The Reality of Differences

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The purpose of this study was to provide information for stimulating dialogue on matters of race and ethnicity within the university community. 1,424 students were surveyed in the College of Business Administration, College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences, College of Engineering and College of Science to determine how students of different ethnicities perceive each other. Statistically significant differences were found in our students’ perceptions that could be explained by the respondents’ ethnicity, generation in the U.S., the number of different ethnic groups from which they “had a friend with whom they worked pretty closely,” and their own perception of “how others saw them.” Certain ethnic groups were perceived less favorably by all other groups. There is evidence of prejudice and ethnocentrism. It is also clear, however, that certain factors are associated with student perceptions of each other that are more positive. As Cornel West wrote, “Race Matters.” We must address these issues of race and ethnicity as a university community.

A Prologue

A “pilot study” preceded this one in the summer of 1997. In responding to “My perception of most students who are [Name of an ethnic group]” along a 5-point scale, there was only one ethnic group whose students failed to rate their own group highest among all groups. There were only 13 members of that group in the pilot study, but their rating of Whites was more positive than of themselves. I shared my surprise at this outcome with Linda Banks, a middle-aged re-entry student who had struggled to overcome a learning disability on top of the enormous obstacles of race and gender to become the success that she is. “Why should it be a surprise,” she asked, “when society tells us from the day we’re born that we are not good enough?” Linda Banks was an African American. She could have been any one of us.

Introduction

While diversity is only one aspect of any organization, it is, by choice, a central fact of ours. Cal Poly Pomona is deeply committed to promoting diversity within our university community, and to increasing understanding of and appreciation for the various cultures contributing to it.

A sense of community—a shared sense of striving to achieve our purpose as a university—is possible only when relationships between us are based upon a mutually high regard for each other. But the very diversity that we cherish appears, at times, to diminish our sense of community. It is necessary, therefore, to inquire about the nature of our relationships with each other. This study seeks to contribute to our understanding of an important aspect of our diversity by investigating our students’ perceptions of their peers from different ethnic groups.

Purpose

This study’s purpose was to assess the evaluative component of our students’ perceptions of their peers who are from different ethnic backgrounds and, if differences in their perceptions were found, to explore some of the factors which might explain those differences. It is hoped that the data obtained will provide the stimulus for meaningful dialogue between the various constituencies of our university community, thereby contributing a small but
meaningful thread to our “Tapestry for the Next Millennium.” The first of several, this paper provides a preliminary look at the results. (Subsequent papers will report additional findings on the attitudes held by those of different ethnicities toward women as professionals, toward Jews, gays and lesbians, and toward the passage of Proposition 209. Finally, the major findings of the study will be examined in the context of what we know about prejudice.)

The Instrument, Hypotheses Tested and Methodology

The instrument was comprised of 51 questions that asked for information about the following. Only some of these topics are addressed in the present article.

1. The respondent’s gender, academic year, college of the university and major.

2. The respondent’s ethnicity—whether African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Chicano/ Latino, Mid-Eastern, Native American or Alaskan, White, or “Other” which included the possibility of having a multi-ethnic background. If more than one ethnicity was indicated, the respondent was asked how important being multi-ethnic was and to indicate the particular ethnicity that was most important.

3. The respondent’s Generation in the U.S.—if he or she were born in a country other than the U.S. or, if born here, whether he or she was a first-generation American, second-generation American, third-or-later-generation American.

4. The respondent’s relationships with people from other ethnic groups—whether the student “had a good friend” or whether he or she had “worked pretty closely with a person in a job outside of school,” or “worked pretty closely with a classmate at school” or “had a boss” from each of the ethnic groups listed above.

5. The respondent’s “Perception of most of the students from each ethnic group”—whether “very negative” to “very positive” along a 5-point Likert-type scale. A distinction was made between Asians, Latinos and Mid-Easterners who were born in the U.S. and born overseas.

6. Perceptions about how students from each ethnic group got along with those from each other ethnic group, and how relationships between students from different ethnic groups “were generally becoming” from “very badly” to “very well” along a 5-point scale.

