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ABSTRACT

Four hundred and forty-six poor black urban and rural adolescents ages 15-18 enrolled in a summer poverty-work program are administered Gough's Adjective Checklist (ACL) and Holland's Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) to determine their personality profile, to ascertain differences between this group and blacks attending colleges, and to study what implications for programming can be determined from VPI and ACL profiles. Significant sex differences are found on 12 of the 24 ACL scales, with black females tending to score higher on all differing scales. A factor analysis of ACL scores yields two significant factors: that of ego structure and characteristic approach to life. A comparison of the sample VPI scores with black college students scores indicate significant differences on most of the 11 VPI scales. Results indicate that the poor, black adolescent's perception of himself is one of self-depreciation. However, this does not mean that this population possesses a low self-concept since they may think they are worthwhile individuals but do not perceive themselves as competent or effective. The fact that they remain in school and actively seek work in the summer poverty program reinforces the hypothesis that they are trying to become effective and competent in their own lives according to society's dictates. (Author/AM)

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Personality Characteristics of
Black Adolescents

Abstract

Four hundred and forty-six poor, Black, urban and rural adolescents ages 15-18 enrolled in a summer poverty-work program were administered Gough's Adjective Checklist (ACL) and Holland's Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI). Significant sex differences were found on 12 of the 24 ACL scales with Black females tending to score higher on all differing scales. The ACL scores were factor analyzed utilizing Principal Components with Varimax rotation. Four factors were extracted, two significant ones; ego structure and characteristic approach to life.

The VPI scores were compared with Black College students' scores. Significant differences were found on most of the 11 VPI scales.

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Personality Characteristics of Black

Adolescents

One of the problems in attempting to plan programs and work with disadvantaged Black adolescents is the conflicting evidence on non-cognitive attributes. It becomes a relatively simple matter to devise successful programs when there are generally accurate data on personality characteristics, attitudes and interests for the group. Although there may be individual differences, the group characteristics have sufficient documentation so as to raise the probability of success. However, the data for the disadvantaged, Black adolescents are very contradictory. For example, some studies indicate that Blacks have low self-esteem scores (Coopersmith, 1967; Deutsch, 1967; Long and Henderson, 1968). Other studies either report no significant difference or high self-esteem scores (Davidson, Greenberg and Gerver, 1962; Soares and Soares, 1969; Whitley, 1967; Getsinger, Kuncz, Miller and Weinberg, 1972). The confusing nature of the evidence on non-cognitive characteristics can lead to less effective and efficient programming and promotes limited or non-success.

This study was designed to determine

- 1) the personality profiles of disadvantaged Black adolescents on Holland's Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) and Gough's Adjective Checklist (ACL)
- 2) if this group differed significantly on the VPI from Blacks attending college, and
- 3) what implications for programming and planning could be determined from VPI and ACL profiles

Subjects - Four hundred and forty six 15 - 18 year old, disadvantaged, Black high school students enrolled in a summer work program for poverty-level teens. Included in the sample were; 80 rural males, 90 rural females, 80 urban males and 196 urban females. All subjects were currently enrolled in high school (Grades 9-12) and had been designated as poverty level by the local federal poverty agency.

Procedure and Analysis - When the subjects received their work assignments, they were also requested to take the Holland Vocational Preference Inventory and ACL. The results were analyzed for significant differences between groups and between observed groups and the Black College students' scores reported in the VPI manual. In order to facilitate analysis, the norm groups' and observed groups' scores on the VPI were converted to standard scores ($\bar{X} = 50, \sigma = 10$).

Analyses of Results - The poor, Black adolescent checked significantly fewer adjectives than the normative population. However, since norms are provided for those selecting fewer than 75 adjectives, checking few adjectives cannot be considered abnormal. Gough describes the person who scores low as quiet, reserved, cautious, and somewhat ineffective in getting things done. Rural males checked significantly fewer adjectives than did the rural females or urban males and females. This would tend to infer that the rural male sample is more reserved, quiet and cautious. All other mean scale scores fell in the average range of 40-60. However, most of the means were

below 50 which probably indicates a characteristic depression of scores for this population. The relatively small standard deviations would indicate a homogeneity of response style.

