

The ingroup overexclusion effect: identity concerns in decisions about group membership

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Abstract

There are circumstances in which one is reluctant to express a judgment on the basis of the available information. This is for instance the case when the decision may jeopardize the integrity of the group one is a member of. In particular, ingroup members are considered less judgeable than outgroup members. This phenomenon corresponds to the ingroup overexclusion effect (Leyens and Yzerbyt, 1992). An experimental situation was designed in order to rule out an explanation of this phenomenon in terms of confirmation of hypothesis. French- or Dutch-speaking subjects heard recordings of 40 sentences and, depending on the specific wording of the question, decided whether the speakers belonged to the group of French-speaking (i.e. Walloon) versus Dutch-speaking (i.e. Flemish) Belgians or not. The 40 sentences enabled to cross three factors with five sentences in each cell: Walloon versus Flemish speakers, French versus Dutch sentences, and short versus long sentences. As predicted, subjects made most errors when ingroup members read short outgroup sentences. Most importantly, the specific wording of the question did not lead to a reversal of the pattern of errors of group identification. Subjects also took longer to make a decision about an ingroup member reading an outgroup sentence than about an outgroup member reading an ingroup sentence. Such a pattern clearly supports a motivational explanation and undermines a

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confirmation of hypothesis explanation of the ingroup overexclusion effect. Older accounts of ethnic identification phenomena are addressed and it is suggested that identity concerns greatly affect impression formation processes.

INTRODUCTION

In the Middle-Age, the Flemish people rebelled against the French invaders. One morning of 1302, in Bruges, they tried to spot the French spies by asking every unknown person to pronounce correctly the Flemish words: 'Schild en Vriend' (meaning: shield and friend). Those who were unable to pronounce these three words with the right accent were instantly killed. They received a smack of 'goedendag', a very efficient weapon. Was such a strategy efficient?

The present study addresses the impact of group membership on people's decisions about group membership. Over the last decade, research on stereotyping and intergroup relations has confirmed the major impact of ingroup favouritism and outgroup homogeneity (for reviews, see Brown, 1988; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Messick and Mackie, 1989). The present work addresses the problem of making decisions about group membership and extends previous research on a third intergroup phenomenon known as the ingroup overexclusion effect (Leyens and Yzerbyt, 1992; Yzerbyt, 1990).

THE INGROUP OVEREXCLUSION EFFECT

Although the work examining the ingroup overexclusion effect is fairly recent, the underlying theme had preoccupied social psychologists ever since the end of the Second World War. Then, researchers wanted to see whether anti-Semitic perceivers were better than non-prejudiced subjects at recognizing Jewish faces (Allport and Kramer, 1946; Carter, 1948; Dorfman, Keeve and Saslow, 1971; Elliott and Wittenberg, 1955; Himmelfarb, 1961; Lindzey and Rogolsky, 1950; Pulos and Spilka, 1961; Quany, Keats and Harkins, 1975; Scodel and Austrin, 1957; for a similar concern using last names, see Secord and Saumer, 1960). The paradigm of the studies consisted in presenting subjects with a set of pictures (or last names), usually half of them of Jews, and the other half of Caucasians. The task of the subjects was to distribute the stimuli into two piles, one Jewish and one non-Jewish.

About half of the studies evidenced a better performance of the prejudiced subjects as compared to the non-prejudiced subjects. More interestingly, the great majority of the experiments also revealed that prejudiced subjects ended up with fewer ingroup members than did non-prejudiced ones. Two alternative interpretations of the data were in competition (Leyens, Yzerbyt and Bellour, 1993; Shapiro and Penrod, 1986). On the one hand, the vigilance hypothesis states that prejudiced people tend to avoid harmful stimuli and, therefore, are more alert to outgroup members. On the other, the response bias explanation states that, because people consider more targets to be outgroup members when they are prejudiced than when they are not, they make a better job at identifying the outgroup members.

Our reinterpretation of these data is that prejudiced subjects may need more infor-

mation before accepting the targets in their group. In other words, before acceptance takes place, the number of ingroup characteristics that any potential ingroup member must have should be greater than the number of outgroup characteristics that any potential outgroup members must have. At a general level, the ingroup overexclusion effect corresponds to people's tendency to reject ingroup members who are not totally in line with the requirements for ingroup membership. It can thus be considered as the consequence of a protection of the ingroup for which a high criterion of acceptance is requested. To the extent that people remain unaware of any actual misidentification, its consequences may be highly detrimental to them as well as to their group. As a nice albeit dramatic illustration, the movie *The Snake* very well documents the numerous and sophisticated strategies adopted by a director of the CIA, played by Henry Fonda, to ensure that a Soviet transfuge, played by Yul Brynner, is a genuine friend of the U.S. and not just a smart pretender still serving the 'Empire of Evil'.

