SOCIAL MEDIA OSTRACISM IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATED AGAINST GROUP MEMBERSHIP

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Ostracism

Fundamental Human Needs

- A person is ostracized when the individual is excluded or simply ignored by another individual or group, as if he or she did not exist (Williams, 1997, 2009).

- Belonging is a fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)

- Ostracism is unique from other forms of interpersonal conflict because it adversely affects four primary fundamental human needs (Williams 1997, 2001)
    - **Belongingness**
    - **Meaningful existence**
    - **Control**
   - **Self-esteem**

Cyberbullying

- Ostracism or social exclusion is considered a type of bullying across different countries from the age of around 14 (Smith et al., 2002; Monks & Smith, 2006)

- However, research and awareness with regards to bullying, and cyberbullying specifically, focuses on other direct forms of aggression (Kowalski et al., 2014; Baas, de Jong & Drossaert, 2013)

Young People's Social Media Use

- Online social interactions particularly via social networking sites (SNS) have become a significant part of everyday interactions (Ryan et al., 2017)

- Young people's SNS use has been on the rise and one of the most popular online activities (Duggan et al., 2015; Smahel et al., 2020)

- Online interactions play a vital role in the lives of many young people with both positive and negative outcomes reported (Baker & Algorta, 2016)

- Support the development of a sense of belonging and self-disclosure (Davis, 2012)

- Associated with victimisation, including receiving abusive emails and being the target of identity theft, harassment, physical threats, social exclusion, verbal assaults, and humiliation (Wolak et al., 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004)

- Cyberbullying on social media has become more prominent with internet use on mobile devices (Görzig & Frumkin, 2013)

Social Media Ostracism in University Settings
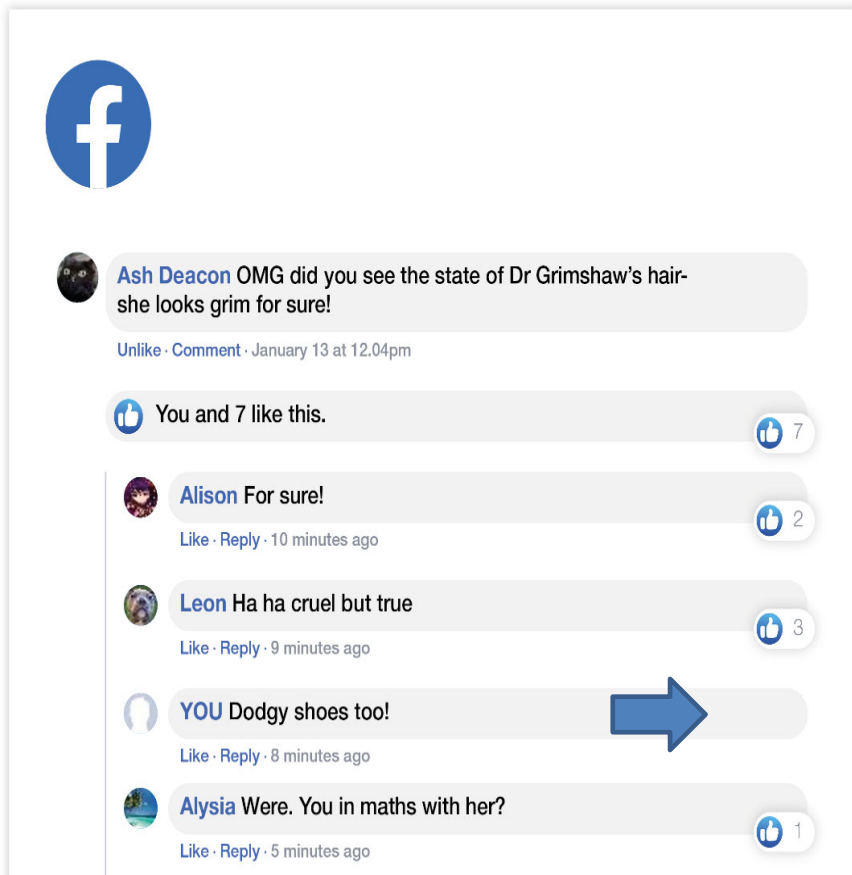
- 19% of college students reported experiencing cyberbullying via SNS (Gahagan et al., 2016)

