2004

Differences between African Americans and white Americans on social acuity

Richard Raymond Jaramillo

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICANS AND
WHITE AMERICANS ON SOCIAL ACUITY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Psychology:
Experimental Psychology

by
Richard Raymond Jaramillo
March 2004
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Approved by:

Jean Peacock, Chair, Psychology

3/08/04

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ABSTRACT

This study, conceptually replicating the study by Funder and Harris (1986), examined the difference between African Americans and White Americans on measures of social acuity. Social acuity, as defined in this context, is the ability and inclination to perceive the psychological state of others and guide one's behavior in accordance with that perception. Self-monitoring, attributional complexity and empathy were the three measures used to assess social acuity between these two distinct ethnicities. It was hypothesized that African Americans would score higher on these measures based on their collective socialization that provides coping skills, resilience, and perhaps, astute perceptive skills in the face of the dominant White culture. The self-construal scale was administered to the African American sample to identify their level of interdependent and independent group traits. The results yielded no significant difference between African Americans and White Americans on measures of social acuity. However, all three measures were found to be robustly correlated and demonstrative of the construct of social acuity. Also, African Americans scored significantly higher on the independent dimension as opposed to the
interdependent dimension of the self-construal scale. The construct of vertical collectivism, in which individuals adhere to the norms and values of the in-group, but do not feel subordinate to the in-group, is posited as an explanation as to why African Americans were higher in their independent self-construal compared to their interdependent self-construal. The significant correlations between the measures of social acuity replicated previous research in this area of personality perception, and validate the use of a multiplicative approach to assessing individuals on personality trait dimensions. The implications for future research on the study of situational, collective and independent cultural traits among African Americans and other distinct ethnicities are indicated.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Jean Peacock for her guidance and patience during my graduate studies and thesis completion.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee members, Professor Faith McClure and Professor David Chavez, for their insightful evaluation and recommendations during the completion of my thesis.
DEDICATION

To my Wife, Daniela, my Love; for your years of love, patience and support.

To my Daughter, Ricki Rae, my Seety Girl; you have made my life complete. Follow your dreams.

To my Mother, Polly, my Angel; for being a special friend and major influence in my life.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Social Acuity

Social acuity, defined as "... the ability and inclination to perceive the psychological state of others and to guide one's behavior in accordance with that perception" (Funder & Harris, 1986, p.530), is one aspect of the field of research dedicated to personality perception. Social acuity is also studied under the rubric of personality judgment, or social judgment. Guiding one's behavior is an important component in defining social acuity because of its relevance to interaction with others. Predicting the behavior and, perhaps, personality traits of others can be useful in social and educational contexts. The examination of social acuity falls under the "accuracy paradigm," which places much emphasis on the correctness of personality judgments as opposed to the "error paradigm," which places more attention on the errors that are made relevant to personality judgments. Examining the accuracy of social acuity, therefore, requires a broad range of criteria (Funder, 1987, 1995; Funder & Harris, 1986).
Realistic Accuracy Model

As a relatively new theoretical foundation with which to study social acuity and ultimately personality perception, Funder (1995) introduced the Realistic Accuracy Model (RAM). RAM's examination of accuracy in personality perception is congruent with the critical realist's philosophy of science: truth, and in this context, accuracy, exists, but attaining it is not accomplished through a reduction of facts and data to reach some measure of understanding, but through a complex, multiplicative approach in which findings are compiled, synthesized and interpreted for their possible relevance (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

According to RAM, accuracy is derived from a process involving the availability, detection and utilization of pertinent behavioral cues. Within this framework, not only are targets of personality judgments (the person being judged) assessed, but the observer, or informant as well (the person making the judgments), which adds a measure of increased complexity and convergence to this area of research. However, to provide structure for the study of accuracy in personality perception, RAM provides the
researcher with four fundamental variables with which to study: "good judge," the assumption that some people are better at making personality judgments than others; "good target," the tendency for some individuals to be more easy to judge than others; "good trait," the potential for some traits (behaviors) to be judged or predicted more accurately than others; and "good information," the degree to which certain or increased information may lead to greater accuracy in judgment. This framework of moderator variables has proven its utility and has been a catalyst for further research in personality perception (Funder, 1995, 1997).

Good judge refers to an individual's ability to detect and use available behavioral cues. One person might be astute at making judgments of others while another person might not be. Variability in accurate judgments is contingent on the judge's interaction and social experiences, and developed social skills. Cognitive abilities and motivation on the part of the judge are also important factors. Specifically, a more intelligent person with sufficient motivation may possibly be more accurate in making judgments of others than a person who is lacking in these areas (Funder, 1995).
A good target is an individual whose behavioral cues are relatively easy to be detected by the judge. Extroverts are easier to judge than introverts based on differences in quantity and quality of social interaction. People who are more socially active may exhibit more behavioral cues than people who have limited contact with others. The less socially active individual would tend to exhibit very few behavioral cues from which to detect (Funder, 1995).

Good trait, is an equally important variable in making accurate judgments. The notion is that certain traits may be more salient and recognizable than others. A trait such as gregariousness would be easier to detect because of repeated exposure to social interactions than a trait such as "pondering" and "daydreaming." These less salient traits would require declarations by the person exhibiting these traits or, detection of less recognizable behavioral cues such as a detached gaze or making inattentive responses (Funder, 1995).

