The Warped Looking Glass: How Minorities Perceive Themselves, Believe They are Perceived, and are Actually Perceived by Majority Group Members in Quebec, Canada

ABSTRACT/RESUME

This study explores how members of various minority groups perceive themselves, believe they are perceived, and are actually perceived by majority group members in terms of an inclusive label (Quebecer) and two exclusive labels (foreigner, immigrant). Respondents were 293 junior college students in Montreal, representing a majority group (French Quebecers), as well as five immigrant groups (European Francophones, Jews, Latin Americans, South-East Asians, and Haitians). Strong support was found for two hypotheses: first, a "cultural similarity" hypothesis was confirmed, with European Francophones being most accepted and the visible minorities least accepted by majority group members; second, the minorities saw themselves more as "Quebecers" and less as "foreigners" and "immigrants" than they actually were, and the reverse trend was shown for the Haitians. The potential role of intergroup misperceptions in the marginalization of minorities is discussed.

Cette etude a evalue comment les membres de divers groupes ethniques minoritaires se percevaient, comment ils croyaient etre perus, et comment ils etaient reellement perus par les membres d'un groupe majoritaire en fonction d'un etiquette inclusive (Quebecois) et de deux etiquettes exclusives (etranger, immigrant). L'echantillon etait compose de 293 etudiants de niveau college provenant d'un groupe majoritaire (Quebecois francais) et de cinq groupes d'immigrants (Europeens d'origine francaise, Juifs, Latino-Americains, immigrants provenant du sud-est de l'Asie et des Haitiens). Deux hypotheses furent fortement confirmees. Premierement une hypothese de similarite culturelle a ete confirmee. Les Europeens d'origine francaise etaient plus acceptes tandis que les minorites visibles etaient plus acceptes par les membres du groupe majoritaire. Deuxiement, les membres des groupes minoritaires se sont plus perus comme etant quebecois et moins des etrangers et immigrants comparativement a ce qu'ils croyaient que les membres de la majorite pensaient d'eux. Aussi, les Europeens d'origine francaise presumaient qu'ils etaient plus perus par les membres du groupe majoritaire comme quebecois et moins comme etranger et immigrant lorsqu'en realite tel n'etait pas le cas. Cette tendance etait inversee chez les Haitiens. Finalement, le role potential des perceptions intergroupes erronees sur la marginalisation des minorites est examine.

A central feature of North American societies is the growing demographic importance and increased collective mobilization of ethnic minorities (Bienvenue and Goldstein, 1985; Fleras and Elliott, 1992; Maldonado and Moore, 1985; Olsak, 1983). Perhaps partly in response to these changes, social psychologists have
shown greater concern for the issues of contact between ethnic groups (Miller and Brewer, 1984), racism (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986; Katz and Taylor, 1988), justice (Lind and Tyler, 1988), and cultural diversity (Moghaddam, Taylor and Wright, 1993). In the Canadian context, specifically, the integration patterns of ethnic minorities, and majority attitudes toward minorities, have received greater research attention (Berry, 1984; 1991; Berry, Kalin and Taylor, 1977; Lalonde, Taylor and Moghaddam, 1988, 1992; Lambert, Mermegis and Taylor, 1985; Moghaddam, 1992, Moghaddam, in press; Moghaddam and Taylor, 1987; Moghaddam Taylor and Lalonde, 1987, 1989; Reynolds, 1992).

In a major national survey, Berry, et al., (1977) found that majority group Canadians differentially evaluated membership in different minority groups, and that their preferences implied a “hierarchy of acceptance” (see Berry et al. 1977, p.106). The position of different minorities in this hierarchy seemed to be associated with how similar the minority is to majority group members. Thus, minorities of Western European origin appeared at the top half of the hierarchy and those of Asian or African descent were situated at the bottom half. This pattern of results is consistent with a long line of research on “social distance” and similarity-attraction (Bogardus, 1925; Byrne, 1971), suggesting that similar others are more likely to be accepted into the category of “ingroup.” Also indicative of majority group perceptions is the growing literature on racism in Canada (see Henry and Tator, 1985), which serves to highlight the idea that minority groups are differentially accepted by majority group Canadians.

