

## **The interactive effect of state and trait mindfulness on reducing implicit racial bias**

James Walsh, Miranda Scheps

*University of East London, London, United Kingdom*

**Background/Objective:** No study to date has explored the interactive effects of state mindfulness and trait mindfulness in reducing implicit racial bias. The current study was designed to address this issue among a slightly older cohort.

**Methods:** A three factor, quasi-experimental, mixed design was employed. The first factor was induction type and had two levels: mindfulness induction and control induction. The second factor was trait mindfulness with two levels: high trait mindfulness and low trait mindfulness. The third factor was the order in which the two inductions were undertaken and also had two levels: order A (mindfulness induction first and control induction second) and order B (control induction first and mindfulness induction second). The first factor was within-participants and the second and third between-participants. Two dependent variables were measured. Implicit racism was assessed twice using the Implicit Association Test (IAT) following the control induction and the mindfulness induction. Explicit racism was measured once. Thirty-five participants (20 males, 15 females; modal age range of 50 – 59 years) engaged in the study and completed the IAT on two occasions one week apart in their own homes.

**Results:** There was no main effect of induction type (H1). In other words, the mindfulness induction did not result in significantly lower implicit racism scores than the control induction. However, this was moderated significantly by trait mindfulness (H2). Specifically, low trait mindful participants showed a significant reduction in implicit racism following the mindfulness induction compared with the control induction. There were no differences in implicit racism between induction conditions among the high trait mindful participants. There were no significant differences in explicit racism as a function of trait mindfulness (H3), and implicit and explicit racism levels proved to be independent of each other (H4).

**Discussion and Conclusion:** This is the first study to show that a combination of state and trait mindfulness is required in order to demonstrate a causal reduction in implicit racial bias. Differences between system 1 and system 2 thinking are drawn upon in an attempt to provide a theoretical framework for explaining the findings.