We propose that people are particularly cautious and need lots of evidence before accepting a target in their group because the social definition of their self is put at stake by a possible misidentification. Support for the idea that a controlled access to the ingroup may serve identity purposes comes from several lines of research. The findings pertaining to the 'black sheep effect' (Marques, Yzerbyt and Leyens, 1988; Marques and Yzerbyt, 1988) indicate that people derogate bad ingroup members in spite of a general tendency to favour ingroup over outgroup members. It thus seems that people's social identity suffers from their association with the undesirable behaviours of bad ingroup members (Branscombe, Wann, Noel and Coleman, 1993).

The existence of the outgroup homogeneity effect is based on a substantial body of literature (for reviews, see Messick and Mackie, 1989; Mullen and Hu, 1989; Ostrom and Sedikides, 1992). However, ingroup homogeneity has also been obtained. In particular, the homogeneity of ingroup members appears to be an important feature of minority groups (Simon, 1992; Simon and Brown, 1987), of new groups (Worchel, 1992), or of groups with well-defined agendas such as political groups (Kelly, 1989), thereby suggesting a possible link between social identification and ease of inclusion.

Finally, according to the optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991), people's basic need for differentiation is counterbalanced by an equally basic need for assimilation. As a result, people will often tend to define themselves more in terms of group members than of unique individuals. Brewer (1991) suggests that distinctiveness is a crucial aspect of groups. People will thus work at maintaining clear boundaries between their own group and other groups because groups that 'become overly inclusive or ill-defined lose the loyalty of their membership or break up into factions of splinter groups' (Brewer, 1991, p. 478). Clearly, this line of work insists upon the negative impact of open frontiers on the identity concerns of group members and it is thus highly congruent with the basic tenet underlying the present research programme.

All these different theoretical advances point to the importance for individual members of taking great care in accepting specific targets under the ingroup banner.

THE SOCIAL VALIDITY OF SOCIAL JUDGMENTS

As we see it, impression formation aims at explaining observed behaviours in order to serve further actions and perceptions. When confronted with new targets, social perceivers can come up with a host of categories (Murphy and Medin, 1985). According to the social judgeability model (Leyens, Yzerbyt and Schadron, 1992; Schadron and Yzerbyt, 1991; Yzerbyt, 1990), people combine category and target-based information by taking several criteria into account. Perceivers do not only examine the data with the aim of accurately reflecting objective reality but they also consider the cultural, theoretical, and integrity levels of adequacy of their judgment (Leyens, Yzerbyt and Schadron, 1994; Yzerbyt, Schadron, Leyens and Rocher, 1994).

The cultural level of adequacy corresponds more or less to the fact that people have a working knowledge of the conditions that lead to valid judgment. As a clear illustration of this sort of adequacy, Yzerbyt and his colleagues (1994; Yzerbyt, Schadron and Leyens, 1993) showed that people express a judgment about a target only to the extent that they believed they had access to individuating information. Leyens, Yzerbyt, Corneille and Gonçalves (1994) extended this idea and stressed the role of a theoretical level of adequacy. They suggested that judgments are made only when people activate the particular theory that allows connecting the available evidence with the kind of judgment requested. Subjects confronted with a slightly modified attitude attribution paradigm were shown to make attributions and to fall prey to the overattribution bias only when an adequate theory was activated.

The present work emphasizes the role of the integrity level of adequacy. Supposedly, when people make social judgments, they take special care to preserve essential aspects of their identity. This conjecture is congruent with the fact that people seem motivated to preserve their integrity in various ways. Some strands of research indicate that people devote differential amounts of processing to preference-consistent than to preference-inconsistent information (Kruglanski, 1990; Pyszczynski and Greenberg, 1987). Specifically, people are likely to perform intensive cognitive work when the evidence is inconsistent with a preferred conclusion.

Ditto and Lopez (1992), for instance, used a paradigm originally proposed by Yzerbyt and Leyens (1991) and measured the amount of information needed to arrive at a preference-consistent or preference-inconsistent conclusion. These authors showed that subjects are more critical when information supports undesirable conclusions than when evidence is in line with expectations. In one of their studies, Ditto and Lopez (1992, experiment 2) asked their subjects to self-administer a saliva test. Subjects were to collect a sample of their saliva, to rub a strip of test paper in it, to wait from 10 seconds to one minute until a colour reaction was completed, and, as soon as the result was clear, to put the strip in an envelope. All subjects were confronted with a lack of colour reaction which, by way of the specific instructions given to the subjects, meant something different in the two experimental conditions. Half of the subjects thought that the result of the test revealed an enzyme deficiency linked to a variety of pancreatic disorders. For the remaining subjects, the lack of colour reaction indicated the presence of the enzyme in their saliva, and thus a lack of pancreatic disorders.

