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Racial Discrimination and the Indirect Effects of Forgiveness on Well-Being
Among Emerging Polynesian Americans

Emily E. Tanner

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Educational Specialist

G. E. Kawika Allen, Chair
Ellie Young
Erika Feinauer

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education
Brigham Young University

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ABSTRACT

Racial Discrimination and the Indirect Effects of Forgiveness on Well-Being Among Emerging Polynesian Americans

Emily E. Tanner

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education
Educational Specialist

There is a lack of research on the effects of racial discrimination on the mental health of emerging Polynesian American adults (ages 17-29). This study examines the effects of racial discrimination and the indirect effects of forgiveness on mental health among 423 Polynesian American emerging adults. Correlations were conducted in preliminary analysis then data was further analyzed through multiple regressions to determine if racial discrimination predicts psychological outcomes. A mediation analyses with Hayes PROCESS macro bootstrapping was conducted to examine the indirect effects of forgiveness. Lastly, a point-biserial correlation was conducted to examine the effects of education level on perception of racial discrimination. Elevated experiences of racial discrimination were linked to increase of negative psychological outcomes including depression, anxiety, stress. In addition, experiences of racial discrimination were inversely correlated with anger and self-esteem. Participants with a high school education or less were more likely to report experiences of racial discrimination. Forgiveness mediated the relationship between racial discrimination and depression, anxiety, stress, and satisfaction with life. Implications are included regarding the necessity of mental health professionals to be aware of the psychological impacts of racial discrimination among Polynesian emerging adults. Additional results are provided, and implications of these findings are outlined.

Keywords: racial discrimination, mental health, well being, young adults, minority groups

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Racial discrimination has been defined as negative and oppressive life events that are specific to the individual's culture or racial group (Chou et al., 2012; Gee et al., 2007; Yip et al., 2008). These negative life events include "actions, practices, and behaviors by members of a socially dominant group that have a differential and negative impact on members of a socially subordinate group" (Broman, 1997, p. 37). These events are aversive and can cause high levels of stress and increases in poor mental health outcomes (Polanco-Roman & Miranda, 2013). Racial discrimination has been linked to negative mental health outcomes among a variety of different ethnic minority groups across the United States (Chou et al., 2012; Gee et al., 2007; Grollman, 2012; Huynh & Fuligni, 2010; Hope et al., 2015; Yip et al., 2008).

Limited research has been conducted in regard to racial discrimination and psychological well-being among Polynesian emerging adults (Chia-Chen Chen et al., 2014). In the research that has been done, it has been found that Polynesian's experience similar negative effects on mental health as other minoritized groups in the face of discrimination (Allen et al., 2017; Brown-Rice, 2013; Chou et al., 2012; Lee & Ahn, 2011). Protective factors against the negative effects of racial discrimination have also been widely studied in other racial groups (Liu et al., 2019). Personal levels of the trait forgiveness has previously been discussed as a possible buffer against the psychological damage caused by discrimination and studies yield mixed results (Jordan & Terrence, 2017; Macaskill, 2012; Toussaint, Shields, Dorn, & Slavich, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Current literature and research related to the psychological impact of racial discrimination is more common with other ethnic minority groups such as African Americans,

Latinx, Asian Americans, and Native Americans than with Polynesian Americans. Further research is needed because Polynesian Americans are underrepresented in literature related to mental health and racial discrimination. More information contributing to our understanding on the effects of discrimination and forgiveness on this population is important for mental health professionals to provide effective culturally sensitive services.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effects of racial discrimination and forgiveness on the mental health (i.e., depression, anxiety, stress, self-esteem, anger, and satisfaction with life) of Polynesian American emerging adults. This current study aims to contribute to the limited Polynesian American research and to add to the existing literature on emerging adult minorities. This study hopes to provide information on the effects of discrimination and how forgiveness can buffer or explain possible negative or positive outcomes so that professionals can provide adequate services and resources to emerging Polynesian American adults.

Research Questions

1. Is there a significant relationship between racial discrimination and depression, anxiety, stress, anger, self-esteem, forgiveness, and satisfaction with life among Polynesian American emerging adults?
2. Does racial discrimination predict higher levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and forgiveness among Polynesian emerging adults?
3. Does forgiveness buffer against the negative effects of racial discrimination and mental health among Polynesian American emerging adults?
4. Is education level associated with racial discrimination effects among Polynesian American emerging adults?

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Experiences of racial discrimination are a common occurrence among individuals residing in the United States (Gomez et al., 2011; Miller, 2009). Minoritized groups continue to face the negative consequences of racism that can present itself through systemic or individual racism such as microaggressions (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010; Pittman, 2011). These negative experiences result in poor psychological outcomes which includes an overall decrease in satisfaction with life (Brown-Rice, 2013; Chou et al., 2012; Lee & Ahn, 2011). Emerging adults are at an age where they may be more susceptible to the stress of racial discrimination and could be at a greater risk of negative outcomes (Grollman, 2012; Polanco-Roman & Miranda, 2013). There continues to be a gap in the literature regarding experiences of discrimination among different minoritized groups, including Polynesians (Chia-Chen Chen et al., 2014). Potential effective protective factors against the negative effects of discrimination are also important to consider and many have been researched including identity, connectedness, forgiveness, and other coping skills (Allen et al., 2017; Torres & Ong, 2010).

The remainder of this literature review will first discuss the effects of racial discrimination on the emerging adult population along with forgiveness as a potential safeguard or buffer for the negative psychological effects of discrimination. The psychological effects of discrimination among African/Black Americans, Latinx, Asian Americans, and Native Americans/Alaskan Natives will also be examined. To conclude the literature review, the limited research available on discrimination among Polynesian American's and potential protective factors will also be discussed.

Racial Discrimination and Mental Health Outcomes Among Emerging Adults

It is common to find increases in feelings of discrimination among emerging adults, ages 17-29 (Grollman, 2012; Polanco-Roman & Miranda, 2013). Emerging adulthood is a developmental theory described as an age of independence as more young adults postpone normative adult roles and expectations to pursue higher education and career development (Arnett, 2000). Classifying emerging adulthood has become a useful way to conceptualize life events and experiences of those in their late teens and mid to late twenties (Arnett, 2007). Similarly, emerging adulthood is an important age demographic to consider when discussing experiences and perceptions of racial discrimination (Hope et al., 2015).

In a study looking at 143 emerging adults at a diverse college, results showed that perceived discrimination was associated with higher levels of feelings of hopelessness. Stress from this discrimination and feelings of hopelessness resulted in an increase in susceptibility to symptoms of depression overtime (Polanco-Roman & Miranda, 2013). At this age, young adults are just finishing high school and entering the work force or pursuing higher education. This could also contribute to negative outcomes due to discrimination as individuals with less education are more prone to depressive symptoms, feelings of helplessness, and are more sensitive to discrimination (Burns & Garcia, 2017; Johnson-Lawrence et al., 2019).

Perceived racial discrimination is a social stressor. Young adults who report frequent discrimination face more depressive symptoms, feelings of anxiety, anger, and decreases in self-esteem and overall health compared to those who report less frequent discrimination (Grollman, 2012; Stokes, 2019). Those that report frequent discrimination often face chronic stress that has been linked to negative outcomes both mentally and physically (Grollman, 2012). It has also been discussed that individuals who go on to college and achieve a higher education are exposed

to more discrimination because racial minorities still lack equal opportunities in education (Burns & Garcia, 2017). Even though education has been found to increase awareness about minority groups, implicit measures of prejudice in highly educated individuals are barely lower than those that are less educated (Kuppens & Spears, 2014).

