ACCULTURATION AND FAMILY AMONG HISPANIC AND NATIVE AMERICANS.

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Acculturation, Biculturalism and Familism among Hispanic and Mainstream Navy Recruits

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April, 1982

Hispanics, familism, acculturation, biculturalism, modernity, socio-economic level

Familism, that is emphasis on family relationships and family interdependence, was studied in samples of Hispanic and Mainstream recruits. It was found to be lower among highly acculturated Hispanics than among...
Hispanics who were moderately acculturated. The moderately acculturated are also more bicultural than the highly acculturated, so that biculturalism is positively linked to familism. The more modern Hispanics were less familistic, and there was no correlation between socioeconomic level and familism in the Hispanic sample. In the Mainstream sample none of these correlations were obtained. However, there was a trend for the higher socioeconomic level Mainstream recruits to be less familistic. Thus familism is a traditional Hispanic cultural attribute, unrelated to social class, while for the Mainstream it may be an attribute of a lower socio-economic level. Interpretation of these relationships must take into account the restricted range of the modernity and socioeconomic status level variables, which is bound to occur when studying Navy recruits.
Acculturation, Biculturalism and Familism Among Hispanic and Mainstream Navy Recruits

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The importance assigned to the family (familism) has been considered by various authors as one of the most significant culture-specific characteristics of Hispanics (e.g., Alvirez & Bean, 1976; Brussell, 1971; Meier & Rivera, 1972). Familism is usually considered as including a strong identification with the family, the feeling of mutual obligation, and the provision of mutual help together with strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity and solidarity among the members of one same family.

Differences in familism between Hispanics and Anglos has been documented by Grebler, Moore & Guzman (1970) and by Holtzman, Diaz-Guerrero and Swartz (1975) where Hispanics were found to express greater concern for the welfare of the family than Anglos. Other authors have shown that the level of familism found among Hispanics may differ according to age so that only the older and more traditional Hispanics show the highest levels of familism (Chandler, 1974) or to differ in terms of the educational level of the respondents (Ferris & Glenn, 1976). In a more recent study, Triandis, Marin, Betancourt, Lisansky and Chang (Note 1) have found that Hispanic and Anglo Navy recruits were equally willing to sacrifice (e.g., selling their TV) if necessary, in order to be present at a family crisis (e.g., death of a brother). In the same study Triandis et al. found that Hispanics are more willing to sacrifice than Anglos in order to be present at family celebrations (e.g., baptism of a nephew; visit by an aunt from abroad).

Various authors have in the past argued that familism is on the decline among Hispanics (e.g., Montiel, 1973). As a matter of fact, in the large
scale study of Mexican Americans in California and Texas (Grebler et al., 1970) a decline in relationships between members of the extended family was found. Likewise, Steward (1956) has proposed that familism varies with socio-economic class in Puerto Rico and Landy (1959) noted that extended family ties in the community he studied were partially disintegrating and that ritual kinship ties (e.g., compadrazgo) were becoming increasingly attenuated.

Given that Hispanics are being exposed to the majority Anglo culture and that this exposure may bring about acculturation and biculturalism, it is possible to expect that cultural values such as familism may be affected by this exposure to different cultural values. The purpose of this study then was to test the possible relationships between our measure of familism (willingness to sacrifice in order to be present at a family crisis or celebration) and our previously developed measures of acculturation and biculturalism.

Method

Subjects

Seventy-three Hispanics and 81 Mainstream recruits responded to the questionnaire while being classified into Navy jobs, as part of a larger study of their perceptions of the social environment. In each of the three Navy recruit stations (Florida, California, and Illinois) when a Spanish-surname recruit was to be classified, the classification officer checked the recruit's self-identification on an application form on which "Hispanic" was one of the ways in which the applicant could describe himself. If the Spanish-surname recruit had selected the "Hispanic" self-identification label, he was asked to complete the questionnaire. At that time another recruit (with a non-Spanish surname) was randomly selected and given the same questionnaire. These other recruits are here referred to as "Mainstream" and will include both whites and blacks as well as Hispanics who did not identify themselves as "Hispanic."
Instruments

A group of ten Hispanics and ten Anglos were asked to freely generate family-related events in which they would feel their presence to be expected or desired, by members of their nuclear and extended family. These events were then listed (with synonyms being deleted) and given to six Junior High School Hispanic students to test the comprehension level of the items.

