

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DISCRIMINATION AND DRIVE  
FOR MUSCULARITY IN ASIAN AND ASIAN AMERICAN  
MEN

by

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## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

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Asian/Asian American men endorse amongst the highest rates of body dissatisfaction across racial groups. However, there has been little research conducted on how experiences with race-related discrimination are connected to Asian men's body image and related behaviors. It was hypothesized that experiences with race-related discrimination would be associated with the greater drive for muscularity, and that this association would be stronger amongst those with greater internalization of the Western masculine body ideal (muscularity and thinness). Participants completed an online survey answering questions regarding their demographics, experiences with racism, drive for muscularity, and internalization of muscularity and thinness appearance ideals. The primary results showed that there was a significant, positive link between Asian/Asian American men's experiences with both racism and microaggressions and the drive for muscularity,  $B's = 2.10-2.21, p's < .001$ . Internalization of the thinness and muscularity appearance ideals functioned as moderators for both experiences with racism and microaggressions, with differential exacerbating and mitigating influences ( $B = -.17-.24, p's < .001$ ). Importantly, Asian/Asian American men who experienced high microaggressions and had higher internalization of the thinness ideal endorsed the

most severe drive for muscularity,  $p < .001$ . These findings indicate that experiences with discrimination can lead to increased harmful behaviors aimed at achieving the Western masculine body ideal. These data may help to inform the development of culturally specific interventions aimed at improving body image and associated behaviors in young Asian and Asian American men.

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## Introduction

The nation's Asian population rose to 11.9 million in 2000 and then nearly doubled to 22.4 million in 2019 – an 88% increase within two decades, making it one of the fastest growing immigrant communities in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). As of 2019, Asian-Americans account for 5.7% of the nation's population (Office of Minority Health, 2019). The largest ethnic subgroups are the Chinese, then Filipinos, Asian Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Within this growing community in the United States, Asian Americans have historically been targets of racism and microaggressions (Yoo et al., 2010). Asian immigrants first arrived in the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to provide cheap labor in the mining, agricultural, and railroad industries, but were severely mistreated and subject to inhumane working conditions (Chen et al., 2020). The sudden influx of Asian immigrants correlated with the rise of xenophobia of Asian immigrants. Xenophobia is defined as the hostile attitudes or aggressive behavior toward people of other nationalities, ethnic groups, regions, or neighborhoods (American Psychological Association, 2021). Anti-Asian sentiment ultimately culminated into the passage of laws like the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which is the only American law that denied immigration and naturalization of a single ethnicity, and the 1924 Immigration Act, that barred immigration from Asian countries (Chen et al., 2020). During World War II, anti-Asian sentiment was amplified with the help of wartime propaganda as Americans of Japanese descent were forced into internment camps out of fear of sabotage (Chen et al., 2020). In the wake of the current COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Asian sentiment has



reemerged and amplified, further making Asian Americans especially vulnerable to racism due to the origin of the virus (Chen et al., 2020).

Racism, defined by American Psychological Association, is a form of prejudice that assumes that the members of racial categories have distinctive characteristics and that these differences result in some racial groups being inferior to others (American Psychological Association, 2021). Microaggressions are brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or situational indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights or insults, especially toward members of minority or oppressed groups (American Psychological Association, 2021). Racism related to being an ethnic minority, like experiences with discrimination and cultural conflict, have been shown to increase anxiety, depression, psychological distress in Asian/Asian American populations (Yoo et al., 2010). In one study, Asian/Asian Americans in low race-related stress conditions reported decreased subjective well-being as race-related stress increased (Iwamoto et al., 2010).

Preliminary data suggest microaggressions and racism may also impact Asian/Asian American men's disordered eating behaviors. Kelly and colleagues (2017) found that experiences with both overt racism and microaggressions were associated with loss of control (LOC) eating in young Asian and Asian American men living in the United States. Asian American men might be at higher risk for disordered eating attitudes and behaviors consistent with a desire to achieve a muscular body type (Kelly et al., 2015). This may be because Asian/Asian American men rate themselves as less masculine, more feminine and less attractive than their non-Asian peers (Iwamoto & Liu, 2009). Asian/Asian American men have also been characterized as being feminine

and unmasculine by White females (Wilkins et al., 2011). A study conducted by Wilkins et al., (2011) revealed that Asian men with higher rates of phenotypic prototypicality (PP) reported lower perceived masculinity. PP is defined as the degree to which an individual's physical appearance is perceived to be prototypical of his/her group (Wilkins et al., 2011). More importantly, they also demonstrated that higher PP was related to lower perceived attractiveness; thus, a more Asian a man looks, the less attractive he is perceived as being to Whites (Wilkins et al., 2011). Prominent stereotypes of Asian American men in American society include perceptions that they are effeminate, asexual, lacking in masculinity, and physically weak (Iwamoto & Liu, 2009). These harmful stereotypes may result in Asian/Asian American men going to extreme lengths to achieve the lean and muscular, Western appearance ideal.

