

RACIAL STEREOTYPES OF ONE HUNDRED COLLEGE STUDENTS *

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ONE outstanding result of investigations of racial prejudice is the uniformity in the patterns of discrimination against various races shown by Americans throughout the United States. In their summary of such studies Allport and Katz have shown that practically the same order of acceptability of racial and national groups has been reported by investigators in widely separated parts of the country.¹ The interpretation of the uniformity in the pattern of social prejudice suggested in this summary follows: Attitudes toward racial and national groups are in good part attitudes toward race names. They are stereotypes of our cultural pattern and are not based upon animosity toward a member of a proscribed group because of any genuine qualities that inhere in him. We have conditioned responses of varying degrees of aversion or acceptance toward racial labels and where these tags can be readily applied to individuals, as they can in the case of the Negro because of his skin color, we respond toward him not as a human being but as a personification of the symbol we have learned to despise.

Now this explanation of the uniform pattern of discrimination against other races needs further analysis. It has long been known that psychologically individuals possess different attitudes toward remarkably similar social situations. In describing our various social selves William James wrote, "there results what practically is a division of the man into several selves; and this may be a discordant splitting, as where one is afraid to let one set of his acquaintances know him as he is elsewhere; or it may be a perfectly harmonious division of labor . . .". "Nothing is commoner than to hear people discriminate between their different selves of this sort: 'As a man, I pity you, but as an official I must show you no mercy . . .'."² That these social selves may fall

* Manuscript received June 22, 1932.

¹ Katz, D., and Allport, F. H., *Students' Attitudes*. Craftsman Press, Syracuse, 1931.

² James, Wm., *Principles of Psychology*. Henry Holt & Co. (1927 edition), Vol. 1, 294-295.

into two great divisions, our private social selves which we show only to our intimates and our public social selves which we exhibit for a more general public has also been known for a long time. In politics especially we speak of private and public morality, and we wonder what a senator's private views on a certain subject may be even after he has delivered an exhaustive public speech on that very topic. The first detailed evidence for these two great divisions of our social selves, however, has been very recent. R. L. Schanck in his significant study of a small community has presented convincing quantitative data for the private and public sets of attitudes and habits which individuals possess in many fields of social behavior.³

The hypothesis of public and private attitudes may well be applied to the problem of racial prejudice. It may be that the cultural⁴ pattern of prejudice is in part a public attitude. Evidence for this interpretation is to be found in the results of the Syracuse study of Allport and Katz where students were asked why they would exclude various racial and social groups from their fraternity and boarding houses. In spite of the fact that personal objections were also offered, over half of the students accepted as their answer the statement: "I have no personal objection to social contacts, such as in the classroom or dining hall, with most of these people; but as things are at present in society it would lower the reputation of my fraternity to admit those I have not checked."⁵ Undoubtedly this statement served as a rationalization for students to cover their personal prejudices but in some cases it may have had partial weight as a genuine reason. The remark is not uncommon that "I do not object to the Irish but I dislike them as a race." Such an expression means that the individual does not object to associating with Irishmen but he does not care to be publicly known for his association with the race. Italians and Poles can gain admission to fraternities much more easily if they bear Anglicized names so that the fraternity will not be known publicly as a lover of foreigners.

The great difficulty in racial prejudice is to know how much of the discrimination is a result of private and how much a result of public attitude. Both factors are probably inextricably bound up in the reaction known as racial prejudice and we have not tried

³ Schanck, R. L., *A Study of a Community*. Psychological Monographs, No. 195, Vol. 43.

⁴ At first glance it would appear that what the sociologists call a cultural response is the same thing as public attitude, but this is not necessarily the case. Cultural response is the broader term and may often include both private and public attitudes.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 149-154.

to deny the importance of the private prejudice. We are merely trying to emphasize the importance of the neglected factor of public attitude. The fact that we have both factors involved is one reason for the conflicting results in investigations of the causes of racial prejudice. Thus G. Murphy and L. Murphy in their summary of studies of racial attitudes point out the discrepancy between the work of Diggins and that of Hunter.⁶ Diggins found that familiarity with members of the despised race helped to dissipate prejudice while Hunter found that familiarity had little to do with the amount of prejudice. Probably one investigator had found largely private attitudes and the other public attitudes. Familiarity may help dissipate private prejudice without a corresponding effect upon public prejudice. Even here we must proceed with caution, for familiarity may augment private prejudice under certain conditions.

