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Paradox Lost

Unraveling the Puzzle of *Simpatía*

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Simpatía is a cultural script that characterizes Hispanics as agreeable, friendly, sympathetic, and polite. However, on self-reports Hispanics score lower on Simpatía/Agreeableness than do non-Hispanics. This study reveals that it is the modesty within Simpatía that accounts for these paradoxical findings by driving down scores on Hispanics' self-reports. To test this idea, this study assesses Simpatía/Agreeableness in Mexican American bilinguals using (a) self-reports of Simpatía in English and Spanish and (b) behavioral manifestations of Simpatía in a social interaction task conducted in English and Spanish. As predicted, on self-reports bilinguals score lower on Simpatía when the assessment is in Spanish than when it is in English, but they show more Simpatía-related behaviors in the social interaction task in Spanish than in English. Follow-up analyses show that the results cannot be explained by translation artifacts on the questionnaire, response-style biases, or reference-group effects. The paradox sheds light on the complex interplay between culture and language.

Keywords: Simpatía; *Agreeableness; Hispanics; cross-cultural; personality; self-reports; bilinguals*

S*impatía* is a cultural script that has been used to describe a pattern of social interaction meant to characterize Hispanics and Latin Americans (Triandis, Marín, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984). A person who is simpático is likeable, easygoing, polite, and fun to be with; is affectionate; and likes to share feelings to others. Simpatía is also associated with striving to promote harmony in relationships by showing respect toward others, avoiding conflict, emphasizing positive behaviors, and deemphasizing negative behaviors (Díaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999; Triandis et al., 1984).

Parallels can be drawn between Simpatía and the "Big Five" personality trait of Agreeableness. Specifically, Agreeableness can be conceptualized as the motivation to maintain positive relations with others (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997; Graziano & Tobin, 2002) and predicts such behaviors minimizing interpersonal conflict (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Like a person high on Simpatía, an agreeable person is appreciative, compliant, forgiving, generous, kind, sympathetic, trusting, and warm; avoids conflict; and is

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polite (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & John, 1992). Indeed, Simpatía can be thought as the Spanish term for Agreeableness. Accordingly, in the next paragraphs, these terms are used interchangeably to refer to an agreeable presentational style.

A cross-cultural prediction can be made that Hispanics and Latin Americans are higher in Simpatía or Agreeableness than groups traditionally not characterized by Simpatía or Agreeableness, such as native-English-speaking North Americans. However, the research that has examined this question has shown precisely the opposite pattern. In fact, Hispanics score significantly lower on Agreeableness than do European Americans (McCrae, 2001; McCrae, Terraciano, & the 79 members of the Personalities Profiles of Cultures Project, 2005; Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter, & Pennebaker, 2006; Ramírez-Esparza & Mehl, 2005; Schmitt, Allik, McCrae, & Benet-Martínez, 2007).

This counterintuitive finding seems to be quite robust and has been shown across a diverse range of independent studies, samples, and inventories. For example, Ramírez-Esparza et al. (2006) found the effects when comparing more than 1,000 Mexicans and Americans who responded to the Big Five Inventory (BFI) in English (John & Srivastava, 1999) and in Spanish (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998) on the Internet. Ramírez-Esparza and Mehl (2005) found the differences when comparing 100 Mexican and American university students who responded to the BFI in English and Spanish on paper. Similarly, Schmitt et al. (2007) found the effects between Latin American groups and Americans who responded to the BFI in English and Spanish. On the other hand, McCrae (2001), using the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) in English (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and in Spanish (Cassaretto, 1999, in McCrae, 2001), reported the differences between Hispanic-Americans' and Americans' self-reports. McCrae et al. (2005) found the differences in Mexicans and Americans based on observers' ratings using the NEO-PI-R in English and Spanish.

