



## Study: Racial pride benefits students

Those who work for a greater good also do better in school

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**BY JANET MILLER**  
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Students who are proud of their ethnic group, are aware of racism and work hard for a greater good such as their church, parents or their race do better in school, according to University of Michigan researchers.

Daphna Oyserman, associate professor in U-M's School of Social Work and Department of Psychology, and her research team studied eighth-grade students in Detroit, the state of Washington, and Israel, comparing views on ethnic identity with how well they did in school.

She studied four minority groups - African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and Arab students living in Israel - to reach her conclusions.

The study, she said, can help educators craft programs to help mold racial identity and improve academic performance. "We wanted to know what about your identity linked you to doing well in school," Oyserman said.

The study also found that:

- Black students who felt good about their race and good about being an American did well in school.
- Black students who felt good about being black, worked hard in school because they felt it reflected on their race, but were more skeptical about society, also did well.
- Black students who didn't identify with their race - who felt they simply weren't part of the human race - didn't do as well in school.

Curiously, students who think of themselves as "children of God" and don't identify themselves with their ethnic group don't perform as well in school.

But racial pride isn't enough to insure academic success, Oyserman said. Students who don't understand racism have no tools to combat it, she said.

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There's a growing body of research on "racial identity" and academic performance, said former Ann Arbor Schools' Superintendent Rossi Ray-Taylor, now executive director of the Minority Student Achievement Network, a consortium of 15 relatively affluent suburban school districts, including Ann Arbor, that have achievement gaps between white and African-American and Latino peers.

"There's a whole body of emerging research that we are trying to make better sense of," said Ray-Taylor.

"There is something going on related to race and achievement. It's nuanced. ... It's not about changing standards. It's about getting to students effectively," Ray-Taylor said.

Oyserman presented her findings at the recent American Psychological Society annual convention.

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