

Study: Diversity improves group decisions

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Tufts University scientists say they've determined diverse groups perform better than homogenous groups when it comes to decision making.

The researchers say they believe that's due largely to dramatic differences in the way whites behave in diverse groups -- changes that occur even before group members begin to interact.

"Traditional arguments in favor of diversity often focus on ethics, morality and constitutionality," said Samuel Sommers, assistant professor of psychology. "I wanted to look at the observable effects of diversity on performance."

In a study involving 200 participants on 29 mock juries, panels of whites and blacks performed better than all-white groups, using a number of measures.

"Such diverse juries deliberated longer, raised more facts about the case, and conducted broader and more wide-ranging deliberations," said Sommers. "They also made fewer factual errors in discussing evidence and when errors did occur, those errors were more likely to be corrected during the discussion."

The study is detailed in the April issue of the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

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