Compared to no-deficiency subjects, deficiency subjects took an average of 30 seconds more to conclude that the test was completed. Also, deficiency subjects were more likely than no-deficiency subjects to make additional tests of their saliva.

In sum, Ditto and Lopez (1992) confronted their subjects with clear information and unavoidable evidence about the presence or absence of an unknown enzyme deficiency. The general attitude was that subjects readily accepted the verdict of the test when it was comfortable to live with. In contrast, quite a few defensive strategies, including multiple testing, were adopted when the judgment was less pleasant.

Other strands of research stress the importance of the nature of the tested hypothesis and accessed information in order to reach specific conclusions (Kunda, 1987, 1990; Pyszczynski and Greenberg, 1987). Some direct evidence for this mechanism of motivated reasoning was recently presented by Sanitioso, Kunda and Fong (1990). These authors had their subjects generate autobiographical memories in order to provide information about their personal levels of extraversion-introversion. Subjects generated first and more episodes in line with whatever pole of the dimension was viewed as desirable. According to Kunda (1990, p. 480), 'motivation affects reasoning through reliance on a biased set of cognitive processes: strategies for accessing, constructing, and evaluating beliefs'.

In sum, there is increasing recognition that integrity concerns are important determinants of the social judgment processes. Building upon their earlier work on information search processes (Yzerbyt and Leyens, 1991), Leyens and Yzerbyt (1992) hypothesized that people would request a lot of positive and confirming information before deciding that someone is a member of their group. They selected four sets of traits organized in terms of two independent dimensions, a descriptive one (Walloon versus Flemish) and an evaluative one (likable versus unlikable). Moreover, the dimensional complexity and evaluative extremity of the four sets of traits were not different. For the four sets and within each set, three personality profiles were constructed by randomly selecting 10 traits per profile with the only restriction that a trait could not appear more than once in any given profile. Walloon subjects were then provided with the 12 profiles, one trait at a time up to the maximum of 10 traits per profile, and asked to decide whether the target was a member of their group as soon as they felt confident enough. As expected, subjects examined more evidence when it was positive and consistent with their Walloon ingroup than when it was negative or disconfirmatory.

One potential difficulty in the interpretation of Leyens and Yzerbyt's (1992) data stems from the fact that only members of one specific group, French-speaking Belgians, were submitted to the decision-making procedure. In other words, it is possible to argue that the pattern of findings would not necessarily replicate over members of the other, opposing, group. A related difficulty stems from the fact that the question asked was always phrased in terms of ingroup membership. This means that our subjects, French-speaking Belgians, were always asked whether or not the target person was a native speaker of French. As a consequence, these data, although totally consistent with a social identity explanation, could also be interpreted in purely cognitive terms. Indeed, to the extent that subjects were asked whether the targets were ingroup members, the French-speaking targets confirmed the hypothesis whereas the non French-speaking targets disconfirmed the hypothesis. One could thus argue that the emerging ingroup overexclusion was simply due to the positivity and confirming status of the information. As a matter of fact, Yzerbyt and Leyens (1991) predicted and found that most information is requested for the positive and confirming target simply because positive or confirming evidence generally provides

less information than negative or disconfirming information. Still, to the extent that social identity is at stake, subjects are expected to bias their interpretation of the hypothesis. In other words, asking subjects of a given group to decide if a target is a member of the outgroup would not unconfound group membership and confirmation of hypothesis because subjects would reframe the question in terms of the ingroup.

OVERVIEW OF THE EXPERIMENT

The aim of the present study is to directly address this important issue. Specifically, we designed a situation where the confirmation of hypothesis account and the ingroup overexclusion account would make different predictions. We asked members of two opposing groups to decide about the group membership of a series of targets issued from either one of these same two groups. Moreover, whereas half of the subjects were asked to decide whether each of the targets was a member of their group or not, the remaining subjects were requested to indicate whether the target was or was not a member of the outgroup.

Because we wanted to examine the impact of the ingroup overexclusion in a somewhat natural context, we decided to avoid using written materials like personality traits and to rely instead on vocal materials. This allowed to manipulate the ambiguity of the stimuli through the use of different languages and the presentation of very little versus more extensive evidence.

