
When Different Becomes Similar: Compensatory Conformity in Bicultural Visible Minorities

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The children of immigrants possess bicultural identities that reflect their ethnic heritage and their membership in the wider community. For most, strong identification with the dominant culture creates a desire for full inclusion within it. In the case of visible minorities, however, physical dissimilarity is at times experienced as an “ethnifying” obstacle to assimilation or integration. One response to this challenge is compensatory alignment with the majority group when physical appearance is made salient. To demonstrate this phenomenon, the authors asked Chinese Canadian participants to rate their liking of a set of abstract paintings. The ratings were made in relation to various normative anchors and either in the presence or absence of a mirror. As predicted, only participants in the presence of the mirror showed heightened conformity to the perceived European Canadian (majority group) norm. This tendency, however, was not matched with greater distancing from the perceived Chinese Canadian (minority group) norm.

The immigrant experience is a central theme in Western cultural history. The economic, social, and psychological challenges of finding a place for oneself within the American “melting pot,” or the Canadian “mosaic,” have shaped the individual and collective identities of many who live or have lived in these two nations. For immigrants and their children, identity and history are one and the same (Bruner, 1997; Dien, 2000). Whereas a considerable amount of research has focused on the experience of adult immigrants, less is known about the distinctive experience of successive generations (Zhou, 1997). Toward filling this gap, we focus here on the consequences of visible minority status for those children of immigrants who are most likely to be grappling with the

demands of bicultural identity. This group consists of the Western-born second generation and the “one-and-a-half generation” who accompanied their parents to the West as children or adolescents (Rumbaut, 1991). We argue that visible minority status is at times experienced by this group as an obstacle to full participation in the majority culture. As a consequence of this negative association, social contexts that heighten self-awareness of physical appearance can produce a compensatory conformity directed at affirming mainstream cultural legitimacy. Such compensation is often expressed as alignment with the majority group. To illustrate this tendency, we examine the expressed attitudes of Chinese Canadian students in relation to physical self-awareness and normative reference.

The Bicultural Challenge

Immigration entails negotiation with a new culture. The difficulties inherent to this negotiation increase in proportion to the distance that separates the new culture from the culture of origin (Church, 1982; Ward & Chang, 1997; Ward & Searle, 1991). Whereas those who immigrated to the West in the 19th and early 20th centu-

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ries were predominantly European, today's immigrants to the United States come mainly from Asia and the Americas (U.S. Department of Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2000). Similarly, a majority of today's immigrants to Canada are South or East Asian (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000). These profiles suggest greater disparity than ever before between the values, beliefs, traditions, and social practices of today's immigrants and those of the European-descended majority who have dominated the shaping of mainstream Western culture. The distance would be even greater were it not for the homogenizing effect of globalization (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). For the children of immigrants, cultural distance presents the challenge of bridging and reconciling two worlds of meaning, one preserved within the family and ethnic community and the other imposed by public education, the wider peer group, employment, and popular culture. For most one-and-a-half- and second-generation children, the experience of straddling the gap between two cultures gives rise to "bicultural" self-identity (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). The duality is reflected in split ethnic designations such as Mexican American, Japanese American, and Chinese Canadian.

The distinctive, Janus-face perspective of biculturality promotes a keen awareness of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990). This awareness often remains passive and unexplored until late adolescence or adulthood when the personal and collective significance of ethnic group membership is brought into focus (Phinney, 1989). A common catalyst for such change is prejudice and discrimination directed toward the ethnic group by the cultural majority (Tse, 1999). For visible minorities, this often takes the form of racism, whereby ethnic groups whose physical commonalities distinguish them from the majority are derogated in a generalized manner. Out of these shared experiences emerge broader, pan-ethnic identities such as Black American or Asian Canadian (S. J. Lee, 1999).

Visible Minority Status and Inclusion

Insofar as the economic and social success of bicultural children of immigrants requires participation in mainstream culture, they will seek full acceptance and recognition of legitimacy by the majority group. In the case of visible minorities, this effort is at times frustrated by the tendency of majority group members to "ethnify" on the basis of physical appearance (Day, 1998; Lalonde, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1992). Ethnification, as expressed in the speech and behavior of majority group members, informs visible minorities that their inclusion in the formal and informal social networks of the dominant culture may be compromised by their physical dissimilarity. In contexts where standing out from the

majority is desirable and even profitable, ethnic distinction is experienced as an asset and a source of pride. In contexts where standing out is disadvantageous, however, visible minorities experience their distinction as a social impediment. These contrasting associations explain why it is common for visible minorities to hold ambivalent attitudes toward the distinguishing physical features that others use as a basis for racial or ethnic ascription. The ambivalence is most pronounced in the case of low-status groups, for whom ethnification tends to devalue as well as exclude.

