

2016

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ScholarWorks Citation

Murdock, E., & Ferrings, D. (2016). Attitude toward multiculturalism: Majority in the minority perspective. In C. Roland-Lévy, P. Denoux, B. Voyer, P. Boski, & W. K. Gabrenya Jr. (Eds.), *Unity, diversity and culture. Proceedings from the 22nd Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*. https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp_papers/219

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Attitude toward Multiculturalism: Majority in the Minority Perspective

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Abstract

Even within a globalizing world, Luxembourg takes an exceptional position with a foreign population of 44 %. In the capital of Luxembourg, home to one-fifth of the country's population, native members make up only 33% of the population. Outwardly the cosmopolitan diversity is praised, but how does the native population, which finds itself in the minority in its own capital, perceive this increasingly plural composition of society? To investigate this specific "majority-as-minority" perspective, we conducted a quantitative study within a Luxembourg employer ($N = 507$) with a large native-born workforce. We examined the endorsement of multiculturalism with an adapted version of the Multicultural Ideology Scale and the Societal Participation Subscale of the Multicultural Attitude Scale. We tested the relationships between the endorsement of multiculturalism and demographic variables and different forms of culture contact experiences. The results show that most respondents endorse the idea of a plural society. However, the results also show reluctance towards specific societal participation measures of the allochthonous population. In addition, we found a slight gender effect, with women showing higher endorsement of multiculturalism, but no age effect. Support for multiculturalism is also tied to the educational level achieved. Finally, direct culture contact, operationalized as composition of circle of friends, is also conducive to endorsement of multiculturalism. We discuss the results within an acculturation context, in which majority–minority relationships become increasingly fluid and cultural diversity is positively evaluated and accepted as a norm; conversely, specific behavioral aspects of living together are yet to be aligned.

Introduction

Luxembourg has the highest immigration rate per capita in the European Union (Eurostat, 2013). Within a comparatively short period of time, in less than 200 years, Luxembourg has transformed from being a poor agrarian country of *emigration* to becoming a wealthy sovereign state and target country for *immigration*. The foreign population percentage has reached 44% (Statec, 2013), and in the capital, home to one-fifth of the population, the foreign population makes up 68% (Etat de la Population, 2013). Thus, the "majority" native population actually finds itself in the minority in the capital. So far, studies on attitudes toward multiculturalism, for example, in Canada (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977) and the Netherlands (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003; Schalk-Soekar, Breugelmans, & van de Vijver, 2009; Verkuyten, 2005), have addressed attitudes of immigrant minorities and host country majorities, but in Luxembourg the balance has tipped, enabling the examination of the host country population's attitude toward multiculturalism from a minority perspective. This is a unique scenario and lessons may be drawn for other countries with a rising immigrant population.

The Ville de Luxembourg uses the slogan "multiplicity" in its external branding

(<http://www.vdl.lu>). Under the headline “Multinational: a city welcomes the world,” the City Management explained: “The city has a long history of welcoming foreigners. Indeed it is the blend of traditional Luxembourgish culture and the influence of many nationalities of our residence that have given the city its unique cosmopolitan diversity” (City Management, Ville de Luxembourg, 2011, p.9). To the outside world, the city presents diversity as an asset. Yet how does the native-born Luxembourg population perceive this diversity? What are native Luxembourgers’ attitudes toward multiculturalism?