- Online ostracism is particularly experienced on SNS due to the direct form of interaction (Williams et al., 2000)

- Ostracism on SNS can occur by ignoring someone in comments or chats (Donate et al., 2017; Tobin et al., 2015)

- One-click tools (e.g., 'likes' on Facebook) can affect satisfaction of the need to belong (Reich et al., 2018)

- University students showed higher threat on all four fundamental needs from SNS ostracism (lack of likes; Galbava et al., 2021)

- University students exposed to a Facebook vignette showing either the inclusion or exclusion of a peer showed significant effects on their fundamental needs when asked to imagine it was them (Smith et al., 2017)

→ SNS OSTRACISM AFFECTS FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS AMONGST UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

OSTRACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

- Individuals from marginalised groups are more likely to be targeted by bullies and cyberbullies (Llorent et al., 2016)

- Young people from discriminated groups are more likely to experience cyberbullying and when they do, are also more likely to be harmed or upset by it (Görzig & Machackova, 2016)

-> Discriminated against students are more likely to be victimised and show enhanced consequences if they are

- College students from marginalised groups experience threats to their belonging due to negative stereotypes or lack of fit of their values with the environment (Cohen et al., 2006; Tibbetts et al., 2016)

- Cues that reinforce marginalisation heighten vigilance towards exclusion and contribute to a chronic threat of belonging in academic settings (Crocker et al., 2002; Walton & Cohen, 2007)

-> Those from discriminated against backgrounds at university have chronically lower fundamental needs

- Young people from minority or highly discriminated groups are more likely to experience online hate which can be mitigated in part by social inclusion (Görzig & Blaya, 2022; Stoilova et al., 2021)

- Belonging interventions lessen psychological threat among marginalized groups at college (e.g., Walton & Cohen, 2007)

-> Consequences of victimisation at university can be lessened by social inclusion – worsened by exclusion

→ SNS OSTRACISM EFFECTS AT UNIVERSITY ARE AMPLIFIED FOR THOSE FROM DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BACKGROUNDS

# Fundamental Needs and Academic Belonging

- School, University, or work represent environments that are an organising feature of one's daily life where a sense of belonging is particularly important and likewise can be sources of chronic social evaluative threat (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004)

- Fundamental needs are affected particularly when denied being part of a group Williams (2009) and this should be enhanced in a University peer group setting

- Academic belonging represents the sense of fitting in within one's school or University. This includes

  1. **Potential to succeed** academically

  2. Being accepted by others – **social fit**

  (Cook et al., 2012; Osterman, 2000)

- A greater sense of academic belonging is associated with enhanced motivation and achievement (Connell et al., 1995; Walton & Cohen, 2007)

- Being affirmed as opposed to not affirmed in one's general sense of self and belonging affected individuals' academic belonging (at school, Cook et al., 2012; at college, Walton & Cohen, 2007).

**→ SNS OSTRACISM EFFECTS AT UNIVERSITY
ON GENERAL FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS WILL FURTHER TRANSFER
TO ASPECTS OF ACADEMIC BELONGING**

Method - Participants

- Opportunity University student sample (UK)
  exclusion: >35 years, non-English speaker
- N=88, 9 male, 76 female, 3 not specified
- 18-33 years old (M=21.6, SD=2.92)
- 51% White, 43% BAME, 6% Other
- 86% Undergraduate, 13% Postgraduate, 1% Other
- 88% primary language English
- 32% discriminated against group

"Do you consider yourself to be a member of discriminated against group?"


