



A Newsletter of the Office of Minority Health

Mental Health and Minorities
September 1997

Coping With Racial Stress

In comparison with Whites, African Americans use more coping strategies for dealing with racial stress and engage in more playful problem solving, according to a study published in the Journal of Black Psychology.

In an effort to evaluate patterns of coping in racially stressful situations, researchers at Cleveland State University studied the responses of Whites and African Americans.

Respondents filled out a 66-item "Ways of Coping Questionnaire" and were asked to write a description of the stressful event they had in mind when filling in their answers.

Researchers note that the definition of racial stress is influenced by individual factors. Being the only one in a classroom of another race, for example, could be racially stressful to some and not others.

The African American subjects reported more incidents of racial stress than Whites due to more frequent experiences with discrimination.

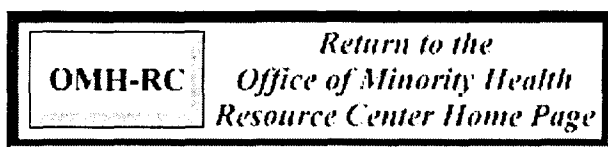
Further, when experiencing racial stress, both Blacks and Whites noted a reduction in the ability to solve problems and seek social support. This difficulty was found to be particularly pronounced for Whites, the authors state. This might be, they explain, because Whites have fewer problem-solving skills in this area.

Both groups exhibited coping patterns different from those they used for stress not related to race. The researchers concluded that in order for all races to function in a multicultural society, there should be more emphasis on helping people of all races enhance coping skills.

Closing the Gap, September 1997, Table of Contents

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Last Modified: September 11, 1997
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