

PERCEIVED RACISM AS A PREDICTOR
OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING
IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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By

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LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT
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PERCEIVED RACISM AS A PREDICTOR OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING
AMONG SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS (150 pp.)

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The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students. In specific, the relationships between the frequency of racism experiences and how much the racism experiences bothered the participants, and demographic factors including gender, generational status, and college grade level were investigated.

A total of 201 self-identified Southeast Asian Americans were included in the final analysis. These subjects completed two instruments, the Daily Life Experience subscale that measured perceived racism and the Depression-Happiness Scale that measured both positive and negative cognitions and affect. Subjects also provided responses about their generational status, gender, and college level status.

The instrument data were analyzed using correlation analysis and multiple linear regressions. Regression analyses revealed that perceived racism and the demographic factors differentially predicted psychological well-being. By examining variations in participants' experiences of racism and how much they attribute the racism experience as bothersome, this study highlights individual differences within this group and provides evidence that racism is a complex process for Southeast Asian Americans.

These results are discussed in detail herein. Implications of the findings along with the limitations of the study are presented. Recommendations of future research are also described.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
 CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW	1
Purpose and Rationale.....	2
Purpose of the Study	3
Research Questions	3
Definitions.....	4
Review of the Literature	6
The Culture of Southeast Asian Americans.....	6
Cambodian Americans	9
Hmong Americans	10
Laotian Americans	12
Vietnamese Americans.....	13
Similarities and differences.....	14
Mental Health Concerns of Southeast Asian Americans.....	16
Racism	18
Racism and Asian American.....	23
Racism and psychological well-being.....	27
Racism and college students	28
Southeast Asian American College Students	36
Achievement patterns.....	38
Mental health needs.....	39
Need for the Study	41
Summary	42
II. METHODOLOGY	44
Participants.....	45
Age, Gender, Grade Level	45
Ethnicity and Generational Status	46
Procedures.....	48
Instruments.....	49
Daily Life Experiences Subscale	50
The Depression-Happiness Scale	54
Demographic Data Sheet	56
Data Analysis	56
Hypotheses One	57

Hypotheses Two	57
Hypotheses Three	58
Summary	58
III. RESULTS	59
Participants.....	60
Missing Data	60
Instrument Subscales and Reliability.....	61
Statistical Results	61
Power Analysis	63
Results for Hypotheses One.....	63
Results for Hypothesis Two.....	65
Results for Hypothesis Three.....	69
Summary	78
IV. DISCUSSION.....	80
Summary of Results.....	80
Research Question 1	82
Research Question 2	82
Gender and psychological well-being.....	88
Generational status and psychological well-being.....	88
College grade level and psychological well-being.....	90
Research Question 3	92
Implications for the Counseling Community.....	94
University Environment.....	95
Counseling Field.....	95
Limitations	99
Recommendations for Future Research	104
Conclusion	106
APPENDICES	108
APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL	109
APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM	111
APPENDIX C. PERMISSION TO USE THE RACIAL AND LIFE EXPERIENCES SCALE.....	115
APPENDIX D. DAILY LIFE EXPERIENCE SUBSCALE	117
APPENDIX E. PERMISSION TO USE THE DEPRESSION-HAPPINESS SCALE	120
APPENDIX F. DEPRESSION-HAPPINESS SCALE	122
APPENDIX G. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET	124
REFERENCES	127

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants ($N = 201$)	47
2. Reliability for Depression-Happiness Scale and Daily Life Experience subscale ($N = 201$)	61
3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Psychological Well-Being (DHS), Frequency and Bothersome of Racism ($N = 201$)	64
4. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Scores on Perceived Racism, Frequency and Bothersome (DLE) Subscale Predicting Scores on Psychological Well-Being (DHS) ($N = 201$)	65
5. Collinearity Statistics of Independent Variables ($N = 201$)	68
6. Results of Multiple Regression Predicting Psychological Well-Being From Scores on the DLE Subscale and Demographic Variables ($N = 201$)	69
7. Pearson Product-Moment Correlations of the Frequency and Bothersome of Racism and Psychological Well-Being	71
8. Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Ethnic Groups, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Ethnic Identity and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables ($N = 174$)	73
9. Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Cambodian American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Cambodian American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables	74
10. Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Hmong American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Hmong American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables	75
11. Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Laotian American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Laotian American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables	76

12. Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Vietnamese American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Vietnamese American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables	77
13. Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Other Southeast Asian American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Other Southeast Asian American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables	78

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past decade, studies have indicated that experiences of racism adversely influence the psychological health of Asian Americans (Alvarez & Juang, 2010; Gee, Spencer, Chen, Yip, & Takeuchi, 2007; Noh & Kaspar, 2003). Gee et al. (2007) reported that everyday discrimination was significantly associated with mental disorders above and beyond that associated with stressors such as acculturation and poverty. Evidence has linked Asian Americans' self-reported racism to depression (Huynh, Devos, & Smalarz, 2011; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Noh & Kaspar, 2003), anxiety (Pieterse, Carter, Evans, & Walter, 2010; Wei et al., 2010), and suicidal ideation (Y. J. Wong, Koo, Tran, Chiu, & Mok, 2011).

Despite such compelling findings, there are limitations to the current studies on racism and psychological well-being in Asian Americans. First, the research on Asian Americans' experiences with racism has been laden by samples that aggregate participants across various Asian American ethnic groups (e.g., Cassidy, O'Connor, Howe, & Warden, 2004; Kuo, 1995; Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999). With over 40 ethnic groups (Sandhu, 1997), it stands to reason that each Asian American ethnic group may have different experiences with race and racism as a result of their respective historical and sociopolitical experiences in the United States. Second, there is a paucity of research that explores the impact of racism on Southeast Asian Americans. It is likely that Southeast Asian Americans who are refugees as a result of the U.S. occupation during the Vietnam War may experience racism in a manner that is distinct

from those historically without a refugee status. Finally, Southeast Asian American college students are in a unique position in the discourse of Asian Americans, yet, few studies have focused on this population.

Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of the present study was to explore Southeast Asian American college students' experiences of racism on their psychological well-being. Southeast Asian Americans' perceptions of the impact of racism on their psychological well-being have been largely unexplored within the counseling profession. Given that racism may have an adverse impact on the mental health of Asian Americans, understanding the relationship between these variables in Southeast Asian American college students will provide insight with this unique group who share a historical experience as refugees. This may enable counselors to better serve Southeast Asian American college students in two ways: (a) counselors will be more aware of the pressures that Southeast Asian American college students face when facing racism and thus be able to offer more culturally appropriate support and (b) knowing the nature of these experiences will enable the counseling field to advocate on a micro- and macro-level to address the needs more accurately. Specifically, the researcher is interested in perceived racism as a predictor of psychological well-being in different ethnic groups of Southeast Asian American college students.

The present study builds on previous research (Alvarez & Juang, 2010; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Noh et al., 1999; A. D. Ong & Edwards, 2008) on the psychological health of Asian Americans as influenced by their experiences with racism. Racism or self-

reported ethnic or racial discrimination is a highly prevalent phenomenon. Racism is a stressor that contributes to disparities in mental health and to variations in health outcomes within racial and ethnic minority groups (Brondolo, Brady ver Halen, Pencille, Beatty, & Contrada, 2009; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Cokley, Hall-Clark, & Hicks, 2011; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). This chapter includes a review of the literature on the relationship of racism and psychological well-being in Asian Americans with a particular interest on Southeast Asian Americans.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students.

Although Southeast Asians share similar histories and geographical locations, they are distinct in their experiences. For that reason, the current study explores Southeast Asian Americans as a whole, but also takes into consideration the ethnic differences by disaggregating the individual ethnic identities. Additionally, including an inclusive and diverse sample of Southeast Asian Americans that range in geographical location, generational status, reported college level status, and gender will add to the broader literature of Asian Americans and mental health.

Research Questions

These research questions guide the analysis of this research: (a) Is there a relationship between the scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale and the scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) for Southeast Asian American college students?

(b) How well does the combination of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale, gender, generational status, ethnicity, and self-reported college level status predict psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) for Southeast Asian American college students? (c) Does the relationship between scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DLE) and of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) vary depending on the ethnicity for Southeast Asian American college students?

Definitions

Exploration of the existing literature and explanation of the research questions begin with definitions of terms and concepts that were used in the present study. As in any specialized area of research, the study of racism, psychological well-being, and Southeast Asian Americans makes use of a number of terms and concepts to facilitate an understanding of the literature.

Generational Status. For the purpose of this study generational status refers to one's immigration to the United States of America (USA; Rumbaut & Ima, 1988). First generation identifies individuals born outside of the USA who did not receive schooling in the USA for more than three-quarters of their academic lives. The 1.5 generation status refers to individuals who were born outside of the USA, immigrated to the U.S. prior to adolescence, and attended school in the USA for more than three-quarters of their academic lives. Second generation denotes individuals who were born in the USA with both parents who were born outside of the USA. The 2.5-generation status refers to

individuals who were born in the USA with one or both parents born in the USA. Third generation refers to individuals and both of their parents who were born in the USA (Chhuon, Hudley, Brenner, & Macias, 2010; Rumbaut & Ima, 1988).

Microaggressions. Microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges of verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities that communicate hostile or negative insults to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group (Sue, Nadal, Capodilupo, Torino, & Rivera, 2008).

Perceived racism. Perceived racism is a self-report of experiences with racial microaggressions, whether intentional or unintentional, which are pervasive and reproduced in everyday and extraordinary experiences (Alvarez & Juang, 2010; Brown, 2008).

Psychological well-being. Psychological well-being refers to a state of being that focuses on the positive and negative emotions and thoughts (Joseph, Linley, Harwood, Lewis, & McCollam, 2004). Examples of positive emotions and thoughts include feeling cheerful, being optimistic about the future, or feeling satisfied with life. Examples of negative emotions and thoughts include feeling sad, being dissatisfied with life, or feeling lethargic.

Southeast Asian Americans. A Southeast Asian American is a racial identity that includes individuals from the countries of Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Within this racial identity, there are several ethnic groups (e.g. Cambodian, Cham, Laotian, Hmong, Mien, Thai, and Vietnamese).

Review of the Literature

With a general understanding of definitions, attention can be shifted to exploring the current body of literature related to racism in the broader Asian American population with a specific focus on Southeast Asian Americans. This section highlights scholarship including: (a) the demographic and cultural values of Southeast Asian Americans (Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese), (b) mental health concerns of the general Southeast Asian American population, (c) racism and its impact on psychological well-being, and (d) Southeast Asian American college students' achievement patterns and their mental health needs. The review ends with respect of the limitations within the current body of literature that support the research questions and hypotheses under consideration.

The Culture of Southeast Asian Americans

There are over 40 distinct subcultures within the Asian American ethnic conglomeration (Sandhu, 1997). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, these subcultures referred to individuals having origins of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, China, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the Philippine Islands (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2012). Within these distinct subcultures, Southeast Asian Americans occupy a unique position in relation to the discourse of Asian American experiences. A brief history that led to the forced migration of Southeast Asians is covered. Additionally, data from the Census Bureau are presented along with brief descriptions of the culture of four Southeast Asian American groups (e.g., Cambodian, Laotian, Hmong, and Vietnamese).

The immigration experience of Southeast Asians in the United States (U.S.) differs from other Asian American groups. Many Southeast Asians were wartime refugees whereas other Asian immigrants such as the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans were more likely voluntary immigrants. The motivation for migrating to the U.S. between voluntary immigrants and refugees differ. Voluntary immigrants generally arrived in the U.S. as a result of individual movements such as family unification or financial purpose. Often, as a result, they had more access to social structures of mainstream American society (Bankston & Hidalgo, 2006). Their voluntary decision to leave their homeland for more opportunities in a new country allowed for a greater sense of control of their future (Westermeyer, 1988).

Unlike voluntary immigrants, refugees generally arrived in the U.S. under duress with basically no economic assets or clearly stated plans for the future (Sakamoto & Woo, 2007). For the most part, refugees were pushed out of their homelands without the option of returning to their native countries. Consequently, they were often ill equipped for circumstances ahead of them and felt a loss of control of their future (Westermeyer, 1988).

According to Bankston and Hidalgo (2006), U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia “produced one of the greatest government-sponsored transoceanic population movements in history” (p. 31). This military involvement referred to the U.S. government support of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia through militia, supplies, and legislation during the Vietnam War. When these countries fell to communist forces in 1975, an exodus of refugees from these countries began. As a response to this exodus,

Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which allowed millions of individuals from these three countries to enter the U.S. (Bankston & Hidalgo, 2006).

Since the Fall of Saigon in 1975, the Southeast Asian population has steadily increased in the U.S. A 1990 Census research reported that Southeast Asians had a “miniscule presence in 1970 [in the U.S., and] mushroomed to over 300,000 by 1980” (Rynearson, Gosebrink, & Gewanter, 1990, p. 11). When Southeast Asians arrived in the U.S., they lacked preexisting ethnic community networks to assist their transition. Their resettlement was largely decided and overseen by government agencies. In 2003, 45% of the Southeast Asian American population was under 20 years of age as compared to 28.5% of the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Among them, more than half a million were the American-born children of Southeast Asian refugees who escaped to this country before 1980 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). More recently, the 2010 Census reported that the five largest Southeast Asian ethnic groups in the U.S. were as follows: (a) Vietnamese (1,737,433), (b) Cambodian (276,667), (c) Hmong (260,073), (d) Thai (237,583), and (e) Laotian (232,130). More than half of the Southeast Asian population lives in four states: California (705,381), Texas (163,625), Minnesota (84,062), and Washington (78,194; Niedzwiecki & Duong, 2004).

As noted before, there are more than 40 subgroups of Asian Americans. Within the Southeast Asian American ethnic group, distinct cultural differences exist. Still, researchers have a tendency to treat Southeast Asian ethnic groups as a single, undifferentiated racial/ethnic category of “Southeast Asians” (Abe, Zane, & Chun, 1994; Chung & Bemak, 2002; Kim, 2002). The research practice of aggregating across

Southeast Asian groups fails to address the idiosyncratic needs of Southeast Asian Americans. To highlight the similarities and differences within and across ethnic groups, the researcher reviewed the literature on the culture (e.g., Census statistics and cultural values) of each Southeast Asian ethnic group.

Cambodian Americans. After the Fall of Saigon, the Khmer Rouge controlled Cambodia. The Pol Pot communist leaders relocated most people to work camps. They stripped the Buddhist religion from society and orchestrated a bloody ethnic cleansing by mass execution (Yang & Chan, 1989). It is estimated that out of a population of 7 million, 1 to 3 million people died during the four years of the Pol Pot regime (Davis, 2000; Mortland, 1997). Only a small number of Cambodians were allowed to enter the U.S. for family reunification in the early 1980s.

Despite their rapid population growth, Cambodian Americans are an invisible, under researched minority (Niedzwiecki & Duong, 2004). Census data revealed that Cambodians in the U.S. are disproportionately poor compared to most other ethnic groups. For example, in the 2000 Census, 29.3% of Cambodians reportedly lived below the federal poverty level with a per capita income of \$10,215 (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). The population is concentrated in urban areas located in California, Washington, and Massachusetts (Chhuon et al., 2010). Large numbers of Cambodians are settled in Long Beach, California, making the area home to the largest Cambodian population in the U.S. (Smith-Hefner, 1999). P. Ong and Umemoto (2000) reported that half of Cambodians who lived in Long Beach are under 15 years of age, and each household averages six members.

Most Cambodians who subscribe to traditional Theravada Buddhist traditions tend to value saving face, maintaining the family bond, and respecting elders (Canniff, 2001; Caplan, Whitmore, & Choy, 1989; Smith-Hefner, 1999). Cambodian families tend to measure success more by the ability to maintain the family bond rather than educational attainment and financial success (Canniff, 2001; Smith-Hefner, 1999). While researching Cambodian families in the Boston area, Smith-Hefner found that the value of saving or maintaining face was often synonymous with achieving a high degree of respect. In particular, this value meant that the behavior and achievement of children were often subject to constant attention and scrutiny. Smith-Hefner suggested that the value of saving face hindered children from pursuing goals that avoided striving too high or too low for fear of loss of face for the family. Conversely, Cambodian American college students reported that protecting the family face encouraged rather than discouraged them to take rigorous courses and pursue their college goals (Chhuon et al., 2010). Other scholars suggested that hard work and belief in patience support Cambodians' persistence to achieve academically (Caplan et al., 1989; Sin, 1991).

Hmong Americans. The Hmong form one of the many tribal minorities in the border regions of China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand (G. Y. Lee, 2007). Their presence in the U.S. was a result of being recruited by the U.S. government to fight the Secret War of Laos as soldiers and spies (Moore & Boehnlein, 1991). After the war ended, many of the Hmong feared severe retribution by the Lao communist government, thus they fled their home country.

The Hmong arrived in the U.S. in the 1980s through the Refugee Resettlement Program. Currently in the U.S., Hmong residents are concentrated geographically in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Forty-five percent of the Hmong are in the age range of 10–29 years and more than one third of the population was born in the U.S. In regards to educational attainment, 45% of the population have no formal schooling compared to 1.4% of the general population; 40.7% have a high school degree; and 7.4% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Additionally, 92.7% of the population still speaks their native language at home; and 44.4% speak English “less than very well” compared to 8.6% of the general population of all cultures (Pfeifer & Lee, 2004). Furthermore, 37.6% of the Hmong population is living below the federal poverty line compared to 12.4% of the general population. Their per capita income in 1999 was reported as \$6,613 and the average household size was 6.13 people.

The Hmong culture has been depicted as preliterate, rural, patriarchal, and traditional (Ngo & Lee, 2007). They come from a largely oral tradition, which led to their struggles to adapt to life in literate societies (Takaki, 1989). Hmong are a collectivistic culture that lives in clan societies, which include extended family members. Kinship and cooperation are valued over individualism in contrast to the culture of American schools (Goldstein, 1985).