- Religion
- Gender
- Ethnicity or country of origin
- Other
- LGBTQ+
- Disability
- Appearance
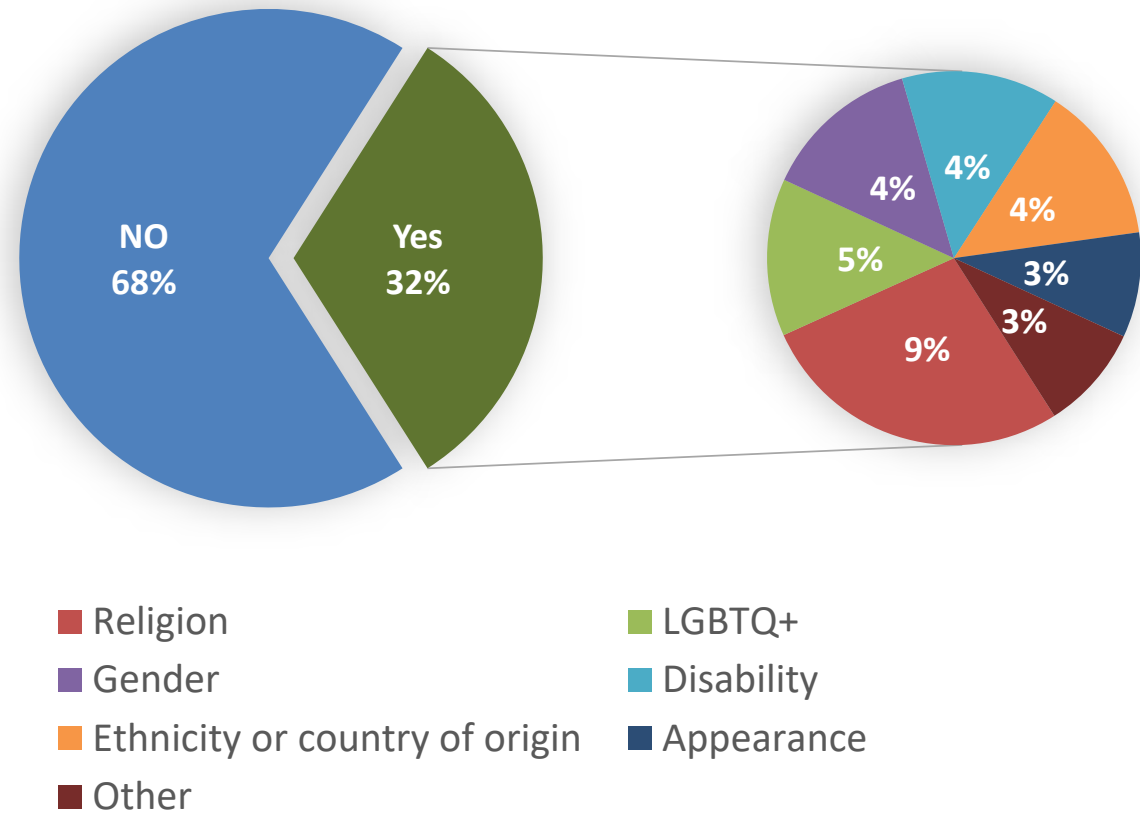
Method - Procedure

random allocation to vignette, Qualtrics survey

"**Please read the short story below and imagine the main character is YOU**."

EXCLUSION

….three of your friends have de-friended you but are still using Facebook regularly to chat to other friends. ….**your comments are ignored *like this*:**
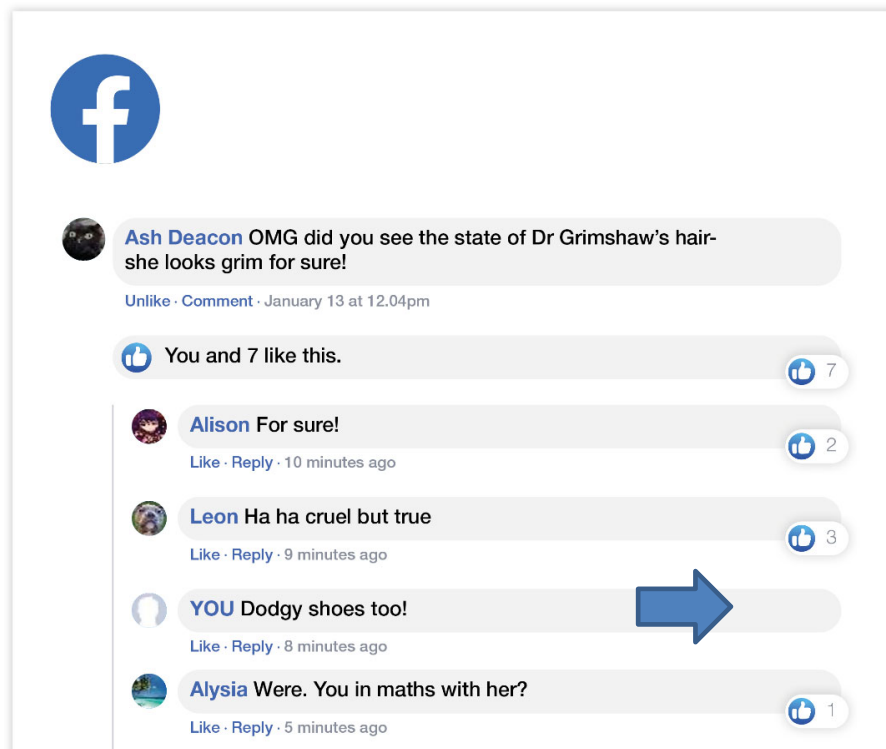
INCLUSION

