

The Role of Experiential Avoidance in Adverse Reactions to Exclusion

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Ostracism and Loneliness

- Brief experiences of ostracism can result in distress and physiological pain (Williams & Nida, 2022)
 - Can be followed by behavior that results in future inclusion or exclusion
- Being ignored or excluded long-term can result in loneliness and unmet social needs
- Loneliness is associated with increased morbidity
 - May disproportionately affect ostracized individuals

Experiential Avoidance

- Unwillingness to maintain contact with unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or sensations
- Associated with social dysfunction and symptoms of psychopathology
- May moderate coping with brief experiences of ostracism (Waldeck et al., 2020)

Experiential Avoidance

- Individuals with higher EA may have:
 - Lower stress tolerance
 - More experienced stress when excluded
 - Relationally aggressive behavior during experiences of social exclusion
 - Damage to self and others
 - Higher risk of losing close relationships

Does experiential avoidance affect an individual's subjective experience and behavioral response to social exclusion?

Hypotheses

- Experimentally manipulate exclusion
- Individuals with higher levels of EA
 - Expected to experience higher levels of adverse reaction following exclusion
 - May engage in more problematic impulsive behaviors after exclusion task

Conditions

- Surveys + 5 minutes of Cyberball
- Between-subjects design – 2 conditions
 - Exclusion vs Inclusion



Measurement

- Brief Experiential Avoidance Questionnaire (BEAQ)
 - 15 items
 - Scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree)
- Post-test questions about the reactions to Cyberball game
 - All scaled 0-100

Preparation & Analysis

- Between-subjects ANOVA
- +1 SD on BEAQ categorized as “high EA”
- Comparison of inclusion and exclusion group

