

**Introduction**

Human beings have an urge to fulfill a social need with others. In order to fulfill this need one may conform to the group's behavior despite personal objections to the behavior. Our impulse to conform to others is due to real or perceived social pressures we experience when we are with others. By encountering this pressure, individuals will conform to others and the group to gain some form of social reward (Bandura, 1986). The reward is sometimes real and is sometimes perceived as a reward. One of the key elements that influence a person to conform is their self-concept. An individual's self-concept determines how strongly they believe they belong to a certain group, and therefore determines how likely one may choose to conform to that group (Masland, Lindsay, Lease, and Michel, 2013).

An individual's self-concept is shaped by their own identity and which group they choose to identify with. When determining your self-concept, an individual will look to associate themselves with certain peer groups. One of these peer groups could be their race, ethnic background, or religion. If they have a strong connection with their racial identity than their self-concept would be closely tied to their race. The same conclusion is true of ethnic indemnity. Therefore not conforming to your own race or ethnic background may come at a social cost.

One's race is a prevalent factor in association with negative feelings. (Carter & Reynolds, 2011). Racism from whites and from intra-race aggression has a strong connection to feelings of depression, anger, frustration, being ashamed, sad, anxious, hopeless, and exhausted (Carter & Reynolds, 2011). These negative feelings arise when dealing with racism as well as when African-Americans are confronted with intraracial

aggressions from other members of their race. One common intrarace aggression an African-American commonly experiences is the acting white accusation (AWA), and its perceived connotation is extremely negative by the person receiving the accusation (Murray, Neal-Barnett, Demmings, & Stadulis, 2012). This accusation is characterized as one African-American adolescent determines another's racial identity as not being black enough; therefore he or she accuses said person as being white (Murray et Al, 2012). The accusation can come in two forms. The first form is directly when the accuser explicitly says, "you are acting white". The second form is indirectly when the accuser says, "you talk proper." This is one of many examples of an indirect accusation.

Whether directly or indirectly the acting white accusation is common among young African-American adolescents, where about 96% experienced the accusation (Murray et Al, 2012). Experiences of the accusation are often distressing. It involves negative feelings such as anxiety and bother. Bother is how much each accusation caused distress in the adolescent. Adolescent who experienced the accusation more often had higher anxiety, as well as higher bother scores (Murray et Al, 2012).

Young African-Americans are experiencing anxiety due to social cost of not conforming to their race. The social cost could be general lack of peer acceptance, or the acting white accusation. This social cost is enhanced when an individual has a strong sense of racial identity. Strongly associating yourself with being black can cause anxiety when your self-concept is challenged. The social cost of conforming to their race is prevalent as well. Often times they are told to negate their identity in order to achieve success in white dominated world (Fordham S, 1993). The normalization of white middle-class males and their characteristics compels African-Americans to conform to

that behavior to avoid the social cost of not conforming to what is considered typical good behavior, although the individual never entered into the realm of bad behavior. (Fordham S, 2013). The social cost of not conforming to the white race could mean being singled out, or being unfairly punished for a certain behavior. In both situations whether or not African-Americans conform to their race, or to the white race, the individual will suffer some form of social cost. This causes a duality in African-Americans, where they are forced to act and behave in two different and distinct ways.

This experiment will examine what influences an African-American to conform to a certain group as well as how compelled African-Americans are to conform in general. Past research has mainly focused on white participants. The experiment will also examine how conformity and the desire to conform relate with the acting white accusation and the feeling of bother. Other factors that will be examined are racial identity, ethnic identity, conformity, and religiosity. These factors will analyze why an African-American chooses to conform to their race or to the white race. It is predicted that someone with a strong sense of racial identity or ethnic identity will be more likely to conform to their race or ethnicity in order to maintain his or her self-concept, and prevent their racial or ethnic identity from being challenged. If their identity is challenged by the acting white accusation, it is predicted that they will experience more bother and anxiety, due to a more fragile self-concept that they would rather go unchallenged.

*Method**Participants*

X participants (X men and X females, all African-American, mean age= X) were recruited for participation through Kent State University's sona system. Participants were either given partial class credit or a small extra credit reward to go towards their class for participation.

*Materials*

The Duke Religious index: The five-item scale can be found in Koenig et al. (1997a). This scale measures intrinsic religion, or one's personal faith. The 5-item scale also measures if you adhere to organized religion, or non-organized religion.

The conformity scale (Mehrabian & Stefl, 1995) is an 11-item self-report scale that measures the likelihood that a person will conform to those around them. Some examples are "I tend to rely on others when I have to make an important decision quickly" and "I don't give in to others easily". These two types of statements are then reverse coded on a scale of 1 (not at all true of me) to 5 (extremely true of me).

The (AWEQ) will measure the acting white accusation (AWA). This scale will measure an individual's experience of when he or she experiences the acting white accusation, directly or indirectly.

The (insert scale here) will measure the participant's ethnic identity.

*Procedure*

Participants will be recruited through psychology courses at Kent State University. The participants will arrive in the lab to complete the quest scale, the

conformity scale, the acting white accusation scale, and the ethnic identity scale. The scales will be given in random order.