

APA task force report outlines actions to end discrimination

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Teaching students of all ages about the value of diversity and the serious mental health impacts of bias and stereotyping will help end widespread discrimination in the United States, according to a new American Psychological Association task force report.

"Not only is discrimination wrong from the perspectives of morality and justice, it is ultimately detrimental to our entire country. Diversity increases our strength," said task force Chair James M. Jones, PhD. "To thrive in a [global economy](#) within the context of the rapidly changing demographics in the United States, we must maximize our country's potential through its diversity."

The APA Task Force on Reducing and Preventing Discrimination Against and Enhancing Benefits of Inclusion of People Whose Social Identities Are Marginalized in U.S. Society was appointed by Melba Vasquez, PhD, APA's 2011 president, to identify the best interventions to prevent and eliminate prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination and the associated health care disparities.

[Psychological research](#) has confirmed that discrimination is harmful in many ways, according to the report. For example, the [psychological consequences](#) of [social rejection](#), exclusion and discrimination can be similar to those of physical assault. The report identifies the importance of [psychological science](#) in the development of strategies and tools that can be implemented and evaluated in the workplace, courts, schools, the media, families and communities.

Diversity improves education, business and personal relations, according to recent studies, the report said. While some critics have argued that too much focus on diversity undermines [American culture](#) and divides people, the task force maintained that emphasizing differences does not preclude recognizing shared aims and values.

Referencing decades of psychological research, the task force listed several ways organizations, schools, policymakers and individuals can reduce prejudice and improve psychological well-being and accomplishment:

- Organizations can work to improve contact among diverse groups.
- Schools and caregivers can encourage children from different racial or ethnic groups to cooperate in learning exercises.
- Individuals can make a special effort to interact with and befriend others who are not part of their particular group.

The task force also presented several recommendations to APA and the discipline of psychology for playing a larger role in decreasing health care [disparities](#) among diverse populations:

- Develop and distribute educational materials on prejudice and discrimination to day care, Head Start, preschool and kindergarten teachers and parents.
- Develop and distribute classroom curricula that incorporate research evidence illustrating the effects of bias and stereotype.
- Develop and encourage diversity training for psychologists and other mental health care providers.

Devote more psychological research to age, gender, disability status, economic and sexual orientation discrimination.

Provided by American Psychological Association

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