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Characterizing Discrimination Experiences by Race Among Homeless Adults

Quentaxia Wrighting, BS [Research Coordinator],

Baylor College of Medicine, Population Sciences Biorepository, Houston, TX

Lorraine R. Reitzel, PhD [Associate Professor],

University of Houston, Department of Psychological, Health, & Learning Sciences, Houston, TX

Tzu-An Chen, PhD [Assistant Professor],

University of Houston HEALTH Research Institute, Houston, TX

Darla E. Kendzor, PhD [Assistant Professor],

University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center, Oklahoma City, OK

Daphne C. Hernandez, PhD, MEd [Assistant Professor],

University of Houston, Department of Health & Human Performance, Houston, TX

Ezemenari M. Obasi, PhD [Professor],

University of Houston, Department of Psychological, Health, & Learning Sciences, Houston, TX

Sonakshee Shree, MPH [Research Assistant], and

University of Houston, Department of Psychological, Health, & Learning Sciences, Houston, TX

Michael S. Businelle, PhD [Associate Professor]

University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center, Oklahoma City, OK

Abstract

Objectives: Among domiciled samples, racial discrimination is a known stressor linked with poorer quality of life. However, homeless adults may be particularly vulnerable to discrimination due to multiple factors beyond race. This study characterized perceived discrimination and its reported impact on quality of life in a sample of adults who were homeless.

Methods: Homeless adults recruited from Oklahoma City self-reported their sociodemographics, past discrimination experiences, and their impact on quality of life via the MacArthur Major Experiences of Discrimination Questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and frequencies were used to

Correspondence Dr Reitzel; Lrreitzel@uh.edu.

Human Subjects Statement

The Institutional Review Boards at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center and the University of Houston approved this study. Informed consent for all study procedures was obtained before data collection.

Conflicts of Interest Statement

Authors have no competing interests pertaining to this research.

characterize perceived discrimination experiences and impact. Racial differences were examined using ANOVAs/Kruskal-Wallis tests and Chi-Square tests.

Results: Discrimination experiences attributed to homelessness were common and consistent between the races. Black adults perceived significantly more lifetime discrimination experiences than White adults, and attributed the majority to race. Relative to Whites and American Indians, Black adults were more likely to endorse links between discrimination and having a harder life.

Conclusions: Results suggest that Black homeless adults may represent the most vulnerable racial subgroup for hardships in life as a consequence of perceived discrimination among homeless adults.

Keywords

homelessness; discrimination; race; health disparities; minority health; quality of life

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the number of people who experienced homelessness on a given night grew to 554,000 in the United States, the first increase in homelessness in nearly a decade.¹ Homelessness is a major public health problem; adults who are homeless experience significant rates of premature morbidity and mortality²⁻⁴ and are significantly underserved.⁵⁻⁷ In addition to high rates of disease, homeless adults also suffer significant stressors that impact their quality of life, including low levels of social support,⁷ fear and mistrust,⁸ inadequate sleep,^{9,10} and financial strain.¹¹ One potential stressor not well-researched among this group, however, is perceived discrimination.

Discrimination is defined as the unjust, unfair, or prejudicial treatment of a person, most commonly attributed to age, sexual orientation, sex, or race.¹² Experiences with discrimination have been predominately examined within domiciled samples and have been associated with suicidal ideation,¹³ substance dependence,¹⁴ and other mental and physical health problems that negatively impact quality of life.^{15,16} Reasons for perceived discrimination vary by race;¹⁴ however, racial discrimination in particular may contribute to and maintain health problems that impact quality of life.¹⁷⁻²² Among Black adults, for example, experiences with racial discrimination are common and frequent²³⁻²⁵ and have been linked with lower self-rated health,²⁶ psychological distress,²⁷ and engaging in unhealthy behaviors while disengaging in healthy behaviors.²⁸ Individuals who are homeless, however, may be subject to discrimination for multiple reasons – including but not limited to age, sex, or race. For example, they may experience discrimination as being based on their homelessness status, socioeconomic status, and mental and physical health conditions.^{8,29} Moreover, these and other factors common within this population (eg, high rates of mental illness and substance abuse and low socioeconomic and social status) may also render them particularly vulnerable to the impacts of perceived discrimination on quality of life.³⁰⁻³²