Unraveling the Puzzle of Simpatía

What could account for these paradoxical findings, in which the group whose cardinal trait is Simpatía actually scores lower on this trait than do other groups? The literature provides two clues to addressing this paradox. First, work on Simpatía in ethnopsychology, sociology, and anthropology suggests that a core element of the behavioral repertoire associated with promoting social harmony is a modest style of self-presentation (see Díaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999; Triandis et al., 1984). For example, Díaz-Loving (1999) writes that Mexicans value "harmony through polite, considerate, amiable, and modest behaviours" (p. 441). Although there is no direct evidence that cultures high in Simpatía would show a modesty bias in self-reports, there is evidence that individuals from other collectivist cultures (in Asia) demonstrate a modesty bias when responding to socially desirable traits (Heine & Lehman, 1997; Heine & Renshaw, 2002; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). This raises the possibility that, in the service of socially appropriate modesty, people high on Simpatía may diminish their scores on positive traits, including Simpatía itself!

Even in non-Hispanic cultures, Agreeableness has been shown to have highly socially desirable qualities (Paulhus, Bruce, & Trapnell, 1995). For Hispanics it is even more desirable because it promotes the social interactions so crucial for Simpatía and collectivist values. Ironically, for Hispanics to present themselves as agreeable would itself be disagreeable

because it would denote arrogance. Consequently, Hispanics could express their Simpatía by being modest on socially desirable traits, leading them to diminish their standing on these traits on self-reports. In contrast, the self-presentational style of Americans can be characterized by a general tendency to show a self-enhancement bias on socially desirable measures (Heine & Lehman, 1997; Heine & Renshaw, 2002; Kitayama et al., 1997).

This possibility is given extra credence by a second observation about the cross-cultural research on Simpatía/Agreeableness: Spanish–English bilinguals score higher on Agreeableness when responding to the questionnaire in English than in Spanish (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006). Ramírez-Esparza et al. (2006) explained that this difference provides evidence for the cultural frame switching phenomenon (Hong, Chiu, & Kung, 1997; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000), in which in the presence of culture-relevant cues (e.g., language), bilinguals experience a culturally appropriate shift in beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. Specifically, when the language of a questionnaire is used as a cue to elicit personality change in Spanish–English bilinguals, this change is consistent with the personality differences between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking monolinguals. That is, bilinguals were more agreeable when responding in English (like Americans) and less agreeable when responding in Spanish (like Mexicans). Although diverse in many aspects, one commonality of all the studies showing the counterintuitive pattern of findings is that they were all based on self-reports.

For this modesty-bias explanation to work, it must be demonstrated that Hispanic individuals really do express more Simpatía/Agreeableness behaviors than do non-Hispanics, despite the modesty bias expressed on self-reports. Specifically, we should expect Hispanics to behave in ways that are more likable, polite, expressive, agreeable, pleasant, and sympathetic in social contexts than would European Americans. This research aimed to test this idea.

One obstacle to much cross-cultural research is ensuring some form of equivalence between samples from entirely different cultures. This issue is especially acute in cross-cultural research because many of the myriad differences between cultures are difficult to identify, detect, and control (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997a). One solution to this obstacle is to use a within-subjects design, that is, to use bilingual participants. Previous research on cultural frame switching in bilingual participants has shown that language can serve as a cue to elicit personality change (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006).

Study Overview

Past cross-cultural studies of Simpatía have yielded some puzzling findings, with individuals from Simpatía countries scoring lower on Simpatía than do individuals from countries characterized as low in Simpatía. We investigated the possibility that these findings may be due to Simpatía-related behaviors affecting how respondents filled out their self-reports. To test this idea, we examined the changes in Simpatía in Mexican American bilinguals as each of their two cultures were primed. Simpatía was assessed with self-reports (which should show the familiar paradoxical pattern of findings) and with codings of behavior during social interactions (which should show the opposite pattern of findings).

In designing the study, we implemented three features: First we recruited Mexican American bilinguals only. This decision was made because the cultural script of Simpatía

has been most extensively reported among Mexicans (see Díaz-Guerrero, Díaz-Loving, & Rodríguez de Díaz, 2001; LaRosa & Díaz-Loving, 1991). For example Díaz-Loving and Draguns (1999) describe Mexican Simpatía in terms of individuals who value "expressive sociability, positive mood states, affectionate social interactions, and reflective, serene, calm, and tranquil attitudes" (p. 121). Unsurprisingly, this cultural script also characterizes Mexican Americans (Triandis et al., 1984). As noted earlier, the appeal of using bilinguals is that we gain power by controlling for many undetectable and uncontrollable differences between individuals of different cultures (e.g., in familiarity with filling out questionnaires). Moreover, for this approach to work, it is essential to find participants who are truly bilingual. Therefore, we screened our participants with an extremely stringent series of bilingualism tests.

