Black Stereotypes of Other Ethnic Groups

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This study reports on the current stereotypes of ten ethnic groups. Black college students, 38 males and 49 females enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses at a black religiously affiliated college in the southeast, indicated traits they felt were typical of each of ten ethnic groups. The traits were selected from a list of 84 adjectives originally used by Katz and Braly (1933) in a study of racial stereotypes. Clear stereotypes emerged for six ethnic groups; all were relatively positive except one, whites, which was extremely negative. The most favorable stereotypes were of Chinese and Jews. The stereotype of blacks ranked third in favorableness, followed by Italians and Germans. Interracial relations have focused primarily on decreasing white prejudice and stereotypes of blacks.

Ethnic and racial stereotypes have been the focus of extensive psychological research for over half a century. The reason for the intense interest is the presumed relationship between stereotypes and intergroup relations. Although the extent of the relationship is still unknown (cf. Allport, 1954), stereotypes that an individual holds of a particular group are assumed to influence that individual's attitudes and behavior toward the group (Allport, 1954; Edwards, 1940; Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969). As Allport (1954) states, stereotypes "are primarily images within a category invoked by the individual to justify either love-prejudice or hate-prejudice" (p. 189). Although recent appproaches to stereotyping describe the process as potentially a more neutral, affectively-free cognitive reference (Taylor & Crocker, 1980), the present authors, in keeping with the early studies and replications in the area, will adhere more to the seminal definitions (cf. Allport, 1954; Katz & Braly, 1933), which indicate the affective quality of the stereotype.

In 1933 Katz and Braly (1933) investigated the verbal stereotypes of undergraduates at Princeton concerning ten racial and ethnic groups. Results indicated that students agreed to a surprisingly large extent on the attributes typical of the ten groups. Many of the characteristics ascribed to the groups were highly derogatory (Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969).

The Katz and Braly (1933; 1935) studies were repeated on two suc-

ceeding generations at Princeton, in 1951 by Gilbert and in 1969 by
Karlins, Coffman and Walters. These later studies found that uniformity
in verbal stereotyping had been considerably reduced. Gilbert (1951) at-
tributed this reduction in stereotyping to three factors: the media were
then presenting a more real and positive picture of the various ethnic
groups in America; students were becoming more involved and interested
in the social sciences and thus their opinions about ethnic groups were
challenged and possibly changed; and the make-up of the Princeton
undergraduate student body was in transition. Karlins, et al. (1969) inter-
preted the decrease in stereotypes differently. They felt that while there
had been a reduction in stereotypes current in 1951, these stereotypes had
merely been "replaced by others, resulting in restored stereotype unifor-
mity" (p. 14). An indication of the pervasiveness of stereotypes is even
present in the research itself (Gilbert, 1951; Karlins, Coffman, &
Walters, 1969; Katz & Braly, 1933), for example, since subjects were re-
quested to evaluate "Americans" and "Negroes" as if they were mutually
exclusive groups.

More recent research has attempted to fill the gaps in information
about black stereotypes and perceptions. A recent study (Guichard,
1977) of college and high school students found that stereotypes of
blacks are becoming less denigrating. The perceptions blacks and whites
have of themselves and of each other are reported to be very similar and
quite positive. However, Chicanos and American Indians were described
as possessing negative traits. These results, while interesting, need to be
accepted with caution because of the small number of subjects (N = 30)
and the extremely limited number of traits (10) used as stimuli. Further
evidence that blacks have positive perceptions of themselves and reject
anti-black ideology is provided by Chang and Ritter (1976). They report
that blacks' perceptions of themselves become more positive with an in-
crease in anti-white feelings. While this study provides some indications
of blacks' perceptions, it used a Black Ethnocentrism Scale which was
comprised of pro-black and anti-white statements, rather than traits;
thus, knowledge of traits attributed to the two groups is unknown. The
purpose of the present study was to determine the content of stereotypes
held by blacks of themselves and other groups. It represents a replication
and extention of the original Katz and Braly (1933) study with the in-
novations of the Karlins, Coffman, and Walters' study (1969) using a
black subject sample.

