

Relationship between Self-image and Attitudes about Working with Other Races

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Abstract

The current study examined the relationship between self-image and attitudes about working with Whites and African-Americans. In a within-subjects design, 60 (40 males; 39 Whites; 21 African-Americans) employees in the aviation and maintenance departments of a large national airport completed questionnaires, indicating Achievement Need, Dominance Need, Self-control, Self-confidence, and attitudes about working with/for Whites and African-Americans. We hypothesized that Whites with a more favorable self-image would have more positive attitudes regarding working with African-Americans; African-Americans with a more favorable self-image would have more positive attitudes regarding working with Whites; participants' race would interact with race of the target population. With attitudes about working with African-Americans the criterion, Self-control was a significant predictor for White participants; Achievement and Self-confidence were significant predictors for African-Americans. Regression analyses predicting attitudes about working with Whites were not significant. We discuss the role of race in the personality—contextual performance relationship.

Relationship between Self-image and Attitudes about Working with Members of Other Racial Groups

The workforce is becoming increasingly diverse and often employees find themselves working with persons demographically dissimilar to themselves, e. g., persons of racial groups different than theirs. Identifying factors that may affect working relationships among employees who differ in terms of race may help employers create synergistic workplace environments (Umphress et al. 2007, 396). One's self-image of his or her personality may be one such factor. Rosenfield et al's. (1981, 17) found that White students' attitudes toward minorities were predicted by their self-image. The current study examined the relationship between self-image and attitudes about working with Whites and African-Americans.

Self-image is personality from the actor's perspective (Hogan 1996, 163). While utility of personality measures for personnel selection was questioned in the past (Guion and Gottier 1965, 135), personality assessment has become an accepted means to increase the predictive validity of multi-test selection procedures (Guion and Highhouse 2006). Selection procedures may include tests of cognitive ability, personality, and physical abilities. In fact, Hogan and Holland (2003,

100) argue that personality tests' validities can be improved when predictors and criteria are aligned by using socioanalytic theory and when performance criterion measures are narrowly defined. The current study was designed to examine the validities of very specific self-image dimensions as predictors of performance narrowly defined as attitudes about working with/for persons of different racial groups.

Self-image

According to socioanalytic theory (Hogan 1996, 163), self-image is one's perception of his or her personality and it shapes the person's social behavior, as he or she strives for acceptance and status in society. In the current study, self-image referred to respondents' perceptions of themselves, including self-efficacy (Bandura 1977, 191), self-esteem (Jensen et al. 1982), self-concept (Banks 1975, 82), and self-identity (Rice et al. 1974). While these terms may evoke various connotations, Spitzer et al. (1966, 265) found they overlap greatly and are used interchangeably in the literature. They all refer to self-ascribed personal characteristics.

In an interesting study by Hogan and Holland (2003, 100), the researchers found that personality measures may be better predictors of job performance than past research has indicated. They attribute their findings to their use of socioanalytic theory to align predictors and criteria. Hogan and Holland (2003, 100) conducted a meta-analysis of 43 studies, all which had used the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI) to predict job performance. The HPI, a 206-item true-false questionnaire designed to predict occupational performance, is based on the Big Five personality model (Digman 1990, 417). The researchers had subject matter experts classify criteria used in the studies as either "getting along" or "getting ahead" and identify the one HPI personality construct most similar to each performance criterion. They found that validities of personality dimensions (e. g., adjustment and ambition) were higher when performance criteria

were more narrowly defined (e. g., shows positive attitude and values productivity), than when general criteria were used (e. g., getting along or getting ahead).

