

Hispanic Acculturation in the U.S.: Examining the Relationship Between Americans' Ethnocentricity and Education

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Abstract

This research sought to gauge Americans' ethnocentricity in regard to Hispanic immigrants and correlated those levels of bias with education levels. A new instrument was developed for measuring ethnocentricity, and it showed strong reliability, validating it for potential use in future research. Both quantitative and qualitative results are included. The findings revealed measurable levels of ethnocentricity and bias and were consistent with prior research indicating that respondents who had the lowest levels of education were the most likely to have negative views of Hispanics and to overestimate the size of the Hispanic population. This suggests the least well-educated Americans may hold a certain amount of defensiveness and hostility towards Hispanics. This bias associated with a lack of education could cause Hispanics to be reluctant to fully assimilate into the American culture, creating a cycle of distrust.

Keywords: *Ethnocentricity, Education, Hispanic, Immigrants, Class, Bias*

Immigration, particularly in regard to undocumented Hispanic immigrants, has been a central political issue in the United States throughout the beginning of the 21st century. As long as the percentage of the Hispanic population rises while the percentage of the majority Anglo population declines, it will likely continue to be. Between the censuses of 1980 and 2000, the Hispanic population in the U.S. increased 142%, with Latinos making up 13% of the entire population by 2000 (Pew Hispanic Center & Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation [PHC], 2004). By 2011 that percentage had increased to 16.7% (Motel & Patten, 2013). The 2000 census showed that whites still comprised a solid majority, making up nearly 70% of the U.S. population (Alba, Rumbaut, & Marotz, 2005) but that percentage dropped substantially, to

63.3%, by 2011 (Motel & Patten, 2013). That proportion has consistently been declining, and population projections suggest that by the middle of the century, it is possible that whites may be a numerical minority in the U.S., comprising less than 50% of the population (Alba et al., 2005; Yatani, 1996).

According to the Pew Research Center, 95.5% of the Latino population in the U.S. is comprised of individuals from 14 different countries of origin, ten of which lie in Central and South America, with the exceptions of Spain, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Cuddington, 2013). Puerto Ricans, who are of U.S. origin, make up the second largest Hispanic group in the country at 9.5% of the Hispanic population. The largest Hispanic group in the U.S., by far, is comprised of individuals of Mexican descent, who make up 64.6% of Hispanics in the country. The common thread, between individuals who are classified as Hispanic, is that some dialect of Spanish is spoken as the primary language in their country or territory of origin, and they are descended from Spanish ancestry, often mixed with Native American ancestry.

Certainly, any large-scale immigration patterns will present unique hurdles as cultures converge. Currently, Hispanics are most likely to fall in the lowest tier of income in the U.S. (Motel & Patten, 2013), which will logically have a profound impact on standard of living and social institutions (Mattimode, 1997). This was true of previous immigrant populations as well, but with each generation those populations attained higher levels of education. Conversely, Hispanics have the highest dropout rates and lowest college attendance rates in the country, although there have been significant improvements in both of those areas since 2000 (Motel & Patten, 2013). The problems of low levels of education and low standard of living in the Hispanic communities of the U.S. necessitate an examination of assimilation and Anglo Americans' acceptance of Latinos, both culturally and economically.

Early research findings depicted immigration as a pattern in which cultural dissimilarity, poverty, and discrimination were gradually replaced by enculturation, economic advancement, and acceptance by the majority (Portes, Parker, & Cobas, 1980). This representation was

associated with sociological theories of assimilation. More recent studies have taken a more critical look, acknowledging that as immigrants become educated and socially conscious, they become more cognizant of discrimination and inequities projected by the host country. After the racial tension and violence in the late 1960's and 70's, social theory began to focus less on cultural factors and more on the function of immigrant groups in the American economy. This gave rise to conflict theory, which does not assume that fluid assimilation is the inevitable result of large-scale immigration.

Acculturation is similar to assimilation, except that while assimilation focuses on an individual level and assumes one person's adoption of the host culture's patterns, acculturation refers to two cultures' mutual influences on each other (Pew Hispanic Center & Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004). The question of acculturation is particularly relevant in the case of Latinos because the tremendous number of immigrants in the U.S. ensures that both the Hispanic culture and Anglo culture will profoundly influence the other. In one longitudinal study designed to assess the level of acculturation of new immigrants, Mexican and Cuban immigrants were interviewed upon arrival and then again three years later (Portes et al., 1980). The researchers found that the better immigrants understood the host country language and the more they accepted its values, the more skeptical they were of the society and their ability to integrate with it. This finding is consistent with conflict theory and suggests that as new immigrants learn the language and culture, they experience barriers and become conscious that the host country may be unwilling to accept them.

It is clear that language plays a key role in the assimilation process that is rapidly changing America. Davila and Mora (2000) sought to identify whether Hispanic immigrants who entered the U.S. during the late 1980's initially had better English skills, or acquired them within 5 years, than the immigrants who arrived 10 years earlier. The researchers used the Public Use Microdata Samples from the 1980 and 1990 censuses and examined self-reported language proficiency. They found that Hispanics who immigrated in the late 1980's reported better English

proficiency within 5 years of entering the country than did similar immigrants a decade earlier.