### **The Drive for Muscularity**

Asian American men may cope with harmful appearance-based stereotypes by focusing on seemingly changeable physical features, such as body weight and muscle mass (Barnett et al., 2001). Asian American men who experienced greater racism reported higher levels of attitudes toward achieving muscularity (Cheng et al., 2016). Drive for muscularity is defined as an individual's desire to be highly muscular related to their internalization of societal expectations of a lean and highly muscular body type (Edwards, Tod, & Molnar, 2014; McCreary & Sasse, 2000). It was also found that Asian/Asian American men who were more acculturated to mainstream culture were also more likely to endorse muscle enhancing behaviors, like anabolic steroids and supplements (Cheng et al., 2016). Findings suggest that Asian American college men who reported higher internalization of men in media and men who subscribed strongly

to the athletic-ideal internalization reported greater levels of drive for muscularity attitudes compared to men who did not internalize these ideals (Cheng et al., 2016). Asian American men with a stronger adherence to the athletic ideals portrayed in media were also more likely to engage in behaviors to enhance muscle mass (Cheng et al., 2016).

Other studies found that masculinity predicted higher levels of depressive symptoms (Iwamoto et al., 2010). However, there has been little research conducted on how experiences with race-related discrimination are connected to Asian men's body image and related behaviors. Furthermore, the correlation between discrimination and drive for muscularity has yet to be examined.

### **Internalization of Western Male Body Ideals**

Drive for muscularity may also result from Asian/Asian American men striving to achieve the Western male body ideal. The Western male ideal is associated with an aggressive, highly muscular, and "macho" concept, which contradicts the stereotypes often associated with Asian/Asian American men (Keum, 2016). Internalization of the Western male ideal is the nonconscious mental process by which the characteristics of the highly muscular and lean body type are idealized and assimilated into one's own (Keum, 2016). Prominent stereotypes of Asian American men in American society include perceptions that they are effeminate, asexual, lacking in masculinity, and physically weak and are stereotyped as less masculine and more feminine (Wilkins et al., 2011, Iwamoto & Liu, 2009). Asian/Asian American men also rate themselves as less attractive than their non-Asian peers, and these stereotypes may result in taking more body altering behaviors as a way to achieve the masculine ideal (Barnett et al.,

2002; Wilkins et al., 2011). Moreover, men who internalize the Western male body ideal and find it to be the more attractive body type could exhibit higher drive for muscularity (Cheng et al., 2016).

### **Specific Aims and Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the link between racial discrimination and muscularity-enhancing behaviors and cognitions in young Asian American men. Although understudied and underrepresented in the current body of eating disorder research, Asian American men are an especially high-risk sample that endorse among the most frequent and severe disordered eating pathology across ethnic groups. Preliminary data indicate that experiences with race-related discrimination are associated with loss of control eating—the subjective experience of being unable to control or how much or what is being eaten. It is unknown whether experiences of race-related discrimination are associated with behaviors aimed to increase muscularity. This may be especially relevant to Asian American men, who often perceive themselves and are rated by others as smaller, more feminine, and less masculine than their non-Asian counterparts. Another aim of this study is to investigate the link between Asian American men's experiences with race-related discrimination and the behavioral drive for muscularity (e.g., excessive exercise, steroid use, supplement consumption). The goal is to add to a small but growing body of research investigating the association between sociocultural factors for disordered eating and excessive/compulsive exercise in Asian American men, a historically underrepresented yet high risk group. Hopefully these data can inform the development and implementation of culturally specific interventions

aimed at improving body image and eating behaviors in young Asian and Asian American men.

The study hypotheses were:

1. Greater experiences with both overt racism and microaggressions would be associated with greater drive for muscularity in young Asian/Asian American men.
2. Greater internalization of the muscularity and thinness appearance ideal will exacerbate the link between experiences with racism the drive for muscularity in young, Asian/Asian American men.

## Methods

Participants were obtained through Qualtrics Panels, who utilized social media outlets to recruit diverse participants. Data were collected between January 2017-February 2017. The criteria to participate in the study were as follows: self-identifying as 18-to-30-years-old, male, Asian or Asian American, and English fluency. There were four constructs of interest for this thesis that were recorded through the survey questionnaires: participant demographics, experiences with racism, drive for muscularity, and internalization of muscularity and thinness appearance ideals (described in detail below).