Attitudes and Contextual Performance

Socioanalytic theory (Hogan 1996, 163) argues that career success is greatly influenced by motives of getting along and getting ahead. Similarly, other researchers (Borman and Motowidlo 1993, 71; Motowidlo et al. 1997, 71) argue that personality uniquely contributes to job success. Campbell et al.'s (1993, 35) theory of performance and McCrae and Costa's (1996, 51) framework for personality note the importance of self-image to performance. Campbell et al.'s (1993, 35) theory claims self-knowledge is one determinant of job performance components. They suggest that knowing one's abilities, interests, and personality contributes to a person's behavior on the job. Similarly, McCrae and Costa's (1996, 51) framework includes self-concept as well as objective biography, basic tendencies, characteristic adaptations, and external influences as categories of personality variables. According to them, individuals, responding to environmental pressures and demands, utilize behaviors that are consistent with their personality. Assuming self-image is a subset of characteristic adaptations, the former should be related to attitudes about adaptive behaviors, such as working with and for members of other racial groups.

Motives of getting along and getting ahead affect contextual performance (Motowidlo et al. 1997, 71), which is different and distinct from task performance (Borman and Motowidlo 1993, 71; Motowidlo and Van Scotter 1994, 475). The work by Borman and Motowidlo (1993, 71) and Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994, 475) suggest that overall work performance is comprised of components of task performance and contextual performance. Task performance behaviors include activities that relate directly to production of products or services, which fulfill

the primary mission of the organization. Such behaviors include operating machinery in a manufacturing plant, performing surgery in a hospital, or cashing checks in a bank. In contrast, contextual performance includes typically discretionary behaviors related to organizational citizenship (Organ and Konovsky 1989, 157) that contribute to the smooth operation of an organization (Borman and Motowidlo 1993, 71). The construct of contextual performance includes interpersonal elements (such as maintaining good working relationships) and motivational elements (such as persistence) (Borman and Motowidlo 1993, 71; Motowidlo and Van Scotter 1994, 475).

The relationship between self-image and contextual performance has received much attention (Beatty et al. 2001, 125; Motowidlo et al. 1997, 71; Witt et al. 2002, 911). Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994, 475) found that task performance was more highly correlated with experience and personality variables were better predictors of contextual performance. Their study used self-report personality measures of work orientation, dominance, dependability, adjustment, cooperativeness, and internal control. However, their measure of contextual performance did not specify demographics of co-workers or supervisors. For example, the 16 items used to measure contextual performance referred to workers' likelihood to "cooperate with others in the team" and "offer to help others accomplish their work." Other researchers have investigated similar personality characteristics. For example, Lyne et al. (1997) found that Adjustment, Ambition, Likeability, and Prudence (Hogan Personality Inventory dimensions) were significantly related to contextual performance; McManus and Kelly (1997) found Sociable, Analytical, and Self-confident personality dimensions were related to contextual performance.

The Current Study

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Our study focused on attitudes about working with Whites and African-Americans. While attitudes concerning other racial groups are important, relations between Whites and African-Americans have been a primary societal concern in the U. S. We hypothesized the following.

Hypothesis 1a: Whites with a more favorable self-image would have more positive attitudes of working with African-Americans.

Hypothesis 1b: African-Americans with a more favorable self-image would have more positive attitudes of working with Whites.

We also examined the relationships between self-concept and attitudes about working with members of one's same racial group. Given that race of the rater may interact with race of the person observed, as with performance ratings (Landy and Farr 1980, 72) and interviews (Parsons and Liden 1984, 557), we expected that the race of the participant and race of the target population would interact.

Hypothesis 2a: Whites and African-Americans would differ in terms of their mean attitude about working with Whites; Whites' attitudes would be more favorable.

Hypothesis 2b: Whites and African-Americans would differ in terms of their mean attitude about working with African-Americans; African-Americans' mean attitude would be more favorable.

Hypothesis 3a: : With White participants, the pattern of importance of self-image dimensions (Achievement, Dominance, Self-control, and Self-confidence) would be different when predicting attitudes about working with Whites, compared to predicting attitudes about working with African-Americans.

Hypothesis 3b: With African-American participants, the pattern of importance of self-image dimensions (Achievement, Dominance, Self-control, and Self-confidence) would be different when predicting attitudes about working with Whites, compared to predicting attitudes about working with African-Americans.

