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ROLE OF ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL CLASS IN CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION

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ATTRIBUTION OF CAUSALITY:  
ROLE OF ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL CLASS

This study examined the processes involved in the perception of causes of behavior performed by members of various social groups. Ss from two different ethnic groups (English-Canadian and French-Canadian) and the same social class (middle class) judged the relative importance of the internal traits of actors in causing them to behave in specific situations. The actors were described as belonging to one of two ethnic groups (English-Canadian or French-Canadian), one of two social classes (middle class or lower class), or to some combination of the two. The behaviors for which Ss judged actors were either of a socially desirable or socially undesirable nature.

The results partially supported the "similarity to self" principle which had predicted that Ss would show a more favorable perception of their own social groups than of "out-groups" in terms of internal and external attributions. In addition, results showed the influence of cognitive needs on the content of perception and the effect of the cultural variable of stability of social status on the method of expression of affective needs. Results were discussed in terms of their implications for causal attribution theory and a functional approach to the study of person perception.

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ATTRIBUTION OF CAUSALITY:  
ROLE OF ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL CLASS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

The present study was designed to examine the processes involved in person perception by focusing on the ways in which individuals attribute causality to behavior performed by members of various social groups. Traditional research in person perception has generally studied the perception of the internal characteristics or traits of a particular individual or group of individuals. A second area of person perception which has not been studied in as much detail is that of causal attribution (or causal perception). In a general sense, causal perception is the process by which an individual assigns causes to events which take place around him; when applied to interpersonal behavior, this involves the process of perceiving the causes of behavior of other people and of one's own behavior. The present study attempts to capitalize on developments in the field of trait attribution as a basis for examining the processes involved in causal attribution; these processes are then examined by specific research in the area of ethnic and social class perception.

Trait attribution may be characterized as that area of research in person perception which is concerned with the perception of the internal characteristics of an individual or group of individuals. Causal perception, on the other hand, is concerned with the perception of all factors which may be possible causes of an individual's behavior; these include external situational factors as well as internal traits of the individual. The

essential differences between these two approaches may be illustrated by the following simple example: if a person behaves in a sociable way in a particular situation, trait attribution would be concerned only with the perception of such internal traits as sociability or friendliness as being causes of the behavior; causal attribution, on the other hand, would be concerned with the perception of such situational factors as the pressure of the role situation or presence of other people as being additional causes of the individual's behavior.

For a number of reasons, it would appear that the processes involved in causal attribution deserve greater emphasis than they have received in the past. Because causal attribution takes into account external as well as internal causes of behavior, it would appear to be a more comprehensive view of person perception than that of trait attribution. Second it would appear that causal attribution is a more realistic focus of investigation in the sense that it studies to a greater degree than does trait attribution the actual processes by which an individual perceives other people. Michotte (1963), for example, has demonstrated in a number of experiments that people immediately and directly perceive causality in the observation of their world. The work of Piaget (1930) on the development of causal thinking in the child also supports the contention that perception takes place in a causal manner. Compared to trait perception, causal attribution assumes that an individual is more cognitively complex in his perception of his social world, and that he takes into account more than just internal causes of another person's behavior.

Finally, it would appear that causal perception is more closely related to actual behavior than is trait attribution, and therefore is more relevant to a major aim of person perception research; that is, to determine the relationship between perceptual processes and behavior. In a particular situation of interpersonal interaction, a perceiver not only makes generalized trait inferences but also takes into account specific external circumstances in determining the causes of behavior; he then uses his perceptions of both internal and external causes as a basis for how to react in interpersonal interaction. For example, if one person (A) perceives rude behavior by another person (B) as being caused by B's internal rude disposition, then A's reaction to B would be quite different from what it would be if he perceived B's rude behavior as being caused by pressure resulting from external social conditions. Thus, knowledge of how a person perceives causality should serve as a better predictor of the perceiver's behavior in any interpersonal interaction than knowledge that is restricted only to the internal traits of another person.

It seems clear then that the study of person perception might benefit by focusing on the comprehensive, realistic, and predictive process of causal perception. Extensive research in this area has begun only recently, however, and as a result there does not exist at present a well-defined and ordered body of research on the topic. Much of the research in the area of attribution theory has not been concerned exclusively with the



processes involved in attributing causality; instead, many of the studies have focused on additional dependent variables such as liking (interpersonal attraction) or helping behavior (Kelley, 1971). Moreover, many of the studies have used different theoretical models for studying perception of the causes of different kinds of behavior (Heider, 1944, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967, 1971). This diversity of topic areas and theoretical approaches within causal perception leaves a number of questions unanswered concerning how to proceed in a study of the processes involved in the attribution of causality.

One way to organize these diverse issues and to develop a plan for further research would be to study causal attribution by drawing on the order which exists in the more traditional trait attribution research. While the topic of perception of causality is somewhat broader in scope than that of trait perception both areas of study involve many of the same kinds of problems; it would appear, therefore, that the basic paradigms used to study trait perception may be useful as guidelines for the study of causal perception.

#### Trait Attribution Research

In general, studies in the area of trait attribution and indeed in the entire area of person perception have been concerned with one of two major problems. These involve first the content of perception in the form of specific traits, and second, the functions which perception fulfills for an individual. Studies dealing with the first of these, the content, have typically

focused on either the cognitive or the affective components of attitudes (Secord & Backman, 1964; Lambert & Lambert, 1964). The inadequacy of this approach is demonstrated by the low degree of predictive validity between attitudes and behavior; LaPiere's study (1934) and many studies which have followed clearly indicate that knowledge of content of perception does not provide a basis for predicting behavior (see Fishbein, 1967).

Studies of trait attribution dealing with the second problem, the functions of perception, have not been as extensive as studies on content. Research has generally indicated, however, that the functions of person perception can be analyzed in terms of cognitive and affective needs. Theories proposing a cognitive need to perceive one's world in an ordered and coherent fashion have been most numerous. These gestalt-type theories of person perception (e.g., Asch, 1952) are based on the hypothesis that an individual's perception of other people depends upon his need for cognitive order. Studies on social stereotypes indicate that one of their major functions is to provide an individual with a form of cognitive organization in terms of which new information can be interpreted (Fishman, 1956; Brigham, 1971). Based on the same assumptions, cognitive consistency theories have generally supported the hypothesis that a state of cognitive equilibrium acts as a motivating condition towards which an individual strives in his perception of his social world (Abelson, Aronson, McGuire, Newcomb, Rosenberg, & Tannenbaum, 1968).

While there has been fairly extensive research on the

cognitive functions of person perception, there has been less research to determine the influence of affective functions on the content of perception. One theory which has attempted to determine how affective needs influence person perception is Katz's (1960) functional theory. Katz has indicated that person perception fulfills ego-defensive functions (to prevent a person from acknowledging unpleasant truths about himself) as well as value-expressive functions (to enable a person to express his personal values and to achieve self-development or self-realization). These needs may be considered to be two components of an individual's general affective needs. Research on the functions of social stereotypes has indicated that they may serve as emotional defense mechanisms, and may also be important in maintaining one's identification with and status within one's group (Fishman, 1956). Research on attitudes has provided further insight into the nature of affective needs. It has been found that the acquisition of the affective dimensions of attitudes reflects attempts to fulfill egocentric needs such as self-respect (Lambert & Lambert, 1964). It has also been proposed that one of the major functional values of attitudes is the satisfaction of one's emotional needs; for example, as an outlet for the expression of hostility (Secord & Backman, 1964).

In summary, therefore, most traditional research in the area of trait attribution has been concerned with determining the content of perception. Research and theory dealing with the functions of person perception have indicated that these

functions include both cognitive needs (desire of an individual to perceive his world in an ordered and logically consistent manner), and affective or emotional needs (such as self-esteem). On this basis, it would appear that the central problem in the functional approach to person perception would be to determine the ways in which these two sets of needs interact to determine the content of perception.

### Causal Attribution

As suggested earlier, causal attribution is that area of person perception which focuses on how individuals perceive causes of behavior. On this basis, it would appear that there are two major issues in the study of causal perception; the first involves an analysis of the possible causes to which behavior may be attributed. The second involves an analysis of those psychological processes which underlie causal perception; that is, what are the determinants of which all possible causes of behavior are perceived as being important by a perceiver. Concerning the first problem, it has been suggested that when an individual behaves in a particular way, he may behave that way either because of his internal traits or because of external situational factors which exert an influence on his behavior. The importance of studying which of these two categories of causes is perceived as being the true cause by an observer stems from the fact that the observer will behave towards a person very differently depending upon whether a specific act is attributed internally or externally. For example, if one person (A) in

interpersonal interaction perceives the other (B) as behaving in an aggressive manner because of an aggressive personality orientation, than A's reaction to B will be different from what it would be if he perceived B as acting aggressively because of tension created by external social conditions.

It can be seen that an individual's behavior in interpersonal interaction is largely determined by how he perceives the causes of the other's behavior. On this basis, a central problem of causal perception concerns the determinants of which possible causes of behavior are perceived as being actual causes by an observer. As indicated earlier, there does not exist at present a well-defined and ordered body of research in causal perception. An analysis of the more ordered topic of trait perception, on the other hand, suggests that the determinants of how one person perceives the traits of another person include the perceiver's desire to perceive his world in a cognitively consistent manner, as well as a wish to fulfill affective needs (such as self-esteem). It can be hypothesized that since causal perception is essentially an extension of trait perception (that is perception of external as well as internal causes of behavior), the same psychological processes should be involved in the two forms of perception. An analysis of the major theoretical positions which have been formulated within attribution theory suggests that the determinants of the perception of causality can indeed be interpreted in terms of cognitive and affective needs. The following section will present a brief summary of

some of the major research within attribution theory; in addition to indicating the major determinants of perception of causality, this summary should also illustrate the dichotomy between internal-external causes of behavior.

