

# Differences in Behavioral Conventions: A Comparison of United States-Born and Mexico-Born Hispanics, and Anglo Americans<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Past research on ethnicity in outdoor recreation has focused on park use and participation in recreation activities. Explanations of differences in park use and participation rates by minorities and non-minorities have emphasized the marginality and ethnicity hypotheses. A different approach can be used that emphasizes visitor's expectations and preferences for appropriate behaviors at an urban proximate forest recreation site. Four social regularities are identified based on birth place and ethnic identity: cross cultural, United States indigene, Mexican born Hispanic, and Hispanic. The complexity of social regularities means that managers must maintain a high degree of familiarity with different visitor groups and the problems they encounter.

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With a few recent exceptions (Carr and Williams 1993, Floyd and Gramann 1993, Floyd and others 1993), previous recreation studies on ethnic groups have focused on differences in participation rates and activity preferences between the minority ethnic groups and the dominant social group, usually Anglo Americans (McMillen 1983). Earlier studies focused particularly on differences in recreation usage by African-Americans and whites. In these studies the Hispanic population was largely ignored. However, research recently has expanded to include Hispanic populations recognizing the possible differences in recreation styles due to cultural influences not present in the dominant Anglo-American culture. As before, these studies generally compare participation rates and activity preferences of Hispanics to Anglo Americans and occasionally to other minorities.

The two hypothesis most often used to explain underparticipation of minorities in recreation activities are the marginality hypothesis and the ethnicity hypothesis (Allison 1988, Carr and Williams 1993, Floyd and Gramann 1993). The marginality hypothesis attributes differential rates of participation to socioeconomic barriers against minorities that prohibit them from taking advantage of recreation opportunities available to others. These barriers are the results of discrimination practices that keep minorities at lower income levels and segregated from the recreation opportunities available to the dominant social group (McDonald and Hutchison 1987; Kelly and Godbey 1993). The ethnicity

hypothesis attributes differences in recreation participation and style to cultural differences that exist between ethnic groups and the dominant social group. According to this hypothesis, minority groups use recreation to maintain their ethnic identity and re-establish cultural ties that differentiate them from the dominant social group (Washburne 1978).

More recently, some researchers have become interested in how assimilation and acculturation of minority groups affects recreation participation. Yinger (1985) defined assimilation as "... a process of boundary reduction that can occur when members of two or more societies, ethnic groups, or smaller social groups meet." One aspect of assimilation is acculturation. Acculturation occurs when the minority group adopts the dominant group's cultural characteristics such as diet, language, and religion (Yinger 1985; Floyd and Gramann 1993; Negy and Woods 1992). Floyd and Gramann (1993) found least acculturated Mexican-Americans participated in significantly fewer activities than Anglos and concluded that higher levels of acculturation in Mexican-Americans result in more similarities in recreation style with Anglos.

Another aspect affecting recreational choices and behavior is the generational status of the minority group (Carr and Williams 1993). Generational status refers to the number of generations that have lived in close contact with the dominant social group. Socialization is affected by generational status as a cumulative effect from one generation to the next (Kelly and Godbey 1993). Carr and Williams (1993) found the "primary dimension contributing to similarities and differences in outdoor recreation preferences and behavior is ancestral group membership." As generational status increased, so did the similarities in recreation styles and preferences between Hispanics and Anglos.

Research to determine differences in behaviors and recreation styles is needed to understand more fully diversity within ethnic groups. Ethnic groups are not homogeneous entities but they are typically treated as such by most researchers. Recently, however, recreation research has recognized differences within the Hispanic culture. Carr and Williams (1993) found significant differences between Central-Americans and Mexican-Americans and their generational status. Social and cultural processes can result in behavioral differences between minority ethnic groups and Anglo Americans participating in recreation. Social conventions and norms establish patterns of social regularities that arise and are maintained through social interactions within groups. An important Hispanic social regularity is *simpatía*, the maintenance of harmonious interpersonal relations

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characterized by dignified and respectful behavior (Triandis and others 1984). *Simpático* behavior would be different than the more individualistic, self-centered behavior characteristic of Anglo Americans, and such differences could express themselves in dissimilar social conventions and norms.