Responses to the social costs of visible minority status are varied. They include passive resignation, withdrawal into the ethnic "enclave," rejection of the majority group, systematic efforts to change the dominant culture, dissociation from the ethnic minority, and concealment or modification of physical appearance. For the one-and-a-half and second generation, formative roots of attachment, investment, and identification with the dominant culture make withdrawal or disengagement difficult if not impossible (Minoura, 1992). For this group, a more typical response is increased conformity with majority group norms, practices, and ideals; that is, these children of immigrants learn that in situations where standing out from the majority impedes their progress, they can at least partially compensate for physical distinctiveness by emphatically projecting the mainstream culture in their speech, dress, and behavior. This compensation may be deliberate or unconscious and need not reflect private beliefs and preferences. Furthermore, its expression may be generalized or restricted to transactions with members of the majority group. Even more narrowly, it may occur only in situations where the tendency of majority group members to exclude on the basis of physical appearance is either assumed or suspected. Whatever the extent of expression, social contexts that draw attention to visible minority status by heightening physical self-awareness should increase the likelihood of this form of conformity on the whole.

Conformity and Optimal Distinctiveness

We suggest that the social experience of many visible minorities leads them to associate ethnification with exclusion from the mainstream. The experience of ethnic identity, however, is complex, involving positive as well as negative associations. Minority status, after all, has its own rewards. Brewer, Manzi, and Shaw (1993), for example, have argued that minority group membership can fulfill the desire for distinctiveness or uniqueness, especially in depersonalizing contexts that heighten this desire. More generally, the dual identities of acculturated ethnic minorities afford both differentiation (through identification with the minority group) and assimilation (through identification with the majority

group), thereby supporting both of the opposing motives that determine “optimal distinctiveness” (Brewer, 1993). Our intention is not to dismiss or downplay these and related advantages but rather to highlight an equally important consequence of physical dissimilarity. Whatever its benefits, visible minority status incurs specific social costs and to claim otherwise is wishful thinking. Ignoring these costs does nothing to promote understanding of the distinctive challenges faced by an increasingly large segment of our population.

Might visible minorities, however, be prone to conformity for reasons unrelated to social exclusion? The theory of optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Pickett, 1999; Brewer & Roccas, 2001) presents one possibility. According to this theory, an individual’s optimal degree of distinctiveness represents the compromise between standing out and fitting in that is fundamental to social behavior. Not only do individuals and groups vary in how much distinctiveness they find optimal on the whole but social rejection, exclusion, or isolation, on one hand, and invisibility or depersonalization on the other, can shift the optimum in either direction, at least temporarily. This implies a simple route to conformity. Insofar as visible minorities come to see themselves as overly distinctive in a social situation, owing to their physical features, they may experience an increased need for belonging. A predictable response to this state would be increased identification with, and conformity to, the cultural majority. Notably, this increase would occur independent of any other consequences of visible minority status, such as ethnification and exclusion by the majority group. Rather, self-perceived physical distinctiveness, irrespective of its social implications, would be enough to induce conformity. Of course, perceived threats to inclusion that extend beyond physical appearance per se, such as ethnic ascription and stereotyping, would only further heighten the desire to belong and, therefore, increase conformity (Brewer & Pickett, 1999).

The optimal distinctiveness account of conformity differs from our own in two important ways. First, there is a difference in specificity. A heightened need for belonging in response to physical distinctiveness, as suggested by optimal distinctiveness theory, would increase identification with any important ingroup. This is not to say that the increase would be uniform across ingroups. As Brewer (1993) has pointed out, minority group members who embrace their minority identity in response to feeling overly distinctive may risk losing the positive evaluation of the majority group. Nonetheless, a clear distinction is made in her account between optimal distinctiveness and social evaluation. For example, even self-stereotyping on negative group characteristics is expected to ameliorate the feeling of being overly distinctive (Brewer & Roccas, 2001). According to optimal

distinctiveness theory, then, bicultural minorities made to feel physically distinctive should exhibit increased conformity to both of the cultures they identify with, even if unequally so. Consistent with this, Y.-T. Lee and Ottati (1995) found that Chinese American students reminded of their Chinese identity and exposed to an unacceptable negative stereotype of Chinese responded collectively, emphasizing the cohesiveness and homogeneity of their minority group.

According to our theory, the primary discomfort experienced by acculturated visible minorities does not come from physical dissimilarity itself. Rather, it stems from knowledge that ethnification based on this distinctiveness can impede full acceptance and inclusion within the dominant culture, with detrimental consequences. For example, the potential for ethnification and “otherizing” to bring about inequity in housing, education, employment, law, and media representation remains a significant concern for many visible minorities. This implies that increased conformity to the cultural majority but not the minority should result from heightened awareness of visible minority status in contexts where such status is understood as a potential social stigma. Conformity to the majority in these contexts would only sharpen the sense of separation from the majority, causing greater frustration and discomfort. Moreover, in cases where conforming to the majority entails deviating from the majority (i.e., where there are opposing cultural norms), increased nonconformity to the minority group also might be expected.

A second point of difference between optimal distinctiveness and desire for inclusion as alternative bases for conformity relates to individual differences in optimal level of distinctiveness. If the conformity at issue is a response to feeling overly distinctive, then the individual’s chronic need for distinctiveness or uniqueness should moderate the response. Specifically, those who are especially uncomfortable with standing out from others should be most likely to conform when their physical distinctiveness is made salient. If, on the other hand, the conformity stems from a learned association between ethnification and social exclusion, then dispositional desire for uniqueness should be relatively unimportant. For example, a maverick trial lawyer might actually enjoy being the only visible minority member in the courtroom but still worry that her ethnicity could undermine the persuasiveness of her arguments to the jury. Presumably, any compensatory behavior on her part will reflect this situational concern more than it reflects her personality, however much she may take pleasure from standing out in groups. Our account of conformity, then, does not imply any obvious association with trait need for uniqueness.