According to McInnis (1991), the clan serves as the social and political organization. The social organization is that of a patriarchal clan system (Johnson, 2002). The males lead the clan and make all the major decisions. Whereas Hmong males gain

status through higher education, Hmong females gain status through marriage and motherhood (Goldstein, 1985).

Moreover, the Hmong experienced the greatest cultural discrepancy upon arriving in the U.S. (Barney, 1979; Dunnigan, Olney, McNall, & Spring, 1996; Westermeyer, Vang, & Lyfong, 1983). They have been found to remain significantly more traditional than all other Southeast Asian refugees (Ying & Akutsu, 1997). More recently, a growing body of research suggested that Hmong students who are bicultural are the most successful of Hmong youths (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). In a qualitative study of Hmong college students, Bosher (1997) concluded, “students who are successful academically have been able to adapt to American culture without giving up their native culture or ethnic identification” (p. 601). This finding suggests that academic achievement may be a factor in adaptability and resiliency. In other words, Hmong youths who are able to balance both the American and Hmong cultures may have a greater understanding of how to navigate between the cultures, resulting in greater chances of succeeding academically.

Laotian Americans. Laotians began to arrive in the U.S. as refugees in the early 1980s when the communist party Pathet Lao won the war over the American-supported royalists in 1975. According to Shah (2007), Laotians are among more recent refugees to the U.S. Data from the 2000 Census reported that 22.7% of Laotians have no formal schooling; 50.5% have a high school degree; and 7.6% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Additionally, the per capita income in 1999 for Laotians was reported as

\$11,454. Of the Laotian population, 19.1% are living below the federal poverty line with an average household size of 4.21 people.

Like other Southeast Asian American groups, strong family ties and bounded solidarity are important values in the Laotian community. Spending time together with extended family members, speaking in Lao or Mien, and learning from elders about values and ways of life were identified as key elements of Laotian culture (Shah, 2007). However, Fu (1995) suggested that time spent among family members in conversation and storytelling are not a part of Lao cultural values. Instead, the shift in cultural values is a result of practical survival needs. Gordon (2004) noted that women's access to wages has led to changes in gender roles within the Lao family. The value of education is important for both girls and boys because Lao parents believe that two incomes are necessary to support family in the U.S. (Zaharlick, Jobrack, & Calip-Dubois, 1993).

Vietnamese Americans. Of the four Southeast Asian American ethnic groups, Vietnamese Americans are the largest group among Southeast Asians ethnic groups in the U.S. They had previously been exposed to Western culture by French colonialism and are from more urbanized settings in their pre-immigration life (Montero & Nhan, 1979). Vietnamese Americans are perhaps the most celebrated among the Southeast Asian American ethnic groups. Freeman (1995) wrote, "the academic achievement of Vietnamese schoolchildren in America are almost legendary" (p. 69). This claim could be supported from the Census data which showed 8.0% had no formal schooling, 61.9% had a high school degree, and 19.5% had a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2000). The average household size is 3.67 people and 16% are living below the federal poverty line.

Vietnamese Americans share similar values with the aforementioned Southeast Asian American ethnic groups. The values of honoring mutual, collective obligations to immediate and extended family helps to achieve respect, cooperation, and harmony within the family (Caplan et al., 1989; Golds, 1992). Intact families do not work in isolation, as they are a part of a web of social and kinship relations that function to support each other in the larger Vietnamese community. This community has a watchful eye to remind parents and children of the need to do well in school and in their personal lives as to bring honor to the individual, family, and the community (Nash, 1992). Furthermore, values such as respect for elders, obedience, industriousness, and helping others are emphasized (Zhou & Bankston, 1994). These values discourage egoistic values of independent thinking and popularity.

Similarities and differences. In highlighting the demographics and cultural values of the four Southeast Asian American ethnic groups, similarities and differences emerged. One glaring similarity was the collectivistic nature of the cultures. According to Triandis (1995), collectivism is a social pattern that (a) involves individuals perceiving themselves as interdependent with others; (b) emphasizes social norms, obligations, and duties; (c) gives priority to family or group goals over personal goals; and (d) values social connectedness and commitment even when it is disadvantageous to individuals. Bankston and Hidalgo (2006) suggested that refugee groups often have a greater need

than nonrefugee groups to rely on intensive cooperation with individuals who share similar cultural practices and values.

Respect was another theme that seemed to rest at the center of their value systems. According to Zhou and Bankston (1994), this deeply embedded cultural value of respect for elders and authority led to a set of collectively held ideas about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. This is further supported by a major study of the children of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Lao refugees in the U.S. during the 1980s (Caplan et al., 1989; Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1991). The researchers developed a questionnaire aimed at discovering the central values that guide the value orientations of Southeast Asians in the U.S. Factor analyses of their results entrusted the value systems into six interrelated factors: (a) the cultural foundation (connected to beliefs about religion, tradition, and society), (b) family-based achievement, (c) hard work, (d) the family in society, (e) self-reliance and pride, and (f) coping and integration.

Conversely, the differences that emerged included the demographic differences in education and income level, and the way each group practiced their cultural values. In other words, the practicing of cultural values or the processes of ethnic differentiation is led through how ideas and practices represent a different meaning in each of the aforementioned Southeast Asian American ethnic groups. For example, spirituality is central to the worldview of Cambodians, Hmong, Laotians, and Vietnamese. The practice of spirituality differs between the groups, however. In Cambodian and Laotian cultures, the practice of spirituality is predominant in the practice of Buddhism. In the Hmong culture, the combination of animism, the belief that all natural objects have spirits

and that the spiritual and natural realms are highly interactive, and ancestor worship are traditionally the focus of spirituality (Gates et al., 2000). Two religions dominate how Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans practice their spirituality. These two religions include Buddhism and Catholicism (Zhou & Bankston, 1994).

Another difference that emerged within the Southeast Asian ethnic groups was how their historical experience in their home country was tied to their immigration to the U.S. For instance, the Hmong were a preliterate ethnic group that lived in the rural mountains of Laos. Unlike the Hmong, Cambodians experienced years of starvation and political turmoil that led to millions being killed.

It is apparent that these refugee populations have survived numerous traumas due to war, dislocation, and resettlement. Studies have noted that Cambodians, Laotians, Hmong, and Vietnamese have demonstrated high rates of PTSD including symptoms such as anxiety, hostility, or depression (e.g. Chung & Kagawa-Singer, 1993; Moore & Boehnlein, 1991; Noh et al., 1999). Considering the given ethnic diversity in cultural norms, resettlement history, and census demographic characteristics, it is important to provide an in-depth look between and within the ethnic groups. Although it is often a tendency to view all Southeast Asian refugees as a homogenous group, therapists and educators must be sensitive to the interethnic differences and needs that vary among the ethnic groups.

Mental Health Concerns of Southeast Asian Americans

The mental health issues faced by Southeast Asian Americans are complex. Empirical studies that focused on Southeast Asians living in the U.S. include ethnic

groups (Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese) that have fled their countries as a result of war, genocide, and internal political turmoil in their home country (Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Chung & Kagawa-Singer, 1993; Noh et al., 1999). Most of these Southeast Asian Americans endured extraordinary hardships in the process of emigration to the U.S. from their homeland.

These refugee experiences may be the reasons why Southeast Asian Americans are considered at greater risk for mental illness and major depressive disorder compared with immigrants from other Asian countries (Abe et al., 1994; Yang & Chan, 1989; Ying, 2001). Many of these experiences resulted from war-related psychological traumas (Davis, 2000; O'Hare & Van Tran, 1998). Studies have noted that Southeast Asian refugees are at risk for developing serious mental health disorders such as posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety (Chung & Bemak, 2002; D. Kinzie et al., 1990; Mollica, Wyshak, Coelho, & Lavelle, 1985; Westermeyer, 1988).

Despite the prevalence of health problems, Southeast Asian refugees underuse the mental health system (Blair, 1998; P. Cheung & Spears, 1995). A reason for this underutilization may be due to cultural attitudes. Uba (1994) noted that many Southeast Asians see some suffering and illness as an unavoidable part of life. Or they attribute psychological distress to an imbalance of harmony with nature (Lin, Inui, Kleinman, & Womack, 1982), a curse by an offended spirit (Brainard, 1989), or a punishment for immoral behavior (Aronson, 1987).

These views toward mental health illness may be why effective delivery of mental health services to Asian Americans and Southeast Asian refugees has been challenging

(F. K. Cheung & Snowden, 1990; D. W. Sue et al., 2007). In addition, the community's unfamiliarity of mental health services, and the stigma of mental health illness contributes to underutilization (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998; D. Sue & Sue, 2003).

Other barriers to mental health service utilization for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have been identified. Uba (1994) discovered six common barriers as to why Asian Americans and Southeast Asians underutilize health services. These six barriers include: (a) racial and cultural biases; (b) conflicts between the epistemological underpinnings and the personality syndromes, values, expectations, and interpersonal styles of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; (c) Asian and Pacific Islander cultural attitudes toward seeking help and perceptions of the usefulness of such help; (d) language barriers; (e) a shortage of bilingual and culturally sensitive service providers; and (f) lack of knowledge of existing services. Some of these barriers suggest that the underutilization of mental health use may be related to discrimination. For example, a few of the noted reasons underlying the barrier of racial and cultural biases included culturally inappropriate services and a feeling of being unwelcomed. When mental health providers do not make an effort to welcome Asian American clients by providing culturally sensitive providers or a staff member who speaks and understand their language, Asian American clients feel unwelcome and thus are discouraged to seek help.

Racism

Racism can be described as acts or institutional procedures to help create or perpetuate sets of advantages for the privileged group and deprivations for minority groups (Chesler, 1976). These beliefs and procedures can lead to discrimination, or

differential treatment on the basis of race and other factors that hinder a non-dominant group (Bobo & Fox, 2003). For that reason, racism is a broad construct that echoes the processes, norms, ideologies, and behaviors that perpetuate racial inequality.

Racism can occur at an institutional or at an individual level. Barriers to employment or professional advancement on the basis of an individual's racial, ethnic, and cultural background are forms of institutional racism (Chung, Bemak, Ortiz, & Sandoval-Perez, 2008). More specifically, institutional racism occurs through policies and practices such as race-based discrimination in housing, health care, and education. An example of this was the Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882 that barred Chinese from entering the U.S. (Hing, 1993). More recently, Congress included deportation provisions in current immigration laws that specifically impact Southeast Asian Americans (Southeast Asia Resource Action Center [SEARAC], n.d.). These laws work to deport Southeast Asian refugees who have served their sentence in a U.S. jail to their country of origin regardless of their permanent residence status. This controversial form of institutional racism further impedes access to social services for marginalized individuals.

Whereas institutional racism describes social patterns, individual racism focuses on the actions of individuals that perpetuate discriminatory practices against non-dominant racial and cultural individuals or groups. Individual racism can be described in both blatant and subtle acts. Overt acts of racism are readily observable. Subtle acts of racism are more difficult to observe such as implicit attitudes and beliefs. As a participant in a qualitative study responded, the subtlety in racism lies often in the "words that are not said, the nuances in which a comment is made, or an unobvious act of

discrimination” (Young, 2011, p. 1444). Although the subtle acts of racism may be more difficult to observe, targeted individuals are able to identify the nuances and disparaging actions. In a sample of 271 Asian American adults living in Arizona, 34% reported being a target of subtle discrimination due to their race, whereas 24% reported being a target of blatant discrimination (Yoo, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2009).

This subtle form of racism is more insidious and impalpable. Scholars have labeled this form of racism as microaggressions (D. W. Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009), referring to the daily occurrences and less overt forms of racism experienced by non-dominant cultural groups. Due to its brief and common occurrence, microaggressions may be dismissed or glossed over as being harmless (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; D. W. Sue et al., 2009). Sue et al. explored Asian American experiences with racial microaggressions through a qualitative study using a semi-structured interview approach with a sample of 10 Asian Americans. The sample included one male and nine females, four Chinese Americans, two Filipino Americans, one Korean American, one Japanese and German American, and one Asian Indian European American. Eight of the participants were college students and two were working professionals.

From the in-depth interviews, the authors identified eight microaggression themes. These themes included the following: (a) alien in their own land, (b) ascription of intelligence, (c) denial of racial reality, (d) exoticization of Asian American women, (e) invalidation of interethnic differences, (f) second-class citizenship, (g) pathologizing cultural values, and (h) invisibility.

The most prevalent theme that emerged from the qualitative interview was, “alien in their own land.” This theme referred to the assumption that Asian Americans are not American-born. Questions such as “Are you from China?” or “Have you been back to your homeland?” convey a message to Asian Americans that they must be from another country other than the U.S.

The second microaggression theme of “ascription of intelligence” suggested that all Asian Americans are smart. Although this microaggression may sound like a compliment, the pressure Asian Americans feel to conform to this theme can be detrimental to their well-being. The microaggression potentially could create tensions between Asian Americans and other people of color who are perceived as less intelligent. Additionally, if instructors or peers ascribed a level of intelligence to Asian Americans, they may incorrectly identify the needs of Asians when there was a gap of understanding or knowledge.

The third theme is “denial of racial reality.” This theme referred to the microaggression that Asian Americans do not experience discrimination. Beliefs such as Asian Americans as the model minority or that inequity do not exist for Asians denied their experiential reality of bias and discrimination.

Next, the theme “exoticization of Asian American women” reduced Asian American women to exotic objects. Furthermore, Asian American women were viewed as subservient to White men with the focus of pleasing them sexually. In a qualitative study (Lowe, Okubo, & Reilly, 2012), an Asian American woman expressed her experience with this microaggression. The participant described an event where her

White ex-boyfriend raped her, elaborating that her ex-boyfriend viewed her as a submissive Asian woman whom he could dominate.

A fifth theme, “invalidation of interethnic differences,” referred to the idea that all Asian Americans were the same and that the differences between groups do not matter. Phrases such as “Asian Americans all look like,” or “There’s an Asian International student group you can join” delivered the message that differences do not exist for Asian Americans. Furthermore, research that aggregates Southeast Asian Americans into a single, undifferentiated category does not provide accurate information about any one Southeast Asian American ethnic group.

Next, the theme “second-class citizenship” referred to being treated as a lesser being where Whites were given preferential treatment as consumers over Asian American customers. In a study of Southeast Asian refugees (Pernice & Brook, 1996), the participants described feeling exploited by their employees. Many of the participants believed they were underemployed or not paid accordingly unlike their White co-workers. The microaggression conveyed the message that Asians Americans are lesser than their White counterparts.

Another theme was “pathologizing cultural values.” This microaggression suggested that Asian American cultural values were less desirable and were indicators of deficits. For example, using chopsticks as a utensil instead of eating “the American way,” using forks, knives, and spoons, could be viewed as less desirable.

The last theme was “invisibility.” This theme referred to incidents that involved the experience of being overlooked. Whether the incident occurred intentionally or not, the message conveyed that Asians do not exist.

These perceived experiences of racial and ethnic microaggressions have been found to contribute to poor psychological well-being, diminished trust, and decreased self-esteem (D. W. Sue et al., 2007; D. W. Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008) and increased alcohol use among ethnic minority college students (Blume, Lovato, Thyken, & Denny, 2011).

Racism and Asian American. Racism is a widespread problem in U.S. society where Asian Americans are not isolated from experiences of racism. Numerous empirical studies support the challenges that Asian Americans faced in terms of perceived racism (Alvarez & Juang, 2010; Huynh et al., 2011; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Lowe et al., 2012).

In a study of the rates of racism, Alvarez and Juang (2010) focused solely on the experiences of Filipino Americans. The authors used the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale of the Racial and Life Experiences Scale (RaLES; Harrell, 1997) to measure participants’ experiences of perceived racism. The DLE consisted of 20 items that measured one’s perceptions of racial microaggressions such as being ridiculed or differentially treated. Participants reported the degree to which they perceived racial microaggressions during the past year on a Likert scale. A convenience sample of Filipino Americans ($N = 199$) who participated in a larger study on racism in San Francisco participated in this study. The participants included women ($n = 91$) and men

($n = 108$) with a mean age of 39.6 years. Participants identified with three generational statuses: 47% as first generation, 46% as second generation, and 7% as third generation or higher. A staggering percentage of the sample (99%) reported experiencing at least one incident with racial microaggression in the past year.

A stereotype that is particularly salient for Asian Americans is that of the perpetual foreigner. This perceived racism refers to being treated as an alien in one's own land and was associated with feelings of inferiority, discomfort, and isolation (D. W. Sue et al., 2007). In a study that examined the perpetual foreigner stereotype and perceived experiences of racism, Huynh et al. (2011) collected data from Asian American ($n = 231$), Latino ($n = 211$) and European American ($n = 394$) undergraduate college students from a large, public university on the West Coast of the U.S. The mean age of the participants was 19.15 years.

The researchers (Huynh et al., 2011) administered four instruments. These instruments included the Perceived Discrimination subscale (Malcarne, Chavira, Fernandez, & Liu, 2006), Bicultural Identity Integration Scale (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005), Mainstream Comfort subscale (Malcarne et al., 2006), and a perceived foreigner scale (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). The Perceived Discrimination subscale from the Scale of Ethnic Experience (Malcarne et al., 2006) was a 9-item self-report measure that assessed perceived discrimination. Six items were modified from the conflict subscale of the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale-Version 1 (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). The modified subscale was used to measure the extent to which participants experienced a conflict between their ethnic and national identities. The

authors developed a 13-item questionnaire that assessed the extent to which participants believed others perceived them as foreigner as opposed to an American citizen. And, six items from the Mainstream Comfort subscale from the Scale of Ethnic Experience (Malcarne et al., 2006) was used to assess participants' feelings of belonging.