The purpose of the research reported here was to describe differences in behavioral expectations and preferences among Hispanics and between Hispanics and Anglo Americans for a number of behavioral problems encountered in a high density, day use, urban proximate forest recreation setting. Studying behavioral expectations and preferences can provide information on behavioral conventions (Heywood 1993). Behavioral conventions are found in situations that have two or more equally acceptable solutions to a behavioral problem. Lewis (1969) defines convention as a regularity in the behavior of the members of a population when they are agents in a recurrent situation in which some fraction of everyone prefers and expects some fraction of everyone else to prefer and expect some fraction of everyone to conform to the regularity.

## Methods

Respondents' expectations and preferences for behaviors were determined through a series of two part questions. The respondent was first given a problem situation and then asked to think about what other users would expect to happen. The respondent was asked to estimate the percent of other users who would expect him or her to behave as suggested in the problem. For example:

- When you visit Lytle Creek, what percent of other users do you think would expect you to use a picnic site having a table and grill, if you bring food to cook?

The respondent was then instructed to mark a scale showing percentages from zero to 100 percent in 10 percent increments.

The second part of the question determined strong personal preference associated with the behavior by presenting an either/or statement that could be answered affirmatively, negatively or ambivalently. For example:

- When visiting Lytle Creek should you always use a picnic site having a table and grill to cook food?

If the response is "YES" or "NEVER" the respondent held a strong preference towards behaving consistent with or contrary to the behavior suggested in the problem situation. An ambivalent response, "MAYBE," "NO OPINION," or "MAYBE NOT" indicated the lack of a strong personal preference towards the suggested behavior.

Because the preference items used the normative term "should," the measures of expectations and preferences can not be considered to be valid operationalizations of conventions. Respondents expectations and sense of obligation, from the normative preference items, can be combined to determine whether social regularities exist for

the problems under study. Social regularity results from social interactions where actors consider the situation and the other person's expectations and definitions of the situation (Kelly 1983).

We developed a questionnaire to assess the expectations and normative preferences of visitors to the Applewhite Picnic Area on Lytle Creek in the San Bernardino National Forest, in southern California. On the basis of previous studies and the knowledge and experience of USDA Forest Service researchers and technicians, a number of problem situations were identified that were relevant to conditions at the Applewhite picnic area. Expectations and preferences were measured concerning: (1) the use of formal picnic sites to cook food or to eat prepared food; (2) the disposal or recycling of trash from food and drinks; (3) whether visitors should be able to walk into or through other visitor's formal picnic sites, or informal picnic sites located on the stream bank or in the stream; (4) the appropriate volume for Spanish language audio programs (music or talk programs played on a radio, cassette or CD player); (5) the appropriate volume for English language audio programs (music or talk programs played on a radio, cassette, or CD player); and (6) whether large, medium and small dogs should be kept on a leash.

The questionnaire was translated into Spanish, and both English and Spanish versions were field tested over the July 4, 1992 holiday weekend. Minor changes were made in question format and wording, particularly in the Spanish language version, and the final Spanish and English language versions were distributed on-site over four weekends in late August and early September 1992. A team of bi-lingual interviewers from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona selected respondents and collected data as part of a number of studies funded through the USDA Forest Service's Wildland Recreation and the Urban Culture Research Unit. The data collection team canvassed all groups present on sampling days and attempted to get one adult to respond from each group. A total of 341 groups were contacted and in 215 one adult responded.

Using data on place of birth and ethnic identification, we classified respondents as United States-born Hispanics, Mexico-born Hispanics, or Anglo Americans. Using Chi-square and T-tests, ethnic classes were compared for proportions completing Spanish language questionnaires, mean years lived in the U.S., and mean age.

Respondents expectations were analyzed to determine if differences existed in the distributions for each of the 16 variables. The median and skewness were determined for each variable, and then the median was used to split the respondents for each variable into two approximately equal categories which had expectations above or below the median. The above and below median categories normative preferences for each variable were then compared, using Chi-square. Non-significant Chi-squares indicate that normative preferences were similar for those above and below the median, whereas significant Chi-square indicate that normative preferences were different.

The normative preference profiles for the ethnic classes were then compared for visual and proportional similarities. Normative preference profiles were plotted as bar graphs showing the percentages with YES, Ambivalent, or NEVER normative preferences for those above and below the medians for each variable. Similar visual and proportional patterns were grouped into several different categories showing agreement or disagreement between ethnic categories, and between those above or below the median expectations within ethnic categories.