Previous studies have also pointed out that emerging adults experience perceived discrimination much more often than older adults (Pérez et al., 2008). One possible explanation for this has been attributed to an increase in exposure to racial events if they immigrated to the United States at a younger age (Pérez et al., 2008). Unlike older adults who have had more exposure and developed coping skills to deal with discrimination, younger adults have not yet developed these effective coping skills and thus experience higher levels of psychological distress (Allen et al., 2017; Torres & Ong, 2010). This lack in coping strategies can increase the effects of discrimination on the mental health of emerging adults. Emerging adults are also much more likely to be exploring their ethnic identity and solidifying their self-concept which can increase the possibility of being more cognizant and aware of subtle ethnic discrimination and biases (Torres & Ong, 2010).

Although research across ethnicities, regardless of age, credits racial discrimination as the cause of negative psychological outcomes (Brown-Rice, 2013; Chou et al., 2012; Lee & Ahn, 2011). For example, research done by Allen et al. (2017) examined Polynesian Americans and the effects that racial discrimination had on psychological health. The study found that racial discrimination was positively correlated with anger, depression, anxiety, and stress. Specifically, for Polynesians, coping strategies such as family support and religious or spiritual living, and open discussion with family members can be helpful to buffer the effects of racial discrimination

(Allen & Heppner, 2011; Allen & Smith, 2015). Regardless of age and experience with coping skills, individuals still suffer the negative effects of discrimination (Torres & Ong, 2010).

Forgiveness Effects on Racial Discrimination and Mental Health Outcomes

Psychological well-being is impacted for those in ethnic minority groups as discrimination continues to be a problem that is ever so pervasive in our society. Although negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, and being dissatisfied with life are all very common, there are several ways to counter the effects of discrimination on mental health (Allen, Kim, et al., 2016; Chia-Chen Chen et al., 2014). One buffer to protect against discrimination is forgiveness. For example, Toussaint, Shields, Dorn, & Slavich (2016) has defined forgiveness as “the release of negative feelings, emotions, and behaviors toward an offender” (p. 1005). At times forgiveness can also increase positive feelings and thoughts toward the person that wronged you (Jordan & Terrence, 2017). Unforgiveness is also mentioned throughout research and is defined as negative emotions toward an offender, such as anger and revenge, or the desire to avoid any contact with offender (Alaedein-Zawai, 2015). Unforgiveness is related to poor mental health, anger, and less satisfaction with life (Macaskill, 2012). There are two different ways to think about forgiveness: forgiveness of self and interpersonal forgiveness (Macaskill, 2012). Since discrimination is caused by the actions of other people, the concept of interpersonal forgiveness will be further discussed. This does not mean that discrimination is permissible if forgiveness of the perpetrator is possible. It is unequivocally wrong and extremely dehumanizing that any person should have to suffer such treatment. When racial discrimination does happen, there is research that suggests that forgiveness might be one thing that can help people navigate their psychological distress (Jordan & Terrence, 2017; Powell et al., 2017). Forgiveness may not work for everyone and every situation, but there is empirical research that

indicates that forgiveness might have some psychological healing benefits when one faces racial discrimination (Powell et al., 2017).

Forgiveness is seen as an effective coping strategy that is associated with several positive mental health outcomes such as lower anxiety, depression, and other psychological disorders (Toussaint, Shields, Dorn, & Slavich, 2016). It has also been shown to increase overall well-being, mood, and satisfaction with life (Breen et al., 2010; Burrow & Hill, 2012). Research has shown that individuals with greater levels of forgiveness experience fewer depressive symptoms and report more positivity, empathy, self-compassion, and acceptance (Breen et al., 2010; Toussaint et al., 2012). The ability to forgive others can also reduce overall stress levels and feelings of anger (Breen et al., 2010; Macaskill, 2012; Toussaint, Shields, & Slavich, 2016). Because of the decrease in these negative emotions, individuals who face discrimination are able to approach situations with less heightened emotion and see situations more clearly when using forgiveness as an effective coping strategy (Raj et al., 2016). This allows individuals to feel more in control of situations by taking a new perspective absent of rage and unhealthy expressions of anger (Raj et al., 2016). Research looks to further investigate the effects of using forgiveness as a coping strategy.

There have been several studies that have looked specifically at how forgiveness impacts mental health outcomes when dealing with racial discrimination. Recent research by Powell et al. (2017) looked at how forgiveness impacts depressive symptoms in African American men and found that racial discrimination was most common among emerging adults. This specific age group had higher levels of depressive symptoms which was attributed to the fact that this age saw the most discrimination on a daily basis. Although, those young men who had high levels of forgiveness had significantly fewer depressive symptoms (Powell et al., 2017).

Research has also shown that forgiveness may buffer the effects of stress on mental health by being an effective coping style. In a study that looked at how lifetime stress affects mental health, findings indicated that stress was unrelated to mental health for those with higher levels of forgiveness, but stress predicted poorer mental health outcomes for those with lower levels of forgiveness (Toussaint, Shields, & Slavich, 2016). A recent study looking at forgiveness and mental health in the general population showed that over a 5-week period, increases in forgiveness were associated with a decrease in stress. This decrease also attributed to a decrease in mental health symptoms (Toussaint, Shields, & Slavich, 2016).

On the other hand, there have also been several studies showing no relationship between higher levels of forgiveness and improved mental health. In a study by Macaskill (2012), results showed that lack of forgiving others is not related to worsening mental health or dissatisfaction with life. Having higher levels of trait anger can predict an unwillingness to forgive others, but that did not lead to a decrease in overall mental health or satisfaction with life (Macaskill, 2012). Another study stated that although it has been proven that forgiveness, stress, and mental health are all related and influence each other, the sequence in which these variables interact with each other is not as clear (Toussaint, Shields, & Slavich, 2016). In a study by Burrow and Hill (2012), participants were instructed to read a scenario that detailed an experience of discrimination. Afterward, perceptions of the scenario and levels of forgiveness were assessed. Interestingly, findings showed that individuals who had higher levels of forgiveness were less likely to view discrimination in the scenario. This brings up the argument that levels of forgiveness and well-being are only determined by the perception of the potentially oppressive event (Burrow & Hill, 2012). Because of these mixed results, further research is imperative. Forgiveness is an important factor to investigate when considering the effects of discrimination. There are many similarities

across ethnicities when looking at the effects of discrimination on the mental health of young adults.

Psychological Effects of Discrimination Across Racial Ethnic Minorities

Perceived racial discrimination affects all different ethnic minority groups in the U.S. (Allen et al., 2017; Brown-Rice, 2013; Chou et al., 2012; Lee & Ahn, 2011). Research has shown that prominent racial discrimination affects ethnic minority groups such as African Americans, Latinx, Asian/Asian Americans, and American Indians (Chou et al., 2012; Gee et al., 2007; Torres & Ong, 2010; Yip et al., 2008). It is important to note that racial discrimination has been linked to various developmental risk factors for minority youth and emerging adults related to unhealthy psychological, social, and physical outcomes (Seaton et al., 2009). In wake of current events related to social justice and racial discrimination, now more than ever people seek clarity and hope in overcoming injustices surrounding race. These injustices and displays of discrimination emphasize the response and awareness that needs to occur to solve these issues especially in regard to Black Americans.

