

## RESEARCH ARTICLES

# Stereotypes of Latinos and Whites: Do They Guide Evaluations in Diverse Work Groups?

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We examined whether stereotypes of Latinos as less warm and less competent than Whites guided perceptions of individuals in interacting work groups. Both Whites and Latinos rated Latino group members as lower in competence and warmth than White group members. This occurred in work groups with a majority of White members as well as in work groups with a majority of Latino members. The most favorable ratings were received by solo Whites in majority Latino groups, whereas the least favorable ratings were received by solo Latinos in majority White groups. Implications and future directions for research are discussed.

*Keywords:* stereotypes, groups, minority, diversity, Latinos

Latinos<sup>1</sup> represent one of the fastest growing ethnic minority populations in the United States. Latinos make up 14% of the employed population (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Forty-four percent of the growth in the nation's population between 2000 and 2020 is expected to be Latino (Therrien & Ramirez, 2000). How Latinos are perceived in the United States affects how they are treated and what opportunities and outcomes they have in this country. It is important to understand how Whites perceive Latinos, as Whites remain the dominant ethnic group in the United States. It is also important to understand how Latinos perceive themselves, as in-group perceptions can have a profound impact on individual and group outcomes.

This study examines how Latinos and Whites are evaluated by their group members in face-to-face groups. We examine whether Latinos are seen as less competent and less warm than Whites, consistent with stereotypes (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002), and whether Whites and Latinos agree on these evaluations. This study contributes to an understanding of ethnic stereotyping by acknowledging that stereotypes of Latinos may differ from those for other ethnic minority groups. This study also contributes to an understanding of diversity in

work groups by focusing on interactions between Latinos and Whites specifically (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

### Stereotypes of Whites and Latinos in the United States

Studies of ethnic diversity in interacting groups have tended to combine members of different ethnic minorities into a "non-White" or "minority" category (for reviews, see van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998)<sup>2</sup>. Although ethnic minority groups share much in common, they have different histories, stereotypes, and perspectives. It is therefore important to study specific minority ethnic groups, and how they interact with Whites, separately. We examine stereotyping in interacting groups of Latinos and Whites.

Whites and Latinos have different histories, status, and stereotypes in the United States. Whites dominate the United States in numbers and in power, controlling disproportionate amounts of economic, political, and social capital. Latinos as a group are often judged as unwanted and unskilled newcomers, earning considerably less than Whites per year (30% less in 2007, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term *Latino* to refer to individuals of Latin American descent, regardless of skin color, and the term *White* to refer to individuals of European descent. In mainstream American culture, Latinos are also referred to as Hispanic or Chicano/a and the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2007), for example, asks individuals to specify whether they are "White (non-Hispanic)" or "Hispanic."

<sup>2</sup> Putting members of different Latino groups together (e.g., Mexican and Columbian) also glosses over important differences between these groups, but members of different Latino groups are likely to share more in common with each other in the United States than with other ethnicities when it comes to ethnic stereotypes.

In California—the state with the largest number of Latinos in the U.S. (U.S. Bureau of Census Statistics, 2007)—university students rate Latinos as having significantly lower social status than Whites.<sup>3</sup>

Stereotypes of social groups can be classified along the dimensions of competence and warmth (Fiske et al., 2002). Competence elicits respect whereas warmth elicits liking. Perceptions of the competence and warmth of a group depend on its social status and whether the group is seen as cooperative and accommodating or competitive and threatening (Glick & Fiske, 2001). High-status groups are perceived to be more competent than low-status groups, whereas cooperative groups are perceived to be warmer than competitive groups. Studies show that Whites are judged as competent and warm, Asians are judged as more competent but less warm than Whites, and Blacks and Latinos are judged as less competent and less warm than Whites and Asians (Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999).<sup>4</sup> This concurs with the relatively low status of Latinos and with perceptions of them as competing with Whites for resources (e.g., jobs, services).