To our knowledge, only 2 studies have directly examined perceived discrimination experienced by individuals who were homeless. In both studies, homelessness was the

predominant reported reason for perceived discrimination (by 52.9% and 61.5% of the samples, respectively), with discrimination attributed to race/ethnicity/nationality also commonly endorsed (endorsed by 23.5% and 50.6% of the sample, respectively).^{8,29} One of these studies reported linkages between perceived discrimination and the consumption of a high fat diet but not between perceived discrimination and other health risk behaviors (eg, inadequate fiber intake, low fruit/vegetable intake, inadequate physical activity, overweight/obesity).⁸ The other study linked perceived discrimination experiences to immigrant status and longer time homeless.²⁹ However, one of these studies was relatively small (N = 57; 54.4% Black), consisted only of smokers willing to participate in a cessation study, and did not examine the impacts of perceived discrimination on having a harder life and/or a less full and productive life.⁸ The other study was conducted outside the United States with a focus on refugees, included a diverse sample of adults identifying as “racialized minorities” as opposed to categorization by distinct racial groups, included only 3 domains on which perceived discrimination might be based, and was limited to individuals with moderate mental health needs.²⁹ Thus, gaps in the literature include detailed delineation of perceived discrimination experiences among a less targeted sample of homeless adults in the United States, understanding perceptions of how discrimination has made life harder or less full and productive among this group, and examination of racial variations in perceived discrimination and its impact on quality of life.

Relative to specific mental and physical health conditions, quality of life indicators tend to capture overall mental health, wellbeing, physical function, social function, satisfaction, and happiness. Consequently, quality of life indicators represent a global picture of overall status that is not disease or disorder-specific, but that may influence and be influenced by health conditions and health risk behaviors. Research with various patient groups and population subgroups has demonstrated associations between perceived discrimination and poorer quality of life.^{33–43} Studies have also supported associations between poorer quality of life and premature death.^{44,45} For these reasons, extending the literature in this area to examine how perceived discrimination has made life harder or less full and productive is important, particularly among groups at risk for poor quality of life like individuals who are homeless.

This study had the following primary aims: 1) to characterize the perceived discrimination experiences of homeless adults; 2) to examine perceived reasons for discrimination; 3) to examine the perceived impact of discrimination on quality of life; and 4) to examine how perceived discrimination and its impacts might vary by race, as measured within a large convenience sample recruited from 6 homeless-serving agencies in a large city. We hypothesized that perceived discrimination experiences would be commonly reported among this sample, particularly due to homelessness, and that discrimination would be linked to a perception of negative lifetime impacts among all racial groups.

METHODS

Participants

This cross-sectional study was conducted among a convenience sample of homeless adults from 6 homeless serving agencies in Oklahoma City, OK. The primary recruitment strategy was via flyers posted within the facilities. Individuals were eligible to participate if they

were 18 years old, were receiving services at the recruitment site/s, and earned a score of 4 on the Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine-Short Form (REALM-SF)⁴⁶ indicating a >6th grade English literacy level that is necessary to complete questionnaire items.

Procedures

Data collection occurred at 6 shelter recruitment sites in July and August of 2016. Eligible participants provided informed consent and completed questionnaires administered via a computer. Remuneration for participation entailed a \$20 department store gift card. All study procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Boards at the primary and affiliated institutions.

Study Variables

Participant characteristics.—Participant characteristics included age, sex, education (in years), length of time homeless (months over lifetime), and race, which was categorized as White, Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN), or Other/Mixed race. Due to low representation in the sample, we could not include Asian and Hispanic/Latino as separately designated sub-groups in this study.

Experiences of discrimination.—A modified version of the MacArthur Major Experiences of Discrimination Questionnaire was used to assess major experiences of discrimination over the lifetime.^{47–49} Participants self-reported the total number of times throughout their life that they perceived discrimination within the following 11 major event types: 1) being discouraged by a teacher or advisor from seeking higher education, 2) being denied a scholarship, 3) not getting hired for a job, 4) not being given a job promotion, 5) being fired, 6) being prevented from renting or buying a home in a desired neighborhood, 7) being prevented from remaining in a neighborhood because it made neighbors feel uncomfortable, 8) getting hassled by the police, 9) getting denied a bank loan, 10) being denied or provided with inferior health care, or 11) being denied or provided inferior service by a service provider.

