



Confusing Boundaries: French and English Quebecers' Reactions to Immigrants' Ethnic and Religious Backgrounds

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Abstract

In secularized societies, ambivalent attitudes toward immigrants may betray negative reactions resulting from misperceptions that fuse ethnic and religious identities (i.e. all Arabs are Muslims). In this study, 369 French and English Quebecers were asked about their attitudes toward various ethnic and religious groups in order to predict their openness towards accommodating faith-based and cultural requests. A social reciprocity reaction was found to be predictive of French, but not English, speakers' responses. A mediation analysis suggests that French speakers are reacting to perceptions of religious identity rather than immigrants' ethnic background. Overcoming barriers to integration means combating homogenizing misperceptions that privilege religious stereotypes.

Introduction

"No group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself."
- Simone de Beauvoir (1949)

- Immigrants are perceived as 'other' but what kind of other?
- The 'other' is regarded as distant from the identity of the host community
 - Since Western societies adhere to the ideals of secularism, seeing the 'other' in religious terms creates distance
 - By identifying ethnic groups with stereotyped faith traditions, immigrants can be construed as challenging the ideals of a secularist society
- Blurring boundaries between the religious and ethnic identities of immigrants cultivates more social distance and dampens motivation to meet accommodation requests.

Previous research and poll results:

- Nieguth and Lacassagne (2009) suggested that rural Quebecers tend to conflate immigrants' ethnicity and religion enabling a construction of an 'us and them' mentality.
- The blending of ethnic/religious identities taken together with recent debates over the meaning of secularism in Western societies suggest that host communities see immigration as raising concerns about the place of religion in public space (Berger, 2007; Akbaba, 2009; Calhoun, Juergensmeyer & VanAntwerpen, 2011; Habermas, 2011; Taylor, 2011)
- An Angus-Reid (2013) poll found that 77% of Quebecers agreed with the statement that "the values of Quebec society are at risk due to reasonable accommodation".
 - Only 23% agreed that "reasonable accommodation enriches Quebec society"
 - 65% thought that "laws and norms should not be modified to accommodate minorities"
- Public opinion polls taken at the time of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission converged in documenting greater resistance by French over non French mother-tongue Quebecers to questions of reasonable accommodation (Léger Marketing, 2007; Bouchard & Taylor, 2008).

Social reciprocity, Social distance, and Accommodating the Other

Boundary-making (us/them) draws on social psychological strategies as a way of reconciling values of ethnic/religious inclusiveness with those of majority-group cultural cohesiveness (Bourhis et al, 2009).

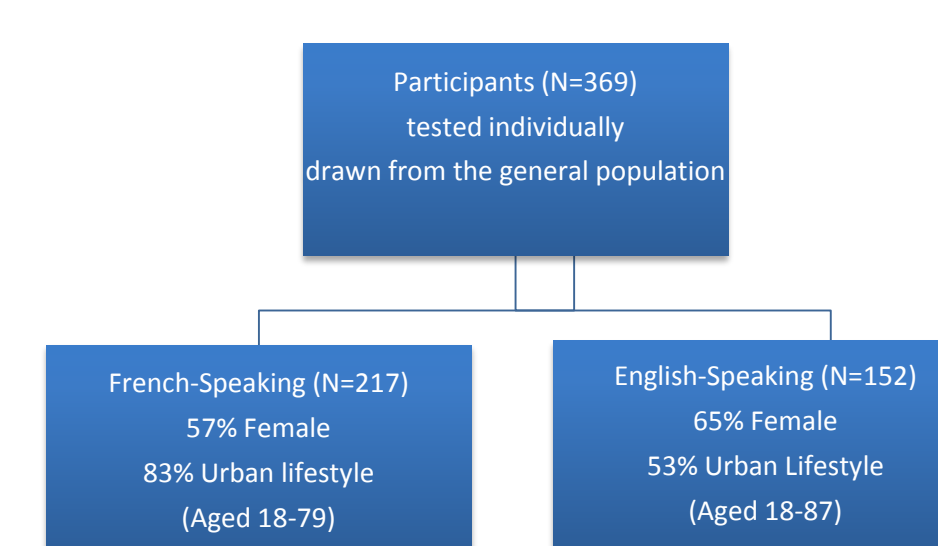
- Identity boundaries can be maintained through 'social reciprocity'
 - Social reciprocity means that a person perceiving another as less invested in a relationship will in turn be less motivated to pursue that relationship
 - Feeling rejected by the other, an individual will reciprocate by not accepting that person
- Social distance means that people vary in felt degrees of closeness with members of diverse social groups revealing a hierarchy of social preferences (Bogardus, 1925; Allport, 1958)
- Social reciprocity helps to understand the relationship between perceived social distance and attitudes toward accommodating immigrant requests.
 - if the 'other' is perceived as less open to close social relationships (perceived to be more socially distant), then less effort is invested in that relationship as reflected in less willingness to make religious/cultural accommodations.