In line with the ingroup overexclusion effect, we predicted that subjects would make more errors of classification when the target is in fact an ingroup member than when the target is an outgroup member. Specifically, we expected that our subjects would exclude more actual ingroup members from their ingroup than actual outgroup members from the outgroup, especially when confronted with the outgroup rather than the ingroup language and, possibly, with limited rather than more extensive information. We also expected that the wording of the question and the membership of the subjects would not influence the pattern of findings. Finally, we also predicted that subjects would need more time to make a decision when confronted with an ingroup rather than with an outgroup target.

METHOD

Subjects

Sixty-four female undergraduates from the University of Louvain, Belgium, volunteered to participate. While 32 subjects were native French speakers, commonly called Walloons, studying at Louvain-la-Neuve, the French-speaking campus, the remaining 32 subjects were native Dutch speakers, commonly called Flemish, studying at Leuven, the Dutch-speaking campus.

Materials

Five short sentences and five long sentences were selected and both a French and a Dutch version of each sentence was prepared, yielding a total of 20 stimulus sen-

tences. Whereas short sentences comprised from three to five words, long sentences consisted of an average of 10 words. Also, long sentences included one main sentence proposition along with a subordinate. Care was taken that the French and Dutch versions of each sentence were as similar as possible to each other in various respects: meaning, level of language, length of sentence, length of words, difficulty of pronunciation, etc.

It is important to stress the fact that the length of the sentences is directly related to the difficulty of pronunciation and the ease of recognition. From the perspective of the speaker, short sentences are easy to pronounce and long sentences are difficult to pronounce. Of course, the level of difficulty reverses when one takes the perspective of the listener who needs to recognize the group membership. In order to facilitate the presentation of the data, we will refer to both aspects, pronunciation and recognition, by using the objective feature 'length' of the sentence.

Twenty Walloon male students from the University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve and 20 Flemish male students from the University of Louvain at Leuven were called into the laboratory of their social experimental division and asked to read aloud all 20 sentences in front of a microphone connected to a professional tape recorder. Two matrices of 20 speakers by 20 sentences, one for each linguistic group, served as the pool for the construction of the experimental sets of stimuli.

First, 20 speaker-by-sentence combinations were randomly selected from the matrix of Walloon speakers with the only restriction that no speaker and no sentence appeared more than once. The same procedure of random selection was then used to select 20 speaker-by-sentence combinations in the matrix of Flemish speakers. This yielded the first set of 40 experimental sentences which were digitalized, slightly altered and stored into a Macintosh IIci computer.

In order to secure a replication of our first experimental set, another experimental set of 40 sentences was created using the same procedure with the only restriction that all 40 combinations had to be new ones.

Procedure

Subjects came to the laboratory one at a time. The female experimenter welcomed the subjects in their own language. However, care was taken not only to have all verbal instructions provided in broken French or Dutch but also to speak with an accent typical of the opposite linguistic community. This was done for two reasons. First, this presentation was expected to make intergroup concerns more salient. Secondly, this allowed the same French-speaking female experimenter to do the job for both Walloon and Flemish subjects.

Subjects were welcomed and seated in front of a microcomputer. They were given written instructions concerning the use of the computer during the experiment. When subjects had read the instruction sheet, the experimenter answered all remaining questions, started the program and left the room.

A computer program was specially created for the purpose of presenting the sentence. A blank screen lasted for several seconds after the experimenter's order to start the experiment. On the basis of an *a priori* schedule, one of the two wordings of the question (i.e. 'Is this a French-speaking speaker?' versus 'Is this a Dutch-speaking speaker?') was then selected and presented at the centre of the screen. In addition, subjects could see the 'YES' and 'NO' answers, each represented at

the centre of one of the two bottom quadrants of the screen. The two answers were also made salient on the keyboard by means of two keys specially relabelled for that purpose. All other keys of the keyboard were deactivated during the experiment.

After one second, subjects were confronted with the first sentence. They were to make a decision as soon as possible about the specific question by pushing the key corresponding to their answer. As soon as subjects provided an answer, the vocal excerpt was interrupted. The screen cleared and the same procedure was repeated for each of the 39 remaining sentences. The order of presentation of the sentences was determined randomly and was unique for each subject. Also, each one of the two experimental sets of 40 sentences was presented to one half of the subjects.

When all 40 sentences were presented, subjects were requested to warn the experimenter. They were fully debriefed, thanked for their participation, and dismissed.