7. Perceptions about how the respondent thought he or she was perceived by students from each ethnic group, and how the respondent perceived him- or herself.

8. Whether professors and staff treated students from certain ethnic groups better than those from other ethnic groups.

9. Whether more training was needed to help students overcome racial biases.

10. How important it was to “have friends from ethnicities different from one’s own,” and related questions.

11. The competence of women in the respondent’s career field.

12. The respondent’s acceptance of Jews.
13. The respondent's acceptance of people who are gay and lesbian.

14. Finally, the respondent's understanding of what Proposition 209 was all about, and whether its passage was positive or not.

**Hypotheses.** Of a number of null hypotheses tested, only those central to the present study are listed here.

\(H_0\): That there is no statistically significant difference in how students from different ethnic groups perceive each other.

\(H_2\): That gender cannot be shown to explain differences in how students from the various ethnic groups perceive each other.

\(H_3\): That the student's generation in the U.S. cannot be shown to explain differences in how students from the various ethnic groups perceive each other.

\(H_4\): That the number of ethnic groups in which the respondent had a good friend cannot be shown to explain differences in how students in various ethnic groups perceive each other.

\(H_5\): That the number of ethnic groups from which there was a person with whom the respondent worked pretty closely (outside of school) cannot be shown to explain differences in how students from the various ethnic groups perceive each other.

\(H_6\): That the number of ethnic groups from which there was a classmate with whom the respondent worked pretty closely in school cannot be shown to explain differences in how students from the various ethnic groups perceive each other.

\(H_7\): That the number of ethnic groups from which the respondent had a boss cannot be shown to explain differences in how students from the various ethnic groups perceive each other.

\(H_8\): That the respondent's ethnicity cannot be shown to explain differences in his or her perception of how students from various ethnic groups regard the respondent.

\(H_9\): That the respondent's perception of how he or she is perceived by those in other ethnic groups cannot be shown to explain differences in his/her perception of those other groups.

**Methodology.** Participation was sought from the College of Business Administration, College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS), College of Engineering, and College of Science. An effort was made to include courses in CLASS and Science which were likely to have students who were not majors as well as just majors in those colleges, and to include upper- as well as lower-division students. Student participation in the study was encouraged but voluntary.

60 faculty members from the four colleges distributed the questionnaire to students in 82 different classes. It is estimated that about 3,120 questionnaires—90 percent of all that were given to those faculty-were distributed altogether. The faculty read already-prepared instructions to their students, verbatim. Students were asked not to participate if they had already completed the questionnaire in another class. Their anonymity was assured. They were to complete the questionnaire at home, not in class. Control, therefore, was lost; however, it is
likely that more instructor assistance was obtained by not requiring class time. 1,424 usable responses were obtained. The response rate is estimated to have been 45.6 percent.

Because the study targeted students in just four colleges and student participation was voluntary, the sample was not truly representative of the entire university.

The Sample
The sample's composition was as follows: 673 (47.3%) of the respondents were male; 710 (49.9%) were female. 41 (2.8%) did not say. 223 (15.7%) of the students were freshmen. 188 (13.2%) were sophomores. 499 (35.0%) were juniors, and 460 (32.3%) seniors.

577 (40.5%) of the students were from the College of Business Administration. 224 (15.7%) were from the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences. 191 (13.4%) were from the College of Engineering, and 217 (15.2%) from the College of Science. 182 (12.8%) of the students were from other colleges of the university (most of these were from the College of Agriculture and School of Education and Integrative Studies). 33 (2.3%) did not indicate a college.

Table 1 shows the composition of the sample by ethnicity.

Table 1. Respondent ethnicity and, if multi-ethnic, ethnicity most identified with.