…you find that people you haven't spoken to in a while get back in contact with you. …..**people usually reply and often 'like' what you have written like this:**
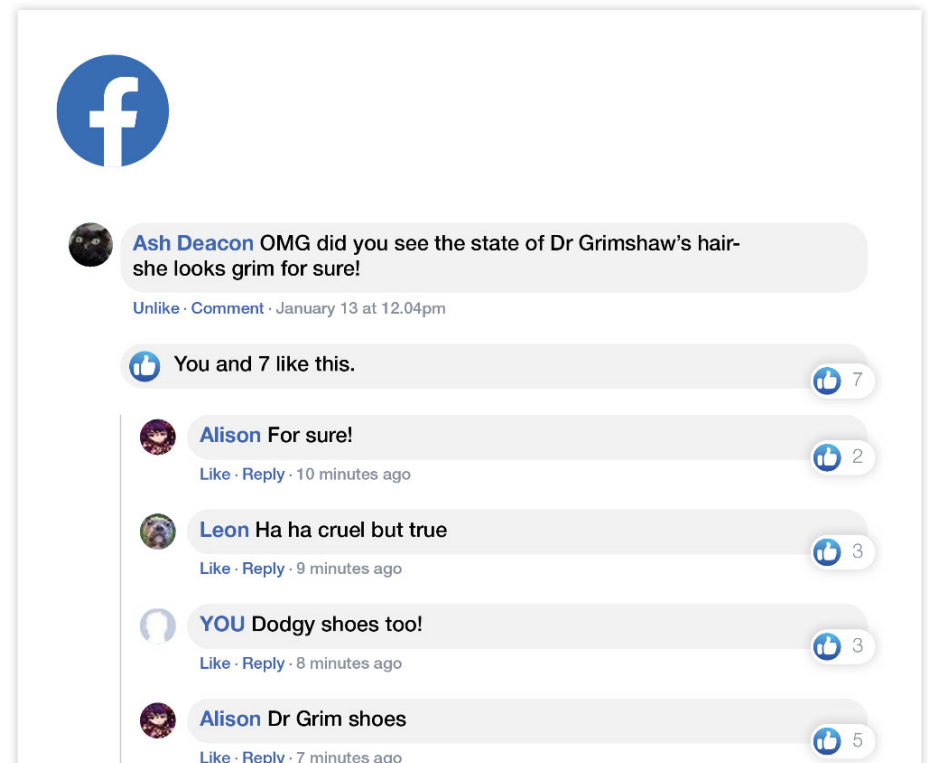
Measurement Instruments

- ## Need Threat Scales (Williams, 2009)

*"After reading the scenario and **imagining that this is happening to you**, please read each statement and indicate the number that best describes how you feel at this moment".*

  - o **Belongingness** ("I feel like an outsider"; α = .89)
  - o **Meaningful existence** ("I feel meaningless", α = .85)
  - o **Control** ("I feel that other people decide everything", α = .81)
  - o **Self-esteem** ("I feel good about myself", α = .88)
  - o *Composite Scale, α = .96*

- ## Academic Belonging (Cook et al., 2012)

*"Before we come to the end of the study, we would just like to ask you a few more **general questions about yourself**. "*

  - o **Social fit at University** ("I feel like I belong in my University", α = .86)
  - o **Potential to succeed at University** ("I am the kind of person that does well in my University", α = .73)

