# The marketing major and Hispanic students:
An occupational stereotype?

Suzanne N. Cory
St. Mary's University

ABSTRACT

Despite the Hispanic population growth in our country, only 7% of those earning a college degree in business each year are Hispanic. Within that 7%, only 5% major in marketing. The reason why so few Hispanic college students are interested in marketing is of interest. Students seek many sources of information when choosing a college major and the stereotype of members of occupations may represent one of those sources. Often college majors are chosen while students are still in high school. Therefore, a group of high school students completed a questionnaire in order to determine whether the stereotypical marketing manager's attributes were different between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students. No significant differences were found between the two groups or between genders within each group.

Keywords: Occupational stereotypes, marketing major, Hispanic higher education
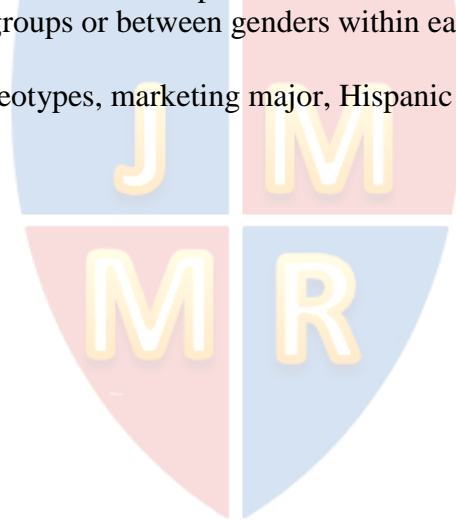
According to Carnevale et. al, (2011, p. 75) business is a popular major for college graduates and accounts for 25% of all degrees awarded each year. However, only 7% of individuals graduating with a degree in business are Hispanic. Within the business major, about 12% of graduates earned a degree in marketing or marketing research. However, only 5% of those earning a degree in marketing are Hispanic. Gender-wise, the male to female ratio of marketing majors is approximately equal, 49% and 51%, respectively.

Given the Hispanic population expansion in the U.S. and the corresponding increase in the proportion of middle class households within his group (Bernstein Research, 2010, p. 15), this population segment represents a growth opportunity for marketing goods and services. According to the study, the average Hispanic household spends less than non-Hispanics and the manner in which the income is spent is somewhat different between the two groups. Given this information, with so few Hispanics earning degrees in marketing, the question arises as to whether non-Hispanics have the ability to market these goods and services successfully to the Hispanic portion of our population. As indicated by Di Giovanni (2011), marketing messages and images need to be created to carefully avoid any Hispanic stereotype, such as an association with chili peppers or sombreros. He also indicates that Hispanic businesses are growing at three times the rate of business of other ethnic groups, but the Hispanic market is largely ignored and untapped, often because of misperceptions regarding its members. Di Giovanni found that one particular misperception is their questionable legal residency status in the U.S. and Abeyta and Hackett (2002) found that another misperception regards a universal Spanish proficiency in the Hispanic population. Dale (2008) offers advice about marketing to Hispanics and indicates, among other important issues, that the easiest way to access the market is from within the Hispanic community.

In addition, Hispanics, who represent our largest minority, are on average younger than non-Hispanic whites and are often bicultural which results in marketing challenges that do not exist for other groups (Martinez 2011). Martinez (2011) also states that although Hispanics represent 16% of our population, only 4% of the total advertising market is directed toward them. This seems to be a sign of wasted opportunities to reach an ever-growing segment of our population through appropriate marketing techniques. In 2009 Singh and Bartikowski indicated that although Hispanics are important consumers in our country, little research has been conducted in the area of U.S Hispanic advertising. Rizkallah and Truong (2010) later surveyed Hispanic American adults and listed implications for marketing managers interested in the Hispanic market, especially in Southern California. Pieraccini et al. (2010) indicated that due to the diversity and multicultural aspects of U.S. Hispanics, an integrated marketing campaign to reach the entire Hispanic population may be futile. They recommend focusing messages to a specific Hispanic subgroup in order to increase their effectiveness. Adams et. al (2008) investigated marketing strategy for Hispanics by assessing the locus of control among Latino and Anglo college students. Their results indicated that educated Hispanics are more acculturated and have attitudes more in line with other young educated consumers. They also felt that marketing efforts targeting young Hispanics separately could backfire if these efforts become a reminder of cultural values that this group is trying to discard. These results support the suggestion that more Hispanic business students should be encouraged to earn a degree in marketing.