RESULTS

Decisions

In order to facilitate the analysis of the decision data as well as the presentation of the results, subjects' decisions concerning the group membership of the targets were transformed into error scores. An error was counted when the group membership selected by the subject did not match the actual group membership of the target. Also, the decision data were reorganized in line with the group membership of the subjects. To assess the effectiveness of our manipulation on the errors concerning group membership, we conducted a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed design ANOVA using campus (the Louvain-la-Neuve campus versus the Leuven campus) and wording of the question (ingroup-directed versus outgroup-directed) as between-subjects variables and group membership of the target (ingroup target versus outgroup target), language of the sentence (ingroup language versus outgroup language), and length of the sentence (short sentence versus long sentence) as within-subject variables.

A significant main effect of campus, $F(1,60) = 11.05$, $p < 0.002$, indicated that the Flemish subjects generally made more errors ($M = 22.58$ per cent) than the Walloon participants ($M = 16.57$ per cent). There was however no global impact of the wording of the question nor did the campus interact with the wording of the question.

As a check for the success of our manipulation of stimulus ambiguity, we examined the language of the sentence and the length of the sentence main effects. Not surprisingly, subjects made less errors when the sentences were read in their own language ($M = 15.63$ per cent) than when they were read in the language of the outgroup ($M = 23.52$ per cent), $F(1,60) = 31.17$, $p < 0.001$. The built-in effect of the length of the sentence also influenced subjects' decisions, $F(1,60) = 61.68$, $p < 0.001$: short sentences led subjects to make more mistakes, ($M = 23.67$ per cent) than long sentences ($M = 15.47$ per cent).

A series of effects are directly relevant to the main ingroup overexclusion predictions. First, the group membership of the target main effect approached a conventional level of significance, $F(1,60) = 3.90$, $p = 0.053$. Overall, subjects tended to misclassify ingroup targets ($M = 21.34$ per cent) more often than outgroup targets

($M = 17.82$ per cent). This effect was qualified by the presence of a highly significant interaction between the group membership of the target and the language of the sentence, $F(1,60) = 11.94$, $p < 0.001$. As can be seen in Table 1, outgroup sentences were more often misclassified for the ingroup than for the outgroup targets, $t(63) = 3.42$, $p < 0.001$. This was not the case when the sentences were read in the language of the subject, $t(63) = 1.76$, n.s. Conversely, subjects confronted with an outgroup target made a similar number of mistakes whether the sentences were read in French or in Dutch, $t(63) = 0.13$, n.s. When the target was an ingrouper, however, the number of errors of classification was significantly higher for the outgroup than for the ingroup sentences, $t(63) = 5.43$, $p < 0.001$.

Table 1. Percentages of errors as a function of group membership of the target and language of the sentence

Language of the sentence	Group membership of the target	
	Ingroup	Outgroup
Ingroup	13.59 _a	17.66 _a
Outgroup	29.06 _b	17.97 _a

Means with a different subscript are different from each other at $p < 0.05$.

Importantly, the three-way interaction involving the group membership of the target, the language of the sentence, and the length of the sentence also reached a conventional level of significance, $F(1,60) = 4.42$, $p < 0.04$. As can be seen in Figure 1, separate analyses confirmed the presence of a group membership of the target by language of the sentence interaction for both the short, $F(1,60) = 16.21$, $p < 0.001$, and the long sentences, $F(1,60) = 3.99$, $p < 0.05$. Figure 1 also shows that the language of the sentences tended to affect the decisions for the ingroup targets more for the short than for the long sentences, $F(1,60) = 3.32$, $p < 0.08$, a pattern totally absent in the case of outgroup targets, $F(1,60) = 1.74$, $p > 0.19$. In line with predictions, the short sentences read out by an ingroup target in the outgroup language produced the highest percentage of errors ($M = 36.26$ per cent).

Whereas the group membership of the target by length of the sentence interaction came out significant, $F(1,60) = 6.91$, $p < 0.011$, an unexpected three-way interaction involving the group membership of the target, the length of the sentence, and the campus, $F(1,60) = 29.70$, $p < 0.001$, indicated the presence of a different pattern in each campus (see Table 2). Whereas the latter effect may rest upon differential skills as listeners and/or as speakers of students coming from one or the other campus, it is important to notice that subjects of both campuses misclassified ingroup targets reading short sentences more than any other kind of targets.