Findings and Discussion

Mean responses toward each ethnic group. Table 2 presents our students' ratings of their own and other ethnic groups. The names of the ethnic groups doing the rating are shown in the top row of the table. The ethnic groups being rated are shown in the left-most column. Responses were made to "My perception of most students who are Native Americans [or one of the eight other 'ethnic groups'] is ________, along the following scale:

Among the groups being rated, a distinction was made between Asians who were born overseas and those born in the U.S. A similar distinction was made for Chicanos/Hispanics and those of Mid-Eastern heritage. The average response to "My reception of most students
who are [Name of an ethnic group] along the five-point scale above, is shown by the number in each cell. In parentheses beneath that mean rating is the number of responses from which the mean was calculated. Every ethnic group’s self-rating is shown in the shaded cells along the main diagonal of the table. The “Ave. by OTHERS” in the right-hand column shows the (weighted) mean response for each ethnic group by all other ethnic groups; e.g., 2.56 is the mean response toward African Americans calculated from the responses by all other ethnic groups for them. The italicized number in the lower-right corner of each “Ave. by OTHERS” cell is the ranking for a given ethnic group relative to all others, with 1 being the most positive ranking.

There are nine groups altogether since Asians, Chicanos and Mid-Easterners who were “born in the U.S.” and “overseas” were counted separately. African Americans were ranked fifth among the nine. The numbers in the bottom row of the table show the average responses given for all other ethnic groups, by the group named at the top of the column. For example, 2.32 is the average response given for all other ethnic groups by African Americans. The italicized numbers in the top-right-hand corner of these cells in the bottom row show which ethnic group tended to give the most positive rankings, and which the least positive.

Some immediately apparent trends. Except for the very small number of Native Americans who gave a higher rating to Asians born overseas, every ethnic group rated students from at least one of its own groups first. (Recall that for Asians, Chicanos and Mid-Easterners, responses were made for two groups: those born overseas and those born in the U.S.) Although the differences were not statistically significant, Asians and Chicanos gave a higher rating to members of their own ethnicity who were born overseas than they did to those born in the U.S. Both of those groups, however, gave more positive responses toward Mid-Easterners who were born in the U.S. than toward Mid-Easterners born overseas. This last difference was statistically significant. Looking at the responses made for each ethnic group by others not in that group (in the right-hand column), Asians born in the U.S. were rated best, followed by Native Americans, then Whites. African Americans were rated fourth, Asians born overseas, fifth and Mid-Easterners born in the U.S., sixth. They were followed by Chicanos born in the U.S., then, Chicanos born in another country. The Mid-Easterners born overseas were always ranked last or tied-for-last by every other ethnic group.

Table 2. Mean responses toward each ethnic group by all ethnic groups
It is important to note that in no instance was the average response for any ethnic group as bad as “neutral.” The worst average response by others was 2.78, for Mid-Easterners born overseas. Still, to get that 2.78, one might suppose that a substantial number of responses toward Mid-Eastern students was worse than neutral. That this was the case is illustrated by Table 3 which shows the distribution of responses toward Mid-Eastern students born overseas by all of the respondents in the sample, excluding the Mid-Eastern students, themselves.

Table 3. Distribution of Responses toward Mid-Eastern students, by non-MidEastern Students

As expected, there were differences between the responses for a group by members of that group and by members of other groups. T-tests for differences in those ratings were significant at the .001 level in all cases except for Asians born in the U.S. and for the ratings of Mid-Eastern students, both those born in the U.S. and overseas. The rating of one’s own group was more positive in every instance except for Asians born in the U.S., for whom the rating by members of their own group and rating by all others were virtually the same. These results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. T-tests for differences between rating of each ethnic group by own and all other groups.

Of much interest was how the members of each ethnic group believed they were perceived by those in other groups. These results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. How each ethnic group believes it is perceived by other groups.
The difference between a group’s perception of itself and how it perceived other ethnic groups is shown in Table 6. (The Native American perceptions are not considered here because they were so few in number.) This difference might be considered a partial measure of ethnocentricity—the belief that one’s own culture, values and customs are superior to those of all other ethnic groups.

