

THE INFLUENCE OF REFERENCE GROUP, AGE AND SEX  
ON INTERPERSONAL JUDGMENT

by

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## ABSTRACT

Eight models (Ms) and 40 subjects (Ss) participated in a study investigating several variables associated with interpersonal judgment or person perception accuracy. The Ms were Mexican-American male and female students and non-students. The Ms varied in age with four Ms between the ages of 40 and 50 and four Ms between the ages of 18 and 25. The subjects were 20 male and 20 female Mexican-American university students between the ages of 18 and 25. Each model presented a five minute social history which was videotaped. Following the social history presentation each model rated himself on seven personality traits. The Ss viewed the videotaped session for each individual model, then the Ss were requested to rate each model according to how they felt the model rated himself. Three hypotheses were investigated: (1) Ss between the ages of 18 to 25 would not rate the non-student models as accurately as the student models, despite the fact that they were members of the same ethnic group; (2) Ss between the ages of 18 to 25 would rate the Ms of their own ages more accurately than middle aged Ms; (3) female Ss would not be more accurate than males in their assessment of the Ms.

## -INTRODUCTION

There is a movement within the field of mental health to train and utilize paraprofessionals or peers as mental health workers in community mental health centers. This trend is prevalent in mental health centers located in areas of the community which are mainly composed of minority populations. The use of peers or paraprofessionals arises in part from the position that individuals respond better to the therapeutic environment and experience when the therapist is of the same race and background as the client. Research conducted in this area suggests that the effectiveness of therapy is often dependent upon the race of the therapist. Didato (1971) posited that therapy failure results from the bias or inability of the therapist to appreciate the life-style of a client from a different culture or ethnic group. Sattler (1970) discussed an overall trend reported in psychotherapy evaluation studies of interracial client-therapist relationships. He concluded that Black clients perform more effectively and are less inhibited with Black therapists than with White therapists. Vontress (1974) examined varying cultural factors among different ethnic groups which impede counseling

effectiveness. For example, structuring is misinterpreted in different cultures and each culture has distinct patterns of communication. Variance from these factors between client and therapist interferes with the counseling process. As an outgrowth of this area of investigation, it is now widely accepted that members of minority groups develop a better therapeutic relationship with some race or culture therapists.

Psychologists who are members of minority groups have criticized the existing mental health system for offering services which do not meet the needs of minority groups. Wylie (1973) criticized community psychologists for a paternalistic approach to minority groups. He maintained that the White psychological community has not seriously confronted its own covert racism. Thomas (1970) also denounced the mental health field for not developing mental health programs and service relevant to the needs and problems of the Black community. Presently more mental health centers are training and recruiting minorities for professional and paraprofessional positions within existing mental health services. Psychologists who are members of minority groups are in demand to direct community mental health programs located in areas which offer services mainly to minority groups.

The main implication of research in the area of effectiveness of mental health services which pair individuals from a minority group with a therapist from a different ethnic group is that the therapist's judgment regarding the client may be based on racial or socioeconomic differences between the client and therapist. Judgments based on these factors can influence diagnosis and treatment modalities. The treatment a client receives may be more a function of the client's race or culture than a function of emotional problems or situational crises. It is feasible that the services the client receives are often not focused on the proper variables; this can conceivably result in treatment failure.

Research findings on client variables which affect the process of psychotherapy have demonstrated that race and social class variables affect the nature of the diagnosis and the nature of the treatment. Garfield (1971) cited a 1967 study by Larenzen who found that social class variables were related to varying admission criteria for different types of mental health clinics, public and private, in a major metropolitan area. Carkhuff and Pierce (1967) examined the influence of the variables of race and social class upon amount of client self-exploration in therapy and found less client self-exploration for different race client-therapist dyads.

It is reasonable to assume that the variables of race and social status have an influence on the nature and success of the therapeutic relationship. Since it has been demonstrated that these factors influence the therapeutic process between individuals of different ethnic groups, it appears relevant to evaluate these variables among members of the same minority group. It is probable that these same factors are operating to affect the nature of interpersonal judgments between individuals of the same ethnic group. However, little research within minority groups has been conducted regarding variables such as social status, age or sex which might influence the interpersonal perception process and affect interpersonal relationships. In fact there is a dearth of research in the areas of clinical judgment and interpersonal perceptions among members of the same ethnic group.

Most of the research investigating race and social class variables in relation to therapy has involved Blacks and Whites. Christensen (1970) investigated person perception accuracy as a function of ethnic groups and familiarity. He concluded that Black judges were as sensitive as White targets. Lewis (1972) examined differences in accuracy of judgment on a seven-item personality trait rating scale between White students and Mexican-American students. In this study, significant differences in accuracy were shown

for one trait only. Kaplan and Goldman (1973) studied accuracy of perception among Mexican-American Black and White high school students. They concluded that Blacks and Mexican-Americans were more accurate in their perceptions of each other than of Whites and that Blacks and Mexican-Americans were more inaccurate in their perceptions of Whites than were Whites of them. Results of investigations in this area demonstrate conflicting findings; there is a need for further research in this area with additional emphasis on other subject variables such as social status, reference group or age which may influence interpersonal judgments.