### Measures

*Demographics.* Participants self-reported through an online survey their age; height (ft, in) and weight (lbs.), from which body mass index (BMI) in kg/m<sup>2</sup> was calculated. The participants' ethnicity; generation status; geographic region; education status; employment status; marital status; income; geographic region; and presence of a psychiatric diagnosis were also recorded.

*Experiences with Racism in Asian Americans.* All participants completed the 13-item Asian American Racism-Related Stress Inventory (M. J. Miller, Kim, Chen, & Alvarez, 2012), which assessed participants' experiences with both overt racism and microaggressions. Items (e.g., "Someone asks you what your real name is") were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (This has never happened to me or someone I know) to 5 (This event happened, and I was extremely upset), with a higher mean score related to increased experienced with racism. The internal consistency rating for both the overt racism and microaggressions subscales were good,  $\alpha = .83$  and  $.85$ , respectively.

*Drive for Muscularity.* The 15-item Drive for Muscularity Scale (DMS; McCreary & Sasse, 2000) was used to assess drive for muscularity. The DMS measures drive for muscularity across both cognitive and behavioral dimensions. In the current study, the total mean score was used to measure both cognitive (e.g., “I think a lot about looking more muscular:”) and behavioral dimensions (e.g., "I lift weights to build up muscle"). Participants rated the frequency with which they engaged in behaviors with the intention to increase muscularity, or thought about their desire to increase their muscularity, on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 6 (always). Items were summed and then averaged, with higher scores indicated a greater behavioral drive for muscularity. The internal consistency rating for the DMS was excellent,  $\alpha = .91$ .

*Internalization of muscularity and thinness appearance ideals.* Ten items from the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (Schaefer et al., 2015) assessed the moderators, internalization of muscularity (“I think a lot about looking muscular”) and thinness (“I want my body to look very thin”) ideals. Questions were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= Definitely Disagree to 5 = Definitely Agree), with higher scores indicating greater internalization of either thinness or muscularity. The internal consistency rating for the internalization of muscularity and thinness domains were good,  $\alpha = .80$  and  $\alpha = .86$ , respectively.

## **Data Analytic Plan**

The data gathered from the surveys were organized and analyzed using the software IBM SPSS Statistics V.27. Linear regressions models assessed the association between both overt racism and microaggressions, and the drive for muscularity. The internalization of thinness and muscularity appearance ideals were examined as moderators.

Linear regression models examined the two main effects: 1) Experiences with overt racism and the drive for muscularity and 2) Experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity. Linear regression moderation models examined the moderating effects of the internalization of appearance ideals and the drive for muscularity: 1) Internalization of muscularity as a moderator for the link between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity, 2) Internalization of thinness as a moderator for the link between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity, 3) Internalization of muscularity as a moderator for the link between experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity, 4) Internalization of thinness as a moderator for the link between experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity.

For the main effects, the covariates were entered into the first block of the regression model and independent variables were entered into the second block of the regression model. For moderation models, covariates were entered into the first level of the regression model, and to reduce concerns with multicollinearity, centered independent and moderator variables were entered into the second level of the



regression model. Interaction terms between the centered independent and moderator variables were entered into the third and final level of the regression models.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

Participants included 266 Asian/Asian American men ( $M_{\text{age}} = 24.4 \pm 3.6\text{y}$ ;  $M_{\text{BMI}} = 24.2 \pm 5.6 \text{ kg/m}^2$ ; 24.5% Chinese, 17.0% Indian, and 12.4% Filipino). 32.7% of the men in our sample reported being born outside the U.S., 44.4% reported being 1<sup>st</sup> generation, and 23% reported being 2<sup>nd</sup> generation or higher. Results showed that there were no significant differences with regards to our variables of interest by generational status. Of the participants in the sample, 44.0% reported living in urban locations and 42.9% reported living in suburban locations. Additionally, 52.3% of the sample reported having a 4-year college degree; 68.7% reported part- or full-time employment; and 54.2% reported an annual income greater than \$40,000. 80.5% of participants denied a psychiatric diagnosis and 43.9% reported current student status. Correlations among variables are reported in Table 1 (*Pearson's R's* = -.02 to .45).

Table 1.

