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Argyrides, Marios

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The Development and Validation of the People Perspective Questionnaire

Marios Argyrides¹ and Jerrold Downey²

1 Neapolis University Pafos

2 University of South Alabama

The purpose of this study was twofold: first, to develop a measure (*People Perspective Questionnaire*; PPQ) that assesses a dimension previously proposed, stating that a characteristic or trait exists, whereby some people perceive others as similar to *each other* and some perceive others as more unique or different from *each other* as compared to one's self; second, to administer and assess the reliability and validity of this measure among Caucasian and African American participants. In Study 1, 445 Caucasian undergraduate students answered the PPQ together with other measures on racism, aggression, ethnic identity and collective self-esteem. For Study 2, 179 African American undergraduate students answered the same measures. The PPQ has very good reliability coefficients that are consistent among Caucasian and African American samples. This measure also evidenced very good convergent validity with the criterion measures. The PPQ is a useful measure of person perception in the dimension proposed above. It may also be helpful in further understanding aggression and racism, and it might be useful in assessing the effectiveness of racism reduction and diversity-training programs.

Person perception has become a complex variable in the psychological literature. Throughout the years, both philosophers and psychologists have been interested in the nature of human perceptual processes. Person perception is a part of this process involving how we see and attempt to understand what other people are like. Insufficient effort has been made at relating how we perceive others and areas of obvious concern such as racism and aggression. It seems reasonable to expect that many facets of perceiving others could be related to these topics. For example, Argyrides and Downey (2001) proposed that the perception of similarity between others is related to lower levels of racism and aggression.

There are several ways that we formulate our perception of others. First impressions (Sherman & Klein, 1994), expectations (Hill et al., 1989, 1990), and stereotyping (Bodenhausen, 1993; Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994) are all classic areas of research in person perception.

Author info: Correspondence should be sent to: Dr. Marios Argyrides, Psychology Department, Neapolis University, Pafos, 2 Danais Ave., 8042 Pafos, Cyprus. E-mail: m.argyrides.1@nup.ac.cy
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Self-schemas – cognitive frameworks for organizing, interpreting, and recalling information (Wyer & Srull, 1994) – are also relevant to how people perceive and characterize others (Carpenter, 1988; Dodge & Tomlin, 1987). These schemas are used as a method to organize information about others and to formulate specific perceptions about them.

Several studies have been conducted concerning the perception of similarity and a possible influence on liking. For example, Aronson (1990) found that perceived similarity to one's self and attraction/liking are related. Based on findings such as this, one can easily see that our perception of the people around us can influence our behavior. There are also theories (e.g. social categorization theory; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000) about how people perceive others categorically. People generally divide the social world into two distinct categories: 'us' and 'them'. Moreover, they view people as belonging to an *in*-group (their own group or us) or to an *out*-group (another group, or them). This is called *social categorization*, and it takes place on many dimensions, including race, religion, age, sex, ethnic background, occupation, and income. This division of people into distinct in-groups and out-groups is a universal aspect of human behavior (LeVine & Campbell, 1972).

It should be pointed out that any differences in within-group variability perceived in out-groups versus in-groups are viewed as a shared perceptual phenomenon in our perception of others. This view is different from the dimension proposed by Argyrides and Downey (2001), which supported the existence of a characteristic or trait whereby some people perceive others as similar to each other and some perceive others as more unique or different from each other (similar or different from *each other* and not as compared to one's self). Argyrides and Downey expect others to differ individually along this perceptual dimension, regardless of in-group or out-group categorization. Furthermore, Downey, Caddell and Argyrides (2001) hypothesized that more perceived similarity in others would result in lower levels of racism and aggression. There were two possible mechanisms that were supported in these proposed relationships. First, perceiving others as similar to each other may lead to perceiving others as similar to one's self. This, in turn, may lead to lower levels of racism and aggression, as previously supported in the literature (Brewer, 1999; Struch & Schwartz, 1989). Second, perceived similarity makes it harder to sort out targets for racism and aggression. Therefore, the constructs of racism and aggression were deemed to be of great interest in the current study. Furthermore, Argyrides (2006) supported a positive relationship between perceived similarity and ethnic identity and collective self-esteem. Argyrides (2006) found that higher levels of perceived similarity in others were

related to higher levels of ethnic identity and higher levels of collective self-esteem. Therefore, the measures of ethnic identity and collective self-esteem were also of great interest in the current study to be used as criterion measures, together with racism and aggression.