There has been a renewal of interest in the field of interpersonal perception or person perception accuracy in the last ten years. The focus of recent research has been on investigating factors which influence the process and outcome of interpersonal judgment. Taguiri (1958) conceptualized person perception as observations individuals make about the intentions, attitudes, emotions, ideas, abilities, purposes and traits of other individuals. There are events that can be thought of as occurring inside the person. Our observations are based on actions of the other individual but these actions or events are defined in psychological terms. For example, a person who observes a man angrily berating a clerk in a store because the line is slow

might label the man as aggressive. An important component of interpersonal judgment or person perception is the perceiver's perception of the intention or purpose of the other individual; it is possible that the perceiver can misinterpret the attitudes or feelings of the perceived.

The findings and implications of research in interpersonal perception have much relevance for the field of clinical judgment. It is not enough for a therapist to try to assess a client's personality characteristics according to the therapist's judgment of the nature of these variables. It is also necessary for the therapist to understand the personality characteristics of another person as that person sees himself. Only a thorough understanding of a client's self-concept enables the therapist to work with the client on a level meaningful to each participant.

Concern over the issue of selecting therapists, group leaders, teachers and other professionals engaged in work whose success is dependent upon interpersonal interactions prompted the beginning studies in the field of interpersonal judgment in the late twenties. Adams (1927) studied groups of subjects who ranked themselves and others on certain personality characteristics. Valentine (1929) conducted a similar study. Both Valentine and Adams attempted to isolate variables which influence the perception

of others. These studies followed the theoretical orientation that intuition influences perception. Wescott (1968, p. 97) stated: "intuition can be said to occur when an individual reaches a conclusion on the basis of less explicit information than is ordinarily required to reach that conclusion." He stated that the accuracy of intuitive judgments can be verified through further information gathering or experimentation. Wescott discussed mediating processes which can affect the judgment; he indicated that the accuracy of intuitive judgments are a function of the quantity or explicitness of information available.

Vernon (1933) attempted to identify the personality characteristics of individuals who were accurate in their interpersonal perceptions. The focus of this study and other similar studies in the thirties was to obtain information about personality characteristics which could be used to facilitate the proper selection of psychotherapists, teachers and group leaders. The method employed in Vernon's study was a precursor to the main methods utilized in many later studies on person perception. In his investigations male students were given intelligence tests, personality tests and tests to assess artistic ability. Each subject rated himself, other friends and strangers. They rated themselves and their friends on the dimensions which were assessed in the testing. They rated the strangers by

matching samples of their handwriting or artistic composition with photographs or short character sketches of the stranger. The subject's judgments were compared to the performance of the person judged in order to determine accuracy. Three types of judges were selected: accurate raters of friends, accurate raters of strangers and accurate raters of self. Results of this study suggested that individuals of one category of judges differed from individuals of the other two categories. The findings of this investigation offered no evidence that accuracy in judging others is a global trait.

A shift occurred in the late forties and early fifties in the field of person perception from efforts to demonstrate person perception accuracy as a global trait to efforts to examine the influence of social factors on interpersonal judgment. Investigations in this area prompted an interest in the relationship between interpersonal judgment and social behavior. Taft (1955) conducted an investigation aimed at detecting the main components of the ability to accurately judge others. Many of the studies in interpersonal judgment since the study by Taft have followed similar methodology. Taft studied the effect of the variables of socioeconomic status and minority group status in graduate students on accuracy of interpersonal judgment. He found no correlation in ability to judge and the variable

of socioeconomic status where judges rated subjects on six traits to predict the subject's responses to the same traits. However, Taft reported that Black students and foreign students were less accurate in judging middle-class White students than Jewish students. He posited that the Blacks and foreign students were too dissimilar and isolated from the subject group to judge them accurately but that the Jewish group possessed a marginal position in the American culture as a whole which provided both the opportunity and stimulus for making accurate judgments.

The nature of the conclusions from Taft's study emphasize the necessity of considering the problem of relevance in interpersonal perception research. Hastorf, Richardson and Dornbusch (1958) maintained that it is important to consider the primary aspects of person perception before conducting an investigation. The authors stated that it is first necessary to separate the goal of understanding the perceptual process from the goal of using data from person perception studies to predict behavioral responses. Once the goal is defined the investigator should consider two factors. One factor is the qualities of experience in social perception which are reflected in the verbal categories utilized to discuss or describe others. The second factor to consider is the nature of the determinants of these social experiences. For example, some determinants

might be occupation, race or socioeconomic status. After the qualities and determinants of the social perception have been investigated, then the consequences of a specific perception should be examined. Hastorf, et al. reasoned that the most important factor should be the impact the interacting variables of the social perception experience have on other behaviors.

Bronfenbrenner, Harding and Gallway (1958) focused on an important distinction when they differentiated sensitivity to individualized differences from sensitivity to generalized others. This factor of differential sensitivity can affect the behavior of any individual in his interactions with any other individual. A teacher's perceptions of thirty students as a group of minority students could serve to obscure the specific abilities and individuality of each student. There exists an obvious need for extensive research in the area of differential sensitivity; this variable could be either an advantage or a disadvantage depending on the specific situation.