Attitudes and Compensatory Conformity

The foregoing suggests that the learned association of visible minority status with exclusion leads many children of immigrants to assert their mainstream cultural legitimacy by adopting a persona that projects the majority culture. Public expression of attitudes would be a likely vehicle for such compensatory conformity. Past research reveals that individuals often shift their attitudes toward what they think a desirable majority believes and away from what they think an undesirable minority believes (Wood, Pool, Leck, & Purvis, 1996; Wood & Stagner, 1994). This suggests that conditions that increase self-awareness of visible minority status may prompt one-and-a-half- and second-generation children of immigrants to align themselves with the sentiments of the majority culture while perhaps distancing themselves from the sentiments of their own minority ethnic group. Of course, the two complementary tendencies need not coincide. The assertion of membership within one group does not generally require disidentification with another (Berry, 1990).

Despite the far-reaching implications of attitudinal conformity for the educational, occupational, consumer, and political choices of bicultural visible minorities, the empirical literature is surprisingly mute on this topic. As far as we are aware, the following study is the first effort to confirm the phenomenon. For purposes of initial testing, we chose to restrict our focus to Chinese Canadian university students at the University of Toronto. All participants were one-and-a-half or second generation. Reliance on this ethnic group had certain advantages for satisfying the conditions of the theory. First, the ethnic Chinese qualify as a clear visible minority in Canadian society (Manyoni, 1986). Second, younger Chinese immigrants are more likely than their older counterparts to strongly identify with mainstream Western culture (Cheung, 1989). Third, admittance to a competitive Canadian university ensures high English proficiency and intensive contact with Canadians of European descent, the relevant majority group. Notably, linguistic adaptation has been identified as a primary requirement for the development of bicultural competence (Dion & Dion, 1996; LaFromboise et al., 1993). Fourth, the wide gap between traditional Chinese and modern Western values (Bond, 1986, 1991; Ho, 1997; Hsu, 1971; Schwartz, 1992) implies that the bicultural identity of this group involves clear contrasts and divisions (Sung, 1985). Fifth, limited evidence suggests that Western-born Chinese children are more ambivalent toward their ethnifying physical features than are their Black and White counterparts (Fox & Jordan, 1973). This evidence, however, is more than a quarter-century old, drawing its contemporary relevance into question (see, e.g., Lake, Staiger, & Glowinski, 2000). Even so, the

early findings are at least consistent with our premise that physical appearance is experienced as both an asset and a liability by this visible minority group, depending on the situation.

To examine compensatory conformity, we measured attitudes as a function of physical self-awareness and normative reference. We predicted that Chinese Canadian participants would be more likely to shift their attitudes toward those attributed to European Canadians (the majority group) and away from those attributed to Chinese Canadians (the self-identified minority group) when their physical appearance was made salient.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 94 Chinese Canadian undergraduate women at the University of Toronto. Nearly all were recruited from a large introductory psychology class. The age range was 17 to 25 ($M = 19.70$, $SD = 1.40$). Fifty-two participants were one-and-a-half generation and 42 were second generation. All individuals in the former group had lived in Canada a minimum of 5 years ($M = 9.88$, $SD = 3.52$). This qualification ensured sufficient exposure to Canadian culture to allow for the emergence of biculturality.

Procedure

Participants were individually tested by an Asian Canadian female experimenter. The consent form described the study as examining identity and aesthetic judgment. Participants were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental conditions, all of which involved the same basic computerized task. One half of the sample completed the task in view of a 1.22 m \times 1.22 m mirror. The mirror was mounted on an adjacent wall 1.83 m from the computer such that the participant was forced to view her full image while receiving preliminary instructions (greeting, consent form, confirmation of eligibility, etc.) from the experimenter seated to her right. The heightened physical self-consciousness was intended to prime participants' awareness of their visible minority status. For the other half of the sample, the mirror was hidden by a curtain throughout the entire procedure. After directing the participant's attention to the computer monitor, the experimenter left the room to allow the participant to work through the procedure alone.

On-screen instructions revealed that a series of 55 abstract paintings of a cube (taken from LeWitt, 1996) would be presented, one at a time. Each painting in the set was identical in form but unique in its combination of colors. The participant's task was to indicate her personal liking for the color combination used in each

painting. To prevent concerns about the “correctness” or “accuracy” of these judgments, the instructions emphasized their purely subjective significance:

Keep in mind that there are no “right” or “wrong” ratings in this study. It’s all a matter of personal preference and we just want your honest impression of the color combination used in each painting. . . . Go with your first impression.