The purpose of this study was twofold: first to develop a measure that assesses this dimension proposed by Argyrides and Downey (2001), and second, to administer and assess the reliability and validity of this measure (*People Perspective Questionnaire*) among Caucasian and African American participants.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants. For Study 1, four hundred and forty five ($n = 445$) Caucasian undergraduate students were administered the *People Perspective Questionnaire* (PPQ) together with some other questionnaires of interest described below. All participants were recruited from introductory psychology classes. There was an almost equal number of males and females in this sample (48% males and 52% females). The mean age of the sample was 20.6 years old ($SD = 3.8$).

Construction of the People Perspective Questionnaire (PPQ). The items of the scale were constructed based on the original concept of assessing how one perceives others, as similar or different from each other, and not as compared to one's self. In addition, based on an older finding in the literature by Janak (1978), the authors also hypothesized that possible perceived similarity may be related to levels of helpfulness. Therefore, more items were added that related to willingness of a person to help others in need. Items were generated by a team of social psychologists and a counseling psychologist interested in person perception. The original form of the PPQ included 21 exploratory items which were considered for initial factor analysis. These items are answered on an 11-point Likert type scale (0 = Totally different in every way, nothing similar at all, to 10 = Totally similar in every way, nothing different at all) and they assess whether a person perceives 'Others' as similar or different from each other on several aspects of personality, future goals, perceptions and needs. This category of 'Others' is defined in the measure as people outside one's own close group (i.e., not close friends and/or family, not close co-workers, etc.). Participants were asked about their perceptions concerning these individuals. Examples of items on this scale include: "How similar or different do you think people are regarding their hopes for the future?" and "How similar or different do you think people are regarding their willingness to work to get ahead?" and "How similar or different do you think people are regarding their desire to get along with others?"

Measures. In addition to the *People Perspective Questionnaire*, four other measures were administered in order to assess the convergent validity of the developed measure. These included scales on racism, aggression, ethnic identity and collective self-esteem.

Racism was assessed using the *Modern Racism Scale* (MRS; McConahay, 1986). In the original form of the MRS, the word 'African-American' is used. Since the word would not apply to this study (the population of African-Americans was of interest for the validity of the measure as well the potential future cross-cultural use), the word was modified to 'minority.' The word minority was chosen as a method of indirectly assessing the group(s) that came to mind when the word 'minority' was used. Thus, at the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were asked to identify and write down the group of 'minority' that came to their mind and on which they would base their answers. For Study 1 where Caucasians were used, Caucasian participants referred to African Americans, Hispanics and Asian-Americans. For Study 2 where African American participants were used, they referred to Hispanics, Asian and Native Americans. Example items are: "Over the past few years, minorities have gotten more economically than they deserve" and "If a minority family with about the same income and education as I have moved next to me, I would mind it a great deal." The "modified-word" version of the MRS was also used by Hodson and Costello (2007) and Argyrides (2006, 2013) with alpha reliability coefficients of .80, .85 and .82 respectively. The Likert-type response scale ranged from Strongly Disagree (receiving a score of 1) to Strongly Agree (receiving a score of 5). The MRS has satisfactory reliability, with coefficients ranging from .81 to .86 (McConahay, 1986). For the current sample, the alpha coefficient was .87.

Aggression levels were assessed using The *Aggression Questionnaire* (Buss & Perry, 1992). The scale consists of 29 items ranked on a 5-point Likert-type form ranging from "extremely uncharacteristic of me" (receiving a score of 1) to "extremely characteristic of me" (receiving a score of 5). Example items include: "I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me," and "If I have to resort to violence to protect my rights, I will." The scale is widely used with sound psychometric properties, such as alpha coefficients averaging .89. For the current sample, the alpha coefficient was .87.

Ethnic identity was assessed using the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* (MEIM; Phinney, 1992). This 15-item measure is answered on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). It assesses ethnic identity as a general person characteristic across different groups. Even though the scale has two components (Ethnic Identity Exploration and Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment), the

total ethnic identity score was used in this study (as described by Phinney, 1992). Examples of the items include “I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me” and “I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.” The measure has been used subsequently in dozens of studies (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001) and has consistently shown good reliability ($\alpha > .90$ for college samples). For the current sample, the overall alpha coefficient was .94.

Collective self-esteem was assessed using the *Collective Self-Esteem Scale* (CSES; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). This is a 16-item, 7-point (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) Likert-type measure. Even though the CSES has four subscales (Membership Esteem, Private Collective Self Esteem, Public Collective Self Esteem and Importance to Identity), the total collective self-esteem scale score was used in the current study (as described by Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The CSES has reported reliability coefficients ranging from .85 to .88. For the current sample, the alpha coefficient was .87.

Procedure and Data Analyses. Participants completed the measures of interest at a preset time in their classrooms and received extra credit for their efforts. An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using a varimax rotation was conducted on the new PPQ scale. Initial criteria for the determination of factors involved an analysis of the eigenvalues and scree plot. The criteria for the loading of factors included a value of at least .40 on the primary factor and no more than .25 on any other factor. Reliability was computed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients.