Extensive social psychological research into the causal attribution process began with the work of Fritz Heider (1944, 1958). Heider believed that the possible causes of the actions of a person could be analyzed into one of two categories; these include "can" and "try" components. "Can" components include an individual's ability (internal) to perform the action as well as the effective environmental force (external). "Try" components include an individual's intention to perform the action as well as the effort which he exerts to carry out that action (internal factors).

On the basis of Heider's model, Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest, & Rosenbaum (1971) extended the analysis of the processes involved in causal perception of achievement-related behavior. Weiner and his associates outlined four possible causes to which success or failure may be attributed: these include the internal factors of ability and effort, and the external factors of task difficulty and luck. For example, if a participant in a sports competition loses the game (a behavior of failure), the possible causes of this behavior include the person's level of ability and the amount of effort he has expended (internal factors), as well as such external factors as "bad luck" or task difficulty. Weiner et al. (1971) were also concerned with the determinants

of which of the above causes is perceived as being relevant by a perceiver. One determinant of how an individual perceives the causes of his own success or failure is "achievement motivation"; the level of an individual's achievement motivation is a function of an interaction between cognitive and affective factors (an individual's cognitive belief concerning the probability of success or failure, his affective need for achievement, and his capacity to experience the affects of pride or shame as a result of success or failure). Studies by Weiner and Kukla (1970) and Kukla (1970) indicated that individuals high in achievement motivation are likely to attribute their own success more internally and their own failure less internally than individuals low in achievement motivation; the attributions which actors make in turn influence how they approach achievement related activities. Such findings clearly support an interpretation of the determinants of perception in terms of cognitive and affective needs.

A somewhat different approach to the study of causal attribution was taken by Jones and Davis (1965) who were concerned with whether an individual makes a "corresponding inference" from an act to an underlying disposition; that is, does the perceived disposition equal or correspond to the perceived act. For example, if a person acts or behaves in a rude manner, does a person attribute that act to a rude internal disposition? The degree of correspondence from an act to a disposition is simply another term for the degree of internal responsibility for that act. Jones and Davis showed that one determinant of the degree

of correspondence which a perceiver makes from an act to a disposition is the affective relationship between the actor and the perceiver in interpersonal interaction. This relationship may include the "hedonic relevance" of the act to the perceiver (that is, the degree to which the perceiver's needs are fulfilled or obstructed by the actor's behavior), and the personalism of the actor's behavior to the perceiver (degree to which actions are perceived as being directed towards helping or harming the perceiver). These factors clearly indicate that an individual's perception of the causes of behavior of another person is influenced by the degree to which the observer's affective needs are fulfilled.

Another theoretical position which has been formulated to explain the perception or attribution of causality is that of Kelley (1967, 1971). Kelley outlined four cognitive factors which determine whether an action is attributed to an internal property of an entity. These factors include distinctiveness (impression is attributed to the entity in its presence but not in its absence), consistency over time and consistency over modality (mode of interaction with the entity is the same at different times and when the external situation is different), and consensus (one person's opinion about the dispositional properties agrees with that of other people). Kelley (1971) also outlined some common errors or illusions which have an influence on the attribution of causality. One common error is a general tendency to attribute the behavior of a person to his



internal traits rather than to take into account all relevant situational factors. This error reflects an individual's state of cognitive awareness since all relevant external causes of behavior are often not obvious or visible. Another common error of causal attribution is what Kelley labels egocentric assumption: in an interpersonal relationship, an individual tends to attribute to himself events with positive outcomes and to attribute to another person events with negative outcomes. Kelley also hypothesized that attribution may be distorted by the magnitude of the affective consequences. Kelley's theoretical ideas concerning the processes involved in the attribution of causality point out some possible ways in which cognitive and affective needs may interact to determine the specific content of causal perception.

The possible causes to which an individual's behavior may be attributed include both internal and external factors. As in trait attribution, the determinants of which of these possible causes are perceived as being the actual causes by a perceiver include both the perceiver's need to maintain a high level of cognitive consistency in his perceptions, and his desire to fulfill affective and emotional needs such as self-esteem. It would appear that the central problem of research in causal perception would be to determine which needs are most important in a particular situation of interpersonal perception, and how these needs determine the content of perception.

The example mentioned earlier concerning interaction in a

sports competition may serve to illustrate possible effects of cognitive and affective needs on the content of causal perception. If one participant loses the competition, he must determine the cause of that "behavior." His perception of causality is likely to be influenced by cognitive factors (as outlined by Kelley) in such a way that his attributions of causality should conform to his previous cognitive beliefs (for example, his beliefs about his own ability or effort and the ability or effort of his opponent). His attribution of cause could on the other hand be more influenced by his desire to maintain self-esteem. Thus, the participant may tend to attribute losing the game to bad luck, not playing on home ground, or other external factors. To make such an attribution would be equivalent to attributing his own failure to external factors; such an attribution would enable the actor to maintain self-esteem. The example illustrates some ways in which the content of causal perception may be influenced by cognitive and affective needs. It also serves to illustrate that the way in which an individual attributes his own behavior involves the same basic processes as the way in which he attributes the behavior of another person (Bem, 1967).

#### Ethnic and Social Class Perception

The above theoretical discussion suggests some important dimensions of the basic psychological processes involved in the perception of causes of behavior. The major purpose of the present paper is to use the above theoretical ideas as a basis for studying perception of ethnic and social class groups in a

Canadian cultural context. In several respects, the present study serves as an extension to previous research which has been performed in inter-group perception. While previous research has largely been concerned with studying the content of group perception, the present study is as well concerned with the functions which determine the content of perception. In addition, most previous research has followed a strict trait attribution model; that is, it has been primarily concerned with determining the traits which one group assigns to another group. The current study is also concerned with the dynamics of the broader process of causal perception as well as that of the perception of the traits of a particular social group.

According to a functional theory of person perception, it was predicted that the evaluational dimension of the content of one group's perception of another group would be influenced by the degree of similarity between the characteristics of the perceiver-group and those of the group being perceived. This hypothesis was based on the functional need for self-enhancement or self-esteem which Kelley (1971) has shown to have a major influence on how an individual attributes causes to the behavior of other people. Several studies support the proposal that a greater similarity between the perceiver and a group being perceived should result in a more favorable evaluation of that group. Byrne (1969) has shown that an individual has a more positive affect towards a person whose attitudes are similar to his own than towards a person whose attitudes are different from his own.

A number of studies (Fielder, Blaisdell, & Warrington, 1952; Newcomb, 1961; Broxton, 1963; Secord, 1964) have shown that there is a relationship between the degree of assumed similarity between a perceiver and an individual being perceived, and the degree of positive affect directed towards that person. A study by Aboud and Taylor (1971) indicated that an individual tends to use his ethnicity as a reference point in determining what characteristic of the target person to focus on. Another study by Aboud, Taylor, and Doumani (1972) indicated that the cues used by Ss as a basis for person perception depend upon the degree of similarity between the characteristics of the S and those of the individual being perceived. Similarly, studies on ethnic perception using the trait attribution model also support the hypothesis that an individual's perception of his own group has a more favorable affective content than his perception of out-groups (e.g., Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960).

In order to derive a comparative measure of S's affective perceptions of various social groups, Ss were asked to judge the degree to which behaviors supposedly performed by members of various ethnic and social class groups were caused by the internal traits of the actors (as opposed to being caused by external situational factors). The behaviors came under one of two categories: one set of behaviors described the actors as behaving in "positive" (or socially desirable) ways in particular social situations; the other set described the actors as behaving

in "negative" (or socially undesirable) ways in similar social situations. It was expected that the pattern by which Ss attributed causality for positive and negative behaviors performed by various actors would reflect Ss' evaluational reactions to those actors in the following manner: a high internal attribution for positive behavior would signify a positive or more favorable evaluation of the actor; correspondingly, a high internal attribution for negative behavior would indicate a negative or less favorable evaluation of the actor. It can be seen that the dependent variable employed in this study may serve as a useful measure of Ss' affective reactions to members of various social groups.

The social groups whose behavior Ss judged varied in the degree of similarity of their characteristics to those of the perceiver. Actors belonged to one of two ethnic groups (English-Canadian or French-Canadian) and/or one of two social classes (middle class or lower class). Correspondingly, Ss represented both of these two ethnic groups, but only one of the two social classes (middle class). On the basis of the "similarity to self principle," it was expected that each ethnic group would perceive members of their own social groups more favorably than representatives of out-groups. This would mean that for positive behaviors, Ss should assign a higher degree of internal responsibility to an actor described as being similar to the perceiver than to an actor described as being different from the perceiver. Correspondingly, it was predicted that for negative

behaviors, Ss would assign a higher degree of internality to an actor described as being different from the perceiver than to an actor described as being similar to the perceiver. Finally, when the actor was described as being similar to the perceiver on only one of the two traits of ethnicity and social class, it was predicted that Ss would focus on the similar trait as a basis for attributing positive behavior, but on the different trait for attributing negative behavior. It should be emphasized that the above predictions concerning the expected pattern of results are based solely on the "similarity to self" principle of self-enhancement as being the major determinant of inter-group perception. It is quite probable that the actual results will be influenced by other cognitive and affective needs which individuals attempt to fulfill in their perceptual reactions.

#### METHOD

##### Subjects

Ss were university students from two different ethnic groups: one group consisted of 100 English-Canadian students from Montreal, the second group were 64 French-Canadian students from Quebec City. Approximately one-half of the Ss were males and one-half were females. The social structures of the two universities indicated that both groups of Ss represented a middle-class background.

##### Procedure

All Ss in each group (English-Canadian and French-Canadian)

were divided into four equal sub-groups. Each sub-group received a set of three questionnaires; while the content of the questionnaires varied within each group as well as from one sub-group to another, all questionnaires were similar in certain basic ways.