## Results

The comparisons of U.S.-born Hispanics, Mexico-born Hispanics, and Anglo Americans showed differences between the ethnic classes and the percent completing Spanish language questionnaires, mean years lived in the U.S., and mean age (*table 1*). The completion rates of Spanish language questionnaires were significantly different for each ethnic class. A very small proportion of Anglo Americans completed Spanish language questionnaires. A higher proportion of U.S.-born Hispanics, about one-fifth, completed Spanish language questionnaires, while a substantial majority of Mexico-born Hispanics, about three-quarters, completed Spanish language questionnaires. Even though Mexico-born and U.S. born Hispanics reported similar ages, Mexico-born Hispanics had lived in the U.S. about half as long—an average of 14.9 years—as U.S.-born Hispanics (27.5 years). Both U.S.-born and Mexico-born Hispanics were younger on average than Anglo Americans and consequently both U.S.- and Mexico-born Hispanics reported fewer years in the U.S. than Anglo Americans.

The median and skewness were determined for each of the expectation variables. Three patterns were evident: (1) variables with very high medians (70 to 90 percent) and relatively large negative skewness values, such as leashing large and medium size dogs, disposing of trash in a trash can, and cooking food at formal picnic sites; (2) variables with very low medians (15 percent) and relatively high positive skewness values, such as playing English and Spanish language audio programs at their loudest volumes; and, (3) variables with medians in the low-middle range (35 to 55

percent) and relatively small positive or negative skewness values, such as playing English language audio programs at moderate volumes, eating prepared food at formal picnic sites, and entering other’s formal picnic sites or informal stream bank picnic sites.

The appropriateness of splitting the results for each variable into those above and below the median was justified through the results of Chi-square tests. Significant differences were found in the normative preferences of those above and below the median expectations for each variable except trash disposal.

Based on similarities and dissimilarities between the ethnic classes in the normative preferences of those above and below the medians, four ethnically based social regularities were identified plus one grouping characterized by no agreement ethnically or expectationally. The four social regularities identified were: (1) cross cultural social regularities with a sub-group of consensus only for those above the median expectations; (2) U.S. indigene social regularities; (3) Mexican-born Hispanic social regularities; and (4) one Hispanic social regularity.

Cross cultural social regularities included disposing of trash in a trash can, recycling trash, leashing large dogs, playing English language audio programs at their lowest volume, leashing medium and small size dogs, and always entering in-stream picnic sites if consensus was above the median expectations. The bar graphs for the first four cross cultural social regularities—consensus for both those above and below the median expectations—are shown in *figure 1*. As the bar graphs illustrate, substantial majorities of almost all ethnic classes have positive normative preferences for disposing of trash, recycling and leashing large dogs. The only exceptions were the relatively high proportions of Mexico-born Hispanics who were ambivalent about leashing large dogs (below the median), and playing English language audio programs at their lowest volumes (both above and below the median). Yet majorities did express positive normative preferences for leashing large dogs and playing English language audio programs at their lowest volumes.

In the sub-group of cross cultural social regularities substantial majorities above the medians (more than 60 to 90 percent) from all ethnic classes had positive normative

**Table 1—Comparison of U.S.-born and Mexico-born Hispanics and Anglo Americans**

Population	Percent completing Spanish language questionnaire	Mean years lived in U.S.	Mean age
U.S. Born Hispanics	<sup>1</sup> 19.6	<sup>2,3</sup> 27.5	<sup>5</sup> 29.8
Mexico Born Hispanics	<sup>1</sup> 75.4	<sup>2,4</sup> 14.9	<sup>6</sup> 31.6
Anglo Americans	<sup>1</sup> 0.4	<sup>3,4</sup> 34.5	<sup>5,6</sup> 36.5

<sup>1</sup>p = 0.000; <sup>2</sup> & <sup>4</sup>p = 0.000; <sup>3</sup>p = 0.037; <sup>5</sup>p = 0.025; <sup>6</sup>p = 0.050

