Stereotypes, Emotions, Behavior, and
Overall Attitudes Toward Hispanics by Anglos

By
Linda A. Jackson

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About the Author: Dr. Linda A. Jackson is a Professor in the Department of Psychology at Michigan State University. Professor Jackson holds a Ph.D. in Social Psychology, and her major areas of interest include gender and physical appearance, stereotypes and prejudice and social identity theory. This paper is based on a larger project that was published in the journal <u>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</u>.

Abstract

This research examined the stereotypic characteristics and values, emotions, and behaviors associated with Hispanics by Anglos. Stereotypic characteristics and values indicated generally negative perceptions of Hispanics (e.g., less productive and intelligent, more physically violent and rebellious), although a few positive characteristics (e.g., strong family) and values (e.g., salvation) were associated with the group. Less positive emotion was associated with Hispanics than Anglos, but there was no evidence that negative emotion was associated with the group. Behavioral interactions with Hispanics were sparse and emotionally neutral, with few Anglos reporting close friendships with Hispanics. Best predictors of overall attitudes toward Hispanics were emotion and behavior, with stereotypic characteristics and values contributing little to the prediction. Findings are discussed in terms of the need to examine sources of negative perceptions of Hispanics and methods for changing such perceptions.

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Despite the volumes of research on stereotypes and prejudice (i.e., overall attitudes toward a group) in the psychological literature, relatively few studies have examined Anglos' stereotypes of Hispanic Americans or their overall attitudes toward this group. Fewer still have examined the emotions that Anglos associate with Hispanics, or the quantity and quality of contact that Anglos have with Hispanic group members. The purpose of our research was to address this gap in the literature by documenting the stereotypes, emotions, and behavior associated with Hispanics by Anglos, and the extent to which these three attitudinal dimensions predict overall attitudes toward the group.

How are Hispanics perceived by Anglos? A review of the handful of studies that have examined stereotypes of Hispanics suggests that perceptions are generally unfavorable (Bernat & Balch, 1979; Fairchild & Cozens, 1981; Guichard & Connolly, 1977; Simmons, 1961). For example, Hispanics are viewed as lazy, cruel, ignorant and pugnacious, but also as family-oriented and tradition-loving (Fairchild & Cozens, 1981). Other evidence suggests that Hispanics use the same stereotypes in describing themselves (e.g., Bernat & Balch, 1979; Montenegro, 1976; Peterson & Ramierez, 1971).

The most recent study to examine perceptions of Hispanics by Anglos was published over a decade ago. Using an open-ended response format to elicit stereotypes, Marin (1984) found that Anglos used a mixture of positive and negative characteristics to describe each of three Hispanic groups; Mexican Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans. For example, negative characteristics associated with all three groups were aggressive, poor, and lazy; positive characteristics were family-oriented and proud. For the most part, similar characteristics were used to describe the three groups, although the frequency with which respondents mentioned a characteristic varied somewhat from group to group (e.g., fewer characteristics were associated with Puerto Ricans than with Mexican Americans or Chicanos).

Given the profound demographic transformations in the United States (Riche, 1991), which project that Hispanics will be the numerically dominant minority group within 15 years, it is important that we reexamine Anglos' perceptions of Hispanics. Volumes of research on the self-fulfilling prophecy suggest that others' perceptions have important implications for self-perceptions and behavior (Jussim, 1986; Miller & Turnbull, 1986). Specifically, negative perceptions of Hispanics by Anglos may create self-fulfilling prophecies whereby negative perceptions become internalized in the self-concepts of many Hispanics. Thus, the purpose of our research was to provide a thorough assessment of current perceptions, an assessment that included not only the stereotypic characteristics associated with Hispanics but also the values, emotions, and behavior that Anglos associate with this group. Recent research and models of prejudice suggest that emotion and behavior may be more important than stereotypes in determining overall attitudes toward a group (i.e., prejudice), a possibility we also considered in our research (Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1993; Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, in press; Jackson et al., in press; Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, 1991).

Methods

Subjects Subjects were 265 Anglo college students (164 females and 101 males) at a large midwestern university who volunteered to participate in a study of Group Perceptions for extra credit in their introductory psychology courses.

Materials The Group Perceptions Survey consisted of 5 parts. Parts I and II, which assessed perceptions of Hispanics and Anglos, respectively, were each divided into 4 sections. Section 1 contained the "thermometer measure" of prejudice (i.e., overall attitudes toward a group). Subjects were asked to select a number from 0° to 100° (in 10° increments) that best represented their overall attitude toward the group (0° = very unfavorable, 100° = very favorable; Haddock et al., in press; Jackson et al., in press). Section 2 assessed the characteristics associated with the group. Subjects were asked to indicate the percentage of group members that they believed possessed each of 120 characteristics. The characteristics were selected from previous research on group

perceptions (e.g., lazy, intelligent). Section 3 assessed the emotions associated with the group. Subject were asked to indicate the percentage of group members that caused them experience each of 55 emotions (e.g., happy, angry). Section 4 assessed the values associated with the group. Subjects were asked to indicate the percentage of group members that they believed had as a goal or guiding principle in their lives each of 45 values (e.g., working hard to achieve success, a world at peace; see Jackson et al., in press, for details about the sources of characteristics, emotions, and values used in the Group Perceptions Survey).