Good information equates to the availability of information to the judge. In this context, information pertains to any verbal or nonverbal behavior witnessed by the judge that is pertinent to knowing what sort of person
the target is. Quantity of information is an important factor in making increasingly accurate judgments. The longer the judge is exposed to the target person, such as acquaintances or friends, the more accurate judgments will likely be (Funder, 1995, 1997).
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Acuity

The study of personality in general and one of its descendant areas of personality research, personality perception, or social judgment, has historically focused on an individual level of analysis in which individual differences have been the central focus. Hence, personality research was, and is now, predominately an idiographic endeavor, but with its data analyzed nomothetically. Gordon Allport, considered a member of the "avant-garde" of American personality psychology, defined personality as "... the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment" (Allport, 1937, p.48). Allport's proclamation emphasizing individual differences also served as the protocol that personality researchers have adhered to for decades.

Utilizing the "individual differences" approach to studying personality perception, and more specifically, social acuity, Funder and Harris (1986), formulated a multifaceted method to examine the level of social acuity of
individuals in a study consisting of 64 undergraduate college students (male=32; female=32). In an effort to obtain comprehensive and coherent data with which to measure social acuity in their sample, these authors used the following self-report inventories: Self-Monitoring (Snyder, 1974), Attributional Complexity (Fletcher, Danilovicha, Fernandez, Peterson & Reeder, 1986) and Empathy (Hogan, 1969). In addition, subjects were tasked to complete the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) (Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers & Archer, 1979), a perceptual performance task, and the California Q-sort (Block, 1961; Bem & Funder, 1978), which consists of a set of one hundred phrases used to describe personality traits of oneself or another person. Funder and Harris (1986) found that the four measures of social acuity revealed a number of significant correlations: self-monitoring and empathy, $r = .46, p < .01$; PONS and attributional complexity, $r = .38, p < .05$. Of some concern, however, is the fact that attributional complexity was not significantly correlated with self-monitoring or empathy. Also, Q-sorts completed by the subjects revealed significant correlations among the four measures of social acuity. Self Q-sorts were significantly
intercorrelated with high scorers on the PONS and self-monitoring, $r = .36$, $p < .001$; higher scorers on the PONS and empathy, $r = .39$, $p < .001$; and high scorers on self-monitoring and empathy, $r = .61$, $p < .001$. Informant' Q-sorts revealed significant intercorrelations with the four measures completed by the subjects as well: high scorers on the PONS and attributional complexity, $r = .42$, $p < .001$; high scorers on PONS and empathy, $r = .26$, $p < .01$; and high scorers on self-monitoring and empathy, $r = .81$, $p < .001$. Overall, these authors found an adequate amount of converging data from a number of diverse methods that tapped into the domain of social acuity.

Additional research has been carried out on the subject of personality perception. In a study conducted by Colvin and Funder (1991), 138 undergraduate students were recruited as targets (persons being judged) and grouped into opposite sex pairs. Each pair had three, five-minute conversations with the topic of the first two sessions to be picked by the targets and the topic of the third session chosen by the experimenter. After the three sessions, the pair then filled out the Bem Sex-Role Inventory, Self-Monitoring Scale, Hogan Empathy Scale and the Attributional complexity
scale and the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity as described by Funder & Harris (1986). Q sorts were used by acquaintances and strangers to make personality and behavioral judgments of targets. Correlations between the scales and Q sort judgments revealed that acquaintances' judgments of targets' personality were more accurate than stranger judgments. However, there was no difference between judges on behavioral predictions of targets.

Utilizing the NEO-PI, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness Personality Inventory, Q sort and videotape sessions on 239 university students, Funder, Kolar, and Blackman (1995) found that knowing the target increased interjudge agreement, but was not necessary for making those judgments. Also, judgments by acquaintances resulted in greater interjudge and self-other agreement as opposed to judgments by strangers. The consensus reached from these findings was that interjudge agreement is a function of mutual accuracy rather than mere similarity or communication between judges, or overlapping of judgments based on observing the target in the same behavioral settings.
Kolar and Funder (1996) used 140 Harvard University undergraduate students in their study examining the accuracy between self-judgments of personality, and one acquaintance versus two acquaintance judgments of the target person. In this study, Q-sort and videotaped sessions were used to test the different experimental conditions. They found that judgments made by a single acquaintance had slightly more predictive validity than judgments made by the target (self-rating). Furthermore, judgments made by two acquaintances were significantly greater in predictive validity than either self-ratings or single acquaintance judgments.

In another study utilizing videotaped sessions as manipulation, Blackman and Funder (1998) recruited 360 subjects to perceive and make judgments of six targets in videotaped behavioral sessions ranging from five to thirty minutes duration. Q-sort ratings were used to assess self-other agreement and consensus between judgments of personality based on the video sessions. These authors found that accuracy in judgments was significantly greater in observing the longest video sessions than the shortest.

Conversely, a high degree of consensus was achieved among judges after watching the shortest video sessions and
did not increase with observing longer video sessions. Additional judges introduced into the experiment who knew the targets on the average of fourteen months reached much higher accuracy and consensus than the initial perceivers who watched the video sessions. Overall, the level or longevity of acquaintanceship and information between targets and judges resulted in a higher association between consensus and accuracy of personality judgments (Blackman & Funder, 1998).