Participants were asked “What was the *main* reason for the discrimination you experienced?” with the following options: 1) being homeless, 2) age, 3) ethnicity or nationality, 4) gender, 5) height or weight, 6) a physical disability, 7) race, 8) religion, 9) sexual orientation, 10) other aspects of appearance, 11) income/education/socioeconomic status, 12) smoking/tobacco use, or 13) other. Options 1, 11, and 12 were added to the original measure by investigators for the purposes of this study.

Perceived impacts of discrimination.—The MacArthur Major Experiences of Discrimination Questionnaire was also used to assess the perceived impacts of discrimination over the lifetime.^{47–49} Participants were asked “Overall, how much has discrimination interfered with you having a full and productive life?” (Reverse coded: 1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = some, 4 = a lot) and “Overall, how much harder has your life been because of discrimination?” (Reverse coded: 1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = some, 4 = a lot).

Statistical Analyses

The strength of associations were calculated between variables of interest, with correlational test selected based upon variable distribution and nature. Descriptive statistics (percent, mean and standard deviation) were calculated for participant characteristics and questionnaire items. Comparisons between racial groups were conducted using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) or Kruskal-Wallis test for continuous variables depending on the distribution and Chi-square test for categorical variables. Fisher exact test was used for the perceived discrimination attribution question (ie, “What was the main reason for the discrimination you experienced?”), as the expected value of one or more cells was less than 5. Significance was set at $p = 0.05$. All analyses were conducted using SAS 9.4.⁵⁰

RESULTS

In sum, 648 individuals were screened for participation in the study. A total of 38 individuals were ineligible due to an inadequate literacy level and 610 individuals enrolled in the study and completed the questionnaire. Of the 610 enrolled participants, 581 self-reported homelessness within the survey. Among the 581 enrolled and homeless participants, 15 had missing data on some study variable. Thus, 566 participants (63.43% men, $M_{age} = 43.6 \pm 12.2$ years) with complete data were included in the current analyses.

The demographic characteristics and the perceived discrimination experiences of all participants and by racial groups are presented in Table 1. On average, participants had 11.9 years of education and endorsed 42.3 months of homelessness over their lifetime (median = 28 months). The sample comprised 56.4% ($N = 319$) White, 20.3% ($N = 115$) Black, 11.8% ($N = 67$) AI/AN, and 11.5% Other/Mixed race adults ($N = 65$; 50 Other Race, 15 Mixed Race). Most participants who identified as more than 1 race reported being American Indian and White. Relative to Oklahoma City domiciled demographic data, Whites and Other/Mixed race adults were under-represented (56.4% vs 67.7% and 11.5% vs 15.0%, respectively) and Blacks and American Indians/Alaskan Natives were over-represented (20.3% vs 14.5% and 11.8% vs 2.8%, respectively).⁵¹ In the sample overall (including those who endorsed no perceived discrimination experiences), the average number of perceived discrimination experiences over their lifetime was 22.9 (median = 6 events). Approximately 73% of participants perceived 1 or more discrimination events. There were significant differences between racial subgroups in the report of ≥ 1 perceived discrimination event (67.7% White; 79.1% Black; 83.6% AI/AN; 80.0% Other/Mixed; $\chi^2 = 12.2042$, $p = .007$; not in table). Specifically, Whites reporting ≥ 1 events reported an average of 26.1 experiences, Blacks reported an average 41.9 experiences, American Indians/Alaskan Natives reported an average of 31.9 experiences, and Other/Mixed race individuals reported an average of 32.7 experiences. The most commonly reported perceived discrimination experiences were attributed to being hassled by police, not getting hired for a job, and being discouraged from seeking higher education.

