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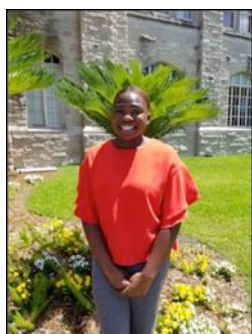
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Assessment of How African American Students Ascribe Success to Individuals Based on Race

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Motunrayo Hassan (Peachtree City, GA) is a psychology major, public health minor. Her research interests include success, people's perceptions of success, disorderly eating in the African American community, and how eating habits play a role in communities. Hassan began this project during an Advanced Research class during the Fall 2017 semester. Under the guidance of faculty mentor Dr. Elliot Hammer, she spent the semester developing her manuscript. Hassan's favorite part of the research experience was conducting statistical analyses. She recently joined Xavier's Institute for Diverse Voices directed by Dr. Turner.

Abstract

The current study sought to identify any relationships that may exist between the race of an individual and the amount of success African American students ascribed to them. College students at Xavier University of Louisiana viewed a series of photos in the Chicago Face database (CFD; Correll & Wittenbrick, 2015) and rated the level of success they believed each individual had. Through a repeated measures ANOVA, it was determined that race did not have a significant impact on the amount of success ascribed to an individual by African American college students. The findings may aid in resolving any preconceived notions that Black people and minorities at large are viewed as less successful than their White counterparts and assist university organizations with communicating about success with students.

Key Terms:

- Success
- Ascribed-success
- Economic-success
- Race
- Career-success

The notion that African Americans and other minority groups are less successful than European Americans is an idea that is persistent through American society. The Cross model (Cross, 1978) establishes the various stages of awareness an African American can occupy concerning his or her race. Many African American college students in the immersion-internalization stage of the Cross model have made conscious efforts to eradicate the idea that African Americans are less successful than European Americans from their way of thinking in order to attain the level of success they desire (Cross, 1978). However, many people do not have the time, resources, and knowledge necessary to ensure their internalization of the knowledge that minorities have the ability to be as successful as European Americans. The environment in which people are raised may affect their view of what quantifies success. In minority communities, where poverty is prevalent, success may be associated with having money attained from illegal activities as a result of the way people in that area are socialized. On the other hand, in an environment with a plethora of professionals and doctors, a young person's idea of success may involve a formal education and professional career.

Although young people are not always conscious of systemic issues, the way they view others and themselves often reflect these issues. The present study examines how college students at a Historically Black College or University ascribe success to individuals of varying races. Success will be understood operationally as the level of satisfaction in an individual's economic state and career. Economic state will be the amount of money an individual has or makes. Career success will be the positive psychological or work-related achievements accumulated as a result of an individual's work experiences (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995). Career satisfaction will be understood as the level of satisfaction an individual gets from intrinsic and

extrinsic aspects of his or her career (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). The study's objective is to investigate how college students' attribution of success varies in relation to race. I will explore the degrees of success the students assign to multiple individuals in relation to their race.

Aspects of Career Success

Career success can be considered objectively or subjectively. Objectively, career success is judged by others on the basis of observable external factors, such as salary and number of promotions. Subjective career success includes current job satisfaction because careers consist of multiple jobs that occur in a sequence of work-related positions (Judge, et al, 1995).

The demographic makeup of an organization may influence behavioral patterns including promotions and salaries. Evidence suggests that minorities are treated differently than their White counterparts in management positions. Compared to White managers, minority managers receive lower evaluations in terms of estimated job qualifications, performance ratings, and pay and promotions (Cox & Nkomo, 1991; Greenhaus, et al, 1990). When levels of career attainment are considered, minorities have lower levels of career success when compared to White men (Cox & Nkomo, 1991). It follows that minority executives typically have lower objective career success than do White executives.

The tendency for Black people in suburban areas to cluster near central city low income neighborhoods with various disadvantages, including fewer services and lower tax bases, may contribute to the way success is ascribed to Black people (Logan & Alba, 1993; Logan & Schneider, 1984; Schneider & Logan, 1982; Schneider & Phelan, 1993). With an association already being

established between densely Black populated urban areas, poverty, and drug related crime (Valdez & Kaplan, 1995), a trend may emerge when considering Black citizens and rates of success in terms of career opportunities.