Results

Factor analysis yielded two major factors: Person Perception (whether one perceives others as similar or different from each other) and Helpfulness (how helpful one tends to be). Twelve items loaded towards the person perception factor and four items towards the helpfulness factor. The remaining five items were dropped from the final version of the PPQ (due to cross-loadings onto more than one factor). A reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .86 on the person perception factor and .87 for the helpfulness factor. Test-retest reliability was conducted on 98 Caucasian students who were enrolled in introduction to psychology classes, within a three-month interval. The Pearson coefficient for this subsample was .87.

Descriptive Statistics and Validity Data. On the Person Perception subscale, Caucasian participants had a mean of 58.28 ($SD = 13.96$) and on the Helpfulness subscale 18.81 ($SD = 3.21$). Within the Caucasian sample, results indicated good evidence for construct and criterion validity. Specifically, the measure’s main factor (perceived similarity)

was found to positively correlate with levels of helpfulness ($r = .49, p < .001$), ethnic identity ($r = .37, p < .001$) and collective self-esteem ($r = .43, p < .001$). On the other hand, this measure was found to negatively correlate with the *Modern Racism Scale* (racism) ($r = -.36, p < .001$) and aggression ($r = -.47, p < .001$) (refer to Table 1).

TABLE 1. Correlates of the PPQ Constructs of Perceived Similarity & Helpfulness in the Two Studies

	Aggr.	Rac.	Help.	EI	CSE
PPQ Perceived Similarity in Caucasians	-.47***	-.36***	.49***	.37***	.43***
PPQ Perceived Similarity in African Americans	-.45***	-.31***	.54***	.35***	.40***
PPQ Helpfulness in Caucasians	-.35***	-.31***	.41***	.32***	.36***
PPQ Helpfulness in African Americans	-.33***	-.34***	.47***	.31***	.43***

Note. – Aggr. = Scores on the Aggression measure; Rac. = Scores on the Racism measure; Help. Scores on the Helpfulness subscale of the PPQ; EI = Scores on the Ethnic Identity measure; CSE = Scores on the Collective Self-Esteem measure. *** = $p < .001$

STUDY 2

Method

Using the same procedure mentioned above, the new 16-item measure was also administered to an undergraduate sample of African American participants, together with the other criterion measures mentioned above. One hundred seventy nine undergraduate students were recruited with an approximately equal number of males and females (45% males and 55% females) and a mean age of 23.9 ($SD = 2.1$).

Results

Reliability Analyses. The Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .81 for the person perception subscale and .80 for the helpfulness subscale, indicating similar internal consistency with the Caucasian sample. Test-retest reliability was conducted on 58 African American students who were enrolled in introduction to psychology classes, within a three-month interval. The Pearson coefficient for this subsample was .84.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used in the current study, which offered several advantages over more traditional approaches. Specifically, SEM afforded an estimated latent construct for the two-factor solution of the scale, allowed a test of the fit of the hypothetical factor structure using non-experimental data while explicitly controlling for measurement error. In evaluating the goodness of fit to the data, the chi-square statistic associated with the p value is reported, the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). A non-significant value of the chi-square statistic indicates a good fit, however the test is sensitive to sample size and should be considered in relation to its degrees of freedom (i.e., dividing chi-square value by its degrees of freedom should result in a value below 2, indicating a good model; Byrne, 2006). For the current study, the combinational fit criteria for CFI and RMSEA indices were used as described by Hu and Bentler (1999). CFI equal to or superior to .95 and RMSEA less than .05 are considered to indicate a good fit. CFI equal to or superior to .90 and RMSEA less than .08 are considered to indicate a moderate but acceptable fit.

TABLE 2 Structural Equation Model & Values for the *People Perspective Questionnaire*

Factor	Item Number	Coefficient Value
	Item 1	.68
	Item 2	.71
	Item 3	.78
Factor 1	Item 4	.73
Person Perception	Item 5	.70
(Perceived Similarity vs	Item 6	.69
Perceived Difference in others)	Item 7	.68
	Item 8	.71
	Item 9	.73
	Item 10	.70
	Item 11	.69
	Item 12	.70
	Item 13	.71
Factor 2	Item 14	.73
Helpfulness	Item 15	.70
	Item 16	.69

Note. – χ^2 (103, N = 179) = 251.36, $p < .05$; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .037. All coefficients were significant at $p < .05$ level.

The resulting model included two latent variables (the 12 items of person perception loaded on Factor 1 and the other four items on Factor 2 – the helpfulness factor (Table 2)). As indicated by the fit indexes, the model fit the data well: χ^2 (103, $N = 179$) = 251.36, $p < .05$; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .037.

