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ABSTRACT

The attitudes of Canadians toward multiculturalism were investigated in this study. Four attitude domains were examined. The first dealt with the attitudes held by Canadians toward a variety of ethnic groups in the country. The second involved general beliefs regarding cultural diversity. The third consisted of attitudes toward immigration. The fourth domain included the psychological phenomenon of prejudice and discrimination. Two questions constituted the core of the present study: whether Canadians view cultural diversity as a valuable resource, and whether confidence in one's own identity is a preprequisite for accepting others. The results for each of the four attitude domains in the total sample are presented first, and the major trends that emerge across the four domains are described. Respondents in the study showed a reasonably high level of overtolerance for ethnic diversity and a general acceptance for multiculturalism as a social fact. The study also revealed a considerable lack of knowledge concerning multiculturalism as government policy. (Author/AM)

MULTICULTURALISM AND ETHNIC ATTITUDES IN CANADA:

A Summary of a National Survey

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This is a summary of a national survey of attitudes toward multiculturalism, ethnic groups and immigration in Canada. It was conducted pursuant to a contract between the authors and the Secretary of State, Government of Canada. A complete and detailed report of this study is forthcoming.

Our study was designed to investigate the attitudes of Canadians toward multiculturalism. For the purposes of this research, multiculturalism has two meanings. First, it refers to the existence of ethnic groups in Canada which derive from cultural traditions other than French or British. Second, it also refers to the current policy of the Federal Government, announced in 1971, which seeks to promote the retention of these heritages and the sharing of them among all Canadians. The policy was based upon the assumption that if people are to be open in their ethnic attitudes, and have respect for other groups, they must have confidence in their own cultural foundations. Given this assumption, the policy is also designed to help break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies.

A number of questions for research are implied in the policy. Two of the more obvious, are whether Canadians view cultural diversity as a valuable resource, and whether confidence in one's own identity is a prerequisite for accepting others. These two questions constitute the core of the present study.

More specifically, the research reported here consisted of an examination of four attitude domains. The first dealt with the attitudes held by Canadians toward a variety of ethnic groups in the country. The second

involved general beliefs regarding cultural diversity. The third, consisted of attitudes toward immigration. The fourth domain included the psychological phenomena of prejudice and discrimination.

A survey instrument was developed to gather information in all four attitude domains, and to assess demographic characteristics of respondents. It was administered during June and July 1974 to 1849 respondents, individually and in person.

The sample of respondents was selected from a national sampling frame, covering 95% of the population of Canada. Excluded were persons located in the extreme northern parts of the country, and those living on reservations and in institutions.

An examination of the sample's basic demographic characteristics indicates that it closely approximates the characteristics of the Canadian population as revealed in the 1971 Census.

Variations in attitudes according to number of background variables were examined. Among these were region of residence, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, degree of urbanization, religion, political party preference, age and sex.

I shall present the results for each of the four attitude domains in the total sample and then describe

major trends that emerged across the four domains.

Attitudes toward ethnic groups were assessed in three ways. First, respondents were asked to indicate which groups they were aware of. Second, they were provided with a set of cards, with names of ethnic groups on each, and were asked to sort the cards on the basis of their perceived similarity. And last, they were asked to rate a number of ethnic groups on ten adjective dimensions.

Ethnic groups mentioned most often, and therefore apparently being the most visible were Italians, British, French and Germans. Other groups such as Ukrainians, Chinese and Poles were the next most frequently mentioned.

By assessing the frequency with which any two ethnic group cards were placed in the same pile, we were able to analyze how respondents perceived or categorized the ethnic groups. By performing a multidimensional scaling analysis on the matrix of co-occurrences, two dimensions were revealed: one involved the recency of immigration of a given group into Canada; the second appeared to be based on visible racial differences.

