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**ABSTRACT**

Two scales were developed to measure racial attitudes in contemporary society: the Social Scale and the Social Scenarios Scale. New scales were needed because the items in older tests are outdated, and because in modern society negative attitudes are often masked by rationalizations that purportedly do not have to do with racial prejudice. The new scales were substantially revised from two earlier racial attitude scales: the Social Distance Scale and the Social Situations Scale. Factor analyses revealed two factors for the Social Scale: non-intimate social relations and more intimate partnerships or social relations. Test reliability was .89 and .71. The Social Scenarios Scale, containing 12 situational items, yielded three factors: pejorative remarks, intimacy, and job or housing injustice. Test reliability ranged from .54 to .75. The subjects in this study were 190 white university teacher education students. Results indicated that prejudicial attitudes expressed by white respondents toward blacks increased as contact between whites and blacks became more intimate. The two measures are appended. (GDC)

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Assessing Racial Prejudice & Discrimination  
in Modern Society\*

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## Abstract

This paper reports the development of two scales to measure racial attitudes in contemporary society. Racial prejudice and discrimination are difficult to assess in modern society since negative attitudes are often masked by rationalizations that purportedly do not have to do with racial prejudice. The scales reported here are adapted from earlier racial attitude scales--specifically, the "Social Distance Scale" (Bogardus, 1933; Westie, 1953) and the "Social Situations Scale" (Kogan and Downey, 1956) are substantially revised and updated. Factor analyses and reliability coefficients are reported for the two scales and the subscales. The subjects were university teacher education students (  $N = 190$  ). The scales indicate that prejudicial attitudes expressed by white respondents toward blacks increase as contact between white individuals and black individuals becomes more intimate.

Assessing Racial Prejudice and Discrimination  
in Modern Society

The racial climate in the United States has changed dramatically in the last 30 years. Laws have made racial discrimination illegal and, relatedly, the general public has begun to characterize blatant racism as unlawful and immoral. Old-fashioned racism (e.g., openly attributing inferior qualities to blacks, promoting segregation, advocating discrimination, and so forth) is generally rejected (but not unheard of) in contemporary society. Today, white Americans tend to proclaim strong convictions regarding racial equality, fairness, and justice and believe that racial discrimination is a thing of the past. Unfortunately, such beliefs are often openly professed while at the same time individuals avoid personal, close contacts with blacks and act in ways suggesting the acceptance and maintenance of negative racial stereotypes (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986). This contradiction has made the measurement of racial attitudes in contemporary society particularly difficult. Whites are less and less comfortable admitting prejudicial views publicly or privately yet continue to harbor negative feelings and beliefs about blacks (McConahay, 1986).

Much of modern day prejudice tends to occur in situations in which individuals can rationalize or justify their discriminatory actions as nonprejudicial (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986). Thus, busing is obviously not good for any child and a black political candidate, it may be rationalized, does not represent one's

interests. Modern prejudice also becomes more evident when the interaction required to appear nonprejudicial is considered to be too intimate in character. Thus, an individual claims to have no prejudice until he or she is asked to choose a black doctor, roommate, or dance partner. Modern prejudice, often acted upon and disguised as "rational" and nonprejudicial actions, are perhaps particularly insidious because they are pervasive yet less identifiable, and therefore, less amenable to change (McConahay, 1986).

The climate and structure of public opinion regarding prejudice and discrimination have vastly changed in the past three decades and as a result instruments traditionally used to measure racial attitudes are unusable. Presently, most white Americans would respond with shock and possibly hostility if asked to respond to racial attitude items that were frequently used in racial attitude scales in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, in the past, instruments for measuring prejudice have asked respondents to share their attitudes about blacks living in their country, shopping at the same stores, or using the same elevator. Many present-day respondents are offended by even the inclusion of such questions on a survey. New measuring instruments are necessary to help us understand and measure change in contemporary racial attitudes.

The authors of this paper have endeavored to develop two scales that are usable in measuring elements of present-day, white American attitudes toward blacks and racial discrimination.