PROCEDURE OF PRESENT STUDY

As a preliminary step in investigating the public and private nature of attitudes toward racial and national groups the authors asked 100 Princeton students to give the traits which they considered most characteristic of each of the following ten groups: Germans, Italians; Negroes, Irish, English, Jews, Americans, Chinese, Japanese, and Turks. The students were asked to select the traits from a previously prepared list of 84 adjectives, although they were permitted to use additional traits if they found the list inadequate. The directions used in the experiment follow:

"Read through the list of words on page one and select those which seem to you typical of the Germans. Write as many of these words in the following space as you think are necessary to characterize these people adequately. If you do not find appropriate words on page one for all the typical German characteristics, you may add those which you think necessary for an adequate description."

A blank space followed this paragraph of instructions in which the student wrote in the traits he considered typical German characteristics. He was then asked to repeat this procedure for the Italians, then for the Negroes, and so on through the ten national and racial groups.

When the student had finished this task he found at the end of his questionnaire form the final instruction "Now go back over the ten lists of words which you have chosen and mark with an X the five words in each list which seem to you the most typical of the race in question."

⁶ Murphy, G., and Murphy, L. B., *Experimental Social Psychology*. Harper & Bros., 1931, 637-645.

The list of words or traits from which the students were asked to select follows:

intelligent	suave
brilliant	courteous
scientifically-minded	conventional
witty	argumentative
sophisticated	straightforward
alert	slovenly
shrewd	suspicious
sly	reserved
meditative	quiet
imaginative	stolid
stupid	ponderous
ignorant	stubborn
superstitious	impulsive
naïve	quick-tempered
industrious	suggestible
lazy	passionate
honest	sensual
deceitful	pleasure-loving
unreliable	jovial
evasive	happy-go-lucky
faithful	humorless
treacherous	sensitive
cowardly	methodical
cruel	neat
kind	persistent
generous	imitative
grasping	frivolous
mercenary	gregarious
materialistic	practical
vengeful	progressive
quarrelsome	conservative
gluttonous	musical
pugnacious	artistic
aggressive	sportsmanlike
conceited	tradition-loving
boastful	efficient
ambitious	very religious
ostentatious (showy)	extremely nationalistic
individualistic	physically dirty
talkative	loyal to family ties
loud	arrogant
rude	radical

This list of traits was prepared from the characterizations of 25 Princeton undergraduates obtained previously and supplemented by the investigators' additions. Twenty-five students had been asked to "list as many specific characteristics or traits as you think are typical of the following racial and national groups". No traits were suggested to the students. The authors hoped in this manner to obtain a list of characteristics which would not be limited by their own knowledge of racial stereotypes.

RESULTS

Table I presents the twelve characteristics most frequently assigned to the ten races by the 100 students. This table summarizes the traits which students rechecked as the five most typical characteristics of each race.

TABLE I.