Method

Participants

Participants were 83 employees in the aviation and maintenance departments of a large national airport who volunteered to complete questionnaires. In a within-subjects design, each participant completed two self-report questionnaires. Data of 23 respondents were excluded from analysis because of incomplete responses, resulting in a sample size of 60 (40 males; 20 females; 39 Whites; 21 African-Americans). Respondents' education ranged from less than high school diploma to master's degree, and the average age was 33 years.

Materials

Four scales similar to those used by others (Motowidlo and Van Scotter 1994, 475; Lyn et al. 1997) were selected from Gough and Heilbrun's (1983) 37-scale Adjective Check List (ACL) to serve as indicators of self-concept. The ACL is a self-report instrument designed to identify personal characteristics. Critiques by Teeter (1985) and Zarske (1985) in the *Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook* indicate the ACL is a well-developed and reliable personality assessment instrument appropriate for research purposes, especially to study self-concept. It was normed on a large, heterogeneous sample including most education levels.

Using a rational approach, we chose scales that seemed related to motives of getting ahead (Achievement, 38 items; Dominance, 40 items) and getting along (Self-control, 34 items; Self-confidence, 34 items) in a racially diverse workplace. In the current study, a high score

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represented a high level of the characteristic. Achievement and Dominance Scales are categorized as Need Scales and are based on Murray's need-press theory of personality (Murray 1938). Gough and Heilbrun (1983, 8) define Achievement as "striv[ing] to be outstanding in pursuits of socially recognized significance... The high-scorer ... is a hard-working, goal-directed individual, who is determined to do well... The motivation to succeed seems to lie less in competitive drives than in an insistent need to live up to high and socially commendable criteria of performance." Dominance is defined as "To seek and maintain a role as leader in groups, or to be influential and controlling in individual relationships. . . The high-scorer ... is a strong-willed, ambitious, determined, and forceful individual, free of self-doubt in the pursuit of goals, and ... adroit in directing the group's actions toward the attainment of socially worthy objectives" (Gough and Heilbrun 1983, 8). Gough and Heilbrun (1983, 30) report alpha coefficients for Achievement of .85 and .82 for males and females, respectively; and alpha coefficients of .79 and .78 for Dominance for males and females, respectively.

Self-control and Self-confidence Scales address topics of interpersonal behavior (Gough and Heilbrun 1983, 16). In our opinion, persons who are diligent, attentive to their job duties, as well as eager to make a good impression will get along with others. A high Self-control scorer may be described as "cautious, conservative, meek, mild, moderate, modest, patient, peaceable, quiet, reserved, submissive, timid, and unassuming" (p. 16). A high Self-confidence score indicates an assertive, talkative, gregarious person. Gough and Heilbrun (1983, 30) report alpha coefficients for Self-control of .65 and .71 for males and females, respectively; and alpha coefficients for Self-confidence of .79 and .77 for males and females, respectively. Standard scoring procedures were followed; raw total scores were converted to standard scores using appendices in the ACL Manual (Gough and Heilbrun 1983, 30).

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We used participants' self-reported attitudes about working with Whites and attitudes about working with African-Americans as criteria. We believed that those with more favorable attitudes would be more likely, than those with less favorable attitudes, to engage in positive contextual performance behaviors (such as helping and cooperating with co-workers). A 4-item questionnaire was developed by the authors specifically for the current study. Two items measured attitudes about working with whites ("I would be willing to work for a White person." and "I like to work with White people.") and two measured attitudes about working with African-Americans ("I would be willing to work for an African-American person." and "I like to work with African-American people."). The four items were embedded in a longer questionnaire, with the following instructions: "This questionnaire will measure your attitude toward work and other people you may work with. Please circle the number that best represents your opinion." Items were rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); higher scores indicated more favorable attitudes. Inter-item reliabilities were calculated for the dyads by racial group. Correlations between items used to assess attitude about working with Whites were statistically significant ($r = .34, p < .05, n = 39$) with White participants and with African-American participants ($r = .81, p < .01, n = 21$). Correlations between items used to assess attitude about working with African-Americans were also statistically significant with White participants ($r = .44, p < .01, n = 39$) and African-American participants ($r = .66, p < .01, n = 21$). Sums of ratings on the dyads produced total scores indicating attitudes about with Whites and attitudes about working with African-Americans. Mean scores are contained in Table 1.