Each questionnaire contained a description of ten common behaviors. Five of the behaviors described an actor as behaving in positive or socially desirable ways in particular social situations, while the remaining five described the actor as behaving in the corresponding negative or socially undesirable ways in identical social situations. The behaviors reflected the following internal traits on two extremes of evaluative dimensions; friendly-unfriendly; successful-unsuccessful; tolerant-intolerant; brave-cowardly; and considerate-inconsiderate. Thus, for the two dimensions of friendly-unfriendly personality traits, each S was presented with a description of a person reacting in a friendly manner in a particular social situation; he was also presented with a separate description of the actor behaving in the opposite manner (that is, in an unfriendly way) in the same social situation. Thus, two descriptions--one of positive behavior and one of negative behavior--were given for each of the five domains of behavior. While the order of presentation was randomly alternated from one questionnaire to another, each questionnaire presented either all positive or all negative behaviors first.

For each behavior, the dependent measure was determined by asking Ss to judge in terms of a per cent rating on a scale, the

degree to which the behavior was caused by relatively stable personality traits of the actor. It was made clear to the Ss that the degree to which behavior was not considered caused by internal traits was by definition caused by external situational factors.

Differences among the various questionnaires consisted of different characteristics of the actors to whom the behaviors were attributed. All questionnaires were similar in that they presented a standard description of the actor as being a "typical young man from Montreal." The three questionnaires presented to the first of the four sub-groups of Ss gave an additional description of the actor as being (1) an English-Canadian; (2) a middle-class business executive; and (3) an English-Canadian middle-class business executive. Questionnaires presented to the second sub-group of Ss described the actors as being (1) an English-Canadian; (2) a lower-class laborer; and (3) an English-Canadian lower-class laborer. The third sub-group of Ss received questionnaires describing the actors as (1) a French-Canadian; (2) a middle-class business executive; and (3) a French-Canadian middle-class business executive. Finally, Ss in the fourth sub-group received descriptions of actors as being (1) a French-Canadian; (2) a lower-class laborer; and (3) a French-Canadian lower-class laborer.

In summary, therefore, all Ss in each sample were divided into four sub-groups. All Ss within each sub-group received three questionnaires which described behaviors being performed by (1)



a member of one of two possible ethnic groups; (2) a representative of one of two possible social classes; and (3) a member of one of the four possible combinations of the two ethnic groups and social classes. The separate ethnic and class questionnaires were randomly presented either first or second to all Ss, while the combination questionnaire was always presented last.

The questionnaires which had been first written in English were translated into French by a back-translation method. The procedure followed in testing the two groups of Ss was identical except for the ethnic affiliation of E, which was the same as that of the Ss for both English-Canadian and French-Canadian samples.

#### Method of Analysis

Two types of analyses were performed. The first involved separate four-way analyses of variance performed on the percent ratings made by both groups of S on the combination ethnic-class questionnaire. There were five dependent variables for these analyses corresponding to the five domains of behavior evaluated in the study. The factors for such analyses included the ethnic affiliation of the Ss (English-Canadian vs. French-Canadian), ethnic affiliation of the actors (English-Canadian vs. French-Canadian), social class of the actors (middle-class vs. lower-class), and quality of behavior (positive vs. negative).

The second set of analyses involved multiple regression analyses performed on the data to determine to what degree ratings made by Ss on (1) the ethnic questionnaire, and (2) the

class questionnaire could be used to predict ratings on (3) the combination ethnic-class questionnaire. These analyses indicated the degree to which Ss focused on ethnicity or social class as a basis for attributing the behavior of actors described by a combination of these characteristics. For each of the four sub-groups of Ss within the English-Canadian and French-Canadian samples, ten multiple regressions were performed on the per cent ratings, corresponding to the ten behaviors in the study.

## RESULTS

The results of the present study will be presented in two major sections. The first section describes the results of the five analyses of variance performed on the two groups of Ss; each of the five analyses of variance corresponds to one of the five sets of behavior manipulated in the study. The second section describes the results of the multiple regression analyses, first for the English-Canadian Ss and then for the French-Canadian Ss.

### Analyses of Variance

Each of the five analyses of variance involved a four-way analysis for which the factors were (a) ethnicity of Ss; (b) ethnicity of actors; (c) social class of actors; and (d) evaluative dimension of behavior. The dependent variable in each case was the per cent ratings made by Ss to indicate the relative importance of internal causes for the behavior. The results for all five analyses of variance are summarized in table 1.

TABLE 1

F Values for Analyses of Variance

Behaviors	Ethnicity of Ss (G)	Ethnicity of Actors (A)	Social Class of Actors (B)	Evaluative Dimension (C)	GxA	GxB	AxB	GxAxB	GxC	AxC	BxC	GxAxC	GxBxC	AxBxC	GxAxBxC
Sociable- nonsociable	0.64	0.23	1.79	9.51**	0.23	0.40	0.17	0.61	2.41	10.26**	1.92	0.73	4.60*	0.49	0.51
Successful- unsuccessful	0.18	0.35	0.29	13.62**	0.17	0.29	0.53	0.44	1.75	0.76	0.92	2.65	0.15	0.79	4.45*
Tolerant- intolerant	0.34	0.24	0.52	0.33	0.51	0.24	0.46	0.35	2.16	0.53	0.37	0.62	2.96	0.19	0.28
Brave- cowardly	1.98	0.57	0.23	14.62**	0.94	0.20	0.55	0.75	2.61	0.17	1.03	0.97	4.10*	0.34	0.95
Considerate- inconsiderate	1.94	0.88	0.96	1.27	0.28	0.19	0.11	0.16	0.11	5.48**	1.10	5.28**	4.70*	0.18	1.49

\*p &lt; .05

\*\*p &lt; .01

The analysis of variance for sociable-nonsociable behaviors indicates that Ss attributed significantly higher internal responsibility to actors for the negative dimension of this behavior ( $\bar{X} = 68.7$ ) than for the positive dimension ( $\bar{X} = 61.8$ ). The analysis for this behavior also reveals a significant interaction (Figure 1) between ethnicity of actors and the evaluative dimension of behavior; this interaction indicates that both groups of Ss perceived French-Canadian actors more favorably than English-Canadian actors. That is, Ss attributed positive sociable behavior more internally when performed by French-Canadian actors than when performed by English-Canadian actors; negative or non-sociable behavior, on the other hand, was attributed more internally when performed by English-Canadian actors. The two groups of Ss did not evidence the same agreement, however, with respect to their perceptions of the two social class groups as revealed in the significant interaction between ethnicity of Ss and social class of actors (Figure 2). English-Canadian Ss perceived lower class actors more favorably than did French-Canadian Ss; that is, English-Canadians attributed positive behavior performed by lower-class actors more internally and negative behavior less internally than did French-Canadian Ss. The perceptual responses of the two groups for middle-class actors, on the other hand, suggested that these actors were perceived somewhat more favorably by French-Canadian Ss than by English-Canadian Ss.

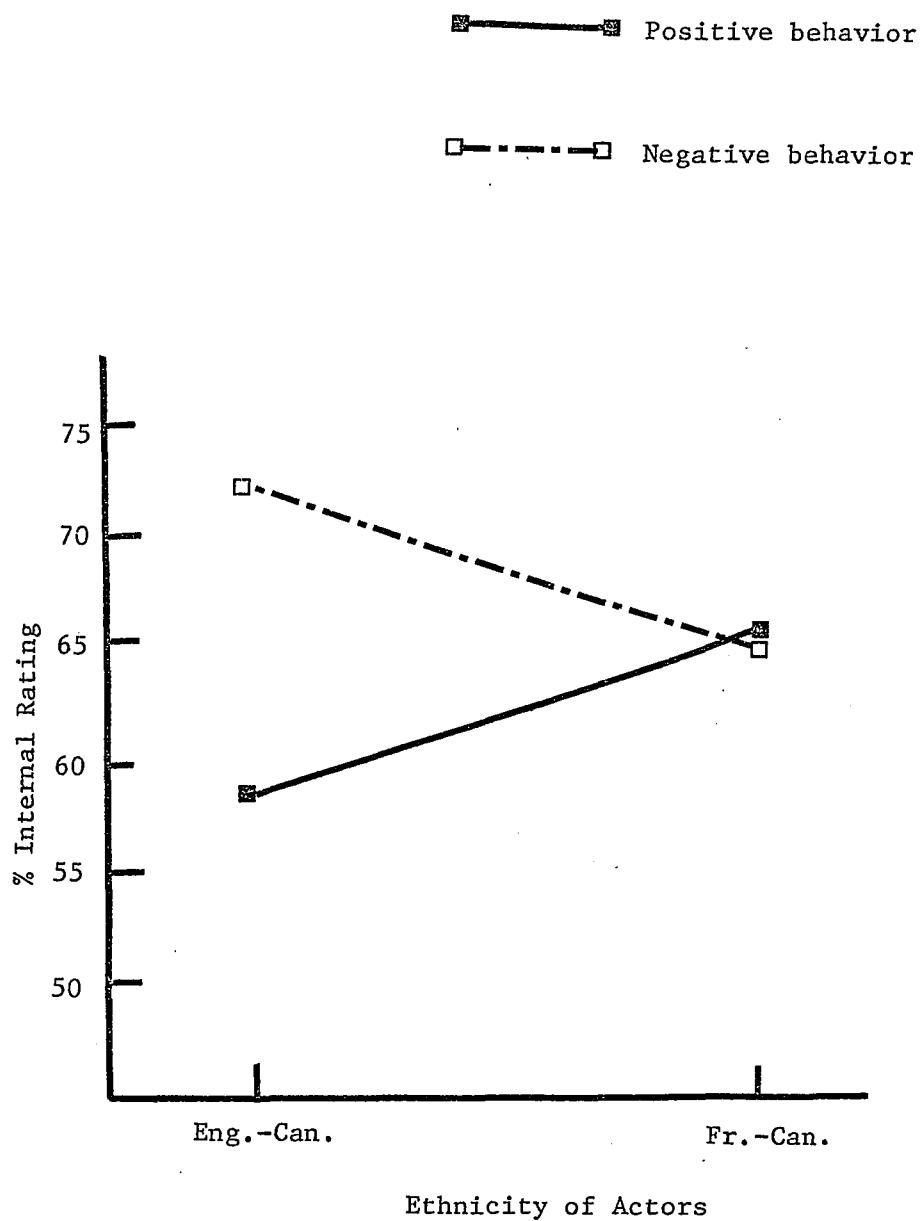


Figure 1. Sociable-nonsociable behavior: interaction between ethnicity of actors and evaluative dimension of behavior.