As research on personality perception in general has indicated, it incorporates many different sources of information and assessment measures. Accuracy in personality judgment or social acuity is, therefore, derived at utilizing a multiplicative approach and synthesizing converging data. Not only can the accuracy of personality judgments of the self be analyzed, but also judgments of persons known to the target, and consensus of judgments between judges.

Cross-Cultural Psychology

A clear departure from the individual differences paradigm in recent years has been to focus attention and analysis to variability among personality traits and,
behavior in general, across cultural groups. As posited by Singelis (2000), cross-cultural studies must attempt to pinpoint the specific aspect of a given culture that can account for its behavioral differences. Cross-cultural researchers should exercise mobility between measuring etic (universal) traits and emic (cultural-specific) traits as a means of detecting particular aspects of behavior. To accomplish this task, researchers must refrain from ignoring cultural variance along trait dimensions and behavior, and ought to consider variation between cultures as much more than bothersome extraneous variables (Kagitcibasi & Poortinga, 2000; Kim & Park, 2000). In specifying their reasons for the development of cross-cultural personality measures, Sampo and Ashton (1998) perhaps captured a guiding principle for the future of cross-cultural personality research by stating "... people in one culture might, on average, be higher on a particular personality trait or show a greater trait variability than people in a different culture" (p. 151).

African American Socialization

One rationale for conducting a study between two diverse ethnicities comes from the position of researchers
who have proposed that African Americans have developed and possess a high degree of coping strategies to "deal" with their existence within a predominately Caucasian society (Daley, Jennings, Beckett, Leashore, 1995; Houston, 1990). African Americans have developed effective problem-solving strategies that have allowed them to survive and coexist with the dominant culture, which has historically restricted them from certain life's amenities (Brega & Coleman, 1999; Miller, 1999; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999; Neville & Heppner, 1997; Stevenson, 1994; Steward, et al. 1998; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thompson, 1999).

The socialization process of African Americans is viewed as the foundation on which positive self-images, coping skills, and resilience to societal stressors and racial discrimination are achieved. This socialization process is important for self-respect and respect of the African American culture. It is a protective barrier against societal and racial hostilities. It is important for the family to engage in racial socialization of children in order to develop a racial identity that is both protective and positive (Miller, 1999; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999; Stevenson, 1994).
The collective identity of African Americans, as opposed to an individualistic identity, continues to function as a support base in which coping mechanisms have been passed down to resist negative images or stereotypes attributed to them by the dominant culture, and succeed. A statement by Houston (1990) perhaps puts the topic at hand into greater context:

Because of the many covert, subliminal, nonverbal, and otherwise seemingly innocuous means of culturally transmitting and conditioning personality from parent to offspring, it is possible that personality represents the most profound and intense of all African survivals (p.119).

The concept of collectivism and individualism has been expounded on by making distinctions between different types of collectivism and individualism. These different types, or "species", as referred to by Triandis (1995) and Triandis and Chen (1998), are Horizontal Individualism (HI), Horizontal Collectivism (HC), Vertical Individualism (VI), and Vertical Collectivism (VC). HI is a pattern in which individuals tend to their own daily functions while not
necessarily preoccupied with comparisons with others, nor do they want to distinguish themselves in their social environment. Equal status is the norm with HI. Australia and Sweden are two countries that exemplify HI. The HC pattern differs, as individuals tend to merge with in-groups such as families, coworkers and the community, but do not necessarily feel subordinate to these groups. Equality is the norm in this sub-type. An example of a group fitting HC is a monastic order such as the Israeli kibbutz.

Individuals in the VI sub-type according to Triandis (1995) and Triandis and Chen (1998) are concerned with comparisons with others, highly competitive and want to stand out in their community or nation. This species is prevalent in the United States and other Western countries such as France. In the VC sub-type, individuals adhere to the norms of their in-groups and are willing to make self-sacrifices for their group. However, inequality is accepted and the individual is not viewed as the same as others. Greece and India are two countries that are demonstrative of VC.

Triandis and Chen (1998) examined these sub-types of collectivism and individualism in a study using 123 Illinois
psychology students and 181 Hong Kong students. The students were tasked to read 16 different scenarios depicting various social situations and make responses. Overall, these authors found that the Hong Kong students were slightly more collectivist than the Illinois students. The Illinois students were very high in horizontal individualism and slightly high in horizontal collectivism. The Hong Kong students were very high in horizontal collectivism and slightly high in horizontal individualism. According to Triandis and Chen, all people have HI, VI, HC, and VC cognitive dispositions, but manifest according to the situation.
Hypothesis

The current study proceeded from an "a priori" position that, indeed, an ethnic-specific salience would be found in the construct of social acuity with the following hypothesis: African Americans would reveal a higher level of social acuity compared with White Americans. Rationale for this particular hypothesis stems from the fact that certain coping mechanisms, adaptation skills and resiliency exist within African Americans based on positive racial socialization. It is plausible that as a result of this socialization process, African Americans may have also learned, explicitly or implicitly, astute perceptive skills with which to make accurate social judgments of others. It is also plausible that African Americans possess a higher degree of social acuity than White Americans. This line of reasoning formed the basis for hypothesizing that African Americans would score higher on social acuity than White Americans.