THE TWELVE TRAITS MOST FREQUENTLY ASSIGNED TO VARIOUS RACIAL AND NATIONAL GROUPS BY 100 PRINCETON STUDENTS

Traits checked Rank order	No.	Per cent	Traits checked Rank order	No.	Per cent
GERMANS					
Scientifically-minded . . .	78	78	Very religious.	24	24
Industrious.	65	65	Stupid.	22	22
Stoic.	44	44	Physically dirty.	17	17
Intelligent	32	32	Naive	14	14
Methodical.	31	31	Slovenly.	13	13
Extremely nationalistic. . .	24	24	Unreliable.	12	12
Progressive.	16	16	IRISH		
Efficient.	16	16	Pugnacious	45	45
Jovial	15	15	Quick-tempered	39	39
Musical	13	13	Witty.	38	38
Persistent.	11	11	Honest.	32	32
Practical.	11	11	Very religious.	29	29
ITALIANS			Industrious.	21	21
Artistic.	53	53	Extremely nationalistic. . . .	21	21
Impulsive.	44	44	Superstitious.	18	18
Passionate.	37	37	Quarrelsome.	14	14
Quick-tempered	35	35	Imaginative.	13	13
Musical.	32	32	Aggressive.	13	13
Imaginative.	30	30	Stubborn.	13	13
Very religious.	21	21	ENGLISH		
Talkative.	21	21	Sportsmanlike.	53	53.5
Revengeful.	17	17	Intelligent	46	46.5
Physically dirty.	13	13	Conventional.	34	34.3
Lazy.	12	12	Tradition-loving.	31	31.3
Unreliable.	11	11	Conservative.	30	30.3
NEGROES			Reserved.	29	29.3
Superstitious.	84	84	Sophisticated.	27	27.3
Lazy.	75	75	Courteous.	21	21.2
Happy-go-lucky.	38	38	Honest.	20	20.2
Ignorant.	38	38	Industrious.	18	18.2
Musical.	26	26	Extremely nationalistic. . . .	18	18.2
Ostentatious.	26	26	Humorless.	17	17.2

TABLE I—Continued.

Traits checked Rank order	No.	Per cent	Traits checked Rank order	No.	Per cent
JEWS					
Shrewd.	79	79	Meditative.	18	18.6
Mercenary.	49	49	Reserved.	17	17.5
Industrious.	48	48	Very religious.	15	15.5
Grasping.	34	34	Ignorant.	15	15.5
Intelligent.	29	29	Decentful.	14	14.4
Ambitious.	21	21	Quiet	13	13.4
Sly.	20	20			
Loyal to family ties.	15	15	JAPANESE		
Persistent.	13	13	Intelligent.	45	47.9
Talkative	13	13	Industrious	43	45.7
Aggressive	12	12	Progressive.	24	25.5
Very religious.	12	12	Shrewd	22	23.4
AMERICANS			Sly	20	21.3
Industrious.	48	48.5	Quiet	19	20.2
Intelligent	47	47.5	Imitative.	17	18.1
Materialistic.	33	33.3	Alert	16	17.0
Ambitious.	33	33.3	Suave.	16	17.0
Progressive.	27	27.3	Neat	16	17.0
Pleasure-loving.	26	26.3	Treacherous	13	13.8
Alert.	23	23.2	Aggressive.	13	13.8
Efficient.	21	21.2			
Aggressive.	20	20.2	TURKS		
Straightforward	19	19.2	Cruel.	47	54.0
Practical.	19	19.2	Very religious	26	29.9
Sportsmanlike	19	19.2	Treacherous	21	24.1
CHINESE			Sensual.	20	23.0
Superstitious.	34	35.1	Ignorant.	15	17.2
Sly	29	29.9	Physically dirty.	15	17.2
Conservative	29	29.9	Deceitful.	13	14.9
Tradition-loving	26	26.8	Sly	12	13.8
Loyal to family ties	22	22.7	Quarrelsome.	12	13.8
Industrious.	18	18.6	Revengeful	12	13.8
			Conservative	12	13.8
			Superstitious.	11	12.6

The traits most frequently assigned to the Germans seem consistent with the popular stereotype to be found in newspapers and magazines. Their science, industry, ponderous and methodical manner, and intelligence were pointed out by over one-fourth of the students. *Scientifically-minded* was the most frequently assigned characteristic, as many as 78 per cent of the group ascribing this trait to the Germans.

Italians received the common characterization of the hot blooded Latin peoples: artistic, impulsive, quick-tempered, passionate, musical and imaginative. The greatest agreement was shown on the *artistic* qualities of the Italians with 53 per cent of the students concurring in this belief. Next came *impulsiveness* with 44 per cent, to be followed by *passionate* with 37 per cent and *quick-tempered* with 35 per cent. This characterization scarcely accounts for the degree of prejudice frequently exhibited toward the Italians.