Though Latinos and Blacks may be similarly stereotyped; they are likely to differ in how much they endorse common stereotypes. Latinos show less in-group favoritism (i.e., positive bias toward their own vs. other ethnic groups) than Blacks do (Carpenter, Zárate, & Garza, 2007; Sidanius, Levin, Federico, & Pratto, 2001), and thus may be more likely to endorse negative stereotypes of their group. Research also shows that Latinos are less likely than Blacks to view actions taken against a member of their group as prejudicial (Triandis, Kurowski, Tecktiel, & Chan, 1993), supporting the idea that Latinos are more likely to view these negative actions, and potential explanations of them—including negative views of the target—as fair.

Most of the stereotyping literature to date has studied individual appraisals of hypothetical others they never meet (e.g., with photos, names, vignettes). Although these studies have laid very firm groundwork for the stereotyping literature, to better understand how social stereotypes operate in reality we must also study them within social contexts (Berdahl, 2008). Stereotypes might have less influence on perceptions during social interactions if they are outweighed by the vast amount of information provided during live exchanges, as individuals observe and communicate with each other as multidimensional beings and not as abstract representations of the social categories they represent. For this reason, we chose to study stereotyping in ethnically diverse and interacting groups.

The use of stereotypes to perceive Latinos and Whites in groups may be minimized or even reversed depending on processes of social perception and the ratio of Latinos and Whites in the group. If an interacting group context minimizes or erases ethnicity as a meaningful category due to the multitude of other individuating information available (e.g., gender, age, personality, ideas, ability), then Latinos and Whites should, on average, be evaluated as equally warm and competent (if they are) regardless of the ethnic composition of a group. If, on the other hand, people exhibit in-group favoritism to maintain a positive social identity in an intergroup context (e.g., Abrams, Thomas, & Hogg, 1990; Kanter, 1977/1993; Park, Ryan, & Judd, 1992; Pratt, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Taylor, 1981; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), or if positive in-group sentiments are magnified among members of a majority ethnicity in a group, then the ethnic

majority should average more positive evaluations than the ethnic minority. That is, Whites should be seen as more competent and warm than Latinos in majority-White groups, while Latinos should be seen as more competent and warm than Whites in majority-Latino groups. Finally, if both Whites exhibit in-group favoritism and Latinos exhibit out-group favoritism so that both Whites and Latinos stereotype Whites as more competent and warm than Latinos, then Latinos will be evaluated as less competent and less warm than Whites regardless of their relative proportions in the group.

To test which of these scenarios is the case—(a) a reduction in stereotyping during face-to-face interaction, (b) in-group prejudice by Whites as well as by Latinos, or (c) pro-White/anti-Latino prejudice by Whites and Latinos—we conducted a study of interacting groups in which half of the groups had three White members and one Latino member and the other half of the groups had three Latino members and one White member. Groups worked together on a decision-making task before each member privately rated each other's competence and warmth.

## Method

### Participants

One-hundred and 16 student volunteers (12 men and 104 women) from a large university in Southern California participated in this study. Their average age was 18.13 years ( $SD = 1.52$ ). They were assigned to 29 four-member groups, each consisting of all male or all female participants to avoid confounding sex with ethnicity and numerical representation in the group. This resulted in three all-male groups and 26 all-female groups.

Participants were prescreened by means of a short survey. Only self-identified White and Latino individuals participated in the study. The majority of the Latino participants (87%) were at least second generation Latinos in the United States (52 of the 60 Latino participants) and all were fluent in English. Participants were unaware of the selection criteria and of the hypotheses being tested. With approval from the university's human subjects review board, participants were led to believe that assignment to groups was random and that the study concerned the effectiveness of groups in decision-making tasks.

### Procedure

On arrival at the experimental rooms, each person was instructed to decide independently how to allocate \$11,200 in merit

<sup>3</sup> We asked students ( $N = 137$ ) at the same university in California from which the current study's sample was drawn, "In general, do Latinos or Whites have higher social status (respect and esteem)?" and to choose from one of the following answers: 1 (*Latinos have much higher status*), 2 (*Latinos have higher status*), 3 (*Latinos & Whites have equal status*), 4 (*Whites have higher status*), and 5 (*Whites have much higher status*). The average response was 4.17 ( $SD = .74$ ), which differed significantly from 3 (*Latinos & Whites have equal status*), in the direction of Whites having more status,  $t(1, 136) = 18.56, p < .001$ .