Procedure

Participants completed questionnaires and provided demographic information during work hours just before their daily break. To minimize demand characteristics, a White female

and an African-American male researcher were present at all administrations of the ACL and the Attitude Questionnaire (in that order). Participation was voluntary; those who preferred not to participate were allowed to wait in their seats or leave the room. Participants were told that the data were being collected for research purposes only and that no individual responses would be shared with the employer.

Results

Because we were interested in attitudes of each racial group (African-Americans vs. Whites), we analyzed data for each group separately. Descriptive statistics for each group are contained in Tables 1 and 2.

Ordinary least squares multiple regression analysis was performed separately for White and African-American participants to test Hypotheses 1a and 1b. First we analyzed data using only White participants. The regression of attitudes about working with African-Americans on Achievement, Dominance, Self-control, and Self-confidence was significant ($F(4,34) = 3.47, R = .54, p < .05$), lending partial support of Hypothesis 1a. Table 3 shows that Self-control was the only significant predictor ($p < .01$). The regression of attitudes about working with Whites on Achievement, Dominance, Self-control, and Self-confidence was not significant with African-American participants, and Hypothesis 1b was not supported.

We performed *t-tests* to examine differences in mean attitudes by Whites and African-Americans. Table 1 shows that Whites' attitudes about working with Whites ($M = 7.74, SD = 1.16$) was significantly ($t(58) = 3.16, p < .01$) more favorable than were African-Americans' attitudes about working with Whites ($M = 6.76, SD = 1.73$); Hypothesis 2a was supported. Mean attitudes about working with African-Americans were not significantly different between the racial groups, and Hypothesis 2b was not supported.

To test Hypothesis 3a, we examined two regression equations using only White participants. The first regressed attitudes about working with African-Americans on the four chosen self-image dimensions. It had been calculated to test Hypothesis 1a and was found significant. The second involved regressing attitudes about working with Whites on the self-image dimensions. It was not significant. Finding Whites' self-image significantly predicted attitudes about working with African-Americans, but not attitudes about working with Whites suggests support for Hypothesis 3a.

To test Hypothesis 3b, we examined two regression equations using only African-American participants. The first regressed attitudes about working with Whites on self-image dimensions. It had been calculated to test Hypothesis 1b, and was found not significant. In the second, attitudes about working with African-Americans were regressed on the self-image dimensions. The regression equation was significant

($F(4,16) = 6.72, R = .79, p < .01$). Table 4 shows that Achievement ($p < .05$) and Self-confidence ($p < .01$) were significant predictors. Interestingly, the regression weight for Achievement is negative, indicating that African-American participants with higher Achievement self-ratings indicated less favorable attitudes toward working with other African-Americans. Finding African-American's self-image significantly predicted attitudes about working with African-Americans but not attitudes about working with Whites suggests support for Hypothesis 3b. Interactions were not found between any scales and education.

Discussion

We found only partial support for our hypotheses. Only three of the four ACL scales used in the current study were significant predictors of attitudes about working with African-Americans, but they were different for White (Self-control) and African-American (Achievement

and Self-confidence) participants. None of the scales was a significant predictor of attitudes about working with Whites.

We did find that self-reported self-image by White participants was significantly related to attitudes about working with African-Americans (Hypothesis 1a), but we did not find support for Hypothesis 1b. African-American participants' self-image scores did not predict attitudes about working with Whites. Non-significant regression equations (for White and African-American participants) to predict attitudes about working with Whites suggest other factors may be more important than self-image measures used in this study to predict attitudes about working with Whites. We believe it is unlikely that a measurement problem led to the results. With African-American participants, the correlation coefficient between items used to measure attitudes about working with Whites was quite high ($r = .81, p < .01$), indicating good internal consistency reliability. In addition, the standard deviation for the measure (1.73) does not suggest a problem with restriction of range. One explanation of the results is that stereotypes about Whites as workers (held by African-American and White participants) persisted and exerted more influence on attitude ratings than did the self-image scores.