There is still need, however, for more research on the self-perceptions of ethnic minorities themselves. Central to such self-perceptions are the labels immigrants have available to them after arrival in the host society. Some such labels imply that the individual remains outside the majority group, while others imply that the individual has moved closer to gaining entrance to the majority group. For example, in the context of the Canadian province of Quebec, the labels “foreigner” and “immigrant” imply less progress in gaining entrance to the majority group, thus “exclusion,” than the label “Quebecer,” which implies “inclusion” to a greater extent.

Clearly, ethnic minorities adopt labels such as “foreigner” and “Quebecer” through interactions with others (Weinreich, 1983; 1986). Thus, in addition to exploring how individuals perceive themselves, it is also important to examine how individuals view majority groups as perceiving the self. In examining this latter topic, Moghaddam and Taylor (1987) conducted a study of visible minority women in Montreal, and found that these women perceived themselves more as “Canadians” and less as “immigrants” than they believed majority group Canadians perceive them. Importantly, the longer these women lived in Canada, the more they felt that they were viewed by majority group members as outsiders. This unexpected finding was interpreted by Moghaddam and Taylor (1987) as reflecting the experiences of visible minority women with discrimination, so that women who have lived in Canada longer have greater opportunities to experience discrimination and, consequently, are more likely to believe they are perceived as outsiders. Related to this is the finding of Lalonde et al., (1992) that ethnic minorities believe Canadian society positively values the label “Canadian” more than that of “immigrant.” Thus, labels such as “Canadian” and “immigrant” seem to imply different levels of “inclusion” and “exclusion.”

This line of research focusing on the perceptions of minority groups is limited in an important way, however, because it fails to provide information about the accu-
either orally or in writing. I would attribute this to his being as overwhelmed as the rest of us by the sheer magnitude of the achievement in the institute’s establishment.

The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies was, at the time, the largest subsidy out of public funds which any Ukrainian community project had ever received outside Ukraine. To my mind, it was a richly deserved dividend to the first, pioneer settlers whose hard work had done so much to open up the prairie west. I know that to me personally the institute was an expression of the gratitude I felt to grandparents and parents who had taught me to love education and to value culture (Ukrainian and otherwise). But no matter how fortuitous for the institute’s establishment may have been my own efforts, without “the immersion” in Ukrainian studies which Bociurkiw, Rudnytsky and Luckyj had provided, it would not have been possible to draw up the proposals. And, in the same vein, if it had not been for Peter Savaryn’s very large political influence with the government and within the university, the institute would not have come into being. For the institute, in the last analysis, was a political act—an act of public policy made possible by the public funds which the government of Alberta, through Albert Hohol, deemed worthy to make available. Hohol’s support was crucial, and if Savaryn and I may be considered the institute’s godfathers, he was the presiding medic at the institute’s birth whose gentle tap at precisely the right time gave the institute its first heartbeat.
"being accepted" by European immigrants. The testing of this third hypothesis, which was the main innovation of this study, required the contrasting of how minority groups perceived themselves and believed they are perceived by majority group members, with how they are actually perceived.

METHOD

Subjects

The respondents for this study were 293 junior college students from an ethnically diverse college in Montreal. The average age of the students was approximately 18 years. Four immigrant groups were represented in the sample: 30 European Francophones, the majority from France with eight from Belgium and one from Switzerland; 45 Haitians; 45 South-East Asians representing the nations of Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia; 23 Jewish students, 17 of whom were Sephardic from North Africa (we use the labels "European Francophones," "Jews," "Latin Americans," "Haitians," and "South-East Asians," because pilot work demonstrated that the respondents clearly understood these labels). For one particular analysis a sample of 150 Caucasian French Quebecers from the same college were also included.

Materials and Procedure

The present research was part of a large-scale project dealing with ethnic relations at a multiethnic junior college. Respondents were recruited by soliciting their participation in school classes, with the co-operation of school authorities. In the case of the ethnic minority respondents, our goal was to achieve as large a sample as possible. Thus, we attempted to be as inclusive as possible, achieving about a 70% return rate. The French Quebecers were randomly selected from the total school population by using school lists. Questionnaires were completed individually by respondents in their classes during school hours; but there was no communications between respondents while they completed questionnaires. Since their classes are all in French, respondents completed a questionnaire in French. The questionnaire comprised the following sections of relevance to the present study.