There were statistically significant differences between the racial groups in months of homelessness over lifetime, discrimination total score, and several specific discrimination experience items (Table 1). White and Other/Mixed participants had fewer months of homelessness than Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native participants. Overall

(including those who reported 0 discrimination events), White participants reported significantly fewer perceived discrimination experiences relative to all other racial groups (White: 17.7 (median = 5), Black: 33.2 (median = 12), AI/AN: 26.6 (median = 11), Other/Mixed: 26.2 (median = 11)). This pattern of results was maintained with a log-transformed perceived discrimination experiences as well. With regard to specific discrimination events, White participants reported significantly fewer endorsements relative to Black participants on 9 out of the 11 perceived discrimination events, except “You were denied a bank loan?” and “You were denied or provided inferior medical care?” Compared with American Indian/Alaskan Native participants, White participants endorsed significantly fewer perceived discrimination events on 5 items including: “You were hassled by the police?” (White: 3.7 (median = 0) vs AI/AN: 7.5 (median = 3), $p < .001$) and “You were not given a job promotion?” (White: 1.6 (median = 0) vs AI/AN: 3 (median = 0), $p = .041$). Also, compared with Other/Mixed participants, White participants reported significantly fewer perceived discrimination experiences on 6 items including: “You were discouraged by a teacher or advisor from seeking higher education?” (White: 3.1 (median = 0) vs Other/Mixed: 4 (median = 1), $p = .002$), and “You were fired?” (White: 1.1 (median = 0) vs Other/Mixed: 2 (median = 0), $p = .006$). No racial differences on specific perceived discrimination events were found between Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Other/Mixed race groups.

Select correlations between variables are presented in Table 2. The number of perceived discrimination experiences over the lifetime was significantly associated with reported interference with a full and productive life and having a harder life as a result of discrimination. Longer length of time homeless was positively correlated with discrimination experiences, interference with a full and productive life, and having a harder life due to discrimination.

The distribution of the main reason for the perceived discrimination experienced differed significantly between White, Black, and American Indian/Alaskan Native groups ($p < .001$; top half of Table 3). In the sample overall, perceived discrimination was primarily attributed to homelessness (25.8%), followed by other (14.0%), then race (10.8%), and then age (9.9%). Although “being homeless” was reported as being the main reason for the perceived discrimination experienced by White (26.4%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (28.6%) and Other/Mixed race (23.1%) groups, Black adults endorsed race (33.0%) as the main reason for perceived discrimination events, followed by homelessness (24.2%). Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Other/Mixed race groups reported higher endorsements of ethnicity/nationality (2.3% White; 12.1% Black; 14.3% AI/AN; Other/Mixed 9.6%), and race (2.3% White; 33.0% Black; 10.7% AI/AN; 7.7% Other/Mixed) as being the main reasons for perceived discrimination, relative to the White group.

The perceived impacts of discrimination by race are found at bottom half of Table 3. The distribution of “How much harder has your life been because of discrimination?” showed differences for White and American Indian/Alaskan Native groups compared with Black participants. Fewer White (18.1%) and American Indian/Alaskan Native (26.8%) participants attributed that their life has been “a lot” of harder due to discrimination compared with Black participants (35.2%); whereas more White (26.9%) and American Indian/Alaskan Native (32.1%) participants indicated life has not been harder at all because

of discrimination as compared with Black participants (13.2%). There were no differences between racial groups on perceptions of how much discrimination had interfered with having a full and productive life.

DISCUSSION

To the authors' knowledge, the current study is the first to fully delineate everyday perceived discrimination experiences among homeless adults in the United States and to examine the self-reported effect of discrimination experiences on 2 quality of life impact dimensions. Further, this study is believed to be the first to examine variation in perceived discrimination experiences and impacts by race among this group. Consequently, this study adds a distinctive perspective to the current literature by characterizing a potential determinant of quality of life for individuals who are homeless.

Results indicated that homelessness was a commonly endorsed reason for perceived discrimination among this sample, and one that was endorsed roughly equally between the racial groups. However, Black adults were the only group to endorse race as the primary reason for the perceived discrimination they experienced, relative to homelessness. Importantly, results indicated that the negative lifetime impact of discrimination (having a "harder life") was disproportionately endorsed by Black adults relative to their racial counterparts in this sample. However, there were no significant differences in endorsement of perceived discrimination interfering with having a full and productive life between racial groups, though only about a quarter of the sample denied an impact. Although not measured in this study, racial socialization and racial identity may be protective factors promoting resiliency against some impacts of perceived discrimination and explain this pattern of results.⁵²⁻⁵⁵ Specifically, even though someone might have a harder life because of perceived racial discrimination, other factors may be more important in influencing the degree of fulfillment and/or productivity in life. However, findings suggest that, even among non-domiciled samples, perceived discrimination is disproportionately linked to race for Black adults rather than other personal or circumstantial characteristics.