The liking ratings were made on a continuous, sliding scale that appeared below each painting. The participant used the mouse to move an arrow to the position on the scale that represented her attitude. The left endpoint of the 8.6 cm scale represented extreme dislike and the right endpoint represented extreme liking. On each trial, the arrow appeared at a random start position on the scale, from which the participant moved it to indicate her rating. Participants were informed that the start position was random.

After rating the first series of 55 paintings, participants learned that a second series of 55 paintings would be presented. Participants were asked to rate these in the same manner as before. Additional instructions were varied to represent four distinct reference conditions, with approximately one quarter of the sample assigned to each. Participants in the control condition were told nothing more and advanced directly to the ratings. In contrast, participants in the three normative anchor conditions were told that for all paintings in the second series, the arrow would appear at the point on the scale that represented the average rating that the painting had received from female student participants belonging to a particular ethnocultural group. In this way, these participants were led to believe that moving the arrow to indicate their personal attitudes would now reflect deviation from a group norm. (In reality, the arrow appeared on the scale at a random start position, just as before, with the exceptions described below.) The ethnocultural groups used to define the three normative anchor conditions were *European Canadian* (EC; defined as “Canadians of European descent”), *Chinese Canadian* (CC; defined as “Canadians of Chinese descent”), and *Nigerian* (NI; defined as “Nigerian nationals living in Nigeria”). Because a large majority of Canadians are of European descent, the European Canadian anchor represents the majority or mainstream cultural norm. Therefore, both the Chinese Canadian and European Canadian anchors were relevant to participants’ bicultural identity. The Nigerian anchor was selected to be exogenous and irrelevant to identity. It was included for comparison only. The eight conditions formed a 2 (mirror: yes, no) \times 4 (normative anchor: control, EC, CC, NI) between-subjects design.

Participants were told that all paintings in the second series were new. In truth, only 45 were new. Unbeknownst to each participant, the 10 paintings in the first series that she had given the most neutral ratings (based on within-subject ranks) were randomly mixed in with the new paintings. These 10 paintings were the ones for which the participant held the weakest attitudes, identifying them as ideal candidates for normative influence. Recall that all the paintings were highly similar, differing only in color combination. As a result, participants did not recognize the critical paintings as old. For these 10 paintings only, the arrow appeared on the rating scale at the position to which the participant had moved it on first presentation. Because participants were unaware of this correspondence, movement of the arrow away from the start point on second presentation represents a combination of nonconscious attitude change and disinclination to agree with what is perceived to be a group average (norm conditions) or random point (control condition). Such movement from a prior attitude provides a more sensitive index of normative influence than does movement from a truly random point on the scale. The latter produces excessive variation and, depending on the position of the random point in relation to the scale endpoints, can constrain movement in one direction or the other. It needs to be emphasized that although participants were presented with their previously expressed attitudes on the critical trials, this was not at all their understanding. They believed they were viewing a group norm. Less willingness to deviate from one apparent norm as compared to others on these trials therefore reflects relative conformity. Consistent with the hypothesis, we predicted that the strongest conformity (least movement) would occur in the mirror-EC condition, whereas the weakest conformity (most movement) would occur in the mirror-CC condition.

After completing the second set of ratings, participants completed four paper-and-pencil questionnaires, three of which are relevant here.

The Chinese-Canadian Acculturation Scale (CCAS; Zheng & Berry, 1991). The CCAS consists of 12 multiple-choice items intended to assess Berry’s (1990, 1994, 1998) four acculturation orientations—assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation. Only the first two involve strong identification with the majority or mainstream culture. The assimilation orientation is defined as strong identification with the majority culture but weak identification with the heritage culture. The integration orientation is defined as strong identification with both the majority and heritage cultures, implying balanced biculturality. Marginalization is defined as strong identification with neither culture and separation as strong identification with only the heritage culture. Each item contains four options, each describing an

attitude or behavior reflecting one of the four orientations. Respondents must choose the option that best fits with their own attitudes and behavior. Four scores, summing to 12, are calculated to represent relative levels of the four orientations. The CCAS was included to confirm that the dominant orientation of participants was either assimilation or integration and to exclude any participants for whom this was not true. The exclusion was warranted by the hypothesis, which pertains to only those children of immigrants who identify with the majority culture.

The Body Image Questionnaire (BIQ; Berscheid, Walster, & Bohrnstedt, 1973). The BIQ asks respondents to rate their satisfaction with 25 aspects of their bodies (eyes, hair, breasts, arms, feet, etc.) using a 6-point Likert-type scale, with 1 labeled *extremely dissatisfied* and 6 labeled *extremely satisfied*. The summated score reflects overall satisfaction with one's body. The BIQ was included to address the possibility that any effects of the mirror were due to negative concern about body image rather than priming of visible minority status.

The Need for Uniqueness Scale (NUS; Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). The NUS measures individual differences in trait desire for uniqueness or distinctiveness—the motivation to stand out from others. Respondents indicate on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale their agreement with each of 16 statements reflecting low or high need for uniqueness (e.g., “I like being different,” “I dislike being the odd one out”). The reliability and validity of the NUS have been supported in a range of studies (see Snyder & Fromkin, 1977, 1980). The summated NUS score has been shown to predict deviation from social norms and standards. As such, it appears to reflect the individual's dispositional level of optimal distinctiveness, the compromise between assimilation and differentiation motives. An inverse association between need for uniqueness and conformity in the present context would be consistent with the optimal distinctiveness account of conformity but inconsistent with our own theory. As such, the NUS was included to help identify the basis of any conformity observed.

