*)* in comparison to their White counterparts (*M* = 16.25, *SD* = 10.99*; p* = 0.08).
- Results of a regression analysis indicated that being a member of a marginalized group was associated with a 19.18-point **increase in anxiety.**
- It was also found that the effect of discrimination varied by race, although not statistically significant (*p* = 0.13).



Discussion & Future Directions

- Continue to recruit a larger proportion of Non-White individuals to continue to address this gap in the literature.
- Future directions should also include further investigation into the racial experiences and their effect on anxiety in autistic youth.

References

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