In addition, they discovered that the English language gap between new Hispanic immigrants and U.S. born Hispanics increased between 1980 and 1990 (Davila & Mora, 2000). Both groups increased in their ability to use English, but U.S. born Hispanics had larger gains relative to those of immigrants. This suggests that U.S. born Hispanics responded rapidly to pressures to learn English. Contrary to speculation that Hispanic immigrants are not learning English as quickly as previous generations of immigrants, they do appear to be learning the language, and both first and second generation immigrants are increasing their ability to do so. The largest gains in fluency were made by those with fewer than 12 years of schooling, as expected, since those individuals have the most room to grow. If recent immigrants possess stronger English language skills than previous ones, we would expect them to be able to pass those skills on to their children, therefore putting less pressure on public schools in regard to English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

In another large scale study on language and assimilation, the 2002 National Survey of Latinos showed a wide range of language proficiency in the Hispanic population, with 47% indicating they were primarily Spanish speakers, 28% indicating they were bilingual, and 25% indicating they were primarily English speakers (Pew Hispanic Center & Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004). One of the major findings was that Hispanics' views on topics such as marriage, gender, abortion, childrearing, homosexuality, etc. were correlated with their proficiency with English, even after controlling for age, gender, education, income, place of residence, country of origin, political party, religion, citizenship, and generation. More specifically, after these factors were controlled for, the more English Hispanics were able to speak, the more likely they were to hold 'American' cultural views. This suggests that language acquisition is closely correlated with assimilation.

Other researchers also used the National Survey of Latinos, which sampled 3000 Hispanics, to explore identity issues and assimilation (Brodie, Steffenson, Valdez, Levin, & Pew Hispanic Center, 2002). They

found that 88% were likely to chiefly identify themselves with their country of origin (Mexican, Nicaraguan, etc.). Also, 81% were likely to refer to themselves as Latinos or Hispanics, but only 53% percent were ever likely to refer to themselves as Americans. This suggests a situation where enculturation has been limited to the point that Hispanics are far less likely to identify with their present country than they are with their ethnicity or former country. Only 21% would 'first' describe themselves as Americans. Not until the third generation did the majority of Hispanics identify themselves as Americans, and even at that stage, only 57% did.

But while most recent immigrants were unlikely to identify themselves as Americans, they tended to view their economic opportunity in the U.S. very positively, believing it provided them the most chance for success (Brodie et al., 2002). However, their view on morality in America and discrimination were less positive; 45% reported that they or someone close to them had experienced some form of discrimination because of their ethnicity. Of those polled, the most likely reason given for the cause of the discrimination against them was their language (35%).

Besides the larger issue of assimilation and the more personal one of identity, language is certainly associated with economic forces and can dictate the level of opportunity open to new immigrants. A positive correlation has been found between English proficiency and income level (Davila & Mora, 2000). The workers with the highest proficiency had the highest earnings, and those with the lowest proficiency clearly earned the least. However, analysis suggested that if all immigrant workers were to develop moderate English language skills, the mean wage would increase, but those at the lower end of the spectrum would be unaffected. Essentially, those at the middle and upper ends of the spectrum would be able to find more lucrative employment, but then the employment market would be so saturated that the workers on the low end of the continuum would not be able to do the same. Still, an increase in mean earnings would translate into improved standard of living for millions of people. This is why many argue that the only way for Hispanics to become upwardly mobile is through greater English proficiency (Mattimode, 1997). If they do not achieve this, they will continue to be relegated to the most marginal forms of employment.

Despite Hispanic immigrants' efforts to improve their economic status and the fact that they have been increasing their proficiency with the English language, they have been victims of a system that continually creates barriers to advancement. Since the 1980's, the importance of English language skills for minority workers has increased due to legislation such as the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) (Davila & Mora, 2000). The IRCA allows for stiffer penalties for companies that hire undocumented workers. Therefore, companies will go to greater lengths to scrutinize and eliminate prospective employees, and one of the measures they use is proficiency with English.

During the 1980's there also were several attempts by congress to create constitutional amendments that would mandate English as the national language. While these were unsuccessful at the national level, by 1990 more than half of all states had enacted English-only or English as the official language legislation (Davila & Mora, 2000). In states where English-only laws have been implemented, Hispanics have suffered economically, especially in regard to home ownership, when compared to Hispanics in states without such laws (Davila, Mendez, & Mora, 2003). It is particularly striking that Hispanics with both limited English proficiency *and* those fluent in English were disadvantaged in this way.

One of the fears that drives the political movements against Hispanic immigrants is that their presence will stagnate incomes, depress wages, and cause Americans to lose jobs (Yatani, 1996). Politically, while Republicans have historically been in opposition to immigration, in the last 30 years many Democrats have also supported legislation seeking to limit immigration, in large part because they see it as a way to protect the economic well being of lower middle and working class Americans. But as with any political issue, perceptions of the American public drive policy, and unfortunately, misperceptions, fear, and prejudice are still very much a part of America.

These findings reveal a number of important issues. First, the Hispanic immigrant population continues to grow rapidly, and the Anglo

population may find itself to be a numerical minority within just a few decades. And contrary to popular opinion, both newly arrived Latinos and those who have settled in the U.S. for a number of years are learning English quickly. However, acculturation appears to be a problematic issue. As Hispanics learn the English language and the American culture, they resist forming an identity as Americans and their skepticism of society grows, even if they continue to perceive the U.S. as a land of economic opportunity.