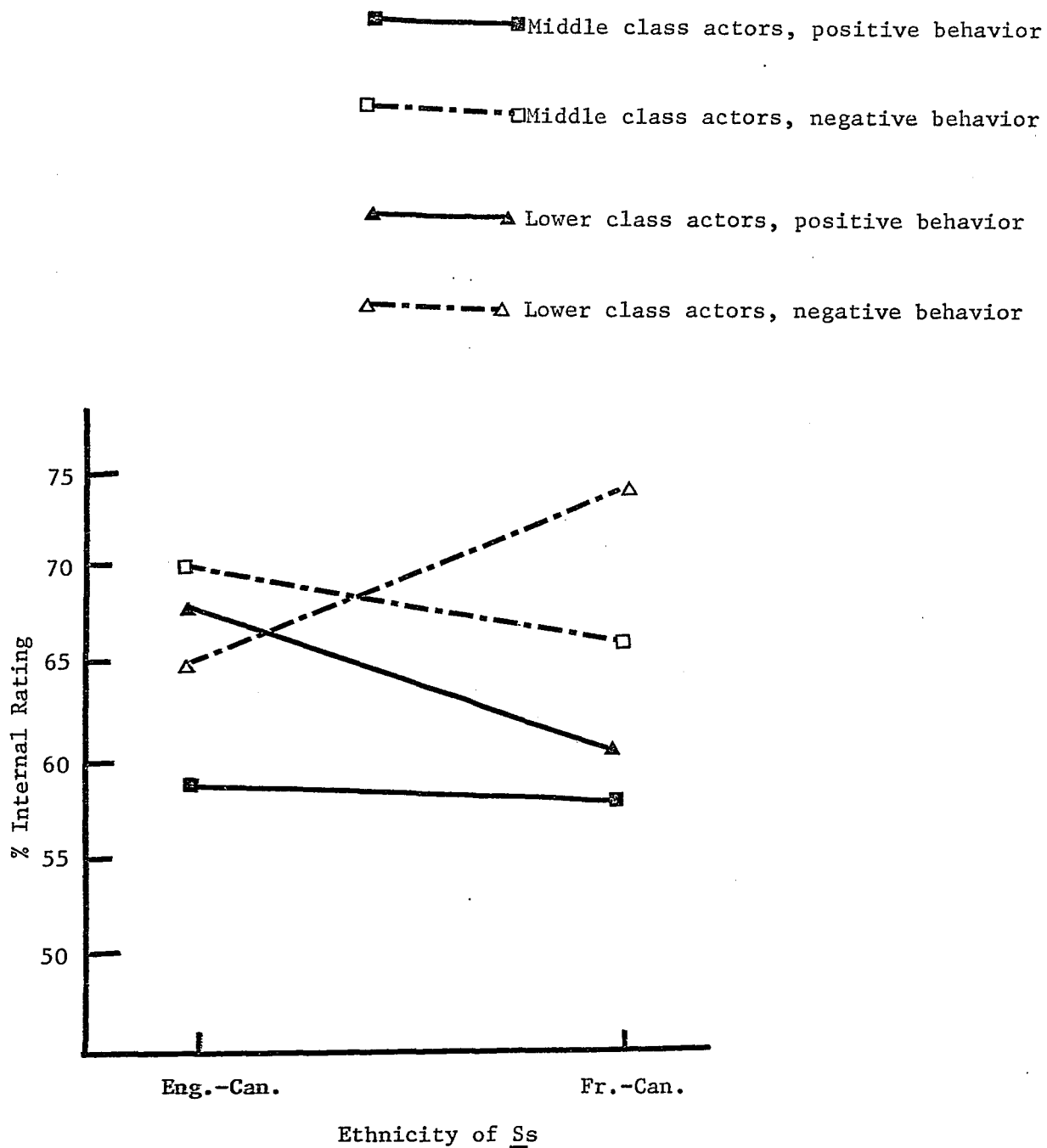


Figure 2. Sociable-nonsociable behavior: interaction between ethnicity of Ss, social class of actors, and evaluative dimension of behavior.

Results of the analyses of variance for success-failure behaviors indicate that Ss attributed significantly higher responsibility for the positive dimension of this behavior ( $\bar{X} = 62.0$ ) than for the negative dimension ( $\bar{X} = 54.0$ ). The analyses of variance also revealed a significant four-way interaction among the four independent variables (Figure 3). This interaction, although complicated, suggests that Ss representing both ethnic groups showed an ethnocentric attitude in their comparative evaluative judgements of lower-class members from the two ethnic groups (but not of middle-class actors from the two ethnic groups). Specifically, English-Canadian Ss attributed successful behavior performed by English-Canadian lower-class actors more internally and unsuccessful behavior less internally compared to their perceptions of causality for French-Canadian lower-class actors for the same behaviors. French-Canadian Ss, on the other hand, attributed successful behavior more internally when performed by French-Canadian lower-class actors than when performed by English-Canadian lower-class actors. Another trend indicated by the above interaction was a tendency by each group of Ss to perceive lower-class actors from their own ethnic group more favorably than middle-class actors from their own ethnic group. Thus, English-Canadian Ss judged English-Canadian lower-class actors as being more personally responsible for success and less responsible for failure than English-Canadian middle-class actors. Correspondingly, French-Canadian Ss perceived French-Canadian lower-class actors as being more respon-

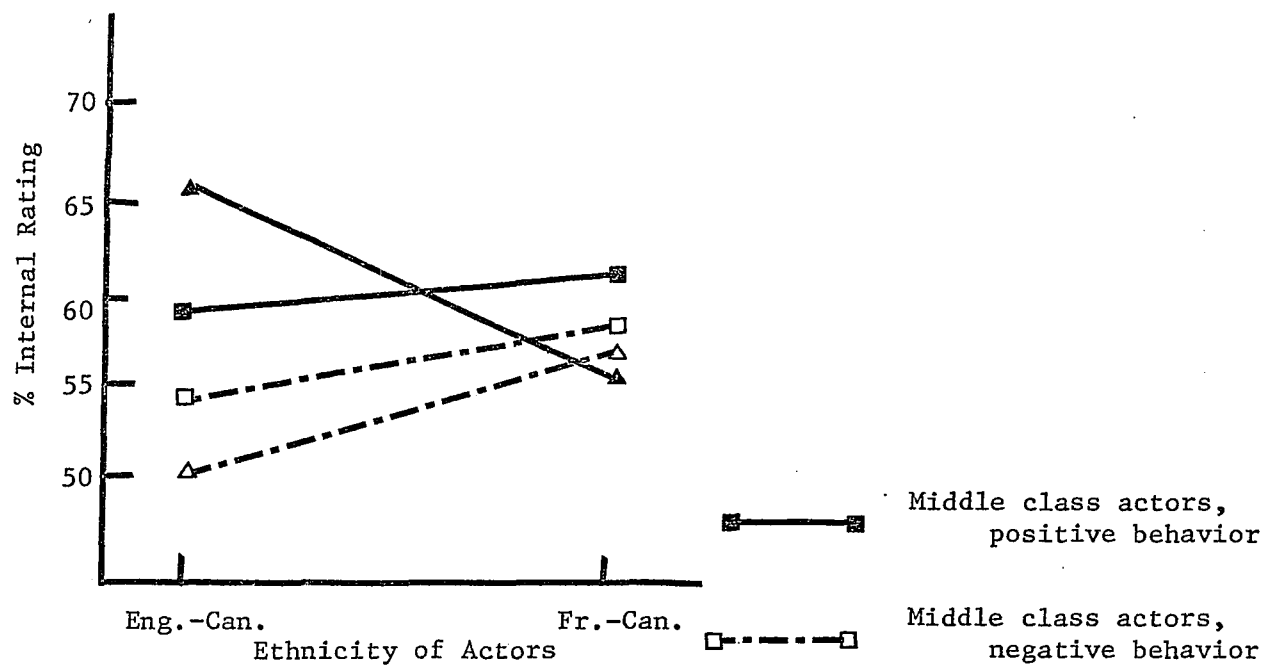
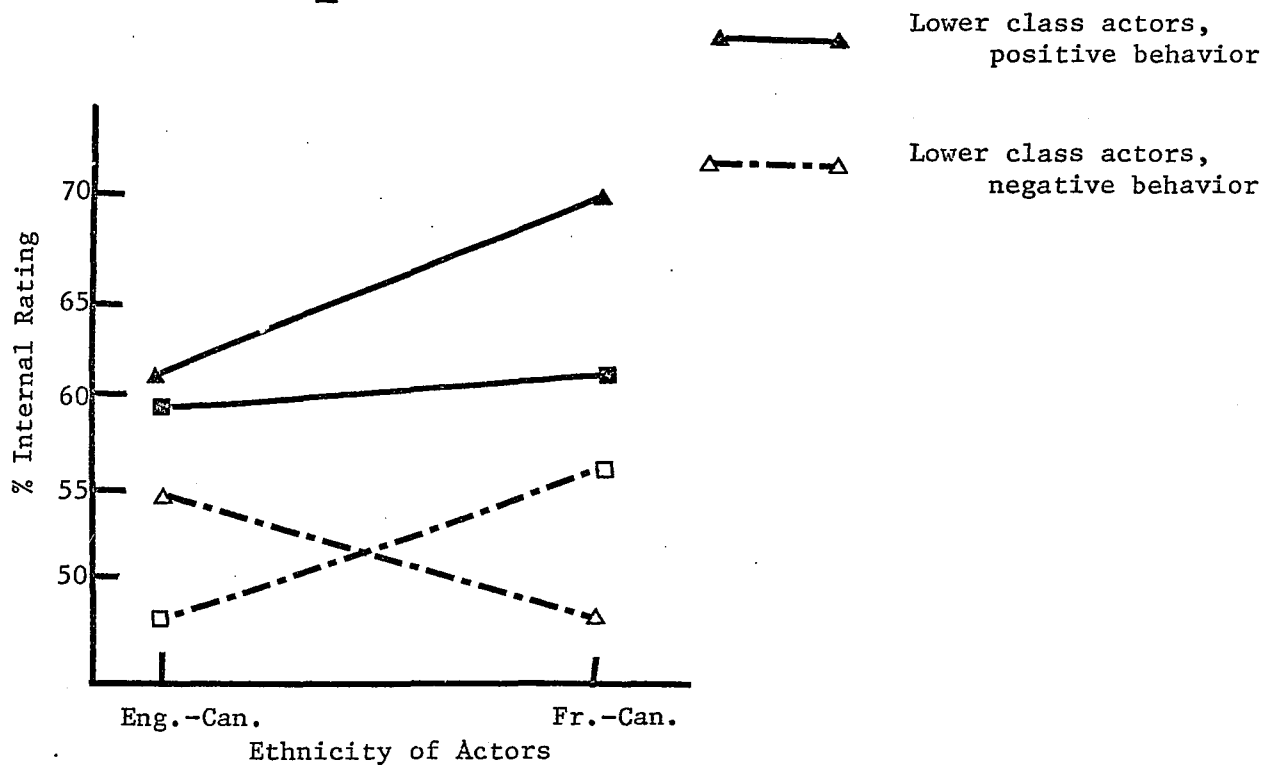
A. English-Canadian SsB. French-Canadian Ss