The second feature of the design was to ensure that the judges of the social interaction task were blind to the purpose of the experiment. Accordingly, we ensured judges were unaware of the purpose of the study, and the social interaction task was viewed with no sound in order to prevent the judges from confounding the true behavioral effects with stereotypes of Spanish speakers versus English speakers.

The third feature of the design was to make sure the effects could not be attributed to cultural differences in the judges (e.g., cultural differences in attending to certain cues); therefore, we sought to replicate the findings in judges in the United States and in Mexico.

Method

Participants

A total of 40 Mexican American bilinguals (14 men and 26 women) living in Austin, Texas, were recruited to participate in this study. Their mean age was 23.1 years (SD = 7.1). In all, 56% of the participants indicated that they were born in the United States and 41.5% in Mexico. Most of the participants indicated that they had learned Spanish through their family (i.e., 85%) and English in school (i.e., 83%). Most of the participants indicated that they used English to talk to their classmates and peers (85%) and Spanish to talk to their family (i.e., 70%). Participants were recruited by means of flyers and were paid for their participation.

Measurement of Bilingualism

To ensure the bilinguals were very familiar with both English and Spanish and were conversant with the cultural associations of each language, we carefully screened participants with a series of bilingualism tests. Specifically, participants' bilingualism was assessed by means of a phone interview, a language questionnaire, a translation task, and proficiency ratings given by two Spanish–English bilingual judges. In the phone interview, a Spanish–English bilingual research assistant questioned the participants to ensure they had a Mexican background and to assess their spoken ability in both English and Spanish (e.g., ensuring they spoke both languages without a significant accent). In the language questionnaire, bilinguals provided information about their demographics, their self-reported level of bilingualism, and the percentage of time they used one language or the other with

different people. The translation task consisted of translating sentences with a high level of difficulty—five sentences in Spanish and five in English—into the other language. Finally, for the proficiency ratings, we asked two Spanish–English bilingual judges to evaluate participants' spoken ability in both languages on the basis of a face-to-face interaction and the videotaped interviews. As a result of these tests, 2 of the participants were removed from the analyses.[1] The final sample totaled 38, 14 men and 24 women.

Self-Reports

Simpatía was measured using the nine Agreeableness items of the BFI. Our decision to use this instrument was driven by two central concerns. First, we selected this scale because it has been successfully translated and validated in English (John & Srivastava, 1999) and in Spanish (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998). Second, the core features of Simpatía are successfully captured by the items of the BFI Agreeableness scale. Specifically, the idea that a person who is *simpático* is polite, likeable, kind, and affectionate (Triandis et al., 1984) is captured by the items "is considerate and kind to almost everyone" and "is helpful and unselfish with others," and with the reverse code of items "is sometimes rude to others" and "can be cold and aloof." The notion that being simpático is associated with an easygoing outlook (Díaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999; Triandis et al., 1984) is captured by the items "has a forgiving nature" and "is generally trusting." Finally, the idea that Simpatía is related to promoting harmony in relationships by avoiding conflict and emphasizing positive behaviors (Díaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999; Triandis et al., 1984) is captured by the item "likes to cooperate with others" and by the reverse code of items "starts quarrels with others" and "tends to find fault with others." In this study the alphas were .73 for the English scale and .72 for the Spanish scale.

