

**Title:** The Role of Racial Discrimination in Disrupting Self-Regulated Learning Processes Among Undergraduates at a Large Predominantly White Institution

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Forms of discrimination at both the societal and institutional level influence how racialized students view themselves and interact within higher education settings. The self-regulated learning (SRL) frameworks are student development models that seek to incorporate personal goals and motivations with perceptions of learning context expectations and goal structures (Karbenick & Newman, 2014). Learners successfully engaging in the self-regulated learning process are more likely to seek feedback and guidance with the goal of becoming more autonomous (Clarebout et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2001). Academic help-seeking (AHS) is a fundamental skill for the performance and success of students within higher education settings. AHS is a form of adaptive behavior that helps students overcome learning challenges (Mihlon, 2010; Roussel et al., 2011; Ryan & Shim, 2012), which often results in higher grades (Ryan et al., 2005). Guided by the Motivational Experience Model (Thoman et al., 2013), and self-regulated learning frameworks (Karbenick & Newman, 2014), this study was designed to gain a better understanding of the psychological factors related to academic help-seeking attitudes.

**Design:** Responses from a sample of 477 racially diverse undergraduates at a predominantly white institution in South Central United States were analyzed using confirmatory factor analyses and structural equation modeling. Quantitative analyses was conducted using SPSS and Mplus. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) and Cronbach's alpha values was used to assess the validity and reliability of each scale (Muthén & Muthén, 2004).

**Findings:** Results indicate that perceptions of discrimination and imposter phenomena among students negatively predict changes in academic help-seeking attitudes, while a sense of belonging to one's racial and ethnic groups instead bolsters these stances. Furthermore, perceived discrimination was found to positively predict impostor phenomena and negatively predict sense of belonging. Of note, compared to other racial and ethnic groups, Black students in this sample reported significantly higher perceptions of everyday discrimination, higher levels of sense of belonging to their own racial or ethnic group, and lower senses of belonging to the university and U.S. society. This work thus highlights the direct and indirect effects of perceived discrimination on the academic experiences of different racially minoritized students.

**Value:** This study contributes to existing literature by demonstrating specific psychological mechanisms through which perceived discrimination negatively affects behaviors important to academic achievement in higher educational settings. Persistent racial discrimination serves to subvert access to higher education for students of color by driving imposter phenomena and

undermining different senses of belonging. Institutions have a responsibility to do what they can to mitigate any negative psychological, social, and academic effects of racial discrimination, but research is needed to identify detrimental mechanisms among different racial subgroups. An understanding of psychological factors related to academic help-seeking is essential for designing effective initiatives aimed at promoting these behaviors across student populations. Findings have the potential to identify specific mechanisms by which discrimination against BIPOC students within a higher education setting negatively influences academic performance and outcomes.

**Keywords:** self-regulated learning, academic help-seeking, impostor phenomena, racial discrimination, sense of belonging, structural equation modeling

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