In Part III of the Group Perceptions Survey subjects rated the characteristics, affects, and values they had considered in Parts I and II in terms of their desirability, valence, and importance, respectively. Thus, they rated: (1) the desirability of each of the 120 characteristics (++ = very desirable and -- = very undesirable); (2) the valence of each of the 55 emotions (++ = very positive, -- = very negative) and; (3) the importance of each of the 45 values (++ = very important, -- = very unimportant). Responses were coded on 5-point ratings scales such that higher numbers indicated greater desirability, more positive valence, and greater importance, respectively.

Part IV contained measures of right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981), racism (McConahay, 1986), and self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). Because these subject characteristics were not strongly related to perceptions of Hispanics they will not be discussed further.

Part V of the Group Perceptions Survey assessed the quantity and quality of behavior toward Hispanics. Subjects were asked to indicate the amount and pleasantness of their contact with Hispanics on 7-point scales in which higher values indicated more contact and more pleasant contact, respectively. They also indicated the numbers of acquaintances and close friends who were Hispanic.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Stereotypic characteristics and values associated with Hispanics

Characteristics and values that distinguished Hispanics from Anglos in the minds of our Anglo subjects are presented in Table 1. A characteristic or value was considered stereotypic if the

difference between percentages assigned to Hispanics and Anglos was at least 10%. For example, the characteristic "lazy" was considered stereotypic of Hispanics if the percentage of Hispanics believed to be lazy was at least 10% greater or less than the percentage of Anglos believed to be lazy. Similarly, the value "financial independence" was considered stereotypic of Hispanics if the percentage of Hispanics believed to hold this value was at least 10% less or greater than the percentage of Anglos believed to hold this value.

Using the 10% criterion, 36 characteristics and 12 values were identified as stereotypic of Hispanics by Anglos. Among the 36 characteristics, only 4 may be interpreted as positive characteristics; strong family, tradition-loving, religious, and old-fashioned. Of the remaining 32 characteristics, at least 26 are unequivocally negative characteristics. Specifically, compared to Anglos, Hispanics were perceived by Anglos as <u>less</u> productive, optimistic, ambitious, athletic, business-wise, dependable, independent, self-disciplined, planful, efficient, intelligent, sophisticated, good-looking, well-adjusted, patriotic, industrious, prosperous, knowledgeable, and prompt. They were perceived as <u>more</u> uneducated, poor, rebellious, physically violent, dirty/smelly, noisy, and criminally inclined. Additional characteristics that distinguished Hispanics were more ambiguous with respect to their valence. Hispanics were viewed as <u>less</u> conservative, materialistic, competitive, self-centered, progressive, and individualistic, and as <u>more</u> old-fashioned.

Negative perceptions of Hispanics were also evident in the 12 values stereotypically associated with the group. Compared to Anglos, Hispanics were viewed as placing <u>less</u> value on physical fitness, mature love, recognition by the community, a good life for others, national greatness, delaying pleasure to achieve success, the pursuit of knowledge, good health, economic prosperity, and financial independence. They were seen as placing <u>greater</u> value on salvation and religious or mystical experiences.

Table 1

Stereotypic characteristics and values associated with Hispanics by Anglos

HISPANICS LESS THAN ANGLOS	HISPANICS MORE THAN ANGLOS

Stereotypic characteristics

productive	strong family
conservative	poor
optimistic	tradition-loving
ambitious	religious
athletic	uneducated
materialistic	old fashioned
competitive	rebellious
business-wise	physically violent
dependable	criminal tendencies
independent	dirty/smelly
self-centered	noisy
self-disciplined	
planful	
progressive	
efficient	
individualistic	
intelligent	
sophisticated	
good-looking	
well-adjusted	
patriotic	
industrious	
prosperous	
knowledgable	
prompt	

Stereotypic values

physical fitness	salvation
mature love	religious experience
recognition by community	
good life for others	
national greatness	
putting off pleasure	
pursuit of knowledge	
good health	
economic prosperity	
financial independence	

Emotions associated with Hispanics

Twenty-five emotion terms distinguished Hispanics from Anglos, from the perspective of Anglos (i.e., the difference in percentages assigned to Hispanics and Anglos was at least 10%). Factor analysis suggested that most terms referred to a single underlying dimension; positive emotion (e.g., happy, glad, delighted). Less positive emotion was associated with Hispanics than with Anglos. For example, fewer Hispanics than Anglos elicited the emotions "happy," "glad," and "delighted" in Anglo respondents. In addition, fewer Hispanics prompted feelings of admiration, pride, and inspiration.