## Sample Demographics

*Note.* BMI = body mass index

	Full Sample ( <i>N</i> = 266)
	% or <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Age (years)	24.4 (3.6)
Ethnicity	
Chinese	24.5%
Indian	17.0%
Filipino	12.4%
Vietnamese	10.4%
American Indian	10.0%
Korean	8.7%
Other Asian	17.7%
BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	24.2 (5.6)
Geographic Region	
Urban	44.0%
Suburban	42.9%
Rural	7.1%
Education	
≤High school	21.4%
Some college	26.3%
≥4-year college degree	52.3%
School Status	
In school	43.9%
Not in school	56.1%
Marital status	
Single	62.6%
Married	19.6%
Other	17.8%
Employment Status	
Disability	3.8%
Unemployed	27.5%
Employed part-time	24.9%
Employed full-time	43.8%
Annual income	
<\$19,000	25.5%
\$20,000-29,000	13.9%
\$30,000-39,999	6.4%
\$40,000+	54.5%
Presence of a Psychiatric Diagnosis	
No	80.5%
Yes	19.5%

Table 2.

*Covariate, Independent, Dependent, and Moderator Variable Correlations*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	<i>M (SD)</i>
1. BMI									24.16 (5.56)
2. Education	-.02								3.00 (mode)
3. Income	-.04	.37**							4.00 (mode)
4. Psychiatric Dx	.06	-.08	-.08						19.55(% present)
5. Microaggressions	.10	.07	.08	-.05					2.15 (0.89)
6. Racism	.10	.08	.13	.04	.60**				2.60 (0.92)
7. Thinness	.14	.06	.10	.02	.29**	.21**			2.94 (0.89)
8. Muscularity	.06	.18*	.14*	-.02	.30**	.36**	.65**		3.14 (0.96)
9. Drive for Muscularity	.04	.04	.15*	-.04	.29**	.22**	.35**	.49**	3.17 (1.11)

*Note.* Spearman's  $\rho$  correlations were reported for categorical variables;

Pearson's  $r$  correlations were reported for all continuous variables; Mean

and SD values were reported unless otherwise noted; BMI = Body mass

index; Education = highest level of educational attainment (1 = high school

degree or less; 2 = some college; 3 = 4-year college degree or more);

Income = annual income in U.S. dollars (1= less than \$19,000; 2 =

\$20,000-29,000; 3 = \$30,000-39,000; 4 = \$40,000 and over); Psychiatric

Dx = Presence of a psychiatric diagnosis (% that report a current

diagnosis); Asian Values = Adherence to traditional Asian values;

Muscularity = Internalization of muscularity appearance ideal; Thinness =

Internalization of thinness appearance ideal; EDSX = Exercise dependence

symptoms

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

## Primary Analyses

Data were first examined for normality and missingness. Missing data were minimal (< 2%) so listwise deletion was employed (Buhi et al., 2008). All analyses adjusted for BMI, highest level of education, annual income, and presence of a psychiatric diagnosis. There was a significant, positive link between Asian/Asian American men's experiences with overt racism and the drive for muscularity,  $F(1, 250) = 13.35$ ,  $B = 2.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.08$ . There was also a significant, positive link between experiences with Asian/Asian American men's experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity,  $F(1, 250) = 25.13$ ,  $B = 2.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.12$ .

Table 3.

Multiple Linear Regression Models for Experiences with Racism and Drive for Muscularity with Internalization of Thinness and Muscularity as Moderators

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p-value</i>
df (1, 250)					
Level 1	BMI	.01	.01	.04	.56
	Education	-.04	.10	-.03	.71
	Income	.12	.06	.15	.03
	Psychiatric Dx	-.18	.18	-.06	.32
Level 2	Racism	.27	.08	.13*	.00
	$R^2$		.03		
	F for $\Delta R^2$		13.35		.16

df(1, 250)

Level 1	BMI	.01	.01	.04	.53
	Education	-.04	.09	-.03	.69
	Income	.12	.06	.14	.04
	Psychiatric Dx	-.18	.18	-.07	.30
Level 2	Racism	.23	.07	.19	.00
	Thinness	.40	.08	.32	.00
Level 3	Racism*Thinness	-.17	.07	-.15	.01
	R <sup>2</sup>		.20		
	F for $\Delta R^2$		.18		.18

df(1, 250)

Level 1	BMI	.01	.01	.04	.53
	Education	-.04	.09	-.03	.69
	Income	.12	.06	.14	.04
	Psychiatric Dx	-.18	.18	-.07	.30
Level 2	Racism	.11	.07	.09	.11
	Muscularity	.56	.07	.48	.00
Level 3	Racism*Muscularity	-.17	.06	-.15	.01
	R <sup>2</sup>		.18		
	F for $\Delta R^2$		.18		.18

df(1, 250)

