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Racially-motivated housing discrimination experienced by Indigenous postsecondary students in Canada: impacts on PTSD symptomology and perceptions of university stress

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: To examine the impacts of housing discrimination experienced by Indigenous postsecondary students on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptomology and perceptions of university stress.
Study design: Cross-sectional study.
Methods: Data were gathered via in-person surveys completed by 142 Indigenous students between 2015 and 2017. Associations were analyzed using phi coefficients and linear regression models adjusted for confounders. Qualitative data were examined using thematic analyses.
Results: Indigenous students who had children (almost 50% of the sample), were living with a romantic partner, and/or were between the ages of 25–44 years experienced significantly more racially-motivated housing discrimination than other Indigenous students in the sample. The frequency of housing discrimination in the past 12 months was significantly associated with increased PTSD symptoms; particularly, intrusive recollection and more perceived stress at university in linear regression models adjusted for confounders. Every 1-point increase in the frequency of housing discrimination on a 4-point scale resulted in a 5.4-point increase in PTSD score. Although living with a romantic partner resulted in more housing discrimination, it also served as a resilience factor, buffering the impact of housing discrimination on PTSD symptomology. Qualitative data indicated students faced Racially-motivated housing discrimination that was blunt and deliberate and highlighted the resourceful ways students sought to resist it.
Conclusions: Racially-motivated housing discrimination exacerbated PTSD symptomology among Indigenous students and adversely impacted perceptions of their university experience. Efforts are needed to address housing discrimination directly, as well as provide greater family-focused housing and mental wellness supports to Indigenous students to

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reduce potential impacts of this public health problem on postsecondary success and degree completion.

Introduction

Postsecondary training is an important determinant of social mobility and health.[1] For many students, access to housing in cities is needed to pursue a postsecondary education. This is particularly true for Indigenous students in North America, many of whom move far from their communities to an urban center for training. Research suggests Indigenous Canadians, including university students, are exposed to high levels of racism in cities.[5] Racism is an ideology that targets some groups based on their ethnicity or phenotypic characteristics.[2] Racism informs action by justifying the prejudicial attitudes and unfair treatment (discrimination) of individuals and institutions against racially defined groups.[2] Racism operates through a number of mechanisms to impact marginalized groups. A mechanism of particular relevance for Indigenous students is by limiting access to housing in cities. Housing is an essential human resource. Limiting access can directly endanger the physical welfare of individuals through homelessness or by pushing individuals into substandard or unsafe living situations.[3] Among Indigenous students, housing discrimination can also impact their ability to pursue postsecondary training and, in turn, impact their social mobility. A study published by Currie et al. (2012) found 27% of Indigenous university students had experienced racially-motivated housing discrimination in their lifetime compared with 26% of US African American adults and 10% of US Latino adults generally.[4,5] The first objective of this study was to build on this research by examining the impacts of housing discrimination on two forms of stress: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptomology and perceptions of university stress.

PTSD is a particularly potent stress response that occurs in reaction to social trauma. Key symptoms include intrusive recollection of events, ongoing physiological hyperarousal, and efforts to avoid stimuli associated with traumatic events.[6] Several studies have documented an association between racial discrimination and PTSD, as well as stress more generally.[7–11] The extent to which housing-specific racial discrimination may contribute to PTSD symptoms has not been studied but has biological plausibility, given threats to housing directly endanger the physical welfare of individuals, and personal control over these situations is often low.[12]