Whites, compared to African-Americans, may be more accepting of working with persons of the other race. African-American participants, compared to White participants, indicated significantly less favorable attitudes about working with and/or for Whites (Hypothesis 2a); our participants did not differ with respect to attitudes about working with African-Americans (Hypothesis 2b). However, Table 1 shows that means (for White and African-American participants) are above the mid-point of 6, indicating that both Whites and African-Americans felt favorably about working with members of the same and other race. We must caution that results could be affected by participants' honesty.

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Finding Whites' self-image significantly predicted attitudes about working with African-Americans, but not attitudes about working with Whites suggests support for Hypothesis 3a. We had hypothesized that the relative importance among the self-image dimensions would differ by race of the target population. With White participants, Self-control was the only significant predictor of attitudes about working with African-Americans. It appears that those with greater self-control were more likely to have more favorable attitudes about working with and for African-Americans. Individuals who were more cautious, moderate, patient, peaceable, and unassuming may have been more willing to get along with all co-workers and supervisors. Achievement's, Dominance's, and Self-confidence's non-significance as predictors could partially be due to their negative correlations with Self-control. (See Table 2.) In other words, White participants who were more reserved were also less goal-directed, less strong-willed, and less assertive. Results do not appear to be due to aberrant distributions of self-concept dimensions. As shown in Table 2, the means obtained for our sample were consistent with those reported in the ACL manual.

Finding African-American's self-image significantly predicted attitudes about working with African-Americans, but not attitudes about working with Whites suggests support for Hypothesis 3b. As with Hypothesis 3a, we had hypothesized that the relative importance among the self-image dimensions would differ by race of the target population. Two of four self-image dimensions were significant predictors of attitudes about working with African-Americans, Achievement and Self-confidence. African-Americans with higher self-confidence had more favorable attitudes about working with and for African-Americans. Put another way, African-Americans with lower self-confidence had less favorable attitudes about working with and for African-Americans. One interpretation is that stereotypes and suspicions of affirmative action

policies (Heilman et al. 1997, 603) may have discouraged those with lower self-confidence. They may have worried that working with other African-Americans would reflect poorly on themselves. In contrast, others' perceptions may not have overly concerned African-Americans who were more self-confident and more assertive. Interestingly, African-Americans with lower Achievement Need had more favorable attitudes about working with African-Americans. Do African-Americans who have higher motivation to succeed fear that working with or for African-Americans may impede their progress? Again, the stigma of affirmative action practices may have influenced participants' attitudes about working with other African-Americans. Heilman et al. (1997, 603) found that female affirmative action hires were rated as less competent than men and women not associated with affirmative action. Our high Achievement African-American participants may have anticipated misinterpretation of their success, as due to preferential treatment rather than their abilities. Self-confidence and Achievement were significantly correlated with each other ($r = .49$ with African-Americans), which may raise questions about their relationships with attitudes about working with African-Americans. With 24 percent ($r^2 = .24$) common variance, they each have 76 percent variance remaining to contribute uniquely to the attitudes about working with African-Americans. Our study did not collect information regarding the organization's affirmative action practices or policies. Consequently, we can only speculate about participants' opinions about affirmative action policies, their operation, and beneficiaries of them.

Different patterns of inter-correlations among self-image measures for White and African-American participants are worth noting. Table 2 shows that Achievement, Dominance, Self-control, and Self-confidence were significantly inter-correlated, with our White participants. With our African-American participants, the only significant inter-correlations were those

between Self-confidence with Achievement and Dominance. The difference in inter-correlations suggests a different structure for self-concept for our racial groups. Future research should investigate differences in the self-image construct for different racial groups. The ACL manual reports norms by gender, but not by race. Many commercially available tests and measures were originally developed on White populations. As their application spreads, researchers must ensure construct validity in other populations (Goh, Lee, and Yu 2004, 171).