Social Interaction Task

To promote the expression of interpersonal behaviors, we wanted the participants to have the experience of interacting with another human being, not just a written set of questions. We chose an interview task because it would allow us to exercise control over the experimental setup and the behavior of the people with whom the participants were interacting. It was also necessary to control for the possibility that bilingual interviewers might themselves be susceptible to cultural frame switching and change their behavior as they spoke different languages. Therefore, we devised a way to maintain some degree of social interaction but at the same time allow ourselves to standardize the interview stimuli across the two language conditions. To achieve these goals, a "videotaped interview" was created in which a fully bilingual speaker of Spanish and English was videotaped giving instructions and outlining the questions in both English and Spanish. It is important to note that great pains were taken to ensure the recorded bilingual interviewer had a neutral face and position when doing the interviews in both English and Spanish. This "videotaped interview" was presented to each bilingual participant while the participant was alone in a room, and the participant had to answer the questions while looking into a video camera.

In each interview session, the bilingual participants were taken one at a time into a room where a TV monitor, a VCR, and a video camera were set up. The participants sat on a chair with a TV monitor and VCR to their left and a video camera facing them. Only the upper

part of their body (from hip to face) was recorded. After explaining the procedure, the research assistant pushed the record button of the video camera and left the room. As instructed, the participants pushed the play button of the VCR to view the prerecorded interview. This interview was introduced in the following way:

> The following interview contains eight questions. For each question please listen carefully and then press the pause button on the VCR before answering. Some of the questions may have multiple parts to them. Once the tape is paused, please turn and face the camera to record your response. Once you have finished answering, press the play button to listen to the next question.

The interview questions were as follows:

1. Please state your subject ID number.
2. Where do you live? Do you know your neighbors? How well do you know them?
3. What are they like? Are they nice people or not? Are you friends with any of them?
4. Are you studying or working? What do you study or what do you do?
5. What are your plans after graduation? If you are not in school, what are your long term future plans?
6. Which classes do you like or dislike? If you are no longer in school, answer for the time period when you were still in school.
7. What made you choose to come to Austin?
8. If a friend of yours were to come to UT to study, what would your advice be, based on your experience?

The interviews took approximately 5 minutes. At the end of the interview, the participants knocked on the door to indicate that they had finished.

Procedure

The bilingual participants came to the lab on two occasions. In the first meeting, participants completed the bilingualism screening questionnaire, provided self-reports of Simpatía, and participated in the social interaction task in either Spanish or English. The second meeting, which was scheduled at least 1 week later, involved providing self-reports of Simpatía and participating in the social interaction task, but this time using whichever language they had not used in the first session. At the end of the second meeting, participants were debriefed and paid for their participation. Note that the order of language use in the two interviews, English versus Spanish, was counterbalanced.

Ratings of Simpatía-Related Behaviors in the Social Interaction Task

Ten English-speaking European American monolingual judges from the University of Texas and 10 Spanish-speaking Mexican monolinguals from the Autonomous University of Puebla served as judges of Simpatía/Agreeableness in the social interaction tasks. The interviews were compiled onto one of two videotapes, with one session on each tape and with the assignment to tape randomly determined. Thus, each of the participants appeared once on each tape, speaking either Spanish or English, and judges viewed each participant only once.

The judges were instructed to watch the recorded interviews in their own time and rate the participants' Simpatía/Agreeableness on the same items used in the self-reports. The interviews were watched without sound, and the judges were blind to the fact that interviews were done in two languages. Thus, the judges evaluated the participants' personalities on the basis of nonverbal behaviors. Finally, the judges were told that the study involved personality impressions of people engaged in conversations. The judges showed good agreement in their personality ratings, mean intraclass correlation coefficient (1, 1) = .82.

Before debriefing the judges, we asked them whether they had realized the participants were speaking different languages. None of the judges had guessed the participants were speaking different languages. Furthermore, as an additional manipulation check, we asked five judges to view a few minutes of 10 interviews and try to guess the language the participants were speaking. The judges could not reliably identify which language the participants were speaking.

Results

Self-Presentation of Simpatía

To determine whether differences in Simpatía at the self-presentational level replicated previous findings, we computed mean differences between self-reported levels of Simpatía in English and in Spanish. The results showed that bilinguals presented themselves as less agreeable when they responded to the questionnaire in Spanish than when they responded in English, English Mean = 4.12, SD = .52; Spanish Mean = 3.98, SD = .54; $t(37)$ = 2.83, p < .01. In addition to replicating previous findings, these findings also support the validity of using a bilingual cultural frame switching design.