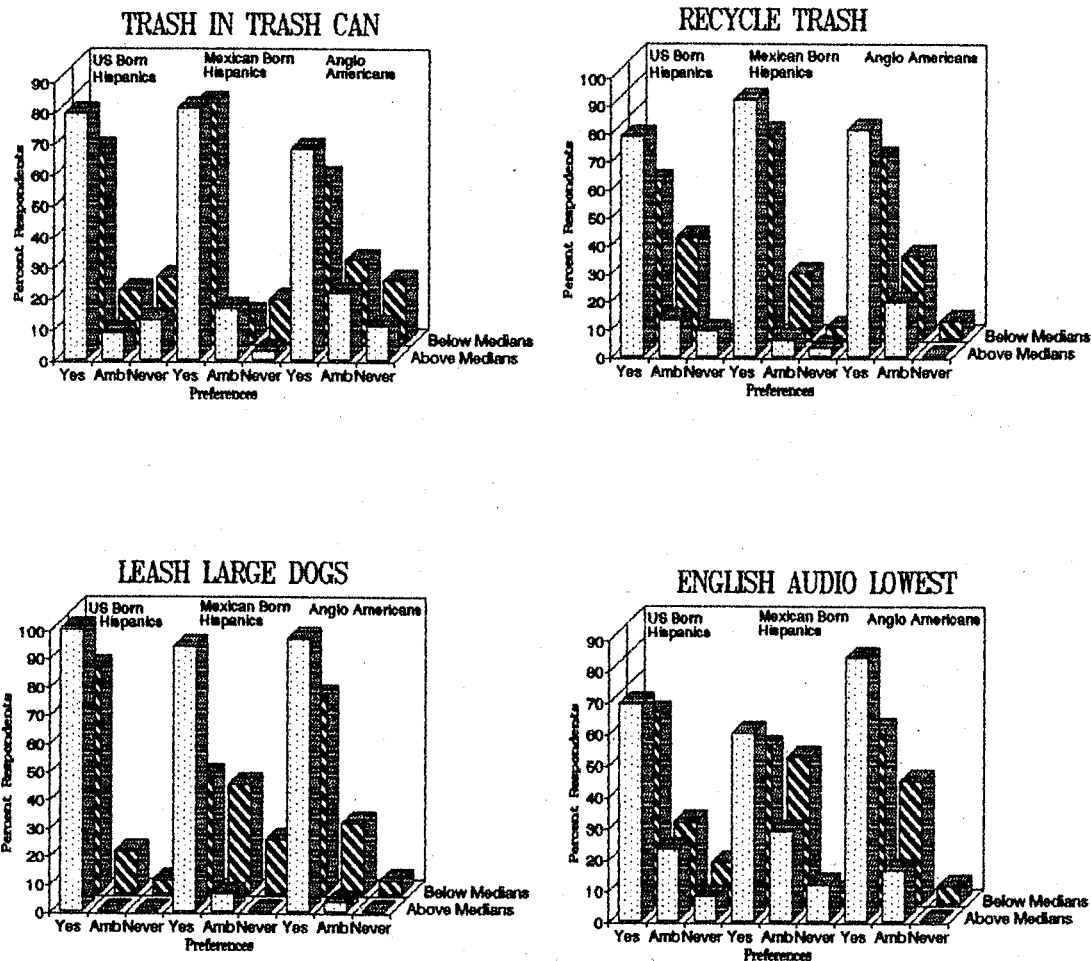


Figure 1—Cross cultural social regularities

preferences for leashing medium and small size dogs and always entering others' in-stream picnic sites. Pluralities or majorities of those below the medians were ambivalent but there were three exceptions. Majorities of U.S.-born Hispanics and Anglo Americans had positive normative preferences for leashing medium size dogs, and a majority of Mexican born Hispanics had positive normative preferences for entering others' in-stream picnic sites.

U.S. indigene social regularities were characterized by substantial majorities (70 to 90 percent) of U.S. born Hispanics and Anglo Americans above or below the median expectations who had positive or negative normative preferences for leashing medium size dogs, listening to Spanish language audio programs at their lowest volume, and never listening to Spanish or English language audio programs at their loudest volumes (figure 2). U.S. born Hispanics and Anglo Americans above and below the medians had positive preferences for leashing medium size dogs, but U.S. born Hispanics below the medians were ambivalent about lowest volumes for Spanish language audio programs and loudest volumes for English and Spanish language audio programs.

T-tests showed significant differences in the ages of U.S.-born Hispanics above and below the median expectations for lowest Spanish ( $T=2.26$ , 31.1 d.f.,  $p=0.031$ ), loudest English ( $T=2.19$ , 30.2 d.f.,  $p=0.036$ ), and loudest Spanish ( $T=2.30$ , 27.4 d.f.,  $p=0.029$ ) audio volumes. For each audio volume, U.S.-born Hispanics whose expectations were below the medians were eight to nine years younger on average than those whose expectations were above the medians.

Mexico-born Hispanic social regularities were characterized by majorities or pluralities of both those above and below the medians having positive normative preferences for entering other's formal picnic sites and informal sites in the stream and on the stream bank. In all cases, however, substantial proportions (30 to 49 percent) were ambivalent about entering others' sites.