Both scales have been revised and adapted from previously used but out of date prejudice and discrimination scales.

#### METHOD

Data for these scale constructions were derived from the responses of 190 teacher education students at a state university in the Rocky Mountain region. Subjects were informed that their participation would be voluntary and that their responses to the instruments would be strictly confidential and anonymous.

To measure white students' attitudes toward blacks, we developed "The Social Scale," which is a substantial reworking of the "Social Distance Scale" developed by Emory Bogardus (1933), as revised by Westie (1953). To measure white students' willingness to engage in discriminatory or anti-discriminatory behavior when confronted with racial conflict situations, we developed "The Social Scenarios Scale," which is a substantial reworking of the "Social Situations Scale" developed by Kogan and Downey (1956). Taken together "The Social Scale" and "The Social Scenarios Scale" attempt to measure the degree of comfort whites feel when blacks are in various positions of prestige and intimacy in their lives. Additionally, the scales measure whites' willingness to condone or confront discrimination in a variety of social situations.

#### The Social Scale

White subjects' attitudes toward blacks were measured by responses to an eight item scale reflecting the extent to which subjects are comfortable having a black person occupy certain

social statuses. (The scale is reproduced in Table 1.) Item responses are scored such that the higher the scale score, the more comfortable a white subject would be in relations with blacks. A score of 1=very uncomfortable, 2=moderately uncomfortable, 3=slightly uncomfortable, 5=slightly comfortable, 6=moderately comfortable, and 7=very comfortable. A score of 4 was assigned if the respondent indicated a response between 3 and 5 or if the subject qualified his or her response between being comfortable and uncomfortable. The scale  $M=43.75$  and the  $SD=9.6$ . The reliability coefficient of "The Social Scale" is .88.

Items were selected after pilot testing prospective items to determine which ones have the greatest discriminatory power. Several items were dropped since there was little or no variance in subjects' responses. For example, most respondents indicated feeling "very comfortable" to have a black person "living in the same neighborhood" or "as a personal friend."

A principal component factor analysis of the "Social Scale" yielded a two factor solution (see Table 1). The items loading on the first factor have in common that they refer to non-intimate social relations. The items loading on the second factor refer to partnerships or social relations of a more intimate character. To be sure, the factor analyses reveal that white respondents' attitudes toward social relations with blacks are predicated upon the intimacy of the relations: the more intimate the contact, the less comfortable the white subjects are with the relationship.

The non-intimate subscale was a six item scale ( $M = 35.14$ ,  $SD = 7.2$ , alpha reliability coefficient = .89). The partner subscale was a two item factor loading ( $M = 8.61$ ,  $SD = 3.5$ , alpha reliability coefficient = .71). The correlation between the non-intimate factor and the partner factor was .557 ( $p < .001$ ).

#### The Social Scenarios Scale

The Social Scenarios Scale presented subjects with 12 different situations in which racial conflict occurs. The respondent was to choose one of four possible responses to each situation. The responses were coded 0 = anti-discriminatory and 4 = most anti-discriminatory. If the subject indicated a response between the two middle responses or if the respondent qualified his or her response between the two middle choices, then the response was coded 2. (The Social Scenarios Scale is reproduced in Table 2.)

Our Social Scenarios Scale is a substantial revision of Kogan and Downey's (1956) "Social Situations Scale." Their Social Situations Scale provided respondents with 15 items depicting norm conflicts over situations of prejudice or discrimination. The situations involved resolving conflicts with peers (five items), authority figures (five items), or strangers (five items).

The procedure used to formulate items and response categories involved pilot-testing items to select those which were most discriminating. We employed the Likert (Murphy and Likert, 1938) "Discriminatory Power" technique utilized by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950) in their



studies of the "authoritarian personality." Briefly, the "Discriminatory Power" (DP) of each scale item is determined by comparing the mean of those falling within the top quartile with the mean of those falling within the lowest quartile. A DP score of 1.0 or greater indicates that there is adequate variance in responses and that the means for the two quartiles are significantly different. Under these conditions an item is said to have discriminatory power along the dimension of expression of prejudice. Following this procedure, items were modified and refined to maximize their discriminatory power.