Behavioral Expression of Simpatía

To test whether bilinguals behaviorally expressed higher levels of Simpatía when speaking Spanish than when speaking English, we performed paired t tests independently for the U.S. judges and the Mexican judges. As shown in Figure 1, the findings were consistent with our expectations and replicated across U.S. and Mexican judges; specifically, the findings indicated that participants expressed behaviors that made them appear higher on Simpatía when they were speaking in Spanish than when they were speaking in English. Admittedly these findings may appear subtle, but it should be borne in mind that the judges were able to detect differences in Simpatía-related behaviors despite the facts that the participants were sitting and were viewed from the waist up only and that the interactions were very short (approximately 5 minutes), highly constrained, and stripped of all auditory cues. Furthermore, it is interesting that the judges were not able to detect which language was being spoken, given that these findings showed that judges were able to detect subtle differences in behavior reliably associated with which language was being spoken. Unfortunately, we did not measure the specific nonverbal cues that were indicative Simpatía-related behaviors. Clearly, studying these cues would have provided a more complete picture of how Simpatía is expressed in social contexts. Future studies should examine the role of such cues in the expression and perception of Simpatía.

Figure 1
U.S. and Mexican Judges' Ratings of Simpatía/Agreeableness Based on Bilinguals'
Behavior in a Social Interaction Task Conducted in English or Spanish.
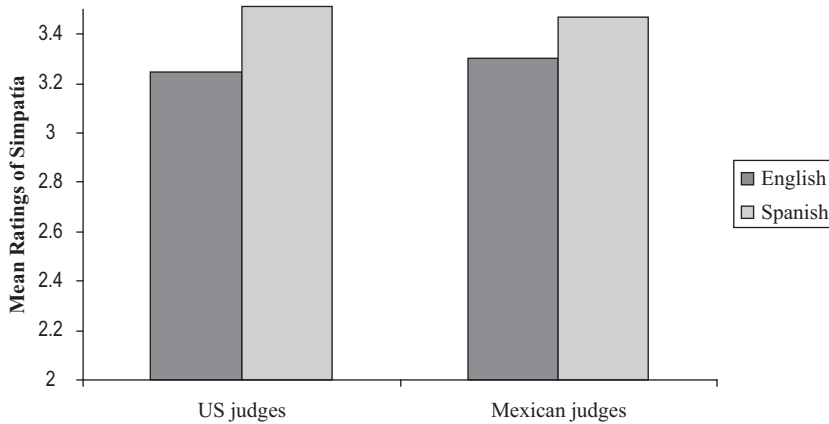
Note: For the U.S. judges, t-value$(37) = -2.31$, $p < .05$; for the Mexican judges, t-value$(37) = -2.10$, $p < .05$.

Together the two sets of findings lend support to the idea that the paradoxical cross-cultural findings of Simpatía can be attributed to a self-presentational style. In other words, these findings indirectly support the idea that people from Simpatía (vs. non-Simpatía) cultures respond to self-reports with a modesty (vs. self-enhancement) bias that masks and even reverses the true behavioral differences in Simpatía. However, before considering the implications of these findings, it is necessary to address a number of other possible explanations for the findings.

Testing Alternative Explanations for the Findings

In this section we discuss several possible alternative explanations for the findings: translation artifacts on the questionnaire, response-style biases, and reference-group effects.