Demographic Information: A series of demographic questions focused on age, sex, and details of ethnic background.

Intergroup Perceptions: Respondents' perception of themselves and how they believe they are perceived by French Quebecers were assessed through three sets of questions. The first set of questions required respondents to rate the extent to which they thought of themselves as a member of a variety of group labels. Respondents were presented with the following labels: "immigrant," "foreigner," and "Quebecker." After the presentation of each label, respondents indicated the extent to which they saw themselves as members of that particular category. The labels were presented in a fixed order, based on our previous research experience using these labels (e.g., Lalonde et al., 1992; Moghaddam and Taylor, 1987) which indicated no order effect. Responses to each question took the form of a nine point scale, where one (1) represented "definitely no" and nine (9) represented "definitely yes." For the second set of questions, the interviewer asked the respondent to rate the same groups again adding "... only this time rate, not how you think of yourself, but how most French Quebecers think of you." For the third set of questions 150 French Quebecers were asked how they actually perceived members of the other five groups in terms of the labels "immigrant," "foreigner," and "Quebecker."
racy of such perceptions. If society, and majority groups in particular, can act as a mirror for the "looking glass self" (Cooley, 1902), we must also address the question, "how accurately do individuals see what is in the mirror?"

An important next step, then, is to assess how majority group members actually perceive minority groups (actual-outgroup perceptions). Do majority group members actually perceive members of different minority groups as "immigrants" and "foreigners," more than they perceive them as majority group members, or are they only assumed to do so? This question is, we believe, of theoretical importance, because discrepancies between believed and actual outgroup perceptions are likely to be systematically associated with similarity. Because majority group members place more similar outgroups higher in the status hierarchy (Berry et al., 1977), the more similar minority groups are more likely to assume that majority group members see them as "ingroup" rather than as "outsiders." In contrast, dissimilar minority groups are more likely to see themselves as being placed in "outsider" categories.

If this pattern of intergroup perceptions was to emerge, then a number of potentially frustrating consequences might arise. For instance, Western Europeans might be over-confident about how much they are accepted, and be unexpectedly frustrated at what they may see as their "cool" reception. On the other hand, visible minority group members who perceive themselves to be outsiders and also believe they are perceived by majority group members as outsiders, may be misjudging how majority groups actually perceive them. In some conditions, majority group members may be more accepting of minority groups than minority groups believe them to be.

In order to explore "own," "believed-outgroup," and "actual-outgroup" perceptions, we undertook a study of intergroup attitudes in the context of a Francophone junior college in Montreal. The respondents included samples of majority group members (French Quebecers), "non-visible" minority group members (European Francophones), and a variety of "visible" minority group members (Jews, Latin Americans, Haitians, and South-East Asians).

The focus for the research was perceptions on the basis of group labels implying "exclusion" ("immigrant, "foreigner") and "inclusion" ("Quebecer") in terms of 1) the actual perceptions that majority group members have of various minority groups, 2) the perceptions of minority group members in terms of their own category memberships and 3) the perception of minority group members in terms of how they believe majority group members perceive them. We ventured three hypotheses.

The first hypothesis was based on the notion of "cultural distance" and predicted that acceptance by majority group members would be in order of intergroup similarity (Bogardus, 1925; Byrne, 1971). It was hypothesized that majority group members (French Quebecers) would perceive the non-visible minority group (European Francophones) more as "Quebecer" and less as "immigrant" or "foreigner" than the other four visible minority groups. Following Moghaddam and Taylor (1987) and Lalonde et al., (1992), our second hypothesis was that minority group respondents would perceive themselves less as "immigrant" and "foreigner" and more as "Quebecer" than they believed French Quebecers perceive them. Hypothesis three predicted that the beliefs that minority groups hold about majority group perceptions would be systematically biased, so that there would be an exaggeration of "being rejected" by visible group minorities, and an exaggeration of
The findings clearly support this hypothesis, although the "hierarchy of acceptance" is not as clear-cut as we had predicted. The European Francophones clearly were perceived more as "Quebecers" and less as "foreigners" than the other groups, but the Jews were perceived to be similar to the European Francophones on the "immigrant" label. Also, the Jews were seen more as Quebecers than one of the other minorities, the South-East Asians.