Attitudes toward Multiculturalism

The term “multiculturalism” can refer to demographic features, policy issues and, importantly, psychological aspects. As van de Vijver, Breugelmans and Schalk-Soekar (2008) explained, multiculturalism as a psychological concept denotes “an *attitude* related to the political ideology, which refers to the acceptance of and support for, the culturally heterogeneous society” (italics in the original, p. 93). One of the first surveys of multicultural and ethnic attitudes was carried out in Canada (Berry & Kalin, 1995). Recognizing the multifaceted nature of the concept of multiculturalism, Berry and Kalin (1995) developed scales to assess attitudes toward multiculturalism. The Multicultural Ideology Scale (MIS) covers diversity (*i.e.*, whether diversity is good for society), acculturation strategies by minorities (*i.e.*, assimilation or cultural maintenance by immigrants), and acculturation strategies by the majority (*i.e.*, whether the majority should be more proactive in getting to know the minorities). The MIS scale consists of 10 items, five of which are reverse coded, measured on a 7-point Likert scale. This scale has proven to be a short and reliable scale measuring attitudes toward multiculturalism (van de Vijver *et al.*, 2008). Van de Vijver and colleagues amended and extended the MIS scale, resulting in the 28-item Multicultural Attitude Scale (Breugelmans & van de Vijver, 2004; Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004). This extended scale covers the basic domains of the MIS scale in more depth and adds an additional domain, namely equal societal participation and interaction between ethnic majority and minority groups. As the name suggests, this subscale covers specific measures of societal participation as well as the equal treatment of immigrants. This Societal Participation (soPat) subscale has eight items, also measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

The attitude toward multiculturalism is considered a unidimensional construct, although support across domains varies, with a high degree of internal consistency (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003; Breugelmans & van de Vijver, 2004; van de Vijver *et al.*, 2008). Addressing the question of construct validity, Schalk-Soekar (2007) compared quantitative and qualitative answers of Dutch majority members and found significant correlations across measurement modes, also lending support to the construct validity of the multiculturalism measures. Research has also shown that the attitude toward multiculturalism is a stable construct across time (Breugelmans, van de Vijver, & Schalk-Soekar, 2009; Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Croon, 2008).

Level of Endorsement of Multiculturalism

Few studies have empirically tested the attitudes of majority members toward multiculturalism specifically. Berry and Kalin (1995) found endorsement for multiculturalism in Canada. Attitudes toward multiculturalism were moderately positive, and tolerance was moderately high. Studies in the Netherlands have mainly found neutral attitudes toward multiculturalism; majority members do not oppose multiculturalism, but they do not actively support cultural diversity in their own country. Comparative studies also including minorities (*i.e.*, Turkish in the Netherlands) have consistently found higher endorsement of multiculturalism by minority members (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2003; Breugelmans & van de Vijver, 2004; Schalk-Soekar & van de Vijver, 2008; Schalk-Soekar *et al.*, 2009; Verkuyten, 2005; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006). As mentioned previously, although multiculturalism is a unidimensional construct, the level of support across domains varies. In the Netherlands, overall support for multiculturalism was neutral; this neutral score results from the endorsement and rejection of domains canceling each other out. Majority Dutch respondents tend to be neutral about diversity, negative about acculturation of ethnic groups (*i.e.*, they prefer assimilation to cultural maintenance by immigrant groups in all domains), neutral about acculturation by the majority group (the extent to which the Dutch majority must adjust), and positive about societal participation. When comparing studies across countries, the measures used to assess the attitude towards multiculturalism have to be taken into consideration. As van de Vijver, Schalk-Soekar, Arends-Tóth and Breugelmans (2006) noted, if surveys focus on cultural maintenance by immigrants, support tends to be lower. This was the case, for example, with studies carried out in Spain (Medrano, 2005) and the United Kingdom (Heath & Tilley, 2005) where a slightly negative attitude toward multiculturalism was reported.

Several studies in the Netherlands have found a strong positive effect of educational background on multiculturalism, including those of Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2003), Breugelmans and van de Vijver (2004), and van de Vijver *et al.* (2008). In addition, the latter two studies found a small effect of gender, with women having a more positive attitude. The third study also found a small effect of age, with younger members having a more positive attitude than older participants. Thus, the findings for age and gender are inconclusive. As mentioned previously, in comparative studies with immigrant groups, immigrants have consistently shown higher levels of endorsement than majority members. Strong ethnic identification was related to higher endorsement by minorities but a lower level of endorsement by majority members (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006). These authors also found that out-group friendships had a positive effect on multiculturalism for majority members.