The theory of ontological security speaks to the impact that racially-motivated housing discrimination can have on stress symptomology and well-being. Ontological security is a state of stable mental health achieved through the ability to give meaning to one's life through continuity and trust in the world as it appears to be.[13] Racial discrimination itself has been posited to threaten ontological security, given the unfair prejudicial treatment challenges one's trust in others, and is often inconsistent with how an individual views themselves.[14] Stable housing has also been shown to be required to achieve ontological security.[15] Thus, we posit that racially-motivated housing discrimination further challenges ontological security, and thus mental well-being, as it interferes both with an individual's perception of themselves and their trust in others, as well as their ability to achieve a stable, safe place for themselves that is predictable, controllable, and meaningful. To this point, a 2018 study found housing discrimination had social consequences including reduced trust in neighbors and a reduced sense of social belonging among minority groups.[16] In the United States, racially-motivated housing and mortgage discrimination have been associated with mental distress and mental health problems including depression, as well as reduced self-reported health, increased chronic disease, and reduced cancer survival rates.[17–21] In Canada, research suggests housing discrimination is a common experience for urban Indigenous people and that those who experience it believe it is negatively impacting their health.[22] Building on these findings, the present study hypothesized that Racially-motivated housing discrimination would be associated with elevated PTSD symptomology among Indigenous adults attending university, as well as increased perceived stress at university. The final goal of this study was to examine Indigenous student resilience, resistance, and resourcefulness when faced with racially-motivated housing discrimination in an urban environment, and student recommendations to address this public health problem.

Methods

Study design and procedure

Data for this cross-sectional study were collected from Indigenous students attending postsecondary training in a small city in western Canada (Population: 98,000).[23] The project received ethics approval from the Human Subject Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge. An Indigenous Advisory Committee made up of key stakeholders within the Lethbridge Indigenous community worked with us to set study priorities, select the questions the project would explore, and decide how data would be collected. Postsecondary students 18 years and older who identified as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or Indigenous generally were recruited using a poster displayed in various places across campus and shared through a campus email list serve for Indigenous students. Interested students were invited to contact a research assistant to learn more and/or arrange a time to participate. Data collection began in September 2015 and continued over four academic terms, ending in April 2017. Written consent

was obtained from all participants. Data were collected in-person in a private office on campus through paper-and-pencil in-person surveys. A research assistant remained in the room during survey completion working at another desk to answer potential questions. Students were given an honorarium of $25 for completing the survey.

Measures

Exposure variable

Racially-motivated housing discrimination was operationalized by two related questions on the Experiences of Discrimination (EOD) scale.[5] The EOD is valid and reliable measure of self-reported discrimination across racial groups, including Indigenous university students and Indigenous adults more generally.[4,7] In the present study, the two EOD questions posed were adapted to represent housing discrimination experienced in a 12-month period, rather than across the lifespan. The first question asked: *In the past 12 months, have you experienced discrimination, been prevented from doing something, or been hassled or made to feel inferior getting or maintaining housing because of your race, ethnicity, or color?* Response options were 0 = *No* and 1 = Yes. The second question asked: *If yes, how many times did this occur in the past year?* Response options were 1 = *once*, 2 = *two or three times*, and 3 = *four or more times*. There were no missing values for these questions. Students were then presented with an open-ended question that asked: *Is there anything you would like to share about housing discrimination?*

Outcome variables

Two measures of stress were examined. The first examined PTSD symptomology using the 17-item PTSD Checklist Civilian Version (PCL-C). This measure reflects the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition (DSM-IV) symptoms of PTSD and can be used as a screen to determine if PTSD diagnostic testing is warranted. The PCL-C simplifies assessment based on multiple traumas because symptom endorsements are not attributed to a specific event.[24,25] The measure asks participants about symptoms occurring in the past month. Response options include 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *a little bit*, 3 = *moderately*, 4 = *quite a bit*, and 5 = *extremely*. A total symptom severity score (range = 17–85) is obtained by summing all 17 items. A score of 30–35 is typically used as a cut-point for referral to PTSD diagnostic testing in a civilian population.[24] The PCL-C can be used to calculate three PTSD subscale scores for intrusive recollection (PCL item 1–5), avoidance/numbing (PCL item 6–12), and hypervigilance (PCL item 13–17).[26] A meta-analysis of the PCL-C demonstrates good internal validity, temporal stability, test-retest reliability, and convergent validity across ethnically diverse populations.[27] In the present study, internal consistency of the PCL-C overall score ($\alpha = 0.93$), intrusive recollection subscale score ($\alpha = 0.88$), avoidance/numbing subscale score ($\alpha = 0.86$), and hypervigilance subscale score ($\alpha = 0.82$) were very good. We also asked students: *What has the experience at university been like for you this year?* Response options were 1 = *not at all stressful*, 2 = *not very stressful*, 3 = *somewhat stressful*, and 4 = *very stressful*. These responses were recoded into 0 = *not at all or not very stressful* and 1 = *somewhat or very stressful*.