<sup>4</sup> Although Latinos in general tend to be rated as less competent and less warm than Whites, more varied distinctions in ratings are made when ethnicity is combined with socioeconomic status (e.g., migrant workers vs. professionals; Fiske et al., 2002). For the purposes here, we stick to general ratings of Latinos versus Whites.

bonuses among six meritorious employees from a hypothetical organization (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). This is a standard exercise also used to assess managerial performance (e.g., Howard & Bray, 1988; Thornton & Byham, 1982).

Participants were given 20 min to complete this task, which required them to read six supervisors' memos, containing information about the employees, such as the length of their organizational tenure, their salary, and the date of their last bonus. During this time the experimenter (in a separate room) assigned each person to a group based on ethnicity (participants' ethnicity information had been gathered from the prescreening survey). Two types of groups were created: White majority groups (three Whites and one Latino member) and Latino majority groups (three Latinos and one White member). There were 14 White majority groups and 15 Latino majority groups. Groups were homogeneous with respect to gender.

Participants were informed of the group to which they were assigned after the 20-min period, at which time the individual decision forms were collected. Once participants had joined their groups in separate meeting rooms, they were instructed to work together to come to a consensus about how to allocate the bonus funds. Each group was given one form on which to record the final decisions and their reasons for these decisions. Participants had unlimited time to complete this part of the task. When finished, each group reported to the experimenter in a room nearby. Average time to completion of the task for all groups was 31.83 min,  $SD = 8.00$ . Each participant completed a posttask questionnaire separately in a private room. They were reminded that all answers would remain confidential.

### Measures

In the posttask questionnaire, participants rated, and were rated by, all other members in the groups to which they were assigned. We asked participants to "rate each member of the group based on your interaction with them and to the best of your knowledge on the following characteristics," from 1 (*poor*) to 5 (*excellent*), on competence (5 items,  $\alpha = .90$ , knowledge, leadership skills, work ethic, wanted to achieve, and shared ideas for project), and on warmth (2 items,  $\alpha = .81$ , interpersonal skills and led social interactions; Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). Participants were then asked to identify the ethnicity of members of the groups to which they were assigned to see if participants were aware of the ethnicity of each member. Only groups in which every member correctly identified the ethnicity of every other member were used in the analyses (three groups were excluded<sup>5</sup>).

Although competence and warmth are theoretically orthogonal constructs, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses of the seven items to see if they were empirically distinct. We first fit a two-factor model (i.e., the two constructs) to the data. The comparative fit index (CFI), the adjusted-goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) were .99, .95, and .05, respectively, suggesting that this model provides a very good fit (Byrne, 2001). Next we fit a one-factor model to the data (i.e., loading all seven items onto a single construct). The CFI, AGFI, and RMSEA were .99, .88, and .10, respectively, which suggests that a one-factor model provides a poorer fit (Byrne, 2001). These results indicate that the two constructs fit the data better than one construct alone.

### Statistical Analyses

As is the case in group-level research, individuals in each of the groups were exposed to the same group context, violating the assumption of independent observations for ordinary least square (OLS) regressions. Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM5, Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2000) was chosen because it accounts for this nonindependence of error terms and estimates standard errors without bias in terms of group membership. The effects of factors at higher levels (Levels 2 and 3) on individual-level (Level 1) outcomes are estimated simultaneously, which allows examination of predictors at the appropriate levels of analysis (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992).

