

Introduction

- In addition to the disproportionate rates of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and deaths, **racial minorities in the U.S. continue to face racial discrimination**^{1,2}.
- 2021 saw a dramatic rise in Anti-Asian hate crime compared to 2020³.
- Racial discrimination is linked to increased physical and mental health outcomes, with our own data demonstrating COVID-19 related racial discrimination to be associated with PTSD symptoms among Asian Americans².
- Learned helplessness, when an individual believes that he/she cannot change his/her situation, is an understudied construct that can develop as a result of consistent failure to achieve results regardless of effort⁴.
- Given that exposure to racism is not within one's control, this study aims to **determine the association between racial discrimination and racial trauma in Asian Americans during the pandemic and whether this association varies by learned helplessness.**

Research Goal

- Understanding the effects different psychological responses to adversity have on the mental health of racial minority young adults can help guide tailored therapeutic practice and supports available to them.
- To consider individual psychological traits such as learned helplessness in those seeking therapy due to their racial trauma symptoms.

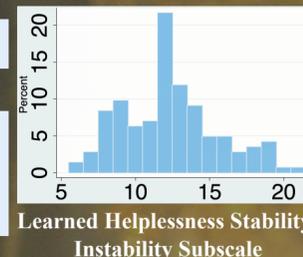
CARES

The COVID-19 Adult Resilience Experiences Study

Starting in April 2020, we surveyed several psychological measures in 18-30 year old young adults living in the U.S. This study is based on 129 Asian young adults who completed waves 2 and 3.

Key Characteristics

Factor	Mean	Variable	Mean
Age	24.5 (3.3)	Learned Helplessness	12.4 (3.33)
Gender		Perceived Daily Discrimination	16.7 (5.73)
Women	122 (84.7%)	Racial Trauma	45.9 (14.74)
Men	20 (13.9%)	History of mental health condition	21.53%
Other	2 (1.4%)	Perceived family social status	5.74 (1.95)
Race			
Asian	129 (100.0%)		

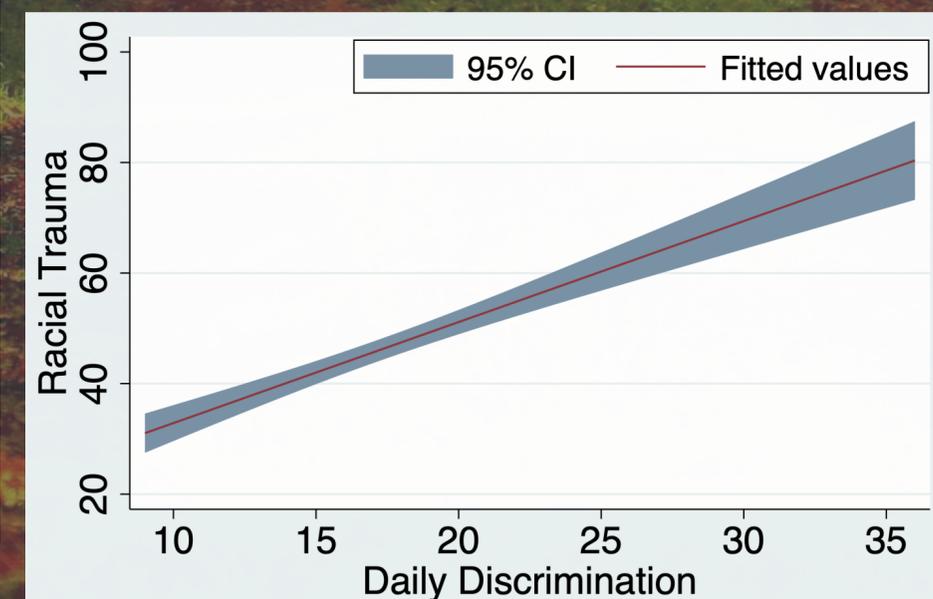


Multiple Linear Regression

predicting racial trauma symptoms

Predictors	β
Learned Helplessness	0.44
Age	0.24
Perceived Family Social Status	-0.21
Gender (Reference: Women)	
Men	-0.50
Other	-5.10
Positive history of a mental health condition	-0.36
Perceived Daily Discrimination	1.77 ($p < 0.001$)

$R^2 = 0.452$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.421$



Results

- An adjusted multiple linear regression model revealed a **non-significant association between learned helplessness stable-unstable subscale and racial trauma** ($p=0.178$).
- Among the selected terms, **the single strongest predictor of racial trauma is the level of racial discrimination someone is going through on a daily basis** ($P < 0.001$).
- Learned helplessness did **not** moderate the association between daily discrimination and racial trauma ($p=0.773$).

Discussion & Implications

- Our data suggests that people with learned helplessness are **not** more vulnerable to the effects of discrimination on racial trauma.
- **Our data suggests that when working with Asian Americans, targeting learned helplessness may not be sufficient for racial trauma.** As managing expectations is central for successful therapy⁵, we do not suggest that advocating for tackling a learned helplessness mindset will decrease racial trauma symptoms. Other coping mechanisms may be warranted.
- Energy should be channeled towards advocacy in reducing racial discrimination within society.

Limitations

- Measures of symptoms were self-reported.
- Further studies are needed to generalize this finding across different racial minorities.

References

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