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The impact of Socioeconomic Status, Race, and Food Security on Mental and Physical Health

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how an individual's race, socioeconomic status, and their household food security are correlated with physical and mental health outcomes. We propose that those with lower socioeconomic status and food security, as well as Non-Whites, are negatively correlated with better physical and mental health outcomes.

Hypotheses

- H1: Socioeconomic status is positively correlated with better physical and mental health outcomes
- H2: Food security is positively correlated with better physical and mental health outcomes
- H3: Whites have better mental and physical health outcomes than Non-Whites

Data and Methods

- Sixth wave of the Baylor Religion Survey (2021)
- National Random Sample of American adults
- Fielded by Gallup
- N=1536
- Multivariate OLS Regressions

Dependent Variables

Physical Health

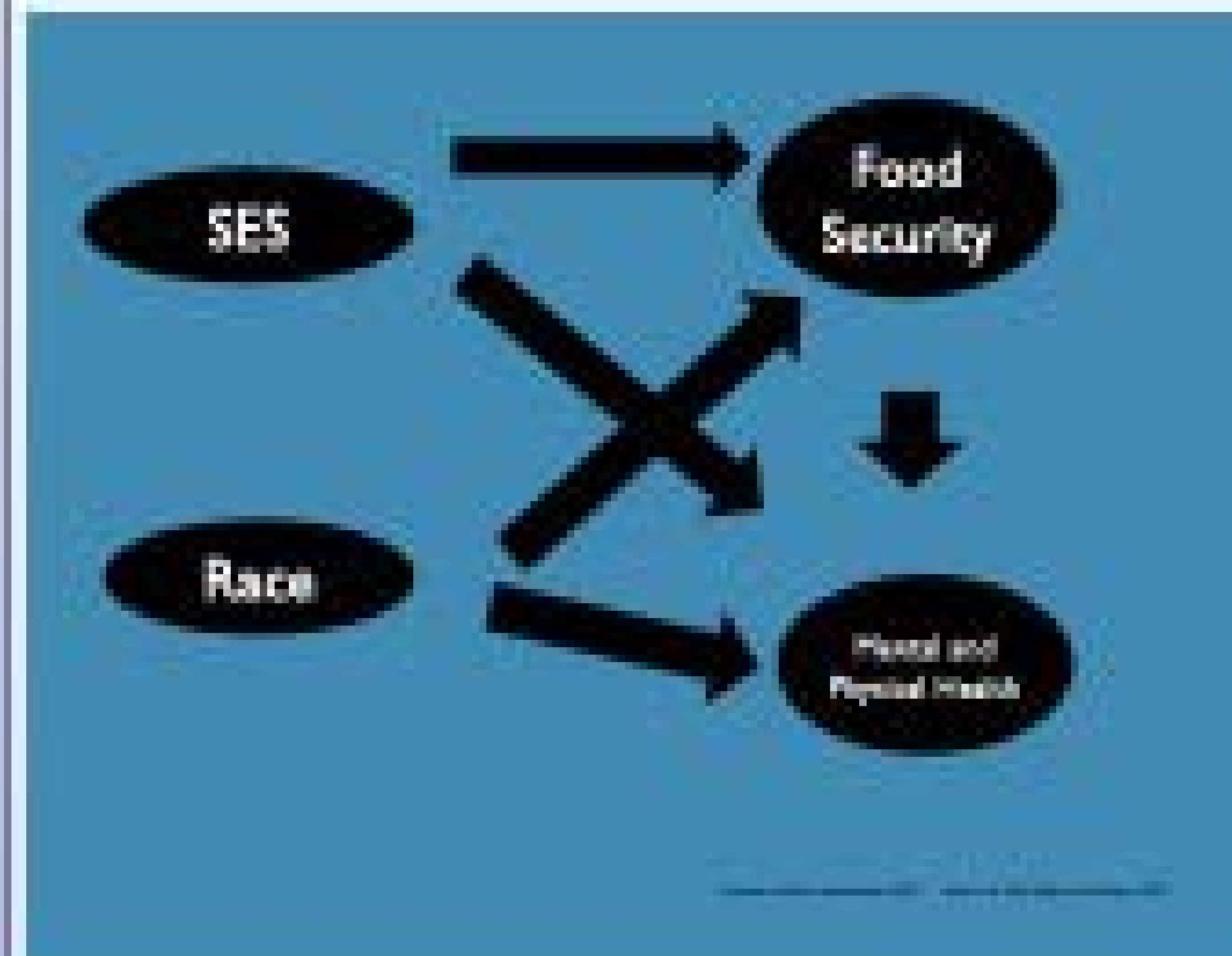
- In general how would you say your health is? (1 (poor) - 5 (excellent))
- In the past 7 days, how many days did you exercise long enough to work up a sweat? 0 - 7 (in days)

