



# Mental Health and Racial Justice in the Time of COVID-19

Celia B. Fisher, Xiangyu Tao, Tiffany Yip

Presented by Celia B. Fisher

Marie Ward Doty University Chair in Ethics

Director Center for Ethics Education

Director HIV/Drug Abuse Prevention Research Ethics Institute

Professor Psychology

[Fisher@Fordham.edu](mailto:Fisher@Fordham.edu)

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# Impact of COVID-19 on Physical Health Disparities

Disproportionate contagion and fatality in  
Black, Indigenous and Latinx and poor  
communities

- Role as essential workers
- Pre-existing health disparities
- Lack of access to healthcare

# Impact of COVID-19 on the Mental Health of People of Color (POC)

## Traditional explanations for mental health disparities:

- Pre-pandemic impact of systemic racism on mental health
- Long standing inequities in access to mental healthcare
- POC distrust in healthcare providers

## Unique Impact of Covid 19

- What are the lived experience of POC jeopardizing mental health
- How must mental health treatment adapt in response to these realities?

# National Online Survey: April 2020

## 305 Black, Indigenous & Latinx

### Age

- 18 – 25 years

### Gender

- 55% cisgender female
- 23% cisgender male
- 22% gender minority

### Education

- 53% some college

### Employment

- 36% essential workers
- 24% other employed
- 40% unemployed

### Region

- 29% urban
- 39% suburban
- 32% rural

# POC Basic Needs in Time of COVID

## Financial Insecurity

- 46% < \$31,000
- 30% “Can’t make ends meet”

## Food insecurity

- 19% “Had to skip a meal...not enough money”
- 23% “Worried I would run out of food...lack of money”

*Employed reported greater financial and food insecurity*

# POC Health Disparities

## Pre-existing CDC COVID health risk:

- 40% had at least 1
- *Asthma, obesity, heart condition most common*

## Prescription Insecurity

- 36% “Unable to fill prescription”: *costs, lack of insurance, unable to reach physician or pharmacy*

## Covid-Related Mistreatment

- 19% “Mistreated by healthcare worker...thought I had Coronavirus”

**Employed were more likely to report  
prescription insecurity and mistreatment**

# POC Mental Health Disparities

## Depression (PHQ-D)

- 13% moderate depression
- 22% moderately severe depression
- 56% severe depression

## Anxiety GAD-7

- 18% moderate anxiety
- 67% severe anxiety

## Predictors of Depression & Anxiety

- **Employment**
- COVID health risks
- Financial insecurity
- Prescription insecurity

# Coronavirus Victimization Distress

BECAUSE PEOPLE BELIEVED I HAD THE CORONAVIRUS, I WAS.....	Total
Teased or bullied	31%
Physically threatened, hit or beaten up	27%
Treated rudely or unfairly	34%
Verbally taunted or called bad names in public	29%
Cyberbullied	32%
<i><b>At least 1 instance of Coronavirus Victimization</b></i>	<b>43%</b>



# Coronavirus Racial Bias (CRB)

BECAUSE OF THE CORONAVIRUS	Total
The country has become <u>more dangerous</u> for people in my racial/ethnic group	50%
People of my race/ethnicity are more likely to <u>lose their job</u>	57%
People of my race/ethnicity will not receive Coronavirus <u>healthcare</u> as good the care received by other groups	47%
People of my race/ethnicity are more likely <u>to get the Coronavirus</u>	40%
I worry about <u>people thinking I have</u> the Coronavirus simply because of my race/ethnicity	38%
Most social and <u>mass media</u> reports about the Coronavirus create bias against people of my racial/ethnic group	36%
I have seen a lot more <u>cyberbullying</u> of people of my race/ethnicity	36%
Negative <u>social media</u> posts against people of my race/ethnicity have increased	39%

# COVID-19 Mental Health Risk Factors

- Coronavirus Victimization and Coronavirus Racial Bias beliefs increased levels of Depression and Anxiety

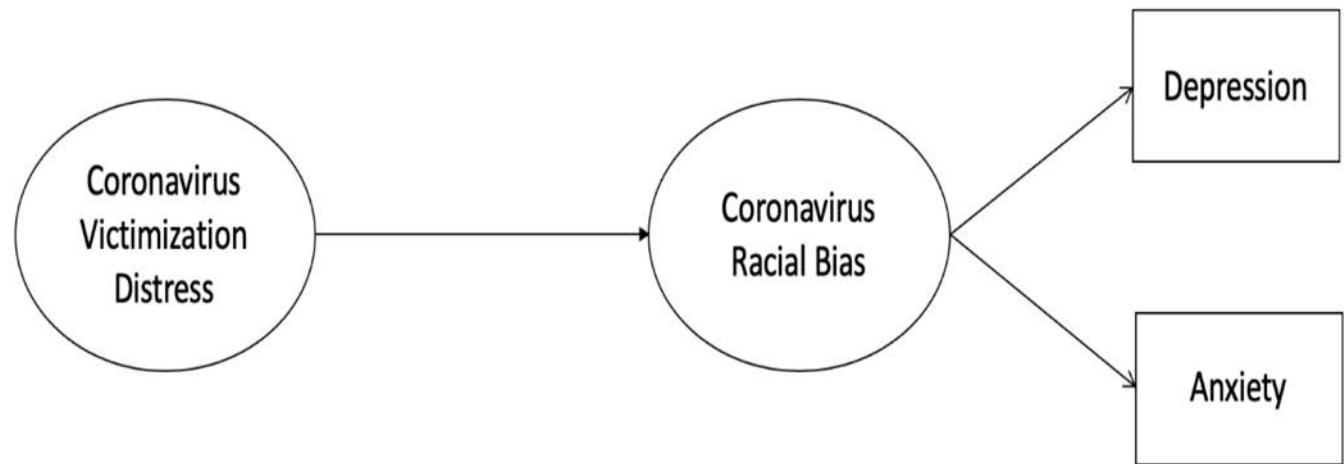
# Coronavirus Victimization, Racial Bias, and Mental Health

*COVID Health  
Risks*

*Employment*

*Financial  
Insecurity*

*Prescription  
Insecurity*



# POC Mental Health Disparities in the Time of COVID-19

- Public fear and stigma has led to Coronavirus specific victimization and increased concern over racial bias among POC
- Employed POC are especially vulnerable to Coronavirus victimization and fears of increased racial bias.
- Beyond health, financial and employment factors, Coronavirus Victimization and Coronavirus Racial Bias beliefs increase racial disparities in mental health

# Racial Justice & Mental Health Services in the Time of COVID

- It is not enough to talk about the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and Racism as if they are independent or simply a manifestation of a historical systemic racism
- Rather we need to see Coronavirus specific acts of racial victimization and and fears of Coronavirus influenced increases in racial bias as a syndemic in which these 2 epidemics interact synergistically in their effect on mental health.

# Implications for Mental Health Justice

- Failure to acknowledge the intersecting influences of race and Coronavirus public fears in treatment, can jeopardize treatment through invalidating the lived experience of POC
- When treating POC patients, cultural competence requires mental health practitioners to quickly obtain the skills to help patients practically address COVID public reactions deleterious to their mental health.

- Mental health justice
- Employment has reversed its effect on mental health
- Treat the individual for consequences- reality