In the study of attitudes toward ethnic groups it was necessary to select a small number of groups. Nine groups were chosen: English and French Canadians, Immigrants in general, Canadian Indians, German, Chinese, Ukrainian, Jewish and Italian Canadians. In addition, for each

respondent, two groups, which he or she had named earlier, were added, making a total of eleven. Respondents were asked to provide ratings for each of the eleven groups on ten adjective dimensions: hardworking, important, Canadian, clean, similar to me, likeable, stick together as a group, wealthy, interesting and well known to me.

In general respondents appeared to be at least tolerant of "other ethnic" groups, and there was no evidence of extreme ethnic prejudice; however, respondents did have clear preferences. They reacted very positively to the two charter groups in comparison to "other ethnic" groups. Of the non- charter groups, North Europeans were evaluated relatively favourably (e.g., Dutch and Scandinavians) compared to the South and East European groups (e.g., Greeks and Poles), who were in turn rated more favourably than several other groups (e.g., East Indians, Negroes, Spaniards, Portuguese).

The attitude domain concerned with multiculturalism was assessed with six series of questions, measuring specifically (1) multicultural ideology, that is, the degree of acceptance versus rejection of cultural diversity, (2) the perception of current government policy as involving "assimilation," "permissive integration," or "supportive integration," (3) the extent of knowledge of government policy, (4) the perceived consequences of the multicultural

policy, (5) attitudes toward specific multicultural programmes, and (6) behavioural intentions toward multiculturalism.

Knowledge of the multiculturalism policy was not widespread (only one fifth knew about the policy), and most people perceived the government's current policy to favour "permissive" rather than "supportive" integration. Despite this low level of knowledge and the inaccurate perception of the policy, multicultural attitudes were generally positive. With respect to multicultural ideology, respondents were on the whole slightly in favour of cultural diversity. The perceived consequences of multiculturalism were also slightly positive. Although programme attitudes were greeted with general acceptance, there was evidence of greater acceptance for some programmes (e.g., "community centres" and "folk festivals") than for others (e.g., "radio and television shows in languages other than English or French"). Finally, behavioural intentions were less favourable than attitudes.

The third attitude domain, immigration, was assessed in three areas: (1) perceived consequences of immigration, (2) the acceptability of various types of immigrants, and (3) behavioural intentions toward immigrants and discrimination against them. Perceived consequences of immigration were slightly positive, but there was considerable difference

of opinion. Of greatest concern to respondents was the possibility that "there would be more unemployment" with continued immigration.

Most types of immigrants were rated to be quite acceptable. Considered as most acceptable were "immigrants who could be useful to this country," "immigrants with a skilled trade," and "immigrants who are highly educated." The only types of immigrants that received negative ratings were "immigrants from communist countries" and "anyone who wants to immigrate."

In view of the abundant public debate on the issue, it is notable that "immigrants who are coloured" were found to be acceptable.

Regarding their behavioural intentions, respondents showed a considerable willingness to interact with immigrants. However, they also expressed a slight but consistent preference for members of the majority groups. It appears therefore that while highly educated and skilled immigrants are considered highly desirable for admission to Canada, there is some reluctance to use their services, especially if they are of high status.

To measure prejudice in general, the survey instrument included measures of authoritarianism and ethnocentrism.

Through analyses carried out across the various attitude domains the following themes emerged.

There was a strong coherence among all the attitudes measured; correlations in the expected direction were found in all cases.

How do members of the two charter groups perceive each other? Our study revealed that the mutual attitudes of the two charter groups are quite positive. One interpretation of this finding (which is suprising in the light of the conventional wisdom on the subject) is that when Angloceltic and French Canadians view each other within the context of multiculturalism, a relative similarity and mutual acceptance will emerge; but when they reveal their attitudes in the context of biculturalism, a relative dissimilarity and mutual rejection become manifest.

Further relationships among attitudes were studied in order to assess the ethnocentrism hypothesis: that ingroup and outgroup attitudes are negatively related. When attitudes toward one's own group (English or French Canadian) were correlated with attitudes toward all "other ethnic" groups, a clear pattern emerged: the more positive English and French Canadians were toward their own group, the more negative they were toward "other ethnic" groups. In sharp contrast, the more positive members of charter groups were toward their own group, the more positive they were toward the other charter group.