The current study conceptually replicated the study by Funder and Harris (1986) and also deviated from, and perhaps, transcended the boundaries of the "individual differences" paradigm to studying social acuity and
personality in general. A sample of African Americans and a sample of White Americans were studied to assess possible differences with regard to their level of social acuity. This group-level analysis sought to reveal a distinction between cultural groups on the construct of social acuity.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedure

A between-subjects multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) design comprised of a sample of 60 African American subjects and a sample of 60 White American subjects, serving as the independent variable, was utilized for the current study. Male and female university students were recruited, briefed and debriefed in accordance with American Psychological Association ethical policies.

All participants completed the self-monitoring scale, attributional complexity scale and the empathy scale, in the sequence they are listed, through a combination of classroom and laboratory sessions. These three scales comprised the dependent variable for this study. In addition, African American participants completed the self-construal scale. As a deception, all subjects were told that the proposed study was looking at "communication styles." Data was analyzed between the African American sample and the White American sample to determine the degree to which these two groups differed with regard to scale components.
Although Funder & Harris (1986) utilized the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS; Rosenthal et al., 1979) and the California Q-sort (Block, 1961; Bem & Funder, 1978) in their study of social acuity, this study limited the scope of its data collection to self-report questionnaires. Accordingly, these two measures were not used in the current study. Elimination of these two sources of data were expected not to hamper the results of the current study, for the three scales that were used should have sufficiently tapped into the construct of social acuity while maintaining a multiplicative data collection approach to assessing social acuity.

Measures

**Self-Monitoring Scale (SM), Revised, 18-Item**

The original Self-Monitoring Scale was a true-false self-report questionnaire with 25 items that measured to what degree an individual is perceptive of the social interactions of others and uses this perception to guide their own social interactions. The Alpha for this scale was .63, which is somewhat lower than desirable. A one-month, test-retest reliability yielded .83. This scale has accumulated some studies indicating its external validity.
For instance, SM scale development studies have found that subjects scoring high in SM tend to be more versatile in their behavior contingent on social cues from others as compared to subjects scoring low on SM (Snyder, 1974; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). A factor analysis conducted after the development of this scale revealed the following three distinct subscales: extraversion, acting ability and other-directedness (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980).

However, due to the weak Alpha of the original SM scale, Snyder & Gangestad (1986) developed the revised 18-item SM scale, with an increased internal consistency of .70, while still maintaining its original test-retest reliability of .83. Hence, the new revised scale was used in the current study. Individual items were scored in the direction of high self-monitoring, thus participants scoring in this direction were deemed high self-monitors. A typical question keyed true and indicative of a person high in SM is, "I'm not always the person I appear to be," and one item keyed false is, "I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people."
Attributional Complexity Scale (AC), 28-Item

The Attributional Complexity Scale is a 28-item scale measuring the level of cognitive complexity individuals use in social interactions. This scale utilizes a 7-point, likert-type scale to respond to items covering seven constructs: level of interest or motivation; preference for complex rather than simple explanations; presence of metacognition concerning explanations, which is generally the awareness of the strategies one uses to explain behavior; the awareness of the extent to which an individual's behavior is a function of interaction with others; the tendency to infer abstract or causally complex internal attributions; the tendency to infer abstract, contemporary, external causal attributions; and the tendency to infer external causes operating from the past (AC; Fletcher et. al., 1986). To maintain uniformity between measures, a 5-point likert format was used in the current study.

Higher scores for the AC scale are directed in the direction of higher attributional complexity. A typical item keyed in the positive direction and indicative of a person high in AC is "I believe it is important to analyze
and understand our own thinking processes" and a question keyed in the opposite direction is "I think very little about the different ways that people influence each other."

The internal consistency of the AC scale is .85, with an 18-day test-retest reliability of .80. Studies constructed to test the validity of the AC scale revealed good results. For instance, the discriminant validity was tested against social desirability, academic ability and internal-external locus of control with results as predicted by the author: attributional complexity was not related to either construct. Testing of the AC scale's convergent validity revealed that it converged with a need for cognition (Fletcher, et al., 1986).

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), (Empathy Scale), 28-Item

The Empathy Scale used in the study conducted by Funder & Harris (1986) was a criterion-keyed scale consisting of 64 true-false questions, which was developed empirically by Hogan (1969). This scale is a composite of 31 items from the California Personality Inventory, 25 items from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, and 8 items developed at the Institute of Personality and Research at
University of California, Berkeley. Higher scores are indicative of individuals with high empathy.

Although the Hogan Empathy Scale exhibited good psychometric properties and proved its usefulness in measuring empathy from subjects in the study conducted by Funder and Harris (1986), this study used the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), which is an empathy scale developed by Davis (1980). This scale is a "28-item" self-report questionnaire comprised of four 7-item, 5-point, likert-type subscales with each assessing a specific aspect of empathy. The Perspective Taking (PT) scale measures the tendency of an individual to adopt the point of view of people in daily situations. The Fantasy Scale (FS) measures the degree to which a person becomes enmeshed in the feelings and actions of characters in movies, books and plays. The Empathic Concern (EC) scale measures the tendency of individuals to experience feelings of warmth, compassion and concern for other people. The fourth scale, Personal Distress (PD), measures an individual's own feelings of uneasiness and discomfort in reaction to the emotions of others. A typical item from the IRI keyed in the positive direction is, "I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a
novel," and an item keyed in the opposite direction is "When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm."