Validity Data. Within the African American sample, results indicated good evidence for construct and criterion validity. In detail, the measure (high perception of similarity) has been found to positively correlate with levels of helpfulness ($r = .54$, $p < .001$), ethnic identity ($r = .35$, $p < .001$) and collective self-esteem ($r = .40$, $p < .001$). On the other hand, this measure was found to negatively correlate with racism ($r = -.31$, $p < .001$) and aggression ($r = -.45$, $p < .001$) (see Table 1).

Descriptive Statistics of the Measure. On the Person Perception subscale, African American participants had a mean of 57.35 ($SD = 15.72$) and on the Helpfulness subscale 18.37 ($SD = 3.72$).

Group Comparisons. In order to assess whether the Caucasian sample differed significantly from the African American sample on the constructs of Person Perception and Helpfulness, independent sample t -tests were used. Results indicated that the mean score of Caucasians on Person Perception ($M = 58.28$, $SD = 13.96$) did not differ significantly from that of African Americans ($M = 57.35$, $SD = 15.72$; $p > .05$). The same was present for the Helpfulness construct where the mean of the Caucasian sample ($M = 18.81$, $SD = 3.21$) did not differ significantly from that of the African American sample ($M = 18.37$, $SD = 3.72$; $p > .05$). The two groups seem to have very similar scores on how they perceive others around them (as similar or different from each other) as well as their willingness to help someone in need.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was first to develop a measure of the dimension of how one perceives people around them – as similar or different from each other (the *People Perspective Questionnaire*; PPQ) – and secondly, to assess the reliability and validity of this measure among Caucasian and African American participants. The dimension proposed in the current study is different from the commonly proposed measures addressing the assessment of perceptions of a group of people as compared to one's self rather than as compared to each other.

The measure was found to have very good to excellent reliability coefficients that are consistent among Caucasian and African American samples. This measure also evidenced very good convergent and discriminant validity. The authors feel that the PPQ will be a useful measure of person perception, and possibly helpful in further understanding aggression and racism. Based on the results previously

reported, this measure can be helpful in assessing effectiveness of racism reduction programs, assessing the effectiveness of campaigns which promote an emphasis on similarities rather than an emphasis on differences, and possibly be used as a pre- and post-training questionnaire with diversity-related trainings.

The significant positive relationship between perceived similarity and helpfulness is worth noting. Results indicate that individuals are more likely to help others in need if they perceive others around them as similar to each other. Previous older research has supported a relationship between perceived similarity and levels of helpfulness (Janak, 1978) and this conclusion is further supported with the current findings.

Argyrides and Downey (2001), Argyrides, Mikula, Bean and Jones (2004) and Argyrides (2006, 2013) have assessed this dimension of person perception within the United States and cross-culturally. In all cases, results indicated that the perception of high similarity among others was related to lower levels of racism and aggression. The same relationships were present in the current study and offer further support for the above findings. As previously stated, two possible mechanisms can shed light to these relationships. First, perceiving others as similar to each other may lead to perceiving others as similar to one's self. This, in turn, may lead to lower levels of racism and aggression, a finding previously supported in the literature (Brewer, 1999; Struch & Schwartz, 1989). Second, perceived similarity makes it harder to sort out targets for racism and aggression. Similarly, individuals who are perceived as being more similar to others can also be perceived as "less of a threat," thus, increasing the likelihood of being helpful towards them.

Furthermore, the constructs of the scale were extended to assess possible relationships with the constructs of ethnic identity and collective self-esteem as previously supported (Argyrides, 2006, 2013). Thus, these measures were included in the current study as criterion measures for validation purposes. Results indicated significant relationships between perceived similarity, ethnic identity and collective self-esteem. It is possible that individuals with a more secure ethnic identity (scoring high on the ethnic identity measure) and more concrete levels of collective self-esteem (scoring high on the collective-self-esteem scale) do not feel the need to isolate individuals or "others" into targets but are rather able to see more collective needs in humans, regardless of their in-group or out-group categorization.

Further research is required, especially the qualitative type, in order to identify the specific mechanisms that are involved in these relationships. Further research is also encouraged in the translation and validation of the current instrument into other languages and populations. It would also be interesting to use this measure with the different

theoretical orientations of therapists. Specifically, the measure can be used to assess whether therapists with more existential/humanistic therapeutic approaches score higher on perceived similarity and helpfulness than therapists with more psychoanalytic/psychodynamic-oriented approaches. Finally, it would also be interesting to assess perceived similarity and helpfulness as used in the current measure with other constructs such as individualism and collectivism, extraversion, friendliness, political party affiliation and charity donations.

The findings of the current study should be interpreted with caution since the results reflect a specific age group (college-age students) and should not be generalized without validation into other age groups.

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