Current Research

The capital of Luxembourg has a unique demographic population composition. The main research goal of the current study was to establish the attitude toward multicultur-

alism within the context of the majority being in the minority. On the basis of the research carried out in Canada and the Netherlands, we derived the following hypotheses for the Luxembourg context:

Hypothesis 1a: The attitude toward multiculturalism is expected to be neutral to positive.

Hypothesis 1b: Slightly more positive support for the societal participation measure is expected.

Hypothesis 2: A slight gender effect is predicted with women expected to show higher levels of endorsement of multiculturalism.

Hypothesis 3: Younger respondents should have higher multiculturalism scores.

Hypothesis 4: Educational background should influence the attitude toward multiculturalism, in line with the highest level of school education achieved.

Hypothesis 5: Immigrants should have more positive attitudes toward multiculturalism than the native-born population.

Hypothesis 6: Culture contact experience should have a positive impact on the attitude toward multiculturalism.

Method

Procedure

We contacted a large Luxembourg employer, occupying a cross-section of mainly native-born staff. Permission to conduct the survey was granted by the company's management. Employees were informed in their payslips about the study to ensure an equal chance of information and participation. The academic nature of the project was emphasized and that participation was voluntary and anonymous. No incentives for participation were offered. An online survey was made available on the company's intranet for seven weeks. Paper-based questionnaires were made available to employees with no access to computers. The distribution of the questionnaires was organized through the company. All questionnaires were made available in German and French.

Respondents

In total, 521 employees opened the online questionnaire. Of these, 100 only opened the link or filled out the questionnaire too incompletely to allow for analysis, leaving 421 valid online questionnaires. Eighty-six paper questionnaires were returned, for a total of 507 respondents. For both methods, German was the preferred language (77% online, 89.5% paper). Sixty-seven percent of the respondents were male, and the mean age was 42 years ($SD = 10$ years). The vast majority (92%) were born in Luxembourg. For 72% of the respondents, both parents were also born in Luxembourg. Finally, 97% of respondents were Luxembourg citizens, 83% of these from birth and 14% through acquisition.

Measures

Multiculturalism

The original multiculturalism scales were available only in English and written for the Dutch context, so we needed to adapt the items to the Luxembourg context and translate them into German and French. We used a method of translation and back translation, enlisting the help of a professional translator. We also discussed the translations with bilingual speakers to ensure that translations captured conceptual equivalence. Furthermore, we tested the translated items in an online pilot study within the Luxembourg context ($N = 640$). Based on the pilot study results, we needed to drop one item from the original 10-item MIS. The 9-item scale yielded an alpha coefficient of .87, and principal component analysis yielded a single-factor solution. Only the first factor had an eigenvalue greater than 1 (4.50) and explained 50% of the total variance.

All eight items of the soPat subscale of the Multicultural Attitude Scale were included. This subscale also yielded good reliability ($\alpha = .83$). Factor analysis showed that the soPat is also unidimensional. Even though two factors had eigenvalues greater than 1 (3.86 and 1.11, respectively), explaining 60% of the variance, the major share of 46% was explained by the first factor. There is a high positive correlation between the MIS scale and the soPat subscale ($r = .75, p < .01$). As a closing question, we included one additional item in the survey, which read: “On balance, multicultural societies have more advantages than disadvantages.”

We combined these three measures to form the 18-item Total Multiculturalism Scale. The combined scale had high internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$). Furthermore, the respondents had the opportunity to complete an open-ended comments field introduced by the following wording: “In your opinion, what are the advantages of a multicultural society?”

Demographic Measures

A short demographic section covered respondents’ place of birth, the place of birth of both parents, as well as the respondents’ citizenship.

Composition of Circle of Friends. We operationalized this question by asking “How many of your friends have a different country of birth to yourself?” The answer choices were “none,” “few,” “about half,” “many,” and “all.”