Finally, participants were probed for their understanding of the study and fully debriefed. The entire session lasted approximately 45 mins.

RESULTS

Questioning during debriefing confirmed that participants in the three normative anchor conditions believed that the initial position of the rating arrow was random during the first series but normative (for the specified ethnocultural group) during the second series. Participants in the control condition believed that the initial position of the arrow was random during both

series. Furthermore, none of the participants recognized the 10 critical paintings as having been presented twice.

Preliminary

To confirm equivalence of acculturation orientation, body image, need for uniqueness, age, and exposure to Canadian culture across cells, a 2 (mirror) \times 4 (normative anchor) MANOVA was conducted on the four CCAS subscales scores, BIQ score, NUS score, age, and number of years in Canada. No significant ($\alpha = .05$) main or interactive effects were found (all Wilks's Λ p s $> .58$). This parity supports the success of random assignment and suggests that the manipulations did not differentially affect participants' responses on the paper-and-pencil measures.

To confirm the biculturality of the sample, the four CCAS scores were examined. The means were as follows: assimilation = 1.71 ($SD = 1.89$), integration = 7.32 ($SD = 2.13$), marginalization = .59 ($SD = .97$), and separation = 2.38 ($SD = 2.12$). Integration was clearly the dominant orientation, with assimilation only weakly represented. This suggests that most of the participants were highly invested in maintaining a Canadian identity, but not at the cost of surrendering their Chinese identity. Total-sample Pearson's product-moment correlations between length of Canadian residency and orientation scores were as follows: assimilation, $r = .35$, $p = .0005$; integration, $r = .15$, $p = .15$; marginalization, $r = .06$, $p = .59$; and separation $r = -.49$, $p < .0001$. Thus, participants who had lived longer in Canada were higher on assimilation and lower on separation, as would be expected.

To ensure that all participants in the sample identified sufficiently with Canadian mainstream culture, any whose combined assimilation and integration scores were not greater than their combined marginalization and separation scores were excluded from further analysis. Five participants were thus excluded. One additional participant was eliminated as a clear sample outlier on the dependent variables analyzed below. This left a final sample of $N = 88$ for hypothesis testing. The eight cell sizes ranged from 9 to 12.

Deviating From the Group Norm

The mean absolute distance (where 1 scale unit $\approx .34$ mm) of movement from the rating anchor for the 10 old paintings served as the measure of adherence to the perceived group norm. Thus, greater mean distance implies greater willingness to deviate from the norm. To test the hypothesis, a 2 (mirror) \times 4 (normative anchor) ANOVA was conducted on the deviation measure (means and standard deviations appear in Table 1). The main effects for mirror, $F(1, 80) = .13$, $p = .72$, and normative anchor, $F(3, 80) = 2.24$, $p = .10$, were not significant. There was,

TABLE 1: Deviation From the Perceived Norm as a Function of Mirror Exposure and Normative Anchor ($N = 88$)

Normative Anchor	Mirror	
	Exposed	Hidden
Control	35.83 (11.25)	32.26 (9.80)
European Canadian	20.49 (11.16)	34.46 (12.22)
Chinese Canadian	39.52 (12.33)	30.94 (11.87)
Nigerian	37.88 (14.42)	32.43 (9.91)

NOTE: Values represent absolute movement from the normative anchor for the 10 paintings presented twice. Higher means represent greater deviation from the perceived norm (less conformity) in all but the control condition. Standard deviations appear in parentheses. The rating scale is 256 units long, where 1 scale unit \approx .34 mm.

however, a Mirror \times Normative Anchor interaction, $F(3, 80) = 4.19$, $p = .008$. The interaction was decomposed against the hypothesis.

First, the simple effect of normative anchor was tested within each of the two mirror conditions. Consistent with the prediction that the strongest levels of conformity would emerge when physical self-awareness was heightened, there was a large simple effect for normative anchor when participants viewed themselves in the mirror, $F(3, 80) = 6.18$, $p = .0008$, but no effect when they did not, $F(3, 80) = .17$, $p = .91$.

Next, planned contrasts were conducted within the mirror condition to confirm that the pattern of differences was in line with prediction. Greater conformity (less deviation from the norm) was expected in the EC condition than in the control condition. This was confirmed, $F(1, 80) = 6.17$, $p = .01$. Less conformity (greater deviation from the norm) was expected in the CC condition than in the control condition. This was not confirmed, $F(1, 80) = .51$, $p = .48$. Finally, no difference was expected, or found, between the NI and control conditions, $F(1, 80) = .79$, $p = .38$.

Testing the simple effect of mirror within each normative anchor condition produced parallel results. Participants in the EC condition exhibited greater conformity in the presence of the mirror than in its absence, $F(1, 80) = 5.97$, $p = .02$. In contrast, the mirror did not have a significant effect in the CC condition, $F(1, 80) = 3.18$, $p = .08$, although the difference was in the predicted direction (less conformity in the presence of the mirror). Finally, the mirror had no effect in the NI condition, $F(1, 80) = .07$, $p = .79$, and in the control condition, $F(1, 80) = .03$, $p = .85$.