Results indicated that Asian Americans ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.65$) and Latinos ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.64$) reported higher perceived discrimination than European Americans ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 0.59$). Additionally, Asian Americans and Latinos were more aware that peers perceived them as less American and more foreign when compared to European Americans. Furthermore, data from the Asian American college student group suggested that having an awareness of the perpetual foreigner stereotype was a significant predictor of both a perception of identity conflict, $\Delta R^2 = .14$, $F(1, 228) = 44.12$, $p = 2.24 \times 10^{-10}$, and a lower sense of belonging $\Delta R^2 = .14$, $F(1, 228) = 44.38$, $p = 2.00 \times 10^{-10}$ to the American culture. Additionally, the researchers noted that having an awareness of the perpetual foreigner stereotype was not a significant predictor of depression over and above perceived discrimination, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F(1, 53) = 1.09$, $p = .30$ (Huynh et al., 2011).

In a qualitative study focused on the lived racism experiences of people of color, Lowe et al. (2012) conducted a purposive sample to recruit participants from the East Coast. Of the participants ($n = 19$), Korean American ($n = 6$), African American ($n = 3$), Asian Indian ($n = 1$), Chinese American ($n = 1$), Filipino American ($n = 1$), Haitian Canadian ($n = 1$), Iranian American ($n = 1$), Japanese ($n = 1$), Mexican American ($n = 1$), Taiwanese ($n = 1$), Thai American ($n = 1$), and Vietnamese American ($n = 1$) were represented. The authors used a consensual qualitative research methodology to analyze

the data. This process allowed the researchers to focus on the process and the outcome of the experiences of the participants.

From the voices of the Asian American participants, the common themes that emerged were (a) all of the participants experienced multiple incidents of racism, and (b) the strong negative emotions they exhibited when reflecting on these racist events. Of the two Southeast Asian American participants in the study, one described his pain, stating,

[It's] hurtful (pause), and I think that my being able to remember so vividly the way they looked, the way the guns looked (pause) now, 12, 15 years later, I guess it tells me that it was a hard thing . . . When you recall [a racist] story, all of the feelings come back . . . and now, you're feeling like it's still with you and it's there. (p. 192)

Other participants described similar experiences when reflecting on their experiences with racism. For example, the other Southeast Asian American participant described feeling powerless and ashamed when she recounted an event where others ridiculed her for having almond-shaped eyes.

The results of the above studies continue to support the relationship between perceived racism and mental health of Asian Americans. Studies such as the ones by Huynh et al. (2011) and Lowe et al. (2012) explore how Asian Americans experience racism and the responses to racist events. Results showed that racism engenders responses that are similar to classical symptoms of trauma such as responses of intense

fear, helplessness, or horror when one re-experiences intrusive distressing recollections of the event (American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-IV*, 2000).

The representation of Asian American ethnic groups is limited in the above studies with even less representation for Southeast Asian Americans. The issue of underrepresentation in the other studies is noted as well (Lee & Ahn, 2011; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Silka & Tip, 1994; D. W. Sue et al., 2009). For instance, D. L. Lee and Ahn (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of the literature that addressed racial discrimination for Asians. In 23 studies with 26 independent samples, 13 samples were based on various Asian ethnic backgrounds, and the rest of the samples focused exclusively on a particular ethnic group. Only one of the studies included a Southeast Asian group, which was Vietnamese. This suggests the need for future research exploring the heterogeneity among Asian Americans, including factors such as ethnic ancestry and immigration history.

Racism and psychological well-being. Researchers have investigated the experience and effects of racism on ethnic minority groups. They found that racism was associated with both mental and physical health symptoms among Asian Americans and could adversely affect mental health (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Noh et al., 1999; Pieterse et al., 2010; Y. J. Wong et al., 2011).

In a study that explored the relationship of perceived racism and psychological well-being in Southeast Asian Americans, Noh et al. (1999) reported that participants who experienced racism tended to report an adverse psychological well-being and increased psychological distress. The authors conducted a mixed methodology research

study with adult Southeast Asian refugees ($N = 647$) residing in Canada. A 17-item self-report questionnaire was developed to measure depression by using items from the Vietnamese Depression Scale (J. D. Kinzie et al., 1982) and the Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969). The reported reliability coefficient for the depression scale was 0.92. An important statistical finding suggested that depression scores were positively related to perceived racial discrimination with a correlation coefficient of $r = 1.58$ which is significant at $p < 0.001$. Specifically, participants who reported experiences with discrimination had a higher mean score on the depression scale compared to the participants who reported having no experiences with discrimination. These results suggested that perceived racial discrimination negatively affected the mental health of Southeast Asian refugees.

Racism and college students. For the past several decades, many universities and colleges have promoted the inclusion of a diverse student body with a particular focus on racial and ethnic diversity. Some have suggested that increasing a diverse student body for universities and colleges can increase racial tensions, create self-segregation, and generate feelings of racial hostility (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Others have also suggested that the more “mixed,” or the more racially diverse student population on a university campus, the greater potential for campus violence among ethnic groups (Marcus, 1994).

In a longitudinal study, Cress and Ikeda (2003) focused on college students ($N = 8,961$) enrolled at the University of California, Los Angeles to determine the perceptions of campus climate and feelings of depression. Students ($n = 508$) enrolled at the

University of California, Los Angeles were surveyed at two different points: 1993 (at the time of college entry) and 1997 (four years after matriculation). The authors reported the results between two categories: Asian American college students ($n = 508$) and all other college students ($n = 8,453$). Asian American women reported the highest perception of a negative campus climate ($M = 21.91, p = .05$) followed closely by Asian American men ($M = 21.91, p = .05$). All other college students for both women ($M = 20.73, p = .05$) and men ($M = 20.13, p = .05$) reported lower perceptions of a negative campus climate.

Additionally, results suggested that Asian American college students were more likely to experience feelings of depression in negative campus climates when compared to non-Asian American college students. A statistically significant positive relationship between perceptions of discrimination on campus and reports of depression emerged for Asian American women ($r = .19, p = .00$) and for Asian American men ($r = .24, p = .001$). Higher reports of discrimination were associated with an increased occurrence of depressive symptoms for Asian American college students. Furthermore, analyses from self-reported measures suggested that perceptions of a negative campus climate significantly predicted higher levels of depression in Asian American college students ($\beta = .08$).

Furthermore, Asian American college students may be negatively impacted by perceived racial and ethnic discrimination. According to Y. J. Wong et al. (2011), Asian American college students attributed suicidal ideation to experiences with racism. In a mixed-methodology research study, the authors explored the phenomenon of suicide ideation among Asian American college students. Students enrolled in undergraduate

psychology courses ($N = 288$) in a large West Coast public university participated in this study. More than half of the participants were East Asians (54.1%). A small representative of Vietnamese (18.1%) and other Asian American students (27.8%) also participated in the study. From the participant sample, 55.9% identified their college level status as freshmen, 22.4% were sophomores, 11.4% were juniors, and 9.6% were seniors. The immigration generational statuses were distributed across first generation (40.5%), second generation (53.8%), and third or higher generation (5.7%).

The qualitative portion of the research involved one open-ended question about suicide ideation. The open-ended question was stated as, “In your opinion, what might cause an Asian American college student to think about committing suicide?” The researchers used a grounded theory procedure to analyze the responses.

The analysis of participants’ responses revealed two subthemes in relation to perceived racism. The first subtheme refers to cultural differences that addressed the challenge of balancing between Asian and American cultural norms. A quote that illustrates this theme is the response of one participant who stated, “Asian American college students may be at conflict with their identities, American and Asian, and it may have come to some point for some individuals to think of committing suicide” (Y. J. Wong et al., 2011, p. 204).

The second subtheme refers to Asian Americans’ unfulfilled expectations of acceptance by the dominant group. This subtheme was associated with racism. Sample narratives included, “Discrimination of race, gender, and ethnicity can cause an Asian American college student to think about committing suicide” and “Maybe they receive a

lot of racism from others and they feel that they are being discriminated against because they are nerdy or uncool” (Y. J. Wong et al., 2011, p. 205).

Another study that provides further illustration on the impact of perceived racism in Asian American college students is the quantitative study from Hwang and Goto (2009). The authors explored the impact of perceived racial discrimination on multiple mental health outcomes. Students enrolled at a university located in the Rocky Mountain region of the U.S. were recruited through emails inviting them to participate in an Internet-based research study on student health. Of the participants ($N = 206$), a majority were East Asian Americans ($n = 107$) with a small representative of Vietnamese Americans ($n = 20$). The Latino student ($n = 79$) participation in the study was also less than the total of Asian American participants. About 24% of the students were in their first year of college, 15% in their second, 28% in their third, 17% in their fourth, and 16% in their fifth year.

The authors (Hwang & Goto, 2009) used two subscales of the General Ethnic Discrimination scale (GED; Landrine, Klonoff, Corral, Fernandez, & Roesch, 2006) to assess discrimination. The two subscales, perceived lifetime exposure to a variety of discriminatory events and the appraised stress associated with experiencing those events, were combined into one overall discrimination score. The reported internal consistency was $\alpha = .94 - .95$.

As for assessing mental health outcomes, the authors (Hwang & Goto, 2009) used four instruments. The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI; Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983) was used to assess psychological distress. The internal consistency was reported as $\alpha =$

.97. The Scale for Suicidal Ideation (SSI; Beck, Kovacs, & Weissman, 1979; Beck, Steer, & Ranieri, 1988) was used to assess current conscious suicidal intent. The reported internal consistency was $\alpha = .71$. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1983; Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970) measured state anxiety such as transient feelings of worry and nervousness and trait anxiety such as individual differences in enduring anxiety. The internal consistency was reported as $\alpha = .93$ and $\alpha = .90$, respectively. The fourth mental health outcome instrument was the Hamilton Depression Inventory (HDI; Hamilton, 1960, 1967; Reynolds & Kobak, 1995). The HDI is a 23-item self-report inventory. The internal consistency was reported as $\alpha = .82$.

Results from the study suggested that fewer years in school were significantly associated with higher psychological distress ($R^2 = .09$). In addition, higher discrimination scores were associated with (a) higher psychological distress ($R^2 = .09$); (b) higher suicidal ideation, accounting for 3% of the variance ($R^2 = .03$); (c) higher state anxiety ($R^2 = .09$); and (d) higher trait anxiety ($R^2 = .15$). Furthermore, those participants who were exposed to discrimination were 1.62 times (CI = 1.24, 2.12) at greater risk for clinical depression ($p < .01$).

These results suggest that perceived racism increase one's state of psychological distress in Asian American and Latino college students. The findings are not generalizable to Southeast Asian American college students, however. In the study, only one Southeast Asian American group, Vietnamese, was included. Even more limiting was that out of the 207 Asian American participants, only 20 of those identified as Vietnamese. Furthermore, the results were aggregated for Asian Americans. The authors

reported a significant finding in support of the positive relationship between perceived racism and psychological distress in Asian Americans. The finding and limitations of the study from Hwang and Goto (2009) further illustrates the need to study the impact of racism on the psychological well-being in Southeast Asian American college students.

In a more recent study, Pieterse et al. (2010) examined the association among perceptions of racial and/or ethnic discrimination, racial climate, and trauma-related symptoms among racially diverse college undergraduates. Undergraduate students ($N = 289$) enrolled at a large state institution in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. were recruited for the study. Ethnicities included White students ($n = 170$), Black students ($n = 47$), and Asian American students ($n = 71$). Participants reported the following standing in college: freshmen ($n = 165$), sophomores ($n = 65$), juniors ($n = 27$), and seniors ($n = 26$).

Pieterse et al. (2010) used four instruments to assess racial and ethnic discrimination, racial climate, and trauma-related symptoms. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; S. Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) was used to assess the degree to which individuals perceived their lives as stressful. Higher scores on the PSS reflected higher perceptions of life stress. Psychometric data reported by Pieterse et al. (2010) indicated Cronbach's alpha values as $\alpha = .84$ for Asian American, $\alpha = .87$ for White, and $\alpha = .87$ for Black students.

The Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist-Civilian Version (PCL-C; Weathers, Litz, Herman, Huska, & Keane, 1993) is a 17-item self-report measure used to assess the presence of various stress-related symptoms. The symptoms on the checklist are

associated with the diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder. The authors reported reliability with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .91$ for Asian American students, $\alpha = .93$ for White students, and $\alpha = .88$ for Black students.

The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire (PEDQ; Contrada et al., 2001) was used to assess the frequency of various acts of ethnic discrimination. The PEDQ is a 22-item self-report instrument. The authors reported reliability coefficients with Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .92$ for the Asian American students, $\alpha = .79$ for the White students, and $\alpha = .86$ for the Black students. Pieterse et al. (2010) also used the Racial Climate Scale (RCS; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003) to assess perceptions of racial climate on college campuses with reported Cronbach's alpha as $\alpha = .81$ for Asian American students, $\alpha = .76$ for White students, and $\alpha = .66$ for Black students.

Results suggested that test of between-subjects effects indicated that the groups differed on perceived discrimination (PEDQ), $F(2, 283) = 49.70, p < .01, \eta^2 = .26$, and racial climate (RE), $F(2, 283) = 49.70, p = .010, \eta^2 = .03$. Asian students reported higher levels of discrimination ($M = 26.31, p < .001$) when compared to White students ($M = 21.05, p < .001$) but not Black students ($M = 35.02, p < .001$). Similar findings emerged for racial climate. Asian students perceived the racial climate more negative ($M = 7.64, p < .001$) than did White students ($M = 7.42, p < .001$) but not Black students ($M = 8.97, p = .007$).

Additionally, for Asian students, perceived discrimination and racial climate both had a significant and positive association with trauma related symptoms. Perceived ethnic discrimination ($\Delta R^2 = .04, p = .047$) and racial climate ($\Delta R^2 = .07, p = .005$)

contributed additional variance in trauma-related symptoms ($\Delta R^2 = .04, p = .005$). For the Black students, perceived ethnic discrimination contributed an additional 10% variance in trauma-related symptoms ($\Delta R^2 = .10, p = .020$), but racial climate was not a significant predictor of trauma-related symptoms. These results further support the suggestion that experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination may be viewed from the perspective of psychological trauma (Butts, 2002; Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, & Kelly, 2006).

Despite observations that college and community samples are exposed to similar racism experiences (Landrine et al., 2006), and that negative campus climates affect Asian American college students negatively (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Pieterse et al., 2010), there is a lack of scholarship on the topics. Solorzano et al. (2000) reported that racial and ethnic minority college students are often made to feel as “outsiders” or “the other.” This statement supports Cress’ (2008) report that 39% of students reported being discriminated against at least once in college because of their race, gender, age, or disability. Additionally, empirical research on the impact of racial discrimination on Asian Americans was significantly related to greater levels of anxiety (Cassidy et al., 2004), depression (Becker & Grilo, 2007; Cassidy et al., 2004; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008), suicidal ideation (Hwang & Goto, 2009; Y. J. Wong et al., 2011), and overall psychological distress (Clement, Noels, & Deneault, 2001; Dion, Dion, & Pak, 1992). These results suggest the importance and need to explore the relationship of racial discrimination and psychological well-being in all Asian American ethnic groups.

Southeast Asian American College Students

Given the growing body of literature indicating psychological distress and depression resulting from perceived racism and discrimination, understanding the relationship between perceived racism and the psychological well-being of Southeast Asian American college students is particularly important. Lam (2007) included a sample of self-identified Vietnamese American ($N = 122$) undergraduate college students attending a public university in southern California. Both women ($n = 75$) and men ($n = 47$) with a mean age of 24.2 years ($SD = 5.4$ years) participated in the study. The author measured perceived racial discrimination using a Likert scale to assess how much participants felt “racism affects the lives of people of their racial and ethnic group” on a 4-point scale, from 1 (*rarely*) to 4 (*all the time*). Depression was measured using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). The CES-D is a measure of symptoms and moods associated with depression. It consists of 20 items using a 3-point scale to rate how they felt in the past week. Higher scores indicated higher depression. In the sample, the reliability was $\alpha = .83$. Anxiety was measured using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1983). This instrument is a 20-item measure of general experiences of anxiety on a 4-point scale. The reliability for this sample was $\alpha = .81$.

The results suggest a significant relationship between perceived racial discrimination with depression and anxiety. Lam (2007) reported a positive correlation between perceived racial discrimination with depression ($r = .29, p < .01$) and anxiety (r

= .29, $p < .01$). In other words, students who perceived racial discrimination reported higher depression and anxiety.

According to Chhuon et al. (2010), ethnic minorities, immigrants, and second-generation youth often face difficult transitions between their home, school, and peer cultures. These difficult transitions often manifest in their pursuit of academic success. Southeast Asian American students often face these difficult transitions due to incongruence between these groups' backgrounds and mainstream society. For instance, a Cambodian American college student shared her experience upon her early college experiences:

Because everything was so different [at the university]. Getting situated, like my living situation and coming to a new living environment. Feeling like you're alone, kind of secluded. I felt that way. Like freshman year, I tried extremely hard to fit in with the White groups. Usually I felt awkward. (Chhuon & Hudley, 2008, p. 23)

This sample narrative provides an insight into the experiences of Southeast Asian American college students.

These findings suggest that Asian American college students grapple with racism (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Pieterse et al., 2010; D. W. Sue et al., 2009; Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008). The limitation in many of these findings is the lack of diversity of Southeast Asian American students. For example, in the study by Hwang and Goto (2009), only one group of Southeast Asian Americans was included in the study—Vietnamese. This is alarming especially when Rumbaut and Ima (1988) noted

that the acts of racism against refugee students were barriers to the students' educational success and increased their motivation toward joining gangs for self-protection.

Achievement patterns. Throughout history, the model minority myth was used to tout the image that all Asian ethnic groups, regardless of their diversity in culture, education, and class, were more successful than other racial minorities (Yoo, Burrola, & Steger, 2010). However, the achievement patterns of Southeast Asian Americans tell a different story. While more than four out of five East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) who enrolled in college earned at least a bachelor's degree, large proportions of Southeast Asians attending college are not earning a college degree. Data have shown that 33.7 % of Vietnamese, 42.9 % of Cambodians, 46.5 % of Laotians, and 47.5% of Hmong adults (25 years or older) reported having attended college, but not earning a degree. It is more likely for East Asians and South Asians to have a bachelor's degree or advanced degree than Southeast Asians (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2011, p. 10).