Need Threat (composite) by Ostracism and Discrimination

Ostracism
- Exclusion (blue)
- Inclusion (red)
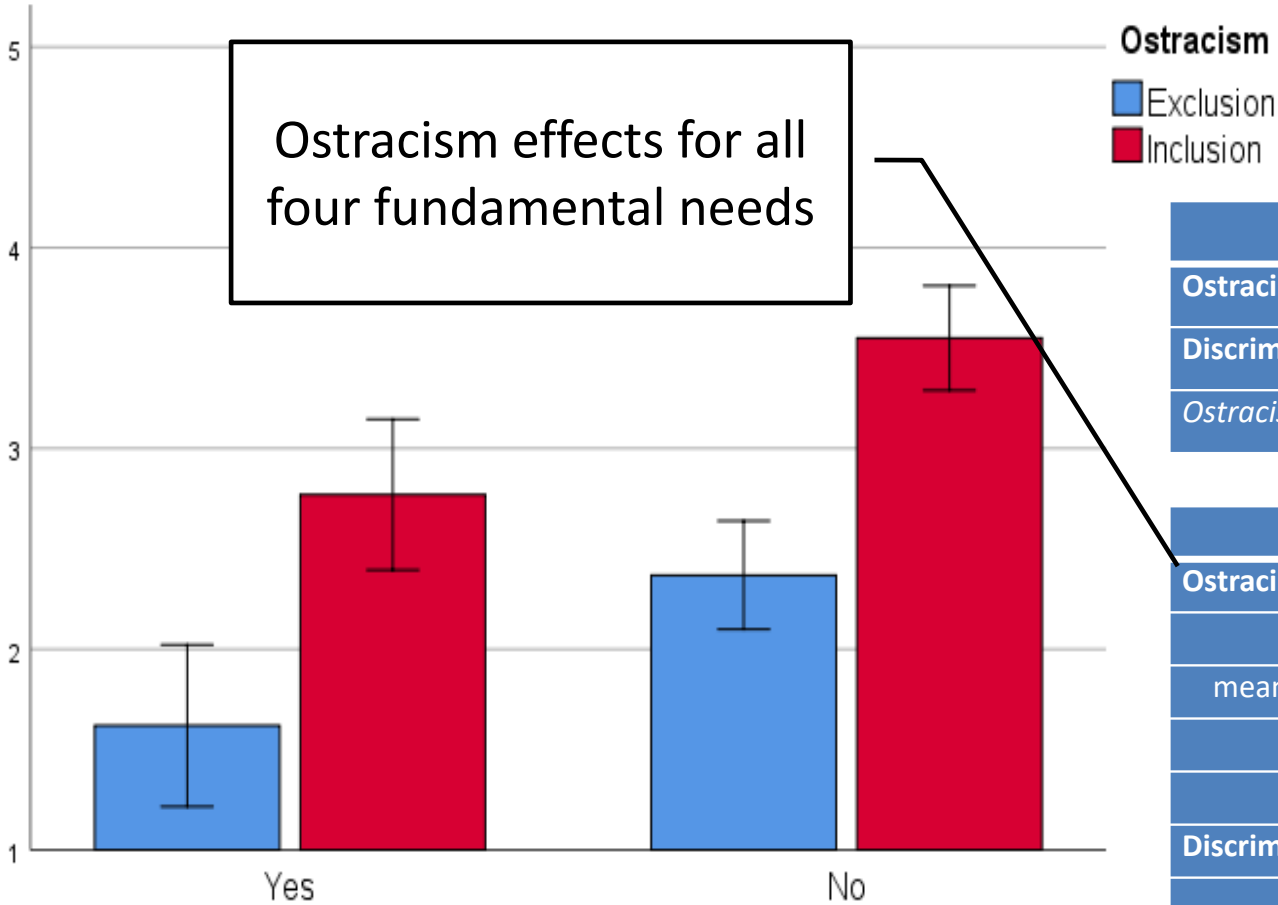
Ostracism effects for all four fundamental needs

Discrimination effects for four fundamental needs

Ostracism effects are **not** amplified amongst those from discriminated against backgrounds

	MANOVA		
Ostracism*	$F(4, 81) = 15.16$,	$p = .000$,	$\eta^2_{partial} = .43$
Discrimination*	$F(4, 81) = 5.63$,	$p = .000$,	$\eta^2_{partial} = .43$
*Ostracism*Discrimination*	$F(4, 81) = 0.62$,	$p = .652$,	$\eta^2_{partial} = .43$
Ostracism			
belonging***			
meaningful existence***			
control***			
self-esteem***	$F(1, 84) = 36.79$,	$p = .000$,	$\eta^2_{partial} = .31$
Discrimination			
belonging***	$F(1, 84) = 13.82$,	$p = .000$,	$\eta^2_{partial} = .14$
meaningful existence***	$F(1, 84) = 17.84$,	$p = .000$,	$\eta^2_{partial} = .18$
control***	$F(1, 84) = 13.46$,	$p = .000$,	$\eta^2_{partial} = .14$
self-esteem***	$F(1, 84) = 20.91$,	$p = .000$,	$\eta^2_{partial} = .20$

