

Canadian bilingualism: does "Canadian = English"?

David Sumantry, Craig Blatz*

Grant MacEwan University

POSTER

ORAL Discovery

Canada's policy of bilingualism is lauded as holding the English and French cultures on equal standing in the country (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2012). However, Francophones are a minority group in Canada and relations with Anglophones have been historically tense.

Previous research has looked at intergroup attitudes toward visible minorities in Canada. Asians and Blacks have been shown to be evaluated less favourably than White-Canadians (Blatz, Semanya, & Wright, unpublished). Francophones, in contrast to these groups, are a non-visible Canadian minority, as they cannot be discriminated from the English based on appearance. Our interest was in whether or not people actually perceive the two "White" cultures as equals. If bilingualism was "working," we would see non-significant results in comparing the two groups.

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is a common tool that psychologists use to measure implicit intergroup preferences (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Accuracy and fluidity is measured in sorting stimuli through a computerized response-time task. We used three IATs to measure preferences between Canadian provinces, and a fourth, auditory IAT used verbal phrases in the two languages. A variety of explicit measures examined the overt opinions and attitudes of the participants.

Results on both the explicit and implicit measures were significant. French-Canadians (as well as Quebec) were consistently evaluated less favourably than English-Canadians. Francophones were regularly described as less Canadian than their counterparts. Interestingly, Canadians seem to express explicit preferences to a greater degree than they hold implicitly.

References

Blatz, C., Semanya, A., & Wright, S. C. (2010). Liked but excluded: Multiculturalism, outgroup evaluation, and the "Canada = White" effect. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Psychology, Grant Macewan University, Edmonton, Alberta.

Greenwald, A. G. & Banaji, M. R. (1995). Implicit Social Cognition: Attitudes, Self-Esteem, and Stereotypes. *Psychological Review*, 102(1), 4-27.

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2012). The Official Languages Act and you. Retrieved from <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/tou/al-eng.asp>