Figure 3. Successful-unsuccessful behavior: interaction between ethnicity of Ss, ethnicity of actors, social class of actors, and evaluative dimension of behavior.



sible for success and less responsible for failure than French-Canadian middle-class actors.

For brave versus cowardly behaviors, Ss attributed significantly higher responsibility to actors for the positive dimension of brave ( $\bar{X} = 71.1$ ) than for the negative dimension of cowardly ( $\bar{X} = 62.3$ ). The analysis of variance for this behavior also indicated clear differences between Ss representing the two social groups in their perceptions of social classes (Figure 4). This interaction suggests that English-Canadian Ss perceived lower-class actors more favorably than middle-class actors. Specifically, English-Canadian Ss rated higher internal attribution to lower-class actors for positive dimension of the behavior and lower internal attribution to these actors for negative dimension. French-Canadian Ss, on the other hand, showed the opposite pattern, indicating a more favorable perception of middle-class actors than of lower-class actors.

For considerate-inconsiderate behaviors, the analyses indicated that both groups of Ss perceived French-Canadian actors more favorably than actors of English-Canadian ethnicity (Figures 5 and 6). This trend was suggested by the higher internal attribution to French-Canadians for positive considerate behavior, and high internal attribution to English-Canadians for negative inconsiderate behavior. The two groups of Ss again showed differential affective perceptions of the two social class groups (Figure 7). The differential internal attribution ratings for positive and negative behaviors indicates that

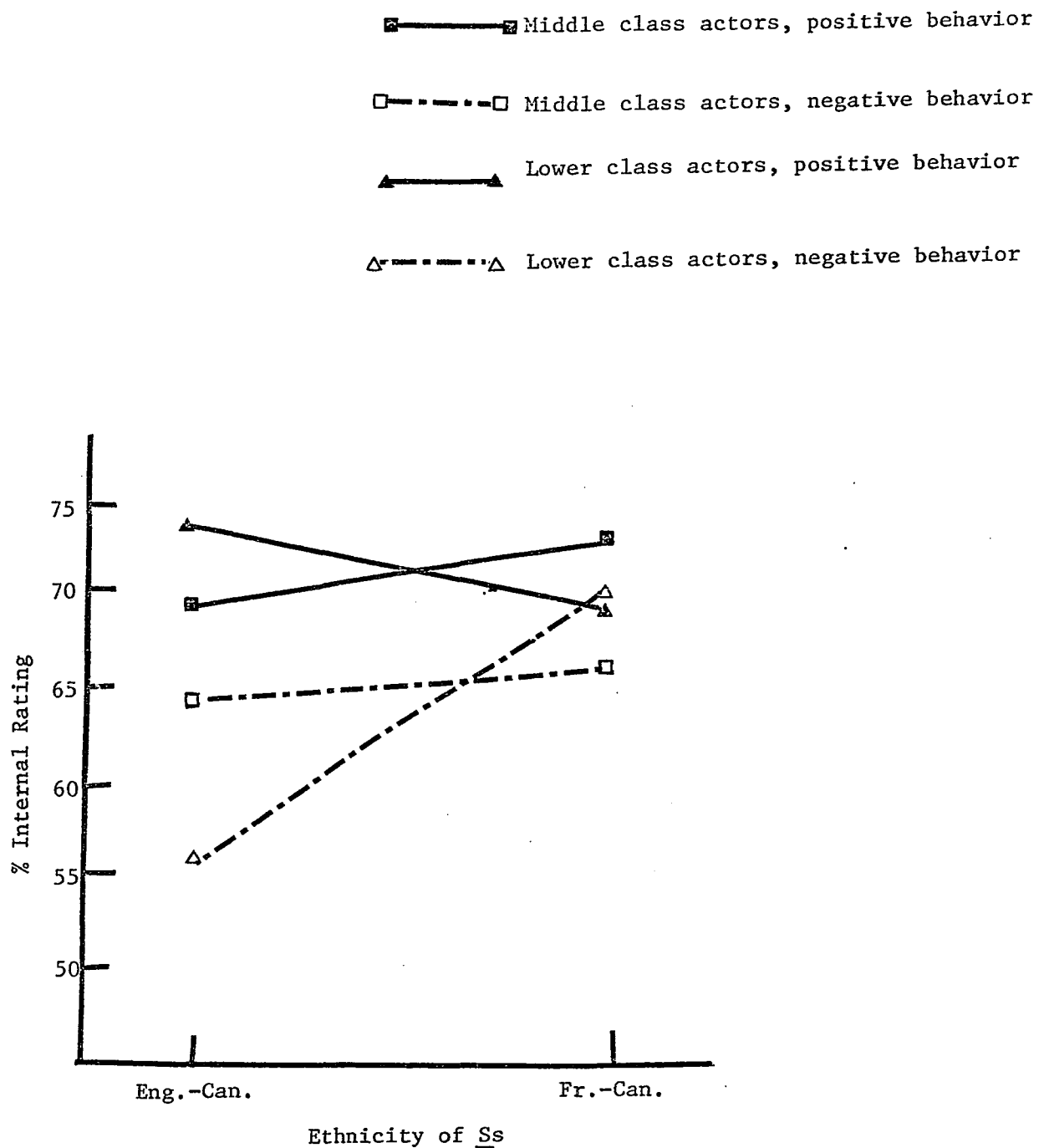


Figure 4. Brave-cowardly behavior: interaction between ethnicity of Ss, social class of actors, and evaluative dimension of behavior.