A three-level hierarchical linear model (HLM) was applied to this nested design in which type of group (White majority or Latino majority) was varied between group members' ethnicity (Latino or White) and numerical distinctiveness (majority member vs. minority member). Two contrast terms were used to compare ratings of members in groups: (a) ratings received by majority-versus minority-group members and (b) ratings given by majority-versus minority members. Each contrast was further analyzed through its interaction with the type of group. We evaluated the null models (models without predictors) for ratings of competence and warmth and found significant Level 2 and Level 3 variances in the ratings, validating HLM5 as the correct analysis strategy for our data (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Raudenbush et al., 2000).

### Results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and correlations for all measures.

As individual ethnicity was dichotomous, the variable Latino (ethnicity coded 1 = Latino) had a mean of .51 ( $SD = .50$ ) indicating that approximately half of the participants were Latino. Type of group was also dichotomous. The variable Latino majority group (type of group coded 1 = Latino majority group) had a mean of .52 ( $SD = .50$ ) indicating that half of the groups were Latino majority groups. As would be expected, Latino majority group was significantly and positively correlated with being a Latino ( $r = .50, p < .001$ ). Competence ( $M = 3.68, SD = .93$ ) was significantly and negatively correlated with being a Latino ( $r = -.33, p < .001$ ). Warmth ( $M = 3.77, SD = .95$ ) was also significantly and negatively correlated with being a Latino ( $r = -.23, p < .05$ ).

### Competence

The analysis of ratings of group members' competence revealed a significant interaction between type of group (White majority vs. Latino majority) and the first contrast of majority versus minority group members,  $\beta = .261, t(27) = 7.79, p < .001$  (see Table 2). To examine the pattern of this interaction, two simple effect tests were performed on the competence ratings within each type of group. In White majority groups, Whites were rated higher by both other Whites and by the Latino member than the Latino member

<sup>5</sup> In two of the excluded groups, at least one of the members misinterpreted the question regarding the ethnicity of the participants to refer to the ethnicity of the hypothetical employees in the scenarios for the task. In the third excluded group, one member left the question blank.

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliability Coefficients  
for the Variables in the Study

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Latino	0.51	.50	—			
2. Latino majority group	0.52	.50	.50**	—		
3. Competence	3.68	.93	-.33**	-.02	.90	
4. Warmth	3.77	.95	-.23*	.03	.82**	.81

Note. *N* = 116. Reliabilities are shown along the diagonal.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$ .

was rated by the Whites in the group,  $\beta = .305$ ,  $t(13) = 6.84$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Figure 1). In Latino majority groups, Latinos were rated lower by both other Latinos and by the White member than the White member was rated by the Latinos in the group,  $\beta = -.225$ ,  $t(14) = -4.67$ ,  $p < .001$ . Thus, Whites were rated as more competent than Latinos regardless of whether they were in the numerical majority or minority in the group (see Table 3).

Though there was a significant interaction between type of group (White majority or Latino majority) and the first contrast (ratings of majority members vs. minority members), there was no significant interaction between type of group and the second contrast (ratings of majority members by majority vs. minority members). Thus, majority members were rated similarly by both numerical majority and numerical minority members. There was also no significant main effect of type of group on competence ratings as there was no difference in competence ratings between Latino majority groups and White majority groups. There was also no significant main effect of the type of rater (i.e., the second contrast). No difference existed between the ratings of the majority members or the ratings of the minority (see Table 2).

### Warmth

The three-level HLM applied to analyze warmth ratings revealed the same pattern of results. As can be seen in Figure 2, there was a significant interaction between type of group (White majority vs. Latino majority) and the first contrast of ratings of majority versus minority members,  $\beta = .195$ ,  $t(27) = 5.27$ ,  $p < .001$ . To examine the pattern of this interaction, two simple effect tests were performed on the ratings of warmth within each type of group. In White majority groups, Whites were rated higher by both other Whites and by the Latino member than the Latino member was rated by the Whites in the group,  $\beta = .237$ ,  $t(13) = 4.88$ ,  $p < .001$ . In Latino majority groups, Latinos were rated lower by both other Latinos and by the White member than the White member was rated by the Latinos in the group,  $\beta = -.177$ ,  $t(14) = -3.26$ ,  $p < .01$ . Thus, Whites were rated as warmer than Latinos regardless of whether they were in the numerical majority or minority in the group (see Table 3).