To assess the possibility that feelings of cultural

and economic security are related to the attitudes under consideration, two new variables were constructed. Correlational analyses indicated that feelings of cultural and economic security were positively related to such attitudes as acceptability of immigrants, multicultural ideology and multicultural behavioural intentions. On the other hand, feelings of security were negatively related to ethnocentrism and the evaluation of one's own group.

The independent variables which were most strongly and consistently related to the attitudes under study were socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Through detailed analyses the independent contribution of these variables was established. The importance of socioeconomic status in the patterning of attitudes has emerged from many sources. Consistently, on attitudes toward immigration, on multicultural ideology and programme attitudes, on scales of ethnocentrism and authoritarianism, and on a number of attitudes toward specific ethnic groups, respondents of lower socioeconomic status exhibited less tolerant attitudes, but on the other hand they showed more favourable attitudes toward their own group. In short, lower socioeconomic status groups were most ethnocentric.

The importance of ethnicity in the patterning of attitudes was shown in the unique response of French

Canadians. They scored higher on authoritarianism and ethnocentrism. They were less favourable in their attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism and they proved to be more positive about their own group and less positive about "other ethnic" groups than members of the other ethnicity categories. Two possible explanations for this finding, namely religion and region of residence, were eliminated through detailed data analysis.

The most likely explanation of the French-Canadian response lies in their history and culture. Since the Conquest, there developed in French Canada a cultural posture which has been called "siege orientation." The primary goal became preservation of the French way of life on an English continent. In part this was accomplished by isolation from the surrounding English culture. Psychologically, self-protection involved the development of ethnocentric attitudes.

An independent variable that produced small but consistent differences in attitudes was political party preference. Among both anglophone and francophone samples, Liberal and New Democratic Party supporters held the more positive attitudes, while Progressive Conservative and Social Credit/Créditiste supporters were less positive.

A number of independent variables which were expected

to have a bearing on the attitudes under consideration, failed to do so. Despite an indication in the literature that ethnic attitudes would be related to generational status, the expected relationships were not found. It seemed also reasonable to expect that attitudes differ across the regions of anglophone Canada, given the varied history of settlement, contact with ethnic diversity, and ethnic background. However, except for the Atlantic provinces, attitudes were remarkably similar from Ontario on westward; the "rift" between East and West did not appear. In the Atlantic region, attitudes were generally less accepting of diversity and more ethnocentric as compared with the rest of the anglophone sample.

We also expected that those of "other ethnic"back-grounds might have more positive attitudes toward cultural diversity than those of Angloceltic background. However, in general there were few differences, both being generally positive.

The present study was designed to answer two major questions. One was whether Canadians view cultural diversity as a valuable resource, and the other whether confidence in one's own identity is a prerequisite for accepting others.

Respondents in our survey showed a reasonably high level of overt tolerance for ethnic diversity and a

general acceptance for multiculturalism as a social fact. However a certain level of covert concern and reluctance to accept ethnic diversity was also uncovered. Although overt racism was low, race was shown to be an important dimension for categorizing people, and racially different groups appeared at the bottom of the perceived ethnic group hierarchy. The present study also revealed a considerable lack of knowledge concerning multiculturalism as government policy. Degree of support for multicultural programmes depended on the specific programmes involved. community centres and folk festivals were postively received, while respondents had reservations about third language teaching and broadcasting.

Although the present study did not contain a direct measure of "confidence in one's own identity," it was possible to test the multicultural assumption by using certain indirect measures. Taking own group evaluation as a measure of confidence, the multicultural assumption was clearly not supported. On the contrary, an ethnocentric pattern of attitudes emerged, with the most positive ingroup attitudes being associated with negative outgroup attitudes. But, taking measures of economic and cultural security as indices of confidence, the multicultural assumption was supported. Those who were most secure were also tolerant toward "other ethnic" groups. Such

apparently contradictory results suggest conceptual ambiguities in the multicultural assumption. Clearly, "confidence in one's own identity" cannot be equated with positive own group evaluation.