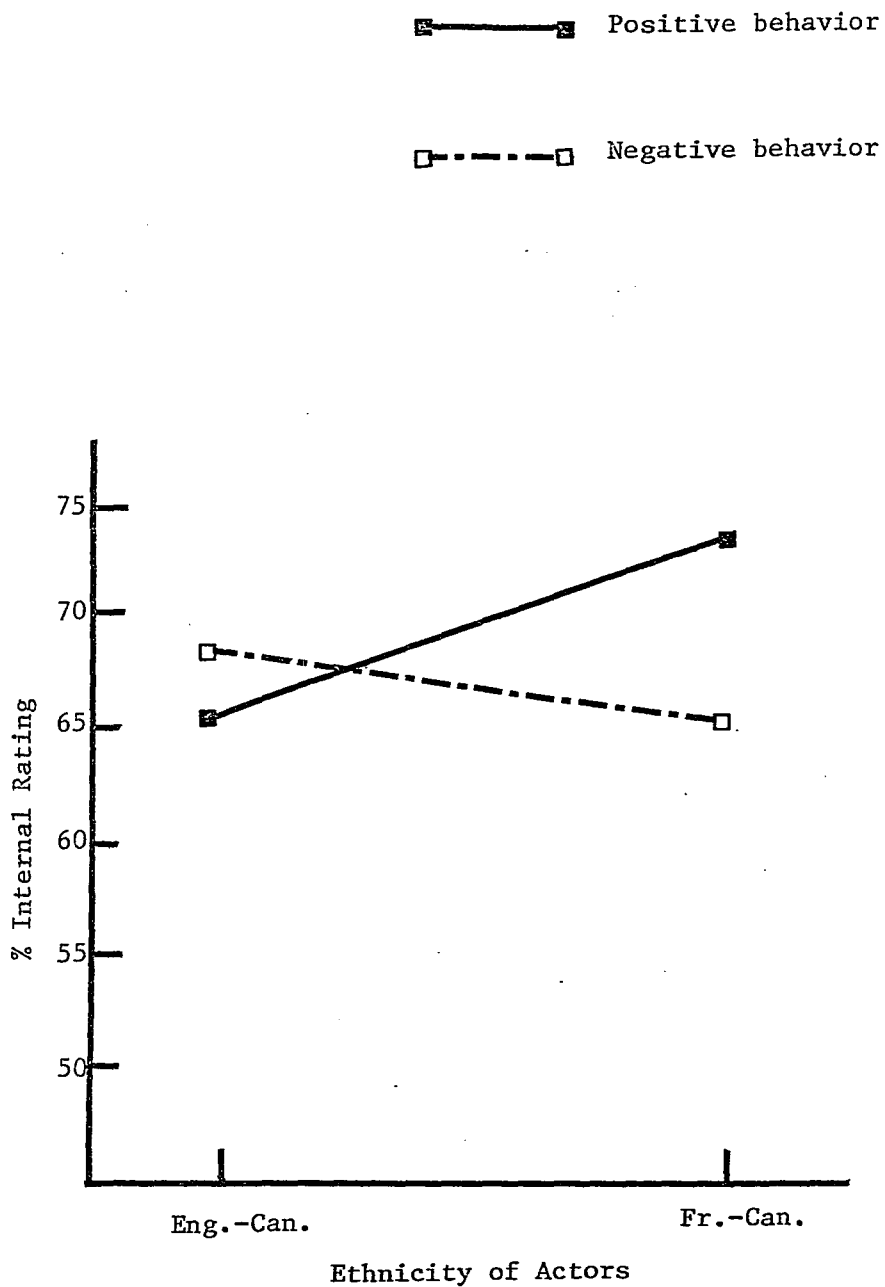


Figure 5. Considerate-inconsiderate behavior: interaction between ethnicity of actors and evaluative dimension of behavior.

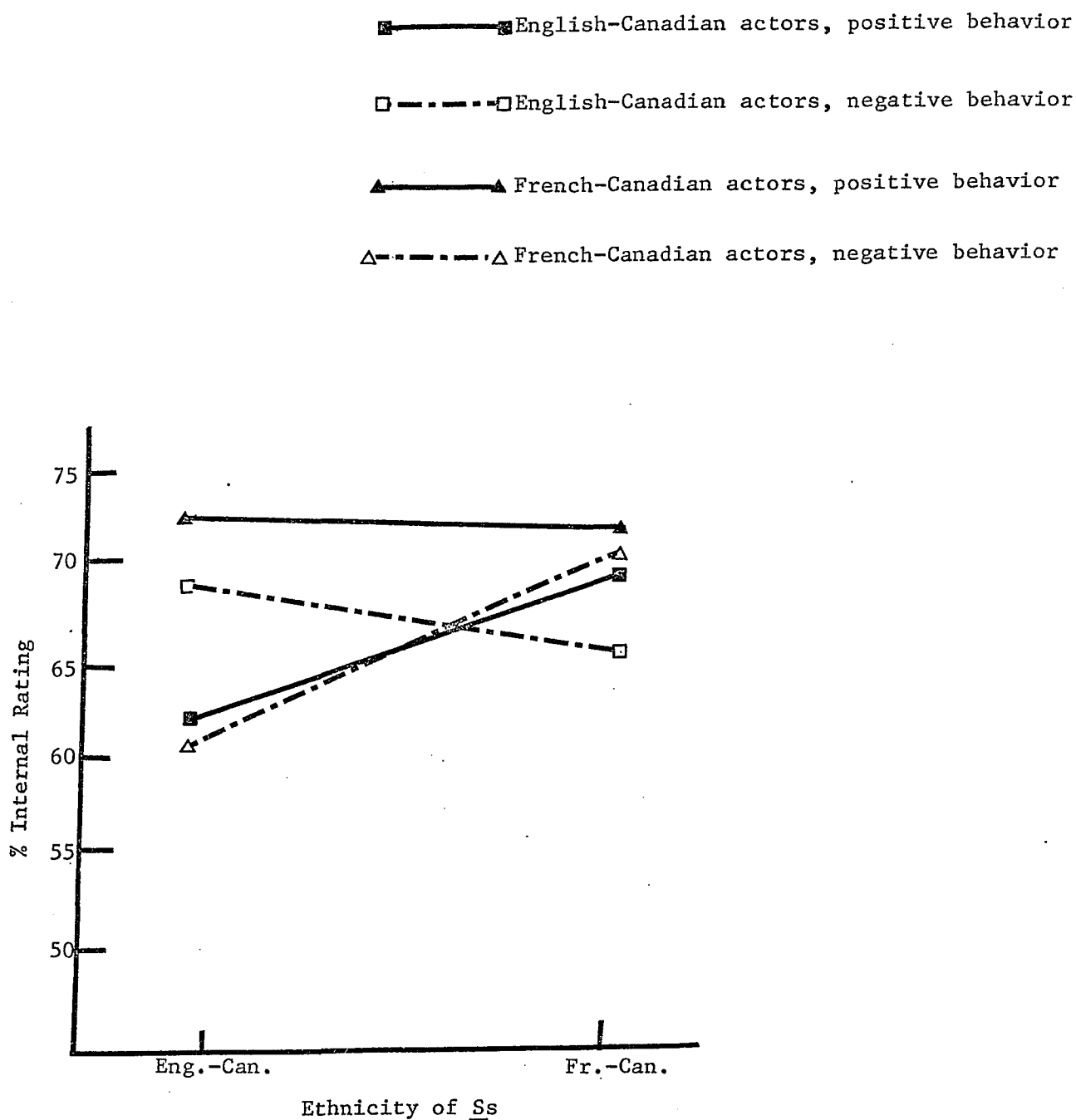


Figure 6. Considerate-inconsiderate behavior: interaction between ethnicity of Ss, ethnicity of actors, and evaluative dimension of behavior.

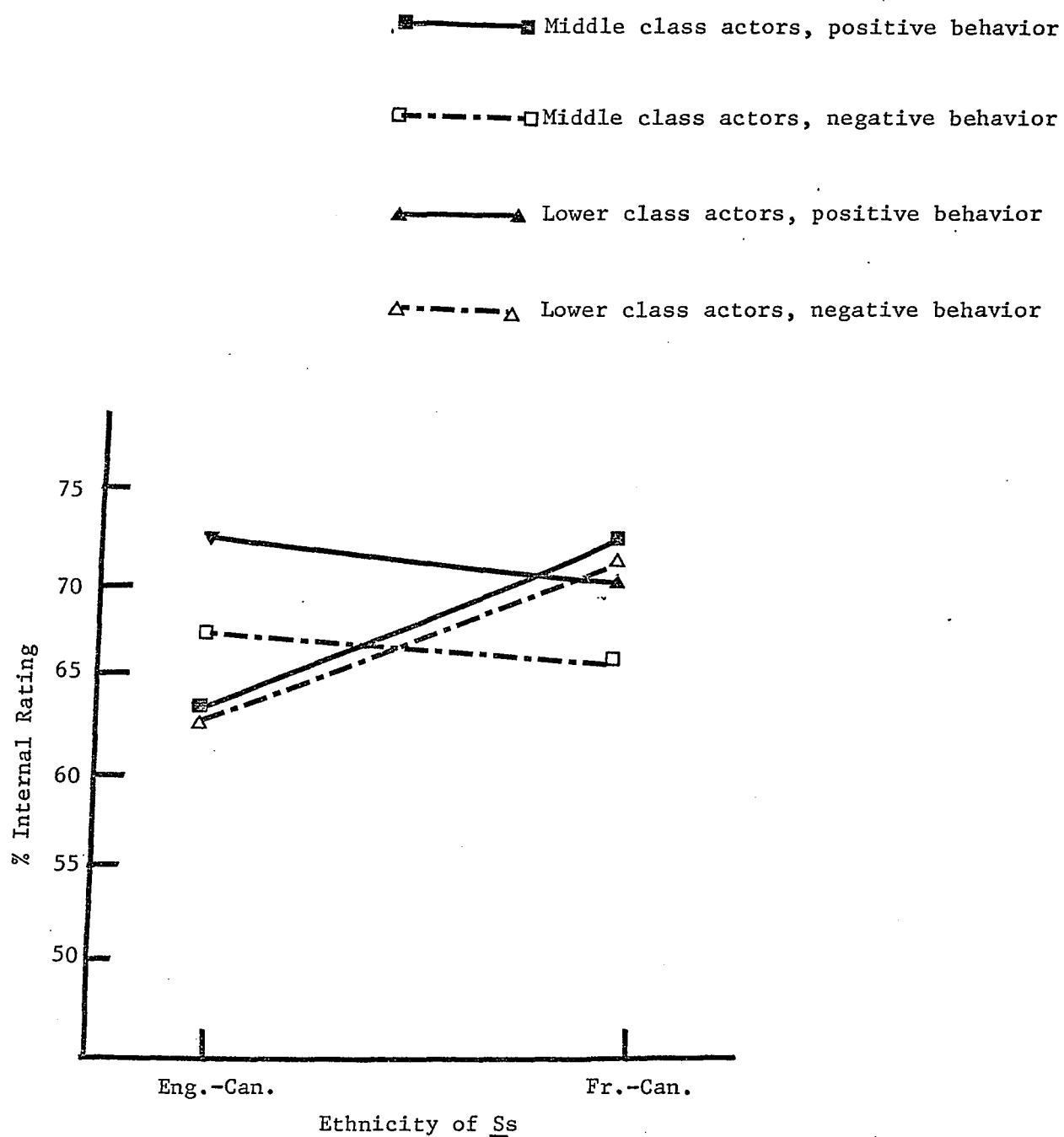


Figure 7. Considerate-inconsiderate behavior: interaction between ethnicity of Ss, social class of actors, and evaluative dimension of behavior.