Aspects of Economic Success

According to Forgas (1998), the causes of economic success in many studies are classified in four categories: ability, effort, luck, and situation. The role that social, cultural, and racial aspects of life play is important when these categories are taken into consideration (Furham, 1982). Contextual variables, including an individual's social perspectives (Arkin, Gabrenya, & McGarvey, 1978), social situations, and general cultural environment (Fincham & Jaspars; 1980; Semin, 1980), strongly influenced attributional characteristics of success. A sample studied by Furnham (1982) showed that poverty was less related to individualist characteristics but more reliant on demographic and generational variables, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and class.

Additionally, self-serving bias, people's tendency to attribute positive events to their own character but attribute negative events to external factors, may play a role in the way individuals view success attribution. Gender, income, race, ethnicity, and age may cause people to view financial success differently. An individual with wealth may be likely to attribute economic success to effort and ability, while an individual who is less fortunate may be more likely to attribute economic success to luck or situation (Forgas, Furham, & Frey, 2001).

Subliminal messages are sent to viewers via the television, internet, peers, teachers, and parents. Although consumers are not always conscious of the messages they are receiving, they internalize the information, and when asked questions, consumers may divulge the

information they have absorbed. The messages that people receive about success and who obtains success can affect the way they view success. This result is potentially seen when they are asked questions about how they view others in society and, as a result, themselves.

Television is a major pastime for many people, but excessive amounts of screen time can lead to health and social issues. On average, non-Hispanic Black adolescents have the highest likelihood of exceeding screen time recommendations, with their television time exceeding that of non-Hispanic and White adolescents (Wethington, Pan, & Sherry, n.d.). With a large number of Black children spending large amounts of time in front of the television, a large portion of their knowledge of society and social interactions may come from the programs they watch. Content studies have shown that Black people are linked to criminality more often than White people are in television programs, while having fewer appearances than White people as professionals (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman & Rojecki, 2000). This trend, in turn, leads to a weak association between Black faces in professional positions in America. In the eyes of many young Black people, bearing similar physical attributes to the criminals depicted in media may lead to an association between their own future success and the lives of the figures they view on television. This priming of viewers, to associate Black people with crime, can translate into the way that they view the success of Black people, crime and success being mutually exclusive.

There have been various studies exploring the relationship between race, career and economic success; however, very few have explored how people view the success of others based on their race. The goal of my study is to begin to fill this gap in the research and look into how African American students ascribe success to others based on race.

Hypotheses

There will be a difference in the average levels of career success African American students ascribe to Black, Asian, Latino(a) and White individuals (Hypothesis 1). African American students will ascribe the highest average career success to Asian individuals and the second highest average career success to White individuals (Hypothesis 1a). African American students will ascribe the second lowest career success, on average, to Black individuals and the lowest average career success to Latino(a) individuals (Hypothesis 1b). There will be a difference in the average economic success African American students ascribe to Black, Asian, Latino(a) and White individuals (Hypothesis 2). African American students will ascribe the highest average economic success to White individuals and the second highest average career success to Asian individuals (Hypothesis 2a). African American students will ascribe the second lowest average economic success to Black individuals and the lowest average economic success to Latino(a) individuals. (Hypothesis 2b).

Method

Participants

The study consisted of 30 undergraduate students from Xavier University of Louisiana. The average age of these participants was 20.8 ($SD = 3.27$), and 80% of the participants identified as women and 20% identified as men. Participants identified as Black/African American (99.97%), and Biracial/Multiracial (.03%). Nearly 16.7% of participants were freshmen, 50% were sophomores, 6.7% were juniors, and 26.7% were seniors.

Measures/Materials

Participants were shown pictures that consisted of the first four of each racial category in the Chicago Face Database (CFD; Correll &

Wittenbrick, 2015). The Chicago Face Database comprises high-resolution photographs of 589 male and female targets of varying ethnicities, (Asian, Black, Latino and White), as shown in Figure 1. Each target is represented by a neutral expression photograph that has been normed by an independent rater sample. The CFD also includes photos of happy, angry, and fearful expressions for 58 participants, but for the purpose of this study, only the neutral expressions were utilized. Facial features, including median luminance, nose width, nose length, lip thickness and face length, were already measured and assessed for outliers. Differences greater than 20% were removed resulting in an inter-rater reliability for physical measures of ($rs \geq .74$). Overall, reliabilities for judgment of each individual photograph were high, ranging from .89 to .99. There were ecological validity issues with the Chicago Face Database as a result of diversity within the racial categories, threatening both internal and external validity (CFD; Correll & Wittenbrick, 2015). However, these issues did not greatly affect the current study.