Covariates

Gender and exact age were assessed, as well as the Indigenous group participants most closely identified with First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or Indigenous, generally. Marital status, whether students were parents, and whether students had children under 18 years living in their home (whether or not they were their own) were assessed. Perceived current socio-economic position was assessed on a 5-point scale (upper income, upper-middle income, middle income, lower-middle income, and lower income).

Analysis strategy

This study did not ask participants a direct question about whether they had moved out of their childhood home. Thus, the sample included students who were and were not at direct risk for discrimination while personally getting or maintaining housing during the time period examined. In an open-ended question about housing discrimination, 5% of the sample indicated they still lived at home and thus were not at direct risk ($n = 8$). These students were removed from the analysis. As a result, the total sample examined in this study was $N = 142$. Students were asked if they rented or owned a home. Homeowners remained in the sample given date of purchase was not ascertained in this study, and individuals may have experienced housing discrimination when seeking to purchase a home in the past year. Students who indicated they had lived in their current apartment or home for a number of years also remained in the sample, given the question we posed to students asked about discrimination getting or maintaining housing.

Quantitative data were first examined using Loess curves to assess the linearity of associations, as well as crosstabs and phi coefficients to examine unadjusted associations. Next, unadjusted and adjusted linear regression models examined the association between the main exposure variable (frequency of racially-motivated housing discrimination) and the main outcome variable (PTSD score), as well as associations between relevant confounders and PTSD score. Confounders were selected *a priori* using existing literature, with the exception of two variables. The first assessed if students were parents and the second, if students were living with a romantic partner (married or common law). These variables were included as confounders in the regression model based on the strength of the association observed in our preliminary analyses using phi coefficients. Statistical interactions were examined using Loess curves and multiplicative interaction terms; none were found. A thematic data analysis was used to identify qualitative themes across open-ended questions.[28] Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 24 and NVivo 11.0.[29,30]

Results

Overall, 63.1% of the sample ($N = 142$) identified as First Nations, 23.2% as Indigenous generally (without a specific affiliation), and 13.5% as Métis.[31] As shown in Table 1, most participants were female (72%), which is in keeping with the

Table 1 – Characteristics of full sample and subsample who experienced housing discrimination.

Characteristics	Total N (%)	12-month housing discrimination n (%)	P-value[a]
Total sample	142 (100%)	25 (100%)	
Gender			0.59
Female	101 (71.1%)	19 (18.8%)	
Male	42 (29.6%)	6 (15.0%)	
Age			0.01*
18–24 years	62 (44.0%)	3 (4.8%)	
25–34 years	46 (32.6%)	12 (26.1%)	
35–44 years	24 (17.0%)	9 (37.5%)	
45 + years	9 (6.4%)	1 (11.1%)	
Indigenous group			0.06
First Nations	89 (63.1%)	20 (22.5%)	
Métis	19 (13.5%)	0	
Indigenous	33 (23.2%)	5 (15.5%)	
Marital status			0.04*
Living with a romantic partner	59 (41.8%)	15 (25.4%)	
Not living with a romantic partner	82 (58.2%)	10 (12.2%)	
Student is a parent			0.01*
Yes	66 (46.5%)	21 (31.8%)	
No	76 (53.5%)	4 (5.3%)	
Children in home			0.03*
Yes	74 (46.5%)	18 (24.3%)	
No	68 (53.5%)	7 (10.3%)	
Rent or own home			0.10
Rented	100 (70.4%)	21 (21.0%)	
Owned	42 (29.6%)	4 (9.5%)	
Income			0.20
Upper-middle	9 (6.3%)	0	
Middle income	32 (22.5%)	4 (12.5%)	
Lower-middle	68 (47.9%)	12 (17.6%)	
Lower income	33 (23.2%)	9 (27.3%)	
University experience			0.04*
Not stressful	17 (12.4%)	0	
Stressful	120 (87.6%)	25 (100%)	
Housing discrimination			
Never	117 (82.4%)		
Once	11 (7.7%)	11 (44.0%)	
2–3 times	7 (4.9%)	7 (28.0%)	
four or more times	7 (4.9%)	7 (28.0%)	