Hypotheses:

- Social reciprocity should hold for both Anglophones and Francophones: in perceiving ethnic and religious groups as rejecting of them (measured by social distance) they will in turn be less open to immigrant requests for accommodation.
 - Francophones will show stronger reactions than Anglophones and be less accommodating
- Given the commitment to a secular society, the reciprocity reaction will be stronger to religious targets than to ethnic targets for both linguistic groups.
- Given the documented conflation of immigrant ethnicity and religion, reciprocity reactions to ethnic targets will reflect the identification of ethnicity with stereotyped faith traditions. Religion will therefore mediate the reaction to ethnic targets.

Method

1. Participants (Quebec's Estrie region)



2. Measures:

Testing the hypothesis of social reciprocity requires two attitudinal measures: a) towards targeted (immigrant) groups; b) towards making reasonable accommodations for immigrants

a) **Reverse Bogardus scale (RB scores):** seven-item scale revised to reflect participants' perceptions of the extent to which ethnic/religious groups welcome close social contact with them (accept them).

- directs participants to a targeted group, say Iranians (ethnic) or Muslims (religious), and asks (in increasing order of closeness): "Would Iranians (Muslims) exclude you from their country", "accept you as a visitor", "as a citizen", "as a co-worker", "as a neighbour", "as a close personal friend", "as a close kin by marriage"?
- an RB score was calculated for each ethnic and religious group and later combined into a Total Score for all ethnic targets and all religious targets
 - high RB score = target group perceived as more open to close social contact (more accepting).
 - low RB score = target group perceived as less open to close social contact (less accepting).
 - Cronbach's α : Ethnic targets range between .858 and .887; Religious targets between .86 and .91

b) **Reasonable accommodation (RA scores):** Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 6=strongly agree)

- same four questions used in a previous Léger Marketing survey.
- Every immigrant should respect Quebec's rules and laws even though they may go against certain of their religious beliefs or cultural practices (reversed scored)
- It is necessary to alter the application of Quebec rules and laws in order to accommodate some of the religious and cultural practices of immigrants
- It is necessary for immigrants living in Quebec to adopt a Quebec lifestyle (reversed scored)
- We should be tolerant concerning the conventions and customs of different ethnic communities in Quebec
- high RA score = participant is more tolerant toward accommodation requests.
- low RA score = participant is less tolerant toward accommodation requests.