Many Americans view immigration as a major problem, even if they are descendants of recent immigrants themselves (Mattimode, 1997). All segments of the population tend to perceive minority groups as being larger in number than they actually are, which, for the majority, can increase the perceived threat and therefore prejudicial feelings (Alba et al., 2005). In many cases, prejudice against a minority is proportional to the size of the minority, because larger minority populations are viewed as more of a threat and arouse more negative attitudes. In addition, there is a negative correlation between education and the perception of the size of minority populations, with people with lower levels of education tending to perceive minorities as numerically larger than those with high levels of education. This combination of factors would suggest that Americans with limited education are more likely to feel threatened and hold prejudicial views. If so, those Americans holding prejudicial views encompass a substantial portion of the country, considering that 90 million adults are functionally literate at best (Collins, 2006), and those 90 million adults comprise nearly half of the adults in the United States (Hock & Mellard, 2005). This dynamic has the potential to create great impediments for Hispanics over the coming decades, since they now comprise the largest minority and are steadily growing in number.

Research Questions

There is good reason to infer that Hispanics' distrust towards American society is largely due to intolerance they experience as they attempt to assimilate. The purpose of this study was to measure the relationship between Americans' education levels and their ethnocentricity towards Hispanic immigrants. In the low wage jobs that Hispanics are most likely to hold, they are more likely to work with and encounter Americans with

lower education levels and possibly higher levels of bias. If a link were to be found between Americans' levels of education and the bias they show towards Hispanics, it may help explain why Hispanics are more likely to choose not to identify themselves as Americans and why they tend to remain skeptical about their social prospects in the U.S. even after learning the language and integrating economically. Additionally, the study was formulated to assess whether Americans who advocate English-only policies and claim to seek to preserve a traditional variety of Standard American English (SAE) actually use that form themselves. If not, it would suggest an underlying bias that is unrelated to language use.

Method

The study was conducted in a small city in the state of Georgia in the Southeastern United States. The city was chosen because the makeup of its population and the socioeconomic level of its residents are similar to those of many "heartland" towns across the U.S. In addition, Georgia has a relatively high number of Hispanic immigrants. According to the U.S Census Bureau (2010), Georgia has the tenth fastest growth rate of Hispanic immigrants of any state in the country, a fact that makes Georgia highly representative of the rest of the nation: Historically, Georgia does not have the well-entrenched, well-integrated Hispanic communities that California, Texas, Florida, or New York do, and its rapidly expanding Hispanic community is a relatively new phenomenon to the state. Most U.S. states are either in similar situations or will be within the next 20 years. This makes the acculturation process in these states ripe for empirical study, as deep social transformations will surely accompany the changing demographics.

The county where the data was collected was comprised of 60,687 people, with approximately 83% of the population being Caucasian, 15% being African American, and fewer than 2% being Hispanic (New Georgia Encyclopedia, 2007). The population of the county is mostly working class with a median household income of \$49,756 (GeorgialInfo, 2009), similar to the nation's median. The county is relatively rural, although the city has a small urban center at its core, again similar to many towns across the nation. The county's economic status and ratio of

White to African American residents are also similar to many communities in the country, except that the Hispanic population has not yet increased within the county as it has in much of the state. It should be noted, however, that the neighboring county, has been one of the fastest growing counties in the U.S. since the 1970's and has a large and rapidly expanding Hispanic community (New Georgia Encyclopedia, 2007), so it should not be assumed that residents of the county do not come in contact with Latinos. In fact, there is good reason for them to believe that Hispanics will soon settle in large numbers there.

The survey was conducted outdoors in the financial center of the city. Highly influential research in linguistics has often been conducted in commercial environments, such as Labov's (1966) groundbreaking work based on data gathered in New York City department stores. Commercial environments offer social settings where individuals come together to display their public personas in an atmosphere of relative equality. These environments can also provide samples that are randomized and can be highly representative of local populations. This financial center serves the city and the vast majority of the county, so it was the most likely location to provide the greatest amount of randomization. County residents from all racial, social, and economic stratifications frequent this location, and it was deemed that the site would produce the most representative sample of the county's population.

Participants

Twenty-five individuals agreed to participate in the study, or approximately one of every three to four who were asked. This was deemed adequate because the writing samples collected from the participants would add qualitative depth to the quantitative analysis. The racial makeup of the sample was similar to that of the county, although slightly skewed towards African Americans, with 72% of the respondents being Caucasian, 28% being African American, and no other ethnicities being represented. Recall that 83% of county residents were Caucasian and 15% were African American as of the most recent census. Of those sampled, 40% were males and 60% were females. All of the age ranges were represented, although there was only one person in both the 15-20

year old and 70 or over categories. This was judged to be an acceptable mixture since teenagers lack extensive social experience outside of school and may not have formed well-developed schema in regard to immigrant issues, and citizens over the age of 70 comprise such a small proportion of the population. The education levels of the respondents also varied across the spectrum, although no one reported having less than a high school diploma. Since education level was the most important independent variable in the analysis, it was essential that a variety of levels were represented, and this was indeed the case with this particular sample.

Measures

A survey was developed that was intended to measure Americans' opinions with regard to Hispanic immigration, acculturation, and language use. This survey will be referred to here as the Cuevas Ethnocentricity Scale (CES), and the resulting scores served as the dependent variable in the study. Respondents were asked to reply to eight statements scored on a Likert scale, with a range from 1 to 5, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The statements were constructed as they were because they pertained to factors that had been identified as relevant in previous literature. For example, Americans may be likely to believe that new waves of Hispanic immigrants are not learning English as quickly as previous immigrants and non-English speakers may "pollute" American English (Davila & Mora, 2000). This has fueled a populist movement to preserve American English and solidify it as the national language. In addition, Hispanics tend to view America as a place that offers economic opportunity (Brodie et al., 2002), but Americans may feel threatened by the extent that economic benefits are afforded to immigrants. The statements were meant to assess these types of beliefs and variations of them.