The two-way interaction between the wording of the question and the language of the sentence also came out significant, $F(1,60) = 4.65$, $p < 0.035$, but was qualified by a significant three-way interaction involving the length of the sentence, $F(1,60) = 4.89$, $p < 0.031$ (see Table 3). Whereas for the short sentences the wording of the question had a different impact depending on whether the language of the sentence was that of the ingroup or of the outgroup, $F(1,60) = 9.49$, $p < 0.003$, this was not the case for the long sentences, $F(1,60) < 1$, n.s. Thus, the data for the short

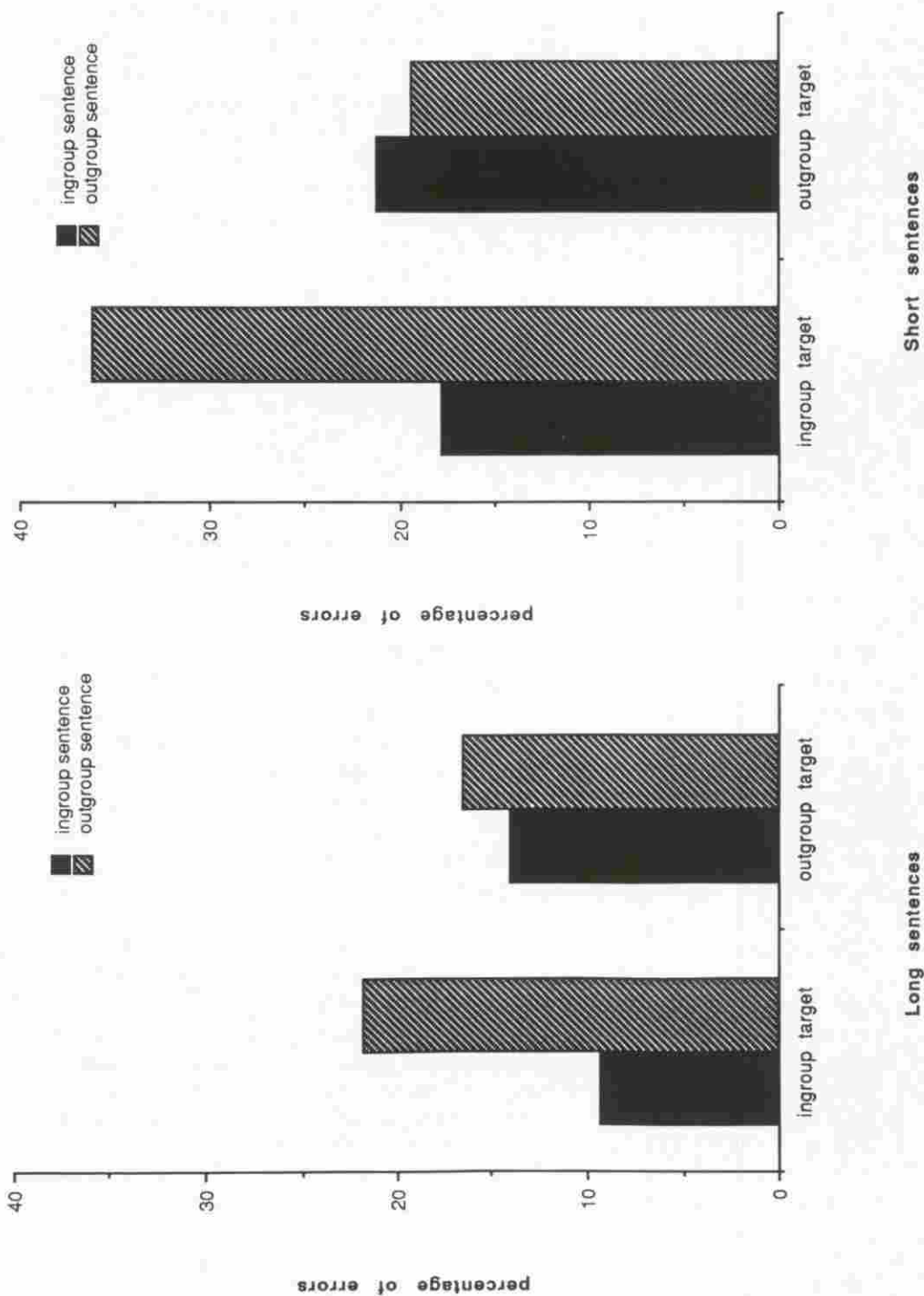


Figure 1. Percentage of errors as a function of length of sentence, group membership of target, and language of the sentence

Table 2. Percentages of errors as a function of group membership of the target, campus, and length of the sentence

Campus	Group membership of the target	
	Ingroup	Outgroup
Louvain-la-Neuve (French)		
Short	22.19 _a	19.06 _{ab}
Long	17.50 _b	7.50 _c
Leuven (Dutch)		
Short	31.88 _a	21.56 _b
Long	13.75 _c	23.13 _b

Means with a different subscript are different from each other at $p < 0.05$.