[a] P-value of the phi coefficient test. Statistically significant values (P < 0.05) are marked with *.

reported proportion of female students in most Canadian universities.[32] The median age was 26 years (standard deviation [SD] = 9.3, range 18–61 years). Most (71.1%) self-identified as low-middle to low income. Approximately half the sample were single, not living with a partner, and never married. Most participants (70.4%) were currently renting. The majority had lived within a First Nations community for some portion of their lives (78.7%). Almost half the sample had children (46.5%).

Racially-motivated housing discrimination

Approximately 18% of the sample had experienced racially-motivated housing discrimination in the past 12 months; 44% had experienced it once, 28% had experienced it 2–3 times, and 28% had experienced it four or more times in that period. Qualitative data similarly suggest that Indigenous students struggled in '*finding affordable, acceptable living conditions on a student budget*' (P122) and that this struggle was exacerbated by racism:

> '*Couldn't find a home because of being First Nations. Great difficulty because of my last name.*' (P32)

> '*Some landlords said no after hearing I was an Aboriginal person.*' (P49)

> '*When I have tried to rent a place, people would often tell me that the place had been unavailable as soon as they knew where I was from.*' (P53)

In unadjusted analyses (Table 1), students between the ages of 15–44 years, those living with a romantic partner, and students who had children or were living with children were more likely to experience housing discrimination than other students. As shown in Table 1, almost a third of students who were parents had experienced racially-motivated housing discrimination in the past year compared with 5% of students who were not parents (*phi coefficient* = 0.35, *P* = 0.001). Indigenous students with children living in their home, whether or not they were their own, were also more likely to experience housing discrimination in the past year (*phi coefficient* = 0.18, *P* = 0.03).

Impacts of housing discrimination on stress symptomology

Indigenous students reported a high baseline level of PTSD symptomology. Even among those who had not experienced housing discrimination in the past year, the average PTSD symptomology score was 37.5 (SD = 13.3). This is significant given scores of 30–35 are typically used as a cut-point for PTSD diagnostic testing in a civilian population.[24,33] As shown in Fig. 1, the frequency of housing discrimination in the past year was associated with increases in PTSD symptomology (*Pearson's r* = 0.28, *P* = 0.001), including increases in each PTSD subscale score (*Pearson's r* = 0.31, 0.25, 0.22 for intrusive

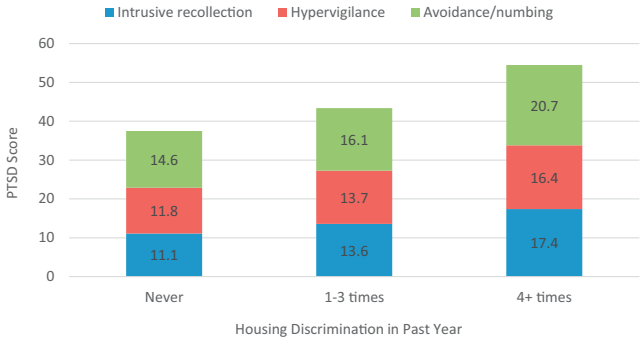

Fig. 1 – Impacts of racially motivated housing discrimination on PTSD overall and subscale scores among Indigenous university students. PTSD = post-traumatic stress disorder.

thoughts, hypervigilance, and avoidance/numbing; respectively, $P < 0.01$). Overall, those who experienced racially motivated housing discrimination 1–3 times in the past year had PTSD scores that averaged five points higher than Indigenous peers who had not. Among students who had experienced housing discrimination four or more times in the past year, PTSD scores averaged 17 points higher than peers who had not experienced housing discrimination.