Our study did have some limitations. First, the inter-correlations between items measuring attitudes about working with the two racial groups were quite low, which may cause concern regarding the measures' internal consistency reliabilities. However, the statistical significance of the inter-correlations convinced us that they were acceptable for a first exploration of relations between self-image and attitudes. In addition, differences in internal consistency reliabilities obtained using White participants and African-American participants should be noted; the attitude measures appear to be more reliable for African-Americans than for Whites. Second, our sample represented only one organization. Future research should include a broader sample of organizations and industries.

Third, measures of self-concept and attitudes were self-report. Accuracy of self-report measures is often questioned because they depend on participants' honesty and self-understanding. Self-report measures seemed appropriate for our study, whose aim was to investigate participants' self-concept. Attempts were made to eliminate demand characteristics; e. g., researchers representing both races were present at all administrations of the questionnaires. A related limitation is common method variance shared by our predictors and criteria. Since attitudes may not translate directly into behavior, future research should collect more objective measures (e.g., behaviors) of working relationships with members of other races.

Difficulties of collecting true measures of performance (contextual and task) continue to plague research efforts. Other researchers have resorted to self-report measures to study working relationships. For example, Beatty et al. (2001, 125) used participants' self-rated intentions to engage in behavior as measures of contextual performance. Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994, 475) had supervisors rate "how likely" mechanics in their study would perform on 16 contextual performance dimensions.

Conclusion

Our study's findings regarding differences between White and African-American participants may be our greatest contribution. We contend that attitudes about working with members of other races will likely affect contextual performance. Research investigating moderators of the personality and contextual performance relation has been limited (Beatty et al., 2001, 125). Our findings suggest that racial stereotypes held by workers should be considered.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Attitudes about Working with Whites and Attitudes about Working with African-Americans

<u>Attitude about</u>	<u>Participants' Racial Group</u>		
	<u>Whites</u>	<u>African-Americans</u>	<u>t(58)</u>
<i>n</i>	39	21	
Working with Whites			
Mean	7.74	6.76	3.16*
<i>SD</i>	1.16	1.73	
Working with African-Americans			
Mean	7.31	7.52	.78
<i>SD</i>	1.40	1.08	

Note: Score range for Attitudes was 2-10, with higher scores indicating more favorable attitudes.

See text for more details.

* $p < .01$.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations of Self-concept Scales for White and African-American Participants

<u>Scales</u>	<u>Mean (SD)</u>	<u>Achievement</u>	<u>Dominance</u>	<u>Self-control</u>
(Whites; <i>n</i> = 39)				
Achievement	51.69 (8.37)	1.00		
Dominance	54.97 (9.31)	.71**		
Self-control	49.28 (10.70)	-.37*	-.54**	
Self-confidence	56.26 (10.97)	.71**	.79**	-.47**
(African-Americans; <i>n</i> = 21)				
Achievement	49.62 (7.36)	1.00		
Dominance	53.62 (8.51)	.01		
Self-control	51.29 (7.52)	.31	-.01	
Self-confidence	53.14 (11.22)	.49*	.45*	-.19

Note: Standard scoring procedures were followed; higher scores indicate higher levels of the construct. For adult males (females), Gough and Heilbrun (1983) report means/*SDs* for Achievement, Dominance, Self-control, and Self-confidence of 50.01/10.12 (47.40/9.30), 50.98/10.15 (48.54/9.66), 50.20/9.74 (50.26/11.23), and 50.17/9.99 (47.19/10.46), respectively.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

Table 3

Regression Analysis Summary using White Participants, with Attitudes about Working with African-Americans the Criterion

<u>Predictor</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>t</u>
Achievement	.348	.037	1.57
Dominance	.449	.040	1.69
Self-control	.367	.023	2.13*
Self-confidence	-.173	.032	-.69

Note: $F(4,34) = 3.47, p < .05$

* $p < .05$.

Table 4

Regression Analysis Summary using African-American Participants, with Attitudes about Working with African-Americans the Criterion

<u>Predictor</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>t</u>
Achievement	-.455	.031	-2.14*
Dominance	.086	.023	.47
Self-control	.160	.026	.88
Self-confidence	.906	.022	3.90**

Note: $F(4,16) = 6.72, p < .01$

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.