The general trend of our findings is consistent with those of Berry et al., (1977), and suggest that majority group members differentiate between minority groups and are more accepting toward some than toward others. Interestingly, this study comes 15 years after Berry et al., (1977), and shows very similar patterns of preferences. Some ambiguity remains with respect to the Jews. Although most of our sample were Sephardic Jews, and although it was they who interacted with the majority group sample on a daily basis at school, we cannot exclude the possibility that in making their ratings the majority group sample were thinking of the long-established community of European Jews in Quebec. Thus, what seem to be more accepting attitudes toward Jews, relative to the visible minority groups, may have been influenced by the Jews' being conceived as "European," and thus more similar to majority group Canadians than to visible minorities.

The second hypothesis was that minority group respondents would perceive themselves less as "immigrants" and "foreigners," and more as "Quebecers," than they believe majority group Canadians perceive them. The previous studies that we are aware of which reported this trend focused on visible minority group members (Lalonde et al., 1992; Moghaddam and Taylor, 1987). In the present study, this hypothesis was fully confirmed in the cases of the Haitian, Latin American, and Jewish samples, but not in the case of the South-East Asians. Responses among the Haitians, Latin Americans and Jews seem to reflect the general belief that they are perceived by majority group members as outsiders, and as "belonging" less than they themselves believe they belong in Quebec.

The perception that one "belongs" more than majority group members see one as "belonging" was not shared by European Francophones. This is perhaps because European Francophones are treated as being more similar to French Canadians by French Canadians.

Thus, the findings provide general support for the first two hypotheses. On the one hand, majority group members seem to have a "hierarchy of acceptance." They perceive European Francophones more as "Quebecers" and less as "outsiders." Correspondingly, Haitians, Latin Americans and Jews believe that majority group Canadians see them less as "Quebecers" and more as "outsiders" than they see themselves. European Francophones do not perceive such a rift; and this can be explained, it seems to us, with reference to the high status they enjoy.

But in the realm of intergroup perceptions, perhaps the most important rift that can arise is between how majority group members actually perceive minorities and how they are assumed to perceive minorities. In support of the third hypothesis, the findings of this study indicate that such rifts exist and, second, that the existing rifts are systematically associated with status differences between groups. The "non-visible" minority group, the European Francophones, acted in an "over-confident" manner, in that they assumed that they are "accepted" as Quebecers more than they actually were, and seen less as "outsiders" than they actually were. In contrast, the Haitians, a representative "visible" minority group, lacked confidence completely,
Results

Actual Perceptions: Ratings made by French Quebecers on the three labels were analyzed by a 3 x 5 (status by ethnic group) ANOVA, with repeated measures on both factors, resulting in a significant interaction, F(8,144)=35.65, P<.001. Post-hoc comparisons of means (Newman-Keuls) revealed that French Quebecers perceived European-Francophones and Jews less as "immigrants" than Haitians, Latin Americans, and South East Asians (see figure 3). Compared to the Jews, the Latin Americans, and the Haitians, the European-Francophones were perceived less as "foreigners" and more as "Quebecer". The Jews were also perceived more as "Quebecer" than the South East Asians.

Self-Perceptions: Own and believed-outgroup perceptions were analyzed using a 2x3x5 ANOVA, perception type (own / believed other) by status label (immigrant / foreigner / Quebecker) by ethnic groups (European Francophones / Jewish / Latin American / Haitian / South-East Asian), with repeated measures on the first two factors. The three-way interaction was not significant. When a 2 (perception type) x 3 (status label) ANOVA was run for each of the five ethnic groups separately, significant interaction effects were found for the Haitians F(2,86)=13.05, p<.001, the Latin American Sample F(2,62)=5.09, p<.01, and the Jewish sample F(2,56)=7.9, p<.001. Post-hoc comparisons of means (Neuman-Keuls) revealed the source of the interaction to be a trend found for all three groups, showing own perceptions to be lower than believed-outgroup perceptions on the "immigrant" and "foreigner" labels, but higher on the "Quebecer" label (see figures 1 & 2).