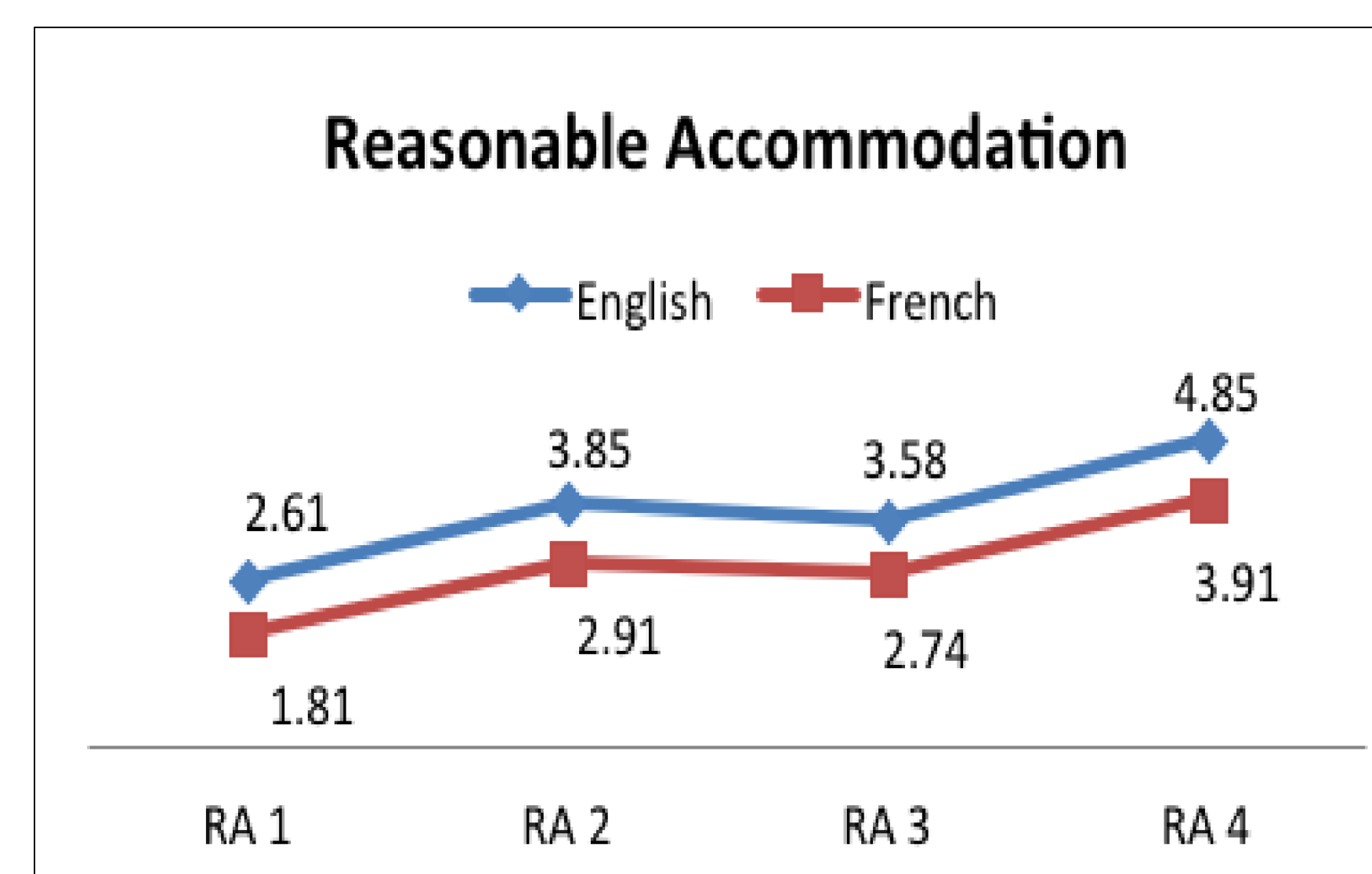
3. Procedure

All participants: signed consent form → reverse Bogardus social distance scale (ethnic/religious groups) → reasonable accommodation → demographic questions.