For each statement, a score of 5 would indicate a more ethnocentric view and greater negativity or reluctance towards Hispanic immigrants. A score of 1 would indicate a less ethnocentric view and less negativity or reluctance towards Hispanic immigrants. For each respondent, the maximum score when all responses were totaled was a 40, which would indicate a strongly ethnocentric view and extreme general negativity

towards Hispanics. The minimum score was an 8, which would indicate a lack of ethnocentric views and a lack of negativity in all areas. A score of 24 was the median and would indicate neutrality, contradictory feelings, or possibly confusion about the questions. The eight statements respondents were asked their opinions on are below in Appendix A.

In addition to the eight Likert scale statements above, respondents were asked what percentage of the current U.S. population they believe to be comprised of Hispanic immigrants. They were given the options of 0-10%, 11-20%, 21-30%, 31-40%, or above 40%. Previous research has noted that Americans with lower education levels are more likely to overestimate the size of immigrant populations (Alba et al., 2005). In addition, those who overestimate the size of immigrant populations have been shown to display more bias towards immigrants, possibly because they feel more threatened when they believe their way of life may be affected by a significant minority population. This question allowed for the examination of that hypothesis when the correlation between CES score and population estimate was examined.

Respondents were then asked to provide demographic information. They were asked to identify their gender, race, education level, and age, which would allow for analysis of the trends based on those categorical independent variables. Finally, respondents were asked to write 3-4 complete sentences to explain their "overall opinion of the current situation the U.S. faces with regard to Hispanic immigration". This question was meant to assess the respondents' own use of SAE. It was of interest whether Americans who advocated for the preservation of SAE generally used a conventional version of SAE. For instance, if an individual advocated for strict use of SAE and used that reasoning to repudiate Hispanic immigrants but did not use SAE, it would suggest that the desire to maintain a strict form of SAE was actually a façade masking other underlying biases. It was also hoped that this open-ended question would provide contextual qualitative data to better explain the CES survey results.

Results

After the data were collected, the CES survey was tested for internal consistency reliability in order to verify whether the survey was measuring a single unitary characteristic, which was the intention, or on the other hand, several different traits. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test this assumption because it is used for assessments that do not have correct and incorrect answers, such as tests of personality traits or aptitude (Salkind, 2006). The alpha coefficient of reliability for the CES survey used in this study was .87, a strong coefficient, particularly for a newly developed instrument. This tells us the survey was indeed measuring a single unitary trait, and the literature would suggest that that unitary trait was ethnocentricity or bias. Therefore, there is reason to believe the assessment was both reliable and valid.

Recall that a minimum total score of 8 of the CES survey indicates little ethnocentrism, a score of 24 indicates neutrality or contradictory feelings, and a maximum score of 40 indicates strong ethnocentrism. Any total score above 24 would indicate a tendency towards ethnocentrism, and any score below 24 would indicate a tendency away from it. The most glaring initial finding was the uniformity of the data across the demographic categories.

The overall mean for all respondents was 29.52, indicating a general tendency towards ethnocentrism and a possible general negativity towards Hispanic immigrants and the Spanish language. The mean for all men was 29.6, and the mean for all women was 29.47. The mean for Caucasians was 30.6, while the mean for African Americans was 28.14. This indicates that both men and women, Caucasians and African Americans, shared similar ethnocentric, if less than extreme views on the topic. However, it must be noted that one Caucasian woman scored the minimum, an 8, which reduced the mean for both Caucasians and women.

The views across various ages showed similar uniformity. The age categories and means follow: 15-20 years old ($M = 29$), 21-29 ($M = 29$), 30-39 ($M = 29.14$), 40-49 ($M = 26$), 50-59 ($M = 29.2$), 60-69 ($M = 30$), 70+ ($M = 40$). Again, the means of the responses were strikingly uniform across age levels. The mean of those in the 40-49 year old category was

somewhat lower than the others, but still showed a similar tendency towards ethnocentrism. While the mean of the 70+ category was 40, the highest score for ethnocentrism, there was only one response in that category.

The results along education levels showed somewhat less similarity. They are as follows: High school/GED ($M = 32.6$), Some college ($M = 31.5$), Bachelor's degree ($M = 23.16$), Some graduate coursework ($M = 31.6$), Master's degree or higher ($M = 28.5$). It is notable that out of all the demographic categories assessed, including race, gender, and age, the only one that showed a mean under 24, indicating a tendency away from ethnocentrism, was the one consisting of individuals with bachelor's degrees. Those respondents with no more than high school education showed the most ethnocentricity, and those with some college showed less ethnocentricity than high school graduates, but more than college graduates. It must also be noted that this sample did not show a clear trend of those with higher levels of education to be less ethnocentric, since those with master's degrees had a higher mean than those with bachelor's degrees. Finally, the category of, "some graduate coursework," may have been misinterpreted by some respondents as meaning: some post-high school education.