Insert Table 1 about here

The results of t-tests indicate that the significant differences are related more to sex than group designation as urban or rural. The males differed from the females on Number Checked, Favorable Adjectives, Self-confidence, Self control, Dominance, Endurance, Intraception, Autonomy, Change, Succorance, Abasement and Counseling Readiness, with the females tending to score higher. The females appear to have better adjustment, are better able to relate to others, and are less able to sustain subordinate roles.

Insert Table 2 about here

The personality profile indicated by the factor analysis can best be described by giving a short sketch of each scale loading significantly on the 4 factors. The first factor accounted for over two thirds of the variance, indicating the relative importance of this factor in the personality dynamics of the poor, black adolescent.

Factor 1

Self-confidence - a low score indicates a relatively person, unassuming, forgetful, mild and reserved.

Achievement - low scores are dubious about the rewards which might come from effort and involvement, uncertain about risking his labors and somewhat withdrawn and dissatisfied with his current status.

Dominance - the low scorer is unsure of himself and avoids situations that call for choice and decision making.

Endurance - tends to be steady, rigid and serious.

Order - low scorers tend to be impulsive.

Exhibition - to seek recognition.

Factor 1 is labeled "ego structure."

Although there are other scales loading significantly, the ones described tended to load the highest - .90 and above. Therefore, the poor, black, adolescent would be described as perceiving himself as ineffectual, reserved, impulsive and seeking recognition. Factor 2 has the scales Defensiveness and Favorable Adjectives Checked to load significantly. The low scorer on Defensiveness tends to be anxious, critical of himself and others and complains about his circumstances. There were significant sex differences on the mean of Favorable Adjectives Checked with both the female samples tending to score higher than the Male samples. The high scorer appears to be motivated by a strong desire to do well and impress others. Since factor 3 had only one scale to load significantly and factor 4, none, these factors are considered to be uninterpretable. Factor 2 is labeled "characteristic approach to life."

Insert Table 3 about here

Results of VPI - Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations for the observed groups. Utilizing the cut-off points of 30 and 70 as extreme or significant scores, the mean scale scores that are significant are the Social and Status scales for the rural females.

When the results were compared with the Black college students' reported in the manual, most scales showed significant differences. The males did not differ on the Realistic scale nor the urban males also on the Self-control and MF scales. The females did not differ on the MF scales nor the rural females on the Conventional scale.

Insert Table 4 about here

The results of t-tests are presented in Table 5. The males had only one scale to differ significantly, Masculinity-Femininity (MF), with all other group combinations having 3-5 scales differing significantly.

Insert Table 5 about here

Conclusions - The rural females scored below average on the Social and Status scales and all groups scored above "average" on the Infrequency scale. An interpretation of low scores on the Social and Status scales would describe the rural female as self-depreciating, unsociable, and having few competencies. The somewhat high scores on the Infrequency scale indicates that the students

"have atypical vocational preferences, self-depreciating attitudes about themselves and have deviant attitudes about their culture. High scores are indicative of incompetency" (Holland, 1970). The indices of random responses and "faking" responses iterated by Holland tend to support the validity of the responses (Holland, 1970).

All groups mean scores were highest on the Realistic and Conventional Interest scales. While all scales are utilized in personality interpretation, only the first six scales are used for vocational guidance. These adolescents, therefore, would appear to have an interest in those vocations which do not call for interpersonal skills or relationships - preference is for working with objects rather than ideas or people.

In addition, these subjects score significantly different than Black college students on most scales. If college students can be characterized as relatively more successful then these subjects are relatively unsuccessful.

Discussion - From the results of the VPI and ACL, it would appear that the poor, black adolescents' perception of himself could be generally described as one of self-depreciation. The subjects appeared to perceive themselves as incompetent, ineffective, seeking recognition and willing to try to attain those characteristics deemed important by society. This does not necessarily mean that this population possesses low self-concepts, that is, they may think they are worthwhile individuals but they do not perceive themselves as competent or effective. Indeed, they may have had few

experiences or opportunities to be recognized as competent or effective. The facts of their remaining in school this long, actively seeking work in the summer poverty program, although performing below expected level in academic subjects would all tend to reinforce the hypothesis that these students are trying to become effective and competent in their everyday lives and more importantly, in accord with society's dictates.