Evident in results was the greater frequency of perceived discrimination experiences endorsed by Black adults ($M = 33.2$), American Indians/Alaskan Natives ($M = 26.6$), and individuals self-identifying as other or mixed races ($M = 26.2$) relative to Whites ($M = 17.7$). The greater frequency of perceived discrimination among Black adults, in particular, and other adults ascribing to a minority race/ethnicity relative to Whites has also been found in the literature among domiciled samples.^{47,56} That Black participants endorsed the highest frequency of perceived discrimination experiences may account for the racially disproportional attributed impact of discrimination on having a harder life among this group. That said, the difference in number of perceived discrimination events reported by Black and American Indians/Alaskan Native participants was not a statistically significant one, and yet Black participants were significantly more likely than American Indians/Alaskan Native participants to report having a harder life as a result of these perceived events. Although not measured in this study, this pattern of findings may be attributable to regional factors (eg, because Black adults have low representation in the Oklahoma population, some social support structures may not have been fully embedded into Oklahoma communities for this

group to benefit from them) or perhaps indicative of phenotypic (darker vs lighter skin) aspects of discrimination (eg, Black adults, relative to other population groups in this study, may have darker skin, which has been previously linked with discrimination severity and impacts^{57–59}). Overall, results suggest that even among a subpopulation (ie, homeless adults) united by multiple and myriad vulnerabilities that might underlie perceived discrimination, Black homeless adults reported experiencing the most discrimination events over their lifetime and may therefore be most negatively affected by it – at least as far as it contributing to the experience of a harder life in comparison to homeless adults identifying as White or American Indian/Alaskan Native.

It is notable that the number of lifetime perceived discrimination experiences were significantly correlated with months of homelessness over lifetime and both lifetime impact measures (“Overall, how much has discrimination interfered with you having a full and productive life?” and “Overall, how much harder has your life been because of discrimination?”). Results, albeit cross-sectional, support previous findings linking perceived discrimination experiences with negative outcomes,^{13–22, 33–43} and may suggest that discrimination experiences contribute to the chronic homelessness or that chronic homelessness contributes to perceived discrimination experiences. Likewise, months homeless was correlated with quality of life impact variables. Although not directly measured in this study, results suggest that interventions to shorten length of time homeless may result in improved quality of life, potentially through reductions in perceived discrimination. Future causal modeling studies may shed additional light on these associations.

Results of this study contribute to understanding the social determinants of quality of life among individuals affected by homelessness and also provide information about frequent sources of perceived discrimination (eg, being hassled by police, not hired for a job, and discouraged from seeking higher education) that are relevant to homeless-serving agencies. In particular, shelter leaders may consider working with their local stakeholders to, for example, ensure that negative interactions with the police are minimized. This could be accomplished through trainings that help law enforcement better understand the homeless population via increased sensitivity to their vulnerabilities, education provision to shelter residents about preventive behaviors, and – when possible – the promotion of “safe places” to spend time during the day. Homeless-serving agencies may also want to consider, if this is not already in practice, working with local housing authorities to minimize housing discrimination and promote transitional housing and low-income, single-occupancy residency unit facilities that are designed to serve this group. Also, homeless-serving agencies who work with their guests to secure employment may, to the extent possible, consider building a network of local organizations willing to hire individuals who experience homelessness, and conduct outreach to local companies to promote the benefits of hiring their guests. Results, however, highlight the realities of discrimination experienced among those seeking employment, particularly among those who are Black and may experience a double-discrimination disadvantage. Additionally, racial discrimination may also serve as a barrier to equitable affordable housing opportunities for Black adults. As such, homeless-serving agencies may consider promoting legal representation for those who have

experienced discrimination to defend against illegal practices and to further help their guests.