Participants rated each individual's career and economic success on a 10-point Likert scale from 1 (*very unsuccessful*) to 10 (*very successful*), based on the explanations they were provided. The researcher explained career success to participants as the positive psychological or work-related achievements accumulated as a result of an individual's work experiences (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995). Economic success was explained as the number of valuable possessions or amount of money an individual has. These explanations were based on a thorough review of the scientific literature for explanations of career and economic success (Fincham & Jaspars, 1980; Forgas, Furham, & Frey, 2001; Semin, 1980). Sample items from the success survey are, "How would you rate the career success of this individual?" and "How would you rate the

economic success of this individual?" for each photograph they viewed. The internal consistency reliability for these scales will be calculated in order to establish reliability.

Procedures

Participants were recruited in the lobby of a dormitory. As they passed, they were asked if they had 15 minutes to complete a survey. Participants were then led to a study room and given a blank laptop computer. After providing informed consent, participants completed a demographic form. Participants viewed a series of pictures compiled from the Chicago Face Database (CFD; Correll, & Wittenbrick, 2015), and completed the corresponding questionnaire. Participants viewed photographs of four Asian women, four Asian men, four Black women, four Black men, four Latina Women, four Latino Men, four White women, and four White men in a randomized order. The questionnaire consisted of a repetition of two questions corresponding to each photograph. Participants were asked to rate each individual's success based on the definitions of career and economic success provided. Participants were then debriefed and were awarded one credit for their psychology courses.

Results

Data Cleaning/Assumption

Data were entered by hand into SPSS. Each variable was coded by first letter of race, sex, and type of success. For data that were omitted or inaccurate, means testing was implemented and substituted for missing scores. Scores for gender within each race were averaged for both career success and economic success in order to obtain a mean score and standard deviation for each race.

Some of the assumptions for repeated measures ANOVA were met. Participants were not randomly selected, the comparison

distribution was normal ($N = 30$), homoscedasticity was not tested, and order effects were accounted for by randomizing the presentation of the pictures for each race.

Preliminary Analyses

A Pearson correlation was calculated examining the relationship between each racial category's success ratings. Asian career success was positively correlated to Asian economic success, Black career success, Latino career success, Latino economic success, White career success and White economic success. Asian economic success was positively correlated to Black career success, Latino career success, Latino economic success, White career success, and White economic success. Latino career success was positively correlated to Latino economic success, White career success, and White economic success. Latino economic success was positively correlated to White career success, and White economic success. White career success was positively correlated to White economic success. No other correlations were significant, see Table 1 for correlation coefficients.

Primary Analyses

The primary hypothesis explored the relationship between race and ascribed success. The researcher was interested in analyzing success ascribed by participants based on the race of individuals.

A repeated measures ANOVA was calculated comparing the effects of race on ascribed career success and ascribed economic success. No significant effect was found, $F(7, 203) = 1.98, p > .05$. No significant difference existed among Asian career success ($M = 6.0, SD = 1.31$), Asian economic success ($M = 5.88, SD = 1.20$), Black career success ($M = 5.89, SD = 1.05$), Black economic success, ($M = 5.41, SD = 1.05$), Latino career success ($M = 6.07, SD = 1.06$), Latino economic success ($M = 5.84, SD =$

.94), White career success ($M = 5.89$, $SD = 1.33$), and White economic success ($M = 5.791$, $SD = 1.27$) means.

None of the results found supported the proposed hypotheses. The race of individuals in the photographs did not affect the level of success that participants ascribed to them. These results suggest that race may not have an effect on the amount of success HBCU students ascribe to an individual.

Discussion

The researcher intended to identify any relationship that may exist between the race of an individual and the amount of success that is ascribed to them by African American students. I originally hypothesized that there would be a difference in the average levels of career and economic success African American students ascribe to Black, Asian, Latino(a), and White individuals; however, there was no support for this hypothesis. I found that the race of the individuals in the photographs did not significantly affect the level of success that participants ascribed to them.

Regarding hypothesis 1a, which proposed that African American students would ascribe the highest average career success to Asian individuals and the second highest average career success to White individuals, there was no support. We found that White and Asian individuals did not have a higher average ascribed career success when compared to other racial categories.

