

Attitudes of American Students Differentially Liked by Latin American Students

A. O. HALLER and BARBARA BRAY

THIS PAPER presents data on the relationship of certain attitudes of Michigan State University students to the degree to which the students, as individuals, are liked personally by Latin American students on the MSU campus. The importance of the study lies not so much in its results, although these may be useful when taken together with further studies, as in the way in which the problem was formulated. Most studies of foreign students on American campuses refer only to the behavior of the foreign student himself, rather than to his relationship with others. Moreover, there are no studies known to the writers of the characteristics of those who surround the foreign student during his sojourn. Yet, this type of information is needed if ultimately we wish to maximize the foreign student's satisfaction with his experience in America. The present study attempts to fill part of this gap by quantitatively testing the association of American students' attitudes to the degree to which foreign students like them. The hypotheses of the study were gleaned from among many presented in the growing body of literature on the foreign student in America [1].

Hypotheses

1. Foreign students like better the American students who value a few intimate rather than many superficial friendships. This hypothesis is based on comments by

foreigners that many Americans tend to be superficial and fickle, and that they are incapable of forming real friendships.

2. Foreign students like better the American students who are the least nationalistic. Foreign students report that they don't like Americans who think that their own country and ways of doing things are always the best.

3. Foreign students like better the American students who have a high degree of interest in intellectual activities. Studies of foreign students have shown that they think American students are too preoccupied with social affairs and lack interest in intellectual activities.

4. Foreign students like better the American students who have favorable attitudes toward foreign students. Presumably the more favorable an American student is to foreign students in general, the more ready he should be to accept particular foreign students as friends.

5. Foreign students like better the American students who are not dogmatic. It is expected that Americans who are intolerant of ideas and beliefs other than their own will be unable to have a satisfying relationship with a student from another society.

6. Foreign students like better the American students who have a low degree of racial prejudice. Foreigners are critical of race prejudice in the United States and many have been victims of discrimination. Because of such experiences, they would be expected to have difficulty in making close friendships with relatively prejudiced American students.

7. Foreign students like better the American students who are most able to distinguish between various foreign countries. One complaint of foreigners is that many Americans look at the world in terms of

A. O. HALLER is Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Michigan State University, East Lansing, and BARBARA BRAY was formerly a Research Assistant at Michigan State University.

The writers wish to extend their thanks to the members of the Michigan State University International Communication Study Seminar who stimulated the study, to the MSU students who willingly served as subjects of the study, and to the students in the Social Attitudes course at MSU for their help in every stage of the study.

"America" and "the rest of the world" and fail to distinguish between other countries and cultures.

Methods

Two differentially liked samples of American students were chosen for comparison by asking foreign students to name six American students whom they know. They were then asked which four they know best and, of these four, which two they enjoy being with the most. This yields three categories of American acquaintances for each foreign student: two known well and specified as being liked, two known well but not specified as being liked, and two known but not specified as known well or liked. The middle category was eliminated from consideration, and one person from each of the other two categories was selected for study. Thus, for each foreign student, there was one American student who was both known and liked, and one American student who was known, but not known well and not mentioned as being liked. This somewhat elaborate technique was used to elicit names of two American students of varying degrees of friendship from among those known to each foreign student. A frontal attack, in which foreign students would be asked to name American students they disliked, was presumed to be impossible. In general, it can be said that each foreign student feels real friendship for his American acquaintance categorized here as "more liked" but that he may not be unfriendly toward the one categorized as "less liked." Thus the term "less liked" is not to be confused with "disliked." The 20 students in the "more liked" group included two women, and the 18 students in the "less liked" group included one.

The 20 foreign students who provided the names of American students were all from Latin America and were living in dormitories on the Michigan State University campus. Students were chosen from one cultural area in order to reduce the possible effect of cultural differences on the results; dormitory residents were selected in order to increase the probability that each would know some American students. Latin

America was the only culture area from which there was a sufficient number of students living in the dormitories. For various reasons, about a half-dozen of the Latin American students so defined were omitted from the study. Twenty Latin American students were interviewed and the final group of American students consisted of 20 "more liked" and 18 "less liked."

The interviewers were upper-level or graduate students who were taking a course in Social Attitudes at Michigan State University.

Five statements were formulated to measure each attitude area. There were four possible degrees of agreement with each statement: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The responses to each question were assigned arbitrary values from zero to three points, thus giving a total possible range of zero to 15 points for each attitude area. The attitude questions are included in the appendix. In the analysis, all variables were dichotomized and the hypotheses were tested by means of X^2 values computed on the resulting 2×2 tables. The 0.05 significance level is accepted critical.