Although there is scant empirical, direct evidence of the relationship of the self concept to academic and social achievement but it seems reasonable to assume that the self-concept would play an important role. However, it may very well be that perceptions of competency and effectiveness play a more vital role in academic and social achievement. That is, an individual may perceive himself positively, but because of reality - such as reading below grade placement, not being able to read, low scores on standardized achievement tests, placement in "Z" or remedial classes--the individual may also perceive himself as incompetent in fulfilling society's demands. For the most part, this perception is accurate. This sounds a positive note since an accurate perception of reality is necessary for adequate mental health. It could also be said that their attitudes are positive since they are still trying to conform or attain society's standards of gainful, legal employment and an education.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations
By Group On
The ACL

Scale	Rural Male N=80		Rural Female N=90		Urban Male N=80		Urban Female N=196	
	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.
Number Checked	35.2	7.6	38.8	8.9	38.1	8.7	39.9	8.9
Defensiveness	43.5	10.8	45.6	8.4	45.8	9.2	46.5	8.2
Favorable Adjective	39.97	10.7	47.6	11.2	41.9	9.5	48.9	10.3
Unfavorable Adjective	45.1	4.9	44.8	6.9	47.4	6.9	44.6	7.2
Self-Confidence	43	4.6	47	6.4	43.0	6.2	46.8	6.2
Self Control	48.99	5.3	50.9	6.2	48.3	5	51.5	6.6
Lability	40.3	7.7	40.9	6.8	42.99	7.8	41.98	7.3
Personal Adjustment	44.1	7.6	46.6	8.8	43.4	7.7	47.2	8.2
Achievement	45.4	7.4	46.5	6.9	46.6	7.4	47.2	7.1
Dominance	46.8	6.3	49.7	5.6	47.9	7.3	49.6	6.2
Endurance	48.3	5.9	50.9	5.2	48.3	5.9	50.6	5.3
Order	45.1	5.96	47.2	4.6	47.3	5.8	47.8	5.4
Intracception	42.1	10.1	46.3	8.9	42.4	8.4	47.3	7.9
Nurturance	46.9	7.5	47.3	7.3	46.5	6.6	48.1	6.5
Affiliation	42.3	8.99	44.8	8.7	44.5	8.3	45.1	7.7
Heterosexuality	48.7	8.9	49.9	9.2	50.6	9.99	50.7	9.5
Exhibition	49.7	4.2	52	5.9	51.2	5.4	51.9	5.6
Autonomy	46.3	4.2	50.5	5.1	47.3	4.7	49.2	5.3
Aggression	48.8	6.6	48.1	5.6	49.7	6.2	47.7	5.6
Change	40.8	5.8	44.9	6.8	42.9	6.6	45.7	6.2
Succorance	47.8	5.3	45.2	5.7	49.4	7.3	45.8	6.5
Abasement	48.9	3.5	47	6.6	48.9	5.4	47.2	5.9
Deference	51.4	5.2	49.4	6.1	49.98	5.7	50.2	5.7
Counseling Readiness	52.3	6.3	46.5	8.1	50.7	7.5	46.8	6.8

Table 2
Results of t-tests
On The
ACL

Scale	Urban Male Female N = 296	Urban Male Rural Male N = 160	Rural Male Female N = 170	Urban Female Rural Female N = 270
Number Checked	- 2.15*	- 1.98*	- 2.79**	0.82
Defensiveness	- 1.61	- 1.00	- 1.40	0.26
Favorable Adjective	- 5.86***	- 0.85	- 4.53***	0.65
Unfavorable Adjective	2.65**	- 2.47	0.25	- 0.22
Self-Confidence	- 5.04***	0.42	- 4.69***	0.50
Self Control	- 3.91***	1.05	- 2.21*	- 0.52
Lability	0.43	- 2.07*	- 0.52	0.12
Personal Adjustment	- 3.93***	0.93	- 1.97	0.39
Achievement	- 1.43	- 0.58	- 1.03	0.54
Dominance	- 2.67**	- 0.66	- 3.14**	0.96
Endurance	- 3.71**	0.51	- 3.02**	- 0.46
Order	- 1.27	- 2.00*	- 2.68**	0.30
Intraception	- 4.88***	0.02	- 2.87**	- 0.80
Nurturance	- 2.20	0.56	- 0.34	0.11
Affiliation	- 1.36	- 1.32	- 1.89	0.79
Heterosexuality	- 0.72	- 1.11	- 0.89	0.83
Exhibition	- 1.38	- 1.76	- 2.99**	0.59
Autonomy	- 3.39***	- 1.07	- 5.92***	- 0.43
Aggression	2.69**	- 0.98	0.72	0.08
Change	- 3.41***	- 2.22*	- 4.30***	0.83
Succorance	4.38***	- 2.03*	3.07**	- 0.25
Abasement	2.14*	- 0.15	2.24*	- 1.59
Deference	- 0.47	1.91	2.28*	- 0.03
Counseling Readiness	5.00***	0.82	5.16***	0.49