Racial discrimination is very common among African/Black Americans (Miller, 2009). Frequent experiences of racial discrimination among African American young adults is associated with more depressive symptoms, lower life satisfaction, and feelings of helplessness (Ayalon & Gum, 2011; Hudson et al., 2013; Madubata et al., 2018). Racial discrimination can also be a predictor of general anxiety disorder and social anxiety disorder (Levine et al., 2014; Urzúa et al., 2019). Fear of negative social interactions with those of different ethnic groups may cause increased anxiety in African Americans because they are more likely to attribute disrespect and poor treatment to racial factors (Levine et al., 2014). In a specific study that tracked African American adolescents for three consecutive years, results demonstrated that perceived

discrimination negatively impacted adolescents' concept of how society views African Americans. It was concluded that racial discrimination reinforces the stereotype of society's negative views of African Americans, which then in turn increases perceived discrimination (Seaton et al., 2009). We can see that experiences and perception affect each other, including psychological outcomes specifically related to anger.

Anger is also a common outcome of experiences of discrimination in the African American population (Miller, 2009). Anger is defined as a common reaction to a stressful life event that arouses specific feelings that urge an individual to injure a target (Miller, 2009; Pittman, 2011; Terrell et al., 2006). Anger has an adverse effect on the health of African Americans and can lead to negative mental health disorders, decreases in well-being, cardiovascular disease, and risk of hypertension (Maxwell, 2016; Miller, 2009; Terrell et al., 2006). Although, forgiveness has been identified in research to be a coping strategy to combat the negative effects of discrimination (Powell et al., 2017). When African American individuals report higher feelings of forgiveness, they experience fewer depressive symptoms. Individuals that were at most risk for mental health symptoms were those that reported frequent experience with every day racial discrimination and low forgiveness scores (Powell et al., 2017). Forgiveness can also buffer against the effects of discrimination and race-based traumatic stress. This means that forgiveness lowers the chances of discrimination causing extreme stress (Jordan & Terrence, 2017). African Americans who are more exposed to discrimination are less likely to forgive offenders and past experiences of oppression. Although, when a sincere apology is offered by the offender, they are more likely to forgive the individual because an apology can display an acknowledgement of poor treatment. On the other hand, when an individual offers an insincere apology there is no real restitution. These feelings of anger due to discrimination and

the need for forgiveness to better cope is common across different ethnic minority groups (Erguner-Tekinapl, 2009).

Similar to findings among African Americans, there has been research documented on racial discrimination and psychological health among Latinx emerging adults. For example, racial discrimination was found to be linked to feelings of helplessness and loss of control, which then can be associated with increased psychological distress. In a study by Gomez and colleagues, they found that the Latinx community felt a lack of personal control and a lower sense of mastery over their environment due to perceived racial discrimination. Feeling a lack of control over one's life was negatively associated with psychological distress (Gomez et al., 2011). Racial discrimination has also been linked to lower levels of self-esteem among Latinx individuals which leads to greater likelihood of anxiety and depressive symptoms (Urzúa et al. 2019). A study that looked at the development of self-esteem noted that in a group of Latinx youth, higher levels of perceived discrimination resulted in a slower development of self-esteem over time. Whereas those with less experience with discrimination developed higher levels of self-esteem at a faster rate (Zeiders et al., 2013).

Anger is also a common outcome of racial discrimination in the Latinx community. In a study by Park and associates (2017), results showed that racial discrimination led to negative mental health outcomes due to high levels of anger and insufficient coping strategies to deal with that anger (Park et al., 2017). Similarly, perceived discrimination not only has been proven repeatedly to predict higher levels of depression, distress, and lower levels of self-esteem, but it also can predict overall school achievement. In a group of Latinx adolescents, it has been found that higher levels of perceived discrimination can predict lower GPA scores (Huynh & Fuligni, 2010). Racial discrimination also has an effect on college students such that perceived

discrimination that occurs in any setting is likely to impact the student academically. The effects of racial discrimination can carry across settings to affect all aspects of life (Cheng et al., 2019).

Effective safeguards and coping strategies are not as common in Latinx literature as it is in other ethnic minorities groups. With limited research available, it was found that forgiveness potentially could be an effective buffer and should be further investigated. In a study of older adults, it was found that Mexican Americans are more likely to forgive others and to forgive themselves than Whites (Krause, 2012). Research has also noted that developing a strong ethnic identity and positive social support could be safeguards against the negative psychological effects of everyday discrimination (Cheon & Yip, 2019; Torres & Ong, 2010; Wright & Wachs, 2019). In a study by Cheon and Yip (2019), it was found that high levels of ethnic identity predicted lower levels of racial discrimination the following year. Encouraging emerging adults to develop a strong ethnic identity could be a great way to buffer the effects of discrimination (Cheon & Yip, 2019; Torres & Ong, 2010). Further research by Wright and Wachs (2019), concluded that Latinx adolescents with social support from parents, friends, or teachers were better able to deal effectively with experiences of racial discrimination. Social support may increase self-efficacy in adolescents and protect them from the negative effects of stress that occur due to experiences involving racial discrimination (Wright & Wachs, 2019).

Although findings among Asian Americans are similar to other minority groups, discrimination can be slightly different for Asian Americans because they are often stereotyped as foreigners regardless of their nativity or citizenship. It is a common microaggression to assume that an Asian is not a true American (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010). These acts of discrimination, with a greater focus on isolation, may lead to psychological distress through attacking an individual's self-esteem, self-concept, and belonging (Yip et al., 2008). In a study

that analyzed self-reported discrimination in Asian Americans, it was found that discrimination can negatively impact self-concept by decreasing sense of control and lowering self-esteem. Because of this lack of control and low self-esteem, discrimination can also foster hopelessness in Asian Americans (Gee et al., 2007). Negative impacts on well-being of Asian American individuals is also a common finding in research (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010). In a meta-analysis on racial discrimination and Asian American mental health, it was found that when an individual is faced with discrimination, they experience greater overall distress, increases in depression and anxiety, lower ratings on psychological well-being, and an increase in suicide ideation (Lee & Ahn, 2011).

Research has found that Asian Americans have a difficult time dealing with these experiences of discrimination even when they are taught effective coping skills (Chong, 2009; Fukumoto, 2013). With the cultural background of a collectivist environment, Asian Americans are much more likely to use a decisional forgiveness style rather than an emotional forgiveness style. Decisional forgiveness is dealing with negative emotions by making the decision to push it to the side, act less negatively toward an offender, and move on. Alternatively, emotional forgiveness is a deep and thoughtful forgiving of the offender where positive emotions replace unforgiving emotions. Decisional forgiveness has proven to not be as effective in overall mental health improvements (Chong, 2009). Although, having high levels of forgiveness in any style results in better mental health outcomes than no use of forgiveness (Fukumoto, 2013).

With not much research done on the buffering effects of forgiveness in the Asian American population, alternative variables were further explored. Research done by Liu et al. (2019) concluded that there could be a moderating effect between self-kindness, mindfulness, and social connectedness in buffering against the negative effects of racial discrimination and

depression. This means that self-care, being mindful, and maintaining connection with others can also help protect against depression caused by discriminative experiences in Asian American college students (Liu et al., 2019). It is very important that those from collectivistic cultures maintain social connection because it plays a very important role in their self-concept (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Further emphasis on self-compassion and connection could prove to be very helpful with Asian Americans experiencing discrimination along with other minority groups, like Native Americans/Alaskan Americans.

Similarly to Asian Americans, Native Americans report decreases in overall mental health due to discrimination, but their extensive history of trauma, persecution, and oppression has led to more serious psychological and physiological outcomes (Brown-Rice, 2013). Native American participants in studies related to racial discrimination (Chae & Walters, 2009; Jones & Galliher, 2015) report that they experience discrimination daily and that it dramatically affects their mental and physical health. The Native American population has the highest suicide rates in the nation, 3.2 times higher than the national average (Brown-Rice, 2013). They also have the highest weekly alcohol consumption of any ethnic group and a lower life expectancy by 2.4 years when compared to the rest of the U.S. population combined. The psychological, social-environmental, and physiological concerns that are common among Native American people are believed to be symptoms of generations of discrimination and oppression (Brown-Rice, 2013).