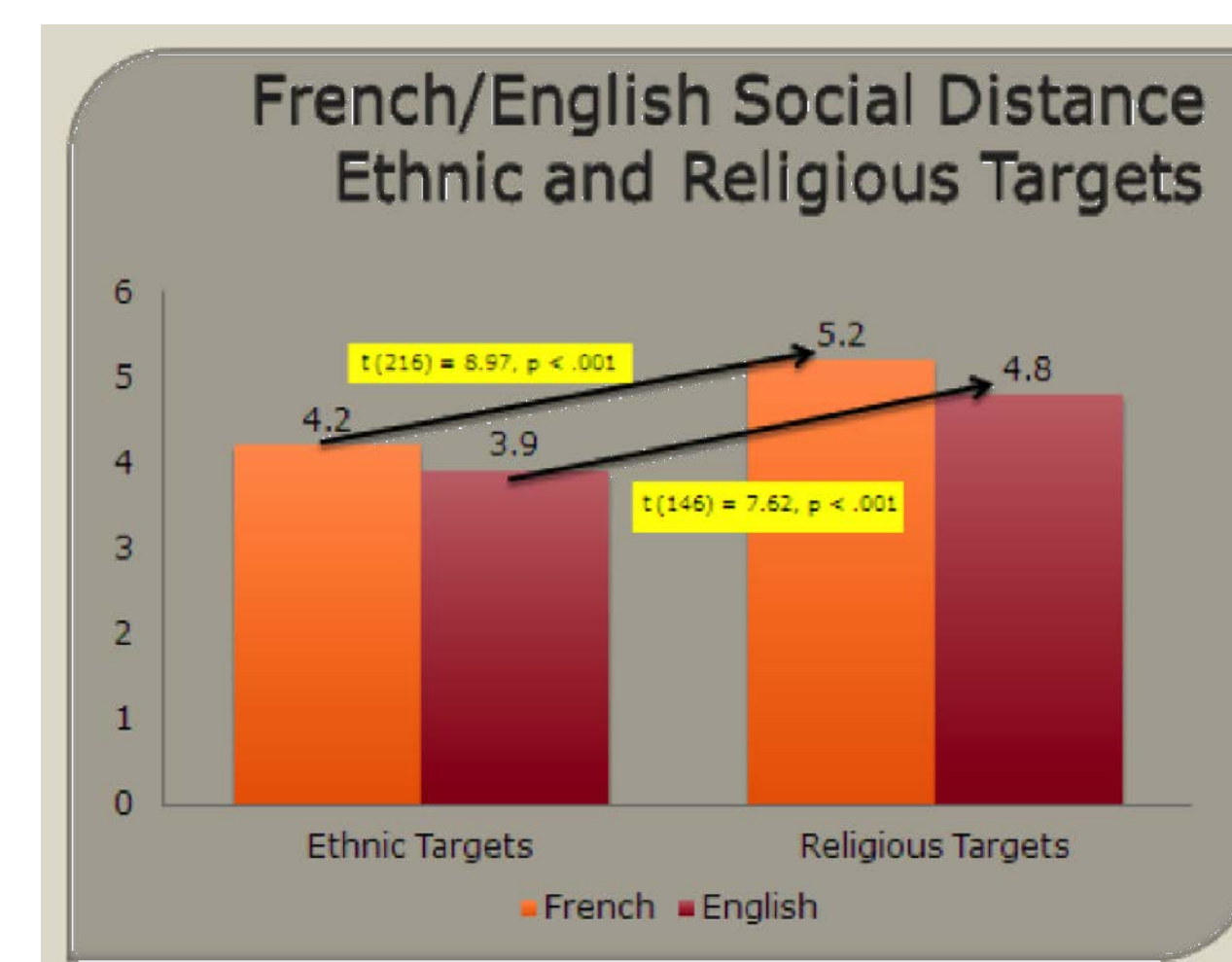
Results

1. Reasonable accommodation

- $F(1,358) = 78.93, p < .000$
- Anglophones are more accommodating toward the religious and cultural practices, and conventions and customs of Quebec immigrants than Francophones. This replicates the findings in previous polls.



2. Social Distance (RB)



- Both Anglophones and Francophones perceive religious groups as more open to social contact than ethnic groups.

