



Ethnicities of the Super Rich: American and International Student Perceptions

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Introduction

Scholars have identified three major factors affecting perception of wealth and inequality in the United States: "the dominant stratification ideology, individual social experience and the changing social atmosphere of the past decades, namely, rising social liberalism." (Kluegel & Smith, 1986). Each of these factors is believed to be based on an individual's social hierarchy related experiences, educational background and dominant political culture (Kreidl, 2000). In the United States, capitalism tends to promote position and wealth with ideological beliefs. Individuals align their perceptions with dominant cultural views, justifying "wealth results from hard work, exceptional talents and effort" or in contrast "that it follows from unequal opportunities, connections, dishonesty, or from failures of the economic system" (Kreidl, 2000). These views are perceived as legitimate only if the person normatively supports the causes based on his or her own cultural experience in his or her place of upbringing.

Literature Review

- The United States is the wealthiest nation on earth and exhibits among the highest levels of economic inequality of any advanced industrial nation (Bradshaw and Wallace, 1996; Braun, 1991; Kerbo, 1996).
- The nature of public opinion about the causes of the substantial economic disparities in the United States is not well understood (Hunt, 2004).
- On beliefs about wealth: African Americans, Latinos, and Whites show similar levels of support for individualistic explanations; however, ethnic minorities are more structuralist than whites on this issue. On beliefs about poverty, ethnic minorities are simultaneously more structuralist than are whites (Hunt, 2004).
- When Forbes has discussed nationality it has overstated diversity and understated the Jewish representation on its lists (Blumber, 2011, 4).

Null Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** American students overestimate White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) prominence.
- H₀₂:** American students underestimate Jewish prominence.
- H₀₃:** International students overestimate Jewish prominence.
- H₀₄:** American students overestimate Black, Hispanic and other White prominence.

Data

Binghamton University: Located on a 930 acre campus in upstate New York, it enrolls 3,000 graduate students and 11,861 undergraduates from all over the United States as well as international students hailing from over 100 countries worldwide. Of those, 3,200 are Jewish students.

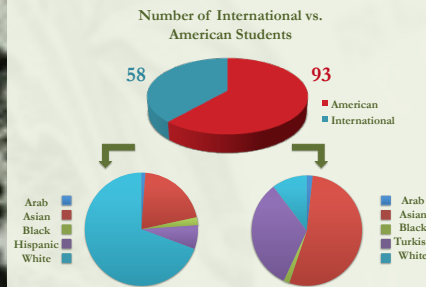


Table L1 Averages of Student Perceptions vs. Reality

Ethnicity	American	International	Reality
African-American	33.3	32.5	1.0
Arab-American	11.1	10.4	5.0
Asian-American	24.2	28.4	12.0
E. European-American	21.3	28.8	3.0
Hispanic-American	33.0	38.0	1.0
Irish-American	30.4	32.4	7.0
Italian-American	23.0	23.1	13.0
Jewish-American	27.9	41.1	114.0
Native-American	3.8	7.1	0.0
WASP	108.9	77.1	171.5
WAS-Catholic	59.7	53.9	

Table L2 Descriptive Statistics

Ethnicity	Mean	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
African-American	32.96	30.0	.597	.565	0	100
Arab-American	10.72	5.00	3.29	13.24	0	100
Asian-American	25.36	20.00	2.33	8.35	0	130
E. European-American	23.70	17.00	3.85	25.40	0	200
Hispanic-American	34.46	30.00	3.68	-0.71	0	100
Irish-American	31.11	30.00	.639	3.50	0	120
Italian-American	23.05	20.00	.70	1.19	0	70
Jewish-American	32.11	19.50	2.15	5.70	0	200
Native-American	5.19	1.00	6.53	49.50	0	140
WASP	98.05	99.00	.657	1.22	0	300
WAS-Catholic	57.00	60.00	1.138	2.20	0	180

Methods

Data Acquisition

Student In Class Surveys
Student Self-Reported Ethnicity Assignment

Variables of Study

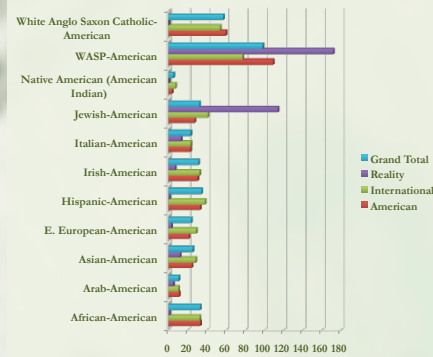
Ethnicity of Student
Ethnicity Ranks by Perceived Wealth

Method of Analysis

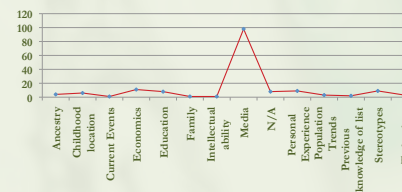
Comparison of Means/Graphs

Results and Analysis

Average Predicted Ethnicities on Forbes 400 List



Self-reported Reasons for Ethnic Wealth Perceptions



References

Blumber, M. Ethnicities of the Super-Rich: Changes in the Forbes 400 List. 2011.
 Hunt, M. O. Race/Ethnicity and Beliefs about wealth and poverty. 23 July, 2004. Social Science Quarterly. 85. 3. 827-853.
 Kluegel, J.R. & Smith, E. R. 1986. *Beliefs about inequality: Americans' views of what is and what ought to be.* Third Paperback Printing.
 Kreidl, M. Perceptions of Poverty and Wealth in Western and Post-Community Countries. 2000. Social Justice Research. 13. 2. 151-176.

Discussion

- Both American and International students underestimated WASP prominence on the list.
 - American students had an average of **108.9**
 - International students had an average of **77.1**
 - **31.8** person difference in predictions
 - **62.6** and **94.4** difference between predictions and reality, respectively
- Of the two, American students predicted closer to reality for WASP representation on the list.
- Both American and International students underestimated Jewish-American prominence on the list.
 - American students had an average of **27.9**
 - International students had an average of **41.1**
 - **13.2** person difference in predictions
 - **86.1** and **72.9** difference between predictions and reality, respectively
- Of the two, International students estimated Jewish-American prominence slightly closer to reality than American students.
- With the exception of Jewish-American and WASP-American, both American and International students overestimated prominence of **all** other ethnicities
- Media was the most reported factor influencing student perception of wealth and ethnicity

Potential Issues

- The sample size of this data is low when looking at results by student ethnicity.
- Student self-reporting of ethnicity may not have been accurate.
- Not every student understood the survey instructions and some students worked in groups.
- Data was collected at a New York State University; this may not be representative of the entire U.S., especially given Jewish prominence in the region.

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