Although all of these oppressive experiences strongly affect the well-being of this population, forgiveness has been seen as a positive coping strategy that has been used by elderly Native Americans (Yoon & Lee, 2004). In a study by Yoon and Lee (2004), it was found that Native Americans had higher levels of self-reported feelings of forgiveness than Whites. Results showed that forgiveness significantly predicted higher life satisfaction and fewer depressive

symptoms in Native Americans (Yoon & Lee, 2004). Further research is necessary to understand how discrimination and forgiveness affects racial minority groups, especially those that are underrepresented in research.

Discrimination Effects Among Polynesians

The negative effects of discrimination are also common in understudied ethnic minority group of Polynesians. Specifically, in Polynesians it is common to find a decrease in overall well-being when there are heightened levels of racial discrimination along with lower levels of self-esteem (Allen et al., 2013). Polynesians reside on various South Pacific Islands such as Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tahiti, New Zealand, and Hawai'i (Aiono, 2017; Allen & Heppner, 2011). Many Polynesians who move to the United States belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), also known as Mormons. The LDS church reached the South Pacific Islands through missionary services and many Polynesians converted to the LDS church. Specific doctrines and teachings of the LDS church share similarities to the Polynesian cultural and family values as well as collectivistic principles. Some LDS Polynesians have since moved to the mainland because of these religious beliefs (Allen & Heppner, 2011). These strong religious beliefs may impact their experiences of discrimination due to teachings of forgiveness and love (Chen et al., 2019). This large population in the U.S. tend to be overlooked when discussing the psychological effects of racial discrimination (Chia-Chen Chen et al., 2014). Polynesians have experienced historical and contemporary racism throughout the years (Garcia et al., 2018). However, little is known regarding the effects of racial discrimination among this population.

Like other racial minority groups, Polynesians experience many of the same negative effects of discrimination (Allen et al., 2017; Garcia et al., 2018). It has been found that racial

discrimination increases anger, depression, anxiety, and stress among Polynesian individuals (Allen et al., 2017), and it has been found that ethnic and racial discrimination negatively influences self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Allen, Kim, et al., 2016). A particularly difficult challenge for Polynesian American college students is dealing with discrimination in the form of microaggressions. Microaggressions are casual, subtle, offensive, and most often unintentional comments or actions that can lead students to feel downgraded, unimportant, and incompetent (Allen, Cox, et al., 2016). These microaggressions are common and could potentially happen daily to those of ethnic minority groups. In efforts to find solutions, research has shown that higher levels of education have been shown to provide individuals with better coping skills, problem solving skills, and develop better resources for coping with discrimination besides passive anger (Pittman, 2011).

In addition, the native people of New Zealand, commonly referred to as Pasifika or Maori, report similar findings when it comes to racial discrimination and psychological well-being (Cormack et al., 2012; Houkamau et al., 2017). Although Maori people are native to New Zealand, they report higher prevalence of racial discrimination and are more likely to experience racial discrimination in a variety of forms in comparison to other ethnic groups in the country. This discrimination is associated with poorer physical health, mental health, and satisfaction with life (Cormack et al., 2018). In a study that investigated how discrimination was perceived in university and high school Maori students, it was found that students often felt that teachers expressed surprise or disbelief at academic success and would attribute their success to other factors. This led many Maori students to feel inadequate and discriminated against in school settings (Houkamau et al., 2017).

Similar to the Pasifika of New Zealand, Native Hawaiians report similar experiences of racial discrimination and negative psychological effects. Although there is very limited research with these specific groups of Polynesians, the research shows similar effects as other minority ethnic groups (Kaholokula et al., 2017; Mossakowski et al., 2017). In a study that examined how perceived racism affects the depressive symptoms in 104 Native Hawaiian adults, it was found that discrimination increases feelings of depression (Kaholokula et al., 2017). These symptoms come about because everyday discrimination is a chronic stressor that has a more negative effect on individuals than a single major discriminative event (Mossakowski et al., 2017). Passive coping strategies are commonly used to deal with experiences of racial discrimination. The most common strategies used by Native Hawaiians include venting and behavioral disengagement. Higher levels of perceived discrimination are related to these negative coping styles, and the use of these coping styles leads to higher levels of psychological distress (Kaholokula et al., 2017).

Buffering Variables Among Polynesians

There have been several factors that can contribute to buffering the negative effects of racial discrimination specifically for Polynesians (Allen et al., 2017; Kane et al., 2019). It has been found in research that Polynesians with a higher self-esteem have a higher level of satisfaction with life. Encouraging a healthy self-concept in Polynesians and teaching positive self-esteem could greatly help the population as it can buffer the negative effects of racial discrimination (Allen et al., 2017). Another potential buffer for Polynesian is the trait of forgiveness. In a study by Kane et al (2019), results found forgiveness to be an important factor to help individuals develop a strong religious commitment, which can lead to a greater well-being. The results indicated that forgiveness mediates the relationship between religious commitment and self-esteem in Polynesians, but on the other hand it did not mediate religious

commitment and satisfaction with life (Kane et al., 2019). With these mixed results, it is clear that further research needs to be done to investigate the link between forgiveness and psychological outcomes in Polynesians to see if it can help with the difficult challenges that they face.

A positive coping strategy in Hawaiian culture that has been addressed in research is the practice of Ho'oponopono (Allen, Kim, et al., 2016; Terao, 2017; James, 2008) Ho'oponopono is a specific Hawaiian cultural practice that is considered an interpersonal healing tradition. This tradition enables the individual to improve their relationships with family members and others by encouraging them to resolve conflicts and restore healthy relationships (Allen, Kim, et al., 2016; James, 2008). This is done through prayer, open discussion, confession, mutual respect, and forgiveness (Allen, Kim, et al., 2016; Terao, 2017). In current research, results found that Ho'oponopono decreases feelings of unforgiveness and can help the individual through emotional and mental healing (James, 2008). Ho'oponopono has been widely applied in counseling and therapeutic settings with Native Hawaiians and is becoming more commonly used across cultures. An article by Brinson and Fisher (1999), describes how Ho'oponopono can be used by school counselors to resolve issues in the classroom and school. It is an effective conflict resolution model and can be generalized to in different settings and ethnic minorities (Brinson & Fisher, 1999).

It is also important to further address the value of religious commitment and spirituality as it relates to forgiveness in the Polynesian culture. Forgiveness is a personality trait that typically goes along with some type of religious beliefs or affiliations (Chen et al., 2019). Particularly, the current study looks at a specific group of Polynesians that identify as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). Research done by Allen and Heppner

(2011) examining religiosity, coping and psychological well-being among a sample of LDS Polynesians found that overall, the sample obtained a much higher mean religious commitment score than those reported on the development of the Religious Commitment Inventory. This shows how important religious commitment and spiritual beliefs are to this group of people. This study also found that LDS Polynesians reported dealing with psychological distress by using collectivistic coping strategies such as family support and religious/spiritual coping (Allen & Heppner, 2011). This current study looks to further investigate the use of religious and spiritual coping strategies, such as forgiveness and how it buffers the effects of racial discrimination. We did not consider the variable of Religious Commitment in our current study due to preliminary analysis that found no significant correlation between Religious Commitment and psychological outcomes. Previous research by Allen and Heppner (2011) also found Religious Commitment to not be significantly correlated with depression and anxiety so the variable was not further investigated (Allen & Heppner, 2011).