Results

The questions on attitude toward friendship were designed to measure preference for a few deep vs. many superficial friendships and a high score shows preference for many friendships. The difference between the "more liked" group and the "less liked" group is not significant, with a X^2 of 0.44. There is no evidence to support the hypothesis that American students who value a few deep friendships over many superficial ones are liked any better by Latin American students.

The differences between the two groups in nationalism is not significant, with a X^2 of 0.25. This area measured the attitude that the United States is superior as a country and the American way of doing things is the best way. The hypothesis that students who are less nationalistic are liked better by foreign students is not supported by the evidence.

Americans liked by Latin American stu-

dents are significantly higher in intellectual interests than students who are not so well liked. The difference between the two groups showed a X^2 of 4.1. This area measured the amount of interest in discussions, classical vs. popular music, education vs. social life, reading serious books, and the intellectuals on campus. These results support the hypothesis that American students who are more interested in intellectual activities are liked better by foreign students.¹

In general, American students of both groups have a favorable attitude toward foreign students. A X^2 value of 0.2 indicates no significant difference between students liked and those not liked. There is no evidence to support the hypothesis that foreign students like American students better who have a more favorable attitude toward foreign students in general.

Dogmatism was measured by the five questions in the *Dogmatism Scale* that are reported by Rokeach to be most highly correlated with the total *Dogmatism Scale* scores [2]. The difference between the two groups in dogmatism is, if anything, the reverse of that expected, with a X^2 of 0.78 when all of the questions are included. This difference is not significant. However, when two questions which are not significantly related to the total attitude area are eliminated, the X^2 of 5.2 shows a significant difference between the two groups. Thus, it may be argued that there is a certain amount of evidence that dogmatic American students are liked more by Latin American students than less dogmatic American students. This is contrary to the hypothesis that dogmatic Americans are not liked by foreign students. However, since the five question index of dogmatism is not significantly related to the enjoyment of the

relationship, it is most reasonable to conclude tentatively that no relationship exists.

Attitude toward Negroes, a measure of racial prejudice, is not significantly related to the degree of testing with a X^2 of 0.04. These results do not support the hypothesis that foreign students like better Americans who are lacking racial prejudice. MSU's students are not particularly prejudiced, however, as shown by the scores. Perhaps, the hypothesis is valid in areas of the country in which prejudice is more pronounced.

Ability to differentiate among countries was measured by asking the respondents to name as many Latin American countries as they could. There was no significant difference between the two groups with a X^2 of 0.00. It is possible that this question is a poor index of the ability to which it refers. Moreover, despite the fact that foreign students criticize Americans on this ground, the writers believe that sheer differentiation is not what the foreign students desire. It is more likely that each wants the American to appreciate his own country and culture, not to be able to differentiate among all countries. Future research should test this latter hypothesis.

Discussion

The study was a comparison of attitudes of American students liked more and those known but not particularly liked by Latin American students. The study offers *no support* for speculation that foreign students, or at least Latin American students, especially like American students who (1) like a few intimate rather than many superficial friendships, (2) are not nationalistic, (3) are favorable to foreign students in general, (4) are not dogmatic in personality, (5) have an exceptionally low degree of racial intolerance, (6) have an exceptional ability to differentiate among different countries, as measured by knowledge of the names of Latin American countries. On the other hand, the study *supports* the widely reported observation that foreign students tend to like intellectually-oriented American students.

While the study is suggestive, its results must be used with caution. Before they are

¹ This finding suggests that the better American students tend to have the happier relationships with Latin American students. At best, these data give only partial support to such a conclusion, however. The chi-square of grade point average and relationship to Latin American students is $X^2 = 2.65$. The probability of such a X^2 is just $P = 0.10$. The tendency is for those with the higher grade point average to be better liked, but since the X^2 is not significant it must be tentatively concluded that no real relationship exists.

put into practice, the conclusions should be verified by additional research using better measures of the variables, better samples, and more experienced interviewers. Since

most of the conclusions are at variance with common conceptions, the writers hope that the study will stimulate more refined tests of these and related hypotheses.