Method

Subjects
Subjects were 87 black college students, 38 males and 49 females. All

students, enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses at a black, religiously affiliated college in the southeast responded to the request to participate; from a total of 91 psychology students, 4 who indicated familiarity with the Katz and Braly study were eliminated, leaving 87. Since the population was not limited to freshman and sophomore males enrolled in introductory psychology courses, the sample is not equivalent to those of previous studies of Princeton undergraduates. The sample is, however, representative of black psychology students.

Procedure

A black male investigator requested that the students indicate traits which they felt were typical of each of the following ten groups: Germans, Italians, blacks, Irish, English, Jews, whites, Chinese, Japanese, and Turks. The students selected the traits from a list of 84 adjectives originally utilized by Katz and Braly (1933) in a study of racial stereotypes. In addition, they were permitted to include additional traits if appropriate ones were not on the list. The instructions were the same as those of Katz and Braly (1933). The ethnic groups were also the same as the ones employed by Katz and Braly (1933), with two changes in labels: "Negroes" was changed to "blacks" and "Americans" to "whites."

After the subjects indicated the characteristics associated with each group, they were instructed to go back over the ten lists of characteristics and choose five words from each list which were most typical of the designated group. In addition they rated the favorableness of the adjectives as was done in the Karlins, Coffman, and Walters study (1969).

Results

Trait selection for males and females were so similar that the two groups were combined ($\chi^2 = $ n.s.).

Some subjects appeared to have difficulty associating some ethnic groups with any traits. For those difficult groups there was a high proportion of "don't know" responses which drastically lowered percentages of subjects choosing any traits. Examples of such response tendencies were: 75% of the students responded "don't know" when asked for traits describing Turks, 39% for the Irish, 31% for the Japanese, and 29% for the English. Because of the low response rate, the results for these ethnic groups are not reported.

The traits most frequently selected as representative of each of the six remaining ethnic groups were as follows:

German-scientifically minded (47.1%), intelligent (35.6%), industrious (19.5%), shrewd (18.3%), and cruel (17.2)

Italians-loyal to family ties (37.9%), talkative (18.3%), tradition loving (13.7%), musical (13.7%) and loud (12.6%)

Blacks-intelligent (47.1%), very religious (34.4%), musical (32.1%), sportsmanlike (25.2%) and loud (22.9%)

Whites-deceitful (28.7%), sly (26.4%), intelligent (17.2%), treacherous (14.9%), and physically dirty (14.9%)

Jews-very religious (40.2%), loyal to family ties (36.7%), intelligent (25.2%), tradition loving (17.2%), and ambitious (17.2%)

Chinese-tradition loving (25.2%), loyal to family ties (24.1%), scientifically minded (18.3%), intelligent (17.2%), and industrious (12.6%)

A measure of stereotype uniformity was computed. This measure was used to assess "the extent to which subjects agree in the traits they assign to a given group: the smaller the number of traits, the more definite or uniform is the social stereotype" (Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969; p. 9). Uniformity scores indicated "the smallest number of traits required to include one-half of all possible designations"; thus the greater the number of traits utilized in the descriptive process, the lower the uniformity score and the weaker the stereotyping process (Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969). Only six groups appear to have a clear stereotype (Blacks - 12, whites - 17, Jews - 17, Germans - 18, Italians - 29, and Chinese - 28). Ratings of the English and the Japanese had such a high number of trait descriptions that they cannot really qualify as stereotypes. Even including all of the traits, the Irish and Turks did not reach the designated 218 (the smallest number of traits required to include one-half of all possible designations).