Except for Chicanos, every ethnicity’s rating of students from its own group was more positive than its average rating of all other groups. The Chicanos’ rating of others was, by far, the most positive and better than of themselves (even though the difference was very small). Is thinking most highly of oneself necessarily racist, or a sign of healthy self-esteem? How does one draw the distinction? Are Chicanos the only ones who perceive others “without prejudice”?

Table 6. A comparison of how each ethnic group perceives its own and all other groups

Of much interest, too, is the similarity (or difference) between how one perceives his or her own group and how that person believes others perceive his or her group. Shown in Table 7, the greatest difference was found for students of Mid-Eastern heritage, whose “Others’ perception of them” rating was, at 2.18, the most positive of all. The Mid-Eastern students were the only ones whose perceived rating by others was better than their rating of themselves. The members of all other ethnicities rated their own group more highly than their perceived rating by others of them. The biggest “positive” difference, .23, was found for African Americans, whose self-rating was 2.05 compared to their perceived rating by others of 2.28. It is noteworthy, however, that the African American perceived rating by others of 2.28 was almost identical to the average self-rating by all the groups of 2.30.

Table 7. A comparison of how members of each ethnic group believe those of other ethnic groups perceive them, with how they perceive their own group

Search for Variables Explaining the Variation in Responses Toward Different Ethnic Groups.

One-way analyses of variance [ANOVA] were conducted for the responses made to “My perception of most of the students from [Name of each ethnic group of the study]” by a number of factors, only four of which are reported here: (1) Ethnicity, (2) Generation in the U.S., (3) Number of ethnic groups from which the student “had a good friend at work” and (4) “How students from other ethnicities see me.” For the ANOVA, the numbers of responses were grouped (recoded) into categories, each containing as close to the same number as could be achieved, for example, “0 or one ethnic group,” “two or three ethnic groups,” and “four to six such groups.” ANOVA were conducted just of Asian, Chicano and White students’ responses because only theirs were substantial in number.
The results of one-way ANOVAs in Table 8 show that the Ethnicity of the respondent was statistically significant in explaining the responses toward every ethnic group, except for Asians born in the United States. That is, whether the respondent was Asian, Chicano or White did make a difference in how he or she perceived African Americans, Asians born overseas, Chicanos from another country, Chicanos born in the U.S., Mid-Easterners born overseas, Mid-Easterners born in the U.S., Native Americans and Whites. The first null hypothesis is rejected.

The mean ratings of each ethnic group by Asians, Chicanos and Whites were shown in Table 2 and are not shown again here. Except for the Asians’ rating of “Asians born overseas” and Whites’ rating of their own group, the mean ratings by Chicanos were generally the most positive, and the mean ratings by Asians, though always better than “neutral” (indicated by a mean response of 3.0), were the least positive. The results of Scheffé tests showed that most of the differences in ratings by the three ethnic groups (considered in pairs) were statistically significant. The ratings for “Asians born in the U.S.” by Asians, Chicanos and Whites varied from 2.44 to 2.47. There were no significant differences between these ratings. This is the one instance in which ethnicity did not make a difference in how an ethnic group was perceived. The Levene statistic for homogeneity of variances of the Asian, Chicano and White responses toward Asians born in the U.S. was .773, and not statistically significant.

Table 8. ANOVAs of responses to “My perception of most of the students from [each ethnic group]” by Respondent ethnicity.
In a culture which values diversity, it seems reasonable to expect a person's perception of other ethnic groups to become more positive as he or she becomes more assimilated into that culture. Shown in Table 9, the trend in average ratings for all of the ethnic groups, from "Born overseas" (2.62) to "2nd or later generation to be born in the U.S." (2.52) appears to support that expectation. ANOVA of the factor, Generation in the U.S. (which is not shown), significantly explained the variation in responses toward every ethnic group except "Chicanos born in another country" and Mid-Easterners born overseas." This study's third null hypothesis was rejected in seven of the nine possible cases.

Also in Table 9, the mean responses by Asians, Chicanos and Whites go consistently from "somewhat better than neutral" toward "quite positive" for five of the nine ethnic groups: African Americans, Chicanos born in the U.S., Mid-Easterners born in the U.S., Native Americans and Whites. There were four exceptions, noted by the bold numbers in Table 9.