Self vs. Actual Outgroup Perceptions: One-way ANOVAs were computed across own, believed-outgroup, and actual-outgroup perceptions for each group's ratings on each status label. Post-hoc tests (Neuman-Keuls) were used to examine the sources of significant differences, and three distinct patterns emerged. First, European-Francophones perceived themselves and believed they are perceived less as "immigrants," F(2,217)=26.03, p<.001, and "foreigners," F(2,219)=10.56, p<.001, than they actually are; and more as "Quebecer" that they actually are, F(2,218)=3.51, p<.01. This is contrasted by a second pattern, evident to different degrees in the responses of the Jewish, Latin American, and Haitian samples, but most clearly apparent in the case of the Haitians. The Haitians believed that they are perceived more as "immigrants," F(2,232)=7.68, p<.01, and "foreigners," F(2,233)=11.49, p<.01, than they actually are, and less as "Quebecer," F(2,230)=3.52, p<.01, than they actually are. A third pattern is evident in the responses of the South East Asians, there were no differences between own, believed-outgroup, and actual-outgroup perceptions on any of the three status labels (see figures 1-3).

Discussion

The main innovation of this study was to assess the accuracy of beliefs minority group members hold about how majority group members perceive them. We addressed this question by examining the relationships among how minority group members perceive themselves, believe they are perceived by majority group members, and are actually perceived by majority group members on the labels "immigrant," "foreigner," and "Quebecer."

Our first hypothesis was that the actual perceptions held by majority group members would reflect a "hierarchy of acceptance," so that, because of their greater similarity to French Quebeccers, European Francophones would be perceived more as "Quebecers" and less as "immigrants" and as "foreigners" than the other groups.
Figure 1. Own Perceptions
since they assumed that they are perceived more as "outsiders" and less as "Quebecers" than they actually were.

These misperceptions are bound to exacerbate the potential for intergroup conflict. In the case of overconfidence, group members believe they are accepted when in fact the majority has reservations. Members of the overconfident group will not be taking steps to overcome the majority group's reservations, and indeed are likely to be presumptuous in the context of interactions with members of the majority groups. Such a posture is likely to make integration with the majority group more problematic.

For members of visible minority groups who exaggerate the extent to which they are not supported by the majority group, a defensive posture is likely. This tends to exacerbate the potential for conflict and also prevent members of visible minorities from taking advantage of the available good will that actually exists in the larger society.

Also, the question arises as to why one visible minority group, the South-East Asians, did not follow the predicted pattern and generally responded in a way that was different from the other groups. There was no difference between own, believed-out-group, and actual-outgroup perceptions among the South-East Asian sample on any of the three labels. One possibility is that the South-East Asians genuinely are more accurate in assessing and matching how they see themselves, as compared to how they are seen by majority group Canadians. But a more plausible explanation is that because they are a newly arrived refugee population, the South-East Asian respondents themselves and members of the majority group were uncertain about their own role in Canadian society and as yet unclear about how they should describe themselves. This would explain why consistently low ratings were given to all three labels, relative to ratings given by the other minority groups who have been in Canada longer and have probably developed a clearer picture of their place in Canada.

Finally, we should raise a methodological issue that might have a bearing on our findings. Our respondents were junior college students, and the question arises as to how these results might be pertinent for other sectors of the population. We specifically chose a junior college as the context for our study because of the importance the school context has in the socialization of intergroup relations. This is a context in which future adults from diverse ethnic backgrounds have an opportunity to interact with one another and form relationships across ethnic boundaries. It is also a context in which there are, presumably, ample opportunities for minority group members to accurately assess how majority groups view them. The discovery of inaccuracies in intergroup perceptions in this school context raises the possibility that such perceptions will be even more biased among adults. This should be a topic for future research in multicultural societies such as Canada.
Figure 3. Actual Perceptions


We used the category "Quebecer" rather than "French Quebecer" because the former is more inclusive.

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