Hypothesis 1b also did not find support in its proposition that African American students would ascribe the second lowest career success, on average, to Black individuals and the lowest average career success to Latino(a) individuals. We found that Black and Latino individuals did not receive a lower average ascribed career

success score when compared to other racial categories.

Hypothesis 2a, which proposed that African American students would ascribe the highest average economic success to White individuals and the second highest average career success to Asian individuals, found no support. We found that White and Asian individuals did not have a higher average ascribed economic success score when compared to other racial categories.

Hypothesis 2b also did not find support in its proposition that African American students would ascribe the second lowest average economic success to Black individuals and the lowest average economic success to Latino(a) individuals. We found that Black and Latino individuals did not receive a lower average ascribed economic success score when compared to other racial categories.

Various studies have explored the relationship between race, career, and economic success; however, few have explored how people view the success of others based on their race. While the influences of media and its messages, oversaturated with unsuccessful Black people (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman & Rojecki, 2000), may have influenced the responses of participants, it is not evident in the results. Self-serving bias may have played a role in some participants' responses (Forgas et al., 2001). Participants may have ascribed success to individuals based on their likeness compared to themselves. In addition, because all participants were college students at an historically Black university, their responses may have been influenced by their surroundings and cultural environment, which aligns with theories surrounding attributional success: people tend to favor explanations or causes that can be attributed to their own success (Furham, 1983).

While we did not find any support for our hypotheses, we were able to observe some correlational patterns in our preliminary analysis. Pearson correlations were calculated examining the relationship between each racial category's success ratings. Asian career success was positively correlated with Asian economic success, Black career success, Latino career success, Latino economic success, White career success, and White economic success. Asian economic success was positively correlated to Black career success, Latino career success, Latino economic success, White career success, and White economic success. Latino career success was positively correlated to Latino economic success, White career success, and White economic success. Latino economic success was positively correlated to White career success, and White economic success. White career success was positively correlated to White economic success. Only Asian economic and career successes were correlated with Black career success, while no category's success was correlated to Black economic success. These results may shed some light on current demographic trends we see at many HBCUs. At Xavier University, the two largest ethnic groups are Black/African American and Asian American. Participants may associate the education and subsequent success of Black and Asian individuals as a result of the trends they see on their college campus.

Implications

This study's results may shed some light on the way college students view success and could help resolve any preconceived notions that Black people and minorities at large are viewed as less successful than their White counterparts. University organizations and administration, such as a university's Center for Career Success, may find this information helpful when communicating and interacting with students on topics surrounding success. The results may be

useful and encouraging when discussing career options with minority students who feel that their opportunities are limited as a result of how people view them.

Limitations/Future Directions

The current study contained a number of limitations that could be improved in future research. It was noted that some of the assumptions for repeated measures ANOVA analysis were violated. In particular, the participants were not randomly selected for the study. The sample demographics were very limited because all participants attended an HBCU and identified as African American/Black. There were only 30 participants, the average age of the participants was 20.8, and 80% identified as women. Similar studies should be conducted with larger sample sizes, exploring the strength of correlations between different races and the level of success they are ascribed. It may be beneficial to collect data on a variety of populations, especially populations outside of the university setting and those with more diverse compositions, in order for there to be a broader and more diverse understanding of results. Future research should utilize a larger and more diverse sample to allow for better generalizability.

Conclusion

The study sought to establish the relationship that may exist between the race of individuals and the amount of success that African American students ascribe to them. The findings from the current study indicate that race does not play a determinant role in the amount of success ascribed to an individual. More research needs to be conducted regarding the relationship between attributed success in relation to race, gender, and age.

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Table 1

Correlations Among Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.ACS	--							
2.AES	.91**	--						
3.BCS	.38*	.39*	--					
4.BES	.25	.35	.87**	--				
5.LCS	.72**	.59**	.35	.35	--			
6.LES	.63**	.67**	.29	.28	.81**	--		
7.WCS	.69**	.63**	.34	.34	.82**	.69**	--	
8.WES	.69**	.65**	.26	.26	.75**	.77**	.95**	--

Note. ACS = Asian career success, AES = Asian economic success, BCS = Black career success, BES = Black economic success, LCS = Latino career success, LES = Latino economic success, WCS = White economic success, WES = White economic success

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

Figure 1

Sample stimuli from the Chicago Face Database



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