Level 1	BMI	.01	.01	.04	.58
	Education	-.04	.09	-.03	-.38
	Income	.12	.06	.15	2.16
	Psychiatric Dx	-.12	.18	-.06	.32
Level 2	Microaggressions	.38	.08	.30	5.01
	R <sup>2</sup>		.01		
	F for $\Delta R^2$		25.13		.16

df(1, 250)					
Level 1	BMI	.01	.01	.04	.62
	Education	-.04	.09	-.03	-.40
	Income	.12	.06	.14	2.08
	Psychiatric Dx	-.18	.18	-.07	.30
Level 2	Microaggressions	.30	.08	.24	4.06
	Muscularity	.50	.07	.43	7.48
Level 3	Microaggression*Muscularity	-.24	.07	-.20	-3.60
	R <sup>2</sup>		.01		
	F for $\Delta R^2$		.32		.18
df(1, 250)					
Level 1	BMI	.01	.01	.04	.53
	Education	-.04	.09	-.03	.69
	Income	.12	.06	.14	.04
	Psychiatric Dx	-.18	.18	-.07	.30
Level 2	Microaggressions	.35	.08	.28	.00
	Thinness	.35	.08	.27	.00
Level 3	Microaggressions*Thinness	-.22	.08	-.17	.01
	R <sup>2</sup>		.01		
	F for $\Delta R^2$		.20		.18

*Note.* df = degrees of freedom; BMI = body mass index; Psychiatric Dx = presence of a psychiatric diagnosis; Asian Values\*Internalization Muscularity = the interaction between adherence to Asian values and internalization of muscularity appearance ideals; Asian Values\*Internalization Thinness = the interaction between adherence to Asian values and internalization of thinness appearance ideals; \* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .001$

## **Moderation Analyses**

The internalization of both muscularity and thinness appearance ideals were also evaluated as potential moderators. The link between experiences with overt racism and the drive for muscularity was positive among men with low internalization of the muscular appearance ideal and negative among men with high internalization of the muscular appearance ideal,  $F(1, 250) = 33.98$ ,  $B = -.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.31$ , shown in Figure 1. The drive for muscularity was highest among men with high internalization of the muscular ideal and low experiences with racism. The drive for muscularity was lowest among Asian/Asian American men with low internalization of the muscular appearance ideal and low experiences with racism.

The internalization of the thin male ideal moderated the link between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity in Asian/Asian American men,  $F(1, 250) = 18.05$ ,  $B = -.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.20$ , shown in Figure 2. Low internalization of the thin appearance ideal exacerbated the link between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity. Asian/Asian American men with high internalization of the thinness ideal did not experience a significant link between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity.

The internalization of the muscularity moderated the link between experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity in Asian/Asian American men,  $F(1, 250) = 40.06$ ,  $B = -.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.35$ , shown in Figure 3. Low internalization of muscularity exacerbated the link between experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity. Asian/Asian American men with high



internalization of muscularity did not experience a significant link between experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity.

The internalization of the thin ideal moderated the link between experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity in Asian/Asian American men,  $F(1, 250) = 21.07$   $B = -.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.22$ , shown in Figure 4. Asian/Asian American men with high internalization of thinness and those who also experienced more microaggressions endorsed the most severe drive for muscularity.