Results

Attitudes toward Multiculturalism

On average, the respondents had a slightly positive attitude toward the idea of multiculturalism, as measured by the MIS scale. The mean score ($M = 4.25, SD = 1.08$) is statistically significantly higher than the scale midpoint of 4 ($t(487) = 5.28, p < .001$). The mean for the soPat subscale ($M = 3.84, SD = 1.32$) is statistically significantly lower than the scale midpoint ($t(491) = -2.55, p < .05$).

The level of endorsement of the idea of multiculturalism is stronger than that for specific measures of participation. Diversity (“It is good that many different groups with different cultural backgrounds live in Luxembourg”) and ethnic maintenance (“Ethnic minorities should preserve their ethnic heritage in Luxembourg”) are affirmed, but the majority also expect assimilation by immigrants (“Immigrants to Luxembourg should change their behavior to be more like the Luxembourgish people,” reversed item). Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the MIS scale.

Table 1
MIS: psychometric characteristics

Item	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	α
1. It is good that many different groups with different cultural backgrounds live in Luxembourg.	503	4.83 (1.86)	
2. Ethnic minorities should preserve their ethnic heritage in Luxembourg.	499	4.28 (1.78)	
3. It would be best if all people forget their background as soon as possible. (R)	503	5.34 (1.76)	
4. A society that has a variety of cultural groups is more able to tackle new problems as they occur.	502	4.02 (1.82)	
5. The unity of the country is weakened by non-Luxembourgers. (R)	503	4.00 (2.11)	
6. If immigrants want to keep their own cultures they should keep to themselves. (R)	504	3.95 (2.11)	
7. Native Luxembourgers should do more to learn about the customs and traditions of the other cultural groups.	503	3.78 (1.84)	
8. Immigrant parents must encourage their children to retain the culture and traditions of their homeland.	503	3.58 (1.73)	
9. Immigrants to Luxembourg should change their behavior to be more like the Luxembourgish people. (R)	504	2.33 (1.47)	
Total MIS Scale	489	4.25 (1.08)	.87

Note: 7-point Likert scale; (R) reversed item; α = Cronbach’s alpha.

The general endorsement of multiculturalism is also reflected in the high agreement with the summary statement “Overall, multicultural societies have more advantages than disadvantages” ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.82$, $mode = 6$). From these findings, Hypothesis 1a, which predicts neutral to slightly positive support for the idea of multiculturalism, can be confirmed. Hypothesis 1b, which predicts higher endorsement for societal participation measures, cannot be confirmed. Specific societal participation measures are less endorsed, with 43% of the respondents expressing negative attitudes toward specific participation measures. We found strong disagreement for recruitment of more non-Luxembourgers into the police force, recruitment of more non-Luxembourgish teachers, and granting voting rights to foreigners after five years. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for the soPat subscale.

Table 2

soPat subscale: psychometric characteristics

Item	N	M (SD)
1. Luxembourgers and non-Luxembourgers should cooperate more to solve problems in Luxembourg.	502	4.80 (1.76)
2. When shopping, I get annoyed if I don't get served in Luxembourgish. (R)	504	2.62 (1.97)
3. I think that Luxembourgers and non-Luxembourgers should seek more private contact with one another.	503	4.82 (1.65)
4. Children should be taught by Luxembourgish and non-Luxembourgish teachers.	500	3.06 (2.18)
5. I think that more non-Luxembourgish persons should work for the Luxembourg police.	504	4.81 (1.69)
6. I think that Luxembourgish children should play more with non-native children.	503	4.82 (2.24)
7. I would not like to have a non-native boss at work. (R)	503	3.19 (2.17)
8. I think that after a period of 5 years immigrants should have the same voting rights as Luxembourgers.	489	3.84 (1.32)

Note: 7-point Likert scale; (R) reversed item; Total soPat subscale Cronbach's alpha = .83

The high correlation between the MIS and the soPat scale was noted above and in the following results will be presented for the combined Total Multiculturalism scale.