Mental Health

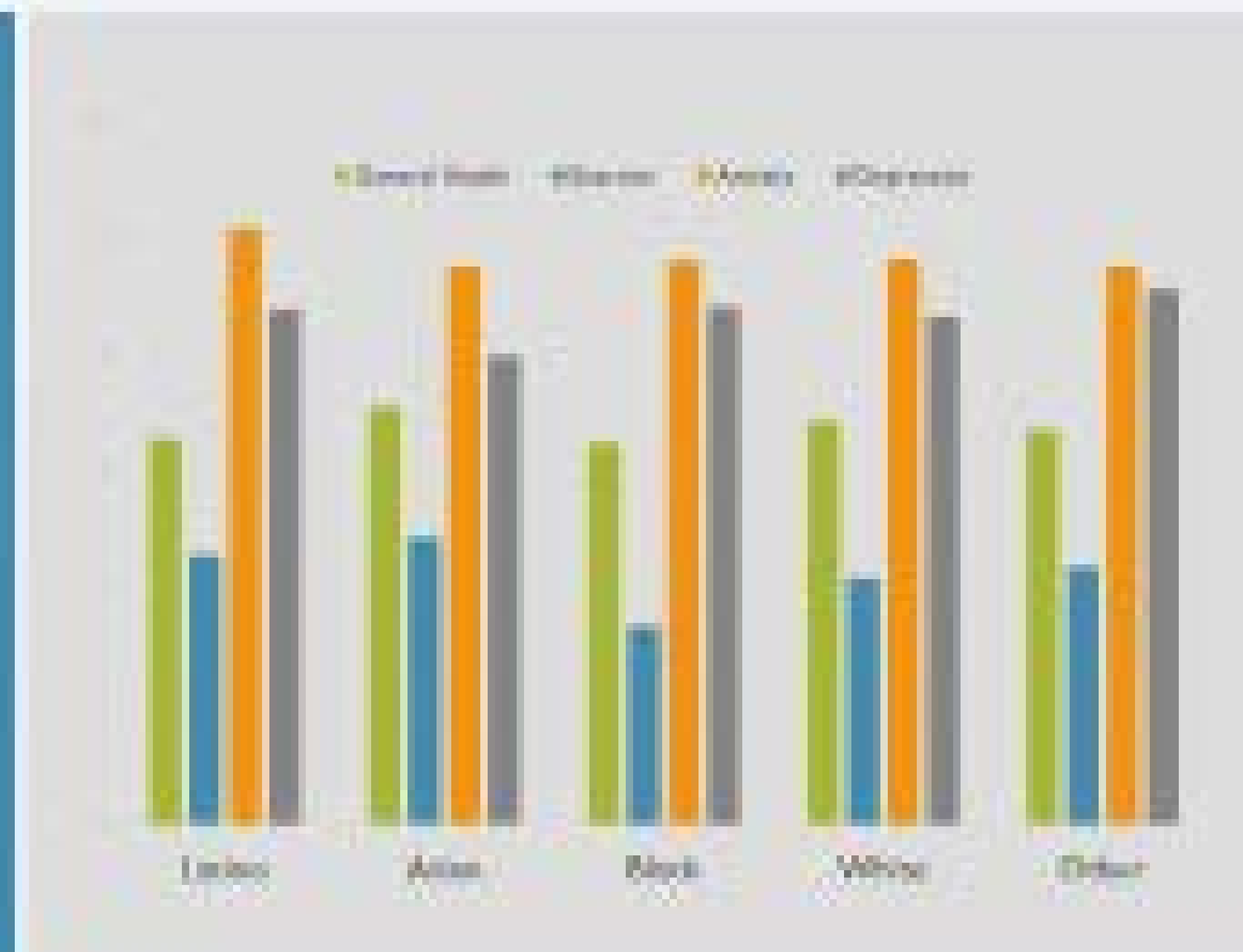
- Depression: Additive Index (2-8)
 - In the past week how often have you:
 - Felt depressed: 1 (Never) - 4 (Most or all the time)
 - Felt sad: 1 (Never) - 4 (Most or all the time)
- Anxiety: Additive Index (2-8)
 - In the past week how often have you:
 - Worried a lot about little things: 1 (Never) - 4 (Most or all the time)
 - I felt tense and anxious: 1 (Never) - 4 (Most or all the time)