Spearman's rho was used to analyze all relationships in this study because it tests correlations between continuous and ordinal data and correlations between two sets of ordinal data (Bruning & Kintz, 1987). The relationship between education level and ethnocentric score was tested, and across all participants there was a negative correlation, $r = -.29$, indicating that as education levels rose ethnocentric scores tended to decrease and vice versa. However, this correlation was not statistically significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level, $p = .158$. Because of the possible confound with the category for "some graduate coursework", the data were analyzed only for the participants with high school diplomas, some college work, and bachelor's degrees. For these participants, there was a moderately high and statistically significant negative correlation between education level and ethnocentricity, $r = -.57$, $p = .013$. So there was a significant difference between subjects at this level, and those with the least education showed more bias, while

those with the most education showed less bias. The demographic information and means for all respondents are found below in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Categories and Mean Scores

Category	Number	Percent of Sample	Mean Score
Males	10	40	29.6
Females	15	60	29.47
Caucasian	18	72	30.06
African American	7	28	28.14
High School/GED	5	20	32.6
Some College	6	24	31.5
Bachelor's Deg	6	24	23.16
Some Graduate	6	24	31.6
Master's or +	2	8	28.5
15-20	1	4	29
21-29	3	12	29
30-39	7	28	29.14
40-49	2	8	26
50-59	5	20	29.2
60-69	6	24	30
70+	1	4	40

If we examine the questions, a number of trends emerge. The statement that respondents were most likely to strongly agree with was “English should be the national language” with a mean of 4.48 out of 5. The statement that was the second most likely to find strong agreement was “It is important for American Standard English to be preserved in its correct form” ($M = 4.4$). Two statements were equally likely to be chosen as the third most strongly agreed upon declarations ($M = 3.72$): “Hispanic immigrants have not been learning English as quickly as previous generations of immigrants did,” and “Immigration is a major problem in this country today.” It is notable that the two statements

respondents were most likely to agree with both referred only to English, with no mention of immigration or Hispanics. They were also chosen more consistently than the following two ($M = 4.48$ and 4.4 vs. $M = 3.72$ and 3.72). This suggests that the respondents' most common disposition was one that expressed the need to protect a national identity in the form of language, rather than overt hostility towards immigrants. However, the two statements that were tied as the third most likely did show a tendency towards depicting a situation in which the individuals felt a threat specifically from Hispanic immigrants.

Of the four statements respondents were most likely to disagree with, the most common was "Commercial phone services (banks, catalogues, etc.) should not provide Spanish options" ($M = 2.88$). This suggests that the individuals in the sample were open to extending economic opportunities to immigrants, although they may have been influenced by the ubiquitous presence of bilingual options already in place in many commercial environments. It must also be mentioned that this was the only question out of all eight with a mean below 3, indicating it was the only one that showed a tendency away from ethnocentricity. The statement with the next lowest mean was "American schools should not teach all children to speak Spanish beginning in 1st grade" ($M = 3.12$). The third was "Schools should not teach students to say the pledge of allegiance in Spanish under any circumstances" ($M = 3.56$). Finally, the last was "If Hispanic immigrants do not learn to speak more English, there is the danger that the English language may be undermined and English as we know it may not continue to be spoken in the United States" ($M = 3.64$). These three could be interpreted to mean that those in the sample do not feel threatened extensively that Spanish will supplant English, but it is also important to note that as a whole the respondents were slightly more likely to agree with the statements.

In regard to the respondents' estimation of the size of the immigrant population, the results of this study aligned with the prior research. Of those with no more than a high school education, all overestimated the size of the Hispanic community in the U.S., and 60% of them believed the Hispanic population exceeds 40% of the country. Of those who picked the correct category, 11-20%, all had at least some college

education. Across all respondents, there was a moderately high, statistically significant negative correlation, $r = -.49$, $p = .012$, between education level and their estimate of the size of the Hispanic population. This suggests that those with lower levels of education were more likely to overestimate the size of the Hispanic population, and those with higher levels of education were more likely to estimate it as being lower or to estimate it correctly.

For the purpose of uniformity, an analysis was conducted on the responses for only those subjects with high school diplomas, some college, and bachelor's degrees. These results showed a somewhat more pronounced, moderately high, statistically significant negative correlation between education level and their estimate of the Hispanic population, $r = -.57$, $p = .013$. This suggests a somewhat stronger relationship between those two variables among the respondents with the lowest education levels, with those with no more than a high school education likely to overestimate the size of the Hispanic population the most and the overestimate declining steeply as education rose to the bachelor degree level.

In addition, the mean total score on the CES survey of those who believed that Hispanics comprise more than 40% of the country was much higher ($M = 36.75$) and showed far more ethnocentricity than those who estimated correctly ($M = 28.57$). However, when an analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the ethnocentricity score and estimate of the Hispanic population size, the results were not significant, although they did approach significance. Across all subjects, there was a small, non-significant positive correlation, $r = .37$, $p = .07$. Had the sample size been slightly larger, it is likely this difference would have been significant.

These results tend to support two findings from previous studies. First, the lower the individual's education level, the more likely that individual was to overestimate the size of the population of Hispanic immigrants. Next, the literature indicated that the greater someone's perception of the size of the immigrant community, the more likely they would be to feel threatened by that community and harbor bias and resentment.

While the relationship between the score measuring bias and the subjects' perception of the size of the population did not quite meet statistical significance, there appeared to be a trend in that direction.