CHAPTER 3

Method

Data for this study was originally collected in 2016 through an online survey. Analysis for the present study will be further discussed. Methodology consists of a description of participants, instruments, procedure of data collection, and data analysis. Institutional review board (IRB) approval was obtained and is included in Appendix A. Prior to beginning the survey, participant's review and acceptance of informed consent was required before continuing the survey. The informed consent consisted of information regarding disclosure of information, the voluntary nature of the study, and the potential risks involved.

Participants

Using an archival data set from a previously administered survey, 423 individuals participated in the study (246 females, 177 males; $M_{age} = 23.55$; age range = 17–29 years). The total sample size of 423 participants, a specific age group of emerging adults related to the purposes of our study, is a subsample of a larger dataset of Polynesian individuals that participated from various places across the U.S. Participants were recruited from California, Nevada, Utah, Washington, Arizona, Missouri, and Hawai'i. All 423 participants reported their religious affiliations as Latter-Day Saints (LDS). The participants' Polynesian heritage was Native Hawaiian ($n = 37$, 8.8%); Tongan ($n = 158$, 37.5%); Samoan ($n = 84$, 20.0%); Tahitian ($n = 14$, 3.3%); Maori ($n = 12$, 2.9%); Fijian ($n = 27$, 6.4%); Multiracial Polynesian ($n = 80$, 19.0%); and Other ($n = 9$, 2.1%). Participants reported the following education levels: less than high school/received a high school diploma/GED ($n = 74$, 17.4%); attended some college ($n = 188$, 44.4%); 2-year college degree ($n = 55$, 13.0%); obtained a 4-year degree ($n = 94$, 22.2%); earned a master's degree ($n = 10$, 2.4%); and earned a professional degree ($n = 2$, .5%).

Instruments

The Daily Life Experience (DLE)

The Daily Life Experience subscale of the Racism and Life Experience Scale (Harrell, 1994) was used in this study. Participants' experiences with racial discrimination related to microaggressions were assessed using this 18-item scale that asked how often they may have experienced racial hassles during the past year (Harrell, 1994). The reported normative sample for this measure was racial minority groups in the United States: more specifically African Americans. Sample items include: "Others reacting to you as if they were afraid or intimidated," "Being insulted, called a name or harassed," "Today, I was ignored, overlooked, or not given service," and "Not being taken seriously." Participants were asked to rate each racial hassle they had experienced using a 6-point response scale assessing how often the event occurred over the past year (0 = never; 5 = once a week or more; .89; Harrell, 1994). The Cronbach's alpha for the original study in 1994 was .89 and the present study was .94.

Trait Forgivingness Scale (TFS)

The Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS) is a 10-item measure of an individual's proneness to forgive interpersonal transgressions (Berry et al., 2005). Individuals are asked to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Examples of some of the statements include, "people close to me probably think I hold a grudge too long," "I can forgive a friend for almost anything," and "If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same." Classical item statistics and Rasch scaling procedures were used to determine internal validity, with results indicating Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between .74 and .80. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .73.

Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale – 21 (DASS-21)

The DASS-21 self-reported questionnaire, developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995), contains three subscales: Depression, Anxiety, and Stress. The DASS includes 21-items that are designed to measure the severity of symptoms common of Depression and Anxiety. The Depression subscale contains 7 items that assess self-depreciation, lack of interest/involvement, hopelessness, states of dysphoric moods, and anhedonia (e.g., “I felt downhearted and blue”). The Anxiety subscale includes 7 items where it measures automatic arousal, anxious affect, and muscular tension (e.g., “I felt I was close to panic”). The Stress subscale (7 items) is described to look for general tensions and negative emotions in response to stressors (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS-21 is rated using a Likert-type scale; 0 = Did not apply to me at all, 1 = Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time, 2 = Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of time, and 3 = Applied to me very much, or most of the time. This study’s Cronbach’s alpha for DASS–21 full-scale is .95.

The Trait Anger Scale (TAS)

The TAS (Spielberger et al., 1983) is a 15-item self-report scale assessing anger as a personality trait in terms of the frequency of angry states experienced over time (1 _ almost never, 2 _ sometimes, 3 _ often, 4 _ almost always). The reported normative sample for this measure was college students and Navy recruits and did not report other demographic indicators such as ethnic minorities. Sample items include: “I have a fiery temper,” “I am quick tempered,” “I fly off the handle,” and “It makes me furious when I am criticized in front of others. The alpha coefficient among college student participants was reported at .87 for Forgivingness, Vengeful Rumination, Affective Traits 195 males and .87 for females. Among Navy recruits, alpha coefficients were .87 for males and .84 for females. The Cronbach’s alpha for this study was .92.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (RSE)

The RSE questionnaire measures self-esteem and is often used among racially and ethnically diverse individuals. The RSE Inventory includes 10 Likert-type items that ranged from one to four (i.e., 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree somewhat*, 3 = *Agree somewhat*, and 4 = *Strongly Agree*). Participants were asked to rank statements such as, *I feel I do not have much to be proud of*, *I certainly feel useless*, *at times, I take a positive attitude toward myself*, and *I wish I could have more respect for myself*. According to a study conducted by Allen and colleagues (2013) Cronbach's alpha for the full-scale scores with the same population was .86. For this study, the full-scale Cronbach's alpha is .84.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)

The SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) is a 5-item Likert-type instrument ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) designed to assess global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life (i.e., "I am satisfied with my life"). The normative sample for this measure consisted of both college students and elderly persons but did not report the racial background of participants or any other demographical data. The internal consistency of the SWLS and alpha coefficients have repeatedly exceeded .80 in various studies (Pavot & Diener, 1993). In Diener and colleagues' (1985) original study, they found an alpha coefficient of .87 (Allen & Wang, 2014). The Cronbach's alpha for this study was .85.

Procedures

In an effort to reach a large population of Polynesian American emerging adults, opportunities to participate were communicated through personal and social media, as has been an effective strategy in other research. We invited Polynesian emerging adults via nationwide social media such as Facebook and email to various Polynesian/Pacific Islander clubs and

organizations to participate in the study. The survey was completed through Qualtrics online. Participants were incentivized and provided a \$10 gift card upon completion of the survey. Two Polynesian doctoral and one Polynesian master's student posted the link to the survey on their Facebook pages. These Polynesian students had over 80% of Polynesian friends on their Facebook profiles. The participants' responses were tracked via Facebook, where they were directed to send a message to the students informing them whether they completed the questionnaire. This study did not include any exclusions for participants. The completion rate for those participants via Facebook resulted in 84%. We were unable to get a completion rate of those who received the link to the survey via email distribution.

Data Analysis

The final sample size was 423 Polynesian American emerging adults. Initial analyses included Pearson product correlations for continuous (Likert-type scale items) variables to analyze research question 1 between independent variable (i.e., racial discrimination) and dependent variables (i.e., depression, anxiety, stress, anger, self-esteem, satisfaction with life). A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine if racial discrimination predicts outcome variables such as depression, anxiety, stress, and forgiveness. A correlation analysis was also conducted between education level and racial discrimination as it is hypothesized that higher education level is positively correlated with more experiences of racial discrimination. Given that education is a categorical or nominal variable (i.e., dichotomous; high school vs. graduate school) and racial discrimination is measured on a continuous variable (i.e., interval/ratio; Likert-type scale), the analysis of choice was a point-biserial correlation to generate a coefficient estimate between a continuous variable and a categorical variable. Additionally, mediation

analyses with Hayes PROCESS macro bootstrapping was conducted to examine indirect effects of forgiveness between racial discrimination and psychological outcomes.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The original data set of 924 was reduced to 628 participants. Due to missing data of less than 5% is considered inconsequential (Schafer, 1999), missing values at the item level were replaced using series means in SPSS by calculating the mean for that item across participants (Allen et al., 2017). The data for the current study originated from the larger dataset of 635 Polynesian American individuals, ages 17 to 76. For this particular study, we analyzed individuals described as emerging adults which consists of ages 17-29. After cleaning the data by removing participants from the study due to substantial missing values, we conducted a preliminary analysis consisting of frequency tests to examine descriptive statistics on 423 completed participant scores (e.g., means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis; see Table 1). Pearson correlations were also conducted to examine the relationships between racial discrimination and negative psychological effects (i.e., depression, anxiety, stress, anger, and self-esteem) as well as trait forgiveness.