Materials & Methods

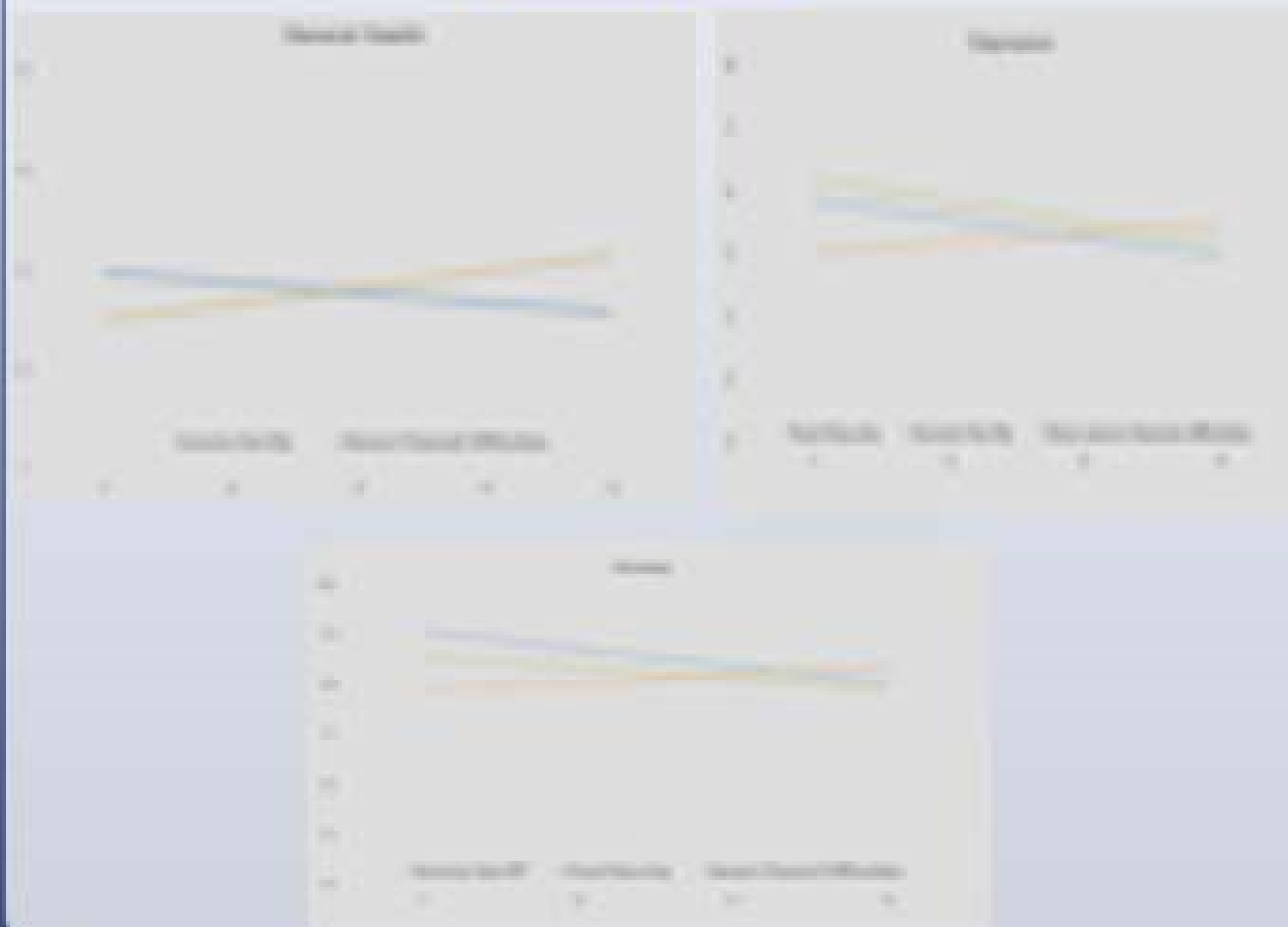
Causal Diagram



Results



Regression Coefficients



Independent Variables

Socioeconomic Status

- Income Gap By

Which of the following best describes your ability to get along on your income? 1 (Can't make ends meet) - 4 (Always have money left over)

- Financial Difficulties

When you were growing up how often did you and your family have severe financial difficulties? 1 (Never) - 5 (Always)

Race/Ethnicity

- Self-identification: White, Black, Latino/a, Asian, Other

Food Security

- How would you describe your household's ability to get food in the past 12 months?
 - 1 = Often we could not afford enough to eat
 - 4 = We could always afford to eat good nutritious meals

Discussion and Conclusion

Socioeconomic status and food security were negatively correlated to depression and anxiety and SES alone was negatively correlated to physical health outcomes. In terms of mental health, Whites presented more symptoms of anxiety than their Non-White counterpart. Finally, being White and having food security was not positively correlated with physical health. Socioeconomic status had a bigger impact on both physical and mental health than race.

References

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