The satisfactory internal consistency of this scale's items ranges from .71 to .77 and the test-retest reliability ranges from .62 to .71. In developing the IRI, Davis (1980) found that the factor structure of the questionnaire remained consistent over numerous administrations to different samples, thus indicating the scales validity and utility. In addition, the convergent and discriminant validity of the IRI was assessed in its relation with the constructs of social functioning, self-esteem, emotionality, and sensitivity to others. As predicted by the author, PT was closely associated with better social functioning and higher self-esteem, and less closely associated with emotionality than the other IRI subscales. Conversely, EC scores were less consistently related to social functioning, but firmly associated with sensitivity to others. FS scores were generally not associated with social functioning or self-esteem, but associated with emotionality and sensitivity to others. Strong associations were found between PD scores and social functioning, self-esteem, emotionality and sensitivity (Davis, 1983).
Also, the IRI subscales demonstrated a number of significant associations \( (p < .05) \) when tested against the Mehrabian and Epstein Emotional Empathy Scale and the Hogan Empathy Scale (cognitive). The Mehrabian and Epstein scale revealed the following significant correlations with the IRI subscales: PT, \( r = .20 \); FS, \( r = .52 \); EC, \( r = .60 \); and PD, \( r = .24 \). Significant correlations also resulted from the Hogan scale and IRI subscales: PT, \( r = .40 \); FS, \( r = .15 \); EC, \( r = .18 \); and PD, \( r = -.33 \). This set of data is a strong indication of the convergent properties the IRI has with other empathy measures (Davis, 1983).

**Self-Construal Scale (SCS), 24-Item**

The self-construal scale is a 24-item scale that measures whether an individual has an independent (individualistic) or interdependent (collectivistic) self-image. This scale is comprised of two 12-item, 7-point, likert-type subscales, one subscale for measuring the independent self and the other subscale for measuring the interdependent self. To maintain uniformity between measures, a 5-point likert format was used in the current study. Higher scores in either subscale are indicative of individuals high in that particular trait dimension. There
are no reverse-keyed items in this scale. A typical item in the independent subscale is "Speaking up during a class is not a problem for me." A typical item in the interdependent subscale is "It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group," (Singelis, 1994).

Cronbach Alphas are sufficient for the independent subscale and the interdependent subscale, .70 and .74, respectively. In developing the self-construal scale, Singelis (1994) found that the two-factor structure remained consistent in repeated samples based on confirmatory factor analyses. Singelis tested the construct validity of this scale by administering it to two distinct ethnicities, Caucasian Americans and Asian Americans. The results, as expected, revealed that the Asian Americans were more interdependent than Caucasian Americans on the interdependent dimension, and Caucasian Americans were more independent than Asian Americans on the independent dimension.

The self-construal scale was used in the current study to possibly explain any within-group variance that may have resulted in the African American sample. Aside from finding a significant difference between African Americans and White
Americans on measures of social acuity, it was anticipated, based on the hypothesis of this study, African Americans would score high on the interdependence dimension of this scale. Likewise, it was expected that African Americans would not score high on the independent dimension of this scale.

As was generally found with the Funder and Harris (1986) study measuring social acuity, the current study also sought to find correlational significance among the measures as a means to illustrate their relevancy to the construct of social acuity. As was indicated earlier, attributional complexity did not correlate significantly with self-monitoring or empathy. Hence, this study allowed for a revisiting of the issue, but with a revised self-monitoring scale and a different empathy scale. Moreover, the data were predicted to reveal higher saliency in social acuity with the sample of African Americans compared to the sample of White Americans.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

Statistical Analyses of Ethnicity

All reversed scale items in the data set were reverse-keyed prior to statistical analysis. MANOVA between African Americans and White Americans using the self-monitoring scale, attributional complexity scale and empathy scale did not reveal a significant difference. Hence, these findings did not support the hypothesis that African Americans would score higher on social acuity.

In addition, a paired-sample t-test was conducted to distinguish between independent and interdependent self-construals in the African American sample. The African American sample was split between independent and interdependent self-construal items, thus creating two subscales. African Americans scored significantly higher on the 12-item independent subscale items ($M = 45.77$, $SD = 5.79$), as opposed to the interdependent subscale items ($M = 38.80$, $SD = 5.81$), $t(59) = 6.80$, $p < .001$ (see Table 1). However, African Americans scored above the median value of 36 on the 12-item interdependence subscale. The median was established from the minimum score and maximum score
possible from the 5-point likert subscale scores, 12 and 60 respectively.

Table 1. Self-construal Sub-scale Scores for African Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indep-SC</td>
<td>45.77</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-SC</td>
<td>38.80</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Indep-SC = Independent Self-construal; Inter-SC = Interdependent Self-construal.

Correlation Between Measures

Significantly high Pearson Product Moment correlations were found between the three measures serving as the dependent variable in this study. Self-monitoring was significantly correlated with attributional complexity, \( r = .250, p < .01 \), and empathy, \( r = .311, p < .01 \). Attributional complexity was significantly correlated with empathy, \( r = .568, p < .01 \) (see Table 2).