Behavior associated with Hispanics

Anglo respondents reported relatively little contact with Hispanics (3.27, on a 7-point scale in which 1 = no contact at all and 7 = a lot of contact), and reported emotionally neutral contact with group members (4.57, on a 7-point scale in which 1 = very unpleasant and 7 = very pleasant). The mean number of close friends who were Hispanic was 1.15, with a median number of 0. The mean number of acquaintances who were Hispanic was 8.76, with a median number of 5. Thus, our Anglo respondents reported little contact, and emotionally neutral contact with Hispanics group members.

Overall attitudes toward Hispanics

Anglo respondents' overall attitude toward Hispanics was relatively neutral; 56.58^{o} on the evaluation thermometer (0° = very unfavorable, 100° = very favorable). Not surprisingly, their overall attitude toward their own Anglo group was quite favorable; 80.81^{o}.

Predicting overall attitudes toward Hispanics from stereotypes, emotions, and behavior

Multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the contributions of stereotypic characteristics and values, emotions, and behavior to the prediction of overall attitudes toward Hispanics (i.e., prejudice).[1] Results indicated that the best predictors of overall attitudes were the positive emotions associated with the group, and the quantity and quality of contact with group members. The more positive emotion associated with the group, and the more frequent and pleasant the contact with group members, the more favorable were overall attitudes toward

Hispanics. Stereotypic characteristics and values contributed little to the prediction of overall attitudes.

Discussion

Our research addressed the question of how Anglos perceive Hispanics, a question neglected in previous research on stereotypes and prejudice. Our findings indicate that perceptions are rather unfavorable, whether perceptions are defined as stereotypic characteristics and values or as emotions elicited by thinking about group members. Moreover, Anglos in our research had relatively little contact with Hispanics, most of which was emotionally-neutral.

Hispanics were perceived by Anglos in our research as having fewer positive characteristics and more negative characteristics than Anglos. Specifically, Hispanics were perceived as less productive, ambitious, competitive, self-disciplined, intelligent, and well-adjusted, among other deficits. They were perceived as more rebellious, physically violent, and prone to criminality than Anglos. Among the values that distinguished Hispanics were pursuit of knowledge, economic prosperity, and delaying pleasure to achieve success, all of which were perceived as less valued by Hispanics than Anglos. More valued were salvation and having a religious or mystical experience.

Emotional responses to Hispanics were less positive than responses to Anglos. For example, Hispanic group members were less likely to elicit the emotions of happiness, gladness, admiration, and pride than were Anglo group members. However, there was little evidence that Hispanics elicited negative emotions in our Anglo respondents (e.g., fear, anger).

Behavioral contact with Hispanics was sparse and emotionally neutral. Few of our Anglo respondents reported having close friends who were Hispanic. More reported having Hispanic acquaintances, although the meaning of acquaintance is difficult to ascertain from our findings. The median number of acquaintances was 5, which may or may not reflect some degree of contact with Hispanics or at least a knowledge of Hispanics in the community.

Where do Anglos get their negative perceptions of Hispanics, given our evidence that they have relatively little direct contact with group members? One likely source of negative perceptions

is the mass media. Harris (1989) has examined media portrayals of several minority groups in the United States, including Hispanics. He found that Hispanics were rarely portrayed (1.5% of all characters), and when they were it was typically as crooks, cops, or comics in a unsuccessful TV shows (e.g., "a.k.a. Pablo," "I married Dora"). The few Hispanics on successful TV shows were all involved in law enforcement (e.g., Victor Sifuentes on "L.A. Law," and Lt. Calletano on "Hill Street Blues). Although there is some evidence that the film industry may be awakening to the untapped Hispanic market (e.g., films such as La Bamba and Born in East L.A., both in 1987, were huge commercial successes), there is little evidence that TV has increased the frequency and diversity of roles for Hispanic characters.

Sources other than the mass media may also contribute to, or reinforce negative perceptions of Hispanics. Unfortunately, research has yet to address how families, communities, and educational institutions communicate negative perceptions, either explicitly or implicitly. For example, how Hispanic children are treated in the classroom doubtless communicates something about teachers' perceptions of Hispanics to Anglo children. The community's attitudes and behavior toward Hispanics inside and outside the community also doubtless communicates something about adults' perceptions of Hispanics to children. More research is needed in these settings to determine if and how negative perceptions are being communicated and how to change such communications. As noted earlier, others' perceptions can have a profound effect on self-perceptions by way of self-fulfilling prophecies. Thus, the future of Hispanic children depends in part on developing positive perceptions in the minds of Anglo children about their Hispanic peers.

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Footnotes

[1]Prior to this analysis, composite measures were formed using procedures described in Haddock et al. (in press) and Jackson et al. (in press). Details on the computation of composite measures for the present research are available in Jackson et al.