Combs (1969) differentiated effective and ineffective workers in the social sciences or helping professions not on the basis of behavioral performance but on the basis of each worker's perceptual organization with respect to how the worker perceived other people and other people's behavior, themselves and the nature of their job. Combs

reported that results from pilot studies suggested that the perceptual organization of persons who are effective helpers (counselors, therapists, teachers, nurses and priests and ministers), have a number of common kinds of perception.

Since the early sixties there has been an expanding focus on identifying specific factors which influence an individual's perception of another and on studying the pervasiveness and extent of influence of these factors. Cline and Richards (1960) studied the affect of the variables of observer-subject similarity on person perception accuracy. They concluded that generality of judging ability to the extent found in their investigation could not be explained on the basis of observer-subject similarity. This study indicates the importance of investigations which focus on the determination of factors which influence interpersonal judgment. Information clarifying the existence of such factors in situations involving interpersonal judgment will enable researchers to study the various elements of each individual factor and the conditions under which these factors become operable. Then the impact of these factors on behavior can be investigated.

Knowledge gained from investigation in interpersonal judgment can be applied to the fields of clinical judgment and counseling and guidance. It also has application to a broader spectrum; any interaction between individuals will

be affected by each person's perception of the other. The nature of interpersonal relationships between a teacher and pupil, an employer and employee and between groups such as Model Cities coordinators and administrators could be adversely affected by each individual's perception of the other. Often individuals have misguided perceptions of the traits or abilities of others due to an inaccurate assessment of their true nature.

Inaccuracy in interpersonal judgment can be a result of racial group differences or class differences which can affect the accurate perception of the traits of others. Siegel and Siegel (1966) found that membership in reference groups affect the attitudes held by an individual. Urbancik (1973) found that person perception accuracy was highest for judges and subjects of the same ethnic group. Inaccurate interpersonal perceptions can also be a function of selective perceptions. Rommetviet stated (1960, p. 4): "an individual's perceptual responses to other persons are selective and selective in such a way that his discriminations are mainly made along those attributes or 'dimensions' that are dominant in the perceiver's own self-image." Therefore, if the perceiver assumes a similarity between himself and the perceived, perhaps on the basis of reference groups, and this similarity does exist, then the perceiver may make an accurate judgment. However, if the similarity

does not exist then the perceiver may make an inaccurate judgment. In some instances judgments based on stereotypic categorization can be accurate or inaccurate. It is essential to conduct further research in order to clarify under what conditions these variables influence interpersonal perception in either a positive or negative direction. The issue is complex. For example, membership in an ethnic group can enhance the possibility of accurate interpersonal judgments among group members. However, membership in the minority group does not guarantee accurate interpersonal perceptions among members of that group. Differences on other factors such as reference group membership, age, sex or socioeconomic status can influence the perceiver's interpersonal perception and result in a distorted or inaccurate perception.

In the present study the effects of ethnic group membership upon interpersonal judgment were examined under different conditions. Mexican-Americans participated as both models and subjects. The first variable under investigation was the variable of ethnic group membership. A reference group is a group with which an individual identifies himself/herself. Reference groups can be formed on the basis of socioeconomic class, occupation, student status or race. In this investigation Mexican-American students rated other Mexican-American students and

non-students to determine if membership in specific reference groups affect the accuracy of person perception. It was postulated that the subjects would not rate the non-student models as accurately as student models, despite the fact that they are of the same ethnic group. Brown (1973) compared scores on social distance scales between Whites and Mexican-Americans. He found that social distance indices reflected student's own ethnic group and the subcultural features of either group. He concluded that major differences were more a function of ethnicity than social class. It is possible that ethnicity outweighs social class in affecting social perceptions where different ethnic groups are involved. However, when members are of the same ethnic group the subcultural differences should be the most significant factors. It is important to study these variables both between members of different racial groups and among members of the same racial group. In some instances socioeconomic class or reference group differences outweigh racial differences. Terry and Evans (1972) investigated class versus race discrimination attributed to self and others. They indicated that respondents were more likely to discriminate along class than racial status.

The second variable investigated in this study was the variable of age. It was hypothesized that the subjects,

who were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, would rate the models of their own age more accurately than middle-aged models. Naus and Eckenrode (1974) investigated age difference and degree of acquaintance as determined by interpersonal distance. They reported that undergraduates had more negative attitudes toward old people than toward their peers.

The third variable investigated in the present study was the variable of sex. Gough (1968) found that female subjects were more accurate than males in ranking the personality characteristics of the subjects. Urbancik (1973) also investigated this variable but in his study no significance was attributable to the sex variable. Edwards and McWilliam (1974b) studied the effects of perceiver sex and expresser sex as related to cognitive perception. They found no differences in accuracy of perception by different sex perceivers. Taguiri (1969) reported that findings concerning the sex factor in person perception research were equivocal; he stated that studies had not consistently demonstrated that either sex was more accurate.

In summary, the three hypotheses posited in this investigation were that differences in person perception accuracy would be a result of the effect of the variables of age and reference group (student and non-student) and that sex would not be a significant variable.