The characteristics ascribed to the Negroes are somewhat similar to the picture of the Negro as furnished by the *Saturday Evening Post*: highly superstitious, lazy, happy-go-lucky, ignorant, musical, and ostentatious. The greatest degree of agreement for a single trait for any racial group was reached when 84 per cent of the students voted the Negroes *superstitious*. *Laziness* was given as a typical characteristic by three-fourths of the students, but the other traits mentioned above had much lower frequencies of endorsement. It may be noted in passing that for a northern college, Princeton draws heavily upon the South for her enrollment so that this characterization of Negroes is not exclusively a Northern description.

In the case of the Irish no single trait of the 84 presented could be agreed upon as a typical Irish characteristic by half the students. Forty-five per cent, however, thought *pugnacity* typical and 39 per cent agreed upon *quick-tempered*. Witty, honest, very religious, industrious and extremely nationalistic were the other adjectives selected by a fifth or more of the students.

The characterization of the English savors more of the English "gentleman" than of the general stereotype of John Bull. The leading characteristic is *sportsmanship* with an endorsement from 53 per cent of the students. Forty-six per cent of the students favored *intelligence* as typical of the English, 34 per cent *conventionality*, 31 per cent *love of traditions*, and 30 per cent *conservatism*. Other adjectives selected were reserved, sophisticated, courteous, and honest.

The aggressive qualities of the Jews are emphasized. They are pictured as shrewd, mercenary, industrious, grasping, ambitious, and sly. Fifteen per cent of the students did include Jewish loyalty to family ties. The greatest agreement (79 per cent) was shown for *shrewdness*.

The traits ascribed to Americans show a certain objectivity on the part of the students in describing themselves, for the description given is not greatly at variance with the stereotype held by non-Americans. Americans are described as industrious, intelligent, materialistic, ambitious, progressive, and pleasure-loving. As in the case of the Irish the degree of agreement on these traits never reaches half the group. Almost one-half did assign *industry* and *intelligence* to Americans, and a third gave *materialistic* and *ambitious* as the most descriptive adjectives.

Apparently the general stereotype for the Chinese among eastern college students is fairly indefinite, for the agreement on

typical Chinese characteristics is not great. Three of the one hundred students could give no characteristics for the Chinese. Of the 97 who did respond 35 per cent thought the Chinese *superstitious*, 30 per cent thought them *sly*, 30 per cent regarded them as *conservative*. The next most frequently ascribed traits were love of tradition, loyalty to family ties, industry, and meditation.

The picture of the Japanese seems more clear cut with some recognition of the westernization of Japan. Emphasis was placed upon intelligence, industry, progressiveness, shrewdness, slyness and quietness. The Japanese are the only group in which *intelligence* leads the list as the most frequently assigned characteristic. Forty-eight per cent of the students filling in this part of the questionnaire gave intelligence as a typical Japanese trait.

Thirteen students could select no characteristics for the Turks. Fifty-four per cent of those responding gave *cruelty*. Other traits selected described the Turks as very religious, treacherous, sensual, ignorant, physically dirty, deceitful, and sly.

Table II brings out the degree of agreement in assigning characteristics to the ten racial and national groups. It lists the least number of traits which have to be included to find 50 per cent of the 500 possible votes cast by the 100 students in the case of every racial and national group. It will be remembered that each student was allowed to select 5 of the 84 traits presented and there were 100 students. If there were perfect agreement, 2.5 traits would have received 50 per cent of the votes. Perfect disagreement or chance would mean that 42 traits would be necessary to give half of the votes. Table II shows that in the case of Negroes we can find 50 per cent of the votes or selections of traits in 4.6 traits. The agreement here is very high and even in the case of the Turks where 15.9 traits must be included to give 50 per cent of the possible 500 assignments or selections the voting is far from a chance selection.