Opposing the Group Norm

Weak attitudes are especially prone to social influence. To take advantage of this susceptibility, we relied on relatively neutral ratings in measuring conformity to ethnocultural norms. One limitation of our strategy is its

TABLE 2: Opposition to the Perceived Norm as a Function of Mirror Exposure and Normative Anchor ($N = 88$)

Normative Anchor	Mirror	
	Exposed	Hidden
Control	.15 (.08)	.16 (.10)
European Canadian	.04 (.05)	.17 (.15)
Chinese Canadian	.18 (.09)	.14 (.09)
Nigerian	.15 (.06)	.14 (.08)

NOTE: Values represent proportion of opportunities that resulted in movement from the perceived group norm to the opposite quarter of the rating scale. Higher means represent greater opposition. Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

inability to reveal whether compensatory conformity occurred in relation to more pronounced attitudes. In fact, insofar as neutral or middling attitudes imply no clear attitude at all, the tendency for participants to adhere to a perceived group norm might be seen as adoption of the group's valuative position in the absence of strong personal feeling. Conformity, however, implies more than this. Specifically, it also should be the case that participants were less likely to clearly disagree with the EC group norm in the mirror condition. To examine this, we defined disagreement as giving a positive rating to any of the 45 noncritical paintings in the second series that was apparently disliked by the group, or vice versa. Operationally, this translated into movement of the arrow from anywhere within the leftmost quarter of the rating scale to anywhere within the rightmost quarter of the scale, or vice versa. Such instances were taken as clear disagreement or opposition. Given the random placement of the apparent group norm across noncritical trials, the chance to oppose the norm, as defined above, arose on about half of the 45 noncritical trials. For each participant, we calculated the proportion of these instances that resulted in opposition. Group means and standard deviations appear in Table 2. As expected, proportion opposition on noncritical trials was correlated with mean absolute movement (deviation) on critical trials, $r = .32$, $p = .008$.

To test for compensatory conformity as reflected in opposition, a second 2 (mirror) \times 4 (normative anchor) ANOVA was conducted. As before, the main effects for mirror, $F(1, 80) = 1.22$, $p = .27$, and normative anchor, $F(3, 80) = 1.34$, $p = .27$, were not significant. The Mirror \times Normative Anchor interaction, however, was again significant, $F(3, 80) = 3.52$, $p = .02$. The interaction was decomposed against the hypothesis. There was a simple effect for normative anchor when participants viewed themselves in the mirror, $F(3, 80) = 4.52$, $p = .006$, but no effect when they did not, $F(3, 80) = .33$, $p = .80$. The pattern of differences within the mirror condition matched

that found above for the deviation measure. Specifically, planned comparisons confirmed less opposition in the EC condition than in the control condition, $F(1, 80) = 7.45, p = .008$. The control condition, however, did not differ significantly from the CC, $F(1, 80) = .49, p = .49$, or NI, $F(1, 80) = .01, p = .93$, conditions.

Testing the simple effect of mirror within each normative anchor condition produced parallel results. Participants in the EC condition exhibited less opposition in the presence of the mirror than in its absence, $F(1, 80) = 10.81, p = .002$. In contrast, the mirror had no significant effect in the CC, $F(1, 80) = .98, p = .32$, NI, $F(1, 80) = .03, p = .86$, and control, $F(1, 80) = .01, p = .91$, conditions.

In summary, parallel results were obtained for the deviation and opposition measures of conformity.

Conformity and Body Image

The mean BIQ score for the sample was 104.84 ($SD = 11.90$). The scale range is 25 to 150; the range of the sample distribution was 67 to 144. We interpret participants' heightened conformity to the perceived EC group norm in the presence of the mirror as the result of increased situational awareness of visible minority status. An alternative possibility is that the mirror induced an aversive form of self-consciousness characterized by concern about physical attractiveness. If this were the basis of the observed increase in conformity, participants with more negative body image would have shown less willingness to deviate from or oppose the norm. This was not the case. BIQ score was not significantly associated with mean deviation for noncontrol participants, $r(65) = .10, p = .41$; noncontrol participants in the mirror condition, $r(31) = .06, p = .73$; or participants in the EC cell of the mirror condition, $r(11) = .26, p = .45$. Similarly, BIQ score was not significantly associated with proportion opposition for noncontrol participants, $r(65) = -.13, p = .32$; noncontrol participants in the mirror condition $r(31) = .04, p = .85$; or participants in the EC cell of the mirror condition, $r(11) = -.04, p = .92$. This pattern of independence dismisses the possibility that concerns about attractiveness were responsible for the effect. Rather, the mirror appeared to raise another form of consciousness in the participants, as intended. We interpret this as increased situational awareness of their visible minority status in Canadian society.