The writing samples did not yield clear results regarding the respondents' own use of SAE. The greatest difficulty in assessing the responses was that most participants wrote very little, often only one or two brief sentences, making it problematic to attempt to gauge their facility with the language. In addition, there were instances of individuals with low education levels and highly ethnocentric views who did appear to use conventional forms of SAE *and* those who did not. There were also individuals with high education levels and non-ethnocentric views who did not appear to use the most prescriptive forms of SAE *and* those who did, making the results inconclusive. But while the written responses did not provide the conclusive results that were sought, there was a wealth of qualitative data they did provide. The written responses yielded insights into why the individuals felt the way they did. The tone of the writing also revealed the extent of the respondents' anger, frustration, and exasperation with immigrants, the economy, the U.S. government, and those Americans who they felt had attempted to magnify the issue out of proportion for political gain. A sample of direct quotes from the participants' responses can be found below in Table 2.

Table 2

Representative Sample of the Participants' Responses from the Open-ended Writing Prompt (note: The spelling and grammar are exactly as the participants responded.)

"If they can't speak English they should go home. No more sentences needed." (Caucasian male, 50-59 years old, high school education, score = 40)

"I have no problem with the situation all people have a free choice to live in any country" (African American male, 30-39 years old, high school education, score = 16)

“I believe if you do not pay taxes you should not live here. If you can not speak English you should not live here.” (Caucasian male, 30-39 years old, high school education, score = 38)

“There are too many immigrants being let in the U.S.A. We should take care of our own people first. They have no respect for us and they should be grateful.” (Caucasian female, 70+, high school education, score = 40)

“There should, as the first step, be a complete closure of the Mexican border. I have no problem with a guest worker program, where the worker would be “permitted with the proper background checks.” (Caucasian male, 60-69 years old, some college, score = 37)

“Believe it is now taking care of itself due to fact that jobs are disappearing for “day labor”. Many undocumented aliens are leaving on their own; due to lack of work.” (Caucasian female, 50-59 years old, some college, score = 30)

“I think that there should be a limit. There are U.S. citizens who can’t receive the adequate amount of help from the gov’t. And that is wrong. Immigrants come over and get it all easily. Take care of your own first!” (African American female, 30-39 years old, some college, score = 36)

“The main problem I have with illegal immigrants is lack of jobs and healthcare for U.S. citizens. Those are my two major concerns.” (African American male, 30-39 years old, bachelor’s degree, score = 25)

“I do not mind Hispanics being part of this country, but they should become AMERICANS not remain Hispanics. All other national groups have become assimilated without losing their cultural distinction. I also believe paying Hispanics so they send all their money back to Mexico is not good for our economy. Too many people unrelated should not be allowed to live in one

structure.” (Caucasian female, 60-69 years old, bachelor's degree, score = 32)

“Hispanic immigration is no more a threat than Italian, Irish, or Asian immigration in the past. My husband's German grandfathers never learned English. All of their children did learn English and are thoroughly assimilated.” (Caucasian female, 50-59 years old, bachelor's degree, score = 8)

“Some are good & some are illegal!” (Caucasian female, 40-49 years old, bachelor's degree, score = 25)

“I think that immigration is an issue magnified for political gain and media entertainment.” (Caucasian male, 21-29 years old, bachelor's degree, score = 23)

“I believe English should be the national language; however, I think we should provide Spanish as an option for banking, business transaction, and hospitals.” (Caucasian female, 60-69 years old, some graduate courses, score = 22)

“U.S. in grave danger of loosing its identity as a melting pot!” (Caucasian male, 60-69 years old, some graduate courses, score = 29)

“In my opinion illegal immigration is a major problem of U.S. Taxpayer's dollars in increasing amounts with increasing illegal immigration are used to support the needs of these immigrants. I believe this is wrong.” (Caucasian male, 60-69 years old, some graduate courses, score = 32)

“I am open to a diversified culture in the U.S. however, when in this country outsiders must conform to our language and culture!” (Caucasian female, 50-59, some graduate courses, score = 39)

“Unfortunately, I think that they are way over populated. Which is a lot of reasons why the American can’t receive job. Economy is in recession although they claim we are not, I think a lot have to do with American dollars going over seas.” (African American female, 21-29 years old, some graduate courses, score = 35)

Discussion

The statistical analyses revealed several interesting findings. First, the measurement instrument, the CES survey, was shown to have strong reliability and appeared to measure a single unitary attitude, ethnocentricity or bias towards Hispanic immigrants. Since this new instrument has been found to be reliable, it may be used in further research with some level of confidence. In addition, analyses of the correlations between certain variables did reveal significant results. Across all participants, there was a negative relationship between education level and their perception of the size of the Hispanic community. The lower their education level, the more likely they were to overestimate the size of the Hispanic population. Amongst only those subjects with the three lowest levels of education, there were relatively strong negative relationships between education level and their perception of the size of the Hispanic community and between education level and reported bias. In this case, the lower the education level, the more likely individuals were to overestimate the size of the Hispanic population *and* to hold highly ethnocentric, biased views.

This study produced a number of clear results that were most striking in their uniformity. The sample was a relatively accurate reflection of the racial composition of the overall population of the county, and the population of the county resembles that of many heartland communities across the country in many respects. Those who responded to the survey varied in terms of gender, age, and education level. However, in terms of mean score for bias, the results were similar across all demographic categories. Most of those sampled, whether Black or White, young or old, highly educated or limited in education, held some measure of ethnocentric views and showed some negativity towards Hispanic acculturation. Yet those views did not tend to be extreme; the respondents were most likely to feel strongly that English should be the

national language and that the English language should be preserved “in its correct form”, but were somewhat less likely to overtly identify Hispanic immigrants as a social malady. The individuals sampled were most likely to agree that bilingual services should be provided for commercial environments and had mixed views on whether SAE could be threatened by a proliferation of Spanish speakers.

