MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS:
IMPACT OF RACE/ETHNIC COMPOSITION

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• **Diversity**: # of different groups and size of each group
  • \( D = 1 - \sum (n^2) \), where ‘n’ represents the proportion of each race/ethnic group in the school
  • Higher index indicates having greater school race/ethnic diversity

• **Density**: proportion of one ethnic group in a local population, usually comparing a socio-historical dominant compared to non-dominant group(s)
  • Non-Latino white enrollment
  • Race/ethnic minority enrollment

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School Race/Ethnic Composition & Mental Health
Study 1: Literature Review

Research Question
• What is the evidence to date of school race/ethnic composition’s impact on mental health?

Objective
• Conduct a systematic literature review of the current evidence regarding the impact of school race/ethnic composition on mental health outcomes using PRISMA guidelines

Findings
• N=11 articles for synthesis: published 2002-2017; US (n=8) & Europe (n=3); majority high school samples (n=7) (middle school (n=3) & kindergarten (n=1)); equally used convenience & nationally representative samples; study designs included 7 longitudinal & 4 cross-sectional
• For all youth, attending schools with higher vs. lower proportion of same race/ethnic peers in school was protective of mental health
• Unclear at what point of non-Latino white enrollment where risk of mental health symptoms begins to vary by race/ethnic group
School Race/Ethnic Composition & Mental Health Study 2

Texas Stigma Study*, 2011–2015
N=484 6th graders
2-year follow-up

School Race/Ethnic Composition:
• Diversity Index
• Non-Hispanic white enrollment

Race/Ethnic Identity

Covariates: time, gender, intervention, family income, parent educational attainment, past mental health service use, family history of mental illness

Mental Health Outcome:
• Depressive-anxious symptoms

* Principal Investigators:
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Depressive-anxious symptoms by race/ethnic group with non-Latino white enrollment

- No significant main effect of non-Latino white enrollment
- A significant interaction among non-Latino black compared to white adolescents
Depressive-anxious symptoms by race/ethnic groups with diversity

- School diversity positively associated with depressive-anxious symptoms
- A significant interaction among Latino compared to non-Latino white adolescents
Depressive-anxious symptoms by acculturative stress with diversity

Within Latino group analysis by acculturative stress*

* 20-Item Social, Attitudinal, Familial, & Environmental Acculturative Stress in Children scale measured stressfulness of perceived discrimination and feeling like an outsider

- Latino adolescents with high vs. low acculturative stress saw reduced symptoms with increasing diversity
Contributions

• Findings shed light on the value of considering mental health when developing enrollment strategies that promote diversity and inclusiveness within schools.
• Next steps: Identify **modifiable school factors** [race/ethnic composition of faculty/staff, availability of ethnic-specific programming] that can buffer race/ethnic composition effects on mental health

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