Translation artifact. The translation-artifact explanation suggests that the observed differences between self-reported Simpatía responses across languages reflect differences in translations, not changes in self-presentational style. Items from the BFI were used because they had been carefully translated from English to Spanish, with strong evidence for cross-language equivalence (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998). Moreover, item-bias analyses (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997a, 1997b) showed that the English and Spanish items did not have different psychometric item characteristics across the two languages (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006). However, McCrae (2005) subsequently noted that such item-bias analyses do detect differential item functioning but are relatively insensitive to systematic biases that affect all items in the same way. Such systematic biases might be caused by a translation error in the instructions or scale anchors. McCrae's argument raises the logical, albeit remote, possibility that cross-language differences are driven by a systematic bias. One way

to test this idea is to determine whether the participants were rated differently when using the Spanish and English items. If translation artifacts were falsely causing an invariant entity to appear different in self-reports, then the translation artifacts should do the same in observer reports. Analyses of the Mexican and American judges' ratings in this study showed that the participants were judged to have the same levels of Simpatía regardless of whether they were rated on the English or Spanish items; this effect held, both when the participants were speaking English, $t(74) = -0.44$, and when they were speaking Spanish, $t(74) = 0.22$. Combined with the item-bias analyses, these findings suggest that translation artifacts are not responsible for the differences across languages.

Response-style biases. The mean differences on Simpatía across languages on self-reports could also be driven by response-style biases. The most common and widely investigated response-style biases are acquiescence (the tendency to agree with questions regardless of question content) and extreme versus mid response style (the tendency to use the extreme or midpoints of the scale). Although some evidence suggests Hispanics use acquiescent responding (Marín, Gamba, & Marín, 1992; Ross & Mirowsky, 1984) and middling responding because they are modest (Johnson, Kulesa, Cho, & Shavitt, 2005) and low individualists (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995), other research yields contradictory findings (e.g., Hispanics have also been shown to use more extreme responding, Hui & Triandis, 1989; Marín et al., 1992). Furthermore, Grimm and Church (1999) demonstrated that Agreeableness does not predict acquiescence, that lower individualism and modesty do not predict greater midpoint use, that individualism does not predict extreme responding, and that cross-cultural differences in personality are not reduced after controlling for response-style biases. Nonetheless, to ensure our findings could not be attributed to differential response styles in the two languages, following the procedures of Grimm and Church (1999), we compared the relative prevalence of the three response styles in the bilinguals' Spanish and English self-reports. We found no evidence for cross-language differences in extreme responding, $t(37) = 0.74$, *ns*, middling, $t(37) = -1.64$, *ns*, or acquiescence, $t(37) = 1.26$, *ns*, suggesting our findings are not driven by cross-language differences in response style.

Reference-group effects. Another potential interpretation of the cross-cultural/cross-language differences might be as a result of a *reference-group effect* (Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002). That is, perhaps Hispanics and bilinguals (answering the questionnaire in Spanish) compare themselves to other Hispanics; comparisons with other Hispanics, a group high on Simpatía, could lead to lower self-ratings. At the same time, Americans and bilinguals (answering the questionnaire in English) might compare themselves to other Americans; comparisons with other Americans, a group low on Simpatía, could lead to higher self-ratings.

To test this idea, we asked 45 Spanish–English bilinguals to rate their Simpatía by comparing themselves to Hispanics and to Americans using a counterbalanced within-subjects design. Specifically, 26 bilinguals responded to the Simpatía items in English comparing themselves with Anglo-American people and then comparing themselves with Hispanic people (counterbalanced). Another 19 bilinguals responded to the same items, but in Spanish. We found no evidence for reference-group effects in Simpatía self-ratings, that is, compared with Anglo-Americans versus Hispanics, $F(1, 43) = 0.43$. In other words, when

we asked bilinguals to rate their Simpatía comparing themselves with the two different cultural groups with which they were acquainted, their self-ratings of Simpatía did not change. This finding even held up in between-subject analyses in which we examined only the first questionnaire taken, $F(1, 41) = 1.75$. Although the F value is larger and might become significant with a larger sample, it should be noted that the means go in the opposite direction from that predicted by the reference-group effect.

In sum, these follow-up analyses suggest that the findings from this investigation cannot be accounted for by translation artifacts, response-style biases, or reference-group effects.