Ostracism effects on Academic Belonging via Need Threat (Mediation)

Discussion - Conclusions

SNS OSTRACISM AFFECTS FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS AMONGST UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

- Ostracism effects for all four fundamental needs amongst University students

SNS OSTRACISM EFFECTS AT UNIVERSITY ARE AMPLIFIED FOR THOSE FROM DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BACKGROUNDS
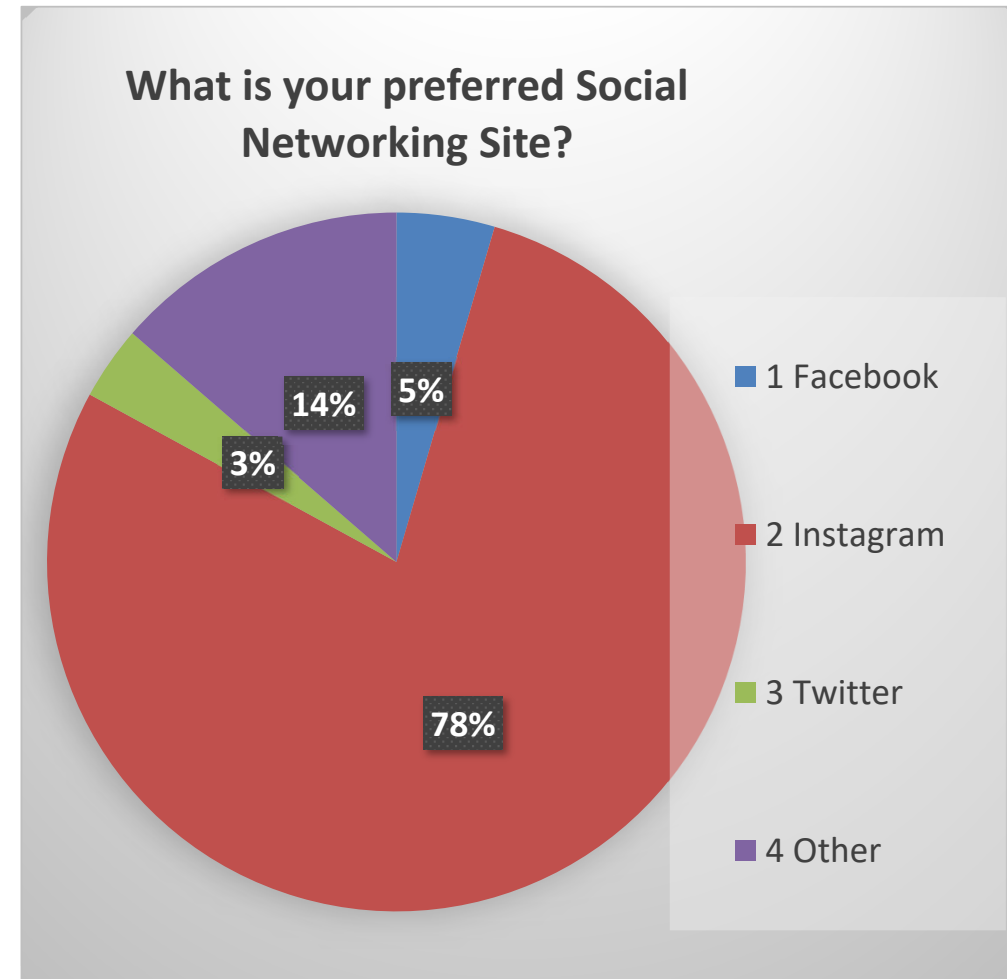
- Ostracism effects are <u>not</u> amplified amongst those from discriminated against backgrounds at University
- Those from discriminated against backgrounds have a lower baseline in all fundamental needs
- → Those from discriminated against group are similarly – not worse – affected, potentially due to chronically lowered fundamental needs