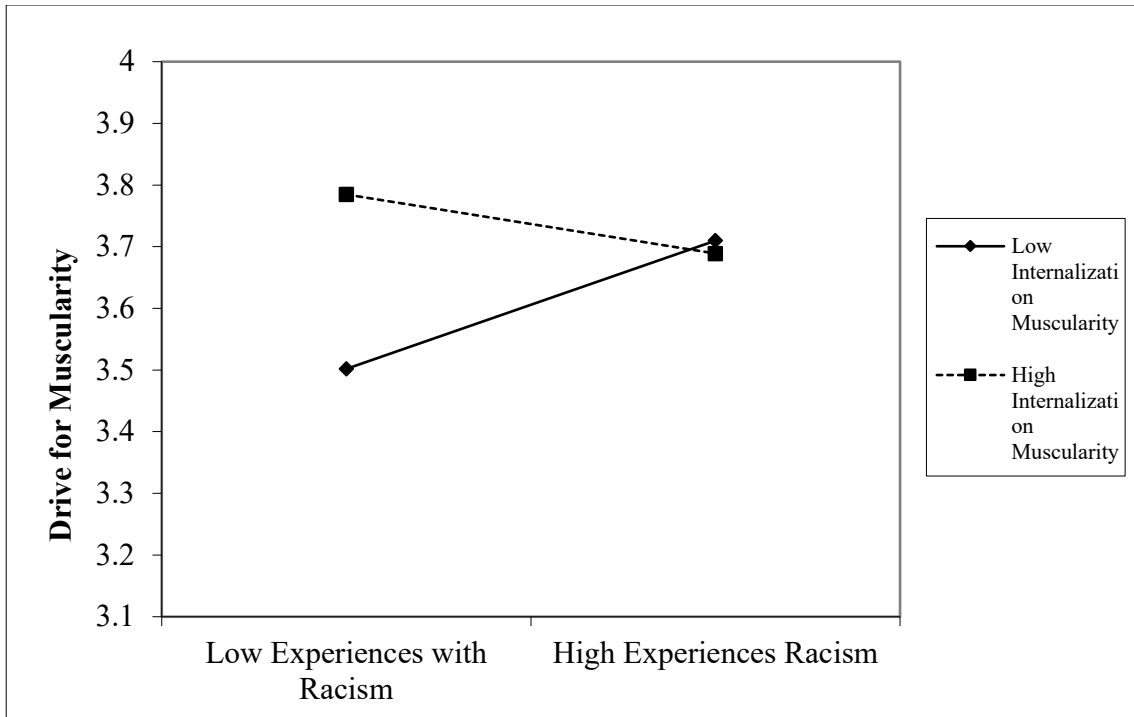
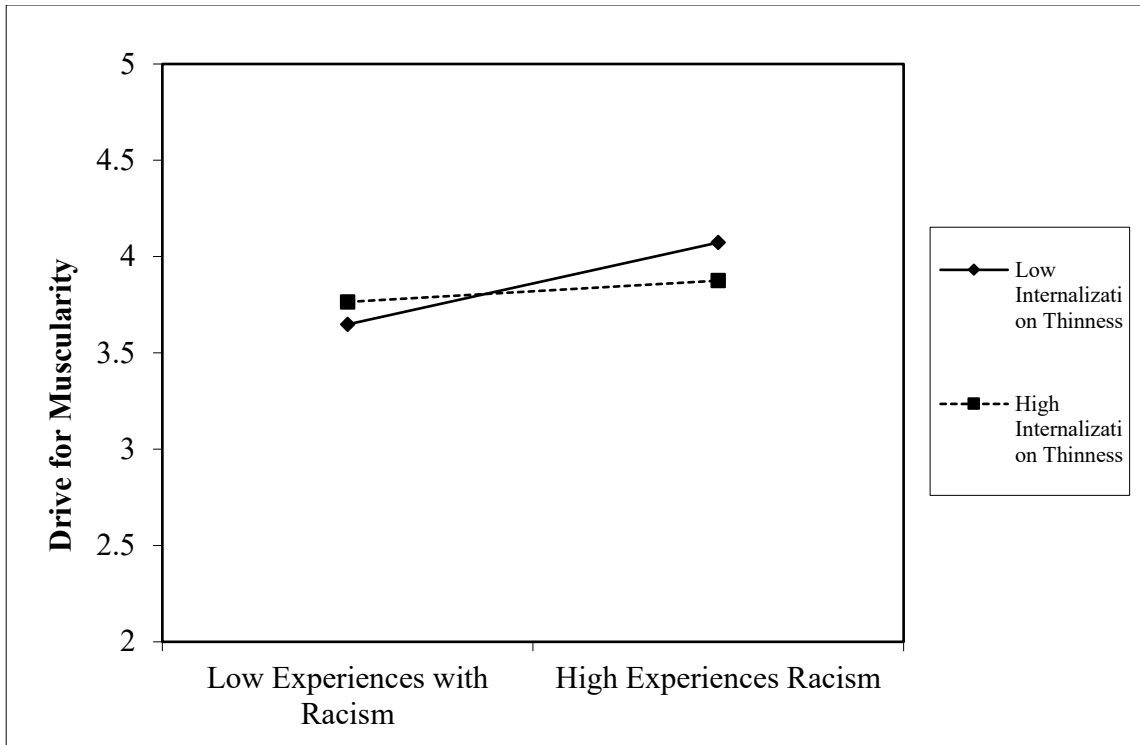


Figure 1. Experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity was positive among men with low internalization of the muscular appearance ideal and negative among men with high internalization of the muscular appearance ideal,  $F(1, 250) = 33.98$ ,  $B = -.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.31$ .



*Figure 2.* Low internalization of the thin appearance ideal exacerbated the link between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity. Asian/Asian American men with high internalization of the thinness ideal did not experience a significant link between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity,  $F(1, 250) = 18.05$ ,  $B = -.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.20$ .