French-Canadian Ss perceived middle-class actors more favorably than did English-Canadian Ss; correspondingly, English-Canadian Ss tended to perceive lower-class actors more favorably than did French-Canadian Ss.

In summary the analyses of variance results indicate that of the behaviors manipulated in the study, sociable-nonsociable and considerate-inconsiderate behaviors were those for which Ss made the greatest distinctions in their perceptual reactions to various social groups; there were no significant differences, on the other hand, in Ss' perceptions of various actors for tolerant-intolerant behaviors. The results also showed that for three of the behaviors, Ss made differential attribution ratings on the basis of the evaluative dimension alone: for sociable-nonsociable behaviors, Ss attributed higher responsibility for the negative dimension than for the positive dimension. For successful-unsuccessful and brave-cowardly behaviors, on the other hand, Ss attributed higher responsibility for positive dimensions of these behaviors than for the negative dimensions.

An analysis of Ss' perceptions of actors on the basis of ethnic affiliation indicated that the French-Canadian Ss showed a somewhat more "ethnocentric" reaction than did English-Canadian Ss. French-Canadian Ss showed such a reaction (that is, a more favorable perception of their own ethnic group than of English-Canadians) for sociable-nonsociable, considerate-inconsiderate and successful-unsuccessful behaviors (the latter for only lower-class members of the two ethnic groups). English-Canadian

Ss, on the other hand, showed such an ethnocentric attitude only for successful-unsuccessful behaviors and then only for lower-class members of the two ethnic groups. English-Canadian Ss actually indicated a more favorable perception of French-Canadian actors than of members of their own ethnic group for sociable-nonsociable and considerate-inconsiderate behaviors.

The analyses of variance indicated major differences in the reactions of Ss from the two ethnic groups concerning their perceptions of social classes. For three of the five behaviors (sociable-nonsociable, brave-cowardly, and considerate-inconsiderate), there were significant interactions among the variables of ethnicity of Ss, social class of actors, and evaluative dimension of behavior. These interactions indicate that English-Canadian Ss showed a more favorable perception of lower-class actors and a less favorable perception of middle-class actors than did French-Canadian Ss. For a fourth behavior (successful-unsuccessful), English-Canadian Ss showed the same general trend as that shown in the above three behaviors (that is, a more favorable perception of lower-class actors than of middle-class actors). At the same time, this was the only behavior for which French-Canadian Ss showed a more favorable perception of lower-class actors than of middle-class actors.

#### Multiple Regression Analyses

For each group of Ss, multiple regression analyses were performed to determine the degree to which internal attribution ratings made for actors described as belonging to a certain

ethnic group and social class could be used to predict ratings made for actors described by a combination of that ethnicity and social class. Thus, the dependent variable for each multiple regression analysis was the rating made on the combination ethnic-social class questionnaire for a particular behavior; the independent variables were ratings made on the separate ethnic and social class questionnaires for the same behavior in the same experimental condition. In each of the four experimental conditions, ten multiple regression analyses were performed, one for each dimension of each of the five behaviors (thus, there were a total of 40 multiple regressions for each sample of Ss). Since the major goal of the multiple regression analysis was to determine the relative importance of social class cues as a basis for person perception, the major focus of the analyses was the beta weights for the two traits; these beta weights are presented in Table 2 for English-Canadian Ss and in Table 4 for French-Canadian Ss.

The multiple regression analyses for English-Canadian Ss showed that ratings made on the separate ethnic and social class questionnaires were reliable predictors of ratings on the combination questionnaire. The mean multiple correlation for these Ss was .69; ratings on the combination questionnaire could be significantly ( $p < .05$ ) predicted from ratings on the separate ethnic and social class questionnaires 85% of the time.

The multiple regression analyses also show that in general, English-Canadian Ss tended to use social class more than ethnicity



TABLE 2

Table of Beta Weights for Multiple Regression Ratings for English-Canadian Ss

Behaviors		Characteristics of Actors							
		Condition 1		Condition 2		Condition 3		Condition 4	
		Eng.-Can.	Mid. class	Eng.-Can.	Lower class	Fr.-Can.	Mid. class	Fr.-Can.	Lower class
Positive	Sociable (Pos.)	-0.31	0.89**	0.83**	0.07	0.20	0.71**	-0.03	0.60**
	Successful (Pos.)	0.46*	0.41*	0.33*	0.62*	0.43**	0.60**	0.52	0.41
	Tolerant (Pos.)	0.42**	0.58**	0.69**	0.22	0.20	0.63**	0.51**	0.40*
	Brave (Pos.)	-0.02	0.84**	0.55**	0.22	0.08	0.70**	-0.16	0.99**
	Considerate (Pos.)	0.08	0.34	0.43*	0.20	-0.37	0.84**	0.37	0.40
Negative	Nonsociable (Neg.)	0.30	0.12	0.13	0.30	0.37	0.36	0.17	0.65**
	Unsuccessful (Neg.)	0.89**	-0.04	0.43*	0.51**	0.26	0.51*	-0.19	0.96**
	Intolerant (Neg.)	0.08	0.32	0.53*	-0.06	0.02	0.35	0.22	0.63**
	Cowardly (Neg.)	0.04	0.49**	0.42*	0.46**	0.21	0.60**	0.39**	0.61**
	Inconsiderate (Neg.)	0.69**	0.02	0.12	0.57**	0.25	-0.03	0.59**	0.16

\*p &lt; .05

\*\*p &lt; .01

as a basis for judging actors. Of the ten behaviors in the four experimental conditions (a total of 40 behaviors), these Ss placed more weight on the social class trait than on the ethnic trait 25 times as a basis for rating actors described by a combination of a certain social class and a certain ethnicity; Ss placed more weight on the ethnic trait only 13 times out of 40 (see Table 3). This ratio of class versus ethnic weights was consistent for both positive and negative behaviors: for positive behaviors, ratings on the social class questionnaire were better predictors of ratings on the combination questionnaire 12 times out of 20, compared to only 7 times in which ratings on ethnicity were better predictors; for negative behaviors, the ratio was 13 times in which social class was the better predictor, compared to 6 times in which ethnicity served as the better predictor.

While English-Canadian Ss showed an overall tendency to focus more on social class than on ethnicity, there were several deviations from this general trend according to the degree of similarity of the actor to the perceiver and according to the evaluative dimension of the behavior (Table 3). In the first experimental condition, in which the English-Canadian trait was paired with middle-class, English-Canadian Ss focused more on middle-class trait than on English-Canadian trait for positive behaviors (ratio of 4 to 1); they did not show any difference in which of these two traits was focused on more for negative behaviors. In the second experimental condition in which English-

TABLE 3

Summary of Results of Multiple Regression Analyses for English-Canadian Ss

Evaluative Dimension of Behavior	Characteristics of Actors							
	Condition 1		Condition 2		Condition 3		Condition 4	
	Eng.-Can.	Middle Class	Eng.-Can.	Lower Class	Fr.-Can.	Middle Class	Fr.-Can.	Lower Class
5 Positive Behaviors	1/5	4/5	4/5	1/5	0/5	5/5	2/5	2/5
5 Negative Behaviors	3/5	2/5	1/5	4/5	1/5	3/5	1/5	4/5

Table indicates number of times each trait was given more weight than the one with which it was paired in each experimental condition.

Canadian trait was paired with lower-class trait, Ss placed more weight on the English-Canadian dimension for positive behaviors, but on the lower-class dimension for negative behavior (ratio of 4 to 1 in each case). When French-Canadian trait was paired with middle-class trait, English-Canadian Ss placed greater emphasis on the middle-class characteristic for positive behaviors, and to a lesser degree for negative behaviors (5 to 0 for positive behaviors; 3 to 1 for negative behaviors). Finally, in the fourth experimental condition in which the French-Canadian trait was paired with lower-class trait, Ss focused more on the lower-class characteristic for negative behaviors only (ratio of 4 to 1); there were no significant differences concerning which of these two traits was focused on for positive behaviors.

The multiple regression analyses for French-Canadian Ss again indicated that the internal attribution ratings on the combination questionnaire could be reliably predicted from ratings on the separate questionnaires (Table 4). The mean multiple correlation for these Ss was .75; ratings on the combination questionnaire could be significantly ( $p < .05$ ) predicted from ratings on the separate ethnic and social class questionnaires 82.5% of the time.

The French-Canadian Ss, in direct contrast to the English-Canadian Ss, showed a slight tendency to focus more on ethnicity than on social class when judging actors (Table 5). For all of the behaviors in the four experimental conditions, considered

TABLE 4

Table of Beta Weights for Multiple Regression Analyses for French-Canadian S

		Characteristics of Actors							
		Condition 1		Condition 2		Condition 3		Condition 4	
Behaviors		Eng.-Can	Mid. Class	Eng.-Can.	Lower Class	Fr.-Can.	Mid. Class	Fr.-Can.	Lower Class
Positive	Sociable (Pos.)	0.29*	0.74**	0.40	0.37	0.48*	0.35	0.41	0.32
	Successful (Pos.)	1.03**	-0.43	0.33	0.52*	0.06	0.68**	0.46	0.32
	Tolerant (Pos.)	0.03	0.39	0.92**	-0.01	0.22	0.42	0.79**	0.16
	Brave (Pos.)	0.05	0.70*	0.73	-0.12	0.29	0.66**	0.25	0.50
	Considerate (Pos.)	-0.17	0.98**	1.02**	0.52	0.17	0.91**	0.53**	0.56**
Negative	Nonsociable (Neg.)	0.14	0.85**	0.01	0.43	0.39	0.21	0.61**	0.36
	Unsuccessful (Neg.)	0.82**	0.08	0.37	0.61**	0.64**	0.31	0.63**	0.14
	Intolerant (Neg.)	0.69**	0.37**	0.42	0.48**	0.88**	0.15	0.54	0.17
	Cowardly (Neg.)	0.50	0.30	0.41	0.15	0.58**	0.39	0.01	0.76**
	Inconsiderate (Neg.)	0.05	0.65	0.41**	0.63**	0.55*	0.43	0.64*	0.25

\*p &lt; .05

\*\*p &lt; .01

TABLE 5

Summary of Results of Multiple Regression Analyses for French-Canadian Ss

Evaluative Dimension of Behavior	Characteristics of Actors							
	Condition 1		Condition 2		Condition 3		Condition 4	
	Eng.-Can.	Middle Class	Eng.-Can.	Lower Class	Fr.-Can.	Middle Class	Fr.-Can.	Lower Class
5 Positive Behaviors	1/5	4/5	3/5	1/5	1/5	4/5	3/5	1/5
5 Negative Behaviors	3/5	2/5	1/5	4/5	5/5	0/5	4/5	1/5

Table indicates number of times each trait was given more weight than the one with which it was paired in each experimental condition.

together, French-Canadian Ss focused on ethnic trait 21 times out of 40 and on social class 17 times out of 40. For positive behaviors, the ethnic trait was given more weight 8 times while social class was given greater weight 10 times; for negative behaviors, the ratio was 13 for ethnicity to 7 for social class.