## METHOD

### Subjects

Eight volunteer Mexican-Americans served as models (Ms). Four of the models were over 40 years of age; two of the models were students and two were non-students. One male model and one female model served in the student and non-student condition. Four of the models were between the ages of 18 and 25; two of these models were students; two were non-students. One male and one female model served in the student and non-student condition.

Subjects (Ss) consisted of 40 Mexican-American students, 20 males and 20 females between the ages of 18 and 25. Subjects were selected from a pool of Mexican-American students who signed up to participate in the interpersonal perception investigation.

### Procedure

Each of the eight models was asked to individually give a five minute verbal social history of various aspects of his relationships with his family and peers, his educational background, work history and future ambitions. This social history was videotaped. A brief outline was offered

to all Ms as a guide but Ms were free to discuss any aspects of their social history during the five minute session.

Following the videotaped social history presentation each model was asked to rate himself on a scale of personality traits first employed by Asch (1946) in his experiment on impression formation. These traits are: intelligent, skillful, industrious, determined, practical, warm and cautious (a list of these traits is contained in Appendix A). The models were asked to rate themselves on each trait with a number from one to seven. Number one indicated that the trait was most like the model, number seven indicated that the trait was least like the model. Creelman (1966) stated that there is an interdependence of language and the meaning of events or experiences; these factors are closely interrelated. He indicated that the verbal categories of our culture determine our experience of the world. For this reason the rating scales and instructions were printed in both English and Spanish in this study (copies of the model's rating scale can be found in Appendix A).

The 40 subjects in the study were informed that the study was an investigation in interpersonal perception. They were told that the task was to rate the models individually on the seven personality traits. Subjects were informed that models had previously rated themselves on

these traits. Prior to viewing the videotape they were given a copy of the rating scale which was printed in both English and Spanish (a copy of this scale can be found in Appendix A). The Ss were asked to read the rating scale then the investigator read the instructions and answered any questions. These instructions were:

This is a study in interpersonal perception. You will be shown a videotape of different models. Each model will talk for five minutes about his life history. After receiving the videotape, please rate the models on the basis of the seven personality characteristics listed on this sheet. Rate the models according to how you think the model rated himself. Rate the characteristics with the numbers from one to seven, depending on how well they describe the model, with one being most like the model and seven being least like the model.

The subjects watched the videotape of each individual model's social history. After viewing one model, the subjects rated the model then viewed the videotape of the next model.

The subjects participated in groups ranging from three to seven until 20 subjects for the male and female condition were obtained. Subjects were asked to choose a viewing time during the day or evening which best fit their schedule.

## RESULTS

The dependent variable in this study, the total difference score (D) was derived by taking the total of the model's self-ratings across the traits then subtracting each subject's rating for that model from the model's self-rating.

An analysis of variance was performed on D; results of this analysis are presented in Table 1. The significance scores were also tested using the Tukey H.S.D. method (Runyon and Haber, 1972). All four main effects were significant (subject's sex,  $F = 7.25$ ,  $df\ 1/38$ ,  $p > .025$ ; model's age,  $F = 31.67$ ,  $df\ 1/38$ ,  $p > .001$ ; model's sex,  $F = 150.46$ ,  $df\ 1/38$ ,  $p > .001$ ).

As signified in Table 2, male subjects overestimated the models (means of -3.65 and 0.38 respectively, although the difference was not significant in the post-hoc Tukey H.S.D. test). The older students were overestimated by the subjects (means of -3.58 and 0.31 respectively, significant at the .01 level in the Tukey H.S.D. test). Students were overestimated (mean of -3.175) more than non-students (mean of -.094); the difference was

TABLE 1  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON TOTAL DIFFERENCE SCORES

Source	df	MS	F
Subject's Sex (A)	1	1300.078	7.25 <sup>a</sup>
Error S(A)	38	179.783	
Model's Age (B)	1	1212.903	31.67 <sup>b</sup>
A X B	1	9.453	>1
Error S(A)B	38	38.297	
Model's Reference Group (C)	1	759.528	27.38 <sup>b</sup>
A X C	1	45.753	1.64
Error S(A)C	38	27.733	
Model's Sex (D)	1	3969.153	150.46 <sup>b</sup>
A X D	1	35.778	1.35
Error S(A)D	38	26.387	
B X C	1	12437.578	324.23 <sup>b</sup>
A X B X C	1	24.753	>1
Error S(A)BC	38	38.363	
C X D	1	47.278	>1
A X C X D	1	14.028	>1
Error S(A)CD	38	50.600	
B X D	1	3597.903	93.67 <sup>b</sup>
A X B X D	1	10.878	>1
Error S(A)BD	38	38.417	
B X C X D	1	983.503	30.30 <sup>b</sup>
A X B X C X D	1	12.403	>1
Error S(A)BCD	38	32.453	

NOTES: ap < .01  
bp < .001

TABLE 2  
 MEANS AND SIGMAS FOR SIGNIFICANT MAIN EFFECTS  
 OF TOTAL DIFFERENCE SCORES

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VARIABLE:

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SUBJECT'S SEX	MALES	FEMALES
$\bar{X}$	-3.65	.38
$\underline{SD}$	10.98	11.33
MODEL'S AGE CLASS <sup>a</sup>	YOUNG	OLD
$\bar{X}$	.31	-3.58
$\underline{SD}$	12.43	9.65
MODEL'S REFERENCE GROUP <sup>b</sup>	STUDENTS	NON-STUDENTS
$\bar{X}$	-3.17	-.09
$\underline{SD}$	8.51	13.41
MODEL'S SEX <sup>c</sup>	MALE	FEMALE
$\bar{X}$	1.88	-5.15
$\underline{SD}$	12.82	8.21

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NOTE: Negative values indicate overestimation, positive values indicate underestimation

<sup>a</sup>These two means are significantly different at .01 level. (Tukey's H.S.D. Test, Runyon and Haber, 1972)

<sup>b</sup>These two means are significantly different at the .05 level.

<sup>c</sup>These two means are significantly different at the .01 level.

significant in the post-hoc Tukey H.S.D. test at the .05 level. Females were overestimated (mean of -5.15) while males were underestimated (mean of 1.88) by the subjects. These two means were significantly different at the .01 level in the post-hoc Tukey's H.S.D. test. In summary the female subjects in general perceived the models more accurately; the older models, student models and female models were generally overestimated. The first hypothesis, non-student models would be rated less accurately than student models, was not confirmed. The second hypothesis, younger models would be rated more accurately than older models, was confirmed. The third hypothesis, females would not rate subjects more accurately than males, was not confirmed.

Table 3 indicates the means for the two-way interactions between model's age class and model's reference group and sex. In the first interaction the young students (means of -7.46) and the old non-students (mean of -8.27) were overestimated, this difference was significant in Tukey's H.S.D. test at the .01 level. The young non-students were underestimated and the old students were rated most accurately (means of 8.08 and 1.11 respectively, these differences were significant at the .01 level according to Tukey's H.S.D. test). In the second interaction, the young male students were underestimated (mean of 7.13) and

TABLE 3

MEANS AND SIGMAS FOR SIGNIFICANT TWO-WAY INTERACTION  
EFFECTS ON TOTAL DIFFERENCE SCORES

	MODEL'S YOUNG	AGE	CLASS OLD
MODEL'S REFERENCE GROUP			
STUDENTS			
$\bar{X}$	-7.46 <sup>b,e</sup>		1.11 <sup>c,d,e</sup>
$\underline{SD}$	7.734		5.20
NON-STUDENTS			
$\bar{X}$	8.08 <sup>a,b,c</sup>		-8.27 <sup>a,d</sup>
$\underline{SD}$	11.50		9.69
MODEL'S SEX			
MALE			
$\bar{X}$	7.18 <sup>a,b,c</sup>		-3.41 <sup>b</sup>
$\underline{SD}$	11.15		11.25
FEMALE			
$\bar{X}$	-6.56 <sup>a</sup>		-3.75 <sup>c</sup>
$\underline{SD}$	8.43		7.79

NOTE: For all pairs of means indicated by superscript letters, the difference was significant at the .01 level using Tukey's H.S.D. test.

the young female student was overestimated (mean of -6.56); this difference was significant at the .01 level in the post-hoc Tukey H.S.D. test. Both old male and female models were overestimated (means of -3.413 and -3.750 respectively but not to the extent of the young female models (mean of -6.563); differences in these means were significant at the .01 level according to the post-hoc Tukey's H.S.D. test.

The significant three-way interaction occurred between model's age class, reference group and sex as shown in Table 4. Young male non-students were underestimated (mean of 17.10) while young female non-students were overestimated (mean of -.925). This difference in means was significant at the .05 level using Tukey's post-hoc H.S.D. test. Old male and female non-students were overestimated but there was no significant difference between means. To a lesser extent the young male student was overestimated but not as much as the young female student (means of -2.725 and -12.200 respectively, significant at the .05 level according to Tukey's H.S.D. test. Old male students were underestimated (mean of 2.65) and old female students were overestimated (mean of -.425), the difference in these means reached the .05 level of significance (Tukey's H.S.D. test). The two models perceived most accurately were the young non-student female and the old student female.

TABLE 4

MEANS AND SIGMAS FOR SIGNIFICANT THREE-WAY INTERACTION  
EFFECTS OF TOTAL DIFFERENCE SCORES

MODEL'S REFERENCE GROUP AND SEX	MODEL'S AGE CLASS	
	YOUNG	OLD
STUDENTS		
Male		
$\bar{X}$	-2.72 <sup>c</sup>	2.65
$\underline{SD}$	6.30	6.04
Female		
$\bar{X}$	-12.20 <sup>a</sup>	-.42 <sup>b,c</sup>
$\underline{SD}$	5.95	7.51
NON-STUDENTS		
Male		
$\bar{X}$	17.10	-9.47 <sup>a,d</sup>
$\underline{SD}$	7.61	12.02
Female		
$\bar{X}$	-.92 <sup>b</sup>	-7.07 <sup>d</sup>
$\underline{SD}$	6.59	6.56

NOTE: For all pairs of means indicated by superscript letters, the difference was not significant at the .05 level.

All other pairs of means were significantly different at .05 level.