The current study extends the literature to link perceived discrimination with a poorer quality of life within a homeless sample. Individuals who are homeless represent a unique and vulnerable population with high rates of physical and behavioral health comorbidities that impact mortality and morbidity.^{2–7} Given that a poorer quality of life has been linked with premature death in the literature,^{44,45} the current results suggest the need for additional research on mechanisms that underlie the potential discrimination to quality of life pathway within homeless samples. Previous literature in this area conducted among patient and other population subgroups suggest possible mediators that could be examined in the context of homeless samples, including but not limited to increased allostatic load and health risk behavior engagement as a form of coping.^{33–43} Mechanistic research of this nature can reveal targets for behavioral interventions to address and possibly prevent the effects of discrimination before they impact quality of life among homeless adults.

Although this sample comprised a diverse group of homeless adults from multiple shelters in an urban area, findings may not translate to homeless adults who live in rural areas or reside in other areas of the country. Additionally, the sample excluded children and unaccompanied youth who were homeless. Other limitations include that the study relied on self-reported data which may be subject to pertinent biases (eg, over- or under-reporting experiences of discrimination throughout the lifetime) and the cross-sectional design of the study, which can only address correlational associations between discrimination experiences and lifetime impacts. In addition, perceived discrimination events were assessed across the lifetime, and homelessness is temporal and changeable whereas race is not. Therefore, experiences with racial discrimination may have been more chronic in nature than experiences with discrimination on the basis of homelessness. Future research in this area should examine how experiences with perceived discrimination and their attribution and impact vary over time by race among this group. Also, many participants reported “other” as the main reason for the discrimination they perceived; however, what constitutes “other” is unknown. Future studies on this topic should include an open text box for participants to describe other reasons for perceived discrimination. Although many of the significant pair-wise differences were attributed to Black vs White participants, Blacks they only made up 20% of the sample relative to their over 40% representation nationally among homeless adults.¹ Also, relative to national estimates where American Indians make up 3% of the homeless population, this group was over-represented in this Oklahoma sample, at 12%.¹ Future studies in this area would benefit from purposeful sampling by race (and ethnicity) to ensure adequate representation of diverse groups.

In conclusion, there is a dearth of literature on homeless adults in general, and even less on the perceived discrimination experiences of homeless adults and how they vary by race. Two prior studies in this area, one amongst homeless adults described as “racialized minorities” with behavioral health needs in Canada²⁹ and another among American homeless adults who were smokers willing to participate in a cessation study,⁸ were consistent with the current study in that the top 2 reasons endorsed for perceived discrimination were homelessness and race, respectively. Neither study, however, delineated the experiences with

discrimination by race, examined the self-reported impacts of discrimination on quality of life, or assessed how those impacts varied by race. The current study contributes to the literature with findings that discrimination experiences attributed to homelessness were common and consistent between the races; however, Black participants were the only racial subgroup to endorse race as the predominant reason for perceived discrimination, and were the also most likely to endorse links between perceived discrimination and having a harder life. Findings suggest that Black homeless adults may represent the most vulnerable racial subgroup for hardships in life as a consequence of perceived discrimination among homeless adults. As quality of life indicators have been associated with premature mortality,^{44,45} links between perceived discrimination and greater self-reported hardships in life in this vulnerable group suggest the need for targeted intervention.

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Table 1.

Participant Characteristics and Perceived Discrimination Overall and by Race among Homeless Adults in Oklahoma City, OK (N = 566).