TABLE II

THE LEAST NUMBER OF TRAITS WHICH MUST BE TAKEN TO INCLUDE FIFTY PER CENT OF THE POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENTS FOR EACH RACE

Races (rank order)	No. traits required
Negroes.	4.6
Germans.	5.0
Jews.	5.5
Italians.	6.9
English.	7.0
Irish.	8.5
Americans	8.8
Japanese.	10.9
Chinese.	12.0
Turks.	15.9

Thus in Table II we have a comparison of the definiteness of the ten racial stereotypes. The most definite picture is that of the Negroes. The Germans and Jews also give consistent patterns of response while the Chinese, Japanese, and Turks furnish the least clear cut stereotypes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The degree of agreement among students in assigning characteristics from a list of 84 adjectives to different races seems too great to be the sole result of the students' contacts with members of these races. If for example the Germans are more scientifically minded on the whole than other peoples this characteristic would be distributed in more or less degree among Germans and the distribution would overlap tremendously with a similar distribution of scientific-mindedness among Americans. Hence many American students judging Germans from those whom they know might find their German acquaintances belonged to the great part of the curve which overlapped with that of the Americans. Their idea of Germans, therefore, would not emphasize the German love for science. Yet we find 78 per cent of 100 students agreeing that one of the most typical characteristics of Germans is their scientific-mindedness. Of course individual experience may enter into the student's judgment but it probably does so to confirm the original stereotype which he has learned. He has heard, for example, of Germany's scientific progress and of the devotion to applied science in Germany. Therefore when he meets a German he will expect the scientific trait to appear, and because human beings from time to time exhibit all kinds of behavior he can find confirmation of his views. Frequently people with a prejudice against Jews will meet a flagrant contradiction of their stereotyped picture in a specific Jewish acquaintance. Immediately they observe that this Jew is an exception, he is not like other Jews, he is a "white Jew". By thus omitting cases which contradict the stereotype, the individual becomes convinced from association with a race that its members are just the kind of people he always thought they were. In this manner almost any characteristic can become attached to any race and stick there with scarcely any factual basis. The fictions that grow up about social classes, professional groups, and political organizations are probably very similar in their genesis.

Stereotyped pictures of racial and national groups can arise only so long as individuals accept consciously or unconsciously

the group fallacy attitude toward place of birth and skin color. To the realist there are no racial or national groups which exist as entities and which determine the characteristics of the group members. It is true that certain behavior traits may be more frequently found among individuals of one nationality than those of another, but the overlapping is obviously very great. This can furnish no real basis for the race-entities which are ordinarily accepted and applied to foreigners (as well as to ourselves). Furthermore it scarcely needs to be pointed out that the question of the frequency of appearance of racial traits is not commonly made a subject of strictly objective surveys. Such observations generally succeed the group or institutional fiction which may serve as something upon which to hang typical characteristics, and the width of the field of investigation and difficulties of control provide a fertile field for the fiction to produce distorted and fallacious observations.⁷

The manner in which public and private attitudes are bound up together is shown in the order of the ten racial and national groups as determined by the definiteness with which students assigned characteristics to them. At first glance it would appear that the students showed the greatest agreement for racial groups with whose members they had contact and the least degree of agreement for the unfamiliar groups. This is in part true, for the Turks, Chinese, and Japanese are found at the bottom of the list in Table II. But familiarity with the members of a race does not explain why Americans, Irish, and English show less definite descriptions than Negroes, Germans, Jews, and Italians. Indeed actual knowledge of individual Americans and Englishmen probably explains the fact that there was less agreement upon these groups than upon others who are less well known. Table II indicates then that the knowledge upon which students assigned characteristics to various races has both a private or personal basis and a public or cultural basis.

Table II shows that the definiteness of the stereotyped picture of a race has little relation to the prejudice exhibited against that race. Studies in various parts of the country have agreed in finding that the greatest degree of prejudice is shown toward the Turks and Negroes. Yet these two groups stand at opposite poles in the present study when compared on the basis of the definiteness of the stereotyped ideas of what these groups are like. In other words people may have a vague idea of the essen-

⁷ For a detailed analysis of this point see the *Psychology of Nationalism*, by F. H. Allport, in *Harpers*, 1927, 155, 291-301.

tial characteristics of a race, as judged not by its truth but by their ability to agree on its typical traits, and yet show extreme prejudice toward that group. Prejudice of this kind seems largely a matter of public attitude toward a race name or symbol. The converse however is scarcely true, for prejudice accompanied by a high degree of consistency in the stereotyped picture may be a matter of a public or a private attitude, or a combination of both.