Hispanics, both U.S.- and Mexico-born, and above and below the medians, had positive normative preferences (54 to 94 percent) for always cooking food at formal picnic sites. This Hispanic social regularity was supported by a majority (63.3 percent) of Anglo Americans above the median, but a majority (57.9 percent) below the median were ambivalent.

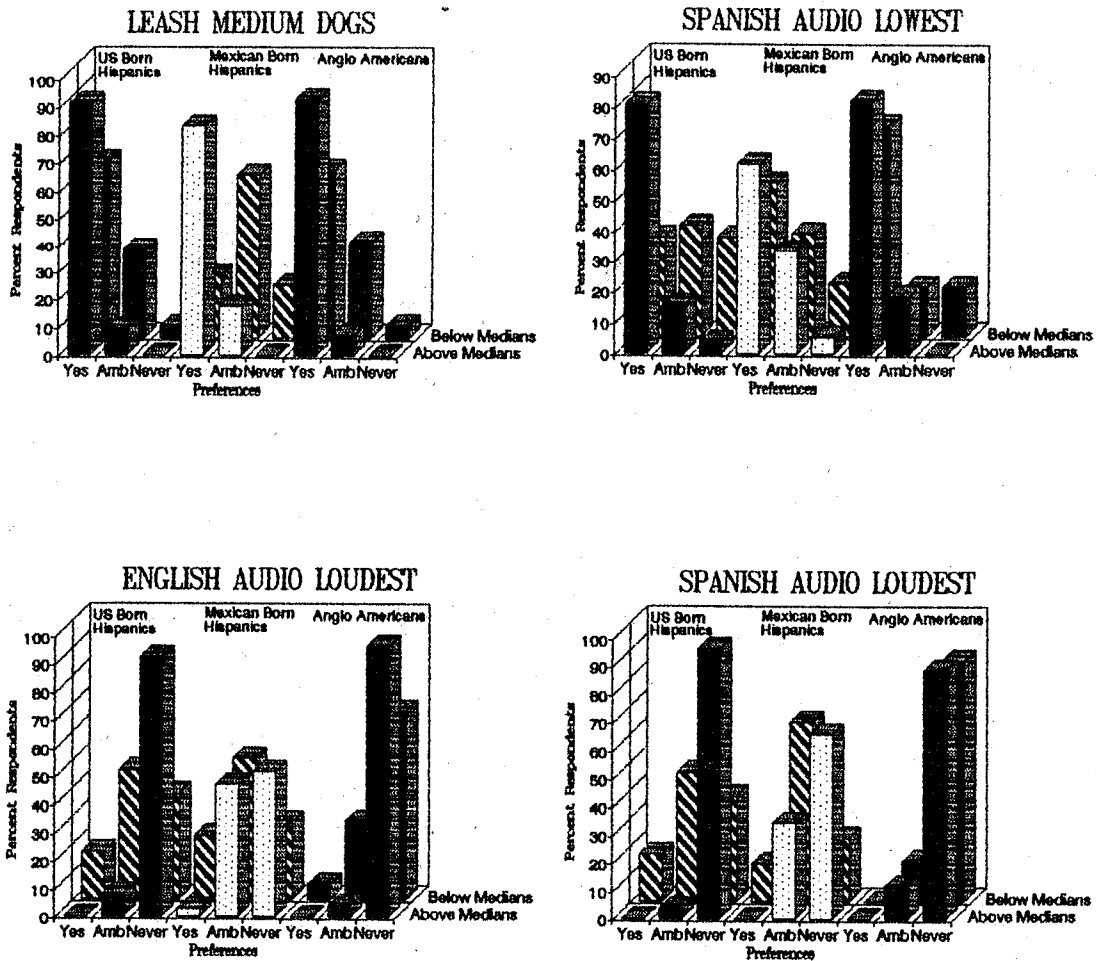


Figure 2—U.S. indigene social regularities

Consensus was not found ethnically or expectationally about eating prepared food at formal picnic sites and listening to Spanish or English language audio programs at moderate volumes. All ethnic groups, both above and below the medians, were ambivalent about eating prepared food at formal picnic sites. Majorities of U.S.- and Mexico-born Hispanics above and below the medians were ambivalent about listening to Spanish language audio programs at moderate volumes. Although a majority (81 percent) of Anglo Americans below the median were ambivalent about moderate volume Spanish language audios, a majority (64 percent) above the median had negative normative preferences. Majorities of U.S.-born Hispanics (56 percent) and Anglo Americans (52 percent) above the medians had negative normative preferences for listening to English language audio programs at moderate volumes, but larger majorities below the medians (72 percent of U.S.-born Hispanics and 82 percent of Anglo Americans) were ambivalent. Majorities of Mexico-born Hispanics both above and below the medians were ambivalent about moderate volume English language audios.