Discussion

Simpatía is a cultural script that has been used to describe the social interactions of Hispanics. For example, Hispanics and Mexicans show more Simpatía-related values than Americans when Simpatía is measured by presentation of case scenarios (e.g., Triandis et al., 1984; Varela, Vernberg, Sanchez-Sosa, Riveros, Mitchell, & Mashunkashey, 2004) or when answering conflict resolution questionnaires (e.g., Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarra, Pearson, & Villareal, 1997). However, self-report data show that Hispanics rate themselves lower on Agreeableness than do European Americans. In this article, we propose it is the modesty associated with high levels of Simpatía in Hispanics that accounts for the paradoxical findings by driving down the Simpatía scores of Hispanics in self-reports. In a sample of Mexican Americans, we measured (a) self-reports of Simpatía/Agreeableness by means of English and Spanish items and (b) behavioral manifestation of Simpatía/Agreeableness in a social interaction task conducted in either Spanish or English. As predicted, when bilinguals responded to items in Spanish, their Simpatía scores were lower than when they responded to items in English. At the same time, bilinguals in the social-interaction task in Spanish behaved more simpático when speaking Spanish than when speaking English.

Our data indirectly support the idea that Hispanics show a modesty bias in self-reporting their levels of Simpatía *relative* to non-Hispanics. However, our data do not speak to the absolute levels of modesty bias shown by Hispanics or self-enhancement bias shown by non-Hispanics. Thus, the paradox cannot be fully resolved until direct measures of the modesty bias are obtained. Future studies should find ways to measure these absolute levels as well as to explore the interplay between modesty and self-enhancement biases that are likely to be especially complex in bicultural individuals.

Another limitation of this study is that we measured Simpatía using items from the BFI. Although the BFI items tap most of the concept of Simpatía, there are other concepts that we failed to capture, including the emotional part of Simpatía, such as valuing expressive sociability and positive mood states (Díaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999). But most important, the BFI does not ask whether the respondent is modest (Díaz-Loving, 1999). Future studies should adapt a valid and reliable scale in English and in Spanish that taps the whole concept of Simpatía.

Future studies should also examine the paradox of Simpatía in monocultural individuals. Research has shown that in self-reports, Mexicans score lower on Agreeableness than Americans do. However, our research raises the question of how Mexicans and Americans would be perceived in their daily lives. Do Mexicans manifest Simpatía in their everyday

behaviors? We infer that the paradox of Simpatía will extend to monocultural individuals. Specifically, on self-reports we expect Mexicans will score lower in Simpatía than Americans, but observers would rate them higher in Simpatía than Americans.

Another line of future research should examine the connections between cultural frame switching effects and the priming literature in social cognition (e.g., Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996). That is, does cultural frame switching simply reflect priming, such that even people who do not speak Spanish would behave in a more "Spanish" way if primed with Spanish cues? After all, people purchase more French wine when primed with French music and more German wine when primed with German music (North, Hargreaves, & McKendrick, 1997). Priming explanations are consistent with our results. In fact, cultural frame switching effects are perhaps driven by priming mechanisms. Nonetheless, we predict that bilinguals are more likely than monolinguals to show the culturally relevant priming effects because bilinguals are more likely than monolinguals to know the cultural associations of each language and are also more likely to get exposed to the primes (whenever they switch languages).

Translation has always been regarded as one of the biggest obstacles to cross-cultural research (Brislin, 1980). Our findings showed that self-reports can interact with other cultural mechanisms to produce potentially misleading results, underscoring the need to develop other methods in cross-cultural research. McCrae (2005) proposed that behavioral methods, such as those used in our study, will be informative in this regard. Other possibilities include analyses of free responses; for example, when asked the same question in Spanish and English, how do bilinguals' responses differ across languages? Do bilinguals use more agreeable words when they speak Spanish than when they speak English? Of course, even these methods are not immune to translation issues, and other methods that can measure shifts without relying on self-reports, such as the use of cultural icons, would also be useful (Wonkyong, Heller, & McInnis, 2005).

Although a cultural script, Simpatía can also be viewed as a personality trait, and it is through the joint filters of language and culture that the paradox of self-reported Simpatía and *simpático* behavior can best be understood. More generally, this research underscores the importance of using multiple methods to illuminate the complex interplay among language, culture, and personality that underlies the intriguing paradoxes and puzzles so prevalent in cross-cultural research.

Note

1. Full details of the extensive screening procedure are available from the first author.

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