	All Participants (N = 566)	White ^a (N = 319)	Black ^b (N = 115)	AI/AN ^c (N = 67)	Other/Mix ^d (N = 65)	p value
	Mean (SD) /Median	Mean (SD) /Median	Mean (SD) /Median	Mean (SD) /Median	Mean (SD) /Median	
Age in years	43.63 (12.15) / 44	43.42 (12.09) / 44	44.04 (12.33) / 45	45.72 (11.19) / 47	41.82 (12.98) / 42	.301
Sex, N men [% men]	359 [63.43]	203 [63.64]	78 [67.83]	36 [53.73]	42 [64.42]	.293
Education in years	11.94 (2.05) / 12	11.81 (1.92) / 12	11.90 (2) / 12	11.91 (2.4) / 12	12.65 (2.27) / 12	.293
Months homeless over lifetime	42.33 (51.4) / 28.02	39.44 (51.62) / 24	48.76 (53.61) / 37.07	52.68 (50.54) / 39	34.51 (45.14) / 24	.006 ^{ab} ^{***} ^{ac} ^{ad} ^{bd} ^{cd}
Discrimination Total Score	22.86 (44.64) / 6	17.68 (38.31) / 5	33.17 (58.44) / 12	26.64 (44.18) / 11	26.17 (43.02) / 11	. ^{***} ^{ac} ^{ad}
You were discouraged by a teacher or advisor from seeking higher education?	3.48 (9.42) / 0	3.08 (10.14) / 0	4.33 (8.1) / 1	3.42 (8.1) / 0	3.97 (9.26) / 1	< .001 ^{ab} ^{***} ^{ac} ^{ad}
You were denied a scholarship?	0.70 (3.44) / 0	0.35 (1.33) / 0	1.34 (5.39) / 0	0.54 (1.79) / 0	1.48 (6.21) / 0	. ^{***} ^{ad}
You were not hired for a job?	3.53 (8.94) / 0	2.97 (8.14) / 0	5.80 (12.91) / 1	2.99 (6.88) / 1	2.82 (4.33) / 1	.001 ^{ab} ^{***} ^{ad}
You were not given a job promotion?	2.10 (7.15) / 0	1.63 (6) / 0	2.90 (7.22) / 0	2.97 (11.11) / 0	2.09 (7.06) / 0	.001 ^{ab} ^{***} ^{ac}
You were fired?	1.56 (6.01) / 0	1.12 (4.08) / 0	2.20 (5.76) / 0	2.18 (11.03) / 0	1.98 (7) / 0	.003 ^{ab} ^{***} ^{ad}
You were prevented from renting or buying a home in the neighborhood you wanted?	1.30 (3.69) / 0	0.92 (3.2) / 0	2.23 (4.69) / 0	1.46 (3.97) / 0	1.37 (3.46) / 0	.001 ^{ab} ^{***} ^{ac} ^{ad}
You were prevented from remaining in neighborhood because neighbors made life so uncomfortable?	0.93 (2.72) / 0	0.80 (2.75) / 0	1.37 (3.55) / 0	0.90 (1.61) / 0	0.86 (1.59) / 0	.012 ^{ab} ^{***} ^{ac} ^{ad}
You were hassled by the police?	4.98 (12.7) / 0	3.70 (11.51) / 0	6.60 (12.21) / 2	7.52 (14.66) / 3	5.78 (16.1) / 1	< .001 ^{ab} ^{***} ^{ac}
You were denied a bank loan?	1.22 (6.37) / 0	0.59 (2.16) / 0	1.92 (7.78) / 0	2.54 (12.48) / 0	1.74 (7.86) / 0	.078
You were denied or provided inferior medical care?	1.82 (6.65) / 0	1.69 (6.19) / 0	1.83 (5.91) / 0	1.13 (2.64) / 0	3.09 (11.35) / 0	.135
You were denied or provided inferior service by a plumber, car mechanic, or other service provider?	1.23 (4.83) / 0	0.83 (2.96) / 0	2.63 (9.01) / 0	1.00 (2.59) / 0	0.98 (2.52) / 0	.004 ^{ab} ^{***}

Note: Perceived discrimination was assessed with the MacArthur Major Experiences of Discrimination Questionnaire. AI/AN = American Indian/Alaskan Native.

* p < .05

** p < .01

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p < .001. Responses to items referring to specific discrimination experiences were applicable only to the 73.32% of participants who endorsed 1 discrimination experienced over the lifetime.
Comparisons between racial groups were conducted using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) or Kruskal-Wallis test for continuous variables depending on the distribution and Chi-square test for categorical variables.

Table 2.

Intercorrelation of Variables of Interest among Homeless Adults in Oklahoma City, OK (N = 566).