The data may not necessarily indicate that the subjects were responding to the model characteristics as discussed above. The difference in accuracy of perceiving the various models could be in part a function of the data transformation into difference scores. The possibility exists that the subjects may not have judged the models significantly differentially in all cases but that the model's self-ratings contributed to the significant effects.

The raw scores were examined to determine whether subjects had discriminated between the models or whether the significant effects of the previous analysis could be partly a result of the different values which were subtracted from the raw scores to obtain the difference. Table 5 presents the results of the analysis of variance on the total of untransformed ratings given each model. Three of the main effects were significant: subject's sex ( $F = 4.44$ , significant at the .05 level), model's reference group ( $F = 4.52$ , significant at the .05 level) and model's sex ( $F = 14.54$ , significant at the .001 level). Two of the interaction effects were also significant: model's age and model's reference group ( $F = 11.86$ , significant at the .005 level) and model's reference group and model's sex ( $F = 24.05$ , significant at the .001 level). However, in general the significance in the analysis of variance on untransformed

TABLE 5  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR RAW SCORES

Source	df	MS	F
Subject's Sex (A)	1	841.753	4.443 <sup>a</sup>
Error S(A)	38	189.427	
Model's Age (B)	1	87.153	3.375
A X B	1	85.078	3.323
Error S(A)B	38	25.826	
Model's Reference Group (C)	1	149.878	4.526 <sup>a</sup>
A X C	1	1.378	< 1
Error S(A)C	38	33.115	
Model's Sex (D)	1	448.878	14.545 <sup>c</sup>
A X D	1	0.028	< 1
Error S(A)D	38	30.861	
B X C	1	318.003	11.869 <sup>b</sup>
A X B X C	1	0.028	< 1
Error S(A)BC	38	26.792	
C X D	1	841.753	24.050 <sup>c</sup>
A X C X D	1	13.203	< 1
Error S(A)CD	38	35.004	
B X D	1	5.778	< 1
A X B X D	1	13.203	< 1
Error S(A)BD	38	20.188	
B X C X D	1	14.028	< 1
A X B X C X D	1	5.253	< 1
Error S(A)BCD	38	16.351	

NOTE:  $a_p < .05$   
 $b_p < .005$   
 $c_p < .001$

data was less than the significance for the analysis of variance on D scores. This suggests that a certain degree of the significance for the D scores data may be a function of data transformation to difference scores based on model's self-ratings.

## DISCUSSION

Lack of confirmation of the first hypothesis (non-student models would be rated less accurately than student models) can be viewed in terms of factors which influenced the subject's judgment of the models. In the present study, the student models were more highly overestimated than the non-student models. The issue is not simply the accuracy of the judgment but the direction of the error. The overestimation of the student models may be a function of the belief systems of the subject. Canon and Matthews (1971) maintained that belief systems are one of the most important variables in interpersonal evaluation. They indicated that interpersonal judgments reflect how similar or different the perceiver views the belief system of the stimulus person. In this study, the student subjects could have perceived the student models as similar to themselves and rated them on the basis of perceived similarity; this could account for the overestimation.

Another factor which can intervene in the interpersonal judgment process is the variable of trait attribution. Feldman (1972) reported that studies of trait centrality show that information about personality characteristics may lead to the attribution of entire

complexes of traits. He investigated stimulus characteristics and subject prejudice as determinants of stereotype attribution. He found that professionals were rated higher than working class individuals. Race was not the predominant factor in interpersonal judgments; Black professionals were rated higher than White working class individuals.

These findings demonstrate the need to determine the central trait of the stimulus person. The central trait often becomes the primary focus and interpersonal judgments are based on this factor. The most significant subject characteristic in the present study appeared to be student/non-student status. When the models and subjects belong to the same ethnic group, perceptions may be based mainly on a central trait such as reference group. Studies which have investigated person perception accuracy between different races may have demonstrated significant intra-race accuracy because race is the central trait. This does not mean that this effect generalizes to all situations involving interpersonal perception among same-race individuals. There is a danger in generalizing from person perception studies and clinical judgment studies involving same-race participants. Positive findings in some studies do not guarantee that same-race client/therapist dyads and same-race student/teacher interactions are more effective.

than between race interactions. The results of the present study for the reference group variable suggest that the same stereotype categorization which influences different race interpersonal perceptions also influences some race interpersonal perceptions.

The second hypothesis of this investigation (younger models would be perceived more accurately than older models) was confirmed. It is probable in this instance that perceived similarity produced more accurate judgments. Bengtson (1971) in his study of interpersonal perception concluded that older people are generally perceived more negatively than younger individuals. He suggested that these findings could be a function of the closeness or distance perceived in the relationship. In some cases generalization from older family members to older stimulus persons could produce more accurate judgments. Findings of the present study regarding the age variable could in part be attributed to the young subject's perception of a large difference or increased social distance between the older models and themselves. This may be a reaction of the student to the more traditional cultural values espoused by the older models. Mittelbach and Moore (1970) discussed the impact of increased experience in the larger Anglo-American system on the strength of the Mexican-American's identification with his/her own ethnic group. They indicated that increased

interaction in the larger system, especially rewarding experience, decreases the saliency of the ethnic group as the prime source of identity.

