EXPLORING RECEIVING SOCIETY ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRATION AND ETHNOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The host majority has an important impact on how immigrants adapt to their new land. The authors examine the social climates toward immigration and diversity through the use of acculturation scales and various host acculturation orientations.

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The adaptation of immigrants and their descendants to their new society is affected by numerous factors (Berry 1997). Amongst the most important are attitudes held by members of the receiving society toward immigrants and related behaviours such as inclusion and exclusion expressed in everyday life and within public and private institutions. Thus, host majority attitudes and behaviours towards immigrants contribute to the 'social climate' towards immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Better knowledge about this social climate of acceptance or rejection is useful for a number of reasons. Foremost is that an intolerant climate benefits no one: it is not only immigrants who adapt poorly when they face rejection, but backlash may be generated among members of the larger society, creating an even more negative climate for both the immigrants and their descendants. Second, knowledge about these attitudes can be useful in designing public education programmes that seek to bring about attitude change; and the success of such programmes can in turn be evaluated against this social climate information. Third, policy decisions about immigration levels and selection criteria, and about the promotion of cultural diversity could also be made using such information. Generally the importance of such research resides in the fact that the success of any immigration and integration policy depends upon the support of the general host population and its willingness to accept immigrants from different countries of origin. Within western democracies we propose that immigration and integration policies are likely to reflect mainly the desires of the dominant host majority though representatives of various immigrant communities can also have a say in the formulation of such policies (Bourhis, Moïse et al. 1997).

International study of attitudes towards immigration and settlement (ISATIS)

Host majority attitudes towards immigration and ethnocultural diversity can be monitored with a survey questionnaire developed within the *International study of attitudes towards immigration and settlement* (ISATIS: Bourhis, Berry et al. 1999). Using representative samples of the general population, this survey questionnaire measures the social climate that prevails towards immigration in Western democracies whose immigration history and integration policies may vary greatly. Our key indicator of social climate towards immigration which we call *immigration attitudes* measures three attitude components: a) preferences for/prohibition against certain types of immigrants, b) attitudes about the positive and negative consequences of immigration for the host society, c) comfort feeling in the presence of immigrants from different ethnic, linguistic and religious background.

Two important psychological processes are likely to affect immigration attitudes. The first one, favourable *orientation towards ethnic diversity*, measures the extent to which host society members endorse the multiculturalism ideology and their level of tolerance towards ethnic difference. The second process, *feelings of personal and collective security*, measures the sense of security or insecurity felt by host majority members in the personal, economic and cultural spheres. We believe that individuals who feel personally and collectively insecure are less likely to have favourable orientations

towards ethnic diversity and less likely to be accepting of immigrants. For instance, culturally insecure individuals are likely to feel that the consequences of immigration are negative for their own host community, to prefer lower rates of immigration and to have less favourable attitudes towards immigrants. Taking stock of previous sociological research, we propose that the demographic background of host majority members can also be related to immigration attitudes. Demographic antecedents include age, gender, language, social class, education and ethnic background.

As a first test of the ISATIS framework we conducted a pilot study with members of two host communities in Canada: Ontario Anglophones attending Queen's University as undergraduates and Quebec Francophone undergraduates attending the Université du Québec à Montréal. Results showed that for both Anglophones and Francophones, personal and cultural security were related to positive orientation towards ethnic diversity. For Ontario Anglophones, favourable orientation towards ethnic diversity and personal/collective security had a positive influence on immigration attitudes. For Quebec Francophones, a feeling of security in the personal and cultural domains was a much stronger predictor of positive diversity orientations and positive immigration attitudes. These preliminary results with undergraduates suggest that improving the social climate towards immigration may need to be addressed differently in English Canada and in French Quebec. Our ISATIS framework was intended as a basis for developing a 'barometer type' survey instrument for assessing the social climate towards immigration not only in different regions of Canada but also in different countries of the western world. In the next section we present selected findings from our international studies using an approach providing a finer grained analysis of the type of acculturation orientations held by host majority members towards immigrants.

The Interactive Acculturation Model

Acculturation is a term used to describe the process of bidirectional change that takes place when two ethnocultural groups come in sustained contact with each other. This definition of acculturation implies that dominant as well as non-dominant cultural groups are influenced and transformed by their intercultural contacts and are expected to change some aspects of their respective culture as a way of adaptating to ethnocultural diversity. A common shortcoming of classic acculturation models is the lack of importance given to how the dominant host majority can shape and be shaped by the acculturation orientations of immigrant groups.

The *Interactive Acculturation Model* (IAM) seeks to integrate within a common theoretical framework the following components of immigrant and dominant host majority relations in cross-cultural settings: 1) acculturation orientations adopted by immigrant groups within the host society, 2) acculturation orientations adopted by the host majority towards specific groups of immigrants, 3) interpersonal and intergroup relational outcomes which are the product of combinations of immigrant and host majority acculturation orientations (Bourhis, Moïse et al. 1997).