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age						
2. Sex (ref: men)	-0.12**					
3. Education in years	0.06	0.06				
4. Months homeless over lifetime	0.28***	-0.11*	-0.06			
5. Perceived Discrimination: Total Number of Events	0.13**	-0.07	0.01	0.22***		
6. Overall, how much has discrimination interfered with you having a full and productive life?	-0.02	0.01	-0.03	0.17***	0.48***	
7. Overall, how much harder has your life been because of discrimination?	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.17***	0.50***	0.83***

* Note: $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

$p < .001$. Spearman correlations, which takes into account non-normal variable distribution, were used for associations with the following exceptions: Point-biserial correlations were used for sex and a Polychoric correlation was used for items 6 and 7. Items 6 and 7 were reverse coded such that higher values indicate more negative impact.

Table 3.

Discrimination Attributions and Perceived Impacts Overall and by Race among Homeless Adults in Oklahoma City, OK (N = 566).

	All Participants (N = 566)	White ^a (N = 319)	Black ^b (N = 115)	AI/AN ^c (N = 67)	Other/Mix ^d (N = 65)	
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	p value
What was the main reason for the discrimination you experienced?						< .001 ^{ab} *** ^{ac} **
Being homeless	107 (25.78)	57 (26.39)	22 (24.18)	16 (28.57)	12 (23.08)	
Your age	41 (9.88)	23 (10.65)	5 (5.49)	7 (12.50)	6 (11.54)	
Your ethnicity or nationality	29 (6.99)	5 (2.31)	11 (12.09)	8 (14.29)	5 (9.62)	
Your gender	19 (4.58)	10 (4.63)	4 (4.40)	2 (3.57)	3 (5.77)	
Your height or weight	9 (2.17)	7 (3.24)	1 (1.10)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.92)	
A Physical disability	16 (3.86)	12 (5.56)	1 (1.10)	1 (1.79)	2 (3.85)	
Your race	45 (10.84)	5 (2.31)	30 (32.97)	6 (10.71)	4 (7.69)	
Your religion	7 (1.69)	3 (1.39)	2 (2.20)	0 (0.00)	2 (3.85)	
Your sexual orientation	11 (2.65)	10 (4.63)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.92)	
Some other aspect of your appearance	36 (8.67)	23 (10.65)	6 (6.59)	4 (7.14)	3 (5.77)	
Your income/ education/ socioeconomic status	31 (7.47)	18 (8.33)	3 (3.30)	6 (10.71)	4 (7.69)	
Smoking/ tobacco use	6 (1.45)	4 (1.85)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (3.85)	
Other	58 (13.98)	39 (18.06)	6 (6.59)	6 (10.71)	7 (13.46)	
Overall, how much has discrimination interfered with you having a full and productive life?						.298
A lot	94 (22.65)	39 (18.06)	26 (28.57)	12 (21.43)	17 (32.69)	
Some	132 (31.81)	72 (33.33)	31 (34.07)	16 (28.57)	13 (25.00)	
A little	84 (20.24)	43 (19.91)	16 (17.58)	13 (23.21)	12 (23.08)	
Not at all	105 (25.3)	62 (28.70)	18 (19.78)	15 (26.79)	10 (19.23)	
Overall, how much harder has your life been because of discrimination?						.030 ^{ab} *** ^{bc} *
A lot	102 (24.58)	39 (18.06)	32 (35.16)	15 (26.79)	16 (30.77)	
Some	98 (23.61)	53 (24.54)	21 (23.08)	13 (23.21)	11 (21.15)	
A little	115 (27.71)	66 (30.56)	26 (28.57)	10 (17.86)	13 (25.00)	
Not at all	100 (24.1)	58 (26.85)	12 (13.19)	18 (32.14)	12 (23.08)	

Note: Perceived discrimination was assessed with the MacArthur Major Experiences of Discrimination Questionnaire. AI/AN = American Indian/Alaskan Native.

*
p < .05
**

p < .01

Responses to items in the table were applicable only to the 73.32% of participants who endorsed 1 discrimination experience over the lifetime. Comparisons between racial groups were conducted using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) or Kruskal-Wallis test for continuous variables depending on the distribution and Chi-square test for categorical variables. Fisher exact test was used for the discrimination attribution question (ie, “What was the main reason for the discrimination you experienced?”), as the expected value of one or more cells was less than 5.