Bell and Stanford (1973) reported the tendency for both younger and older subjects to rate younger stimulus persons more accurately than older stimulus persons. It may be possible that the traits which are employed do not have the same meaning for older and younger individuals. The categories employed in the present study may not have been perceived the same by the older and younger models. The inaccurate judgments of the older individuals in this case could reflect a lack of relevancy of the task for older individuals. It is interesting that the inaccurate judgments reflect an overestimation of the older models. Some consideration should be given to factors which could produce the overestimated judgments. Rubel (1966) discussed the importance of respect for one's elder in the Mexican-American culture. In this culture, the elders are the major organizing principle of the family, which constitutes the most important unit of social interaction.

The final hypothesis of this study that females would not rate the models more accurately than the males was not confirmed. Although research findings in this area are contradictory, a review of a few studies suggests reasons for this inconsistency. Tarantino (1973)

administered questionnaires to ten male and female dyads (roommates) and reported no difference between males and females in interpersonal perception. The lack of difference in this study could be a result of the close interpersonal relationship of the individuals; this enhances each person's knowledge of the other's personality characteristics and, more importantly, their knowledge of each other's self-concept. McCall, Mazaner, Erickson and Smith (1974) found that female observers were superior to male observers when judging videotaped presentations of models. They also indicated that this effect was more pronounced when male and female stimulus persons were rated rather than males or females separately. It does not appear that increased person perception accuracy is a global effect for all females in all situations. Instead research indicates that in certain specific situations, females are more accurate. It would be helpful to know under what circumstances females are not more accurate than males.

Findings from two other studies point out the risk of generalizing from research in the field of interpersonal perception to any social interaction. Edwards and McWilliam (1974a) used a semantic differential scale to assess the variable of sex differences in perception of others. They reported that high and low perceivers of males and females differed only on the semantic dimension of activity

for males and the evaluative dimension for females. This finding suggests a possible tendency of raters to employ stereotypic expressions for each sex which could cause varied interpersonal perception accuracy. Christensen (1974a) evaluated the effects of sex of judge and amount of information received on the accurate perception of other's traits. He concluded that certain traits were more difficult to perceive accurately and that the sex of the judge influences perceptual accuracy only on certain traits. Christensen also stated that increased information increases accuracy on some traits and decreases accuracy on others. It is possible in the present study that the relevancy and meaning of the task differed for males and females; this could decrease the attention of the male subjects to the task and cause less accurate judgments.

The findings of this investigation have implications for the field of clinical judgment and psychotherapy evaluation. It is not possible to directly generalize from a sample of college student participants in a controlled research situation to therapist-client interactions. However, results of interpersonal perception studies can enhance the clinician's knowledge of factors which affect interpersonal judgment. It seems that too often only the most obvious factors are taken into consideration, such as differences in race. Positive research findings that

same-race therapist-client dyads are more effective often serve to limit investigation in the same area. What is needed is a fresh examination of same-race client-therapist dyads. This would enable clinicians and other professionals to be attuned to factors which affect the accuracy of interpersonal judgment in their own race and culture. Roark (1974) suggested that counseling minorities is no different from counseling other individuals. He stated that both same race and different race therapists and counselors need to be aware of the same factors which distort perception. The most important consideration in understanding another is understanding how the person views himself/herself. In some instances, different race therapists may be more accurate than same-race therapists because they do not make inaccurate judgments based on perceived similarity.

Results of this study can only be regarded as tentative because of extraneous factors which impinged on the total investigation. The researcher is a member of the Anglo-American community; this affected the process of soliciting volunteers from the Mexican-American student population. Simmons (1970) discussed the images held by Mexican-Americans towards Anglos. He stated that many Mexican-Americans view Anglos as exploitive, cold, exclusionary and distant. This negative stereotype can influence the nature of interactions between

Mexican-American and Anglos. Many of the Mexican-American students who were approached regarding participation in the present investigation expressed feelings that the research was exploitive. A number of students also alluded to their distrust of any Anglo investigator involved in minority group research.

In view of the feelings conveyed by a large percentage of the Mexican-American students approached regarding the research and their unwillingness to participate in this investigation, the students who volunteered to participate should be considered a select group and not necessarily representative of the population as a whole. Rosenberg (1965) reported that subjects participating in attitude measurement research and interpersonal judgment research generally wish to present themselves in an enlightened way; as a result they assign positive characteristics to the stimulus person which do not really reflect their perceptions. Shrauger and Altrocchi (1964) reported a consistent tendency for subjects participating in person perception research to describe others favorably.

It is appropriate in the context of this study to consider the problem of experimenter bias and experimenter effects. As Rosenthal (1966) has demonstrated, experimental findings are often dependent on the nature of the subject-experimenter interaction more than the experimental

treatment. Some of the positive results reported in the literature may represent the experimenter effect of a positive interaction between subject and investigator. Christensen (1974b) investigated the generality of perceptual accuracy across persons and responses. Although he supported the concept of a global ability to perceive others, Christensen indicated that the sample population and investigators were from a homogeneous population. He suggested that this factor may enhance the possibility of significant positive results. The possibility exists that some subjects entered the present investigation with a negative perception of the nature of the research and with the intention of responding in a manner that would not be detrimental to members of their own culture.