## Discussion

A diversity of social regularities were found: some showed little or no ethnic variation while others were characterized by differences in place of birth and/or ethnic identity. A consensus thought that trash should be disposed of properly or taken home to recycle later and that dogs should be leashed. Visitors born in the U.S., regardless of ethnic identification, generally agreed that audio volumes should not be intrusive, while Mexico-born Hispanics expressed more general agreement about entering other users sites regardless of the type of site or its location. Hispanics, whether U.S.- or Mexico-born, generally agreed that food should be cooked only at formal picnic sites with tables and grills.

The cross cultural consensus about trash disposal and recycling does not appear to be consistent with the findings of Carr and Williams (1993), who, in a study of southern California National Forest recreation sites, found that when asked about their definition of respect for the forest, Anglos and Hispanics born in the United States expressed support for anti-littering and clean up behaviors, while Hispanics

born outside the U.S. did not express such sentiments. Their open ended question format found different forest meanings for U.S. natives than for non-natives. The meaning of the forest recreation setting is the combination of thoughts, feelings, memories and interpretations the place evokes (Schroeder 1991), which is not the same as the expectations and preferences for particular behaviors in that setting. When specifically asked to rate their expectations and preferences for trash disposal and recycling in this study, Mexico-born Hispanics strongly supported these behaviors. Although the forest means different things to natives and non-natives, the results of this study indicate that both natives and non-natives have high expectations and strong preferences for behaviors that should result in a litter free and clean recreational setting. Carr and Williams' caution--that their findings do not reveal the respondents' actual behavior--also applies to the present study. The findings concerning expectations and preferences, however, do indicate that a behavioral standard for trash disposal and recycling could exist for most users regardless of ethnicity. Such a standard could provide the basis for management actions to enhance these behaviors.

Anglos and Hispanics born in the U.S. generally agree that audio programs, whether Spanish or English, should not be played at their loudest volume. For half of the U.S. born Hispanics whose expectations are below the median, however, majorities are ambivalent about audio volumes. This finding is similar to the preferences of Mexican-born Hispanics. Because these U.S.-born Hispanics are significantly younger than those whose expectations are above the median, younger U.S. born Hispanics may identify more strongly with Mexican social regularities than they do with Anglo social regularities. Ambivalent preferences about a behavior that intrudes on many other picnickers experiences does not seem consistent with the respectful behavior prescribed by *simpatía*, however.

In a different context, Mexican born Hispanics were the only respondents in which majorities or pluralities, regardless of their expectations, preferred that all use sites be open for others to enter. In the stream and on the stream bank this can result in site occupants splashed with water, while at formal picnic sites other users can stir up dust or track wet feet over ground covers. Such preferences would not seem to be consistent with *simpatía* behavior. Perhaps *simpatía* is not associated with recreation in this wildland-urban setting.

Consensus about cooking food only at formal picnic sites was only found among Hispanics, whether U.S.- or Mexico-born. The question was worded to specify sites with tables and grills, but even so this may not have been understood by many respondents. Casual observations at Lytle Creek show that some Hispanic users bring portable tables and charcoal grills with them. The strong cooking preference, regardless of expectations, does not seem to be consistent with findings from other research on southern California National Forests that showed that two of the most appealing environmental conditions were nearness to water and shade (Simcox and Pfister 1990). The formal picnic sites, located on a flood plain

between Lytle Creek and Lytle Creek Road, are at some distance from the creek and generally have little or no shade.

## Conclusion

The findings from this study show similarities and differences between Hispanics and Anglo Americans and confirm previous research findings that Hispanic social regularities are not unidimensional. Hispanic's expectations and preferences differ depending on place of birth, age, and the type of behavioral problem considered. Although all users--both Hispanics and Anglos--generally agree about certain behavioral problems, other behavioral problems are much more complex. The complexity of expectations and preferences for some behavioral problems means that managers must maintain a high degree of familiarity with the various constituent groups who visit areas like Lytle Creek and the types of problems they encounter. Periodic surveys that observe and measure social regularities are also needed to confirm behavioral trends as recreation settings and visitor populations evolve and change.

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