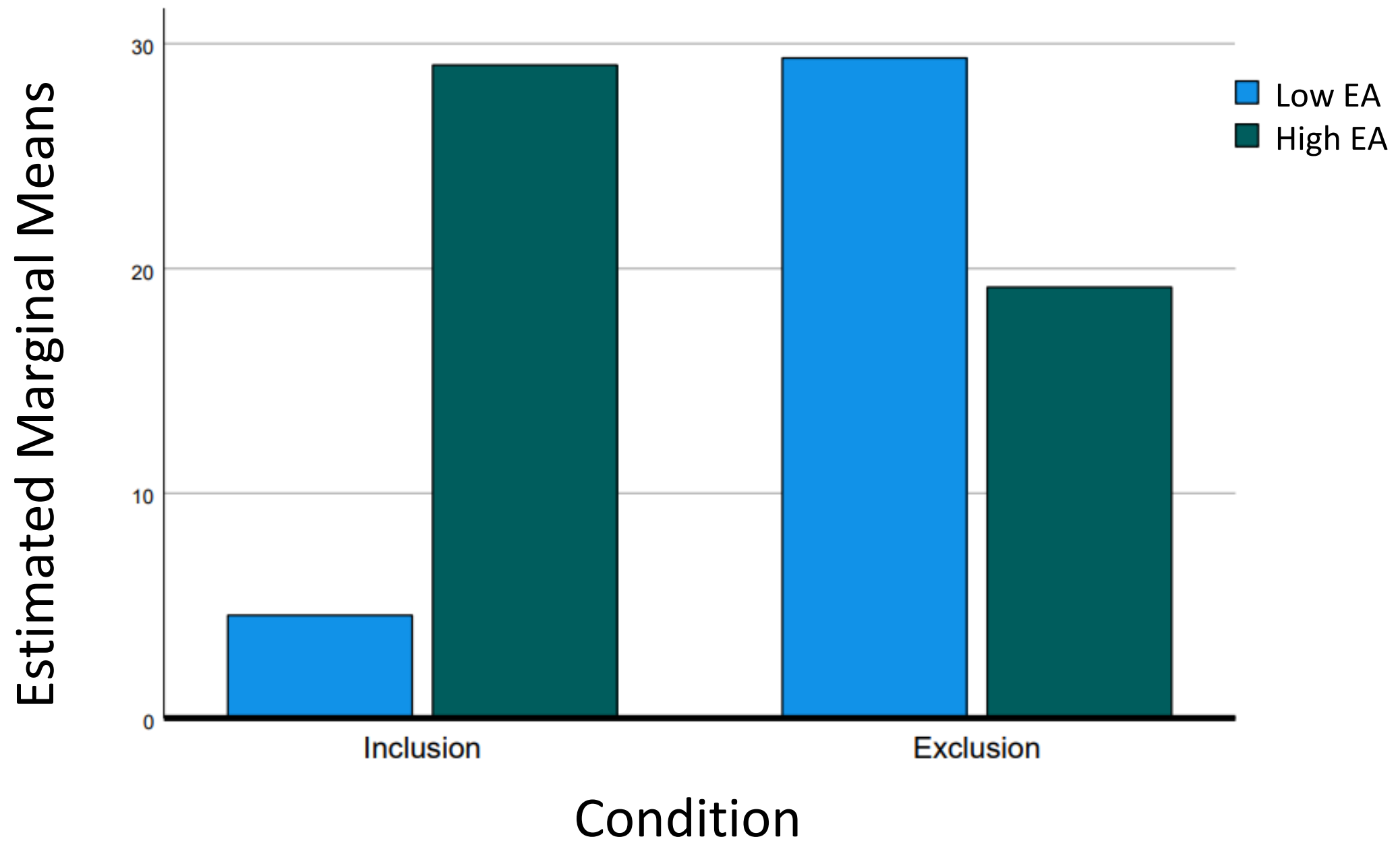
Participants

- 118 participants enrolled, 79 valid responses
- Average Age: 19.62 (2.23)
- 58 Female, 16 Male, 4 Nonbinary, 1 Agender
- 3 Black, 2 Asian, 3 Multiracial, 68 White, 1 Undefined
- 7 identified as Hispanic/Latino