Appendix

Questions Used to Measure Attitudes of American Students

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|----|------|--|
| I. <i>Preference for a Few Intimate vs. Many Superficial Friendships</i> | | | | | | |
| 1. Everyone should be informal most of the time. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 2. A person should try to have many friends. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 3. A person can only have a few real friends. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 4. I try to please most people. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 5. Losing a few close friends is not as important as maintaining many other friendships. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| II. <i>Nationalistic Attitude</i> | | | | | | |
| 6. America's honor must be defended at all costs. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 7. The United States is the best country in the world. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 8. Far away places always interest me. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 9. The American way of doing things is almost always the best way. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 10. The world would be better off if we didn't push other countries around so much. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| III. <i>Attitude Toward Intellectual Activities</i> | | | | | | |
| 11. I like to have long discussions about important matters. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 12. The intellectuals on the campus bore me. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 13. I like popular music better than classical music. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 14. The education one can get at a university is far more important than the campus social life is. | | | | | | |
| 15. I often read serious books just for fun. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| IV. <i>Attitude Toward Foreign Students</i> | | | | | | |
| 16. I get a real pleasure out of talking with the foreign students. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 17. Most foreign students are unsociable. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 18. Foreign students are too snobbish. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 19. People pay too much attention to the foreign students. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 20. Foreign students should try harder to learn our ways. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| V. <i>Dogmatism</i> | | | | | | |
| 21. In times like these it is often necessary to be more on guard against ideas put out by people or groups in one's own camp than by those in the opposing camp. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 22. In the long run the best way to live is to pick friends and associates whose tastes and beliefs are the same as one's own. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 23. There are two kinds of people in this world: those who are for the truth and those who are against the truth. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 24. Man on his own is a helpless and miserable creature. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 25. It is only natural for a person to be rather fearful of the future. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| VI. <i>Attitude Toward Negroes</i> | | | | | | |
| 26. Negroes should stay in their own place. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 27. Generally speaking, Negroes are irresponsible. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 28. A white girl should not marry a Negro. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 29. I would be uncomfortable dining with a Negro. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| 30. White people shouldn't have Negroes as guests in their homes. | SA | A | D | SD | (NA) | |
| VII. <i>Ability to Differentiate Among Latin American Countries</i> | | | | | | |
| 31. Excluding islands, how many countries south of the border can you name? (Interviewer check off) | | | | | | |
| Mexico, Guatemala, British Honduras, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, British Guiana, French Guiana, Dutch Guiana. | | | | | | |

References

1. See, for example: Asar, Probha G. Images of India and America held by students from India at Michigan State College. Master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1952; Beals, Ralph L., & Humphrey, Norman D. *No frontier to learning: The Mexican student in the United States*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957; DuBois, Cora. *Foreign students and higher education in the United States*. Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1956; DuBois, Cora. Research in cross-cultural education. *IIE News Bulletin*, 1953, 28, 5-8, 60-64; Gullahorn, John T., & Gullahorn, Jeanne E. *Foreign student leaders on American campuses: An experiment in cross-cultural education*, 1958; Lambert, Richard D., & Bressler, Marvin. *Indian students on an American campus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956; Scott, Franklin D. *The American experience of Swedish students: Retrospect and aftermath*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956; Smith, M. Brewster. Evaluation of exchange of persons. *Internatl. Soc. Sci. Bull.*, 1955, 7, 387-397; Useem, John, & Useem, Ruth. *The western educated man in India*. New York: Dryden Press, 1955; Watson, Jeanne, & Lippitt, Ronald. *Learning across cultures: A study of Germans visiting America*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Research Center for Group Dynamics, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan; also see the entire issue of *The annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science; America through foreign eyes*, 1954, 29.
2. Rokeach, Milton. Political and religious dogmatism: An alternative to the authoritarian personality. *Psychol. Monogr.: Gen. & Appl.*, 1956, 70.

NEW OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK HANDBOOK TO BE ISSUED

A fourth edition of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* will be issued this fall. This reference book of occupational information has been thoroughly revised and brought up to date, and a number of new chapters have been added.

The impact of new technological developments—such as the spectacular developments in space exploration and rocketry—on particular occupations and industries is analyzed and evaluated in the new *Handbook*.

Occupations covered for the first time include those of programmers, school counselors, technicians, and instrument repairmen. New chapters also cover driving occupations; aircraft, missile, and spacecraft field; the clergy; protective service occupations; sales occupations; and baking industry occupations. Over 600 occupations and 30 major industries are described in this edition, which is illustrated with 177 photographs and 56 charts. It also includes introductory chapters on how to use the *Handbook*, and on occupational and industrial trends and earnings from work.

Some of the major conclusions of the *Handbook* research will be outlined in an article to be published in the December issue of the *Journal*. The *Handbook* may be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C. The 800-page book is priced at \$4.25.