Table 1*Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
DLE	2.95	.93	.31	-.08
TFS	3.53	.56	-.05	.26
DASSD	1.79	.67	.89	.17
DASSA	1.82	.68	1.00	.48
DASSS	2.01	.62	.55	.19
TAS	1.92	.59	.99	1.18
RSE	3.02	.46	.05	-.64
SWLS	4.98	1.24	-.67	.19

Note. DLE = Daily Life Experience; TFS = Trait Forgiveness Scale; DASSD = Depression

Subscale; DASSA = Anxiety Subscale; DASSS = Stress Subscale; TAS = Trait Anger Scale;

RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale

Racial Discrimination and Psychological Outcomes

In addressing the first research question, we analyzed how racial discrimination is correlated with depression, anxiety, stress, anger, self-esteem, and forgiveness. We first conducted a Pearson correlation examining the relationship between Racial Discrimination (RD) and psychological outcome variables (i.e., Depression, Anxiety, and Stress). Results showed that RD was significantly positively correlated with Depression ($r = .252, p < .001$), Anxiety ($r = .261, p < .001$), and Stress ($r = .275, p < .001$). These findings showed that experiences of racial discrimination have moderately strong associations with depression, anxiety and stress. We also found that RD is significantly negatively correlated with Self-esteem (SE) ($r = -.199, p < .001$) and Trait Forgiveness (TFS; $r = -.164, p = .002$), while RD was positively correlated with Trait Anger (TA; $r = .298, p < .001$). Table 2 summarizes the correlations that were conducted.

Table 2*Pearson Bivariate Correlations of the Study Variables*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Alpha
1. DLE	—								.94
2. TFS	-.16**								.71
3. DASSD	.25**	-.30**							.96
4. DASSA	.26**	-.24**	.80**						.96
5. DASSS	.28**	-.31**	.82**	.83**					.96
6. TAS	.30**	-.32**	.25**	.23**	.29**				.92
7. RSE	-.20**	.31**	-.61**	-.50**	-.54**	-.24**			.80
8. SWLS	-.08	.13*	-.16**	-.06	-.09	-.18**	.28**		.85

Note. DLE = Daily Life Experience; TFS = Trait Forgiveness Scale; DASSD = Depression

Subscale; DASSA = Anxiety Subscale; DASSS = Stress Subscale; TAS = Trait Anger Scale;

RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale

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

For the second research question, simple linear regressions were conducted to determine if racial discrimination predicts higher levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and forgiveness among Polynesian emerging adults. Regressions were statistically significant for all four outcome variables (depression, anxiety, stress, and forgiveness). Racial discrimination significantly predicted depression, $b=.18$, $t(347)=4.84$, $p<.001$. Racial discrimination also explained a significant proportion of variance in depression scores, $R^2 = .06$, $F(1, 347) = 23.43$, $p < .001$. Racial discrimination significantly predicted anxiety, $b=.19$, $t(347)=5.04$, $p<.001$. Racial discrimination also explained a significant proportion of variance in anxiety scores, $R^2 = .07$, $F(1, 347) = 25.40$, $p < .001$. Racial discrimination significantly predicted stress, $b=.18$, $t(347)=5.33$, $p<.001$. Racial discrimination also explained a significant proportion of variance in stress scores, $R^2 = .08$, $F(1, 347) = 28.39$, $p < .001$. Racial discrimination significantly predicted forgiveness, $b= -.10$, $t(347)= -3.11$, $p=.002$. Racial discrimination also

explained a significant proportion of variance in forgiveness scores, $R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 347) = 9.64$, $p < .001$. Table 3 summarizes these results.

Table 3

Regression Analysis Summary for Racial Discrimination Predicting Depression

Variable	B	95% CI	β	t	p
(Constant)	1.26	.12	-	10.85	.000
Racial Discrimination	.18	.04	.25	4.84	.000

Note. R^2 adjusted = . CI = confidence interval for B

Indirect Effect Analysis

The SPSS macro PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) was used to conduct the indirect analysis. PROCESS offers bootstrap estimates to calculate bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects. This bootstrapping method has been recommended as the method of choice for testing indirect effects because of its advantages over the causal steps approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and the Sobel (1982) test (Allen & Wang, 2014; Hayes, 2009). The procedure involves resampling several times and estimating the sampling distribution from all of the resamples. This enhances estimation accuracy of the indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In this study the mean of 95% confidence intervals (CI) of indirect effects derived from 10,000 bootstrap samples was estimated. The presence of an indirect effect can be concluded with 95% confidence if the upper and lower bounds of the CI do not include zero (Allen et al., 2017).

Therefore, related to the third research question, we examined the indirect effects of forgiveness between racial discrimination and outcome variables (depression, anxiety, stress, anger, self-esteem, satisfaction with life). The only significant mediating indirect effect variable found was forgiveness between racial discrimination and satisfaction with life (see Table 4). Bootstrapping results indicated that forgiveness had an indirect effect on the link between racial discrimination and satisfaction with life (95% CI (.03, .50); indirect effect = .26, SE = .12, $Z =$

2.21, $p = .027$; total effect = $-.11$, $SE = .07$, $t = -1.47$, $p = .14$; direct effect = $-.08$, $SE = .07$, $t = -1.09$, $p = .27$). In other words, forgiveness may mediate the relationship between racial discrimination and satisfaction with life. All other outcome variables (depression, anxiety, stress, anger, and self-esteem) were not significantly mediated by forgiveness.

Table 4

Hayes PROCESS for Bootstrapping Results

Predictor	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Outcome model (DV = depression)	4.28	.50	8.48	.000
Constant	-.08	.07	1.09	.27
Racial Discrimination	.26	.12	2.21	.03
Forgiveness				
Indirect effect	Effect	Boot SE	95% CI	
1 SD below	-.03	.02	[-.06, .00]	

Note. $N = 423$. All p values, two-tailed. DV = dependent variable; CI = confidence interval.

Education Level

For the fourth research question, we analyzed how level of education may be correlated with experiences of racial discrimination. A point-biserial correlation was conducted analyzing racial discrimination (RD) and seven variables which represent different levels of education. These education levels included less than high school/high school degree/GED, some college, two-year college degree, four-year college degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, and professional degree. Results indicate that not completing high school or only obtaining a high school degree/GED is positively correlated with experiences of racial discrimination (RD) ($r = .14$, $p = .003$). All other education levels were not significantly correlated with an increase or decrease of experiences of racial discrimination. These results suggested that those with less than a high school degree and no college experience are more likely to experience racial discrimination. Table 5 summarizes the correlations that were conducted.

