



Pandemic Induced Fear?

Assessing Fear of COVID-19 in First Semester Psychology Students
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Introduction

PSYCMentor Program

- Program established in Fall 2020 by the Psychological & Brain Sciences Department at Texas A&M University to guide first semester psychology students
- Advance academic excellence by having upperclassmen guide the first semester students with weekly meetings
- Gives upperclassmen the opportunity to gain beneficial leadership experience

Fear of COVID-19

- Many of the classes in Fall 2020 were online-only, and we wanted to see how this impacted our first-semester students
- COVID-19 cases were rising during this time, and there were several clusters at A&M
- Many students did not move to Texas A&M because of COVID-19, which impacted their social experience
- Wanted to see how fear of COVID-19 impacted their first-semester experience

Research Questions

- RQ 1: Were the mentees' ratings of Fear of COVID-19 statistically significantly different between the middle of the semester and the end of the semester?
- RQ 2: Do the mentees' a) race, b) gender, c) sexual orientation, d) parental education, or e) ability status impact whether a mentees' ratings of Fear of COVID-19 differed significantly between the middle of a semester and the end of the semester?

Methods

Participants

- **Race**
 - White (72)
 - Black/African American (7)
 - Hispanic/Latino/Spanish Origin (14)
 - Asian (18)
 - American Indian/Alaska Native (1)
 - Middle Eastern/North African (1)
 - 2+ races (34)
- **Gender**
 - Men (12)
 - Women (135)
- **Sexual Orientation**
 - Heterosexual/Straight (127)
 - Homosexual/Gay/Lesbian (5)
 - Bisexual (12)
 - Self identify/2+ selected(2)
- **Parental Education**
 - < High school diploma (7)
 - High school diploma/GED (12)
 - Some college/Associate's (20)
 - Bachelor's (51)
 - Master's or higher (57)
- **Ability Status**
 - No disability (102)
 - Has a disability (41)

Measures

- Surveys at midterm & end of semester
- 7-item Fear of COVID-19 scale
- 1 = strongly disagree
- 7 = strongly agree
- Example items:
 - "I am very afraid of COVID-19"
 - "I'm afraid of dying because of COVID-19"
 - "It makes me uncomfortable to think about COVID-19"

Results

• Race

- ME of Time: $F(1,140) = .766, p = .01, \eta^2 = .05$ - sig
- ME of Race: $F(6,140) = 4.23, p < .01, \eta^2 = .15$ - sig
- Time x Race: $F(6, 140) = 2.64, p = .02, \eta^2 = .10$ - sig

• Gender

- ME of Time: $F(1, 145) = 1.24, p = .23, \eta^2 = .01$ - ns
- ME of Gender: $F(1, 145) = .32, p = .57, \eta^2 = .00$ - ns
- Time x Gender: $F(1, 145) = 1.87, p = .17, \eta^2 = .01$ - ns