Though there was a significant interaction between type of group and the first contrast (ratings of majorities vs. ratings of minorities), there was no significant interaction between type of group and the second contrast (majority member ratings from majority vs. minority members). There was also no significant main effect of type of group in ratings of warmth. No difference in warmth ratings was found between Latino majority groups and White majority groups. There was also no significant main effect of the second contrast. No differ-

ence existed between the ratings given by majority members and the ratings given by minority members.

### Discussion

We examined group members' evaluations of Latinos and Whites in groups composed of mostly Whites and of mostly Latinos to see if stereotypes were abandoned in the process of group interaction, if in-group favoritism was exhibited by both Whites and Latinos, or if both Whites and Latinos used common stereotypes that favor Whites and denigrate Latinos. Our results are strikingly consistent with the last of these scenarios. Latino members were evaluated as less competent and less warm than Whites in both majority-White and majority-Latino groups. Whites received the most favorable ratings in majority-Latino groups, whereas Latinos received the least favorable ratings in majority-White groups. Rather than neutralizing or even reversing the relative advantage enjoyed by Whites, groups with a Latino majority exacerbated White advantage, whereas groups with a White majority exacerbated Latino disadvantage.

These results are consistent with prior research demonstrating that the status of a social category tends to matter more than its numerical representation in a group context (e.g., Chatman, Boisnier, Spataro, Anderson, & Berdahl, 2008; Heikes, 1991; Ridgeway, 2001; Sackett, DuBois, & Noe, 1991; Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000; Yoder, 1991). Status differences appear to be magnified by skewed distributions, giving individuals from high-status social groups additional advantage and individuals from low-status social groups additional disadvantage.

The ethnic stereotypes used to evaluate group members in this study are consistent with stereotypes identified in studies

Table 2  
Regression Results on Interpersonal Ratings

	Competence		Warmth	
	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>
Group type: Majority White versus majority Latino	-.08 <sup>†</sup>	.05	-.08	.05
First contrast: Majority versus minority ratings received	.04	.03	.03	.04
Second contrast: Majority versus minority ratings given	.02	.05	-.02	.06
First interaction: Group Type $\times$ First Contrast <sup>a</sup>	.26 <sup>b**</sup>	.03	.19 <sup>c**</sup>	.04
Second interaction: Group Type $\times$ Second Contrast <sup>d</sup>	.04	.05	.11 <sup>e†</sup>	.06

Note. Majority and minority = the proportion or number of either Latinos or Whites in the groups.

<sup>a</sup> Interaction between White majority group or Latino majority group and the ratings of majority members versus the ratings of minority members. <sup>b,c,e</sup> In the White majority groups, Whites were rated higher by both the other White members and by the Latino member than the Latino member was rated by the Whites in the group. In Latino majority groups, the Latino members were rated lower by both other Latino members and by the White member than the White member was rated by the Latinos in the group. <sup>d</sup> Interaction between the White majority group or the Latino majority group and the ratings given by majority versus minority members.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ . \*\*  $p < .001$ .