The robust correlations in the current study surpass the correlations found between measures of social acuity in the study conducted by Funder and Harris (1986). All three
scales were found to be highly correlated in the current study, whereas, only self-monitoring and empathy were found to be significantly correlated in the previous study.

Table 2. Full-scale Correlations Between Measures of Social Acuity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Self-Monitoring</th>
<th>Attributional Complexity</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Monitoring</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.250**</td>
<td>.311**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributional Complexity</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>.568**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
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Note. ** p < .01 (Two-tailed)
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions Specific to Research Question and Hypothesis

The central question in this study was whether a difference existed between African Americans and White Americans on the construct of social acuity. As the results indicated, no significant difference was found between these two diverse ethnicities. Moreover, the hypothesis stating that African Americans would score higher on measures of social acuity was also not confirmed.

The fact that previous research on social acuity under the auspices of the realistic accuracy model has not been conducted cross-culturally, this study proceeded a priori with no definite conclusions as to outcome. The field of personality perception has focused on individual differences with regard to predicting personality traits, and to some degree, predicting behavior. However, it is possible that cultural variance on some personality trait or behavioral dimension can be obscured when studies treat ethnicity as a "mundane demographic," rather than a viable variable.
Perhaps of more interest as a result of this study, is the fact that African Americans scored significantly higher on the independent dimension, as opposed to the interdependent dimension, of the self-construal scale. However, African Americans did score slightly above median on the interdependent subscale. Racial socialization of African Americans emphasizes the development of, not only facilitative traits and strategies, but of adhering to in-group values and ideals.

A possible explanation for the fact that African Americans had a significantly higher independent self-construal, while still leaning marginally high on an interdependent self-construal may be found in the constructs described by Triandis (1995) and Triandis and Chen (1998) earlier in this study, and further studied by Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand (1995). These researchers refined the dichotomy of collectivism and individualism into four separate, but related constructs or sub-categories.

As supported by the resulting data in this study, the African American sample can be described or categorized under the "species" of Vertical Collectivist (VC). According to Triandis and Chen, VCs merge with their
particular in-group, yet do not feel subordinate to their in-group. This is a plausible explanation especially considering that all of the African American participants in this study were college students with certain aspirations for the future, having goals and motivations as most college students possess for the most part.

Based on the data revealed in this study indicating African Americans having a high independent trait and slightly high interdependent trait, African Americans may be goal-oriented and autonomous on one hand, but embracing of their supportive culture on the other hand. Ultimately then, exhibiting collective or independent traits or behavioral patterns can be viewed as context-specific. Specifically, African Americans as with other distinct cultural groups, could fall into a particular orientation based on the situation or social environment.

Accomplishments

One accomplishment of this study is that it incorporated the use of the self-construal scale on African Americans, which was noted as a concern for Singelis (1994). He indicated that the self-construal scale was less generalizable to mainland Unites States because his samples
were drawn from the state of Hawaii. This study has contributed to the study of collectivism and individualism as a whole by its assessment of self-construals of African Americans, despite the fact that this study utilized a relatively small number (n=60) of Black participants.

Another accomplishment of this study is that it replicated the findings by Funder and Harris (1986) who found significant converging data on the construct of social acuity in their study. In fact, as indicated earlier, attributional complexity was not significantly correlated with self-monitoring or empathy in the study conducted by Funder and Harris. The findings of the current study revealed that all three measures were significantly highly correlated (p < .01). This may be attributed to the fact that the current study used a revised self-monitoring scale and a different empathy scale, both possessing superior psychometric properties.

Limitations of Study

One limitation of this study, which is probably inherent in most studies conducted on college campuses, is that both samples were comprised of college students. The ability to generalize the findings of this study to the
greater population is not necessarily feasible. It is possible, especially with the findings specific to the self-construal scale items, that a different sample not affiliated with an educational setting would render different results related to ethnic salience.

The fact that no significant difference was found between African Americans and White Americans on social acuity highlights another limitation. It might be possible that attempting to assess social acuity between cultures using self-report measures may not be a sufficient method. Having participants in a study view and make judgments on videotaped scenarios depicting people in different situations, such as used in previous research on personality perception, may be a better instrument with which to assess social acuity between cultures.

Another notable limitation of this study is that of data analysis. Although high correlations were found on the measures of social acuity, this study limited its scope to full-scale correlations. The use of numerous measures with some or all containing cognitive and affective subscale components, and possible intercorrelations, presents a potential interpretative discombobulation. Nevertheless, a
wealth of information could be extracted from examining intercorrelations between measures.

Implications for Future Research

In light of the current study, a few recommendations for future research are warranted. Additional research between cultures is necessary utilizing the approach proposed by Triandis (1995) and Triandis and Chen (1998). The validity of the four sub-categories of collectivism and individualism developed by these researchers should be explored with other diverse ethnicities such as African Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics. The possibility of a person having both collective and individualistic traits contingent upon different situations offers a cogent explanation as to why the African American sample in the current study scored higher along the independent trait dimension.

The self-construal scale developed by Singelis (1994) should be administered to, or utilized as a variable on research with other diverse ethnicities such as Native Americans and Hispanics, and repeated on African Americans throughout the United States. This would allow for the
assessment of the self-construal scale in these cultural
groups, at least with respect to university populations.