According to Ngo and Lee (2007), Southeast Asian Americans are in a unique position when it comes to the discussion of Asian American success. Southeast Asian Americans are viewed in polar opposites, in terms of academic achievement; either hardworking, high achievers, or viewed as delinquent high school dropouts (Ngo, 2006). Furthermore, Bankston and Hidalgo (2006) stated that Southeast Asian American refugees are "located on the margins of American society" (p. 33) which forces their chances for upward mobility primarily on their abilities to do well in school.

The aforementioned statistics and stereotypes negatively impact Southeast Asian American college students. Oyserman and Sakamoto (1997) reported that a majority of Asian Americans did not like to be referred to as the model minority. Other scholars have reported that Asian Americans who internalized the model minority image led to unrealistic expectations and pressure to succeed, which served as a stressor, and led to greater psychological distress (Chen, 1995; F. Wong & Halgin, 2006), lower academic performance (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Chun, 1995; F. Wong & Halgin, 2006), and even suicide (E. Cohen, 2007).

Mental health needs. It is no surprise to clinicians and counselor educators that counseling services are needed for college students. In a study contrasting Asian and White college students, foreign-born Asian students reported greater levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal distress and were significantly more psychologically maladjusted when compared to U.S.-born Asian and White American students (Abe & Zane, 1990). Furthermore, college students who reported feeling depressed were positively correlated with the likelihood of not attending class or completing homework (Cress, 1999). These findings are perhaps more troubling in light of consistent findings that Asian Americans compared to non-Asian Americans tend to underutilize mental health services (Abe-Kim et al., 2007).

Although these findings may suggest a bleak outlook on supporting the needs of Southeast Asian American college students, Ayres and Mahat (2012) discovered a relationship between social support and positive health practices to a defined population of Asian Americans aged 18 to 21 years. The sample included Asian American college

students ($N = 163$) whose ages ranged from 18 to 21 years. The majority of ethnicities represented in the sample were East Asians. About 52% of the participants identified as Chinese, 15% Korean, 7% Japanese, and 5% Taiwanese. Of the remaining participants, 12% identified as Filipino and 9% identified as Vietnamese. More than half of the participants reported being born in the U.S. (60.7%), whereas 39.3% reported being born outside of the U.S. The majority of participants (85%) grew up in the U.S.

Ayres and Mahat (2012) used the Personal Life Questionnaire (PLQ) to measure positive health practices among the participants. The PLQ included six subscales: (a) exercise, (b) less substance use, (c) nutrition, (d) relaxation, (e) safety, and (f) general health promotion. An additional survey, the Personal Resource Questionnaire was used to assess social support. The Personal Resource Questionnaire included subscales representing (a) intimacy, (b) social integration, (c) nurturance, (d) worth, and (e) assistance. The results suggested a positive relationship between social support and positive health practices, $F(1, 202) = 37.67, p < .001$. In other words, students who reported greater levels of social support also reported greater levels of engaging in positive health practices such as exercise, safety, and less substance use.

The findings suggest that mental health services can be beneficial to the health and educational attainment of Asian American college students. Asian American college students may suffer from greater amounts of emotional disturbance than the rest of the general college population (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Tracey, Leong, & Glidden, 1986). However, an increase in social support is positively correlated with an increase of positive health activities.

Need for the Study

The review of literature reveals a paucity of studies on the racism experiences of diverse Southeast Asian American groups (e.g., Laotians, Cambodians, Hmong). A limited number of studies suggest similarities in the experiences of racism between Southeast Asian and other Asian American groups (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Lam, 2007). Discrimination was a consistent predictor of having anxiety and depressive disorder (Gee et al., 2007; Noh et al., 1999). Findings also suggested that perceived racism was associated with suicide ideation (Y. J. Wong et al., 2011), anxiety (Cassidy et al., 2004; Hwang & Goto, 2009), and depressive symptoms (Gee et al., 2007; Noh et al., 1999; A. D. Ong & Edwards, 2008) in Asian Americans. It seems that the current understanding of racism and psychological well-being of Asian Americans is largely based on the assumption that Asian Americans are a homogenous group (Hwang & Goto, 2009; D. L. Lee & Ahn, 2011; Y. J. Wong et al., 2011). This limited scope of understanding that Asian Americans represent a diverse group presenting numerous subcultures and traditions is cause for concern considering the data on the diversity of Southeast Asians living in the U.S. (Barry & Grilo, 2003; Cassidy et al., 2004; D. L. Lee & Ahn, 2011; Ngo & Lee, 2007).

Within the Asian community, ethnic groups vary greatly, yet researchers continue to aggregate data across several Asian ethnic groups. D. L. Lee and Ahn (2011) concluded that more research is needed targeting specific ethnic groups in the experiences of racial discrimination for Asians. This is further supported by the discovery from D. W. Sue et al. (2007) where failure to acknowledge ethnic group

differences is one form of racism. Thus, exploring perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian college students would add to the research base. Furthermore, given the growing body of literature pointing to psychological distress among Southeast Asians (CITE), understanding the relationship between perceived discrimination and the well-being of Southeast Asian American college students is particularly important.

Summary

Review of the literature offers support for the current research questions. The literature on racism and psychological well-being leads to several conclusions. First, ethnic minority college students experience racial and ethnic microaggressions at higher levels when compared to European American students (Blume, Lovato, Thyken, & Denny, 2012). Second, Asian American college students who reported experiences with perceived racism reported poor psychological well-being (Cassidy et al., 2004; Grossman & Liang, 2008; Hwang & Goto, 2009; A. D. Ong & Edwards, 2008). Finally, perceived racism and negative racial college climate contributed to trauma-related symptoms for Asian American college students (Pieterse et al., 2010).

In an attempt to close the gap between Southeast Asian American college students' need for counseling and provision of services, this study seeks to explicitly examine Southeast Asian American college students' experiences of perceived racism in connection to their psychological well-being. Doing so will allow for a greater understanding how Southeast Asian American college students interpret the impact of perceived racism on their psychological well-being. The study will make use of a

correlational quantitative design to assess Southeast Asian American college students' experiences. The application of this methodology to the current study is detailed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The impact of perceived racism on psychological well-being among Asian American Americans has been well documented (Gee et al., 2007; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Noh et al., 1999; Y. J. Wong et al., 2011). Researchers such as D. L. Lee and Ahn (2011) have called for an investigation into how Southeast Asian Americans experience racism and the relationship between racism and psychological well-being among a more diversified group of Asian Americans. This study examined the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students.

The research questions that guided the analysis of this research are: (a) Is there a relationship between the scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale and the scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) for Southeast Asian American college students? (b) How well does the combination of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale, gender, generational status, ethnicity, and self-reported college level status predict psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (D-H-S) for Southeast Asian American college students? and (c) Does the relationship between scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DLE) and of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) vary depending on the ethnicity for Southeast Asian American college students?

Participants

An initial email including an invitation to participate in the study was sent to personal and professional contacts, including identified student leaders of Southeast Asian and Asian American college clubs. A total of 459 individuals began the survey. Of the 459, 219 individuals left more than 50% of the questions unanswered. Of these 219 participants, eight responded “No” to the consent to participate question. The responses from these 219 individuals were eliminated from the final analysis. Additionally, data from two participants were removed from analyses because the participants identified their ethnicity as Hispanic. Furthermore, data from seven participants were removed from the analyses because the participants answered two or more of the validity items incorrectly. Of the remaining 231 participants, 30 individuals omitted one or more items in either the Depression-Happiness Scale or the Daily Life Experience subscale. Their data were excluded from the analysis, which left a final total of 201 (43.8%) participants. According to Treiman (2009), the most commonly used method for dealing with missing data is to drop all cases, thus, this conservative approach was used to analyze the data.

Age, Gender, Grade Level

This sample included 137 female (68.2%), 61 male (30.3%), and 3 other (1.5%) individuals. Of the sample, three individuals identified their gender as other, specifically as queer. Ages of participants were grouped into five categories: (a) 18–20 ($n = 56$), (b) 21–23 ($n = 69$), (c) 24–26 ($n = 33$), (d) 27–29 ($n = 15$), and (e) 30 and over ($n = 26$). The mean age was between the two groups 21–23 and 24–26 with a mean of 24.3 ($SD =$

1.32). The plurality of the participants (19.9%) reported being in their senior year of college. The remainder of the participants reported being: 10% freshmen, 10.4% sophomores, 17.4% juniors, 14.4% graduate or professional students, and 14.4% identified as other.

Ethnicity and Generational Status

A total of 174 (86.6%) of the participants identified their race or ethnicity as Southeast Asian or Southeast Asian American. The sample included Cambodian ($n = 10$), Laotian ($n = 8$), Hmong ($n = 106$), Vietnamese ($n = 33$), and other Southeast Asian American ($n = 17$). Other Southeast Asian American included ethnicities of Filipino American ($n = 11$) and Thai American ($n = 6$). Individuals were given the option of identifying with multiple ethnic groups, and several indicated ethnic group pairings including Vietnamese and Chiu Chow, Chinese, and Cambodian. A total of 25 (12.4%) of the participants identified their ethnicity as another category other than Southeast Asian American. These participants were grouped into “Other Asian American,” and included ethnicities such as Taiwanese, Chinese, Asian Indian, and Korean.

Participants were also asked to indicate their generational status. A total of 11.4% ($n = 23$) identified as first generation, 17.4% ($n = 35$) as 1.5 generation, 56.7% ($n = 114$) as second generation, 6.0% ($n = 12$) as 2.5 generation, and 5.6% ($n = 11$) as third generation or higher. Demographic characteristics of the participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 201)

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	137	68.2
Male	61	30.3
Other	3	1.5
<u>Age</u>		
18-20	56	27.9
21-23	69	34.3
24-26	33	16.4
27-29	15	7.5
30+	26	12.9
<u>Grade Level Status</u>		
Freshman	20	10.0
Sophomore	21	10.4
Junior	35	17.4
Senior	40	19.9
Graduate	29	14.5
Other	29	14.4
<u>Ethnicity</u>		
Cambodian	10	5.0
Laotian	8	4.0
Hmong	106	52.7
Vietnamese	33	16.4
Other Southeast Asian American	17	8.5
Other Asian American	25	12.4
<u>Generational Status</u>		
1 st	23	11.4
1.5	35	17.4
2 nd	114	56.7
2.5	12	6
3 rd or higher	11	5.5

Procedures

Recruitment consisted of sending emails to Asian American and Southeast Asian American organizations at varying universities in the U.S., and face-to-face meetings with college students. A description of the participant prerequisites (e.g., identifies as Southeast Asian American and is a current college student) and the general nature of the study were included in the emails. The study was titled *Perceived Racism as a Predictor of Psychological Well-Being in Southeast Asian American College Students* and participants were informed that the purpose was to collect data about their experiences of racism, how much those experiences bothered them, and their positive and negative affect. Individuals were also informed that they could choose to participate in a lottery drawing for a prize of \$50 gift card by submitting their email addresses following completing of the study.

The researcher conducted an a priori power analysis to determine the necessary participants needed for this study. Using the computer software, G*power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), 104 participants were needed to detect a medium effect size of 0.25 with .80 probability at an alpha level of $p < .05$. A total of 459 individuals registered to complete the surveys. After exploring the data, any individuals with missing data on the survey questions were deleted.

All participants were required to complete the study online. The study was hosted by Qualtrics Survey Software through Kent State University (<http://www.kent.qualtrics.com>). Qualtrics provided a URL and server space for the data to be stored temporarily until administration was completed. Prior to completing the

surveys, the participants were shown an informed consent statement and were asked to click a box to indicate their consent. Additionally, participants were notified that they could choose to skip any question that they did not wish to answer. An indicator was placed at the bottom of each page informing participants of their progress through the study (i.e., the number of measures remaining to be completed).

Participants were offered the opportunity to enter into a drawing for one of two \$50 Visa gift cards as compensation for participating in the study. Participants who were interested in participating in the raffle, whether they consented to the study or not, were asked to email Lynne Guillot Miller at lguillot@kent.edu with the subject titled: “Racism Study Raffle.”

Although there were strengths to the method of Internet data collection, such as obtaining a demographically diverse sample, this method may result in erroneous data if certain precautions were not taken (Schmidt, 1997). In order to control for the submission of inaccurate information, inattentiveness, and random responding, two items were included throughout the survey as checks on validity. Both items asked participants to provide specific responses to filler items. For example, the instructions for one validity item read “Please respond ‘never’ to this statement.” Participants’ responses were removed from the data analyses if the individual answered both of the validity items incorrectly.

Instruments

Two instruments were administered to participants, the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale of the Racial and Life Experiences Scale (RaLES; Harrell, 1997) and the

Depression-Happiness Scale (D-H-S; McGreal & Joseph, 1993). Additionally, a demographic questionnaire asked participants to specify their gender, specific ethnicity (i.e., Hmong, Vietnamese, Cambodian), age, reported college level status (freshmen undergraduate, sophomore undergraduate, junior undergraduate, senior undergraduate, in a master's degree program, in a doctoral or professional program, other), generational status (1st, 1.5, 2nd, 2.5, 3rd or higher), and sources of support (i.e., ethnic student clubs, educational programs).

Daily Life Experiences Subscale

The Racial and Life Experiences Scales (RaLES; Harrell, 1997) consist of five primary scales that were designed to measure multiple dimensions of racism experiences (e.g., direct, subtle). The five racism-related scales include Racism Experiences (EXP), Daily Life Experience (DLE), Perceived Influence of Group Impact (GRP), and Life Experiences and Stress (STR). The RaLES was intentionally developed to include multiple scales that can be used separately to assess different types of racism experiences (Harrell, 1997).

The study used the Daily Life Experience subscale (DLE) of the RaLES. According to Harrell (1997), the DLE assesses for microaggressions. The DLE consists of 20 items that assess how often an experience such as “being ignored, overlooked, or not given service,” “being stared at by strangers,” or “being asked to speak for or represent your entire racial/ethnic group” occurs due to one's race or ethnicity and how much the experience bothers the participant. Participants responded to the items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*once a week*) regarding the frequency of

microaggression experiences, and to a 5-point Likert scale about how much the experience bothers the participant ranging from (0) *never happened to me* to (5) *bothers me extremely*. The scale was scored by summing the item values in two ways. First, the scales were scored by summing the frequency of racism experience and how much it bothered the individual separately. Second, the scales were scored by summing the total of both the frequency of racism experience and how much it bothered the individual together. Total scores for the DLE range from 0 to 200. Higher scores on the subscale indicated that participants experienced a higher frequency of racism and were more bothered by experiences of microaggressions (Harrell, 1997). Total scores for both the frequency and bothersome as separate categories and as one total scale category were used for the study.

To assess the internal consistency of the microaggression score, Cronbach's alphas were computed. The initial development sample included 286 college and graduate students in the Los Angeles area. Harrell (1997) described this sample as a diverse group of students, however, only 26 of the 286 participants identified as Asian Pacific Islander. In the development sample, Harrell reported a coefficient alpha for the DLE as $\alpha = .94$. Racial and ethnic group differences were further tested in the development sample to inform construct validity. According to Harrell, the overall pattern of group differences indicate that participants of color experience more racism and are more aware of racism compared to whites, which suggested that the scales are measuring what they are intended to measure.

The validation sample included 126 undergraduate first-year college students of color, 14 of the participants identified as Asian Pacific Islanders. The coefficient alpha for the DLE in the validation sample was reported as $\alpha = .84$. Although the coefficient alphas for the DLE in the development and validation sample indicated the items formed a scale that with strong internal consistency, the representation of Asian Pacific Islanders in both samples may be too small to determine acceptable internal consistency in Asian Pacific Islanders.

Harrell, Merchant, and Young (1997) conducted three additional validation samples to further test the psychometric properties of selected RaLES scales, including the DLE. Sample 1 consisted of 187 in pre-freshman and pre-transfer students at a large west coast university. Also included in sample 1 were 16 Asian Pacific Islanders. The authors reported a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .89$ for the DLE. Sample 2 consisted of 150 undergraduate and graduate students, in which 43 or 28.9% of the participants identified as Asian Pacific Islanders. The Cronbach's alpha was reported as $\alpha = .94$. Sample 3 consisted of a national sample of 104 African American adults. The authors reported a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .90$.

Despite the small representative of Asian Americans in the development and validation samples of the DLE, Alvarez, Juang, and Liang (2006) reported a similar Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .95$ for the DLE in a sample of Asian American college students. More recently, in a study that involved a community sample of 199 Filipino Americans, Alvarez and Juang (2010) reported a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .95$ for the DLE.

The sample for the test-retest reliability was based on 50 participants from the development sample of 286 diverse undergraduate and graduate students (Harrell, 1997). The author reported test-retest correlation for the DLE over a period of four weeks as $r(50) = .93$, indicating that there is a strong test-retest reliability. Unfortunately, the author did not report the racial and ethnic representation in the test-retest reliability sample. This could possibly mean that Asian Pacific Islanders were not represented in the test-retest reliability sample.

Furthermore, Harrell (1997) examined construct validity in the DLE scores between two racism measures, the Racism Reaction Scale (RRS; Thompson, Neville, Weathers, Poston, & Atkinson, 1990) and two subscales (Institutional Discrimination and Interpersonal Discrimination) from the Quick Discrimination Inventory (QDI; Ponterotto, Burkard, & Rieger, 1995). Students ($n = 286$) participated in the development sample. The participants were grouped into two categories: White students ($n = 151$) and students of color ($n = 121$). The DLE overall was positively correlated with the RRS ($r = .56, p < .001$) and correlated even higher for students of color ($r = .57, p < .001$) when compared to white students ($r = .20, p < .001$) from the development sample. Another significant difference between White students and students of color is the magnitude of correlation between the DLE and Interpersonal Discrimination. The report showed a low positive correlation between the DLE and the Interpersonal Discrimination surveys for students of color ($r = .05, p < .05$) and a negative correlation for White students ($r = -.23, p < .05$). The pattern of correlations suggests that the DLE subscale measured intended constructs. However, the limitation lies in the sample of participants. There is a limited

representation of Asian Americans, and possibly even Southeast Asian Americans in the development and validation samples. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the items was $\alpha = .83$, which indicates that the items have good internal consistency.