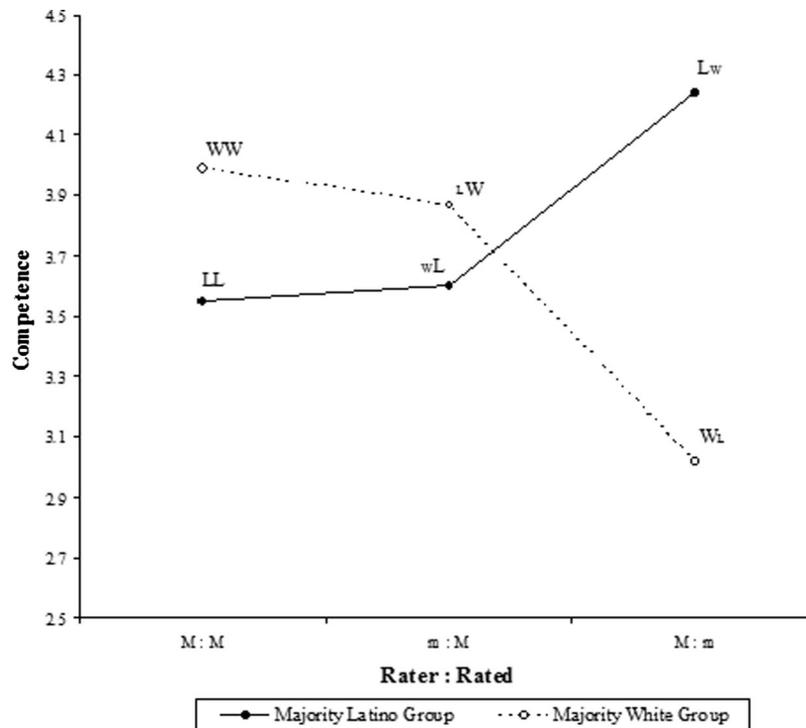


Figure 1. Competence ratings as a function of the type of rater, the person being rated, and the type of group. M = numerical majority; m = numerical minority; LL = Latinos' ratings of Latinos (all Latinos in the numerical majority); LW = Latinos' ratings of Whites (Latinos in numerical majority, Whites in the minority); WL = Whites' ratings of Latinos (Whites in minority, Latinos in the majority); WW = Whites' ratings of Whites (all Whites in the majority); WL = Whites' ratings of Latinos (Whites in majority, Latinos in the minority); LW = Latinos' ratings of Whites (Latinos in minority, Whites in the majority).

using abstract questionnaires and scenarios. These stereotypes withstood different group ethnic compositions as well as the effects of interpersonal exchanges in groups that provided opportunities to prove individual exceptions to social categorical rules. It is possible that ratings reflected actual displays of competence and warmth in groups: Whites may have actually

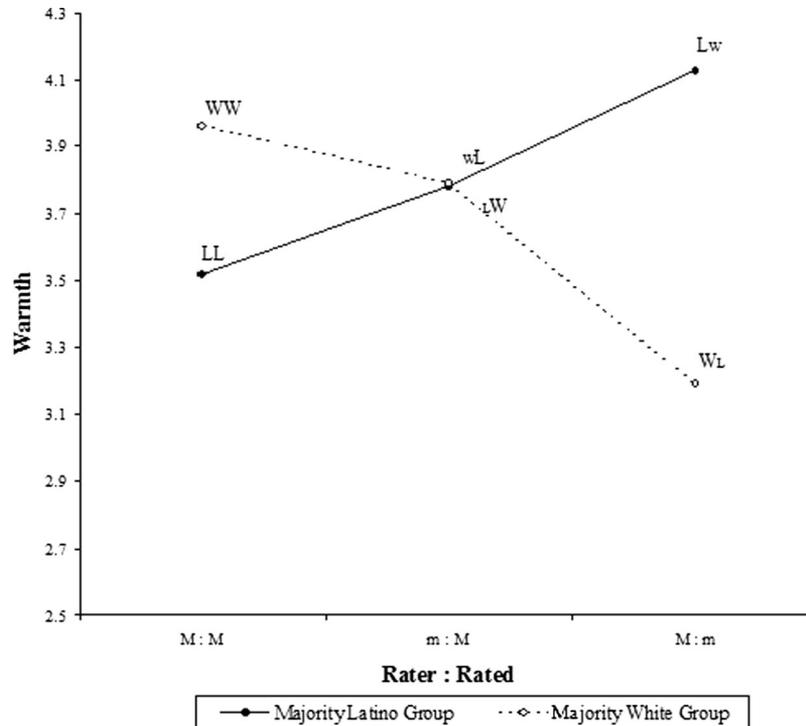
behaved more competently and warmly than Latinos. The fact that differences in ratings of Whites and Latinos were mainly observed for ethnically distinct individuals suggests that ratings were a function of social context: Either the perceptions of numerically distinct individuals were more stereotypic, the behavior of numerically distinct individuals was more stereotypic,