Demographic Variables

In support of Hypothesis 2, female respondents expressed more positive attitudes toward multiculturalism. There is a statistically highly significant difference between the mean scores of male and female respondents, but the effect sizes are comparatively small ($M_{women} = 4.34$, $SD = 1.15$; $M_{men} = 3.84$, $SD = 1.22$; $t(455) = 4.14$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$). Contrary to Hypothesis 3, the relationship between respondents' age and multiculturalism is statistically not significant. As expected, higher levels of education were strongly related to support for multiculturalism. The analysis of variance comparing groups with different levels of educational achievement reached statistical significance ($F(6, 436) = 12.14$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$). Post hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD (honest significant difference) showed that respondents with academic degrees have significantly higher scores than those with lower level school leaving qualifications. The effect size is much stronger ($\eta^2 = .14$, medium effect) than that for gender. Thus, Hypothesis 4, which predicts that the level of education is related to support for multiculturalism, can be confirmed.

Culture Contact

As predicted, respondents who were not born in Luxembourg endorsed multiculturalism more strongly than those born in Luxembourg ($M_{not\ born\ in\ Lux} = 5.12$, $SD = .99$; M_{born}

$M_{\text{in Lux}} = 3.90$, $SD = 1.19$; $t(453) = -5.97$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .8$). Thus, Hypothesis 5 was confirmed.

Nearly all respondents ($n = 502$) answered the question about the composition of their circle of friends. The results show that 6% of the respondents have “no” friends with a different country of birth to themselves, 52.8% stated “few,” 23.5% stated “about half,” and 17.7% stated “many,” including one person who indicated “all.” The analysis of variance examining whether these four groups differ in terms of their attitudes toward multiculturalism reached statistical significance ($F(3, 454) = 13.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$). Post hoc tests using Tukey’s HSD showed that the groups with “about half” and “many” friends with a different country of birth have significantly higher scores than the other two groups reporting “none” or “few” friends ($M_{\text{none}} = 3.20$, $SD = 1.20$; $M_{\text{few}} = 3.79$, $SD = 1.22$; $M_{\text{about half}} = 4.27$, $SD = 1.05$; $M_{\text{many}} = 4.49$, $SD = 1.18$). As predicted by Hypothesis 6 culture contact experience, operationalized as composition of circle of friends, has a positive impact on the endorsement of multiculturalism.

Analysis of the Qualitative Findings

Just under one-third of the respondents ($n = 158$) used the open-ended comment option. We developed topical categories in a “bottom-up” process, in which we created categories on the basis of the themes and concepts mentioned. The goal was to be as parsimonious and comprehensive as possible. A scientific collaborator and the first author separately coded the comments. The agreement for the categorization into topics was high. For those cases where there were disagreements, the criteria were clarified, and after this clarification phase, complete consensus about categorization was achieved. We carried out a separate analysis for the positive and critical comments. Among the positive comments, the most frequently mentioned theme was broadening of the horizon, or getting to know different perspectives and ideas ($n = 70$). Diversity, experienced as enrichment, was mentioned 59 times. In third place, with 50 mentions, was the cognitive component of getting to know different customs and traditions. For critical comments, the most frequently mentioned themes were the need for adaptation by the immigrant groups ($n = 9$), the fear of being overwhelmed by foreign influences (“Überfremdung”), and the need to recognize values/principle of mutuality ($n = 6$ each).

Discussion

This study among majority in the minority members of society showed that the idea of multiculturalism is more strongly endorsed than specific measures of societal participation. Only about one-quarter of the respondents expressed negative attitudes toward the idea of multiculturalism, though 43% were critical of societal participation, as measured by the soPat subscale. The analysis at item level showed that the majority of respondents rejected specific participation measures. A possible explanation for this finding is the “principle–implementation gap.” Yogeewaran and Dasgupta (2014) in-

investigated the effect of multiculturalism construals on attitudes toward ethnic minorities. They showed that when taking an abstract “bird’s-eye” view of the multiculturalism construal, respondents indicated higher endorsement of the concept than when “zooming-in” on specific details on how this goal could be achieved.