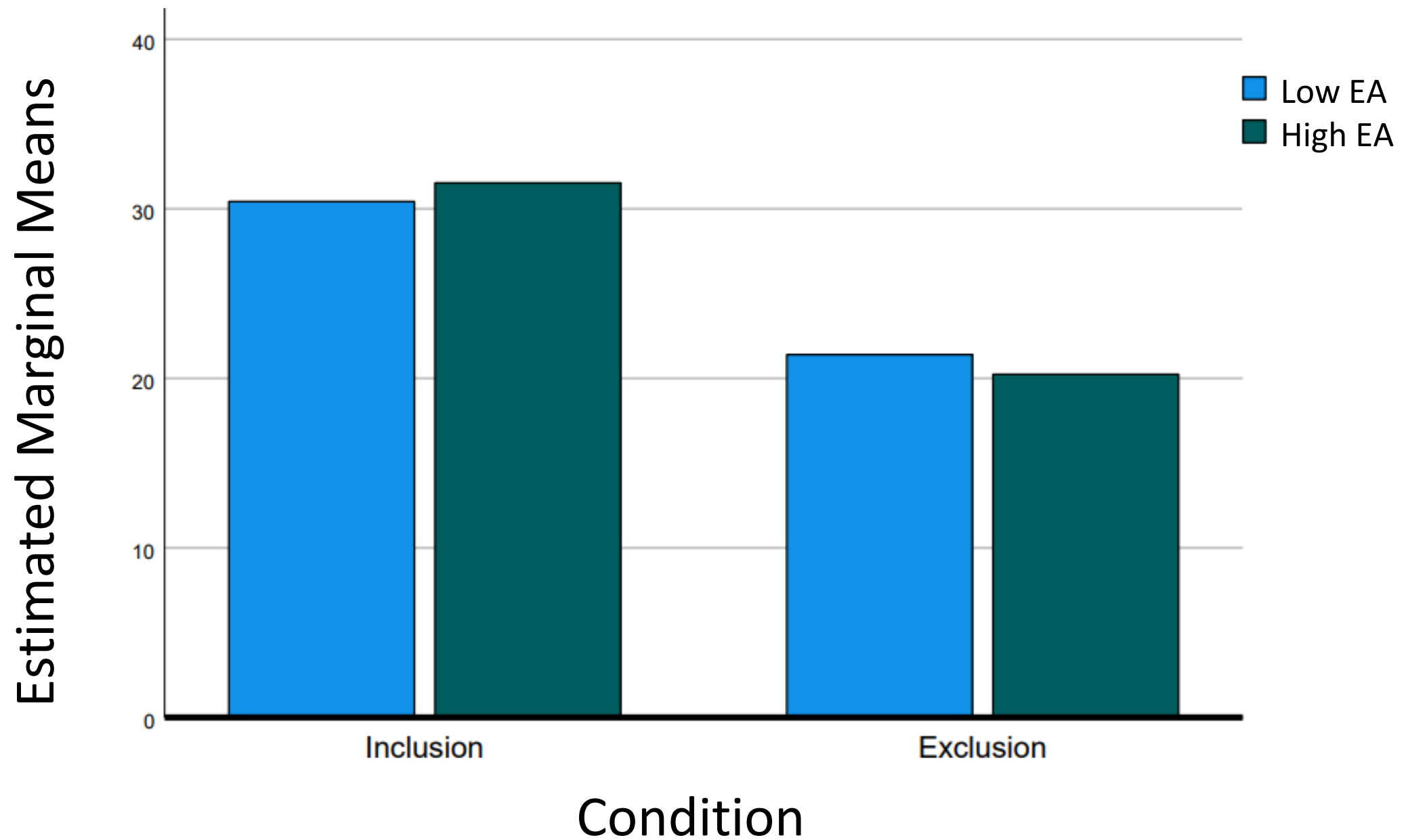
Results



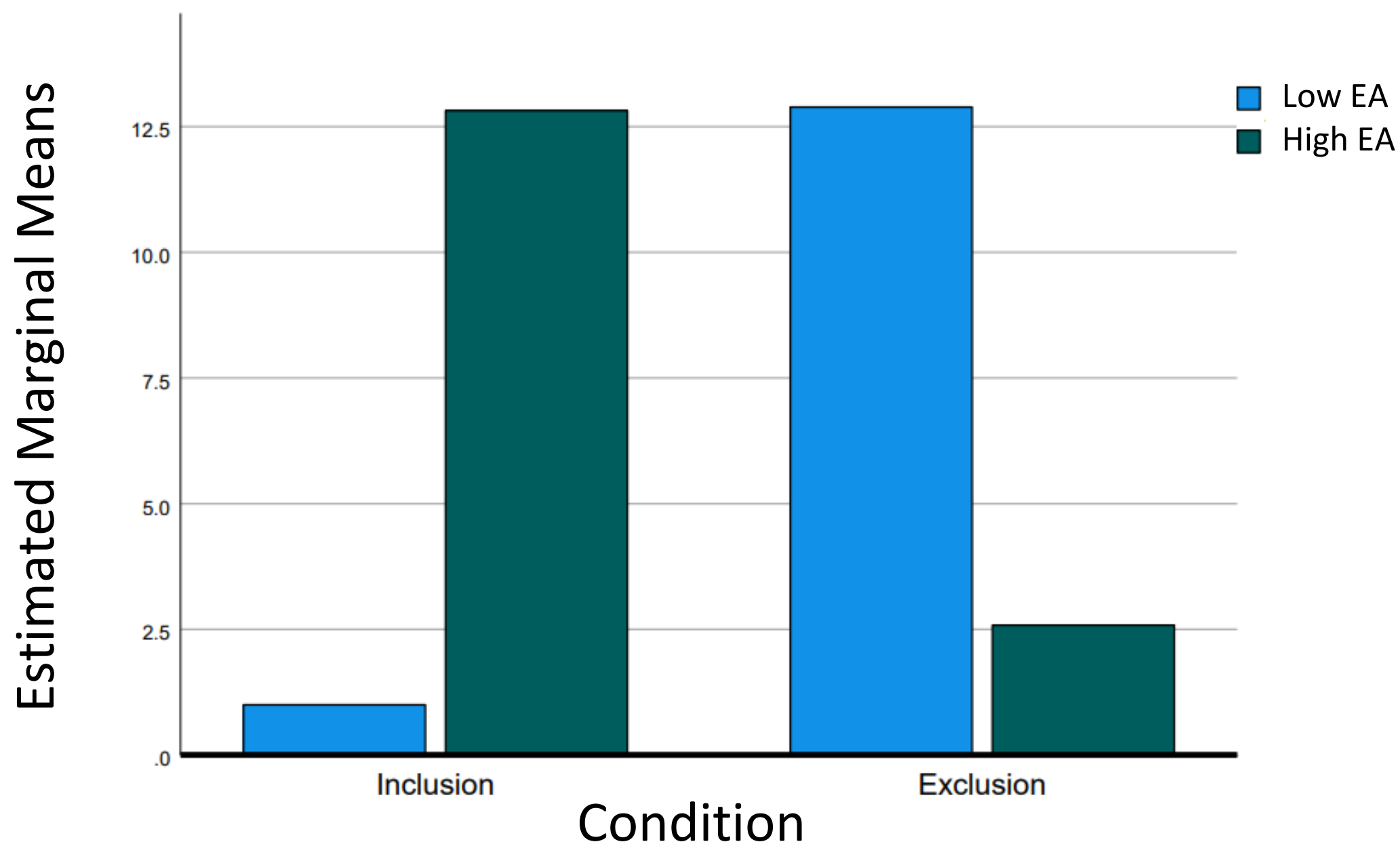
“I feel stressed”