Table 3  
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Majority Latino and Majority White Groups on Each Dependent Measure by Numerical Status Rater and Rated

Dependent measure	Type of group	Rater: Rated <sup>a</sup>		
		M (SD)		
		M:M <sup>b</sup>	m:M <sup>c</sup>	M:m <sup>d</sup>
Competence	Majority Latino	3.55 (0.89)	3.60 (1.00)	4.24 <sup>e</sup> (0.54)
	Majority White	3.99 (0.70)	3.87 (0.71)	3.02 <sup>f</sup> (0.89)
Warmth	Majority Latino	3.52 (1.00)	3.78 (1.01)	4.13 <sup>g</sup> (0.73)
	Majority White	3.96 (0.70)	3.79 (0.82)	3.19 <sup>h</sup> (1.06)

Note. M = majority; m = minority.

<sup>a</sup> White members were always rated as more competent and warmer than Latino members regardless of whether they were in the numerical majority or minority in the group. <sup>b</sup> Majority members' ratings of majority members. <sup>c</sup> Minority members' ratings of majority members. <sup>d</sup> Majority members' ratings of minority member. <sup>e-g</sup> White members received the highest ratings when they were the only White person in the group. <sup>f,h</sup> Latino members received the lowest ratings when they were the only Latino person in the group.



*Figure 2.* Warmth ratings as a function of the type of rater, the person being rated, and the type of group. M = numerical majority; m = numerical minority; LL = Latinos' ratings of Latinos (all Latinos in the numerical majority); LW = Latinos' ratings of Whites (Latinos in numerical majority, Whites in the minority); WL = Whites' ratings of Latinos (Whites in majority, Latinos in the minority); WW = Whites' ratings of Whites (all Whites in the majority); WL = Whites' ratings of Latinos (Whites in majority, Latinos in the minority); LW = Latinos' ratings of Whites (Latinos in minority, Whites in the majority).

or both. Stereotypes likely shaped social expectations and perceptions, and therefore social behavior, in these groups, particularly for individuals whose ethnicity was salient (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 1991; Martens, Johns, Greenberg, & Schimel, 2006; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 2002).

The fact that both Whites and Latinos concurred that Latinos were less competent and less warm than Whites points to the challenges faced by Latinos in the United States. It is undoubtedly difficult to face negative stereotyping from out-group members, but to face similarly negative evaluations from in-group members is likely to make it particularly challenging for Latinos to overcome negative stereotypes. If the results of this study generalize to other contexts, they highlight significant impediments to Latinos' ability to improve their relatively low socioeconomic position in the United States compared to Whites, as these perceptions likely serve to justify and maintain their current low status. Perhaps a consciousness-raising movement like the one organized by Blacks in the United States of the 1960s would help Latinos reject negative stereotypes of their group and the detrimental effects of these stereotypes.

This study is based on college students who are presumably on their way up the socioeconomic ladder, which may mean they are more—or less—likely to question common assumptions and stereotypes about Latinos in the United States. Future research is needed that examines the perceptions of Latinos lower in socio-

economic status to see if these results generalize to the less fortunate majority of Latinos. Future research is also needed that investigates groups of both men and women, as the generalizability of our results may not extend to majority male populations.

## Conclusions

This study advances our understanding of stereotyping in ethnically diverse work groups by examining members' evaluations of each other in interacting work groups with a specific focus on interactions between Whites and Latinos. Other studies have examined stereotype processes in ethnically diverse groups, but most have treated different ethnic minorities interchangeably, combining them into one category or merely looking at the number of ethnic differences in a group without considering the ethnicities involved. This has limited the value of prior results by ignoring the distinct histories and stereotypes associated with different ethnic groups and the unique relations between them, and has led to inconsistent and confusing results in the literature on ethnic diversity in groups (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). A promising direction for future research into ethnic diversity in groups is to examine different ethnic groups separately and identify their unique and common experiences of social stereotyping and interaction in groups.

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