• Sexual Orientation

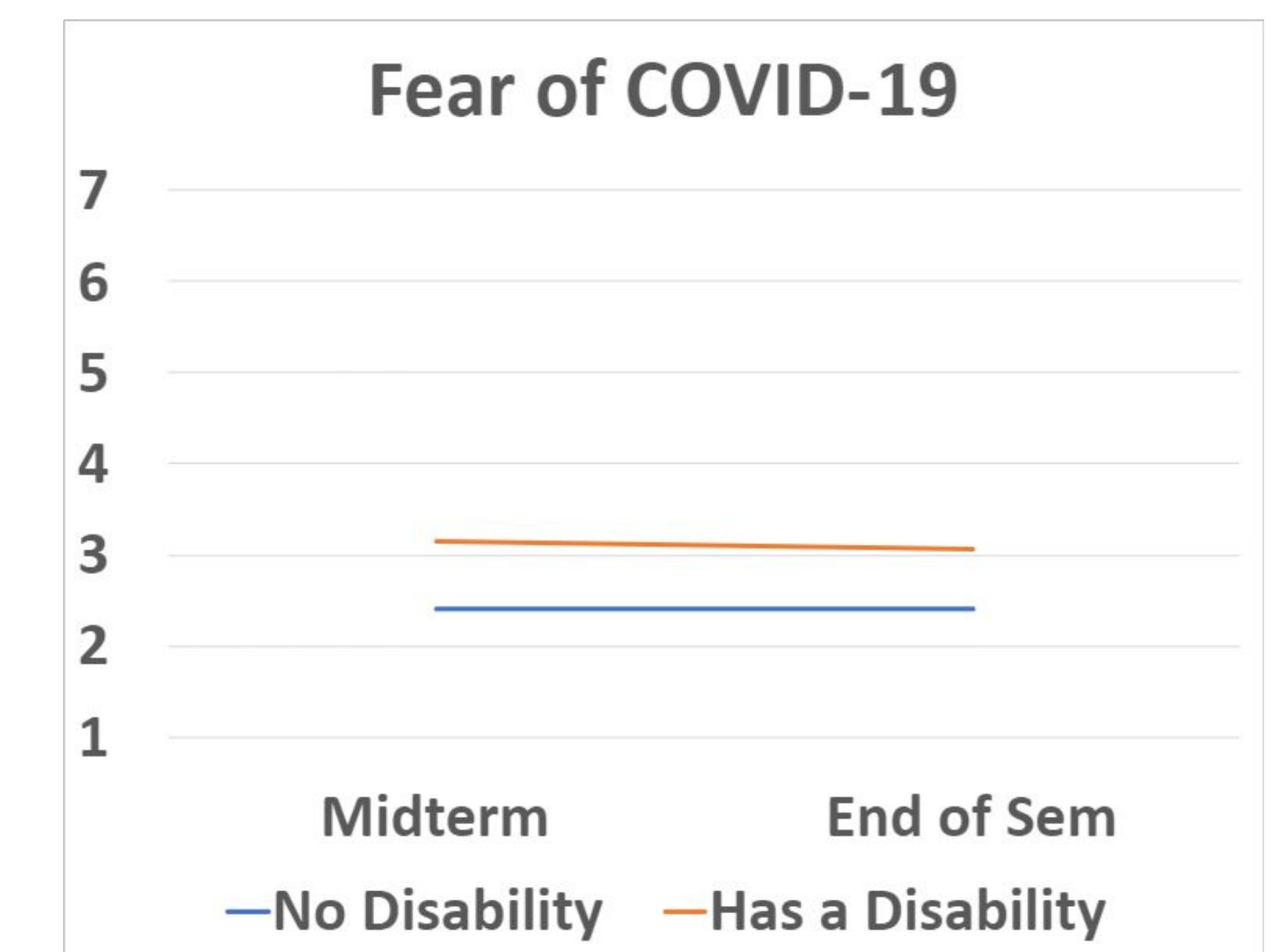
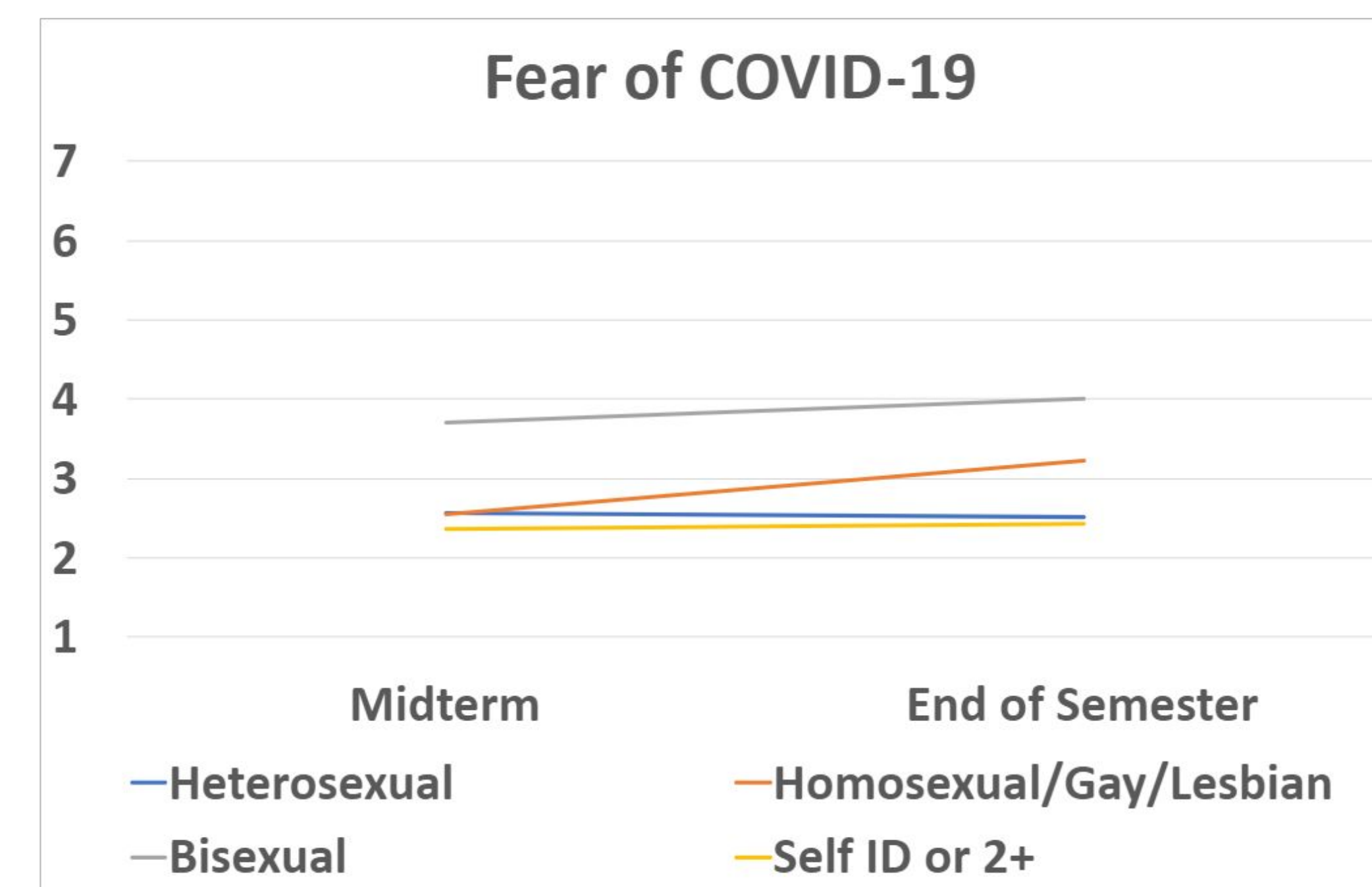
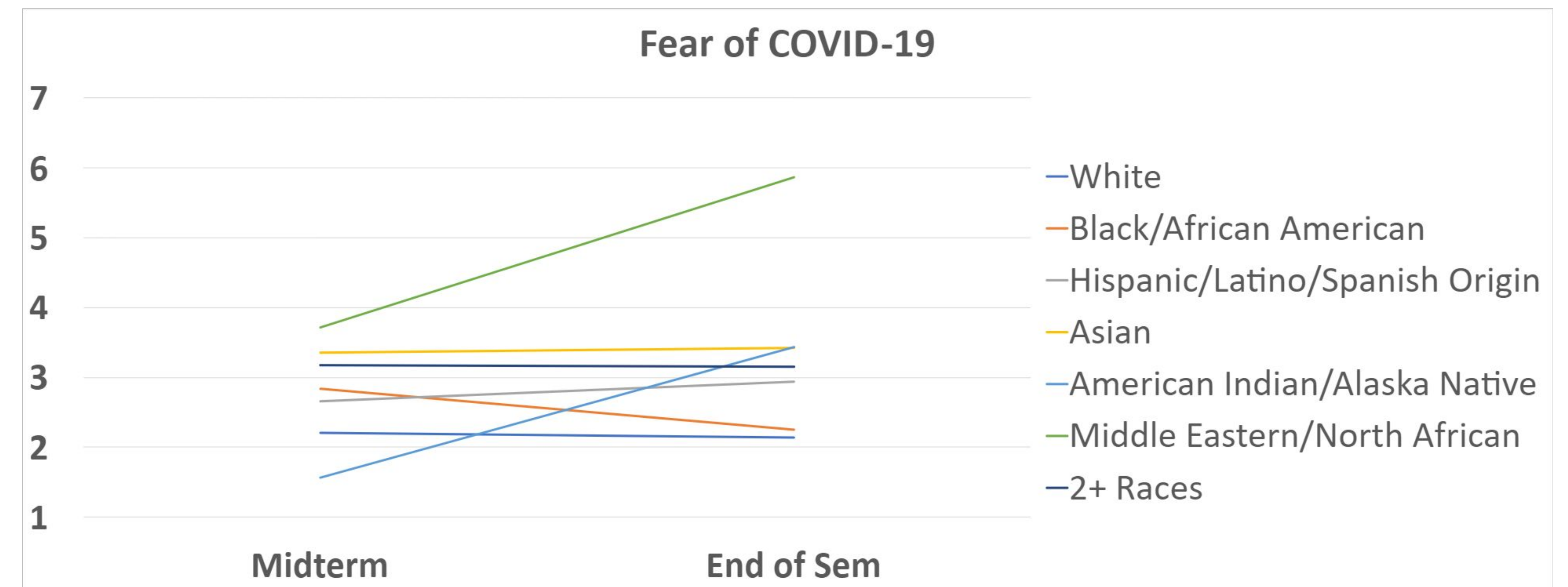
- ME of Time: $F(1, 142) = 1.56, p = .21, \eta^2 = .01$ - ns
- ME of Sex. Orient.: $F(3, 142) = 3.91, p = .01, \eta^2 = .08$ - sig
- Time x Sex. Orient.: $F(3, 142) = 1.54, p = .21, \eta^2 = .03$ - ns

• Parental Education

- ME of Time: $F(1, 142) = .89, p = .35, \eta^2 = .01$ - ns
- ME of Parent Ed.: $F(4, 142) = .22, p = .93, \eta^2 = .01$ - ns
- Time x Parent Ed.: $F(4, 142) = 1.09, p = .36, \eta^2 = .03$ - ns

• Disability

- ME of Time: $F(1, 141) = .25, p = .62, \eta^2 = .00$ - ns
- ME of Disability: $F(1, 141) = 8.80, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$ - sig
- Time x Disability: $F(1, 141) = .39, p = .53, \eta^2 = .00$ - ns



Discussion

- Students' fear of COVID didn't change from mid-term to end-of-semester
- Fear of COVID was not significantly impacted by: gender, parental education
- Fear of COVID was significantly impacted by: race, sexual orientation, ability status
- Interaction between time x race - different trajectories of Fear of COVID
- Sexual orientation & disability did not have significant interaction with time

- Important to note our different group sizes for race
- Results indicate that fear of COVID may be related to students' sexual orientation
- Students with disabilities are much more afraid of COVID than students who had no disabilities
- Students may be more fearful of COVID due to underlying physical conditions and/or mental health conditions