Conformity and Acculturation Orientation

We posited earlier that compensatory conformity in visible minorities is motivated by a desire to overcome ethnification insofar as it presents an obstacle to full inclusion within, and acceptance by, the majority group. If this reasoning is correct, greater compensation should be exhibited by those with greater desire for inclusion within the majority group. To examine this, we com-

bined the two CCAS scores that reflect identification with mainstream Canadian society—integration and assimilation—and correlated this sum with the measures of conformity for participants in the mirror condition who made ratings against the EC norm. Consistent with the above reasoning, stronger Canadian identification was associated with less deviation, $r(11) = -.44, p = .17$, and less opposition, $r(11) = -.64, p = .03$. We also combined participants' integration and separation scores to reflect overall Chinese identification and correlated this sum with conformity for participants in the mirror condition who made ratings against the CC norm. The direction of association was again consistent with theory: Stronger Chinese identification was associated with less deviation, $r(11) = -.31, p = .36$, and less opposition, $r(11) = -.26, p = .44$. Admittedly, only one of the above correlations was statistically significant. The small cell sizes (11 in both cases), however, would prevent even moderately strong associations from achieving significance. Irrespective of p values, the magnitude and sign of the correlations at least hint that acculturation orientation is key to the conformity observed here, consistent with our theory.

Conformity and Need for Uniqueness

The mean NUS score for the sample was 43.50 ($SD = 6.42$). The scale range is 16 to 80; the range of the sample distribution was 30 to 60. To address the significance of optimal distinctiveness for conformity in the present study, we examined the correlations of the NUS with the dependent measures. NUS score was not significantly associated with greater deviation for noncontrol participants, $r(65) = .12, p = .33$; noncontrol participants in the mirror condition, $r(31) = -.06, p = .76$; or participants in the EC cell of the mirror condition, $r(11) = -.06, p = .87$. Similarly, NUS score was not significantly associated with greater opposition for noncontrol participants, $r(65) = -.10, p = .44$; noncontrol participants in the mirror condition, $r(31) = -.12, p = .53$; or participants in the EC cell of the mirror condition, $r(11) = -.17, p = .62$.

These results suggest that participants' trait level of preferred distinctiveness, as reflected in their need for uniqueness, was unrelated to the effects observed here. This independence is consistent with our motivational account, which hinges on ethnification and exclusion rather than optimal distinctiveness as the basis of conformity.

DISCUSSION

This study examined social influence on attitude expression as a function of physical self-awareness and normative reference. Chinese Canadians, a clear visible minority, were expected to agree more with the perceived opinions of the majority cultural group when

physical self-awareness, and by extension, awareness of visible minority status, were heightened. In addition, Chinese Canadians were expected to agree less with the perceived opinion of their own ethnocultural minority group under the same condition. These symmetrical predictions were derived from the theoretical position that the bicultural challenge of many children of immigrants involves a desire for full inclusion within the dominant culture despite the indelible “foreign-ness” of their physical features. Conformity to the majority culture and nonconformity to the heritage culture were proposed as potential responses to this challenge.

Consistent with the conformity prediction, Chinese Canadian women were especially inclined to agree with what they believed was the average attitude of their European Canadian peers after they first viewed themselves in a mirror. This finding is striking for two reasons. First, both the participants and the experimenter were East Asian Canadian. This matching was deliberate because we did not want the physical features of the experimenter to heighten participants’ awareness of their visible minority status in the absence of the mirror. Another purpose of the match was avoidance of any obvious social incentive toward compensatory conformity. Admittedly, it is likely that the participants associated the experimental context more with the majority cultural group than with their Chinese identity, irrespective of the characteristics of the experimenter. Nonetheless, confirmation of the conformity prediction in a setting where no European Canadians were present hints at the spontaneity of the phenomenon.

The finding stands out for a second reason. The attitudes featured here were nothing more than aesthetic judgments of novel stimuli. Beyond fashion and musical taste, such judgments have minimal bearing on perceptions of cultural legitimacy. One’s views on politics, morality, and social relationships reveal consonance with the mainstream; one’s opinions about highly abstract paintings do not. That compensatory conformity emerged despite the low cultural relevance of the attitudes might be taken to suggest a pervasive phenomenon. On the other hand, more important attitudes are determined by long-held beliefs, values, and commitments. As such, they may be less vulnerable to social influence despite their greater cultural relevance. The generality of compensatory conformity therefore remains unclear and needs to be addressed in future research.

Might the greater tendency to conform to the apparent European Canadian norm in the presence of the mirror be alternatively construed as the result of a desire for accuracy? Perhaps the mirror somehow increased motivation to make valid ratings and the European Canadian norm was perceived as more “correct” than