- The commitment to secular ideals does not translate into a perception of religious groups as less open to close social contact

3. Social reciprocity: reflected in the correlation between RB scores and RA scores

- Reverse Bogardus scores (religious and ethnic targets) correlate with reasonable accommodation scores for Francophones but not for Anglophones.

Religion:	Muslim	Sikh	Hindu	Jew	Buddhist	Christian
French(N=214)	.331**	.233**	.190**	.448**	.245**	.139*
English(N=144)	.092	.019	.078	-.007	-.023	-.248**

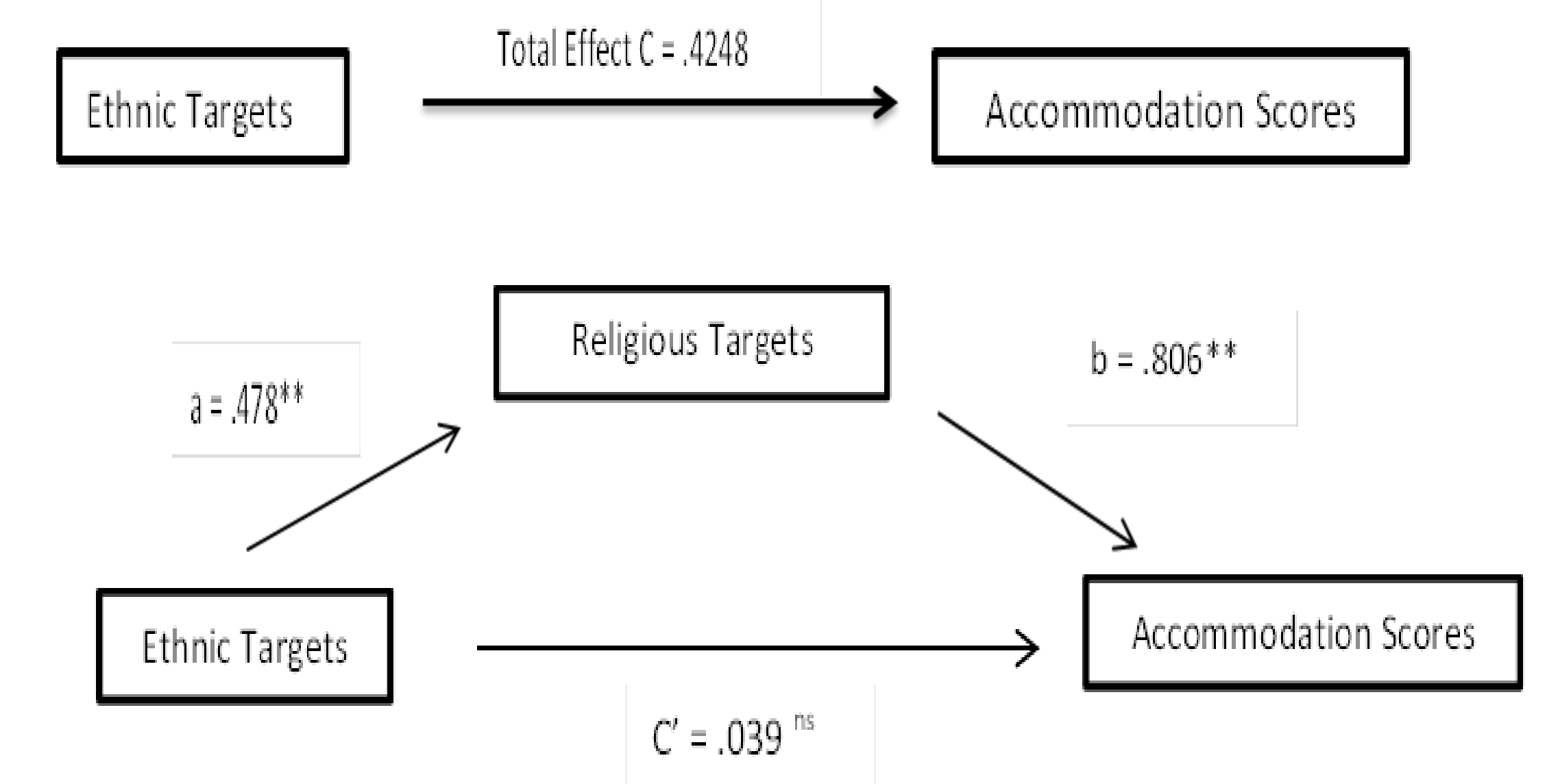
*p < .05; ** p < .001

Ethnicity	Iraqis	Iranians	Afghans	Saudis	Palestinians	Algerians	Israelis	Chinese	Indians
French(N=214)	.15*	.17*	.117	.25**	.16*	.27**	.27**	.17*	.12
English(N=144)	-.066	.036	-.048	.008	-.030	-.104	-.060	.009	.061

*p < .05; ** p < .001

- Given similar correlation patterns for both ethnic and religious targets a composite score was constructed for ethnic as well as religious targets (Total Score).
- The mediation analysis was conducted using RB Total Score and RA Total Score

Indirect Effects of Ethnic Targets (RB-E) on Reasonable Accommodation Scores (RA) as carried through Religious Targets (RB-R)



Preacher and Hayes (2008) statistical procedure for testing Indirect Effects

Path	B (SE)	t	Indirect effects (ab)		BCA CIs	Model R ²	F (df)
			Data (SE)	Bootstrapping (SE)			
RB-E - RB-R (a)	.478 (.046)	10.39**				.14	16.78** (2,211)
RB-R - RA (b)	.806 (.177)	4.55**					
RB-E - RA (c)	.425 (.124)	3.42**					
RB-E - RB-R - RA (c')	.039 (.146)	.271	.385 (.099)	.389 (.099)	.218; .61		

Note: BCA CI = Bias Corrected and accelerated 95 percent confidence intervals; Boot strapping analyses was conducted with 10,000 resamples; *p < .05, **p < .001.

Conclusion

Reasonable accommodation and social distance: confirmed for RA but not RB patterns