Racially-motivated housing discrimination in the past year was also associated with how stressful students perceived university to be that year. All 25 students who experienced housing discrimination in the past year (100%) rated their university experience that year as somewhat or very stressful compared with 84.8% of students who had not experienced housing discrimination, highlighting a small by significant increase (*phi coefficient* = 0.18, $P = 0.04$). Qualitative data highlight why housing discrimination was associated with symptoms of post-traumatic stress, particularly intrusive recollection, as well as university stress more generally. Data suggest students were denied fair consideration for housing in ways that were blunt, cutting, and deliberate:

> *'When I turned 18, it took me over 6 months to find housing. Landlords refused to rent to me because I was a 'risk'. The company that did rent to us ended up hiring us as staff for 5 years.' (P23)*

> *'Trying to find housing in [this city] is bad! On the phone or over email they are very polite and seem nice, but once they see you, they are quick to show the house and get you out of there. Even had a guy say he took the wrong key and just never came back!' (P9)*

> *'Responses from landlords when applied for housing: 'Don't want to rent to Indians.' 'No [***] Indians.' (P29)*

Living with a partner supports resilience

As shown in Fig. 2, students who lived with a romantic partner had lower baseline PTSD symptoms and a blunted increase in PTSD symptomology in reaction to housing discrimination, as compared with students who did not live with a romantic partner; suggesting this covariate served as a resilience factor. However, living with a partner had no impact on how stressful students found university, nor did it influence the impact of housing discrimination on how stressful students found their schooling that year.

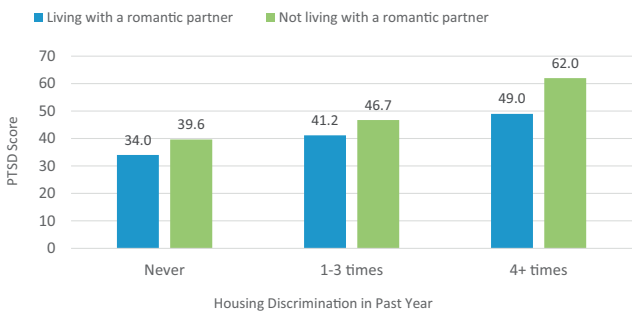

Fig. 2 – Living with a romantic partner reduces the adverse effect of racially motivated housing discrimination on PTSD symptomology among Indigenous students. PTSD = post-traumatic stress disorder.

Regression modeling

Housing discrimination was significantly associated with PTSD symptoms in an unadjusted linear regression model (Table 2). After adjustment for covariates, every 1-point increase in housing discrimination on a 4-point scale (never, once, 1–3 times, or 4 + times in the past year) resulted in a 5.4-point increase in PTSD score ($P = 0.001$). Income category was associated with increased PTSD symptomology among students in an unadjusted model but was no longer significant after other factors were taken into account. Living with a romantic partner was associated with a 5.7-point drop in PTSD symptomology, even when the increased housing discrimination experienced by couples and other confounders were taken into account. Age and gender were not associated with PTSD symptoms among students in an adjusted model.