The instrument administered to the Navy recruits consisted of 19 hypothetical situations involving family crises (illness, death) or celebrations (wedding, birthday) that required the respondent's presence. Each subject was asked to assume that the event was to take place and that he had no money to travel to the event, unless he made a sacrifice (e.g., take a loan, sell his TV, borrow). Each event was followed by four sacrifice responses and by the alternative "I would do none of these." Chi-square analyses noted the significant differences in the frequencies of the Hispanic and Mainstream responses concerning sacrifices in order to participate in family events.

The acculturation and biculturalism scales were developed by factor analyzing the responses by Hispanic and Anglo respondents to a large number of socio-demographic (e.g., place of birth, primary language) and behavioral (e.g., preferred type of music, food) questions that had been used in previous studies on acculturation of Hispanics (e.g., Cuellar, Harris & Jasso, 1980; Olmedo, 1979; Padilla, 1980; Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines & Aranaide, 1978).

The analysis of the different items (Triandis, Hui, Lisansky & Marín, Note 2) showed that Mainstream recruits differed among themselves on a Family History Index (father's birthplace is U.S. vs outside U.S.; same for mother's birthplace, citizenship of close relatives) and in Ideal-Social Acculturation (would like to have only Anglo co-workers and own children to attend Anglo schools). A Family History Acculturation Index (reflecting length of stay in U.S., birthplace in U.S., father's and mother's birthplace in U.S., time lived
in U.S., social environments lived in were mostly Anglo) was computed for Hispanic recruits who also had an Ideal-Social Acculturation Index (would like Anglo co-workers, would like own children to attend Anglo schools).

In addition, among the Mainstream biculturalism was measured by the extent to which mixed ethnicity was a characteristic of the closest friends, romantic partners, neighborhoods and on ideal program of music for the respondent's own birthday party. Among Hispanics biculturalism was reflected by three factors: Media (likes both Spanish and English music, TV, movies), Interaction (has both Spanish and English romantic partners, close friends, neighbors) and Environmental-Affective Biculturalism (mixed ideal neighborhood, and preferred music for birthday is both Spanish and English).

Results

For the Hispanic sample, the greater the degree of acculturation, as indexed by the Family History items, the lower was the familism. This was the case for 8 out of 8 items, and 4 of those were significant at $p<.03$ or less. There was no correlation between the Ideal-Social acculturation index, and familism. The biculturalism index, reflecting preference for both Spanish and English music, TV and movies, was positively correlated with familism. Seven of 8 correlations were positive, and three of them were significant at the $p<.01$ level. Thus, those high in Media biculturalism show more familism. There were no correlations between the other two biculturalism indices and familism or between socio-economic status and familism.

For the Mainstream sample there were no significant correlations.

The one finding that may be of some interest is that for the Mainstream sample there is a negative correlation between socio-economic level (SES) and familism on 8 out of 8 items. This contrasts sharply with the Hispanic sample which showed no correlations between familism and SES.

When subjects answered 8 items of the Inkeles and Smith (1974) Modernity
Scale, we found that on six of the eight items modernity was negatively correlated with familism, so that the more modern respondents showed less familism.

**Discussion**

The negative correlation between Family History acculturation and familism that we found in our data agrees with the arguments of other authors that suggest that familism is declining among Hispanics in the United States particularly as a function of exposure to the less familialistic U.S. culture (Carlos, 1973; Grebler et al., 1970; Montiel, 1973). Interestingly enough, the arguments of several anthropologists (e.g., Landy, 1959; Steward, 1956) regarding the effects of modernization on familism seem to be supported by our data where modernism was also negatively correlated with familism.

The fact that highly acculturated Hispanics are lower in familism and that those high in biculturalism tend to be more familialistic can be interpreted when we consider the curvilinear relationship that we found between acculturation and biculturalism in our previous report (Triandis, Hui, Líansky & Marín, Note 2). This study indicated that Hispanics who are bicultural tend to be moderately acculturated and that Hispanics who are highly acculturated tend to be mono-cultural. The finding that acculturation is linked to lower familism and biculturalism to higher familism suggests that most of our data come from Hispanics in the moderate-to-high range of acculturation. The negative link between modernity and familism is consistent with the interpretation that familism is a traditional Hispanic cultural attribute, and modernity reduces familism. The lack of correlation between social class and familism for Hispanics shows that familism is a cultural rather than a social class attribute.

These findings are consistent with the interpretation that the Navy selects recruits who are relatively acculturated and does not recruit many from the lower levels of acculturation.

In conclusion, these data are consistent with the interpretation that
familism is a Hispanic cultural trait, which is equally important among Hispanics of differing levels of socio-economic status, while it is slightly more powerful among Mainstream Navy recruits of lower Socio-Economic Status. Furthermore, Acculturation has the effect of reducing Hispanic familism.
Reference Notes


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