In the respondents' estimation of the proportion of the U.S population that is comprised of Hispanics, two previously tested hypotheses were supported. Those individuals with lower levels of education tended to overestimate the proportion of immigrants to the greatest degree, and those who overestimated the population of immigrants were somewhat more likely to have more negative feelings toward Hispanics. When these factors are combined, it suggests that those individuals with the lowest education levels are the ones most likely to harbor the greatest bias towards immigrants, and that was the case in this study. It was not within the scope of this study to determine whether this dynamic was due simply to a lack of education or because those with lower levels of education are more limited in employment opportunities, and hence would be more likely to be in competition with Hispanics for jobs, thereby perceiving a threat to their standard of living.

While the means of the overall sample on the dependent variable, the CES score, tended towards ethnocentricity but were not extreme, the open-ended responses showed greater variability in the respondents' thought processes. Those at the extreme ends of the ethnocentricity scale were likely to be more forceful with their opinions and showed greater amounts of anger and frustration, and there were far more extreme responses on the higher ethnocentric range of the spectrum. In addition, while many people mentioned linguistic factors, others mentioned a wider variety of issues, some of which were only marginally related to Hispanic immigration. These other issues included taxation, human rights, the plight of Americans within their own society, an economy in recession, government assistance, healthcare, and the media. These complaints seemed to be associated with American government and had little relation to Hispanic immigration.

It also appears that the situation is exacerbated by Americans' misperceptions. Among those misperceptions are that Hispanic immigrants have not been learning English as quickly as previous generations of immigrants and that there are more Hispanic immigrants in the country than there actually are. This latter misperception feeds other irrational fears such as infringement on the English language and damage to the U.S. economy. From the responses to the open-ended questions, it is apparent that some Americans direct the blame for various problems this country faces onto the Hispanic community, even though immigrants clearly cannot directly influence issues such as healthcare, taxation, or a recession.

While the findings of this study supported the previous research claims that individuals with the lowest levels of education are the most likely to overestimate the size of minority populations and in turn harbor the most bias towards them, other aspects of this social dynamic require more examination. For instance, those participants with bachelor's degrees showed the lowest levels of ethnocentricity and this trait appeared to rise, somewhat, with education level after that point, although the mean scores did not reach the levels of those who held only high school diplomas. It was not clear whether this rise in CES score at the "some graduate" coursework and "master's or higher" levels was the result of confusion on the part of some respondents or from some other source. It would be worthwhile to investigate whether individuals with graduate degrees actually tend to hold more biases than those with only four-year degrees. If that is the case, the reasons for those views are worthy of inquiry, because those highly educated individuals are less likely to overestimate the size of the Hispanic population, so they should feel less threatened than those who do overestimate it. In addition, individuals with graduate degrees should not feel as if they are in competition for employment with less well-educated Hispanics, who are more likely to hold jobs involving manual labor. Therefore, the root of potential bias of those with graduate degrees is a question worth studying.

It would also be useful to collect more extensive writing samples from participants in order to identify whether the individuals who were most insistent on the strict maintenance of SAE adhered to those standards

themselves. Since those with no more than a high school education showed the most ethnocentricity and appeared to be the most defensive of American culture and language, it is probable that the most ethnocentric individuals are less likely to use SAE in speech and writing. If not, it would suggest that there are other underlying biases and that their defense of culture and language was being put forth as superficial rationale to mask deeper prejudices. However, without definitive empirical support, this can only be viewed as a hypothesis.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations to the study. First, the results may have been more defined if a larger sample had been acquired. For this reason it is suggested that similar research be conducted on a larger scale. Also, the inclusion of the category for "some graduate coursework" may have been misunderstood by some participants and may have caused the results to be skewed to some extent, although the analysis of the three lowest education levels did reveal significant results, results that were highly consistent with previous literature. This lack of clarity in regard to ethnocentricity at the upper education levels is reason for further research in the area in order to provide more precise evidence of the beliefs of more affluent, more highly educated individuals. Unfortunately, the writing task meant to assess the respondents' use of SAE did not provide clearly measurable results, although it did provide interesting qualitative, contextual support. While it would be difficult to acquire a sample comprised of participants invested enough in the process to produce enough original writing to adequately conduct an analysis of each individual's use of SAE, the question of whether participants' beliefs correlate with their own use is a worthwhile one.

Implications

The picture that this research paints is of Black and White Americans from typical educational and economic backgrounds who are tentative and somewhat resistant towards Hispanic immigrants, but who are unlikely to be openly hostile. However, if Hispanics are constantly confronted with resistance from people who are reluctant to accept them as neighbors and citizens, particularly those with low education levels

who they are most likely to encounter, it would help to explain why they are hesitant to identify with American society and remain skeptical about their chances of assimilating, even after they have integrated economically and have learned the language. Add to this situation the occasional hostility from the relatively few highly ethnocentric and biased individuals on the most extreme end of the spectrum, and it is apparent why Hispanics would not feel welcomed or accepted. With more education and access to information that would work to dispel misperceptions about Hispanic immigration, Americans could improve the country's prospects by making the process of acculturation a more positive one. If Hispanics are accepted and welcomed, they will be more likely to identify themselves as Americans, and in the process the United States will benefit both socially and economically.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of this exploratory study, however, may be in the newly created ethnocentricity scale, which was validated and shown to have strong internal reliability. Future researchers can confidently use this survey instrument in larger studies using broader samples. Researchers could alter the scope, and the survey could be adapted to other ethnic groups without losing reliability in order to test similar dynamics in other populations, preferably in larger studies. In this respect the groundwork has been laid for subsequent research in this area.