A good choice of college major is important for all students and their decisions about a major could be the result of racial and gender differences (Song and Glick 2004). College major selection processes have previously been studied (Porter and Umbach 2006, Cohen and Hanno 1993, Kim et. al 2002) and methods to enhance students' role identity as marketing majors have

been identified (Kleine 2002). The relationship between personality traits and vocational choice (Garcia-Sedeño, et. al, 2009), and between personality traits and major declaration (Wikoff and Kafka 1978) has been investigated, but little has been done to determine the process of business major selection made by Hispanic students.

Job availability, earnings potential, interest, and aptitude in the subject matter are among the drivers in the major selection process. Gathering information about potential college majors takes many forms. Perceptions about individuals currently practicing the occupation may impact major selection. More specifically, notions held by college students about members of occupations as they begin their academic career may bias their perceptions of potential college majors. Thus, occupational stereotypes may positively or negatively impact a high school student's college major decision.. Many students decide their college majors as early as high school (Booker, 2005); therefore their perceptions of members of the profession may influence their decision about whether to major in marketing. This paper explores Hispanic high school students' perceptions of individuals in the marketing occupation.

PRIOR RESEARCH

Cory et. al (2010) measured young Hispanic college students' perceptions of accountants, marketing managers, and bankers and compared them to those of non-Hispanic white students. They found more differences in perceptions for the marketing manager between the two groups than for either of the other two occupations in their survey. Leppel (2001) determined that other minorities were less likely to major in business than Hispanics but she did not focus on a particular major within business. Erlach (2000) expressed concern regarding the underrepresentation of Hispanics in the business professoriate and offered measures to address the issue. Maceli and Box (2010) focused on retention of Hispanics as business majors in higher education and determined characteristics which contributed toward their persistence. However, choice of major within business was not addressed. Simpson (2001) found no significant differences in choice of academic major between Hispanic, African Americans and Native Americans, but discovered that gender is one of the primary determinants of major choice for all racial categories investigated.

According to Macrae et. al (1994), stereotypes are ingrained in our society and are culturally transmitted. Our society uses them for filtering, organizing, and remembering information, and stereotypes are useful to us because they allow us to form expectations regarding members of a common group. We can then alter our own behaviors in accordance with our expectation that all group members share common characteristics (Lee et. al, 2007). Society has developed gender, ethnic, racial, age and occupational stereotypes (McLean and Kalin, 1994; Coate et. al, 2003; Akbulut-Bailey, 2009). Powell and Kido (1994) hypothesized that appealing occupational stereotypes may interest individuals in joining occupations, whereas a less appealing stereotype may result in disinterest.,

According to Schneider (2004, p. 522), occupational stereotypes are usually "inoffensive" but Cory (1992) feels recruitment of qualified college graduates to certain occupations may be negatively impacted by the related stereotype. Almost 90 years ago, Spranger identified occupational stereotypes when he wrote ". . . no power in adult life moulds (sic) a man so strongly as his vocation. The whole mentality of the agriculturist is entirely different from that of the stock raiser; the artisan differs from the clerk and the fisherman from the miner." (cited in Guilford 1967, p. 57). Further, Coate et. al (2003) found preconceptions

regarding members of an occupation are sources of information which influence career decisions. Members in the occupation hypothetically exhibit personality traits which help determine the stereotype. Sutin et. al (2009, p. 23) state that "Jobs . . . are more than just a source of income; they often become a core aspect of identity. . . " Therefore, selection of a college major, which leads to a graduate's occupation, has many implications, both intrinsic and extrinsic. This is further demonstrated by Decker (1986), who pointed out that our first impression of an individual is often affected by learning of his or her occupation.