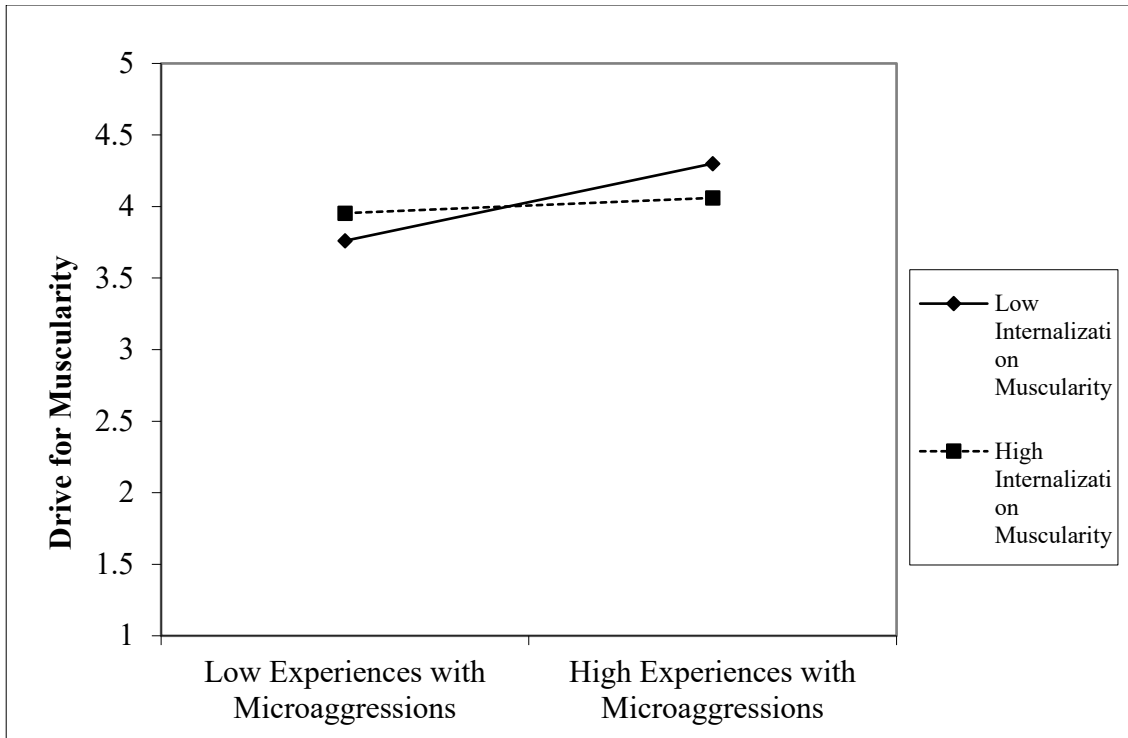


Figure 3. Low internalization of muscularity exacerbated the link between experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity, whereas men with high internalization of muscularity did not experience a significant link between experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity,  $F(1, 250) = 40.06$ ,  $B = -.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.35$

