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Racism hurts academic work: Study

Minorities' self-control also affected

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Toronto Sun

Racism hurts — and it can have an impact on the victim's academic performance and self-control, a study has revealed.

The study found that the psychological pressures experienced by people who belong to racially or socially stigmatized groups interfere with their ability to exhibit self-control when entering a threatening environment or after being made aware of their stigmatized status.

"We found when people belong to a minority group, they face stigmatization pressures and it could have repercussions on intellectual performance and self-control," said Dr. Michael Inzlicht, assistant psychology professor at the University of Toronto.

The study included three experiments. The first experiment involved New York University students who were read hypothetical scenarios, which contained racial ambiguities involving African-Americans. The study found the students who exhibited sensitivity to prejudice and discrimination, also reported

having less self-control of their academic lives.

In second experiment, African-American and Caucasian NYU students were divided into two groups. The control group was told they were going to take a test related to psychological factors; the test group was told the test would diagnose their verbal strengths and weaknesses.

The African-American students who were told the test would assess their abilities, had significantly lower scores.

For the third experiment, female NYU students were divided into two groups. All participants were asked to squeeze a hand grip as long as they could. Control group members were told they were going to take a verbal test, while the test group was told they would take a math test.

Women who were told the test would assess their math ability held the hand grip for much less time than the other group.

"The study shows we need to eliminate prejudice of all kinds because the effects can be dramatic loss of ability to self-regulate and engage in controlled behaviour," Inzlicht said.

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Dr. Michael Inzlicht