Table 3. Percentages of errors as a function of wording of the question, length of the sentence, and language of the sentence

Length of the sentence	Wording of the question	
	Ingroup-directed	Outgroup-directed
Short		
Ingroup	16.56	22.50
Outgroup	30.31	25.31
Long		
Ingroup	11.57	11.88
Outgroup	19.69	18.75

sentences read in the ingroup language reveal that subjects made less errors for the ingroup-directed than for the outgroup-directed question, $t(62) = 2.10$, $p < 0.04$. Instead, when the outgroup language was used to read the short sentences, ingroup-directed questions tended to produce more errors of classification than outgroup-directed questions, $t(62) = 1.65$, $p < 0.11$. In contrast, the wording of the question did not affect the fact that listeners made more errors for outgroup than for ingroup long sentences.

Noteworthy, the interaction involving the group membership of the target and the wording of the question fell short of significance, $F(1,60) = 1.85$, $p > 0.17$. This means that listeners performed similarly for ingroup and outgroup targets whether they were to answer an ingroup- or an outgroup-directed question. The fact that subjects were confronted with short or long sentences did not affect this basic pattern, $F(1,60) = 1.48$, $p > 0.22$.

Reaction times

Reaction time data not only depend on the actual length of the sentence but also on the differential reading abilities of Walloons and Flemish, especially when confronted with outgroup sentences. In order to control for such irrelevant factors, we first standardized the reaction times within each combination of language of the target, language of the sentence, length of the sentence, wording of the question and replication set. We then reorganized the standardized scores in line with the group membership of the subjects and, for each length of the sentence, conducted

a 2×2 repeated measures design ANOVA using group membership of the target (ingroup target versus outgroup target) and language of the sentence (ingroup language versus outgroup language) as within-subject variables.

Table 4. Reaction times (in seconds) as a function of group membership of the target, length of the sentence, and language of the sentence

Length of the sentence	Group membership of the target	
	Ingroup	Outgroup
Short		
Ingroup	4.34	4.69
Outgroup	5.02	4.32
Long		
Ingroup	7.29	8.31
Outgroup	8.78	7.36

Turning to the long sentences, both the group membership of the target main effect, $F(1,63) = 3.74, p = 0.06$, and the language of the sentence main effect, $F(1,63) = 4.31, p < 0.05$, came out significant (see Table 4). As expected, subjects took longer to make a decision when confronted with an ingrouper reading outgroup sentences ($M = 0.120$) than with an outgrouper reading ingroup sentences ($M = -0.120$), $F(1,63) = 7.77, p < 0.007$. In contrast, no difference emerged between the time needed for the ingrouper reading ingroup sentences ($M = -0.025$) and for the outgrouper reading outgroup sentences ($M = 0.025$), $F(1,63) < 1$, n.s. No main effect nor interaction came out significant for the short sentences. However, subjects again tended to take longer to make a decision about an ingrouper reading outgroup sentences ($M = 0.108$) than about an outgrouper reading ingroup sentences ($M = -0.108$), $F(1,63) = 2.36, p < 0.11$.

DISCUSSION

For this experiment, we taped short or long sentences read aloud in French or in Dutch by Walloon and Flemish subjects. The tapes were then distorted and played to Walloon or Flemish subjects. The dependent variables were the subjects' decision concerning the group membership of the speakers and the time they took to make their decision. Half of the subjects received the instructions to decide whether the speakers were Walloons or not; the other half had to decide whether these same speakers were Flemish or not.

The decision data are consistent with the ingroup overexclusion effect: subjects made more errors when they were confronted with an actual ingroup member than when the target belonged in fact to the outgroup. Still, additional aspects of our results help to characterize the underlying mechanisms of this phenomenon in some important ways. Subjects displayed similar performances for the outgroup targets, independently of the fact that the sentences were read in the ingroup or outgroup language. Globally, they were correct about 82 per cent of the time. Quite a different picture emerged when subjects were confronted with ingroup targets. They performed somewhat but not significantly better for the ingroup sentences. In contrast, they

were significantly less correct for the outgroup sentences, with a global success rate of about 70 per cent. This means that the ingroup overexclusion pattern applied only when the target used the outgroup language.

Convergent evidence of the link between the ambiguity of the data, which increases the difficulty of the decision, and the emergence of an ingroup overexclusion effect comes from the data concerning the length of the sentence. In fact, the language of the sentence and the length of the sentence combined to magnify the ingroup overexclusion effect. That our subjects' performance deteriorated only when the decision was likely to be the inclusion in one's group was thus quite sensitive to the ambiguity of the data gathered by the decision-maker.