While Dutch majority respondents showed neutral attitudes toward multicultural ideology but strong endorsement of societal participation measures (Schalk-Soekar et al., 2009), findings are clearly reversed for the Luxembourg sample, which may be due to the effect of the “minority” in the “majority” position. Protectionism may become stronger in an environment in which outsiders outnumber the native-born population. The analysis of the open-ended comments also highlights a difference in emphasis between the positive and negative comments. While the positive comments focused on “soft,” ideational aspects, such as broadening of the horizon, “esprit,” and so on, the critical comments addressed specific aspects of living together. The abstract idea or the principle of diversity is embraced, but the reality in terms of practical implementation and consequences is less so.

The unidimensionality and high reliability of the multiculturalism scales were also confirmed for this study, and the distribution of scores followed a normal curve, indicating that there is no polarization into proponents and opponents of multiculturalism. A comparison with the Dutch data shows that the variance is higher in the Luxembourg sample. In the Luxembourg sample, only one-third of the respondents took a neutral position. Although not polarized, the findings suggest that stronger positions regarding multiculturalism are held in the Luxembourg sample.

As in previous studies on multiculturalism, we found a relationship between the level of education and multiculturalism. Endorsement of multiculturalism rises in line with the highest level of education achieved. This finding could be explained by the increased options that a higher level of education generally confers in both private and professional spheres. As Brandstädter (2007) noted, higher self-complexity increases the scope for compensation. When the self-concept is threatened in one area, this threat can then be compensated with success in another area. Transferred to the multicultural society this may mean that people with higher levels of education feel less threatened in their existence. On the contrary, foreign influences may be perceived as stimulating and as enrichment rather than a threat. In summary, the results show widespread endorsement of the idea of multiculturalism, in the sense of broadening and enriching horizons, though the acceptance of behavioral aspects of living together (*i.e.*, forms of societal participation) is yet to be aligned. This is also reflected in the open-ended comments, with those in favor of multiculturalism focusing mainly on intangible aspects while more critical voices concentrate on the tangible aspects of living together. Voluntary culture contact is positively related to openness to multiculturalism.

Study Limitations

Selectivity Analysis

The 507 respondents mirror a rate of return of 14% of the total workforce. The procedure ensured equal opportunity for participation, but the respondents represent a self-selective sample. The results do not represent a random selection and cannot be interpreted in a strict mathematical–statistical sense as being representative of the total sample. However, central measures reflect some key characteristics of the total sample. The percentage of male respondents (67%) closely matches the percentage of men (69%) working for the total sample. The average age of the sample ($M = 42$ years) closely matches that of the total workforce ($M = 41$ years). Thus, there is convergence in central characteristic, but it is possible that some self-selection occurred. Just under one-third of all respondents provided a comment to the open-ended question, asking for advantages of multiculturalism. We expected that the majority of comments would refer to benefits associated with multiculturalism, but we assumed that respondents of a different opinion would also take the opportunity to express their views. Ten percent of the respondents used the open-ended comment field in this way. Thus, we conclude that people with more positive attitudes toward multiculturalism were more inclined to complete the survey. Respondents who completed the comments field expressed more positive attitudes toward multiculturalism than those who did not, though the effect sizes were small (MIS: $\eta^2 = .04$; soPat: $\eta^2 = .05$). Seemingly, more employees with positive attitudes toward multiculturalism may have completed the survey. Therefore, a positive bias may influence the reliability of the data, and the results should possibly be corrected downward.

Outlook

These findings among Luxembourg natives who find themselves increasingly in the minority point to an endorsement of the *principle* of multiculturalism; thus, the idea of a plural society is widely endorsed. However, specific measures of integration are largely opposed. The data suggest that natives appreciate and perceive cultural differences as enriching and a means of broadening their horizon. Tolerance and respect for different cultures exist, alongside reluctance towards acceptance of concrete forms of societal participation. Given increasingly plurally composed societies, further research might specifically address this “principle–implementation” gap.

Author Note

This research is partially supported by a grant from the Fonds National de la Recherche, Luxembourg (C12/SC/4009630 – IRMA - Intergenerational Relations in the Light of Migration and Ageing).

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