In line with previous poll results, Anglophones scored higher than Francophones on reasonable accommodation questions. This has been widely interpreted to mean that Francophones are less tolerant of immigrants than Anglophones. This interpretation is challenged by the present results. Using the reverse Bogardus scale as a subtle measure of prejudice gauging perceptions of others, we found no difference between the two linguistic groups in their perceptions of ethnic and religious groups. We expected the opposite pattern given that English-speaking Quebecers consistently score higher on questions of reasonable accommodation.

Social reciprocity: confirmed for Francophones but not Anglophones

Social reciprocity captures the idea that people who perceive ethnic and religious groups as rejecting of them will reciprocate by being less willing to accommodate their requests. This social psychological thesis should have held for both French- and English-speaking participants. This was not the case: it held only for Francophones.

Social distance (mediation): confirmed for Francophones but not Anglophones

As it relates to Francophones, religious targets mediated the relationship between ethnic targets and reasonable accommodation scores. We found Francophones reacting to ethnic targets as if they were religious targets: in their case, reciprocity reactions to religious targets trump reactions to ethnic targets.

Final Words:

Reasonable accommodation questions appear to tap concerns about the social space of religion. The present study shows that social distance reactions to both ethnic and religious groups are predictive of reasonable accommodation patterns for Francophones. Yet, when cleared of their religious associations their reactions to ethnic targets no longer predict their reasonable accommodation scores. When asked to consider accommodating cultural and religious diversity within Quebec society, Francophones' conflation of immigrant ethnicity and religion tempers their willingness to accommodate immigrant special requests. In a real sense, multiculturalism spells religious pluralism. In French Quebec, the challenges of cultural integration are challenges of faith.

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