Clearly, the present set of findings supports the contention that the ingroup overexclusion effect is intimately related to the difficulty of the decision. Not surprisingly, subjects made more errors of classification and took longer to make a decision when there was a group mismatch between target and language. In line with the present perspective, however, the larger number of misclassifications only showed when the target was in fact an ingroup member. Similarly, subjects took significantly longer when confronted with an ingroup member. Finally, whereas the pattern of errors was accentuated with the short sentences, the findings for the reaction times only reached significance with the long sentences.

Our data also contradict a simple confirmation of hypothesis interpretation of Leyens and Yzerbyt's (1992) findings. There was no indication that subjects made more errors when confronted with a target who confirmed the specific question asked than when they were presented with a speaker who disconfirmed the hypothesis. Generally, the impact of the wording of the question was very much limited in the present study. We detected some effect of the wording of the question on people's decision-making when the sentences were short but, when subjects were confronted with long sentences, the wording of the question had simply no influence. Still, because the specific target involved does not play a role in this effect, this pattern is alien to the problem of ingroup overexclusion.

To sum up, people confronted with a decision about group membership behave more carefully when the candidate is a potential ingroup member than when the target is (unknown to the judges) a member of the outgroup. The ingroup overexclusion effect seems quite well supported: people are more concerned with falsely labelling a person an ingroup member than with falsely identifying a person as an outgroup member. The present data shed new light on the old controversy between the two classical explanations, the vigilance hypothesis on the one hand and the response bias on the other, given to account for the finding that prejudiced subjects were more accurate than non prejudiced subjects in their labelling of Jewish faces. Clearly, the results support our reinterpretation of the classic literature on prejudice and accuracy of perception (see Tajfel, 1969). Far from being an artifact, the tendency to increase the number of outgroup members is best understood as an exclusion from the ingroup in case of doubt. Of course, it could be argued that ingroup overexclusion and vigilance against the outgroup are the two faces of the same coin. Still, concentrating on the ingroup may better correspond to the phenomenology of the decision-maker.

Future research should clarify the role of ingroup identity as it intrudes in people's decision-making. For instance, to the extent that people's identification with their group is a key factor in the emergence of the ingroup overexclusion effect, members

who identify strongly with their group should be more cautious than members who identify less (Kelly, 1989; Simon, 1992; Worchel, 1992). In a related vein, the contextual salience of a selected aspect of the collective self may lead to the overexclusion of a specific set of targets (Brewer, 1991). In this sense, the ingroup overexclusion process may have less to do with chronic prejudice against a selected set of people than with the value momentarily attached to a given level of social identity which renders specific targets less easy to judge.

From an intergroup perspective, the ingroup overexclusion effect is at odds with a simplistic interpretation of Social Identity Theory (SIT). SIT claims that a fundamental ethnocentric bias is at the heart of people's behaviours and evaluations. In our opinion, a simple-minded reading of SIT is alien to the more dynamic perspective about social identity proposed by Tajfel (1978) and his coworkers (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Turner, 1978; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell, 1987). Research by Mummendey and her colleagues (Mummendey and Schreiber, 1983; Mummendey and Simon, 1989) clearly shows that, when the dimensions at stake are irrelevant for the ingroup identity, outgroup favouritism can sometimes be observed. In other words, under appropriate conditions, people can very well stand outgroup superiority. Similarly, we carried out a research programme on the so-called 'black sheep effect' (Marques *et al.*, 1988; Marques and Yzerbyt, 1988) showing that undesirable ingroup members, that is 'black sheep', are rated more negatively than undesirable outgroup members even on dimensions relevant for the ingroup identity.

We suspect that quite a few non-obvious strategies aim at maintaining identity and discriminating between groups. Future work on social identity will likely report about them at an increasing rate (Haslam, McGarty, Oakes and Turner, 1992). The ingroup overexclusion effect is one such strategy: when people make a decision about group membership, they are in fact quite cautious in attributing the ingroup label.

Looking back at the historical events which took place during this bloody morning of 1302 in the streets of Bruges, we may feel somewhat intrigued that the Flemish sentenced death for whoever could not pronounce a simple series of words such as 'Schild en Vriend'. As it turns out, these few words are quite difficult to correctly pronounce for a French-speaking person!!! The Flemish uprisers thus chose those very conditions under which a minimal number of mistakes would be made: something quite difficult to say in their own language. Assuredly, they made the best possible choice for their specific purpose.

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