Student resourcefulness and resistance

Qualitative data highlight the resourceful ways Indigenous students worked to determine if they were being denied access to available housing:

> *'One lady called me back to view her apartment and I went to meet her, and as soon as she [saw] me she said the apartment was taken. So, I left and my sister caller her, and she said the apartment was still available.' (P28)*

Students also described the ways they worked to resist the racially-motivated discrimination they faced in the urban housing rental market. Many students described withholding an Indigenous last name on the phone, so they would get an opportunity to view a rental in person:

> *'When house hunting, I will not divulge my last name over the phone because often upon hearing that I am Native, the renter will back out immediately.' (P2)*

Other students talked about the ways they concealed their participation in Indigenous cultural traditions so that they could maintain these personally meaningful activities, which have been shown to have protective impacts on health and well-being, while still being able to obtain and maintain housing.[34,35] For example, participants talked about refraining from speaking about their use of smudging when looking for housing. Smudging is an Indigenous ceremony in which traditional herbs such as sage, sweet grass, or cedar are placed in a container, lit, and then gently blown out to create smoke that floats over a person to spiritually cleanse. The plants used in the ceremony are not smoked and do not have intoxicating properties. Yet, participants talked about the need to conceal their engagement in this and other cultural activities given it was misunderstood and often equated with illicit substance use by building managers.

Table 2 – Linear regression models for the direct effects of racially-motivated housing discrimination and covariates on PTSD symptomology score (N = 138)[a].

Variables	Unadjusted models				Adjusted model *Adj* $R^2 = 0.12$			
	B	SE	β	P	B	SE	β	P
Housing discrimination frequency	**4.94**	**1.45**	**0.28**	**0.001**	**5.41**	**1.52**	**0.31**	**0.001**
Indigenous group	−3.39	2.01	−0.14	0.09	−2.98	1.95	−0.13	0.13
Gender	0.66	2.67	−0.02	−0.81	0.11	2.58	0.01	0.97
Age	0.13	0.13	0.09	0.30	0.14	0.15	0.09	0.38
Self-reported income category	**3.03**	**1.40**	**0.18**	**0.03**	1.60	1.50	0.10	0.29
Living with a romantic partner	**−4.74**	**2.39**	**−0.17**	**0.05**	**−5.70**	**2.52**	**−0.20**	**0.03**
Student is a parent	−0.12	2.39	−0.05	0.96	−3.88	3.00	−0.14	0.20

PTSD = post-traumatic stress disorder; B = unstandardized beta coefficient; β = standardized beta coefficient.

[a] Significant results are provided **in bold**. Column 2–5 provide unadjusted estimates of each variable. Column 6–9 provide estimates adjusted for all variables in model. Higher beta values correspond to increased PTSD symptomology score. Indigenous Student Experiences of Housing Discrimination 2

Qualitative data suggest students avoided discrimination by seeking out family members to rent from and finding 'white friends' to help them find housing. More generally, students talked about the critical need to tackle the wall of stereotypes that limited their access to the housing market:

> *'I think not being judged on what is on the outside, because being a student is hard enough.' (P144)*

> *'I understand renters are trying to run their business without distractions from bad tenants but there are other methods than prejudice.' (P145)*

Indigenous students talked about the importance of, and need for more, Indigenous housing opportunities in the city and on campus to alleviate the stress of trying to find housing in a racially hostile environment:

> *'I am currently in Treaty 7 subsidized housing, but prior to this, definitely there were a variety of landlords refusing to even [agree to] a walkthrough on mention of my last name.' (P45)*

> *'…for other students struggling with this issue there should be more available and affordable housing for students. This could be something that the government could look into implementing.' (P120)*

Finally, students discussed the role of postsecondary institutions related to this issue, including the need to '*have more options through the university*' for housing, and '*more resources that work with Indigenous students to maintain and obtain housing.*' Not surprisingly, given almost 50% of this sample of students were parents, many talked about the need for better on-campus and off-campus student housing for single mothers and for families.