Table 9. Mean responses toward each ethnic group by "Generation."

It is often assumed that, when people from different ethnic backgrounds interact with each other, they will grow in their appreciation for each other. While not tested here, this assumption would be seriously questioned if no association were found between substantive life experiences shared by students of different ethnicities and their perceptions of each other. Some "substantive life experiences" might be "having a good friend," "working closely with a person in a job," "working pretty closely with a classmate at school," and "having a boss"—all from ethnicities in addition to one's own. "The Number of ethnic groups from which I have worked with a friend at a job" was successful in explaining the variation in responses toward every ethnic group except "Asians born in the U.S." The other three factors were also successful in explaining variation in responses toward the different ethnic groups. Null Hypotheses 4 through 7 were rejected. "How students from other ethnic groups see me" was successful in explaining the variation in responses toward every ethnic group of the study. Null Hypothesis 8 was, therefore, rejected.

4-Way univariate ANOVAs were conducted of the responses by Asians, Chicanos and Whites toward every ethnic group, by four factors: (I) Ethnicity, (II) Generation in the U.S., (III) Number of groups from which the respondent "had a good friend at work," and (IV) "How students from other ethnic groups see me." The 4-way ANOVAs were run separately for each ethnic group. All of the results are summarized in Table 10. Levels of significance are shown only for the cases that were significant at .01 or better. Just two interaction terms were significant: (1) for responses toward Asians born overseas: "Respondent Ethnicity" with "Number of ethnic groups in which I had a friend at work," at .005, and (2) for Mid-Easterners born overseas: "Number of ethnic groups in which I had a friend at work" with "How others see me," at .037.
Some Conclusions, but More Questions

This study showed that Respondent ethnicity, Generation in the U.S. (whether born overseas, or from the first or second generation born in the U.S., or third or later generation), the Number of different ethnic groups from which the respondent had a friend at work, and How the respondent believes those from other ethnic groups see him or her, were all highly significant in explaining our students’ perceptions of their peers.

Except for those of Mid-Eastern heritage and Asians born in the U.S., there were statistically significant differences in how the members of an ethnic group perceived themselves and how others perceived them. Potentially more important is the difference between how students rated themselves and how they rated others. To the extent that the difference between a group’s self-rating and its rating of all others is a valid measure of ethnocentricity, Chicanos were the least ethnocentric of all groups. Whites appeared to be the most ethnocentric, followed quite closely by everyone else.

Thinking highly of one’s own ethnicity is hardly the same thing as thinking ill of others. And no ethnic group received average responses by any other group that were worse than neutral. And yet, some ethnic groups were consistently perceived in a less positive light than others. This was evidence of prejudice.

“Generation in the U.S.”—in part a measure of assimilation into the U.S. culture—did make a difference in how positively students perceived peers from other ethnicities. A positive association was found between the number of different ethnic groups from which the respondent had good friends and how positively he or she felt toward those who were different from him- or herself. It is impossible to know from this study if having good friends from other ethnic groups was, in fact, responsible for more positive attitudes toward people different from oneself, or whether a person had many friends from different ethnic groups because he or she had a more positive attitude toward different ethnicities to begin with. Still, greater acceptance cannot be expected without the opportunity for more meaningful relationships between people. That opportunity must be provided. More than “a matter of conscience,” our future depends on it. As Cornel West wrote, “Race Matters.”
Questions To Guide Student Discussion of Findings From "The Reality of Differences"

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The immediately preceding article presented data showing how our students perceive their peers from different ethnic groups. This one summarizes the first article’s major findings and offers questions that are intended to stimulate discussion of what the findings mean to us. It is hoped that what we discover about ourselves and each other will contribute to a deeper appreciation for what we have in common and greater acceptance of those ways in which we differ. Some questions that are suggested by the study’s findings follow. The most important questions are likely to be those that occur to the reader.