The Depression-Happiness Scale

The Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS; McGreal & Joseph, 1993) was used to assess psychological well-being. The DHS consists of 25 items designed to assess both positive and negative affective states of psychological well-being. The DHS contains statements addressing positive affective states (12 items) and negative affective states (13 items). Sample items include "I felt sad" (negative item) and "I felt life had a purpose" (positive item). Respondents are asked to think about how they have felt in the past seven days and to rate the frequency of each item on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *Never* (0) to *Often* (3). Higher scores on the scale indicate greater frequency of feelings of positive thoughts and lower frequency of negative thoughts.

McGreal and Joseph developed the DHS to address the need for a multi-item measure of negative and positive feelings focused on the general population rather than a clinical population (McGreal & Joseph, 1993). The authors used data from 200 college students currently attending the University of Ulster in Ireland to assess whether the items that were summed to create the D-H-S score formed a reliable scale to capture a bipolar measure of depression and happiness. The authors reported the Cronbach alpha as $\alpha = .93$. Additionally, higher scores on the DHS were associated with lower scores on the Beck Depression Inventory ($r = -.75$), suggesting that higher scores on the D-H-S is associated with lower levels of depression.

Additionally, Chae and Foley (2010) conducted a study using the DHS in a sample of Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, and Japanese Americans. The authors included 334 participants that were recruited primarily from Asian churches and cultural organizations. Specifically, 29% of the participants were Chinese American, 47% were Korean American, and 24% were Japanese American. The mean age was 26.4 years. About 11% (10.8%) reported that they had completed only high school, 68% reported that they had completed college, and 21% were enrolled in or had completed graduate training. Sixty percent indicated that they were born in the United States, and 38% of the participants reported that they were born in Asia. According to the authors, coefficient alphas for the DHS were reported as $\alpha = .94$, $\alpha = .93$, and $\alpha = .80$ for Chinese American, Korean American, and Japanese American samples, respectively.

Walsh, Joseph, and Lewis (1995) reported a similar coefficient ($\alpha = .90$) with a diverse sample of employed adults. Test-retest reliabilities were reported to be adequate over a period of two-weeks: $r = .70$ (Lewis, McCollam, & Joseph, 2000) and $r = .55$ over a period of two years.

Scores on the DHS confirmed that the scale was able to capture individual differences in subjective well-being without floor or ceiling effects. In a different study that examined the convergent validity of the DHS with other measures of depressive symptomology, results suggested that the internal reliability of the DHS was compared favorably to three measures of depressive symptomology (Beck Depression Inventory, Self-Rating Depression Scale, and the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale; Joseph, Lewis, & Olsen, 1996).

To assess whether the DHS formed a reliable scale for the present study, Cronbach's alpha was computed. The alpha for the 25 items was $\alpha = .916$ indicating high reliability. According to Leech, Barrett, and Morgan (2008), items with moderately high to high correlations (e.g., .40+) will make a good component of a summed rating scale. In the current study, of the 25 items, all the items presented with high correlations.

Demographic Data Sheet

A brief questionnaire (see Appendix F) was developed for the present study to assess participant characteristics such as age, gender, college level status, and ethnicity. Participants were also asked to indicate their generational status, ranging from first to 2.5 or higher generation.

Data Analysis

Gathered data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS; Leech et al., 2008). Descriptive data analysis was used to analyze the demographic data collected. Frequencies and measures of central tendencies were calculated. Linear and multiple linear regression analyses were used to examine the relationship between seven predictor variables (perceived racism [frequency of racism and how much racism bothers], ethnicity, grade level status, age, generation status, and gender) and the criterion variable (psychological well-being). The analyses were considered significant at a p -value of .05 or better. These analyses provided insight into the complexity of perceived racism as a negative risk of psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students.

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses were tested to aid in the investigation of perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students.

Hypotheses One

Null Hypothesis 1: In the population, there will be no relationship between the scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale and the scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS).

Alternate Hypotheses 1: In the population, there will be a negative relationship between the scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale and the scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS).

Hypotheses Two

Null Hypotheses 2: In the population, the combination of scores on perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DHS), gender, ethnicity, generational status, and self-reported college level status will explain zero percent of the variability in scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS).

Alternate Hypotheses 2: In the population, the combination of scores on perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DLE), gender, ethnicity, generational status, and self-reported college level status will explain more than zero

percent of the variability in scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS).

Hypotheses Three

Null Hypotheses 3: In the population, the relationship between scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DLE) and scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) do not differ across ethnicity.

Alternate Hypotheses 3: In the population, the relationship between scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DLE) and scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) do differ across ethnicity.

To test the above hypotheses, two composite variables were created, including perceived racism and psychological well-being. Statistical examination of the normality of the distribution of each composite variable revealed that perceived racism and psychological well-being were normally distributed.

Summary

In this chapter, the research questions of the current study were presented and the study's design and method, correlational quantitative, was described. The researcher's preparation for the study was described followed by the sample size and characteristics, procedures used for data collection and data analysis, and a description of the instruments. Finally, a discussion of the hypothesis was offered. In Chapter 3, the findings of the current study are presented.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The previous chapter outlined the specific methodology of this study. This study investigated the relationship between perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experience subscale (DLE) and psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) among Southeast Asian American college students. The researcher used a correlational quantitative research design to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between the scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale and the scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) for Southeast Asian American college students?
2. How well does the combination of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale, gender, generational status, ethnicity, and self-reported college level status predict psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) for Southeast Asian American college students?
3. Does the relationship between scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DLE) and of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) vary depending on the ethnicity for Southeast Asian American college students?

This chapter outlines the results of the investigation. It is divided into three sections. Section one includes participant demographic. Section two includes a review of the statistical quantitative data analysis. Section three includes a summary of the findings.

Participants

Participants were 201 individuals who self-identified as Southeast Asian American or Asian American. The majority of participants in this sample were undergraduate students attending universities geographically located across the United States of America. The sample consisted of 201 (41%) individuals who completed all questions to the surveys. This sample included 137 female (68.2%), 61 male (30.3%), and 3 other (1.5%) college students. The age range for the participants was between 18 and 39 years of age. The majority of the participants were undergraduate students (57.7%), identified as Hmong (52.7%), and were 2nd generation (56.7%). A full representation of the participants' demographic data can be found in Table 1.

Missing Data

A total of 258 participants were excluded from analysis for missing data, failing to meet inclusion criteria. Participants who were excluded included those who did not consent to participate and did not identify as Southeast Asian or Southeast Asian American. According to Treiman (2009), the most commonly used method for dealing with missing data is to drop all cases. This procedure allowed for a conservative approach. Thus, to present an accurate picture of the statistics, the researcher chose to drop all cases with missing data points from the DHS and DLE surveys. This resulted in a total of 201 participants.

Instrument Subscales and Reliability

Chapter 2 presented the initial validity and reliability scores established by McGreal and Joseph (1993) for the *Depression-Happiness Scale* (DHS) and by Harrell (1997) for the *Daily Life Experience* (DLE) subscale. The DHS is comprised of 25 items designed to assess both positive and negative affective states of psychological well-being. Of the 25 items, 12 statements assess positive affective states and 13 items assess negative affective states. To calculate a composite score for each participant, the negative affective statements were recoded (e.g., *Never* = 3, *Rarely* = 2, *Sometimes* = 1, *Often* = 0). Table 2 presents a summary of the reliability for the DHS and the DLE. Reliability scores for the instruments in this study were in the range consistent with the initial reliability scores established by the authors of the instrument.

Table 2

Reliability for Depression-Happiness Scale and Daily Life Experience subscale (N = 201)

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>
DLE	84.59	37.67	.96
DHS	46.49	11.83	.92

Statistical Results

All of the hypotheses were analyzed using regression models. This statistical technique was chosen because it allows the researcher to simultaneously analyze the impact of one or several independent variables on a dependent variable, while controlling

for the impact of every other independent variable on the dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). In the present study, regression analysis allowed for examination of whether psychological well-being was significantly associated with perceived racism and several other demographic variables including gender (0 = female, 1 = male), generational status (0 = 1st, 1 = 1.5, 2 = 2nd, 3 = 2.5 or higher), grade level (0 = undergraduate, 1 = graduate, 2 = other), age, and ethnicity. Ethnicity was dummy coded before analyzing the contribution of demographic variables to psychological well-being. Converting categorical variables into dummy variables allows for studying the effect of each, controlling for the other within a regression framework (Treiman, 2009). From the data, seven ethnic groups emerged. Of the seven groups, six were applicable to the study due to their Southeast Asian American status. The other group was titled as “Other Asian American.” This group was used as the comparison group. The other groups were converted into a set of six dichotomous variables, one for each ethnicity, with each variable assigned 1 for persons with that ethnicity and scored 0 otherwise.

The dependent variable, or scores on the DHS, created for this model was calculated as a composite score of 25 items pertaining to positive and negative emotions among subjects. The negative emotions were reverse scored (*Never* = 3, *Rarely* = 2, *Sometimes* = 1, *Often* = 0). The scores ranged from 19 to 68. A score of 19 represented the lowest self-reported experience of psychological well-being.

Perceived racism was calculated using the DLE scale. The scale included two sets of responses including how often participants experienced racism and how much the racism experiences bothered them. A composite score was calculated for the frequency

and bothersome responses separately, in addition to a total score by combining the totals of both sets of responses. In this study, the scores ranged from 4 to 130. A score of 4 represented the lowest self-reported experience of perceived racism.

Power Analysis

G*Power (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996) was used to conduct a power analysis for the study. In order to detect a Pearson's correlation of medium effect size of .25 with an alpha of $p = .05$ and power = .80 with 10 predictor variables (all control variables plus the ethnicity categories not including other Asian Americans) a sample size of 118 is required. Accordingly, the current sample of 201 was sufficient to detect a medium effect size, but may be insufficiently powered to detect a small effect.

Results for Hypotheses One

In the population, there will be no relationship between the scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale and the scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS).

A Pearson's correlation was computed to assess the correlation between scores of the DLE as two separate scales, frequency of racism experiences, $r(201) = -.123, p = .041$ and how much the racism experiences bothered the participants, $r(201) = -.032, p = .324$. There was a statistically significant inverse relationship between the frequency of racism experiences and psychological well-being. In other words, participants who reported more experiences of racism tend to report lower levels of psychological well-being. The correlation between how much the racism experiences bothered the

participants in the sample and their psychological well-being was not statistically significant. The results of correlations can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Psychological Well-Being (DHS), Frequency and Bothersome of Racism (N = 201)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Frequency	Bother
DHS	42.66	11.31	-.123*	-.032
Frequency of racism	29.41	16.45		.574**
Bother of racism	55.18	25.73		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

A simultaneous multiple regression was conducted to assess if the frequency of racism experiences and if the racist experiences bothered the participants predicted psychological well-being. The model was not statistically significant. The results of the multiple regression assessing the impact of perceived racism toward psychological well-being can be found in Table 4. Assumptions of linearity and normal distributions were checked and met. Scores for the frequency ($M = 29.41$, $SD = 16.45$) and how much it bothered ($M = 55.18$, $SD = 25.73$) scales of the DLE, or perceived racism did not significantly predict scores on the DHS ($M = 42.66$, $SD = 11.31$), or psychological well-being, $F(2, 200) = 1.72$, $p = .18$, adjusted $R^2 = .017$.

Table 4

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Scores on Perceived Racism, Frequency and Bothersome (DLE) Subscale Predicting Scores on Psychological Well-Being (DHS) (N = 201)

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Frequency of Racism	-.107	.059	-.156	.072
Bothersome of Racism	.025	.038	.057	.509
Constant	44.42	1.961		

Note. $R^2 = .017$; $F(2, 200) = 1.742$, $p = .178$

Results for Hypothesis Two

In the population, the combination of scores on perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DHS), gender, ethnicity, generational status, and self-reported college level status will explain more than zero percent of the variability in scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS).

The assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were checked and met. The results can be found in Figure 1. The scatterplot matrix showed that the independent variables were generally linearly related to the dependent variable of psychological well-being, meeting this assumption.

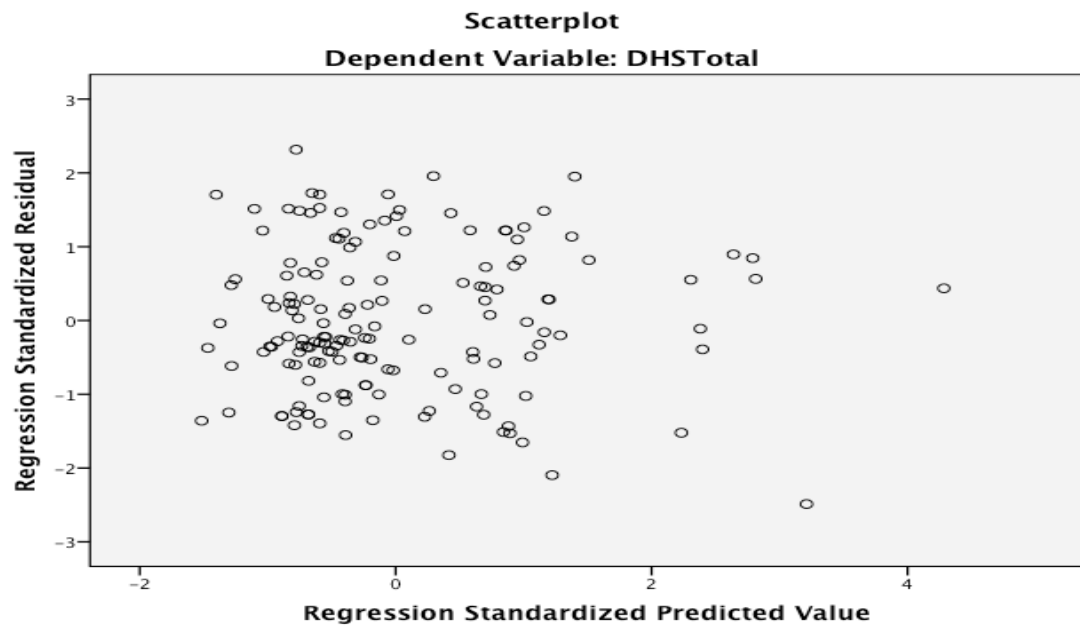


Figure 1. Scatterplot Matrix Linearity and Homoscedasticity Assumption

The other assumptions were checked in the residual scatterplot, which indicated that the errors were normally distributed, the variances of the residuals were constant, and the residual was relatively uncorrelated with the linear combination of predictors. The results of these assumptions can be found in Figure 2.

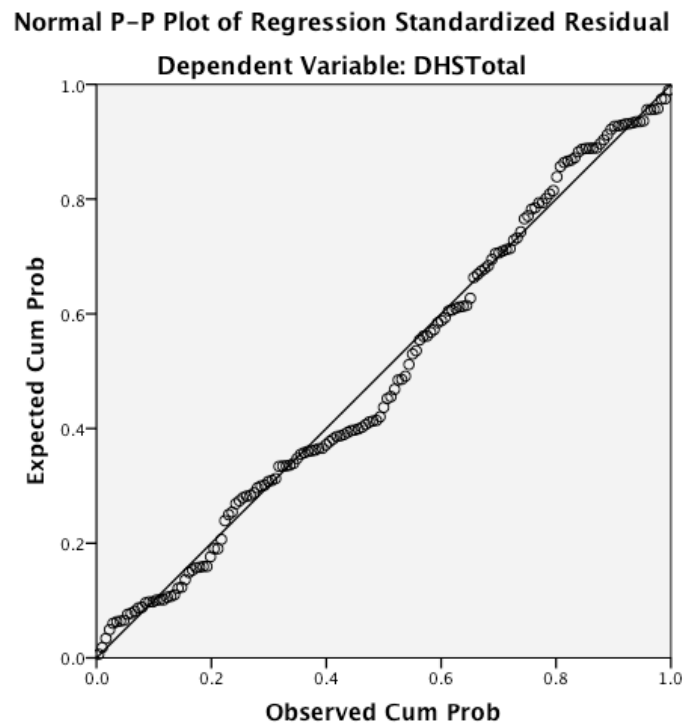


Figure 2. Residual Scatterplot of Normally Distributed Errors

Multicollinearity was also checked by analyzing the Tolerance and VIF values. Results can be found in Table 5. Due to the Tolerance values being close to 1 for all except frequency of racism and how much the racism experiences bothered the participants, multicollinearity was not a concern in the analysis for most of the independent variables.

Table 5

Collinearity Statistics of Independent Variables (N = 201)

Regression Model	Tolerance
Frequency of Racism	.647
Bothersome of Racism	.648
Cambodian American	.943
Laotian American	.952
Vietnamese American	.937
Gender	.970
Generational Status	.980
College Grade Level	.897

A simultaneous multiple regression was conducted to determine the best linear combination of gender, ethnicity, college grade level, generational status, and scores on the frequency and bother scales of the DLE subscale for predicting psychological well-being. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results from the overall regression equation were statistically significant, $F(9, 158) = 2.333, p = .017$. The model summary from the regression analyses gives the R (.351) and adjusted $R^2 = .071$. Thus, this model showed that the set of predictor variables accounted for 12.4% of the variance in the dependent variable, psychological well-being, with a small effect size (adjusted $R^2 = .071$). This indicates that 12.4% of the variance in psychological well-being was explained by the model. The beta weight for the predictor variables varied in both the positive and the

negative direction. The results of the regression predicting psychological well-being from demographic variables and perceived racism can be found in Table 7.

