Capturing Sociological Concepts with Psychological Rigor: A Commentary on Türken & Rudmin (2013)

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Salman Türken and Floyd Rudmin's paper presents the Global Identity Scale, a measure of cultural openness and identification with the world at large which they argue is a form of cosmopolitan orientation. This is a welcome integration of theoretical complexity and empirical rigor, though more development and validation is needed before we can be sure of the mechanisms being probed at the psychological level. Such steps will help it realize its potential as a window into a social psychological construct of real consequence, with which to understand the interface between individuals and a changing global society.

I commend the authors for engaging with the nuance of social theory and contemporary sociological discourse, while also being willing to harness it with the quantitative tools of psychometrics. Discussion of such social fundamentals as engagement with the cultural *other* and reference to the work of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens are sadly absent from mainstream social psychology journals. Even more rare is a summary of the historical roots of cosmopolitanism, from ancient Greek thought to the work of the philosophers of the European Enlightenment. This absence is problematic, firstly, as it neglects the way in which individual identities, attitudes and behaviours are not only affected by the immediate presence of others (Allport, 1968), but strewn with a sociality that has societal and ideological content (e.g., Billig, 1976; Reicher, 1997). Such writing and publishing decisions are part of a well-recognized pattern of the individualization of the social in social psychology (Farr, 1997; Graumann, 1986; Greenwood, 2003), amidst which this journal is a notable exception. Secondly, and of particular relevance to this paper, the paucity of sociological and historical ideas in social psychology journals prevents the discipline from adequately engaging with social structural change, and theorizing our psychological responses to it. We are left instead with a narrow cross-section of the responses of mostly White, middle class college students at one time point in the post-industrial West (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).

Türken and Rudmin break from this trend by situating their work in the wider social context of globalization, and bringing sociological and psychological theory and methods into dialogue. Interdisciplinary research can be a treacherous endeavour, not least because much of the complexity and nuance of concepts ordinarily rendered by rich qualitative data will be lost as they are reduced to self-report items on a factor-analyzed scale. Thankfully, Türken and Rudmin's derivation of such items from a grounded, multi-source exploration of the meaning of global identity and cosmopolitanism ensures that the final outcome is as sensitive to multifarious lived experience as it can be. The limited nature of their samples in terms of socioeconomic and educational diversity—consisting solely of college students—is somewhat compensated for by their diverse cultural origins, spanning Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, and North America.

Aside from faithfully representing the sociological concepts, however, Türken and Rudmin will also need to persuade an audience of psychologists, in order to establish their scale as part of the discipline's toolbox of measures. The first challenge is to make a case for the existence of global identification as a stable disposition, which varies across individuals and endures within individuals over time. Such personality, attitudinal or identity-related traits are usually traceable to a basic social or cognitive orientation: extraversion refers to a core tendency to seek attention or gain reward from others (Ashton, Lee, & Paunanon, 2002), while ethnocentrism taps into a biased evaluation of one's own social coalition or group (Allport, 1954; Bierly, 1985). The biological origins and underlying social-cognitive mechanisms of such traits are intuitive, as they address core challenges of the social and physical environment in which our brains evolved. This is not the case for global identity, which is a product of a very recently achieved ability to travel long distances and interact with people who are culturally and ethnically dissimilar. It is not clear why we might expect a social-cognitive mechanism to have evolved to prepare one to embrace versus reject the world at large. The worry with being unable to identify an underlying mechanism for cosmopolitan orientation is that variation in such a high level social psychological construct may be reducible to variation in basic social-cognitive dispositions not part of its conceptualization. Candidates as underlying mechanisms might be need for closure (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) and openness to experience (McCrae & Costa, 1997). To the extent that variation in global identity can be explained by variation in more foundational cognitive styles and personality traits, we are less and less sure what added value this high level construct provides. In addressing this critique, researchers working on this construct might consider its mechanistic origins, and show that it predicts outcomes of interest over and above related or more basic constructs. They could also make a stronger case for stable variation in cosmopolitan orientation across individuals, and its endurance over time. Or, alternately, we might hear more about how it is predicted to change over time, as is implied by the focus of the authors' introductory discussion. Indeed, the field of societal psychology would benefit greatly from a measure of global identification that is sensitive to societal and cultural changes, and thus could be used to track the effects, for example, of different economic and immigration policies.

Next to be convinced are the psychometricians, who will already be impressed with the rigor with which Türken and Rudmin approach the development of their scale. Their systematic application of a range of criteria in selecting items from an already empirically-generated pool ensures that the final scale provides a reliable, valid, and accessible measure of the construct at hand. The equal weighting of all criteria is unusual, as one might expect greater emphasis to be placed on reliability and criterion validity than on word count, but it does ensure that no selection decisions are arbitrary.

Two pressing issues remain, which could be addressed as the next steps in establishing its service to a variety of research purposes and contexts. The first is the significant correlation of the scale with an established measure of social desirability, despite the authors' attempt to minimize this in item selection. Part of the reason for this relationship is an understandable limitation of all self-report measures, which has been partly addressed in mainstream social psychology by a turn to implicit measures of constructs previously tapped explicitly (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). This is a possibility that these

scale developers might want to explore in future. However, the authors could also work to ensure their self-report measure is less susceptible to self-presentational concerns by tapping into some of the less desirable aspects of a cosmopolitan identity. A constant openness to new cultures and places may lead to a sense of confusion, rootlessness, or lack of appreciation of the local, aspects that could be brought out in new scale items designed specifically to cover this section of its conceptual space.

The second challenge is in knowing what conclusions to draw regarding the dimensional structure of the scale. The authors note as serendipitous an overlap between the valence of the item and the factor on which it falls: all items measuring the cultural openness dimension are positively-keyed, or pro-trait, and all items measuring the non-nationalism dimension are negatively-keyed, or con-trait. However, this is a problem as one cannot be sure that what is being measured in each case is really a sub-dimension of cosmopolitan orientation, or one's response pattern to a set of 'nice' versus 'nasty' sounding items. Such an issue was uncovered as part of a challenge to the construct validity of the social dominance orientation scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000), and is being addressed by the design of a new scale that explicitly aims to have an even number of pro- and con- trait items on each theoretical factor (Ho, Sidanius, Pratto, Levin, Thomsen, Kteily, & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2012)—an approach that developers of the global identity scale may want to consider.

Good self-report measures of individual social psychological orientations are difficult to develop, as they face challenges from two directions. Proponents of the collection of rich, qualitative data may argue that a quantitative measure fails to capture the complexity of a high level sociological phenomenon. At the same time, researchers in the field of mainstream social psychology may demand explication of an underlying mechanism at the cognitive level, and moves toward an implicit measure that precludes the space for self-reflection. In charting the path between these two extremes, Türken and Rudmin bring together psychological and sociological perspectives, to present a measure of an orientation of increasing importance in today's globalized world, boding well for its ongoing utility to societal psychology.

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