Discussion

The present findings highlight racially-motivated housing discrimination as a risk factor associated with increased PTSD symptoms among Indigenous university students. These findings corroborate previous studies documenting an association between racial discrimination experienced across a variety of situations and PTSD among Indigenous adults, as well as racial minorities more generally.[7,9,10,36] The ways in which PTSD symptoms increased in tandem with housing discrimination in this study have consequences for Indigenous students, given PTSD is not an all or nothing disorder and those with subthreshold PTSD have been shown to have intermediate levels of impairment.[37] Consequences of increasing PTSD symptomology include adverse impacts on mental well-being, addiction, quality of life, and close personal relationships.[7,38–40] Increasing PTSD symptomology also has direct impacts on academic success, as PTSD symptoms have been shown to make it more difficult for adults to succeed in and complete university.[41–43] Longitudinal research indicates university completion rates among Canadian Indigenous adults are 33%–56% lower than non-Indigenous adults.[44,45] The reasons behind this discrepancy are not well-understood and likely depend on a number of factors. Based on the findings of this study, we posit that racially-motivated housing discrimination in cities, and the impact this experience has on PTSD symptomology, may play a role in university retention among Indigenous students. This hypothesis is strengthened by our finding that racially-motivated housing discrimination was also associated with increased perceived stress among Indigenous students at university, given perceived university stress has a direct influence on academic performance and student retention.[46,47]

Housing discrimination was most strongly associated with PTSD intrusive recollection symptoms in this study. Intrusive recollection forces individuals to relive highly stressful experiences by replaying memories of the event against their conscious will.[48] Our qualitative findings suggest Indigenous students faced housing discrimination that was highly stressful in that it was frequently blunt, cutting, deliberate, and racially-targeted, thus providing context for the symptoms of intrusive recollection observed. While students described efforts to resist and work around the discrimination they were experiencing, they also voiced a key need for more resources to navigate housing in cities and more access to university and Indigenous-specific housing to reduce their exposure to housing discrimination. Although living with a

romantic partner resulted in more housing discrimination for Indigenous students in this study, it also served as a resilience factor, buffering the impact of housing discrimination on PTSD symptomology. These findings support previous work indicating social supports are a protective factor for PTSD and suggest that efforts to strengthen Indigenous student access to housing should support the choice to live with a romantic partner, as this may promote resilience and support student mental wellness.[49]

Strengths and limitations

To date, few published studies have focused on the health impacts of setting-specific forms of racial discrimination, and as such, this study adds to much needed work in this area. Other strengths include the use of a validated screen for PTSD symptomology, an item from a validated measure of racial discrimination, and the inclusion of open-ended questions to document what students were experiencing related to Racially-motivated housing discrimination and their suggestions to address this problem. Limiting participants to post-secondary students provided a more homogeneous sample and reduced residual confounding because of educational attainment and related factors associated with obtaining and maintaining housing.

Limitations include use of a cross-sectional design, which precludes inferences about causation and temporal sequence, a relatively small sample of participants, and potential response bias due to self-report measures.[50] Overall, the frequency of housing discrimination reported by all participants in this study was likely an underestimate, as students were not directly asked if they still lived with their parents. As well, participants were not asked if they had attempted to find housing in the last year, thus many may have not been at risk for housing discrimination in the past year. As well, recent research demonstrates that neighborhood features are important to examine when assessing the mental health impacts of housing discrimination; however, these features were not examined in this study.[17,51] It is also important to note that Indigenous students who had not experienced housing discrimination in the past year averaged high PTSD symptomology, suggesting housing discrimination exacerbated PTSD symptoms rather than initiated them.

Conclusions

Findings suggest racially-motivated housing discrimination is a common experience and significant stressor for Indigenous university students and associated with elevated PTSD symptoms and university stress, which could in turn impact university success. Living with a romantic partner buffered the adverse impacts of housing discrimination on PTSD symptomology and may be an important resilience factor to be considered when planning housing for postsecondary students. Indigenous students in this study highlighted the need for more resources to help them avoid exposure to housing discrimination in cities, including greater access to Indigenous student and campus housing, as well as greater efforts to address and reduce housing discrimination in cities.

Author statements

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Ethics approval

This study received ethics approval from the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Lethbridge (Protocol #2014-046).

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Competing interest

None declared.

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