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3
Varimax Rotated Factor
Matrix For
The ACL

Scale	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4
Number Checked	.02	.63	.03	.52
Defensiveness	.19	.87	-.00	-.11
Favorable Adjective	.19	.94	-.09	-.03
Unfavorable Adjective	.17	-.17	.01	.71
Self-Confidence	.91	.00	-.14	-.05
Self Control	.85	.06	.17	-.26
Lability	.82	.08	.11	.07
Personal Adjustment	.85	.31	.11	-.21
Achievement	.92	.20	-.01	-.09
Dominance	.95	.09	-.12	-.11
Endurance	.93	.08	.06	-.20
Order	.91	.06	.12	-.13
Intraception	.83	.34	.13	-.18
Nurturance	.87	.21	.20	-.28
Affiliation	.87	.36	.12	-.09
Heterosexuality	.85	.17	.05	.02
Exhibition	.91	-.18	-.04	.08
Autonomy	.89	-.24	-.10	.13
Aggression	.77	-.56	-.04	.10
Change	.89	.10	.05	.07
Succorance	.19	-.34	.55	.43
Abasement	-.09	-.06	.89	.07
Deference	.23	.23	.65	-.41
Counseling Readiness	-.05	-.41	-.00	.18

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Each Group on the VPI

Scale	N = 80 Rural Male		N = 90 Rural Female		N = 80 Urban Male		N = 196 Urban Female	
	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.	\bar{X}	S.D.
Realistic	*49.9	10.96	49.1	9	*50.4	9.9	49.7	9.1
Intellectual	43.5	9.98	44	6.4	43.4	8.7	44.5	6.9
Social	44.6	9.77	38.2	8.3	46.4	9.4	43.3	9.9
Conventional	49.1	9.9	*51.5	8.7	49	8.2	52.8	10.3
Enterprising	48.3	10.2	44.7	8.7	47.3	8.9	47	9.1
Artistic	47.8	10.2	41.1	6.8	49.6	8.7	42.8	7.5
Self-Control	49.1	11.8	51.6	12.1	*53	9.6	55.5	7.5
Masculinity Femininity	42.4	13.4	*52.3	10	*48	9.1	*52.3	8.4
Status	41.9	9.5	39.7	12.7	44.4	7.5	46.9	10.4
Infrequency	57.5	13.8	58.6	12.1	60.4	7.8	63	7.7
Acquiescence	44.3	11.8	40.8	9.6	44	12.1	43.2	9.9

* no significant difference with Black college students' norm group.

Table 5

Results of t-tests Between Groups on the VPI

	Rural Male, Female	Rural Male Urban Male	Urban Male, Female	Urban Female Rural Female	Rural Male Urban Female	Urban Male Rural Female
	t	t	t	t	t	t
Realistic						
Intellectual						
Social	4.51 **		2.73 *	5.06 **		6.3 **
Conventional			3.52 **			
Enterprising						
Artistic	4.88 **		8.39 **		4.73 **	8.25 **
Self-Control				2.95 *	4.92 **	
Masculinity Femininity	4.5 **	2.25 *	4.9 **		5.9 **	2.87 *
Status				4.42 **	3.34 *	
Frequency				3.31 *	3.18 *	
Acquiescence						

* $p < .01$ ** $p < .001$