

Effects of Cross-Racial Social Evaluative Stress on Black Americans

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Experimental literature has found that acute race-related stress is linked with physiological changes, but does race-related stress influence immune system reactivity? For this study, Black participants are exposed to the Trier Social Stress Task (TSST), a paradigm known to elicit immunological response. They are randomly assigned to either two White interviewers, the race-related stressor (RRS) or two Black interviewers, the non-race related stressor (N-RRS). They are then exposed to the TSST. Biological samples are taken pre- and post-stressor to measure fluctuations in immune activity. We anticipate that Black Americans in the RRS condition will show greater increase in IL-6 relative to those who were in the N-RRS. Additionally, Black Americans in the RRS condition will show diminished histamine reactivity relative to the N-RRS condition. This research may provide evidence that racism-related stress can lead to chronic inflammation and, as a result, impact the overall health of Black Americans, contributing to worse health outcomes.