Table 7

Results of Multiple Regression Predicting Psychological Well-Being From Scores on the DLE subscale and Demographic Variables (N = 201)

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Frequency of Racism	-.093	.063	-.142	.14
Bothersome of Racism	.003	.040	.007	.937
Cambodian/Cambodian American	1.272	4.068	.025	.755
Laotian/Laotian American	-2.739	4.315	-.050	.526
Vietnamese/Vietnamese American	-.506	2.342	-.017	.829
Other Southeast Asian American	9.729	3.678	.210	.009
Gender	5.377	1.866	.224	.005
Generational Status	.628	1.170	.042	.592
College Grade Level	-.275	1.229	-.018	.823

Note. $R = .351$; $R^2 = .124$; $F(9, 158) = 2.33$, $p = .017$

Results for Hypothesis Three

In the population, the relationship between scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DLE) and scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) do differ across ethnicity.

In this study, Southeast Asian American college students' scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale were statistically different. In SPSS, the file was split by ethnicity, and then correlations were conducted to analyze the relationships between scores on the DHS, psychological well-being and the two subscales of the DLE, frequency and bothersome of racism experiences.

Results of the correlation differed among the ethnic groups. Two ethnic groups, Laotian Americans and Hmong Americans, had a statistically significant correlation between frequency of racism experiences and psychological well-being. The relationship was a negative relationship, indicating that less experiences of racism were associated with more positive psychological well-being. Table 8 provides the bivariate correlations between the frequency and bothersome of racism experiences and psychological well-being for each ethnic group.

Table 8

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations of the Frequency and Bothersome of Racism and Psychological Well-Being

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Frequency of Racism	Bothersome of Racism	DHS
Cambodian Americans (<i>n</i> = 10)					
Frequency of Racism	40.40	17.86	-	.751*	.152
Bothersome of Racism	64.9	25.08	.751*	-	-.303
DHS	40.75	10.05	.152	.612	-
Laotian American (<i>n</i> = 8)					
Frequency of Racism	25.37	16.42	-	.624	-.794*
Bothersome of Racism	54.13	29.22	.624	-	-.303
DHS	40.75	10.05	-.794*	-.303	-
Hmong American (<i>n</i> = 106)					
Frequency of Racism	28.75	16.66	-	.542**	-.225*
Bothersome of Racism	54.49	26.29	.542**	-	-.152
DHS	42.10	11.71	-.225*	-.152	-
Vietnamese American (<i>n</i> = 33)					
Frequency of Racism	32.52	19.06	-	.635**	.212
Bothersome of Racism	52.27	26.73	.635**	-	-.013
DHS	41.48	8.40	.212	-.013	-
Other Southeast Asian American (<i>n</i> = 17)					
Frequency of Racism	26.47	10.78	-	.577*	-.095
Bothersome of Racism	57.41	27.20	.577*	-	.251
DHS	48.18	13.70	-.095	.251	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Several simultaneous multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine if ethnicity and perceived racism (frequency and bothersome of racism experiences) were predictive of psychological well-being for the entire sample. The results of the regressions assessing the interaction between ethnicity and the two measures of racism combined with the demographic factors can be found in Tables 9 - 14 at the end of the

explanation. An interaction variable was created for each ethnicity and perceived racism (frequency and bothersome of racism). The interaction variables were combined with gender, college grade level, and generational status as the independent or predictor variables. Scores of psychological well-being as measured by the DHS was the dependent variable.

The results of the regressions assessing the interaction between all of the ethnic groups and the two measures of perceived racism, gender, generational status and college grade level can be found in Table 9. The model summary from this regression analysis showed that the set of predictor variables accounted for significant variance in the dependent variable, psychological well-being, with a medium effect size ($R = .44$). The $R^2 = .193$ with the adjusted $R^2 = .096$, which indicated that 9.6% of the variance in psychological well-being was explained by the model. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results from the overall regression equation were statistically significant, $F(17, 158) = 1.988, p = .016$.

Table 9

Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS from Ethnic Groups, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Ethnic Identity and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables (N = 174)

Variable	B	SE B	B	p
Frequency of Racism	-.136	.075	-.207	.072
Bothersome of Racism	-.004	.048	-.010	.933
Gender	5.490	1.937	.229	.005
Generational Status	.782	1.193	.051	.513
College Grade Level	.292	1.260	.019	.817
Cambodian American	-11.079	10.846	-.215	.308
Hmong American	2.333	9.054	.043	.797
Vietnamese American	-5.197	5.309	-.176	.329
Other Southeast Asian American	4.570	9.283	.099	.622
CambodianxFrequency	-.456	.337	-.388	.178
CambodianxBothersome	.478	.226	.656	.036
HmongxFrequency	-.391	.340	-.218	.253
HmongxBothersome	.087	.199	.093	.663
VietnamesexFrequency	.340	.153	.444	.028
VietnamesexBothersome	-.119	.110	-.238	.282
Other SEAxFrequency	-.072	.374	-.044	.848
Other SEAxBothersome	.108	.155	.160	.489

Note. $R = .440$; $R^2 = .193$; adjusted $R^2 = .096$; $F(17, 158) = 1.988$, $p = .016$

In the simultaneous multiple regression model that accounted only for Cambodian Americans, the regression equation was statistically significant, $F(8, 158) = 2.140, p = .035$. The model accounted for 5.5% of the variance in psychological well-being (adjusted $R^2 = .055$) with a medium effect size ($R = .32$). Gender ($\beta = .228, p = .005$) and the interaction between identifying as Cambodian American and how much racism bothered the participants ($\beta = .653, p = .040$) significantly contributed to the model. The results can be found in Table 10.

Table 10

Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS from Cambodian American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Cambodian American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Frequency of Racism	-.095	.064	-.145	.137
Bothersome	-.002	.041	-.006	.954
Gender	5.458	1.913	.228	.005
Generational Status	.669	1.180	.044	.572
College Grade Level	.384	1.216	.025	.753
Cambodian American	-10.208	10.954	-.198	.353
CambodianxFrequency	-.495	.342	-.421	.150
CambodianxBothersome	.476	2.30	.653	.04

Note. $R = .32$; $R^2 = .102$; adjusted $R^2 = .055$; $F(8, 158) = 2.14, p = .035$

Results for the simultaneous multiple regression that accounted for the Hmong American participants can be found in Table 11. Within the Hmong American sample, the overall model was not statistically significant, $F(8, 158) = 1.917, p = .061$. The model summary table gives $R = .305, R^2 = .093$, with an adjusted $R^2 = .044$. Of all the predictor variables, only gender ($\beta = .212, p = .008$) significantly contributed to the model.

Table 11

Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Hmong American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Hmong American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables

Variable	B	SE B	B	p
Frequency of Racism	-.090	.064	-.138	.159
Bothersome	.011	.041	.025	.798
Gender	5.205	1.896	.217	.007
Generational Status	.725	1.177	.048	.539
College Grade Level	.739	1.211	.049	.542
Hmong American	3.957	9.20	.072	.668
HmongxFrequency	-.494	.333	-.275	.140
HmongxBothersome	.152	.173	.163	.378

Note. $R = .305; R^2 = .079$; adjusted $R^2 = .044; F(8, 158) = 1.466, p = .174$

Similarly to the Hmong American sample, the regression model for the Laotian American sample was also not statistically significant, $F(8, 158) = 1.846, p = .073$ in

predicting psychological well-being. The results showed $R = .299$, $R^2 = .090$, and the adjusted $R^2 = .041$. In addition, only gender ($\beta = .206$, $p = .011$) significantly contributed to the model. The statistical analysis indicated that identifying as female was positively associated with psychological well-being. Results can be found in Table 12.

Table 12

Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Laotian American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Laotian American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables

Variable	B	SE B	B	p
Frequency of Racism	-.073	.107	-.112	.494
Bothersome	.053	.070	.127	.445
Gender	4.939	1.923	.206	.011
Generational Status	.568	1.184	.038	.632
College Grade Level	.137	1.231	.009	.912
Laotian American	3.788	4.487	.159	.400
LaotianxFrequency	-.063	.131	-.108	.631
LaotianxBothersome	-.059	.085	-.179	.492

Note. $R = .299$; $R^2 = .090$; adjusted $R^2 = .041$; $F(8, 158) = 1.846$, $p = .073$

As for the Vietnamese American sample, the overall model was statistically significant, $F(8, 158) = 2.481$, $p = .015$ in predicting psychological well-being. The $R = .342$ and the model accounted for 7.0% of variance in psychological well-being (adjusted $R^2 = .070$) with a medium effect size ($R = .342$). Of the predictor variables, gender ($\beta =$

.243, $p = .003$), the frequency of racism ($\beta = -.280$, $p = .009$), and the interaction between identifying as Vietnamese American and the frequency of racism ($\beta = .514$, $p = .011$) significantly contributed to the model. Results can be found in Table 13.

Table 13

Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Vietnamese American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Vietnamese American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables

Variable	B	SE B	B	p
Frequency of Racism	-.183	.070	-.280	.009
Bothersome	.039	.044	.094	.368
Gender	5.821	1.90	.243	.003
Generational Status	.858	1.167	.057	.463
College Grade Level	.417	1.20	.027	.729
Vietnamese American	-4.668	5.234	-.158	.374
Vietnamese \times Frequency	.393	.152	.514	.011
Vietnamese \times Bothersome	-.167	.109	-.335	.127

Note. $R = .342$; $R^2 = .117$; adjusted $R^2 = .070$; $F(8, 158) = 2.481$, $p = .015$

The final simultaneous multiple regression model examined if the combination of the frequency of racism experiences, how much the racism experiences bothered the participants, gender, college grade level, and generational status predicted psychological well-being in the Other Southeast Asian American sample. The model was statistically significant, $F(8, 158) = 2.627$, $p = .009$ and accounted for 7.8% of the variance in

psychological well-being (adjusted $R^2 = .078$), $R^2 = .125$ with a medium effect size ($R = .353$). Only gender ($\beta = .227$, $p = .004$) significantly contributed to the model. Results indicated that identifying as female was positively associated with psychological well-being. Results can be found in Table 14.

Table 14

Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting DHS From Other Southeast Asian American, Perceived Racism, Interaction of Other Southeast Asian American and Perceived Racism (Frequency of Racism and Bothersome of Racism), and Demographic Variables

Variable	B	SE B	B	p
Frequency of Racism	-.085	.062	-.129	.174
Bothersome	-.004	.041	-.009	.925
Gender	5.387	1.854	.225	.004
Generational Status	.604	1.159	.04	.603
College Grade Level	-.611	1.228	-.04	.619
Other Southeast Asian American	6.297	9.195	.136	.494
Other SEAxFrequency	-.092	.332	-.056	.782
Other SEAxBothersome	.184	.139	.273	.186

Note. $R = .353$; $R^2 = .125$; adjusted $R^2 = .078$; $F(8, 158) = 2.672$, $p = .009$

Summary

This chapter reviewed the findings from the quantitative analysis of the investigation on how scores on the Daily Life Experience subscale, perceived racism predicts scores on the Depression-Happiness Scale, psychological well-being among the

participants, Southeast Asian American college students. Participants who reported greater experiences with racism contributed to predicting lower levels of psychological well-being scores on the DHS. In addition, when combining the demographic variables including gender, generational status, ethnicity, and college grade level with perceived racism, the model was statistically significant in predicting psychological well-being.

The next chapter explores these findings, and relates them to the existing literature regarding the benefits and limitations of perceived racism, psychological well-being, and Southeast Asian Americans. The limitations of this research are also presented. Finally, the researcher discusses the implications of perceived racism and psychological well-being for the field of counselor education and clinical practice.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This study examined the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students. The purpose of this study was to give educators and mental health professionals a better understanding of how Southeast Asian American college students' psychological well-being may be influenced by their perceptions of experiencing racism. Understanding the relationship between these variables in this specific population may enable mental health professionals to successfully assist Southeast Asian American college student through the painful experience of racism. The findings of this research are intended to help mental health counselors and educators to understand the complexities of the Southeast Asian American college students beyond the common practice of aggregating the pan of Asian American ethnicities into one category.

This chapter starts with a summary of the major findings for each research question, followed by a section discussing the limitations. Then, the findings of this study are related to the current literature on racism and psychological well-being in the broader Southeast Asian American college student population. Finally, the implications for practice and recommendations for future research are presented.

Summary of Results

Although experiences of perceived racism have been shown to strongly predict Asian American college students' psychological well-being including depression (Huynh et al., 2011; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Noh & Kaspar, 2003), anxiety (Pieterse et al., 2010;

Wei et al., 2010), and suicidal ideation (Y. J. Wong et al., 2011), few empirical studies have examined whether the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being is also significant in the lives of Southeast Asian American college students. Because this study was among the first to examine the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students, it was important to assess perceived racism towards the participants on both the frequency of racism experiences and how much the racism experiences bothered the participants separately. The results of the present study support the hypothesis that there is a relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian Americans. More specifically, participants who reported more frequent experiences with racism also reported lower levels of psychological well-being. Unlike the frequent experiences of racism, there was no statistically significant relationship between psychological well-being and reports of how much the experiences of racism bothered the participant. Furthermore, when scores of both frequency and the bother of racism experiences were combined to predict psychological well-being, the regression model was not significant. In other words, in this sample, perceived racism did not contribute to predicting psychological well-being.

However, as hypothesized, when perceived racism was added with other demographic factors, including gender, generational status, ethnicity, and college grade level, the multiple regression model was statistically significant. These factors contributed to explaining 12.4% of the variance in predicting psychological well-being in the present sample. Despite the marginal effects of these results, initial evidence supports

a relationship among the demographic factors, frequency, and bothersome of racism experiences, ethnicity, and psychological well-being. These findings suggest that a more holistic model that addresses unique factors of Southeast Asian American college students need to be considered in future studies.

Finally, differences existed within the ethnic groups when considering their experiences of perceived racism and psychological well-being. The results of the correlational analysis suggested a significant relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being in three groups, Cambodian Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and Other Southeast Asian Americans. Results also suggested that identifying as female was positively associated with psychological well-being in the sample, whereas reports of more experiences of racism were associated with lower levels of psychological well-being.

Research Question 1

Is there a relationship between the scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale and the scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) for Southeast Asian American college students?

In the present study, the frequency of racism reported by the participants was correlated with psychological well-being. This finding suggests that participants who reported more experiences with racism were more likely to experience negative levels of psychological well-being. This finding is consistent with previous research. Perceived racism has been related to lowered hope (Adams et al., 2003) and to higher depression,

anxiety, and psychosomatic symptoms for Vietnamese participants (Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Solheim, 2004).

Although the relationship between frequency of racism experiences and psychological well-being were statistically significant, the level of how much the racism experiences bothered the participants did not appear to have a statistically significant correlation with psychological well-being. This unexpected finding could be due to how Asian American college students cope. Evidence suggested that Asian American college students are more likely to use avoidant coping strategies in dealing with personal challenges (Chang, 1996; Jung, 1995). It could be that the participants in the current research cope with racism experiences by denying how negatively the experiences impact their psychological well-being. Or it is also possible that those with low psychological well-being perceived more experiences as racism. Noh et al. (1999) reported that Southeast Asian immigrants reported racism experiences as “a fact of life, [and] avoid it or ignore it” (p. 202). The study was completed in Canada, and replication of these findings with U.S. Southeast Asian American college students is needed.

Furthermore, the frequency of racism experiences and how much those experiences bothered the participants were not predictive of psychological well-being among the participants. Additionally, Southeast Asian American college students view the frequency of racism experiences as more likely to be related to feeling negative emotions such as feeling tired or unhappy, but these concerns did not predict their psychological well-being. These unexpected findings may be partially attributed to other

variables not tested, such as social support or coping (R. M. Lee, 2003; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009).

The results of the present study are somewhat conflicting with previous research. Other studies have shown that the frequency of racism reported impacts Asian American college students negatively (Chae & Foley, 2010; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Yoo et al., 2009). In contrast to the results of the relationship between frequency of racism reported and psychological well-being, the levels of how much racism bothered the participants were not significantly correlated with psychological well-being. Because this study was among the first to examine the role of racism in Southeast Asian American college students' psychological well-being, several factors that may have mediated this finding were not considered when conducting the present study. Thus, it is important to consider what may have contributed to these statistically insignificant findings.

One possible factor could be the lack of differentiation of racism in the current study. In the current study, the DLE subscale was purported to measure individual acts of racism. According to Tawa, Suyemoto, and Roemer (2012), Asian American college students' self-reported level of self-esteem was different depending on the type of racism they experienced. The researchers differentiated between two types of racism, interpersonal or mistreatment and discrimination from other individuals, and structural racism or institutional policies that disadvantages Asian Americans. The researchers reported that Asian American college students reported lower levels of self-esteem if they perceived more experiences with personal racism; however, experiences of structural racism led to a higher collective self-esteem. In other words, Asian Americans who

reported experiences with policies that discriminated against Asian Americans as a group, reported a greater bond or connection with their ethnic identity as an Asian American. This stronger sense of belonging in their ethnic identity may have contributed to their resiliency in feeling less negatively when faced with institutional racism. In future studies on racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students, it may be helpful to differentiate the type of racism the participants experience.

It may also be helpful to explore the level of social support and how that mediates the relationship between racism and psychological well-being. In a study of Asian American college students, Ayres and Mahat (2012) reported that both optimism and social support were positively related to positive health practices. More specifically, participants reported that receiving social support such as intimacy, social integration and assistance positively influenced their practice of exercising, relaxation, and negatively influenced their substance use. In addition, the researchers reported that feeling optimistic predicted positive health practices. In future studies, a more thorough exploration of the level of social support may provide a greater understanding of the relationship between racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students.

Similarly to previous research, findings from this study suggest that there is a relationship between racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students. For instance, participants who had high scores on perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale also scored lower on psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS; Hwang

& Goto, 2009). More specifically, those who reported more experiences of racism also experienced more negative affect and cognitions such as feeling sad or hopelessness. This finding corresponds with the finding of the current study. Southeast Asian American college students who reported more frequent experiences with racism also reported feeling more negatively. Hwang and Goto (2009) found that higher discrimination scores were associated with higher psychological distress and higher suicidal ideation. The researchers also noted that those participants who were exposed to discrimination were 1.62 times (CI – 1.24, 2.12) at greater risk for clinical depression ($p < .01$).