A principal component factor analysis of The Social Scenarios Scale yielded a three factor solution (see Table 3). The three factor loadings are: (1) the pejorative remarks subscale, (2) the intimacy subscale, and (3) the work/housing injustice subscale (see Table 4).

The pejorative remarks factor is a four item subscale ( $\bar{M} = 10.03$ ,  $SD = 3.7$ , alpha reliability coefficient = .66). The intimacy factor is a four item subscale ( $\bar{M} = 10.22$ ,  $SD = 3.9$ , alpha reliability coefficient = .75). The work/housing injustice factor is also a four item subscale ( $\bar{M} = 10.54$ ,  $SD = 3.3$ , alpha reliability coefficient = .54). The inter-factor correlations are reported in Table 4. The correlation coefficients are all significant at  $p < .01$  or lower. The subscale correlations are not so high to suggest multicollinearity, but the correlations are significant, which indicate that the subscales tap different but related dimensions of responses to racial prejudice and discrimination.

In the original Social Situations Scale, Kogan and Downey (1956: 292) distinguished items along three dimensions: "incidents depicting various kinds of prejudice and discrimination by" (1) peers, (2) authority figures, and (3) strangers. While these three dimensions were not factor analyzed by Kogan and Downey, Guttman scaling yielded satisfactory subscales. Our revision of Kogan and Downey's Social Situations Scale employs scenarios relevant to contemporary social settings. A factor analysis of our Social Scenarios Scale did not yield a three factor solution along the dimensions (i.e., prejudice or discrimination by peers, authority figures, or strangers) reported by Kogan and Downey (1956). We constructed the peer, authority, and stranger subscales from our Social Scenarios instrument for purposes of comparison with Kogan and Downey's subscales.

Table 5 reports the zero-order correlation coefficients for the Social Situations Subscales (Kogan and Downey, 1956: 293) compared to the coefficients for the Peers, Authority Figures, and Strangers subscales of the Social Scenarios Scale. T-test findings reveal that the subscale means for the Social Scenarios Scale are significantly different from one another. However, the alpha reliability coefficients are: Peers (.40), Authority Figures (.43), and Strangers (.57). These low alpha coefficients suggest that subjects are responding to the characteristics of the social scenarios more than they are responding to the persons who engage in the various incidences of discrimination or expression of prejudice.

## DISCUSSION

Factor analysis of The Social Scale demonstrates that white subjects' attitudes about comfort with social relations with blacks is predicated upon the dimension of intimacy. Whites are much more likely to feel comfortable having blacks occupy non-intimate statuses. The possibility of intimate relations with a black substantially increases the likelihood the white respondent will feel uncomfortable. Our findings suggest that measures of social distance in contemporary society are not unidimensional.

The Social Scenarios Scale is comprised of three dimensions. The first subscale involves scenarios in which pejorative remarks are made about blacks. The second subscale involves scenarios in which inter-racial intimate relations figure. The third subscale involves scenarios in which a black experiences job/housing injustices. The lowest subscale mean is for the pejorative remark scenarios ( $M = 10.03$ ); the intimacy items are next ( $M = 10.22$ ), and the job/housing injustices subscale brought the most anti-discriminatory responses ( $M = 10.54$ ). Subjects were least likely to express a willingness to engage in anti-discriminatory action if the incident involved racist remarks about blacks. This mean score is due in large part to the contribution from one item: the situation involves a friend telling a joke using the word, "nigger." Subjects not only tended not to express offense, subjects reported they would tend to remain silent or find nothing wrong with the joke. In general, if

the incidents involved intimacy, respondents were less willing to act in an anti-discriminatory manner than if the incidents involved job/housing discrimination. This finding was consistent regardless of the type of person engaging in the discriminatory action (e.g., whether peer, authority figure, or stranger).

