

Meta Analysis: Effects of Exclusion on Individuals with BPD

By: ¹Noa R. Atar, ¹Yaelle Akhavan, ¹Sharon Khalil, ²Eva Gilboa-Schechtman, ²Dan E. Hay,
²Noa Perets

¹Yeshiva University, Stern College for Women, New York, NY; ²Gonda Multidisciplinary Brain Research Center, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

Interpersonal connections are essential for the emotional and psychological wellbeing of all individuals. From an evolutionary standpoint, social rejection is seen as a threat to human survival, causing psychological distress and even physical pain. In 2009, Williams suggested that the immediate impact of exclusion (*Reflexive Stage*) is universal and has no variability among individuals (healthy control and psychopathological states alike) [1]. Reinhard, however, suggested that different psychopathological disorders can, in fact, enhance the effects of exclusion. Reinhard describes this interaction between exclusion and psychopathological disorders as a “vicious circle,” and proposes that different disorders will lead to different, and possibly even more severe, reactions, as well as less effective coping strategies in response to the exclusion [2]. This more extreme reaction among clinical patients will compromise their ability to socially interact, leading to further exclusion, hence the name–vicious *circle*. This gap in the research, highlighted by the contrasting views of Williams and Reinhard, emphasizes the importance for further research regarding this topic.

We conducted a meta-analysis which compiled all the results from *Cyberball* research done with individuals with BPD in order to ascertain how much of an effect exclusion has on those individuals as opposed to healthy individuals. *Cyberball* is a virtual ball-tossing game used to manipulate both social inclusion and exclusion in a lab setting. Participants are led to believe that they are playing with two or more other players, when in fact, those players are computer-generated confederates. People diagnosed with BPD are hypersensitive towards rejection, and therefore it is highly relevant to study how these individuals react to the different conditions they will experience in this game.

By gaining a better understanding on how psychopathological individuals respond to exclusion, we can better characterize the disorder, as well as help those individuals cope with any social rejection they may be encountering.

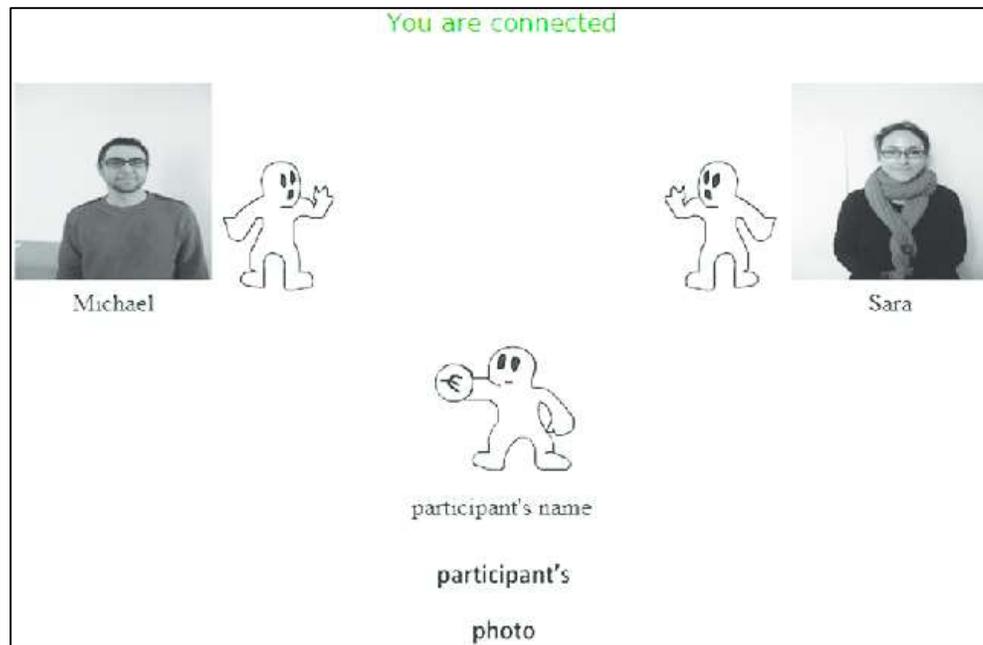


Figure 2. *Cyberball* screenshot of the three players (one participant; two confederates)

References

- [1] Williams, K. D. (2009). Ostracism: A temporal need-threat model. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 41, 275-314.
- [2] Reinhard, M. A., et al. (2020). The vicious circle of social exclusion and psychopathology: a systematic review of experimental ostracism research in psychiatric disorders. *European archives of psychiatry and clinical neuroscience.*, 1-12.