Research Question 2

How well does the combination of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale, gender, generational status, ethnicity, and self-reported college level status predict psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) for Southeast Asian American college students?

In the present study, the demographic variables, gender, generational status, self-reported college grade level (undergraduate and graduate), and ethnicity, in addition to the scores of both the frequency and bother of racism experiences on the Daily Life Experiences subscale, were included as part of a multiple regression analysis model to analyze for its contribution towards predicting psychological well-being among the participants. The findings of this study provide support for this hypothesis. Specifically, the combination of gender, generational status, self-reported college grade level, ethnicity, and perceived racism significantly predicted psychological well-being. These

demographic factors were important to consider if it contributed to the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being in this sample. Generational status, self-reported college grade level, gender, and ethnicity are identifiable components of Southeast Asian American college students. Generational status provides additional information on the participant's length of stay in the U.S. This information may be helpful to assist in assessing the level of psychological trauma from forced migration, adjustment to the American culture, or strength of identification with ethnic group membership. College grade level may be helpful in addressing whether one is successfully finishing college. It is even more important to consider when specifically recruiting college students in hopes to determine whether the grade level is a factor in one's ability to cope with the impact of racism. This information may be helpful to determine when to focus interventions to work in retaining Southeast Asian American college students. Additionally, collecting information on gender is helpful in providing more in-depth insight to how gender in Southeast Asian American college students play a role in the relationship between racism and psychological well-being. This information can also be helpful in tailoring effective interventions that are gender specific to address the wide needs of the spectrum in Southeast Asian American college students.

The existing body of literature about the relationship between gender, generational status, ethnicity, self-reported college status and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students is scant. As such, there is very little evidence that supports a significant link between these variables. Importantly, however, the present study is a first step towards suggesting that the above demographic variables

combined with the scores of the Daily Life Experience subscale may be related to psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale.

Gender and psychological well-being. Prior researchers have reported that gender discrimination is associated with adverse psychological consequences such as low self-esteem and reduced assertiveness in African American population (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Fischer, 1996; Greer, 2011). In the current study, gender was statistically significant in contributing to predicting psychological well-being in all of the ethnic groups. Specifically, in the current sample, participants who identified as female reported greater levels of psychological well-being. Cress and Ikeda (2003) also reported that the relationship between perceptions of discrimination on campus and reported occurrence of depression was stronger for Asian American men than for their female counterparts. It could be that in the past decade, Southeast Asian American women generally experienced increased occupational and educational opportunities, where men have experienced less mobility in employment and in education (Chung, Bemak, & Kagawa-Singer, 1998; Ngo & Lee, 2007). These factors may be helpful to explore in future research focused on Southeast Asian American college students. By understanding how Southeast Asian American male college students perceive racism and if it impacts their psychological well-being, in addition to how Southeast Asian American female college students cope with racism, interventions can be developed to address these concerns.

Generational status and psychological well-being. Unlike the topic of gender and psychological well-being, there is a dearth of research on the relationship between

generational status and psychological well-being. According to previous studies, Asian Americans experience a number of stressful issues including their minority status, immigrant status, and refugee experiences (Atkinson & Gim, 1989; Uba, 1994). Furthermore, in a convenience sample of 50 first-generation Hmong college students, 7% of these students exhibited frequent crying spells, 10% had sleeping disorders, 17% had a pessimistic outlook about their future, 25% felt downtrodden some or most of the time, and 37% noted that their situation was hopeless some or most of the time (S. Lee, 2007). Gormley (2010) confirmed that S. Lee's (2007) sample displayed common factors of high suicidal risk. However, in the current study, generational status was not a statistically significant contributor in predicting psychological well-being in the sample.

Because of the findings from previous research, it was unexpected to find that generational status was not statistically significant in contributing to predicting psychological well-being. Of the participants, 11.4% identified as first-generation, 17.4% as 1.5 generation, and the majority as second generation (56.7%). One apparent concern is the limited knowledge of how Southeast Asian Americans perceive psychological well-being. S. Lee and Chang (2011) reported that the mental health status is still unknown within the Hmong American population. To further complicate the matter, definitive concepts that explain mental illness is lacking within Southeast Asian American communities (Culhane-Pera, 2003). These issues need further investigation to provide a more complete understanding of psychological well-being within a cultural context for Southeast Asian Americans.

Another possible concern that could have impacted the results of the current study regarding generational status is that second-generation Southeast Asian American college students in this sample are more removed from feeling the stress of the refugee experiences of their parents. When Vietnamese refugees were compared to an Australian-born sample, Silove, Steel, Bauman, Chey, and McFarlane (2007) reported that due to their refugee experience, the Vietnamese were more at risk for higher rates of mental health disorders. Because more than half of the sample in the current study was born in the U.S., their experiences as children of refugee parents are obviously different. For future research, it may be helpful to explore how second-generation Southeast Asian Americans view their generational status and the refugee status of their parents to discover what kind of relationship exists between this and psychological well-being and perceived racism.

College grade level and psychological well-being. In the present study, college grade level did not significantly contribute to predicting psychological well-being. This finding was surprising due to previous research. According to Cress and Ikeda (2003), identifying as a freshman in college was the strongest predictor of depression for Asian American students who perceived more discrimination and hostility on campus. More importantly, a negative campus climate has detrimental affects on Asian American students' emotional and psychological state (Cress & Ikeda, 2003). Furthermore, minority college students who reported more social isolation in school, reported lower academic interest (Walton & Cohen, 2007). However, Chung and Bemak (2002) reported that Laotian men perceived their stress was from a low level of English

proficiency. Within the current sample, the participants are probably more advanced in their English skills compared to the community sample of Laotian men. Exploring academic achievement as an additional factor to college grade level and psychological well-being may provide more information. Although in the present study, college grade level did not provide significant insights, it warrants additional research. The drop out rate for Southeast Asian American college students is much higher compared to other Asian American college students (Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, 2009). This may be due to factors such as negative campus climate or not feeling a sense of belonging to the university campus. Chhuon et al., (2010) reported that Cambodian American college students who received multiple sources of support for academic success from their institution perceived this support important for their success. These multiple sources of support included academic tutoring, educational programs such as Upward Bound and Educational Opportunity Program, and cultural student organizations (Chhuon & Hudley, 2008).

Despite not finding the demographic factors as singularly significant contributors to predicting psychological well-being, when combined together with perceived racism, the results of the present study support the inclusion of the demographic variables in future models of perceived racism and psychological well-being. These findings suggest that targeting these unique factors of Southeast Asian American college students may help increase psychological well-being. By further understanding the relationship between these variables and its impact on psychological well-being, future interventions can target Southeast Asian Americans' perceptions of racism and how that might relate to

unique demographic factors. These targeted responses may help in increasing their level of positive psychological well-being.

Research Question 3

Does the relationship between scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences subscale (DLE) and of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) vary depending on the ethnicity for Southeast Asian American college students?

In the present study, the statistical findings supported the hypothesis that the relationship between psychological well-being and perceived racism varied depending on the ethnicity for Southeast Asian American college students. The research question was explored by creating an interaction variable between ethnic group and scores of the DLE (frequency of racism and how much the racism experiences bothered the participants). The interaction variables including the demographic factors (generational status, gender, and college grade level), the ethnic groups and perceived racism (without the interaction) were inputted as the independent variables. Scores of the DHS were inputted as the dependent variable. Next, several simultaneous multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine if the independent variables contributed to predicting psychological well-being in the sample. The first multiple regression included all of the ethnic groups in one model, and then the other four multiple regressions were performed to specifically analyze each ethnic group (Cambodian American, Hmong American, Laotian American, and Other Southeast Asian American) separately.

From the data analysis, four of the six regression models were statistically significant. When analyzing all of the ethnic groups together, 19.5% of the variance in psychological well-being can be predicted from the independent variables. The other three statistically significant models included Cambodian American, Vietnamese American, and Other Southeast Asian American. The findings from each of these models suggested that 5.5%, 34.2%, and 12.5% of the variance in psychological well-being can be predicted from the independent variables, respectively. These findings add support to previous research on the relationship between racism and psychological well-being among Asian Americans. For example, Kim (2002) noted that Cambodian youth were less successful in adjusting to American school environments compared to Vietnamese and Lao youth. Kim noted that this struggle is due to their perception that they do not belong to the dominant White culture. This sense of not belonging due to an awareness of being a perpetual foreigner has been linked to depression and lowered hope and life satisfaction (Huynh et al., 2011).

As for the Vietnamese American and Other Southeast Asian American samples, the findings were consistent with previous studies. Lam (2007) reported that Vietnamese Americans who reported perceived racism also reported higher depression and anxiety. Additionally, evidence has linked self-reported racism to depression (Huynh et al., 2011; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Noh & Kaspar, 2003), anxiety (Pieterse et al., 2010; Wei et al., 2010) and suicidal ideation (Wong et al., 2011) in Asian American participants that have included Filipino Americans and Thai Americans.

Despite these significant results, the findings for the Hmong American and Laotian American samples were not statistically significant. The findings for both the Hmong and Laotian American samples were unexpected. A possible explanation that needs to be taken into consideration for future research is acculturation. Chhuon et al., (2010) reported that Cambodian American college students reported that the strength of relationship with their family and cultural values motivated their need to succeed academically. If the Hmong and Laotian American college students are not as culturally connected to their family, that may be one source of support that is lacking in their academic success.

Additionally, if Hmong and Laotian American college students feel pressure to identify less with their ethnicity or cultural values due to attending a dominant White student campus or perceiving messages that non-White cultural values are not accepted, this may negatively impact their psychological well-being. Thus, if they become more acculturated due to not feeling a sense of belonging, the Southeast Asian American college students may continue to have lower levels of psychological well-being. Or it could be that acculturation may also explain the increase of consumer use of mental health services among Hmong and Laotian from 2001 to 2002 (S. Lee & Chang, 2011). If more Hmong and Laotian Americans are seeking mental health treatment, they may also have developed more coping skills to manage their psychological well-being.

These findings support the need to conduct more exploratory research on the relationship between racism and psychological well-being, with consideration to adding other factors such as acculturation, previous mental health use, and coping skills. Racism

is a complex experience. By further understanding the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being, future interventions can target Southeast Asian American college students' perceptions of racism and increase understanding in how to provide support of their psychological well-being. Furthermore, future research should also include more identifying markers of negative and positive psychological well-being, as well as identifying active coping skills. By understanding specifically how Southeast Asian American college students experience or consider as negative psychological well-being, counselors may be able to develop specific interventions to address these mental health concerns.

Implications for the Counseling Community

The conclusions from this study offer significant insight into the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students. Importantly, the findings provide the foundation for key implications for professionals in the university environment and in the counseling field who serve Southeast Asian American college student population.

University Environment

The findings of the current study have several implications in the university environment. First, racism negatively affects the psychological well-being of Southeast Asian American college students. Perceived racism was also found to predict the psychological well-being of the current sample. This finding is a concern especially for Southeast Asian American college students. Valencia (1997) reported that perceived discrimination negatively impacted the educational achievement of Latino and Latina

college students. Similarly to Latinos, perceived racism was also found as a detriment to the educational achievement in Asian Americans (Hing, 1993; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). University personnel may need to take racism into consideration when working with Southeast Asian American college students. Although statistics suggest that Asian Americans are succeeding academically at the rate of their White counterparts, Southeast Asian Americans present a different picture. According to a release by the White House (2008), the data for Southeast Asian Americans with a bachelor's degree were as followed: (a) Cambodian (11%), (b) Hmong (10.7%), (c) Laotian (11.3%), (d) Thai (25.6%), and (e) Vietnamese (20%). Southeast Asian Americans are disproportionately earning a bachelor's degree compared to the rate of their Asian American counterparts. These statistics for Southeast Asian Americans are compelling and invite further investigation. For example, what contributes to the academic success or failure of Southeast Asian Americans? This kind of question may be helpful in identifying specific interventions to address the barriers Southeast Asian Americans are experiencing in their journey to succeed academically.

Second, despite these compelling statistics on Southeast Asian American college students, most universities across the U.S. fail to collect and/or ask for specific ethnic identity representation beyond the "Asian American" category. Yip, Gee, and Takeuchi (2008) argued that the relationship between ethnic identity and racism varies by culture, generation and age. The current study was an attempt to view Southeast Asian Americans as a separate entity from Asian American, and to also view each Southeast Asian American ethnic group separately. When considering the unique demographics of

Southeast Asian Americans including gender, generational status, grade level, and their ethnicity, perceived racism negatively impacts the psychological well-being of Southeast Asian American college students in this sample.

However, the statistical results varied among the Southeast Asian American ethnic groups when viewed separately. More specifically, findings suggested that a significant relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being was present in Cambodian Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and Other Southeast Asians. This result was different for the Hmong and Laotian American college students. There was not a statistically significant relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being within the Hmong and Laotian American college students. Alvarez, Juang, and Liang (2006) suggested that one's perception of oneself as a racial being predicted the reporting of discrimination, which in turn may increase the risk of mental health problems among Asian American college students. These varied results require further exploration especially when considering ethnic identity and one's association with group membership. University personnel may be able to identify the idiosyncratic needs of Southeast Asian American college students by treating Southeast Asian Americans as a culturally different group compared to Asian Americans.

In addition to recognizing the differences among Southeast Asian American ethnic groups, gender must also be taken into consideration. Southeast Asian American male and female students experience the relationship between racism and psychological well-being differently. Southeast Asian American male students may benefit from educational programs that speak to the roles and expectations of Southeast Asian

American males and the stereotypes to address the differences and to provide support to positively influence their sense of identity. The findings of the current study supports the need to consider Southeast Asian Americans as a unique group that experiences the impact of racism differently.

With respect to the differences of Asian Americans and Southeast Asian Americans, university personnel may need to develop educational programs on the link between racism and psychological well-being that targets these different ethnic and cultural groups. The purpose in developing these educational programs specifically for Southeast Asian American college students is to create a more welcoming campus climate that fosters a sense of belonging. Minority college students reported a greater sense of fit for academic adversity and improved their grade point average when interventions were adjusted to resolving their sense of belonging (Walton & Cohen, 2007). These interventions for Southeast Asian American college students could include normalizing struggles of adjusting to college, teaching coping skills to identify positive and negative psychological well-being, increasing access to culturally competent mental health services, and bringing visibility of ethnic diversity to college campuses.

Finally, developing programs specifically targeted at Southeast Asian Americans as a strategy to recognize the diversity of Asian Americans may also be helpful in diminishing the impact of racism. These programs could consist of course work that incorporates the uniqueness of Southeast Asian Americans' historical context, discussions on the impact of the above demographic factors, and culturally-appropriate tools to combat drop-out of Southeast Asian American students in college.

It is imperative that college environments do not exacerbate racism if Southeast Asian American college students are experiencing racism and low levels of well-being. Thus, it is important that higher education institutions reduce factors that contribute to a negative campus climate by allocating resources aimed at eliminating prejudicial attitudes and acts. Positive interactions with diverse others lead to progress in a wide range of academic and personal contexts (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). This finding suggests that those who are serving college student populations are in a position to provide rich, cultural programs that can bring out positive experiences for all students.

One example of this act is the Student Recruitment and Retention Center (SRRC) located at the University of California, Davis. The SRRC houses several programs developed to recruit and retain historically underrepresented college students. One of these programs is the Southeast Asian Furthering Education (S.A.F.E.) program. This program is led by fellow UC Davis students where they facilitate several events including study groups, leadership training, and conferences that “foster holistic academic and personal development while raising political and cultural awareness” (SRRC, 2013). Programs such as S.A.F.E. can be helpful in fostering a sense of belonging to support students of color who may be underrepresented on a university campus.

Counseling Field

The current study is a step towards adding support for further exploration between the relationship of perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students. Findings from the present study suggest that the frequency of racism is inversely related to psychological well-being in the sample. In

other words, participants who reported more encounters with racism also reported lower levels of psychological well-being. Professionals in the counseling field could be helpful in providing mental health services for Southeast Asian Americans experiencing racism by being aware of multicultural appropriate counseling skills. For example, statements such as “you speak English well,” or “where are you really from” are considered as subtle racist messages (Loo et al., p. 509). Counselors may need to continue their multicultural training to increase their awareness, skills, and knowledge.

Conversely, how much the racism experiences bothered the participants was not statistically significant in predicting psychological well-being in the current sample. This finding was unexpected and deserves more attention in future studies. Gee, Ro, Shariff-Marco, and Chae (2009) suggested that social desirability might be a factor in how Asian Americans report their experiences of racism. More specifically, Asian Americans tend to present themselves more favorably to avoid shaming oneself or their families, thus they may not be consider the experiences with racism as psychologically harmful. Professionals in the counseling field may need to be aware of the concept of “losing face,” or shaming oneself or their families when working with Southeast Asian American college students. Direct questions to identify how Southeast Asian Americans feel may not be the most helpful direction when counseling this population. Instead, counselors may need to elicit how Southeast Asian Americans feel about racism by asking questions concerning their coping strategies, stress level, expectations of their families, and what it means to “lose face.” These multiple pathways extend beyond asking questions centered on only one health outcome, which may understate the potential problems related to

racial discrimination (Aneshensel, 1992). This holistic view is one way of encompassing the collectivistic culture of Southeast Asian Americans.

In addition to discovering Southeast Asian American college students' psychological well-being through a more comprehensive process, counselors may need to understand how each individual finds meaning in their ethnic identity. Results in the current study varied when considering ethnicity. First, Southeast Asian American college students reported that the frequency of racism and how much the racism bothers the participants predicted their psychological well-being. This inverse relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being suggest that Southeast Asian Americans are negatively impacted emotionally when experiencing racism. Studies have suggested that ethnic identity buffers the relationship between discrimination and health outcomes (Chae, Takeuchi, & Barbeau, 2008; Chae & Yoshikawa, 2008; Mossakowski, 2003). Beiser and Hou (2006) argued that a strong ethnic identity exacerbated the association between racism and health outcomes. Counselors may need to investigate the meaning of ethnic identity and possible experiences related to their identity to determine the impact on their psychological well-being. Other factors such as acculturation, feeling a sense of belonging, or identifying what is positive and negative psychological well-being may have impacted the results. Thus, it is imperative that professionals in the counseling field need to take into consideration these unique factors when working with Southeast Asian American college students.