Finally, the intercorrelation of The Social Scale and The Social Scenarios Scale is high ( $r = .583$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $N = 190$ ). While the two scales measure different aspects of racial attitudes, they tap a common concept, racial prejudice.

#### CONCLUSION

Race relations in the United States have changed rather dramatically in the past 25 years. Legal and political transformations have rendered earlier racial attitude scales somewhat awkward and of limited usefulness (cf Bonjean, Hill, and McLemore, 1967; Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986; Miller, 1970; Shaw and Wright, 1967). Expressions of prejudice and discrimination are present; antiblack feelings and action are more subtle and, consequently, perhaps more insidious.

Our conceptual concern with measuring prejudicial attitudes and assessing a willingness to engage in discriminatory or anti-discriminatory actions is to develop instruments that test beliefs in a social climate where expressing prejudice is not typically acceptable (McConahay, 1986). We revised the Bogardus (1933) "Social Distance Scale" and Kogan and Downey's (1956) "Social Situations Scale" to reflect realistic contemporary social incidents, language, and settings. The scales that we

developed and on which we report here are reliable indicators of racial attitudes and the similarities to and differences from earlier scales are highlighted.

A number of caveats are in order when using our Social Scale and Social Scenarios Scale. First, the sample of subjects used to develop these scales were university students in a socially homogeneous community. Indeed, at the state at which this research was conducted, blacks comprise less than four percent of the population. Moreover, the dominant religious group in the state and in the community is characterized by a decidedly conservative philosophy on race relations. Secondly, there is the perennial issue of how to assess attitudes and be confident that subjects are responding honestly and not simply in a socially acceptable fashion. To the extent that we include a broad range of indicators in our scales, we have attempted to minimize this problem. Finally, as legal, social, and political events transform the character of race relations in our society, the scales reported here will need to be updated and revised.

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Table 1

"Social Scale" Items With Factor Loadings and Subscales

I believe I would be happy to have

<u>a black person:</u>	<u>Factor 1</u>	<u>Factor 2</u>
1. as my roommate	.590	
2. rent my home from me	.623	
3. as my spiritual counselor	.587	
4. as my personal physician	.671	
5. as governor of my state	.886	
6. as president of the U.S.	.858	
7. as a dance partner		.755
8. as someone I would date		.873

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Note. Responses for each item ranged from 1=very uncomfortable to 7=very comfortable. Items 1-6 constitute the non-intimate subscale and items 7 & 8 constitute the partner subscale. N = 190.



Table 2

"Social Scenarios Scale" Items

1. (AHOUS) Imagine that as you are sitting in your parents' home one day, a neighbor comes in to ask your parents to sign a letter to a neighbor discouraging her from renting or selling her house to blacks. He explains that it would not hurt blacks because there are plenty of other good places in town to live. He says keeping blacks out would keep up the value of all the houses in the neighborhood. Your folks are about to sign the letter.

Under these conditions,

\_\_\_I would insist that they were wrong and try to persuade them not to sign the petition.

\_\_\_I would probably tell my parents that I didn't think that they were doing the right thing.

\_\_\_I would probably keep quiet because it wouldn't make much difference to me one way or another.

\_\_\_I would understand their reasons for signing the letter so I wouldn't say anything.

2. (SCAB) Imagine you have just arrived in a large city and have a heavy suitcase to carry from the bus terminal to your hotel a few blocks away. You decide to take a cab. Waiting on the corner for a cab, you glance across the street and see a black person also waiting for a cab. After a few minutes, a cab comes by and both of you signal for it. The cab goes right by the black, turns around, and comes back to pick you up. When the driver

Table 2 (continued):

opens the door, he remarks, "I really saw that black fellow first, but I always go by the rule that you should take care of your own first." Under these conditions,

I would figure the cabbie has good reasons for his behavior.

I would probably get into the cab without saying or doing anything.