METHOD

A semantic differential instrument, similar to that used by Cory et. al (2010a) gathered information about perceptions of personality traits of members of four occupations: bankers, accountants, stockbrokers and marketing managers. Selection of these occupations was based on prior research (see, for example, Cory et. al 2007 and Cory et. al 2010b). They are all service occupations and growth has been predicted in 15 of the 16 service-providing industries for the ten year period ending in 2018. Thus, most individuals entering the job market during that ten-year period will find employment in a service industry. Study participants were expected to be familiar with these occupations.

The Sixteen Personality Factor (16 PF) Questionnaire (Cattell et. al 1993) provided the semantic differential terms. This questionnaire has been used since the mid-1940s to determine individual personality traits (e.g., Garcia-Sedeño, et. al 2009). However, the 16 PF Questionnaire was not used to actually determine actual personality traits, but to gather information about participants' perceptions of personality traits for members of each of the four occupations in this study. Four different high schools located in the Southwestern U.S. provided subjects who completed the survey, after having the instrument carefully explained. This resulted in 365 responses, but 11 were not complete, which netted 354 usable surveys. Of the 354 usable surveys, 177 (50%) were completed by Hispanic students and 47 (13%) were completed by non-Hispanic white students. The analysis was restricted to the total of 212 surveys completed by these two groups. The high school students ranged in age from 17 to 19. For Hispanics, 48% were males and 52% were females. For non-Hispanic whites, 57% were males and 43% were females. The sample was restricted to high school seniors, and was not random. However, each school was selected from a different part of the city and should represent a good cross section of individuals in their last year of high school.

Personality traits, based on the 16PF questionnaire, were presented in pairs on the instrument. Each pair of terms was separated by a seven-line scale. Participants were instructed to choose the more descriptive of the two words they felt were applicable to a member of the occupation indicated. They were to consider a member of the respective occupation and then place a mark between each pair of descriptive terms based on the strength of the association with the term. For example, the terms "Shy" and "Bold" were presented to the students in the following format:

	Very	Fairly	Slightly	Neither	Slightly	Fairly	Very	
Shy	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bold

Selection of the term on the left resulted in a score of -3, -2 or -1, based on the strength indicated (i.e., very, fairly or slightly, respectively) and 3, 2 or 1 if the term on the right was selected, again based on the strength indicated (i.e., very, fairly or slightly, respectively). If

"neither" was selected, zero was recorded. The last comparison asked the participants to indicate whether they thought a member of the occupation was more likely to be male, female or neither. The terms and definitions provided to the participants are shown in Table 1(Appendix). This information was printed on each page of the survey.

RESULTS

T-tests were computed in order to determine whether any of the attributes were different for the marketing manager for two groups: Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites. The results are presented in the first and second column of Table 2 (Appendix) respectively. The term found to be significantly different from zero is underlined in the first column. The results for Hispanic students indicated that 10 of the 16 terms were descriptive of a marketing manager. As shown in the first column, Hispanic students perceived that a marketing manager is an abstract thinker, emotionally stable, dominant, conscientious, bold, tough-minded, trusting, self-assured, following self-image and more likely to be male. The results for non-Hispanic white students indicated that 8 of the 16 terms were descriptive of a marketing manager. As shown in the second column, non-Hispanic white students perceived that a marketing manager is cool, dominant, conscientious, bold, tough-minded, self-assured, following self-image and more likely to be male. In all but two cases, (Sober/Enthusiastic and Practical/Imaginative) the direction of the t-tests was identical between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white student, which may indicate a general consensus between the two groups. Therefore, t-tests were computed to determine whether differences between the two groups could be found. The results are presented in the third column. The two groups had no significant differences in perceptions.