Table 5*Point-Biserial Correlations of the Education Level Variables*

Measure	Racial Discrimination
1. LHS/HS	.14**
2. SC	-.07
3. 2C	-.05
4. 4C	.00
5. MD	-.09
6. PD	-.01

Note. LHS/HS=Less Than High School or High School Degree/GED, SC=Some College,

2C=Two-Year College Degree, 4C=Four-Year College Degree, MD=Master's Degree, and

PD=Professional Degree

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

We further investigated the relationship between education level and racial discrimination by conducting a regression to determine if level of education is a potential predictor of increased racial discrimination. A single linear regression was conducted to determine if having a high school degree or less predicts an increase in racial discrimination. The results showed that having a high school degree or less predicted an increase in experiences of racial discrimination ($F(1,421) = 8.95, p = .003, R^2 = .02$). Table 6 shows these regression results.

Table 6*Regression Analysis for Education Level Predicting Racial Discrimination*

Variable	B	95% CI	β	t	p
(Constant)	2.84	.05	-	58.45	.000
LHS/HS	1.54	.12	.14	2.99	.001

Note. LHS/HS=Less Than High School or High School Degree/GED

CI = confidence interval for B

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This study examined the psychological effects of racial discrimination among Polynesian emerging adults and the indirect effects of forgiveness. This study adds to research focused on the negative effects of racial discrimination among ethnic minority groups and expounds on the unique experience of the understudied group of Polynesian young adults. The effects of racial discrimination among Polynesian young adults' psychological health were similar to findings among other racial minority groups (Brown-Rice, 2013; Chou et al., 2012; Lee & Ahn, 2011). Findings also supported previous research that concludes that forgiveness can be a possible buffer against the negative psychological effects caused by discrimination (Jordan & Terrence, 2017; Powell et al., 2017).

Results

Discussion of results consist of the negative psychological effects of racial discrimination through correlation and regression analysis. The mediation of forgiveness will also be discussed as a possible buffer against the effects of discrimination. Finally, the effects of education level on the experience of discrimination are explained.

Psychological Effects

Consistent across previous research, our results also conclude that experiences of racial discrimination predicted an increase in depression, anxiety, and stress (Grollman, 2012; Stokes, 2019). These aversive experiences are also correlated with lower levels self-esteem and an increase in anger (Miller, 2009; Urzúa et al., 2019). Unique to our study, it was found that experiences with racial discrimination was negatively correlated with trait forgiveness among Polynesian American young adults. This emphasizes and supports the ongoing investigations

related to the negative effects of racial discrimination across minority groups, but more specifically adding these disturbing effects to another ethnic minority group—Polynesian Americans.

Forgiveness as a Mediator

Through indirect effect analysis results indicated that forgiveness can act as a mediator. Mediation results suggest that trait forgiveness mediated the relationship between racial discrimination and satisfaction with life in this Polynesian American sample. This finding could lead us to think that trait forgiveness may be a direct result of higher satisfaction with life when one may experience racial discrimination. This may provide valuable insight on the importance of teaching and developing the trait of forgiveness starting at a young age. Polynesian American families may consider encouraging strong relationships within the family (Allen & Smith, 2015) by fostering an attribute of forgiveness as it could possibly be a method to cope and increase well-being in the face of racial discrimination experiences. Mental health professionals can also help Polynesian American emerging adults to identify and possibly utilize the factor of forgiveness as they serve this population (Alaedein-Zawawi, 2015; Toussaint, Shields, Dorn, & Slavich, 2016). Although it is important to note that justice and fairness are also needed when dealing with experiences of racial discrimination. Forgiveness is just a variable that seems to be relevant and helpful for the Polynesian American population when in the face of racial discrimination. It is important to continue to advocate for change and an end of racial discrimination and injustices, and exercising the trait of forgiveness is just one way to heal from these experiences (Powell et al., 2017).

Effects of Education Level

The effect of education level on experiences and perceptions of racial discrimination was also considered. It was hypothesized that the more formal and advanced education a person received, the more experiences with discrimination they would encounter. The reasoning behind this is the potential that as one pursues their education, it may be likely that they are more frequently the minority in higher education, which in may lead to more experiences with racial discrimination. On the contrary, the point biserial correlational results showed that having less than a high school education is significantly correlated with increased experiences of racial discrimination. This finding is similar to research done by Kuppens and Spears (2014) who found that education can increase awareness about discrimination but implicit prejudice in highly educated people is not much lower than those that are not as educated. Another possible reason for this finding is because as an emerging Polynesian American adult receives education past high school, they become more knowledgeable and have access to resources and coping strategies to deal with incidents of racial discrimination in their own life. This finding is important to consider in regard to counseling of young students and adults along mental health professionals when working with Polynesian American emerging adults.

Comparison of Results to Other Findings

In previous research among other ethnic minority groups, racial discrimination was negatively correlated with satisfaction with life (Cormack et al., 2018). The current study also did not find forgiveness to be a successful mediator for anger and self-esteem as criterion variables. In previous research it was found that those with greater levels of forgiveness reported more self-compassion and acceptance (Breen et al., 2010; Toussaint et al., 2012). This was not conclusive in the current study and would be valuable to examine in future research. The current

results also found that possessing the trait of forgiveness does not decrease feelings of anger when dealing with discrimination. This finding was mixed in previous research. Some studies found that forgiveness can buffer the effects of anger (Breen et al., 2010; Toussaint, Shields, Dorn, & Slavich, 2016) while others found that having higher levels of trait anger can predict an unwillingness to forgive (Macaskill, 2012). Possessing and fostering the trait of forgiveness may allow an individual to better work through feelings of anger which can lead to a greater satisfaction with life, but forgiveness does not immediately resolve negative feelings regarding experiences of racial discrimination. The relationship between anger and forgiveness is complicated in regard to experiences of discrimination and warrants further research.

Limitations

Although this study adds valuable information on the perceptions of discrimination and effects of psychological health among Polynesian emerging adults there are some limitations to consider. The majority of the participants (n=396, 93.6%) were affiliated with a specific religious group, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). Because of the lack of religious diversity among participants, these findings might not be an accurate representation of all Polynesian American emerging adults. Forgiveness and religious commitment are often correlated and looked at simultaneously in research. Having a highly religious participation group might not be an accurate representation of how all Polynesian American emerging adults would report trait forgiveness. Because the concept of forgiveness is taught extensively throughout the LDS religion, these participants might have more experiences developing and learning about forgiveness than those who are not religious or have a different background. Thus, the results may not be generalizable to the general population, but possibly resonate with Latter-day Saint Polynesian American emerging adults.

Implications for Future Research

Future research can look at the effectiveness of specific interventions that target and encourage forgiveness among Polynesian American emerging adults to examine how effective it is as a buffer when put into practice. Future research can also consider comparing the experiences of emerging Polynesian American adults to an older age demographic to see what psychological differences occur due to racial discrimination. It would also be interesting to further investigate the protective factor of education for Polynesians against the negative effects of discrimination and how we can better encourage graduation from high school and pursuing higher education.

Conclusion

Research regarding the psychological effects of racial discrimination among Polynesian American emerging adults and the buffering effects of forgiveness requires more attention. The results have contributed to the vast research that attributes negative psychological outcomes to experiences of racial discrimination among ethnic minority groups. These findings in the specific population of emerging Polynesian American adults contributes to the limited research of this minority group. The results have increased the understanding of how the negative psychological effects of discrimination present in this population and the potential safeguard of fostering development of trait forgiveness to counter the effects. Findings from this study may have implications for other ethnic minority groups in the face of racial discrimination.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Campus Memorandum

Brigham Young University The Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects

Re: Renewal Application of Approved Research Date: October 3, 2016

From: IRB Secretary To: Professor G.E. Kawika Allen
 A-285 ASB 273 MCKB
 Email: irb@byu.edu Campus Mail

Your renewal application must be approved before your current approval expires. If IRB approval has expired, you cannot enroll new subjects and the research must stop. Studies that have not been re-approved by the expiration date will be closed.