I would let the driver know nonverbally that I didn't like what he said.

I would definitely tell the cabbie that he had done the wrong thing.

3. (PMAR) Imagine that in one of your classes your instructor has broken the class into small groups to discuss race relations. One of the students in your group says it would be great if blacks and whites got along better but they shouldn't go so far as to intermarry and have children. Under these conditions,

I would voice my disagreement with the student.

I would disagree with the student but not say anything.

I would agree with the student but not say anything.

I would voice my agreement with the student.

4. (SJOB) Imagine you and your friend are in a small store waiting to make a purchase. Across the aisle a white person is asking the manager about a sales position that is open. He is given an application to complete and return. Several minutes later a black person approaches the manager about the same job

Table 2 (continued):

opening and he is told the position has already been filled.

Under these conditions,

     I would confront the manager about his discriminatory actions and tell him I was taking my business elsewhere.

     I would make my purchase and would probably write a letter of complaint to the manager.

     I would stay out of it because it wouldn't make much difference to me one way or the other.

     I would feel it is the right of the management to reject black employees if they want.

5. (APART) Imagine that you have a 19 year old brother who has been going pretty steadily with a young black woman for the past month or so. Although your parents admit that she is very nice, they have been trying to force your brother to stop taking her out, because they are afraid that they might get serious about each other. Your parents don't mind him having her as a friend, but they don't want him to date her or call her "his girlfriend." One night, during an argument, when your brother is present, your parents ask you what you think. Under these conditions,

     I would disagree with my parents and say that, as long as she was a nice person, it was O.K.

     I would probably disagree with my parents but I'd try to keep out of it.

     I would probably tend to side with my parents.

     I would definitely side with my parents.

Table 2 (continued)

6. (PJOKE) Imagine that you are visiting with several good friends, chatting and sharing humorous stories. One of your friends tells a joke about blacks using the word "nigger." Under these conditions,

\_\_\_ I wouldn't say anything, and would think it was a harmless joke.

\_\_\_ I probably wouldn't say anything, but I would feel uncomfortable.

\_\_\_ I would probably say it wasn't a very good joke.

\_\_\_ I would criticize him for telling such a joke.

7. (SMAR) Imagine you are standing in line at the movies waiting for the theatre to empty. The person in front of you, pointing at a black man and a white woman holding hands as they walk out of the theatre, turns to you and says, "isn't that disgusting?" Under these conditions,

\_\_\_ I would speak up and say, "No, it doesn't bother me."

\_\_\_ I would feel uncomfortable with his comment and I would probably give the person a disapproving look.

\_\_\_ I would probably agree with him but I wouldn't say anything back to him.

\_\_\_ I would agree with the person.

8. (PHOUS) Imagine you and some friends are talking about living arrangements for the next quarter. One of your friends says with great disgust that he was assigned a dorm room with some black guy. Under these conditions,

Table 2 (continued)

\_\_\_ I would tell him I found his attitude offensive.

\_\_\_ I would disapprove of his attitude but I wouldn't say anything.

\_\_\_ I would figure that's just his opinion and he has a right to it.

\_\_\_ I could understand why he didn't like the idea.

9. (AJOB) Imagine that several co-workers at your job are black. You notice that they tend to get the worst job assignments and they don't get promoted as often as the other workers. Under these conditions,

\_\_\_ I would feel that the supervisor knows what's right.

\_\_\_ I wouldn't want to create problems so I would probably stay out of the situation.

\_\_\_ I would express my concerns to my black co-workers.

\_\_\_ I would go to the next higher supervisor and tell her what was going on.

10. (PPLAY) Imagine you are a member of a casting committee for a drama club that is in the process of casting parts for a tragic play about two young lovers. The casting committee is in complete agreement that the male lead should go to Sam Olsen. Clearly, the best actress for the part of the heroine is a beautiful young black woman. However, a number of the members of the casting committee refuse to have a black actress play opposite a white actor in a romantic play. Under these conditions,

Table 2 (continued)

\_\_\_I would say that if they refuse to give the part to the best qualified actress I would resign from the committee.