1. The study’s sample was quite evenly divided among men and women. Would you expect much of a difference between their perceptions toward people of different ethnicities? Might your answer be different depending on the group being perceived—whether they’re African Americans, Asians, Mid-Easterners, etc? Why or why not?

Significant differences were not found between the responses by men and women toward any ethnic group.

2. Would you expect to find a difference in how students from different ethnicities are perceived that depends on the respondent’s year in college?

Just in way of one example, the answers might be “Yes” and “No.” Yes, because one would expect a person to become more tolerant and accepting of others (1) as he or she becomes older and more mature, (2) as a consequence of having had more opportunity to interact with people from different ethnic backgrounds, and (3) as a consequence of education that helps one to appreciate people for what they are, not because of preconceived stereotypes.

No, because (1) biases are deeply engrained by the time a person graduates from high school and even four years of college are likely to make little difference in how we perceive others; (2) because we have had sufficient opportunity to interact with people from different ethnic backgrounds by the time we’ve reached college, to have formed perceptions of each other that were, in fact, quite accurate when we got here.

3. These results were not reported in the preceding paper, but there were important differences in how African Americans, Chicanos born in the U.S. and Chicanos born in another country were perceived, that depended on what college of the University the responding students were from. The ratings of each of these groups by students in the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences [CLASS] were significantly more positive than those by students from the other colleges (Business, Engineering and Science). What reasons might there be for this outcome? Are there lessons from CLASS that should be applied in all colleges?

4. Questions to be answered separately by Asian and non-Asian students and, then, shared by both groups: Almost 46 percent of the sample were Asians. What difference might the fact that such a large proportion of our student population is Asian make, to how Asian students are perceived? Do you think how Asian students are perceived would be different if they were much smaller in number? Why, or why not?
5. Questions to be answered separately by Mid-Eastern and non-Mid-Eastern students and, then, shared by both groups: Only 2.8 percent of the sample were of Mid-Eastern ancestry. What difference in how they are perceived might it make that such a small proportion of our student population is Mid-Eastern? Do you think that Mid-Eastern students might be perceived differently if they were much larger in number? Why, or why not?

6. Among other things, Table 2 shows that Asians, Chicanos and Mid-Easterners, who were born overseas were rated considerably worse than people from the same ethnic group who were born in the U.S. Why do you think this was so? What does this say about those who were born elsewhere? What does this say about those who did the rating?

The data in each horizontal row in Table 2, shows how each ethnic group listed in the left-most column was rated by its own and every other ethnic group in the study. For example, the average rating by African Americans of themselves was 2.05; the next best rating of African Americans was 2.30 by Native Americans. This was followed by the Chicanos' rating of African Americans of 2.45, and so on. The "worst" rating was 2.66 by Asians. Still the 2.66 was certainly better than "neutral" indicated by a 3.0, and far from being "quite negative" (a 4.0) or "very negative" (5.0).

Take a look at the ethnic group that you belong to and try to make sense of the ratings and rankings. Look at the ratings received by other ethnic groups, too. Do the results surprise you, or do you think that they were to be expected? Discuss your answers with students from your own ethnic group, then, with those from other ethnic groups.

8. Table 3 shows that 15.6% of the responses toward Mid-Eastern students were "quite negative" or "very negative." What factors do you think accounted for this outcome? And what might be done to make people's perceptions more positive than they were?

Some considerations: (1) One possible reason for the outcome might be the state of current political conditions in the Mid-East. (2) What does that have to do with our students who happen to be Mid-Eastern? (3) Do you know how Mid-Eastern people here in the U.S. feel about what's going on in the Mid-East? (4) How much do we know about that part of the world? Is Western society indebted to Mid-Eastern nations for our technology, mathematics, written language, culture? In what ways? (5) How dependent on the Mid-East are we for natural resources? Is that "good," "bad"? Can a case be made that the West has, in fact, exploited Mid-Eastern nations? (6) Have you had much opportunity to make friends with people from the Mid-East? (7) Do you believe that Mid-Easterners in the U.S. have been discriminated against by others? [The same questions should be asked about every ethnic group.]