Conclusions on Culture and Education

Hispanics are now the largest minority group in America. They are also the fastest growing group. Their present impact on the American economy, especially at the lower levels of the workforce, is substantial. Their present and future political influence cannot be discounted, as they comprise a larger and larger voting block at the same time the Anglo American voting block is decreasing proportionally. Considering the prominence of the Hispanic community in America, it is essential to continue to study the acculturation process, both from the perspective of Anglo and African Americans, and from the perspective of the Hispanic population.

Freire argued that education is the principal engine necessary for initiating radical social change, and theorists have noted that this is at the foundation of critical Marxist scholars' insistence that a relationship between society and schooling drives fundamental social transformations (Gottesman, 2010). Yet Freire's line of reasoning primarily focused on how marginalized groups of people can use education to inspire change and influence dynamics in response to an established and unjust societal structure. Education can certainly be viewed as an instrument for Hispanics to improve their status and alter culture in the U. S., and this has been done successfully in Canada through a post-Marxist framework (Bernhard, 2010). But in this case the data actually address the question from a quite different perspective. Instead of education being a key component of the marginalized group, Hispanics, the data in this study suggest that education, or a lack of it, is one of the driving forces that is associated with the established group's tendency to maintain biases that work to keep the immigrant population at the margins of society. So education is still a transformative influence, but it is the individuals in groups in power who must make strides in that regard.

It might seem like a remote possibility that working class members of the established groups would use education as a platform for social change, particularly when the costs of higher education in the U.S. have pushed college education further and further out of reach for working class families. But there is some precedence for it occurring. In Great Britain, from the 1920's to the 1960's, activists from the working class chose to forego formal education routes in favor of pursuing self-education in Marxist principles, which blended concepts from history, economics, and politics, as a reaction against rigid conservative social structures of the time (Fisher & Fisher, 2007). In some ways universities during that time served as a closed social world that was inaccessible to the working class, thereby helping to maintain the conservative societal structures that were in place. By pursuing education through unconventional routes, it allowed working class activists to influence social change outside of traditional channels.

However, in the U.S., White working class families currently tend to lean heavily towards conservative politics, so there is some doubt about whether a movement towards progressive, left-leaning policies is realistic in the near future, not necessarily because of the accessibility of education, but because those individuals are entrenched in conservative ideals determined to maintain the status quo. One question that underlies this dynamic is whether wealthier, elite members of the conservative establishment create an atmosphere that instills fear about immigration in poorer, less well-educated Americans, causing them to build acrimony against minorities, with the outcome serving to allow those in power to continue to consolidate that power. In essence, this would pit marginalized members of society against one another while those in power escaped scrutiny.

Some have argued that cultural identity is strongly tied to local attachments and that when those attachments are dictated by ideology and self-definitions are delineated in tribal or ethnic terms then ethnocentrism and moral impoverishment are the result (Nielsen, 1987). This is exactly what we see in the current study. Instead of working class Americans viewing their local Hispanic neighbors in a universal sense as part of their community and as being related to them as humans, they are largely driven by ideology and identify along ethnic lines. We see a privileged class who will soon no longer be the majority and are resisting the integration of the largest minority in the country due to a fear of losing that position of dominance, even though the sense of dominance may be misplaced.

A progressive perspective would argue instead for inclusion of the minority population and a dissipation of the power of that ruling class. That perspective would additionally support a strong universal education system, because a lack of education on the part of the privileged class seems to be exactly what is driving the ethnocentricity; they are privileged due to their race and origin of birth, not their socioeconomic standing, and a lack of education is associated with the adoption of inaccurate beliefs about immigrants in addition to hostility towards them. As this study has revealed in its limited scope, some Americans focus their frustrations on the immigrants in their community, despite the fact

that those immigrants experience a similar plight yet have little control of their environment, rather than targeting those frustrations at other Americans in positions of power who can and do impact their well being. Ultimately, as Freire and Marxist scholars would suggest, education can be a compelling influence for social change for both the Hispanic population currently operating in the margins of U.S. society and for working class Americans locked into the lowest rungs of society. Indeed, for significant change to occur, education must be at the forefront of any progressive movement towards equality.

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Appendix A

Cuevas Ethnocentricity Scale (CES Survey) Disposition Statements

1. Immigration is a major problem in this country today.
2. English should be the national language.
3. It is important for American Standard English to be preserved in its correct form.
4. Hispanic immigrants have not been learning English as quickly as previous generations of immigrants did.
5. If Hispanic immigrants do not learn to speak more English, there is the danger that the English language may be undermined and English as we know it may not continue to be spoken in the United States.
6. Commercial phone services (banks, catalogues, etc.) should not provide Spanish options.
7. Schools should not teach students to say the pledge of allegiance in Spanish under any circumstances.
8. American schools should not teach all children to speak Spanish beginning in 1st grade.

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