\_\_\_I would say that the actress should be judged on her talent not her skin color; but I would go along with any decision the majority made.

\_\_\_I wouldn't know what to do so I'd go along with whatever the majority wanted.

\_\_\_I wouldn't side with those who felt that regardless of the talent issue it would not be a good idea to cast a biracial couple.

11. (SHOUS) Imagine you are looking for an apartment to rent that you saw advertised in the paper. You stop a stranger who is watering his lawn to ask for directions. The person you have stopped gives you the directions but says, "you don't want to live there, that place is full of coloreds." Under these conditions,

\_\_\_I would tell him that what color of skin the people had who live there didn't make any difference to me.

\_\_\_I would be offended by his comment but I wouldn't say anything.

\_\_\_I wouldn't respond to his comment but if he was right I probably wouldn't rent it.

\_\_\_I would thank him for his advice and I would no longer consider living in that apartment building.

Table 2 (continued):

12. (ANEG) Imagine you are having dinner with your parents and a well respected friend of your parents. During dinner everyone is chatting about different sports players. At this point your parents' friend states, "it's a good thing coloreds are good at sports because they sure aren't good at much of anything else."

Under these conditions,

\_\_\_ I would nod agreement.

\_\_\_ I would ignore the comment not wanting to make an issue of it.

\_\_\_ I would probably noticeably scowl but I wouldn't say anything.

\_\_\_ I would tell my parents' friend that I was offended by his comment.

Table 3

"The Social Scenarios Scale" Items With Subscales & Factor Loadings

	<u>Factor 1</u>	<u>Factor 2</u>	<u>Factor 3</u>
<u>Pejorative Remarks Subscale</u>			
ANEG	.708		
AJOB	.703		
PJOKE	.687		
SCAB	.621		
<u>Intimacy Subscale</u>			
PMAR		.854	
AMAR		.800	
SMAR		.750	
AHOUS		.400	
<u>Job/Housing Injustice Subscale</u>			
SHOUS			.751
PPLAY			.660
SJOB			.606
PHOUS			.480

Note. Refer to Table 2 to find which items correspond to the variable labels listed in this table. Variable labels beginning with "A" refer to an authority figure who is expressing prejudice or engaging in a discriminatory action. Variable labels beginning with "P" refer to a peer actor, and variable labels beginning with "S" refer to a stranger engaging in the action.



Table 4

Zero-order Correlation Matrix for "The Social Scenarios Scale"  
and Subscales With Means and Standard Deviations

Subscale	2	3	4	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1: Total Scale	.712	.737	.787	30.79	8.1
2: Pejorative Remarks	-	.192	.398	10.03	3.7
3: Intimacy		-	.412	10.21	3.9
4: Job/Housing Injustice			-	10.54	3.3

Note. All coefficients are significant at  $p < .01$ . N = 190.

Table 5

Intercorrelations Between Authority Figures, Peers, and Strangers Subscales for "The Social Situations Scale" and for "The Social Scenarios Scale" With Means and Standard Deviations

Subscale	2	3	4	$\bar{M}^b$	$\bar{SD}^b$
<u>"The Social Situations Scale"<sup>a</sup> ( <math>\bar{n}</math> = 30 )</u>					
1. Total Scale	.55	.82	.55		
2. Authority	-	.52	.41		
3. Peers		-	.48		
4. Strangers			-		
<u>"The Social Scenarios Scale" ( <math>\bar{n}</math> = 190 )</u>					
1. Total Scale	.426	.300	.426	30.79	8.1
2. Authority	-	.603	.635	10.54	3.0
3. Peers		-	.542	9.22	3.3
4. Strangers			-	11.03	3.2

Note. All coefficients are significant at  $p < .01$ .

<sup>a</sup>Source: Kogan and Downey, 1956, p. 293.

<sup>b</sup>Means and Standard Deviations not available for "The Social Situations Scale."