Overall, the current study has contributed to the field
of personality psychology by adding to the research
literature on personality perception, and social acuity
specifically. The call by many researchers for the use of
numerous instruments or measures to assess a certain
personality construct has been validated by this study.

Perhaps, of greater importance are the practical
implications that could be drawn from the findings in the
current study. Correctly perceiving the psychological state
of others, predicting the behavior of others, and gauging
one's response to others is of value with regard to
interpersonal behavior in a variety of social, business and
educational settings. It is possible that positive and
facilitative approaches when interacting with others can be
learned and used that will be productive and engaging,
rather than harsh and divisive.

The same can be stated for positive interaction between
individuals of varying cultural groups. It is important to
learn the uniqueness, differences and similarities of
distinct cultures in order to develop understanding and
common ground for fruitful communication to take place. This study has made a small contribution in assessing certain personal traits and dispositions across cultures.
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS, DEBRIEFING STATEMENT
California State University, San Bernardino
Department of Psychology

Informed Consent

The current study is being conducted by Richard Jaramillo, graduate student, at California State University, San Bernardino under the supervision of Professor Jean Peacock. Participants will complete a number of measures. After completing the measures, participants will then complete a short demographics section. If you have any further questions about this study, Professor Peacock can be reached at (909) 880-5579 or in Social & Behavioral Sciences, SB-506.

No risks to participants are anticipated with this study and your willingness to participate is voluntary. This study has been approved by the Department of Psychology, Human Participants, Institutional Review Board.

Your participation in this study should take approximately 30 minutes. Upon completion of this study, participants will be given a monetary compensation of $8.00 (eight dollars) and three extra credit points.

Before indicating your willingness to participate, please read the following statements.

1. This study has been explained to me and I understand the explanation given to me and what my participation will involve.

2. I understand that I may choose not to participate in this study without penalty, choose to discontinue participation in this study at any time, and choose not to answer any questions that arouse any uncomfortable feelings. If you decide to discontinue participation, return the questionnaire to the person who gave it to you. Certainly, we hope that you choose to answer all of the questions because of their importance to the results of this study. Partially completed questionnaires will not contribute to the analyses of this study.

3. I understand that all of my responses will remain anonymous, however, group level results will be available for me to peruse at my request.

4. I understand that I can receive additional information about this study, upon my request, once participation is completed.

Please do not put any personal identifying marks on this questionnaire.

Please place an "X" in the space provided below to acknowledge that you are at least 18 years of age and that you have read the above statements. By marking and X in the space below, you have given your consent to participate on a voluntary basis in this study.

Place X here:_______ Date:______________
Informed Consent

The current study is being conducted by Richard Jaramillo, graduate student, at California State University, San Bernardino under the supervision of Professor Jean Peacock. Participants will complete a number of measures. After completing the measures, participants will then complete a short demographics section. If you have any further questions about this study, Professor Peacock can be reached at (909) 880-5579 or in Social & Behavioral Sciences, SB-506.

No risks to participants are anticipated with this study and your willingness to participate is voluntary. This study has been approved by the Department of Psychology, Human Participants, Institutional Review Board.

Your participation in this study should take approximately 20 minutes and is worth 2 extra credit points.

Before indicating your willingness to participate, please read the following statements.

1. This study has been explained to me and I understand the explanation given to me and what my participation will involve.

2. I understand that I may choose not to participate in this study without penalty, choose to discontinue participation in this study at any time, and choose not to answer any questions that arouse any uncomfortable feelings. If you decide to discontinue participation, return the questionnaire to the person who gave it to you. Certainly, we hope that you choose to answer all of the questions because of their importance to the results of this study. Partially completed questionnaires will not contribute to the analyses of this study.

3. I understand that all of my responses will remain anonymous, however, group level results will be available for me to peruse at my request.

4. I understand that I can receive additional information about this study, upon my request, once participation is completed.

Please do not put any personal identifying marks on this questionnaire.

Please place an "X" in the space provided below to acknowledge that you are at least 18 years of age and that you have read the above statements. By marking an X in the space below, you have given your consent to participate on a voluntary basis in this study.

Place X here:_______                         Date:________________
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

We want to thank you and appreciate your participation in this study. The questionnaire you have just completed was designed to assess levels of social acuity between two distinct ethnicities. Specifically, we are examining the relationship between African Americans and White Americans on measures of social acuity. Learning more about social acuity and its relation to diverse ethnicities is important to the field of cross-cultural psychology because of their relevance to interpersonal behavior in educational and other social contexts.

We would like to reassure you that your participation will remain totally anonymous throughout this study. All information obtained from participants will be analyzed as group data, hence, the information you have provided will not be analyzed at the individual level. If you should have any questions about your participation or are interested in the results of this study, you may contact Professor Peacock at (909) 880-5579 or at Social & Behavioral Sciences, SB-506. It is unlikely that participating in this study will cause any distress, however, if the questions have raised feelings that are uncomfortable for you and you would like to discuss your feelings, please contact the California State University, San Bernardino counseling center at (909) 880-5040.