Attention was then focused on analyzing the responses based on gender. T-tests were computed to determine any differences in response between males and females for both of the groups in the study. Only two significant differences were found for Hispanics, as shown in Table 3. Males felt that the marketing manager would be described as cool, but females did not. Male Hispanics also felt that a marketing manager was more likely to be male than did the females. No gender differences were found for the perceptions of the non-Hispanic white students.

DISCUSSION

Results indicate that Hispanic students have definite perceptions regarding marketing managers' attributes. Ten of the 17 attributes are statistically significant from zero. Hispanic students feel that a marketing manager is (1) an abstract thinker (more intelligent), (2) emotionally stable (faces reality, calm), (3) dominant (assertive, aggressive, stubborn, competitive, bossy), (4) conscientious (conforming, moralistically staid, rule-bound), (5) bold (venturesome, uninhibited, can take stress), (6), tough-minded (self-reliant, no-nonsense, rough, realistic), (7) trusting (accepting conditions, easy to get on with), (8) self-assured (secure, feels free of guilt, untroubled, self-satisfied), (9) following self-image (socially precise, compulsive), and (10) more likely to be a male. It is also interesting that non-Hispanic white students have similar perceptions. Eight attributes are statistically significant for the second group of participants, and include seven of the same attributes. The only differences found were that non-Hispanic whites felt the marketing manager was cool (reserved, impersonal, detached and aloof), and did not feel the marketing manager was an abstract thinker or emotionally stable. Further, no

differences between the two groups were statistically significant. These results indicate that differing perceptions of marketing managers would not necessarily explain the disappointing number of Hispanics who choose to major in marketing.

Looking at perception differences between genders is also interesting. No differences were found in the perceptions of males and females for non-Hispanic whites and only two were found for Hispanics. Hispanic males felt the marketing manager was cool (reserved, impersonal, detached and aloof) and more likely to be a male than did their female counterparts. These results indicate that differing perceptions of marketing managers between genders would not necessarily explain an inability to recruit male or female Hispanics to the marketing major.

There are many elements and information sources that influence choice of major, and the perceived stereotype of those already in the profession makes only one contribution toward that decision. Keeping in mind that attractive occupational stereotypes may attract qualified individuals, one must ask whether the attributes agreed upon by the two groups would be appealing to Hispanics. Also, Hispanics may erroneously believe that they do not have the attributes associated with their perception of a marketing manager. These are matters for future research.

In the meantime, recruiting Hispanic students to the marketing major continues to be of concern and importance. As with all students, this target population should be informed about the personal and professional attributes required in order to be successful in the field and made aware of career opportunities for marketing graduates. Providing this information requires dedication on the part of all business school faculty as well as those in administrative positions in higher education. But employees in higher education need assistance from those in the "real world." Individuals in the marketing occupation could become more active in the recruitment of Hispanic students to the marketing major. This process could begin when the students are college freshmen or even while they are still in high school. If high school or early university years are the times when students decide their college major, it makes sense to expose them to successful Hispanics currently in marketing. Therefore, business school faculty should reach out to the Hispanic community and encourage those with a marketing career to serve as classroom speakers. The American Marketing Association (AMA) and the National Society of Hispanic MBAs (NSHMBA) are both ideal organizations to assist faculty in this endeavor.

Hispanics in the marketing occupation should readily agree to participate in recruiting programs. They could also arrange office visits, marketing internships and job shadowing opportunities. These activities should stimulate more interest in, knowledge of and enthusiasm for a career in marketing. Organizations of all sizes and affiliations need qualified individuals in their marketing departments and Hispanics are strategically aligned to promote goods and services in this segment of our society. As the Hispanic population grows in our country, everyone has a stake in their professional success in all fields, and marketing seems to be especially advantageous for this group of students.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Definition of Terms Provided to Participants

