The role of fear of intimacy in negative world views following traumatic experiences

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INTRO

- Trauma can cause a "ripple effect", where people who experience trauma tend to not share with others (Mills &Turnbull 2004). Negative cognitive styles may also lead to higher rates of clinical symptoms after traumatic experiences (Browne & Winkelman, 2007). The goal of the current study is to conclude whether fear of intimacy and trauma symptoms have an effect on adjustment following a traumatic experience.

METHODS

• Data was collected through a cross sectional survey administered through an online data collection tool. Data collected included demographic information, the Trauma Symptom Checklist (TCS), the Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS), and the Trauma Constellation Identification Scale (TCIS).

• 264 undergraduate students from a medium sized university designated a Hispanic Serving Institute completed the survey. Full demographic information is presented in Table 1 and Figure 1

• Data were analyzed using the SPSS PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) Model 6.

RESULTS

The full results of the serial mediation analysis are presented in Figure 2 and Table 2. The investigated model accounted for over 63% of the variance (R^2 = .6319). The total effect of trauma on TCIS scores was negative and significant (β = -.1583, CI [-.2784, -.0382]). The indirect effects of trauma on TCIS scores through TCS and FIS was also significant at the 95% confidence level (β = −0.2332, SE = 0.0483, CI [.-.3310, -.1394]).

Figure 2
Serial indirect effects of the experience of trauma on negative view of self, negative affect, and viewing the world as hostile
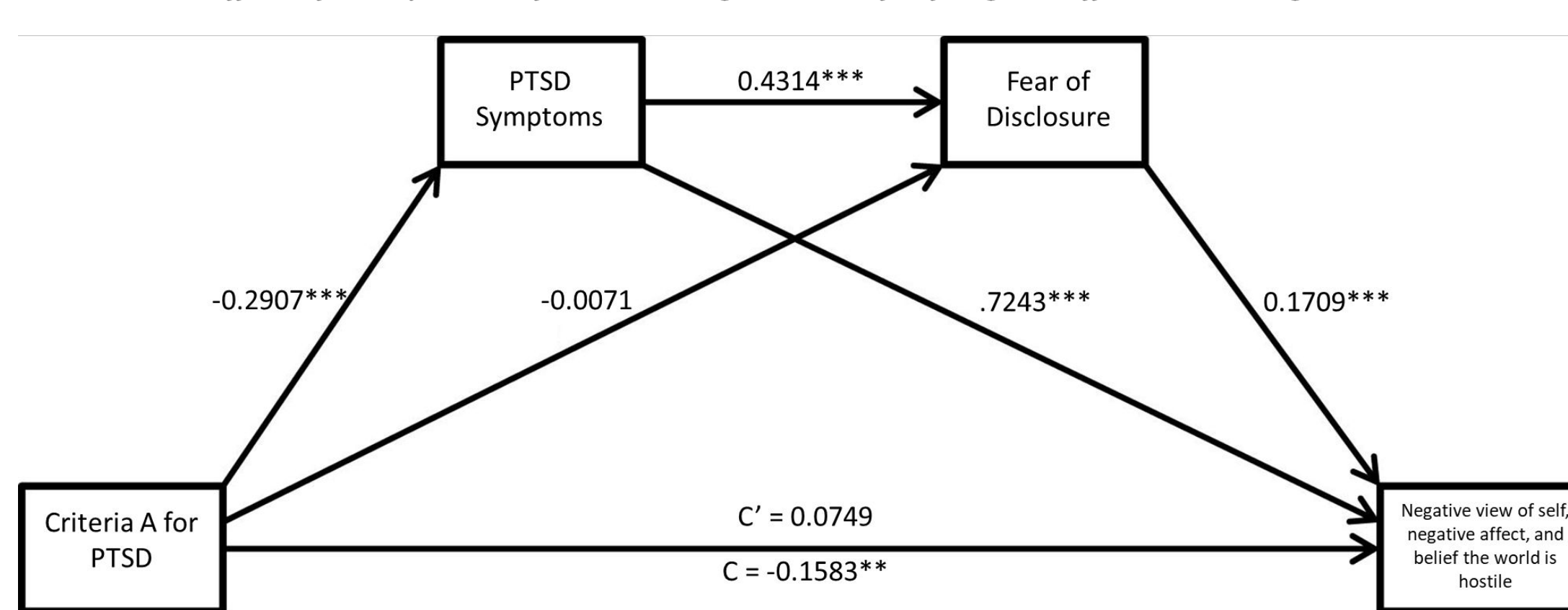
DISCUSSION

Results suggest a possible social account of negative self and world views following traumatic experiences. While PTSD symptoms contribute significantly to this outcome, fear of disclosure also plays a significant role. These findings suggest that facilitation of disclosure may play an important role in minimizing the effect of trauma on negative self and world views. Given previous findings suggesting FAP targets Fear of Disclosure, it is possible FAP may be a meaningful augment to trauma treatments. These findings are consistent with literature bases surrounding both exposure and ACT treatments for PTSD. All findings must be interpreted with caution due to the cross-sectional nature of the data. Rather, all findings are used to provide empirical justification for more resource intensive investigations of the proposed model.