SNS OSTRACISM EFFECTS AT UNIVERSITY ON GENERAL FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS WILL FURTHER TRANSFER TO ASPECTS OF ACADEMIC BELONGING

- Ostracism did <u>not</u> affect the sense of potential to succeed academically
- Ostracism did affect the sense of academic social fit via effects on fundamental needs (full mediation)
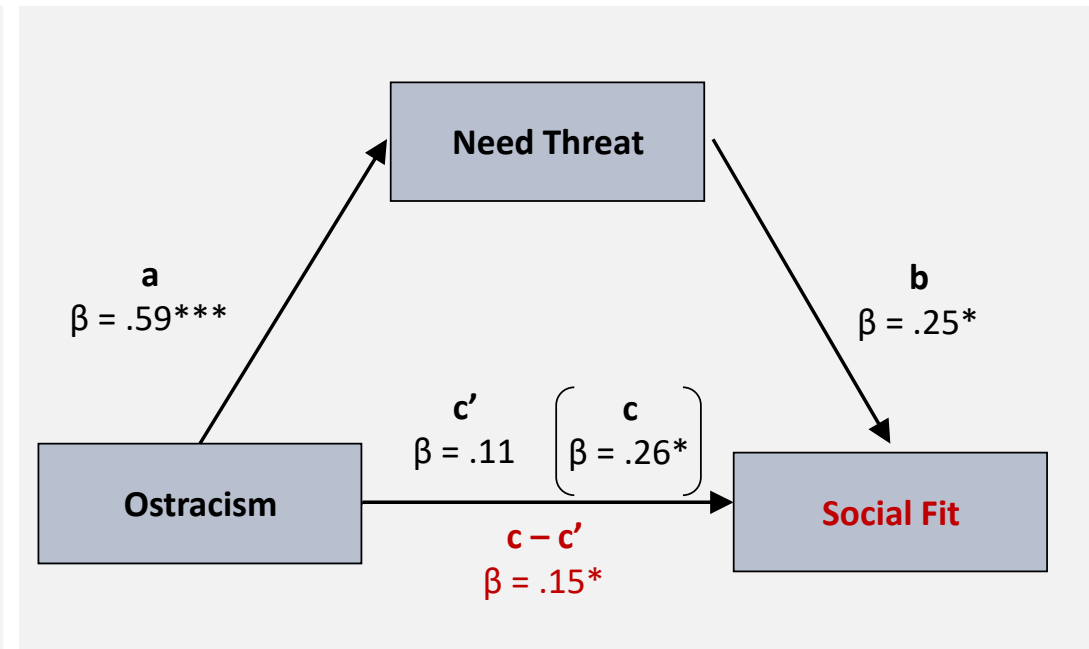
Discussion - Limitations

- Exclusion/inclusion effects not amplified amongst discriminated against group
  - Discrimination not specifically linked to University setting / academic ability
- Effect of ostracism solely on *Social Fit* but not *Potential to Succeed* aspect
  - The scenario and need threat measure targets the imagined self, the academic belonging, the actual self
- Use of Facebook (vs. Instagram) potentially outdated
- Small male sample - Cyberbullying on social media is more prominent particularly amongst girls (Görzig & Olafsson, 2013)
- Cross-sectional and hypothetical design limits
  - Causality, ecological validity

What is your preferred Social Networking Site?

Segment	Percentage
1 Facebook	5%
2 Instagram	78%
3 Twitter	3%
4 Other	14%

Discussion – Future Directions

- The scenario or paradigm could be linked more explicitly to the experience at the participants own University

- Academic belonging should be assessed more closely linked to the experience of ostracism

- Use different types of manipulation which is closer to that actual experience (e.g., experimental tool "Ostracism Online"; Galbava et al., 2021; Wolf et al., 2015)

- Longitudinal design

- Use of Instagram or more popular SNS amongst the population

- Us of a wider more diverse sample, particularly with regards to gender

Figure 1. Example profile.

Annie

Hi, my name is Annie and I am 22 years old. I study chemistry at the Faculty of Science, MU in Brno. I like travelling and I watch series a lot. Also, I enjoy trying new things in my life, and that's one of the reasons why I took a diving course lately.

Likes 2

Like 👍

Source: Galbava et al., 2021

THANK YOU!!

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