Term on the Left Side	Term on the Right Side
Cool: Reserved, impersonal, detached, aloof	Warm: Outgoing, kindly, easy-going, participating, likes people
Concrete Thinker: less intelligent	Abstract Thinker: More intelligent
Affected by Feelings: Emotionally less stable, easily annoyed	Emotionally Stable: Faces reality, calm
Submissive: Humble, mild, easily led, accommodating	Dominant: Assertive, aggressive, stubborn, competitive, bossy
Sober: Restrained, prudent, taciturn, serious	Enthusiastic: Spontaneous, heedless, expressive, cheerful
Expedient: Disregards rules, self-indulgent	Conscientious: Conforming, moralistically staid, rule-bound
Shy: Threat-sensitive, timid, hesitant, intimidated	Bold: Venturesome, uninhibited, can take stress
Tough-minded: Self-reliant, no-nonsense, rough, realistic	Tender-minded: Sensitive, over-protected, intuitive, refined
Trusting: Accepting conditions, easy to get on with	Suspicious: Hard to fool, distrustful, skeptical
Practical: Concerned with "down to earth" issues, steady	Imaginative: Absent-minded, absorbed in thought, impractical
Forthright: Unpretentious, open, genuine, artless	Shrewd: Polished, socially aware, diplomatic, calculating
Self-assured: Secure, feels free of guilt, untroubled, self-satisfied	Apprehensive: Self-blaming, guilt-prone, insecure, worrying
Conservative: Respecting traditional ideas	Experimenting: Liberal, critical, open to change
Group-oriented: A joiner and sound follower, listens to others	Self-sufficient: Resourceful, prefers own decisions
Undisciplined: Lax, careless of social rules	Following self image: Socially precise, compulsive
Relaxed: Tranquil, composed, has low drive, not frustrated	Tense: Frustrated, overwrought, has high drive

Table 2: T-tests for Attributes and Differences between Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Whites

Attributes	Hispanics	Non-Hispanic Whites	T-Test for Difference
Cool/Warm	-1.35	*-2.07	1.03
Concrete Thinker/Abstract Thinker	**3.05	1.61	0.05
Affected by Feelings/Emotionally Stable	*2.26	1.38	-0.20
Submissive/Dominant	**3.65	**3.33	-1.09
Sober/Enthusiastic	1.49	-0.17	0.86
Expedient/Conscientious	*2.75	*2.03	-0.54
Shy/Bold	**6.78	**4.44	-0.62
Tough-minded/Tender-minded	**-4.04	*-2.06	-0.19
Trusting/Suspicious	**-3.54	-0.84	-1.03
Practical/Imaginative	0.18	-0.94	0.90
Forthright/Shrewd	0.44	0.60	-0.27
Self-assured/Apprehensive	**-2.81	**-3.62	1.61
Conservative/Experimenting	0.44	0.23	0.00
Group-oriented/Self-sufficient	-1.21	-0.14	-0.42
Undisciplined/Following Self Image	**3.82	**2.60	-0.46
Relaxed/Tense	1.49	0.24	0.51
Female/Male	**4.02	*2.95	-0.55

*significant at 5%

**significant at 1%

Table 3: T-test for Gender Differences

Attributes	Hispanics	Non-Hispanic Whites
<u>Cool</u>/Warm	**-3.03	1.21
Concrete Thinker/Abstract Thinker	-1.49	1.47
Affected by Feelings/Emotionally Stable	-0.98	-1.30
Submissive/Dominant	0.25	-0.51
Sober/Enthusiastic	-0.87	0.55
Expedient/Conscientious	-0.81	0.78
Shy/Bold	-0.39	-0.42
Tough-minded/Tender-minded	0.26	0.21
Trusting/Suspicious	0.34	0.77
Practical/Imaginative	-0.54	-0.11
Forthright/Shrewd	0.13	0.08
Self-assured/<u>Apprehensive</u>	-0.35	1.44
Conservative/Experimenting	0.44	1.51
Group-oriented/Self-sufficient	-0.44	-0.56
Undisciplined/Following Self Image	-1.01	-0.89
Relaxed/Tense	-1.29	0.68
Female/<u>Male</u>	*2.26	0.28

*significant at 5%

**significant at 1%

A negative t-score indicates that males chose the term on the left (underlined) more than the females chose it. A positive t-score indicates that males chose the term on the right (underlined) more than the females chose it.