

Study findings linking ovulation, racial bias questioned

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Is ovulation related to higher racial bias? Though recent research, from Michigan State University, suggested that there was a link, new research from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business was unable to replicate those findings.

In four studies, documented in their paper "In Search of an Association Between Conception Risk and Prejudice," Carlee Beth Hawkins, a doctoral student, and her co-authors were unable to find any evidence that there is an increase in racial bias related to conception risk.

Hawkins, along with Cailey Fitzgerald of the University of Virginia and Brian Nosek of the University of Virginia and the Center for Open Science, closely followed the study procedures in "Race Bias Tracks Conception Risk Across the Menstrual Cycle," published in the journal *Psychological Science*, but were unable to come to the same conclusions. They also sought to expand beyond [racial bias](#) toward other social groups.

"The theoretical explanation for the findings was that women with higher conception risk and therefore at higher risk of unwanted pregnancy resulting from sexual coercion, are more negative toward racial outgroups because outgroup men are more threatening and therefore more likely to be sexually coercive," Hawkins says. "This logic shouldn't hold for outgroups that aren't likely to be sexually coercive, so we shouldn't see this pattern—or it should be reduced—when examining attitudes toward elderly men, physically disabled men, and gay [men](#), for

example."

Being unable to replicate the original findings, though halted further studies.

"Perhaps the effect is smaller than originally proposed, so small that we couldn't find it again," Hawkins says. "Or, perhaps the effect doesn't replicate in samples or contexts outside the ones originally tested. Either way, this is useful information for this area of research."

The hope is that researchers build off of both sets of research to better understand how physiological processes may shape psychological responses or processes, and improve the way they study this subject, either through larger samples, or more diverse samples.

More information: *Psychological Science*,
pss.sagepub.com/content/20/6/661.full

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