Please send, fax or email one copy of this completed form to the IRB Secretary, Office of Research and Creative Activities, A-285 ASB, fax (801) 422-0620, irb@byu.edu, by the following date. 11-20-2016. **Please respond even if you are done with your research.**

IRB #	X 130404	(IRB Use - Date Received)
Protocol Title	Psychological Well-Being among Polynesian Americans	
Principal Investigator	G.E. Kawika Allen	
Phone #	2-2620	Email gekawika_allen@byu.edu
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Close the Protocol. I am no longer actively working with human subjects AND I have completed the data analysis on this study.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Research is still ongoing. I have attached the following:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	A protocol summary (including your hypothesis and methods or procedures no more than a page long and	
<input type="checkbox"/>	A status report on the progress of the research including:	
	1. any adverse events, unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others and any withdrawal of subjects from the research or complaints about the research since the last IRB review.	
	2. a summary of any relevant recent literature, interim findings, and <u>amendments or modifications to the research since the last review.</u>	
	3. any relevant multi-center trial reports	
	4. any other relevant information, especially information about risks associated with the research	
	5. a copy of the current date-stamped consent document	
	6. a clean copy of the current informed consent document and any newly proposed consent documents	
	7. a clean copy of the current recruiting materials.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Any new amendments or proposed changes to the next approval period must be accompanied by the Amendment/Modification of Research Form. (if applicable)	
Number of subjects accrued during the course of this study?	900	
How many subjects were enrolled in this study since the last approval date?	N/A	
Signature:	G. E. Kawika Allen	Date: 10.10.2016

APPENDIX B

Instruments

Daily Life Experience Scale (DLE)

Discrimination. Participants' experiences with racial discrimination were assessed using an 18-item scale that asked about the racial hassles they may have experienced during the past year (Harrell, 1997). Sample items include "Others reacting to you as if they were afraid or intimidated," "Being insulted, called a name or harassed," and "Not being taken seriously." Participants were asked to rate each racial hassle they had experienced using a 6-point response scale assessing how often the event occurred over the past year (0 = never; 5 = once a week or more). Participants also rated how much each event bothered them on a 0 to 5 scale ($\alpha = .89$, 18 items). Only discrimination frequency ratings are used in the current study.

Daily Life Experiences Questionnaire

0 = Never, 1 = Less than once, 2 = A few times, 3 = About once a month, 4 = A few times a month, 5 = Once a week or more

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. Other people avoiding you
15. Being mistaken for someone who serves others (i.e., janitor)
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

Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS)

Directions: Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by using the following scale:

- 5 = Strongly Agree
- 4 = Mildly Agree
- 3 = Agree and Disagree Equally
- 2 = Mildly Disagree

1 = Strongly Disagree

- _____ 1. People close to me probably think I hold a grudge too long.
 _____ 2. I can forgive a friend for almost anything.
 _____ 3. If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same.
 _____ 4. I try to forgive others even when they don't feel guilty for what they did.
 _____ 5. I can usually forgive and forget an insult.
 _____ 6. I feel bitter about many of my relationships.
 _____ 7. Even after I forgive someone, things often come back to me that I resent.
 _____ 8. There are some things for which I could never forgive even a loved one.
 _____ 9. I have always forgiven those who have hurt me.
 _____ 10. I am a forgiving person.

Scoring

To score the TFS such that higher scores reflect higher trait forgiveness, first reverse score items 1, 3, 6, 7, and 8. After items are reverse scored, add the 10 items to get the total score.

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21)

<h1 style="margin: 0;">DASS₂₁</h1>		<i>Name:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<p>Please read each statement and circle a number 0, 1, 2 or 3 which indicates how much the statement applied to you <i>over the past week</i>. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.</p> <p><i>The rating scale is as follows:</i></p> <p>0 Did not apply to me at all 1 Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time 2 Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of time 3 Applied to me very much, or most of the time</p>			
1	I found it hard to wind down	0	1 2 3
2	I was aware of dryness of my mouth	0	1 2 3
3	I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all	0	1 2 3
4	I experienced breathing difficulty (eg, excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)	0	1 2 3
5	I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things	0	1 2 3
6	I tended to over-react to situations	0	1 2 3
7	I experienced trembling (eg, in the hands)	0	1 2 3

8	I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy	0	1	2	3
9	I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself	0	1	2	3
10	I felt that I had nothing to look forward to	0	1	2	3
11	I found myself getting agitated	0	1	2	3
12	I found it difficult to relax	0	1	2	3
13	I felt down-hearted and blue	0	1	2	3
14	I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing	0	1	2	3
15	I felt I was close to panic	0	1	2	3
16	I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	0	1	2	3
17	I felt I wasn't worth much as a person	0	1	2	3
18	I felt that I was rather touchy	0	1	2	3
19	I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (eg, sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)	0	1	2	3
20	I felt scared without any good reason	0	1	2	3
21	I felt that life was meaningless	0	1	2	3

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) includes three subscales: Depression, Anxiety, and Stress. The Depression (7 items; e.g., “I felt downhearted and blue”) and Anxiety (7 items; e.g., “I felt I was close to panic”) subscales were used in this study as psychological indicators. The DASS-21 assesses the emotional levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, and is rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (did not apply to me at all) to 3 (applied to me very much, or most of the time). Cronbach’s alpha for all subscales were ranged from .84 to .91 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

Please indicate the statement below that would best describe you based on the following scale:

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. _____
2. At times, I think I am no good at all. _____
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities. _____
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people. _____

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. _____
6. I certainly feel useless, at times. _____
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. _____
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. _____
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. _____
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself. _____

Trait Anger Scale (TAS)

1. I have a fiery temper.
Almost never
Sometimes
Often
Almost always
2. I am quick tempered.
Almost never
Sometimes
Often
Almost always
3. I am a hotheaded person.
Almost never
Sometimes
Often
Almost always
4. I get annoyed when I am singled out for correction.
Almost never
Sometimes
Often
Almost always
5. It makes me furious when I am criticized in front of others.
Almost never
Sometimes
Often
Almost always
6. I get angry when I am slowed down by other's mistakes.
Almost never
Sometimes
Often
Almost always
7. I feel infuriated when I do a good job and get a poor evaluation.
Almost never
Sometimes
Often
Almost always
8. I fly off the handle.
Almost never

Sometimes

Often

Almost always

9. I feel annoyed when I am not given recognition for doing good work.

Almost never

Sometimes

Often

Almost always

10. People who think they are always right irritate me.

Almost never

Sometimes

Often

Almost always

11. When I get mad, I say nasty things.

Almost never

Sometimes

Often

Almost always

12. I feel irritated.

Almost never

Sometimes

Often

Almost always

13. I feel angry.

Almost never

Sometimes

Often

Almost always

14. When I get frustrated, I feel like hitting someone.

Almost never

Sometimes

Often

Almost always

15. It makes my blood boil when I am pressured.

Almost never

Sometimes

Often

Almost always

The Trait Anger Scale (TAS; Spielberger, Jacobs, Russell, & Crane, 1983). The TAS is a 15-item self-report scale for assessing anger as a personality trait in terms of the frequency of angry states experienced over time. Alpha coefficients among college students were reported as .87 for Forgiveness, Vengeful Rumination, Affective Traits 195 males and .87 for females. Among Navy recruits, alpha coefficients were .87 for males and .84 for females.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the scale below to indicate your agreement with each item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Strongly Disagree Agree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal. _____
2. The conditions of my life are excellent. _____
3. I am satisfied with my life. _____
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life. _____
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing. _____