

Parker's second finding shows a significant difference between males and females; males have higher self-esteem than females. Black females maintain higher self-esteem than white females. Parker offers no explanation for these phenomena, but leads the reader to assume the reference group theory as a viable explanation.

In sum, Parker offers some hope and solution to problems of low self-esteem in black college students, i.e., resources and networks. But Parker does not sustain his contention that blacks normally have higher self-esteem than whites.

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### Note

<sup>1</sup>J. Kenneth Morland and Ellen Suthers. "Racial Attitudes of Children: Perspectives on the Structural Normative Theory of Prejudice." *Phylon*. Vol. XLI, No. 3 (Fall, 1980) 267-277.

### Critique

The article by Keith D. Parker raises interesting theoretical and methodological questions, but this review focuses on the latter. The author is correct in his critical assessment of black self-esteem research (BSER) methodology. Projective measures have been used in most cases and questions have been raised regarding the validity of such self-esteem measures and therefore about the believability of BSER findings.<sup>1</sup> In addition, blacks and whites tested have not been representative of the general black or white communities of the United States, yet inferences to and comparisons of the populations have been made. Finally, studies have employed non-multivariate statistical techniques which have prevented the use of controls.

One would think that, having recognized this, Parker would have avoided these and other serious methodological errors, but he does not. Two principles of survey research must be respected as a matter of course. First, a researcher must clearly identify the population or populations to which he wants to infer his results. Second, subjects must then be selected *at random* to permit each individual in a given population to have an equal chance of being selected.

The author fails on both counts. He makes it clear that he wants to

compare blacks and whites in the “deep south,” but he does not clearly define this location to permit drawing subjects from the appropriate populations. That the author himself ever formed a clear concept of the populations to which he wanted to generalize his findings given the specific methods that he used to draw the samples is doubtful. Subjects were selected from classes whose areas of study are not described (were they psychology classes, or what?) and all data came from a college which is not identified. Are we to assume that the classes had a representative sample of students from the college and that the college had a student body that is representative of the “deep south”? Definitely not. Black and white individuals were not selected at random so that it is not possible to infer the study’s results to the appropriate populations nor the intergroup differences beyond the two specific samples collected. Thus, although he argues that his conclusions “. . . should be generalized with a measure of discretion,” his findings are useless in terms of their generalizability.

Vital methodological information was not presented in the article. He failed to discuss how the multidimensional index of self-esteem was constructed. What procedures were used to insure that all items within a dimension consistently measure that construct? Were the items factor analyzed or were other tests for internal consistency undertaken? Psychometricians warn that one should not blindly study the relationship of a measurement scale with other variables without first demonstrating a scale’s viability in a given sample. In addition, because scales are typically developed using white samples, scales are usually less valid and reliable when used with minority subjects.<sup>2</sup> This happens because, although a given psychological characteristic is common to two socio-cultural communities, it is often linguistically expressed in a different manner from culture to culture; thus, the wording of scale statements should be modified when non-comparative research is undertaken involving minority subjects. A scale can still be used with people of color without wording modifications in cross-cultural research so long as one can demonstrate that a measure is minimally valid and reliable. Unfortunately, these methodological issues are not discussed, nor are reliability estimates presented for each racial cohort.

Finally, in spite of the author’s criticisms of the statistical procedures employed in BSER, his own analytical methods are seriously flawed. He fails to control for socioeconomic status and academic achievement, two variables that he admits are important. Such controls are suggested because, if racial groups are to be compared, black-white differences in social class and achievement levels have to be eliminated as alternative explanations for whatever black-white self-esteem differences that are

found. Statistical controls were avoided probably because of the statistical method that was employed, the contingency table approach, which makes the use of controls unlikely with small samples. The author should have used multiple regression or partial correlation analysis because these techniques permit multiple controls even with small samples.

Parker failed to use proper statistical techniques in other regards as well. Although he should have calculated a *t* statistic to compare each pair of means on every line of Table 1, he chose to compute them only in the last line. In addition, he should have calculated at least a chi square statistic to test whether there are sufficient self-esteem differences between the racial groups, or better yet, correlation coefficients like gamma or lambda to measure the degree of association between race and self-esteem. By not calculating these statistics, the author took it upon himself to create and employ some unidentified and unscientific criteria for judging statistical relationships. This defeated one of the most fundamental purposes of statistics.

Improper methodology has been a serious problem in social science research involving minority issues. It has typically involved investigations which have unfairly stereotyped minorities and resulted in unfortunate public policies.<sup>3</sup> This has resulted in a call by minority scholars for methodologically sound research on minorities.<sup>4</sup> Studies proposing hypotheses that minorities have superior characteristics to whites must be subject to the same standards of scientific inquiry that are expected of all research.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Louise H. Kidder and Charles H. Judd. *Research Methods in Social Relations* (fifth edition). (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1986).

<sup>2</sup>James A. Banks and Jean D. Grambs, eds. *Black Self-Concept: Implications for Education and Social Science*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972). Homer D. C. Garcia. "Offspring and Family Language Maintenance and Their Effects on Chicano College Students' Confidence and Grades." In R. Padilla and E. Garcia, eds. *Advances in Bilingual Research*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>William Ryan. *Blaming the Victim*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1971).

<sup>4</sup>Octavio I. Romano. "The Anthropology and Sociology of Mexican-Americans." In Octavio I. Romano, ed. *Voices: Readings from El Grito*. (Berkeley: Quinto Sol Publications, 1973).