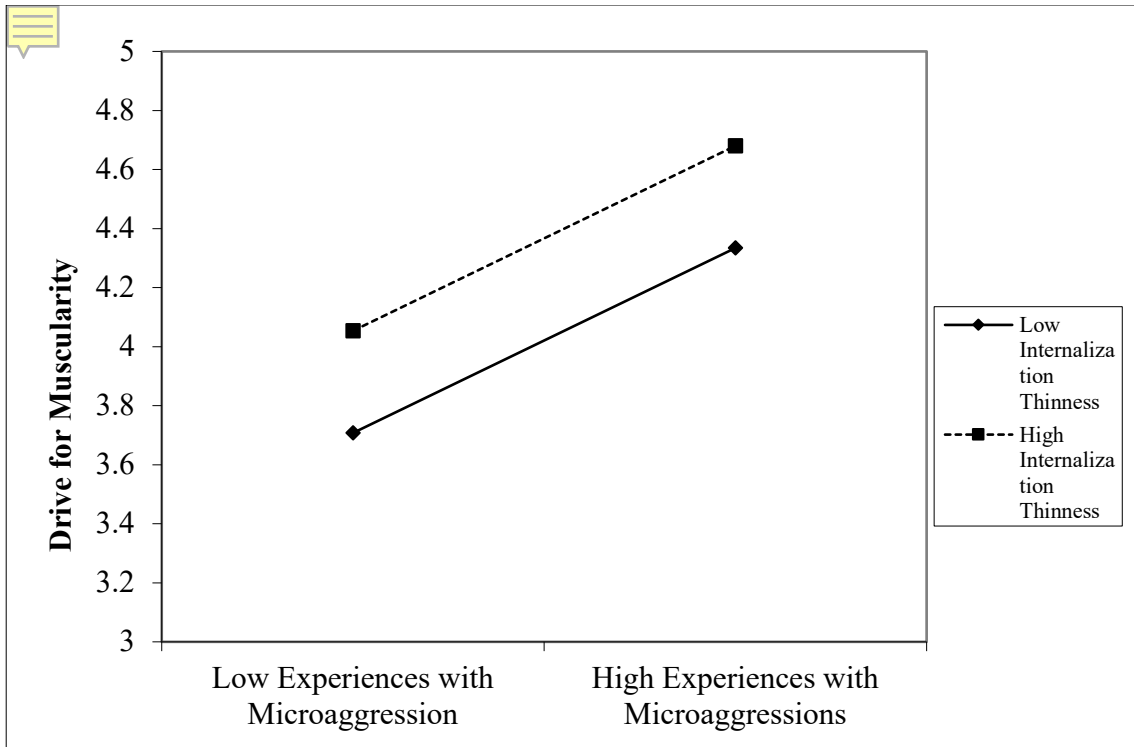


Figure 4. Internalization of thinness moderated the link between experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity in Asian/Asian American men. Drive for muscularity was positive for both low and high internalization of thinness, but most severe for men with both a high internalization of thinness and high experiences with microaggressions  $F(1, 250) = 21.07$   $B = -.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.22$ .

## Discussion

In the current study of young Asian and Asian American Men, the results showed there was a significant, positive link between Asian/Asian American men's experiences with overt racism and the drive for muscularity. There was also a significant, positive link between experiences with Asian/Asian American men's experiences with microaggressions and the drive for muscularity. This is consistent within other studies that found that experiences with both overt racism and microaggressions were associated with other harmful behaviors to alter body image in Asian/Asian American men (Kelly et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2015)

The moderators also showed the link between racism and microaggressions and the moderators, internalization of thinness and muscularity. The link between experiences with overt racism and the drive for muscularity was positive among men with low internalization of the muscular appearance ideal and negative among men with high internalization of the muscular appearance ideal. This can indicate that drive for muscularity is more closely associated to experiences with racism, rather than the internalization of thinness. The drive for muscularity was highest among men with high internalization of the muscular ideal and low experiences with racism. The drive for muscularity was lowest among Asian/Asian American men with low internalization of the muscular appearance ideal and low experiences with racism.

Internalization of the thin male ideal moderated the association between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity in Asian/Asian American men. Low internalization of the thin appearance ideal exacerbated the link between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity. Asian/Asian American men with

high internalization of the thinness ideal did not experience a significant link between experiences with racism and the drive for muscularity. These results show that increased experiences with racism increased the drive for muscularity, even in those with low internalization of thinness. This is significant because it shows that experiences with racism play a role in how Asian/Asian American men perceive themselves, increasing the likelihood for those men to participate in harmful behaviors to alter body shape. Similarly, experiences with microaggressions also increased the drive for muscularity. In fact, Asian/Asian American men with high internalization of thinness and those who also experienced more microaggressions endorsed the most severe drive for muscularity. Even seemingly subtle comments or behaviors can play a role in Asian/Asian American men's body image. These findings remain consistent with other bodies of research that has been studied that indicate those with greater experiences with racism reported higher levels of attitudes toward achieving muscularity (Cheng et al., 2016).

### **Limitations**

The method and design of data collection posed some limitations to the current study. Although the data was revised for its validity, and psychometrically sound measures were selected to assess the constructs of interest, it is important to note that the self-reporting nature of the current study leaves it impossible to assess the honesty and accuracy of each participant's answers. Potential limitations of this include response bias and/or social desirability responding, which is when participants portray themselves in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others (e.g., under-reporting eating disorder psychopathology, Paulhus, 1984).

Another limitation of this study was that it was conducted as a cross-sectional study and not a longitudinal study. Where a longitudinal study would repeatedly collect data from the same sample over an extended period, this study collected data from specific point in time. Therefore, this data does not address the participants' perceptions over a period, but rather a specific moment. It does not provide the opportunity to examine participants over a range of time, which gives us data that is correlational and not causal.

### **Future Directions**

With this data, we hope to further investigate the link between Asian American men's experiences with race-related discrimination and the behavioral drive for muscularity (e.g., excessive exercise, steroid use, supplement consumption). Completing a longitudinal study would give the opportunity to follow each participant and further correlations between racism and the drive for muscularity. This also could provide insight on specific interventions for the Asian American community that addressed the drive for muscularity. Ultimately, these data may help to inform the development of culturally specific interventions aimed at improving body image and associated behaviors in young Asian and Asian American men.



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