Due to the fact that we will be collecting data throughout the academic year, we ask that you do not discuss any details of this study to any potential participants. Again, your cooperation is very much appreciated.
PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS COMPLETE AND HONEST AS POSSIBLE.
READ EACH QUESTION CAREFULLY AND MARK YOUR ANSWERS WITH A CIRCLE.

S-M  | True | False
--- | --- | ---
1. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of others. | T | F
2. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like. | T | F
3. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe. | T | F
4. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information. | T | F
5. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain others. | T | F
6. I would probably make a good actor. | T | F
7. In a group of people I am rarely the center of attention. | T | F
8. In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons. | T | F
9. I am not particularly good at making other people like me. | T | F
10. I am not always the person I appear to be. | T | F
11. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone or win their favor. | T | F
12. I have considered being an entertainer. | T | F
13. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting. | T | F
14. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations. | T | F
15. At a party I let others keep the jokes and stories going. | T | F
16. I feel a bit awkward in public and do not show up quite as well as I should. | T | F
17. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a right end). | T | F
18. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.  

A. C.

1. I don't usually bother to analyze and explain people's behavior.
2. Once I have figured out a single cause for a person's behavior I usually don't go any further.
3. I believe it is important to analyze and understand our own thinking processes.
4. I think a lot about the influence that I have on other people's behavior.
5. I have found that the relationships between a person's attitudes, beliefs, and character traits are usually simple and straightforward.
6. If I see people behaving in a really strange or unusual manner I usually put it down to the fact that they are strange or unusual people and don't bother to explain it any further.
7. I have thought a lot about the family background and personal history of people who are close to me, in order to understand why they are the sort of people they are.
8. I don't enjoy getting into discussions where the causes for people's behavior are being talked over.
9. I have found that the causes for people's behavior are usually complex rather than simple.
10. I am very interested in understanding how my own thinking works when I make judgments about people or attach causes to their behavior.
11. I think very little about the different ways that people influence each other.
12. To understand a person's personality/behavior I have found it is important to know how that person's attitudes, beliefs, and character traits fit together.
13. When I try to explain other people's behavior I concentrate on the person and don't worry too much about all the existing external factors that might be affecting them.
14. I have often found that the basic cause for a person's behavior is located far back in time.
15. I really enjoy analyzing the reasons or causes for people's behavior.
16. I usually find that complicated explanations for people's behavior are confusing rather than helpful.
A. C. (CONT'D.)

17. I give little thought to how my thinking works in the process understanding or explaining people's behavior.

18. I think very little about the influence that other people have on my behavior.

19. I have thought a lot about the way that different parts of my personality influence other parts (e.g., beliefs affecting attitudes or attitudes affecting character traits).

20. I think a lot about the influence that society has on other people.

21. When I analyze a person's behavior I often find the causes form a chain that goes back in time, sometimes for years.

22. I am not really curious about human behavior.

23. I prefer simple rather than complex explanations for people's behavior.

24. When the reasons I give for my own behavior are different from someone else's, this often makes me think about the thinking processes that lead to my explanations.

25. I believe that to understand a person you need to understand the people who that person has close contact with.

26. I tend to take people's behavior at face value and not worry about the inner causes for their behavior (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, etc.).

27. I think a lot about the influence that society has on my behavior and personality.

28. I have thought very little about my own family background and personal history in order to understand why I am the sort of person I am.

E.

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.

2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.

3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.

4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.

5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.

6. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.
E. (CONTD.)

7. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.

8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.

9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind protective towards them.

10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.

11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by how things look from their perspective.

12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.

13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.

14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.

15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.

16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one the characters.

17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.

18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes feel very much pity for them.

19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.

20. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.

21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.

22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in place of a leading character.

24. I tend to lose control during emergencies.

25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes for a while.

26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.

27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.
E. (CONTD.)

28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

S-C

1. I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
2. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.
3. My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.
4. I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor.
5. I respect people who are modest about themselves.
6. I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.
7. I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are important than my own accomplishments.
8. I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans.
9. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.
10. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I'm not happy with the group.
11. If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.
12. Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.
13. I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.
14. Speaking up during a class is not a problem for me.
15. Having a lively imagination is important to me.
16. I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.
17. I am the same person at home that I am at school.
18. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.
19. I act the same way no matter who I am with.
20. I feel comfortable using someone's first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.
21. I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.

22. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.

23. My personal identity independent of others is very important to me.

24. I value being in good health above everything.
DEMOGRAPHICS

The information you provide here will be kept Confidential. Do not write your name on this form.

Please fill out the following information:

1. Gender:  ____ Male  ____ Female

2. Age: ______

3. Race: (Please check only one box)
   ____ African American
   ____ White American
   ____ Hispanic
   ____ Asian
   ____ Native American
   ____ Other (please specify)

4. Class Level:  ____ Freshman  ____ Sophomore
   ____ Junior  ____ Senior
   ____ Graduate  ____ Other

5. Household Income:
   ____ Below $10,000  ____ $20,000 - $30,000  ____ $30,000 - $40,000
   ____ $40,000 - $50,000  ____ $50,000 - $60,000  ____ $60,000 - $70,000
   ____ $70,000 - $80,000  ____ $80,000 - $90,000  ____ $90,000 - $100,000
   ____ $10,000 - $20,000  ____ $100,000 and above

YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE QUESTIONNAIRE
THANK YOU
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