Rethinking Diversity, Belonging, and Justice: The Pandemic and Vulnerable Populations

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This existed even before COVID-19
Yeji’s story

In 2015...
Problems with some infographics in media
In early 2020

Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries, like Airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus. We will be stronger than ever before!

6:51 AM · Mar 17, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone
Yeji and Fanghong’s story

In early 2020

Calling COVID-19 the “Wuhan Virus” or “China Virus” is inaccurate and xenophobic

March 12, 2020 by Marietta Vazquez

This week, my colleagues logged on to Twitter to see “#ChinaVirus” and “#WuhanVirus” trending in the United States. Most posts were written with dismay from people who couldn’t believe some government officials were influencing others to refer to COVID-19 (also known as the Coronavirus) this way.

While there is understandable unease flowing through Americans and people around the globe about the increasing spread of COVID-19, it’s important to remember that words matter and the language we use has power.
Yellow Peril:
Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indian ...

STOP AAPI HATE

National Report (through June 2021)
8/12/21 – This national report covers the 9,081 incident reports to Stop AAPI Hate from March 19, 2020 to June 30, 2021. The number of hate incidents reported to our center increased from 6,603 to 9,081 during April–June 2021. Of all incident reports, 4,548 hate incidents occurred in 2020 and 4,533 of hate incidents occurred in 2021.
Our Research
Background

The largest proportion of the international students is from Asian countries such as China, Korea, Japan, India, or the Philippines.

International graduate students are at risk of developing mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

The novel coronavirus 2019 started to spread in December 2019.
Aims

1. To investigate the relationship between racial discrimination, social isolation, and mental health among international Asian graduate students during the pandemic.

2. To explore international Asian graduate students’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to probe for their coping strategies and their mental health needs.
Methods

Study 1

- **N=177**
- **Data collection:** From July 27 to September 30, 2020
- **Survey methods:** Qualtrics (online survey platform)
- **Informed consents**
- **Measurements:** Mental Health, Social Isolation, Everyday discrimination, Perceived Racial discrimination during COVID-19, Demographics
- **Quantitative data analyses**

Study 2

- **N=23**
- **Data collection:** From September to October, 2020
- **Interview methods:** Zoom
- **Semi-structured interviews**
- **Qualitative data analyses**
Results

Data collection: July, 2020 - September, 2020

Characteristics of the participants (N=177)

- Master: 37.90%
- Doctoral: 38.40%
- Post-doc: 20.30%
- Exchange student: 3.40%

Perceived racial discrimination (N=177)

- Yes: 50.30%
- No: 49.70%
Mental health Challenges

Depression Symptoms (n=150)
- None or very mild: 47%
- Mild: 33%
- Moderate: 14%
- Severe: 6%

Anxiety Symptoms (n=150)
- None or very mild: 54%
- Mild: 34%
- Moderate: 9%
- Severe: 3%
Results

Data collection: September to October, 2020

Theme 1

“We are left alone here”: Being an international student

When the school acknowledged COVID was a serious disease, the first thing they’ve done was actually sending out the mail for everyone who's living the dormitory and saying, “you gotta get out till this weekend.” It was crazy. (Male, Age 28, Korea)

Before everyone started wearing mask, people will look at me and some will make very inappropriate racial comments. . . There was one night I was walking from home from the library, and I was wearing a mask and, there was a group of young people in the car and they stopped by and they started shouting “Corona! You got Corona? (Male, Age 25, China)
“Stay busy” and “do something”: Being a graduate student

When you started thinking of bad things, then you'll keep thinking of that. But if you're doing something, you'll be out of that bad cycle. (Male, Age 28, Korea)
Theme 3

“The graduate student organization) has its own student mental health service counsel. That is student-organized, student-run. The problem is that we don't really have a strong support not like actual support from the school to provide funding and staffing and stuff. So, our capacity is still limited. So, it'll be great if school can take a part in a more active role in pushing those services. (Male, Age 29, China)
Conclusion

Our findings suggest that efforts should focus on helping Asian international graduate students navigate the feelings of uncertainties, providing proper coping skills, make efforts on Anti-Asian racisms, and providing mental health resources.
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- Philadelphia Korean Scholars Association (PKSA)
- Graduate Student Association (GSA) at Thomas Jefferson University
- Graduate Student Association (GSA) at Drexel University
- Temple University Graduate Student Association (TUGSA)
- Pan-Asian Faculty and Staff Association (PAFSA) at University of Pennsylvania
- Pan-Asian American Community House (PAACH) at University of Pennsylvania