The acculturation orientations of host majority members are monitored using a new *Host Community Acculturation Scale* (HCAS). The HCAS measures how individuals endorse each of five host community acculturation orientations (Montreuil and Bourhis 2001). Host majority members who accept and value the maintenance of the heritage culture of immigrants and also accept that immigrants adopt important features of the majority host culture endorse the *integrationist* orientation. Ultimately, this orientation implies that host community members value a stable biculturalism amongst immigrant groups which, in the long term, may contribute to cultural pluralism as an enduring feature of the host society. *Individualism* is an orientation in which host community members define themselves and others as individuals rather than as members of group categories such as immigrants or host majority members. For individualists it is the personal characteristics of individuals that count most rather than belonging to one group or another. The *assimilationist* orientation corresponds to the traditional concept of absorption whereby host community members expect immigrants to relinquish their cultural identity for the sake of adopting the culture of the majority host society. Members of the host community who prefer a *segregationist* orientation accept that immigrants maintain their heritage culture as long as they keep their distance from host majority members as they do not wish immigrants to adopt, 'contaminate' or transform the host culture. Host community members who adopt this orientation disfavour cross-cultural contact with immigrants, prefer them to remain together in separate community enclaves and are ambivalent regarding the status of immigrants as rightful members of the majority host society. The exclusionist orientation can be adopted by members of the host community who are intolerant of immigrants who maintain their culture of origin while also refusing that immigrants adopt features of the majority host culture. Exclusionists believe that immigrants can never be incorporated culturally, economically or socially as rightful members of the host society. Exclusionists may also endorse the prohibition of immigrants from "devalued" national origins and in some cases would prefer some categories of immigrants to be deported to their country of origin.

Results of Canadian and International studies using the HCAS

Using adapted version of HCAS, we recently assessed acculturation orientations of host majority members in four major cities of the world where immigration and integration policies differ: Los Angeles, Montreal, Paris, and Tel Aviv. These studies were conducted with university students who share similar socio-economic status and education level. Eventually, university students are also those most likely to occupy key positions in the civil administration of the state, the education and justice system, industry, business and politics.

In all four cities, host majority undergraduates strongly endorsed the integrationist and individualist orientations towards immigrants. For Francophones in Montreal and Paris, assimilationism was weakly

endorsed while segregationism and exclusionism were virtually rejected. In Los Angeles, Euro-American undergraduates moderately endorsed exclusionism and segregationism while assimilationism was only slightly endorsed. Host majority Israeli Jews in Tel Aviv were similar to Montrealers and Parisians as regards their acculturation orientations towards Jewish immigrants from Russia and Ethiopia. Israeli Jews strongly endorsed integrationism and individualism orientations while they were least likely to endorse assimilationism, segregationism and exclusionism.

According to the IAM, the acculturation orientations held by host majority members may differ depending on the 'valued' or 'devalued' status of the immigrants and national minorities being considered. The 'valued' or 'devalued' status of immigrants and national minorities often reflects the positive or negative stereotypes that are held towards such minorities depending on their country of origin, their socio-economic status and their categorisation as 'visible' or 'non-visible' group members. Our results showed that Francophone undergraduates in Montreal were more integrationist and individualist and less assimilationnist and segregationist towards valued immigrants from France than towards devalued immigrants from Haiti. In Israel, Jewish undergraduates surveyed in 1999 were less integrationist and individualist towards Israeli Arabs than towards Jewish immigrants from Russia and Ethiopia. Conversely, Jewish undergraduates were more segregationist and exclusionist towards Israeli-Arabs than towards Jewish immigrants from Russia or Ethiopia. Our results in Montreal and Tel Aviv clearly showed that the same host majority members may endorse contrasting acculturation orientations depending on the valued or devalued status of immigrants and national minorities.

Social psychological profiles of acculturation orientations

Do individuals endorsing the integrationist or individualist orientations share the same social psychological profile whether such persons took part in our studies in Los Angeles, Montreal, Paris or Tel Aviv? Overall the psychological profile of each acculturation orientation was remarkably similar regardless of the national origin of the host majority undergraduate we sampled in the four cities. The endorsement of *integrationism* and *individualism* was associated with a positive social identity, rejection of the authoritarianism and ethnocentrism ideologies and feelings that immigrants did not threaten the host majority cultural and linguistic identity. Integrationism was endorsed by people who had favourable attitudes towards immigrants and who sought close relations with immigrants irrespective of their ethnic or national origin. Individualists were less likely than integrationists to expect immigrants to adopt features of the host majority culture given that individual freedom of choice was paramount in their value orientations. Overall, integrationists and individualists shared a 'live and let live' orientation towards ingroup and outgroup others.

Host majority undergraduates who strongly endorsed the *assimilationist* orientation moderately endorsed the authoritarianism and ethnocentrism ideology and felt that their majority cultural identity was somewhat threatened by the presence of devalued immigrants. *Segregationists* and *exclusionists* tended to have similar social psychological profiles, though exclusionists were even less favourably disposed towards immigrants than segregationists. Segregationists and exclusionists were those most likely to feel threatened culturally by the presence of immigrants and to have the least secure social identity as majority group members. They were those who most strongly endorsed the authoritarian and ethnocentric ideologies. Segregationists and exclusionists avoided relations with immigrants, especially those whose status was devalued. Segregationists and especially exclusionists were likely to perceive that immigrants did not wish to have good relations with members of the host majority.

Concluding notes

The studies reviewed herein were conducted in post-secondary institutions valuing individual achievement, meritocracy and tolerance towards ethnocultural diversity. Studies conducted with more representative samples of the population are needed to gain a more accurate assessment of the social climate towards immigration in Canada and other countries of settlement in the Western world.

Given their majority status and their control of the state and private institutions, host majority members can have a major impact on the acculturation orientations of immigrant and national minorities. For instance, visible minority immigrants may endorse an integrationist or individualist orientation as they first arrive in the country of settlement. However such immigrants may encounter host majority members who happen to be mostly segregationists or exclusionist towards them. The negative impact of such experiences may be accentuated if such encounters have occurred with host majority members holding "front line" positions such as the police, teachers, health professionals and government clerks dispensing services to immigrants. Faced with rejection even from official representatives of the country of settlement, visible minority immigrants may eventually shift from an integrationist to a separatist orientation as a way of limiting aversive contacts with segregationist or exclusionist members of the host majority while seeking protection and solace within their own immigrant community. However, such feelings of rejection may be attenuated by state integration policies which are mainly pluralist rather than assimilationist, thus contributing to a 'social climate' of tolerance towards immigrant diversity.

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