The procedure employed by Karlins, Coffman and Walters (1969) was duplicated in order to derive a favorableness score for each adjective. The present researchers then calculated a favorableness value for each stereotype. This value was calculated from the values of the "traits comprising the uniformity scores of each stereotype. Each trait's frequency was multiplied by its favorableness value and the sum of the values divided by the total frequency" (Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969; p. 9-10). Table 1 indicates the favorableness of each stereotype held by the black subjects.

Discussion

The six ethnic groups for whom the blacks had clear stereotypes can be briefly described. The stereotypes of all the ethnic groups were relatively positive except one — whites.

Table 1

Mean Favorableness of Traits Comprising Each Stereotype

Ethnic Group	Favorableness*
Whites	.105
Chinese	.993
Germans	.671
Italions	.771
Jews	.886
Blacks	.822
M	.670

*Scale range from −2 to +2; the higher the score the more favorable the traits.

Blacks

The subjects, contrary to expectations, appear to have the strongest or most uniform stereotypes of blacks. Also contrary to expectations, this stereotype was not the most positive one; it ranked number three in favorableness after Chinese and Jews. However, the stereotypes blacks reported for themselves were quite positive. The trait most frequently chosen in the present study as typical of black was "intelligent" (47%). Blacks also described themselves as very religious, musical and sportsmanlike. However, the description of blacks was not entirely positive. A number of blacks characterized themselves as "loud" and "superstitious" and some attributed the characteristic of "laziness" to themselves. More than a third described themselves as "very religious", perhaps because they were students at a church affiliated school which might largely account for this trait's selection.

Whites

The perceptions of whites support the research by Chang and Ritter (1976): whites were viewed very negatively, ranking last among the 10 ethnic groups. Whites were described as "deceitful," "sly," "treacherous," and "physically dirty". The only positive trait indicated was "intelligent" which only 17.2% of the subjects chose. Even when the seven next most frequently chosen traits were examined there appeared to be few redeeming features for whites. Whites were also described as radical, in-

dustrious, shrewd, conceited, scientifically minded, materialistic, and ignorant.

Other Ethnic Groups

The traits chosen by the subject sample portrayed a positive view of Jews: very religious, loyal to family ties, intelligent, tradition loving, ambitious, aggressive, grasping and shrewd.

The top three traits attributed to Germans were positive: scientifically minded, industrious, intelligent. The other traits chosen were much more negative: shrewd, cruel, aggressive and treacherous.

Italians were described in a generally positive manner: loyal to family ties, talkative, tradition loving, musical and loud.

The stereotypes of Chinese reflected a very positive characterization. The characteristics of tradition loving, loyal to family ties, scientifically minded, intelligent, industrious, and meditative were most often chosen. The only negative trait was sly which only 8% of the blacks chose.

Confirming the reluctance of subjects to select stereotypes reported in the Gilbert (1951) and the Karlins, Coffman and Walters (1969) studies, a large proportion of the black subjects responded with "don't know" when questioned about the ethnic groups. Unfortunately, no data concerning the amount of contact black subjects had with other ethnic groups were available. The difficulty in choosing traits might be as much an indication of their lack of familiarity with a group as a reluctance to stereotype. In fact, this is more likely the case since the black subjects readily chose traits for some of the ethnic groups but responded with "don't know" for groups which were not highly visible in their geographical region. When blacks responded to less visible groups, the responses were so scattered that no particular traits emerged as stereotypes. Even with the low uniformity in stereotypes the black subject sample appeared to have a much more positive view of the majority of ethnic groups than did the white subjects in previous studies. Karlins, Coffman and Walters (1969) felt that the more positive white stereotypes in 1967 were a reflection of a more liberal attitude which took a negative view of prejudice. There is a strong possibility that this liberal trend has continued and that the positive stereotypes reported by the black sample is merely a reflection of more positive attitudes held by all college students. If this last hypothesis is true, it does not generalize to the white ethnic group which the black sample viewed in a very negative light. It is particularly interesting that the black sample viewed whites in such a negative light when they did not hold similar negative views of whites

from other American ethnic groups (e.g. Jews, Italians, and Germans).

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