the other norms. This is an unlikely possibility for several reasons. First, the task instructions were clear in pointing out that no ratings were to be understood as more valid or correct than others. Rather, they were subjective impressions intended to reflect personal preference only. Second, participants were recruited in a manner that made it clear that only Chinese Canadian students were eligible for the current phase of the study. Presumably, this understanding disallowed the assumption that Chinese Canadians and European Canadians were being sampled in proportion to their representation in the student population. Furthermore, the Nigerian norm was described as representing the ratings of students living in Nigeria. Therefore, participants had as much, if not more, reason to assume that the ethnocultural norms were based on roughly equal sample sizes than to assume otherwise. If so, there was little reason to perceive the European Canadian norm as especially valid (whatever validity would mean to participants in the present context) for sampling reasons. Third, there was no evidence for greater conformity to the European Canadian norm in the absence of the mirror. If anything, participants showed more (albeit nonsignificantly more) deviation from and opposition to the European Canadian than the Chinese Canadian and Nigerian norms when the mirror was hidden. Although heightened self-awareness has been shown to increase sensitivity to social standards (Diener & Srull, 1979), it is odd that the same norm would be considered most valid in the presence of the mirror but least valid in its absence, if concerns about validity were at all relevant. Furthermore, the tendency for self-focus to increase consistency with norms occurs only for those norms that are compatible with personal standards, beliefs, or values (Gibbons & Wright, 1983). Consistent with this, mirror exposure has been shown to reduce attitude change (Scheier & Carver, 1980), increase resistance to counterattitudinal messages (Hutton & Baumeister, 1992), promote rejection of false feedback (Davies, 1982), and reduce suggestibility (Scheier, Carver, & Gibbons, 1979). Given these findings, it is highly unlikely that it was thoughts about validity that led to less opposition to the European Canadian norm when self-awareness was increased.

The predicted distancing from the minority group norm was not confirmed. After viewing themselves in the mirror, participants were not especially likely to disagree with what they believed was the average attitude of their Chinese Canadian peers. Similarly, but as expected, the mirror had no effect when attitudes were expressed in relation to an ethnocultural group (Nigerian) that was irrelevant to Chinese Canadian bicultural identity.

The unsupported prediction that Chinese Canadians would dissociate themselves from the attitudes of their

own minority group is interpretable in relation to the acculturation orientation of the sample. Compensatory dissociation would be most likely for assimilationists, those who do not strongly identify with Chinese culture. Recall, however, that the orientation of the sample was clearly integration, which represents balanced biculturalism. Assimilation was, in fact, very weakly represented. For one-and-a-half- and second-generation Chinese Canadians, identification with and attraction to the cultural mainstream does not appear to be accompanied by rejection of Chinese identity. This would account for the absence of any tendency to selectively deviate from the perceived Chinese Canadian norm when visible minority status was primed. More generally, the finding that compensatory behavior aimed at inclusion within one group was not mirrored by separation from another is encouraging in light of Canada's federal support for multiculturalism (Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977; Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997). Where other one-and-a-half- and second-generation visible minorities in Canada and the United States stand on this dimension remains to be examined. The socioeconomic status of the minority group and its treatment by the majority are likely to be critical here. The possibility of gender differences, not addressed here, also deserves attention. Finally, the importance of social context needs to be examined. The academic setting of the present study may have predisposed participants toward affirmation of Canadian cultural identity owing to the perception of the University of Toronto as an Anglo-Canadian, English-language institution. Had adherence to European Canadian norms been gauged in the heart of Toronto's bustling Chinatown, situational awareness of the social costs of ethnification might have been so low as to preclude compensatory conformity.

The independence of need for uniqueness and conformity in this study, and the suggestive pattern of associations of the latter with acculturation orientation, are inconsistent with a simple distinctiveness account of the findings. This, however, does not discount the argument that self-focus on physical distinctiveness may be effective in combating feelings of depersonalization, effacement, or indistinctiveness that all individuals suffer from time to time. For this reason, it would be wrong to assume that ethnification imposed by the majority group is never experienced as satisfying by acculturated visible minorities. The potential for distinguishing physical features to restore optimal distinctiveness in social situations may, in some cases, extend so far as to produce conformity to the minority group as a means of accentuating ethnocultural minority status. Such restorative conformity, guided by the individual's optimal level of distinctiveness, would differ in kind from the compensatory

conformity that we have highlighted, which is guided by a desire for full and equal participation in the dominant culture. The latter is aimed at achieving a degree of inclusion and acceptance that may never be achieved but is sought nonetheless. A final possibility worthy of attention is an obverse form of compensatory conformity aimed at affirming legitimacy within the minority culture. This may occur, for example, when an individual's claim to minority cultural identity is doubted or disputed by less acculturated, perhaps older, members of the heritage community.

The phenomenon of cultural compensation by the children of immigrants has gone largely unexamined. Even so, it is consistent with a literature that highlights the rapid and spontaneous adoption of mainstream cultural beliefs, preferences, and practices by this segment of the population (Chin & Lee, 1996; Feldman, Mont-Reynaud, & Rosenthal, 1992; George & Hoppe, 1979; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rosenthal, 1987; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1990, 1992). Compensation as a consequence of biculturalism is therefore neither surprising nor incompatible with previous perspectives. It is, however, poorly understood. We hope that the present study will serve to focus attention on this understudied topic.

What an individual does for the purpose of fitting in can be beneficial, detrimental, or of little consequence, depending on the social context and the behavior in question. With ethnocultural diversity increasing in the West, compensatory conformity and other responses to biculturalism are more visible than ever before. Efforts to reduce both intra- and intergenerational acculturative stress would profit from a clearer understanding of the distinctive motivational tendencies of the children of immigrants as they struggle to weave themselves into our ever-changing social fabric.

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