Trauma symptoms and fear of intimacy assert indirect effects on the relationship between traumatic experiences and maladjustment to trauma

Table 1
Demographic information of study sample

Variable	
Age	21.47 (5.463)
Gender	54 Male 210 Female
Ethnicity	164 Latinx , 98 Non-Latinx, 2 No Answer
Veteran Status	12 Yes, 252 No
Combat Experience	11 Yes, 253 No
Trauma	155 Yes, 109 No

Figure 1
Racial identity of study sample

Racial Identification

White (188)   Black (12)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (2)   Asian (4)
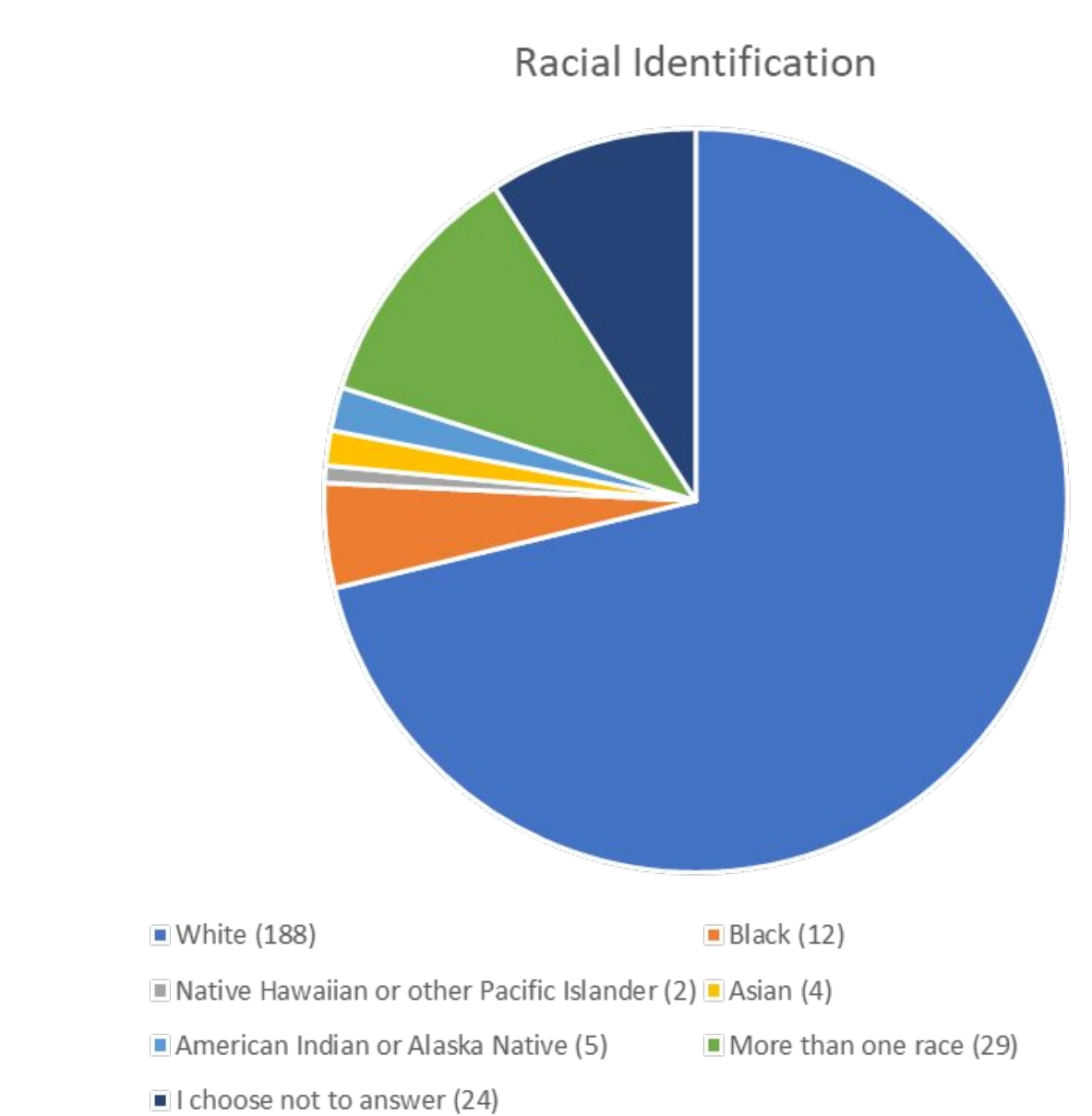American Indian or Alaska Native (5)   More than one race (29)
I choose not to answer (24)

Table 2
Standardized Mediation Direct and Indirect Effects of Trauma on TCIS via TCS and FIS

Path	Standardized Estimate	SE	95% CI[a]
Total effect model**	-.1583	.0610	-.2784, -.0382
Conditional mediation effect model			
Trauma ⇨ TCS***	-0.2907	0.0591	-.4070, -.1743
Trauma ⇨ FIS	-0.0071	0.0583	-.1218, .1077
Trauma ⇨ TCIS	0.0749	0.0393	-.0026, .1523
TCS ⇨ FIS***	0.4314	0.0583	.3166, .5462
TCS ⇨ TCIS***	0.7243	0.0433	.6391, .8095
FIS ⇨ TCIS***	0.1709	0.0418	.0887, .2531
Total indirect effects	-.2332	.0483	-.3310, -.1394
Trauma ⇨ TCS ⇨ TCIS	-.2105	.0424	-.2983, -.1274
Trauma ⇨ FIS ⇨ TCIS	-.0012	.0103	-.0218, .0198
Trauma ⇨ TCS ⇨ FIS ⇨ TCIS	-.0214	.0072	-.0371, -.0089

[a]5,000 bootstrap samples.
*p-value <0.05.
**p-value <0.001.
*** p-value<0.001.

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