Another unique factor to consider when working with Southeast Asian American college students is gender. The results of the current study showed that gender was

consistently a statistically significant contributor to predicting psychological well-being. Specifically, those participants who identified as female reported higher levels of psychological well-being even when perceived racism was taken into consideration. As noted previously, traditional gender roles have shifted since resettling in the U.S. Southeast Asian American women seemed to have adjusted at a healthier rate compared to their male counterparts. Studies have noted that Southeast Asian American women have increased occupational and educational opportunities (Chung et al., 1998; Ngo, 2007). Counselors may need to work with Southeast Asian American male college students on developing coping strategies to adjust this shift in gender roles that may be in contrast to the expectations of their cultural values.

Furthermore, Alvarez and Juang (2010) reported that Asian American females reported more experiences of depression and anxiety compared to their male counterparts, whereas Southeast Asian American males reported more encounters with racism. This finding has two important implications for the counseling field. First, it may be more helpful for counselors to assess for somatic symptoms in Southeast Asian American male college students to address their psychological well-being. Trockel, Barnes, and Egget (2000) argued that health behaviors such as exercise, sleep, and nutritional habits impact college students' academic performance. These observable behaviors may be indicators for counselors to consider when working with Southeast Asian American males in addressing psychological well-being. In future studies, it is important to assess how Southeast Asian American males interpret their psychological well-being. Second, counselors need to understand the uniqueness of being a male in the

Southeast Asian American culture. This knowledge may be helpful in providing resources that are appropriate for Southeast Asian Americans.

Limitations

There are several limitations in the present study. First, this study was bounded to the strengths and weaknesses associated with online data collection. Although delimitations were advertised including age and ethnicity, due to the anonymous nature, one cannot be certain all participants met the requirements to participate.

Second, the self-report method of data collection used in this study presents some concerns about the reliability of subject responses. The items on the instrument are subject to biased interpretation on the part of each subject. It is important to understand that each subject is unique and might give different meaning to the items on the instrument.

Third, the hope of the researcher was to recruit an equal number of participants across the four Southeast Asian American ethnic groups. This was not the case of the current study with the majority of participants identifying as Hmong American (52.7%) and as 2nd generation (56.7%). Additionally, any missing data from a participant was deleted from the final analysis. If their responses could be included in this study, the findings may be more informative regarding perceived racism and psychological well-being. Therefore the results may not generalize well to individuals from different Southeast Asian American college student groups, age, or generational status.

Finally, there was a lack of inclusion of all potentially important variables including strength of ethnic association, acculturation, geography, and coping. These

additional variables may have provided more insight in exploring the relationship between psychological well-being and perceived racism among the current sample.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was the first to have explored the relationship of perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students. Because this study was the first of its kind, it revealed several areas for future research. The researcher identified the following recommendations for future research involving perceived racism, psychological well-being, and Southeast Asian Americans.

First, it may be beneficial in future research studies to increase the diversity of Southeast Asian American participants to add to the credibility of the above findings. In the current study, there was an unequal representation of participants in the ethnic groups. The majority of the participants identified as Hmong American ($n = 106$), Vietnamese Americans ($n = 33$), Filipino Americans ($n = 11$), Cambodian Americans ($n = 10$), Laotian Americans ($n = 8$), and Thai Americans ($n = 6$). Including a more equal representation of participants in each ethnic group will allow for more valid comparisons among the ethnic groups (Leech et al., 2008). One way to present a more diverse sample of participants in the ethnic groups is to work specifically with student organizations that serve those ethnic college students. Meeting with students face-to-face may help with building rapport, and as a result, recruit additional participants.

Second, a mixed method using quantitative and qualitative may strengthen results (Haque, 2010). Given the subjective nature of perceptions about perceived racism and psychological well-being, it is beneficial to allow qualitative comments from subjects to

gain insight into the varied perspectives about these important mental health issues. This will aid in the development of culturally appropriate models of understanding psychological well-being.

Third, exploring additional factors such as sense of belonging, strength of ethnic identity association, acculturation, or participation in clubs and organizations may be helpful in developing counseling and university programs to combat the experiences of racism among Southeast Asian American college students. Hsu, Davies, and Hansen (2004) suggested that acculturation can be a stressful factor in Asian Americans. It may be helpful to understand how acculturation affects Southeast Asian American college students to target interventions that address these unique experiences in this population.

Finally, conducting an in-depth study to explore gender may be helpful in understanding the differences of the statistical results from this study. More specifically, investigating possible factors such as ethnic cultural values and expectations that include family roles, defining success, experiences of racism may help in assessing the differences and similarities between Southeast Asian American males and females. This information may be helpful in addressing the factors that influence one's academic success.

The understanding of psychological well-being among Southeast Asian Americans is still an emerging area of multicultural counseling knowledge, awareness, and skills. Continued scholarship in the future will help to distinguish its benefits and correct upon its limitations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being among Southeast Asian American college students. More specifically, this study focused on analyzing the strength of perceived racism as a predictor of psychological well-being among four identified Southeast Asian American ethnic groups including Cambodian Americans, Hmong Americans, Laotian Americans, and Vietnamese Americans. This particular study represents a first step toward understanding the hypothesized relationship in this unique population of college students. Southeast Asian Americans are disproportionately represented on college universities with low rates of undergraduate degrees. Yet, much of the data reported on Southeast Asian Americans are usually aggregated with Asian Americans. This creates a false idea that Southeast Asian Americans are succeeding at the rate of their Asian American counterparts. This invisibility of Southeast Asian Americans negatively impacts resources and services delivered to this group of college students who are in need of additional academic and mental health support to succeed. The current study was conducted to shed light on the experiences of Southeast Asian American college students.

This study included data that were analyzed to assess for the strength of predictability using scores on the Daily Life Experience subscale to measure perceived racism and scores on the Depression-Happiness Scale to measure psychological well-being. The findings of the present study suggested a trend that Southeast Asian American college students who reported greater experiences with racism tended to have a trajectory towards lower levels of psychological well-being. It is apparent that Southeast

Asian American college students experience racism, and that racism combined with their gender, generational status, and college grade level predicted their psychological well-being. While much further research is needed to validate these findings, it appears that Southeast Asian American college students are negatively impacted by their perceived experiences of racism. With an understanding that the relationship between racism and psychological well-being exists within this sample, interventions can be developed to assist Southeast Asian American college students in addressing their experiences of racism and to teach them how to cope.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL

Appendix A

IRB Approval

Kent State University Mail - IRB approval for Level II, Category 5 p...

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ui=2&ik=ff72d17cf3&view=pt&...>



Maiko Xiong <mxiong3@kent.edu>

IRB approval for Level II, Category 5 protocol #13-154 - retain this email for your records

1 message

KIEHL, LAURIE <lkiehl@kent.edu>

Thu, Mar 28, 2013 at 12:44 PM

To: "mxiong3@kent.edu" <mxiong3@kent.edu>

Cc: "PAGE, BETSY" <bpage@kent.edu>, "GUILLOT-MILLER, LYNNE" <lguillot@kent.edu>

RE: IRB #13-154 - entitled "Perceived Racism as a Predictor of Psychological Well-being in Southeast Asian American College Students"

I am pleased to inform you that the Kent State University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your Application for Approval to Use Human Research Participants as a Level II/Expedited, category 5 project. **Approval is effective for a twelve-month period:**

March 27, 2013 through March 26, 2014

Federal regulations and Kent State University IRB policy require that research be reviewed at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. The IRB has determined that this protocol requires an annual review and progress report. The IRB tries to send you annual review reminder notice to by email as a courtesy. **However, please note that it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to be aware of the study expiration date and submit the required materials.** Please submit review materials (annual review form and copy of current consent form) one month prior to the expiration date.

HHS regulations and Kent State University Institutional Review Board guidelines require that any changes in research methodology, protocol design, or principal investigator have the prior approval of the IRB before implementation and continuation of the protocol. The IRB must also be informed of any adverse events associated with the study. The IRB further requests a final report at the conclusion of the study.

Kent State University has a Federal Wide Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP); [FWA Number 00001853](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [330-672-2704](tel:330-672-2704) or pwashko@kent.edu.

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Kent State University
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Study Title: Perceived Racism as a Predictor of Psychological Well-being in Southeast Asian American College Students

Principal Investigator: Maiko Xiong

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed consent. You are encouraged to print a copy of this document to keep with you.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between perceived racism and psychological well-being in Southeast Asian American college students. The current study will explore Southeast Asian Americans as a whole, but also take into consideration the ethnic differences by disaggregating the individual ethnic identities. In this study, the following research questions will be asked: (a) Is there a relationship between the scores of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale and the scores of psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (D-H-S) for Southeast Asian American college students? and (b) How well does the combination of perceived racism as measured by the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) subscale, gender, generational status, ethnicity, and college level status predict psychological well-being as measured by the Depression-Happiness Scale (D-H-S) for Southeast Asian American college students?

Procedures

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to answer any questions. Your decision to withdraw from the study or refusal to answer questions will not result in a loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation in the study typically takes 15-20 minutes and is strictly anonymous. You will begin by answering a series of survey questions including the: (a) Daily Life Experience subscale (DLE), (b) Depression-Happiness Scale (D-H-S), and (c) demographic questionnaire.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you. However, it is hoped that through your participation, you will have an opportunity to reflect on possible experiences with racism and how those experiences may have impacted your life. Additionally, your participation in this study will add to the counseling literature to better understand the relationship of perceived racism and psychological well-being in Southeast Asian American college students to provide training for counselors and counselor educators.

Risks/Discomforts

There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. However, reflecting on racism experiences may be upsetting. Below is a list of resources you may find helpful for support.

- Your local college counseling center
- <http://multiculturalcounseling.org> (Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development)
- <http://counselorsforsocialjustic.com> (Counselors for Social Justice)
- <http://counseling.org> (American Counseling Association)
- <http://www.searac.org> (Southeast Asian Resource Action Center)

Privacy and Confidentiality

All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in an aggregate format (by reporting only combined results and never reporting individual ones). No one other than the primary investigator will have access to the data. This is a confidential online survey. Encryption (SSL) will be activated and no names or IP addresses will be collected. The data will be stored in the Qualtrics-secure database and on a secure computer. All data will be stored on a password and firewall-protected computer. Once the primary investigator has downloaded the data from the password protected server, the data will be deleted.

Compensation

it is optional to enter the raffle drawing for a chance to win one of two Visa gift cards for \$50. Your entry is entirely separate from your research data. Also, it is not necessary to complete the research study to participate in the raffle drawing. To enter the drawing, please send an email with the subject: ***Racism Study Raffle*** to lguillot@kent.edu. A random selection will be conducted at the end of data collection. If you have been selected, you will be notified through email with directions on how to access the gift card. Directions will also be provided at the end of the surveys.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact the primary investigator (*Maiko Xiong*) at (916-402-8765, mxiong3@kent.edu). Or you may contact her dissertation advisors (*Dr. Betsy Page*) at (330-672-0696, bpage@kent.edu) or (*Dr. Guillot-Miller*) at (330-672-0697, lguillot@kent.edu). This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board (pending). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330-672-2704.

I have read, understood, and printed a copy of, the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION TO USE THE RACIAL AND LIFE EXPERIENCES SCALE

Appendix C

Permission to use the Racial and Life Experience Scale

Hi Maiko,

Yes, you have my permission to use the RaLES or any of its subscales in your dissertation research. Specifically, you have permission to:

- 1) To use the RaLES as an assessment tool
- 2) To put the RaLES on an online survey tool such as survey monkey that will be available only to participants who agree to participate in the study
- 3) To include a copy of the RaLES in my dissertation write-up.

I'm attaching some documents that may be helpful.

Good luck with your work!

Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D.

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APPENDIX D

DAILY LIFE EXPERIENCE SUBSCALE

Appendix D

Daily Life Experience Subscale

DAILY LIFE EXPERIENCE (RACIAL HASSLES). These questions ask you to think about experiences that some people have as they go about their daily lives. Please **first** determine how often you have each experience because of your race or racism. Use the scale in the first column and write the appropriate number on the first blank line. **Next**, use the scale in the second column to indicate how much it bothers you when the experience happens. Write the appropriate number on the blank line.

How often because of race?

0=never
1=less than once a year
2=a few times a year
3=about once a month
4=a few times a month
5=once a week or more

How much does it bother you?

0=has never happened to me
1=doesn't bother me at all
2=bothers me a little
3=bothers me somewhat
4=bothers me a lot
5=bothers me extremely

- | | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| 1) Being ignored, overlooked, or not given service
(in a restaurant, store, etc.) | _____ | _____ |
| 2) Being treated rudely or disrespectfully | _____ | _____ |
| 3) Being accused of something or treated suspiciously | _____ | _____ |
| 4) Others reacting to you as if they were afraid or
intimidated | _____ | _____ |
| 5) Being observed or followed while in public places | _____ | _____ |
| 6) Being treated as if you were "stupid", being "talked
down to" | _____ | _____ |
| 7) Your ideas or opinions being minimized, ignored,
or devalued | _____ | _____ |
| 8) Overhearing or being told an offensive joke or
comment | _____ | _____ |
| 9) Being insulted, called a name, or harassed | _____ | _____ |
| 10) Others expecting your work to be inferior | _____ | _____ |
| 11) Not being taken seriously | _____ | _____ |
| 12) Being left out of conversations or activities | _____ | _____ |

- | | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| 13) Being treated in an “overly” friendly or superficial way | _____ | _____ |
| 14) Being avoided, others moving away from you physically | _____ | _____ |
| 15) Being mistaken for someone who serves others (i.e., janitor, bellboy, maid) | _____ | _____ |
| 16) Being stared at by strangers | _____ | _____ |
| 17) Being laughed at, made fun of, or taunted | _____ | _____ |
| 18) Being mistaken for someone else of your same race (who may not look like you at all) | _____ | _____ |
| 19) Being asked to speak for or represent your entire racial/ethnic group (e.g., “What do _____ people think”?) | _____ | _____ |
| 20) Being considered fascinating or exotic by others | _____ | _____ |

APPENDIX E

PERMISSION TO USE THE DEPRESSION-HAPPINESS SCALE

Appendix E

Permission to use the Depression-Happiness Scale

Dear Maiko, you are welcome to 1. use the DHS in your dissertation, 2 use it in survey monkey, and 3, include it in your dissertation. Attached is a copy of the short scale and a paper describing the short version in case that it is of interest, I'll be interested to hear about what your research is about, and your about your results in due course
Best wishes,
Stephen

Stephen Joseph

School of Sociology and Social Policy

University of Nottingham NG7 2RD

APPENDIX F

DEPRESSION-HAPPINESS SCALE

Appendix F

Depression-Happiness Scale

A number of statements that people have made to describe how they feel are given below. Please read each one and tick the box which best describes how frequently you felt that way in the past seven days, including today. Some statements describe positive feelings and some describe negative feelings. You may have experienced both positive and negative feelings at different times during the past seven days.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. I felt sad				
2. I felt that I had failed as a person				
3. I felt dissatisfied with my life.				
4. I felt mentally alert.				
5. I felt disappointed with myself.				
6. I felt cheerful.				
7. I felt that life wasn't worth living.				
8. I felt satisfied with my life.				
9. I felt healthy.				
10. I felt like crying.				
11. I felt that I had been successful.				
12. I felt happy.				
13. I felt that I couldn't make decisions.				
14. I felt unattractive.				
15. I felt optimistic about the future.				
16. I felt that life was rewarding.				
17. I felt cheerless.				
18. I felt that life had a purpose.				
19. I felt too tired to do anything.				
20. I felt pleased with the way I am.				
21. I felt lethargic.				
22. I found it easy to make decisions.				
23. I felt that life was enjoyable.				
24. I felt that life was meaningless.				
25. I felt run down.				

APPENDIX G
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

Appendix G

Demographic Data Sheet

1. Gender:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Transgender
2. What is your age?
 - a. 18 – 20
 - b. 21 – 22
 - c. 23 – 25
 - d. 26 – 28
 - e. Other
3. What is your ethnicity?
 - a. Cambodian/Cambodian American
 - b. Laotian/Laotian American
 - c. Hmong/Hmong American
 - d. Vietnamese/Vietnamese American
 - e. Other: Please specify
4. When you began the 2012-2013 school year, what was your grade level?
 - a. Freshmen Undergraduate
 - b. Sophomore Undergraduate
 - c. Junior Undergraduate
 - d. Senior Undergraduate
 - e. In a Master's degree program
 - f. In a doctoral or professional program (M.D., Ph.D., J.D., etc.)
 - g. Other
5. Generational Status:
 - a. 1st generation (born and spent more than half of your life in a country other than the U.S.)
 - b. 1.5 generation (born in a country other than the U.S. and spent more than half of your life in the U.S.)
 - c. 2nd generation (born in the U.S. and both parents born in a country other than the U.S.)
 - d. 2.5 generation or higher (born in the U.S. and one or both parents were born in the U.S.)
6. Highest school your father completed:
 - a. Middle school/Jr. high
 - b. High school
 - c. College or beyond
 - d. Other/unknown

7. Highest school your mother completed:
 - a. Middle school/Jr. high
 - b. High school
 - c. College or beyond
 - d. Other/unknown
8. Are you involved with school-based organizations (such as ethnic or cultural clubs)? If yes, please specify.
 - a. No
 - b. Yes. Please specify
 - i. Ethnic or cultural club(s) (e.g. Hmong Student Union, Asian American Association)
 - ii. Intramural Sports
 - iii. Religious or spiritual organizations
 - iv. Other

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