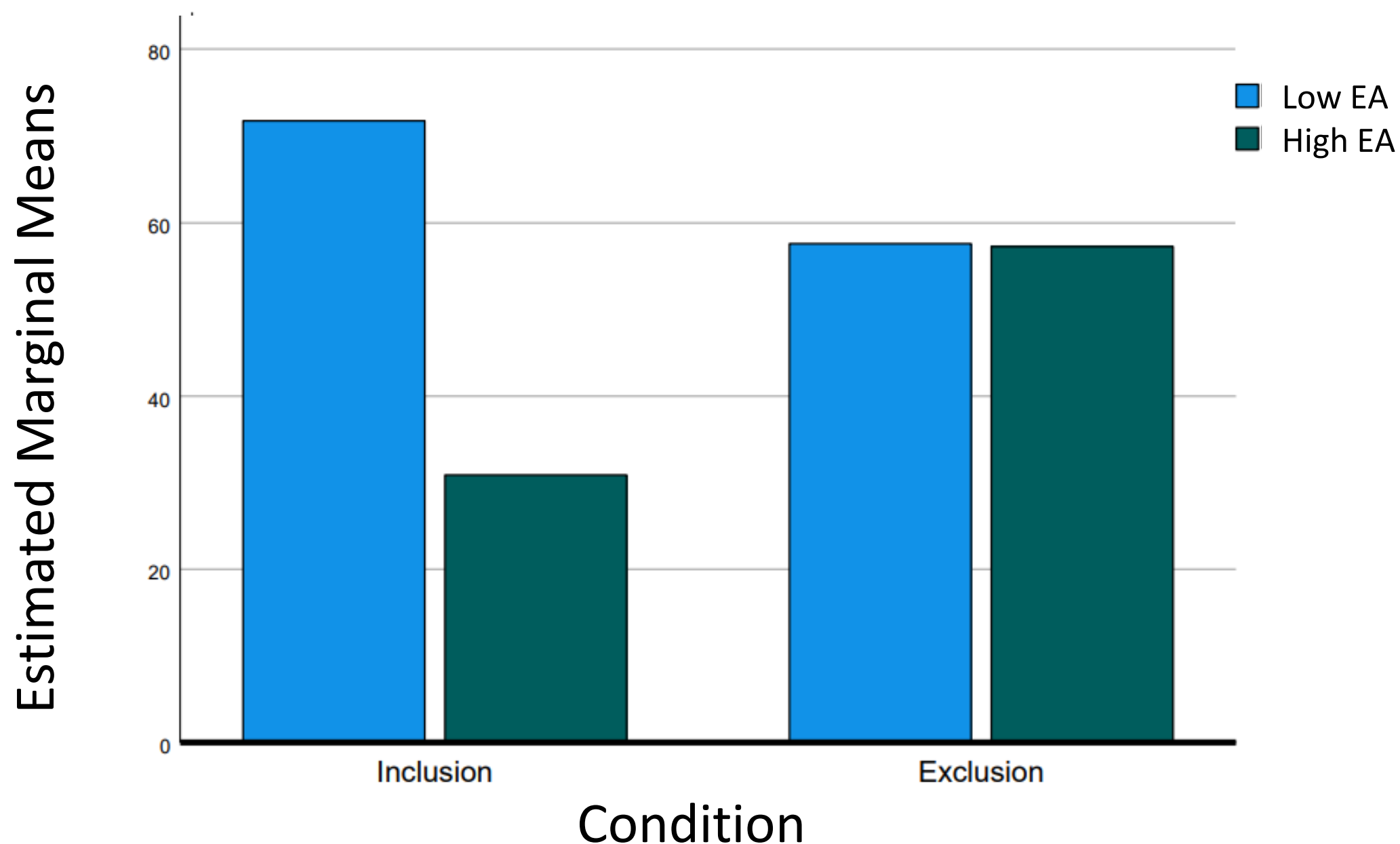
“I feel distressed”



“I lost control.”



“I followed a rational, sensible approach to things.”



Non-significant interactions

- I feel distressed
- I was able to cope well with what happened during the game.
- It was hard for me to resist acting on my feelings.
- I had trouble controlling my impulses.
- I felt like I couldn't stop myself from going overboard.
- I got involved in something I later wished I could get out of.
- Others were shocked or worried about the things I did.
- I thought carefully before doing anything.
- Before making up my mind, I considered all the advantages and disadvantages.
- I acted without thinking.
- I saw things through to the end.
- I concentrated easily.
- I finished what I started.
- I gave up easily.

Discussion

- Sought to assess how levels of experiential avoidance might interact with exclusion
- May be differences in self-control and rationality
 - Does not appear to generalize to all impulse-control
 - EA may affect stress and control more than the other constructs captured by the questionnaire
- Small effect sizes - interpret with caution
- Stressed but not distressed?

Limitations & future directions

- Cyberball is generally used with younger adolescents
 - May have failed to produce strong feelings of exclusion
- Slider problem - Is a zero really a zero?
- Small sample
- Future investigations may include social groups that frequently experience exclusion and ostracism

PSYCHOTHERAPY RESEARCH OR STUDY OF

Thank you

PROSOCIAL

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CONNECTION, INTIMACY, AND LONELINESS

Sources

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