Burma (1970) in a discussion of the Mexican-American culture indicated that Mexican-Americans have a tendency to respond positively even if they disagree. He noted that an outward attitude of pleasant agreement usually prevails. In this study the subjects may have responded favorably because they felt this was an expectation of the investigator or because of this cultural tendency to demonstrate agreement. Burma also maintained that pride is considered one of the most important attributes among Mexican-Americans. This factor may have resulted in favorable judgment of the models. Dworkin (1970) reported that

Mexican-Americans often have a negative stereotype of Anglos. If this factor was operating in the present study, the subjects could have been more disposed to make fewer discriminations among models and in general rate them favorably.

Although the results of this investigation are limited in nature, implications of a more generalized applicability could probably be obtained if future investigators employed the following modifications in the variables of number of models, the traits or rating scales and the relationship of the researcher to the cultural or ethnic group under study.

Research findings in the area of interpersonal judgment could be improved if more models were used for each condition. When only one model per condition is used, it is not possible to determine that the effects are a result of the independent variables and not the personality of the model. If several models are utilized, significant positive results obtained despite varying model characteristics are more meaningful. It would be efficacious to have more models per condition and fewer conditions in order to reduce the number of variables.

An important factor in interpersonal perception research is the saliency of the task for the subjects. In this study, the choice of trait words may have lowered

task relevancy. The seven traits used in this investigation may be more meaningful to the Anglo culture. Hase and Goldberg (1967) maintained that the aspect of item grouping on scale formulation has been overemphasized. They suggested that the relatively low validity coefficients typically reported in psychometric literature are probably caused by the inventory items themselves. One way to make the nature of the task cogent for the specific population, Mexican-Americans, would be to sample the Mexican-American for a data base of adjectives or descriptive phrases endorsed by these individuals as words representative of the model types. The traits endorsed by the highest percentage of respondents would be selected for the model-appraisal scale. The collection of the data base could be conducted by representatives of the Mexican-American community. Inclusion of individuals belonging to the ethnic group being researched in the process of the investigation can serve as an important link between the subject population and the investigator. Also, individuals from the minority community could conduct the sampling for a data base considerably less obtrusively than Anglo researchers and decrease the chance of experimenter bias and experimenter effect.

Future research in interpersonal perception should follow the method of videotaped model presentations applied

in this study. The use of videotaped presentations enhances the potential of accurately perceiving another. Cline, Atzet and Holmer (1972) assessed the validity of verbal and non-verbal cues in accurately judging others. They reported that a combination of verbal and non-verbal cues produced the greatest accuracy. Studies of interpersonal perception between client and therapist or students and teachers can be conducted in natural settings by using videotaped presentations of therapy sessions or classroom interactions. Judgments based on natural sequences of behavior would be less subject to the artificiality of a laboratory setting; this could certainly enhance the possibility of valid results.

The present investigation offers a significant contribution to the field of interpersonal judgment; it is one of the few studies on interpersonal perception in Mexican-Americans. The process of data acquisition and the results of this study contribute increased knowledge to the methodology of person perception research. This investigation represents an effort to move beyond the preliminary nature of previous studies which employed a mixture of ethnic groups. It is hoped that the results of this study provide a foundation for and stimulate additional research on interpersonal judgment in Mexican-Americans.

In addition to confirmation of hypotheses, the process of research should contribute to science by refining the methods and techniques of experimental design and analysis. Herein lies a major value of this effort. The primary aim of research involving human participants should be to increase our understanding of human behavior. In the opinion of this writer, the present investigation meets this criterion.

APPENDIX A

RATING SCALES

Stimulus Traits Employed by Asch (1946)

1. Intelligent
2. Skillful
3. Industrious
4. Determined
5. Practical
6. Warm
7. Cautious

RATING SCALESModel-Appraisal Scale

The following seven items refer to different personality traits. Circle a number from 1 to 7 for each trait. Circle the number that best describes the model, with 1 being most like the model and 7 being least like the model.

Los siete puntos que siguen se refieren a diferentes rasgos de personalidad. Determine con un círculo uno de los números de la 7, en cada rasgo. Seriale el número que mejor describe al modelo, siendo 1 lo más parecido al modelo y el 7 lo menos parecido.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	intelligent, inteligente
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	skillful, hábil
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	industrious, trabajador
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	determined, determinado
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	practical, práctico
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	warm, cálido
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	cautious, carento

RATING SCALES

Self-Appraisal Scale

The following seven items refer to different personality traits. Circle a number from 1 to 7 for each trait. Circle the number that best describes you, with 1 being most like yourself and 7 being least like yourself.

Los siete punto que siguen se refieren a diferentes rasgos de personalidad. Determine con un circulo uno de los números que mejor describe a usted, el número 1 la que mas se le parece y el 7 la que menos se le parece.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	intelligent, inteligente
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	skillful, hábil
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	industrious, trabajador
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	determined, determinado
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	practical, práctico
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	warm, cálido
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	cautious, cato

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