9. Table 4 shows that, except for Asians born in the U.S. and those of Mid-Eastern background, students perceived themselves more positively than they were perceived by members of other ethnic groups. What might be some implications of this difference in perception?

10. Table 5 shows how those in each ethnic group believe they are perceived by those from each other ethnic group. For example, the Asian students believe that they are perceived the "worst" by those from other groups. What factors might contribute to this perception? Should anything be done about it? What?
Notice how the Asian students thought they were perceived by the Mid-Eastern and African American students. Is this likely to affect how the Asian students perceive those two groups? What might be done to prevent any adverse consequences?

11. Table 6 shows how the students from each ethnic group perceived themselves and those in all other ethnic groups (except for Native Americans who were very small in number). The difference between how students perceived their own group and all other groups might be considered to be a partial measure of ethnocentricity—holding the belief that one’s own culture, values and beliefs are superior to those of all other ethnic groups. To the extent that this is true, White students were the most ethnocentric, followed closely by African Americans, Asians and Mid-Easterners. What can we make of this? The Chicano students were not ethnocentric by this measure and this finding is worth noting because there was such a large number of Chicano respondents (256).

12. Table 7 shows that every ethnic group’s perception of itself was more positive than how they thought others perceived them, except in the case of the Mid-Eastern students. Their self-perception was 2.45, while they thought others’ view of them was (at 2.18) much more positive. Why might this have occurred?

13. The results in Table 8 of one-way ANOVA of responses toward each ethnic group of the study show that whether the responding students were Asian, Chicano or White made a difference in how positive the students’ ratings were likely to be of every ethnic group except for Asians born in the U.S. Asians, Chicanos and Whites all gave this group very similar ratings. More detailed results are not shown in Table 8 but, in every case except for the rating of one’s own group, Chicanos gave other ethnic groups the most positive rating. White students gave the next most positive ratings, and Asians gave the least positive ratings.

What might some reasons be for these outcomes? Do they surprise you, or were they to be expected? Why? Are the Chicanos’ more positive ratings of others somehow consistent with commonly held stereotypes of Chicanos? Is this “good”? “Bad”? What lessons are there for Chicanos? For non-Chicanos?

Do the Asians’ “harsher” ratings support any stereotypes of Asians? Go through the same series of questions that were asked about Chicanos.

14. The number of different ethnic groups from which the responding students “had a friend with whom they worked pretty closely outside of school” was significant in explaining responses toward every ethnic group except Asians born in the U.S. In 6 of the 9 possible cases, the higher the number of ethnic groups from which the responding students had a friend at work, the more positive were their ratings of other ethnic groups. The three exceptions were in the case of responses toward Asians and Mid-Easterners born overseas and Mid-Easterners born in the U.S.

Can we conclude that having friends from many different ethnic groups is likely to result in a person having more positive attitudes toward people of different ethnicity? Why, or why not?

15. Very similar findings were obtained for the number of different ethnic groups “from which I had a good friend” and, also, the number of different ethnic groups “from which I worked pretty closely with a classmate at school.” Your answers to the previous question would apply to the two variables in this one, too. How might this information be useful on our campus?
It would certainly make sense to encourage our students to work in teams that, by design, include members of different ethnic groups. The sharing of positive insights from having close friends and having worked with people of different ethnicities could help to overcome negative stereotypes, and help to resolve conflict that may arise.

16. A composite score was calculated representing “How others from each different ethnic group see me.” This score was successful in explaining the variation in students’ attitudes toward others from every ethnic group in the study. This finding seems to indicate that how positively we perceive a person from another ethnic group depends a great deal on how we believe that person perceives us. Do you agree or disagree with this conclusion? For what reasons?

What can be done to make people’s beliefs about how they are perceived by others more accurate?

17. After all this, what are the most important conclusions that you have come to? Compare your conclusions with those reached by others. Are there any conclusions that seem irreconcilable? It isn’t always necessary for everyone to agree.

It is sometimes necessary that we accept “the reality of differences.”

Reference


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