In addition to this general trend indicated above, French-Canadians' responses concerning which trait was given more weight depended upon the relationship of the actor to the perceiver and the evaluative dimension of behavior (Table 5). The analyses showed that when French-Canadian Ss were judging actors described as being both English-Canadian and middle-class (first experimental condition), they placed more weight on the middle-class characteristic for positive behaviors (ratio of 4 to 1); there were no significant differences concerning which trait was focused on for negative behaviors (ratio of 3 to 2). When English-Canadian trait was paired with lower-class trait, French-Canadian Ss focused more on English-Canadian trait for positive behaviors (ratio of 3 to 1), but on the lower-class trait for negative behaviors (ratio of 4 to 1). When French-Canadian trait was paired with middle-class trait, Ss focused on middle-class for positive behaviors (4 to 1) but on French-Canadian trait for negative behaviors (5 to 0). Finally, in the experimental condition in which French-Canadian trait was paired with lower-class trait, Ss placed more weight on the ethnic trait for both positive and negative behaviors (ratio of

3 to 1 for positive behaviors and 4 to 1 for negative behaviors).

In general, therefore, results of the multiple regression analyses indicated a major difference between members of the two ethnic groups concerning which characteristic (social class or ethnicity) was given greater weight as a basis for attributing causality. While English-Canadian Ss tended to place more emphasis on social class trait as a basis for judging actors, French-Canadian Ss placed slightly greater emphasis on the ethnic trait. The multiple regressions also indicated that both groups of Ss tended to focus on the characteristics of the actors in such a way as to generally favor actors similar to the Ss themselves. The analyses indicated, for example, that for negative behaviors English-Canadian Ss focused more on French-Canadian (different) ethnicity than on English-Canadian (similar) ethnic trait; correspondingly, these Ss consistently focused on the different ethnic trait more for negative behaviors than for positive behaviors. While French-Canadian Ss placed more weight on the similar ethnic trait for negative behaviors than for positive behaviors, they did so only when this characteristic was paired with the middle-class trait (also similar to that of the Ss themselves). Concerning social class perception, both English-Canadian and French-Canadian Ss consistently focused on middle-class (similar) trait as a basis for judging actors for positive behaviors, regardless of with which ethnic trait this social class was paired. In no situation, however, did French-Canadian Ss focus on middle-class as a basis



for attributing causality for negative behaviors; English-Canadian Ss placed only slightly more emphasis on middle-class trait for negative behaviors, and then only when paired with French-Canadian ethnicity. In contrast to this pattern, neither group of Ss focused on the lower-class (different) trait for positive behaviors, but almost always focused on lower-class for negative behaviors.

In one experimental condition, French-Canadian Ss focused more on a similar (French-Canadian) trait than on a different (lower-class) trait for negative behavior. This pattern follows a general trend by French-Canadian Ss to focus more on ethnicity than on social class as a basis for person perception.

#### DISCUSSION

On the basis of the functional approach to causal perception, it was suggested that the pattern of affective responses of Ss as reflected in ratings of internality would follow a "similarity to self" principle. That is, it was hypothesized that in order for Ss to maintain self-esteem, they would tend to attribute positive behavior more internally when performed by actors described as being similar to themselves, and less internally when performed by actors described as being different from themselves. Correspondingly, it was predicted that negative behavior would be attributed more internally to actors described as being different from Ss, and less internally to actors described as being similar to Ss. The results which

were obtained in the study for both English-Canadian and French-Canadian Ss provide some support for the "similarity to self" principle with respect to Ss' ratings of actors described by the three stimuli of ethnicity, social class, and a combination of ethnicity and social class. In addition, the results suggested that Ss' perceptual reactions were also influenced by other functional determinants of perception (that is, by other cognitive and affective needs and by other ways of expressing these needs).

Concerning Ss' perceptions of actors representing different ethnic backgrounds, the results of the analyses of variance could only partly be explained by the "similarity to self" principle. According to this principle, it was predicted that English-Canadian Ss would attribute higher responsibility to English-Canadian actors than to French-Canadian actors for positive dimensions of behaviors, and higher responsibility to French-Canadian actors than to English-Canadian actors for negative dimensions of the same behaviors. Correspondingly, French-Canadian Ss should have shown the directly opposite pattern of perceptual responses. The results of the analyses of variance demonstrated that this expected pattern served as an accurate predictor of French-Canadians' perceptions of actors according to their ethnic background. French-Canadian Ss did perceive members of their own ethnic group more favorably than members of the other group for sociable-nonsociable, successful-unsuccessful, and considerate-inconsiderate behaviors. This

expected pattern did not always hold true, however, for English-Canadian Ss' perceptions: these Ss perceived members of their own ethnic group more favorably than members of the other group only for successful-unsuccessful behaviors. For sociable-nonsociable as well as for considerate-inconsiderate behaviors, English-Canadian Ss perceived actors of the other ethnic group more favorably than those representing their own ethnicity.

To explain this exception to the similarity principle of self-enhancement, it is necessary to examine other possible functional determinants of perception which may be present in this cultural context. Since behaviors contain a cognitive content as well as an affective dimension (Peabody, 1967), it is quite possible that this perception may be influenced by certain cognitive needs. It has been shown, for example, that English-Canadians hold stereotyped beliefs about the characteristics of French-Canadians; some of these stereotypes include such internal traits as talkative, impulsive, emotional, colorful, active and sensitive (Gardner, Wonnacott, & Taylor, 1968). It would appear that the cognitive content of these stereotyped perceptions is very close to the cognitive content of the traits of sociable and considerate, even though the latter two traits may contain a more favorable affective content. Thus, one possible explanation of English-Canadians' more favorable perception of French-Canadians than of members of their own ethnic group for sociable and considerate behaviors would appear to be that such a pattern fulfills Ss' cognitive needs to perceive the group in

a manner consistent with their stable stereotyped beliefs about French-Canadians. It can be seen that the specific content of Ss' perceptions of various ethnic groups reflects an interaction between cognitive and affective needs. These needs act in different ways to influence person perception according to the cultural characteristics of the Ss.

French-Canadian and English-Canadian Ss' perceptions of actors who varied in terms of social class also provided partial support for the similarity to self principle. The analysis of variance indicated that for three of the five behaviors (sociable-nonsociable, brave-cowardly, and considerate-inconsiderate), French-Canadians perceived middle-class (similar) actors more favorably than lower class (different) actors. In contrast to this trend, English-Canadian Ss showed a more favorable perception of lower-class (different) actors than of middle-class (similar) actors for the same sets of behaviors. According to the "similarity to self" hypothesis, it had been predicted that both groups of Ss would perceive middle-class (similar) actors more favorably than lower-class (different) actors. The actual results supported this prediction for the French-Canadian Ss but not for the English-Canadian Ss.

An understanding of these differences in the two ethnic groups' perceptions of various social classes may be obtained from a more detailed analysis of the social class backgrounds of the two groups of Ss. In general, the social background of English-Canadian Ss represents a relatively high (that is,

middle-class) status within the context of the larger North American society. The middle-class status of French-Canadian Ss, on the other hand, is one which exists within the context of the province of Quebec. Compared to English-Canadian Ss, the higher socio-economic status of French-Canadian Ss would appear to be relatively unstable and insecure because of fundamental changes occurring within their social group and the relationships of this social group to the larger social system (Rioux, 1969). It is quite possible that the reaction of French-Canadian middle-class Ss to the instability of their socio-economic status is a tendency to downgrade members of a lower socio-economic status representing what may be perceived as a "threatening" social group. Such a hypothesis receives support from sociological analyses of the social structures existing in Quebec: "Les élites québécoises sont elles-mêmes responsable de beaucoup d'irréalisme et d'egoïsme de classe."<sup>1</sup> The English-Canadians' responses suggest that these Ss show a more favorable evaluation of lower class actors, perhaps because they do not feel personally threatened by this social group.

It should be stressed that this particular finding and the explanation presented here should not be generalized too far beyond the immediate subject groups evaluated in the current study. It is possible, for example, that quite a different pattern of affective responses would be obtained in other

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<sup>1</sup>Marcel Rioux, *La Question du Québec*, Paris, 1969, p. 13.

French-speaking universities in the province of Quebec where students may tend to be more favorably disposed towards social change and more sympathetic towards lower socio-economic classes. The most important implication of this pattern of responses is that it demonstrates the necessity of examining the cultural background of Ss at as broad a level as possible in order to demonstrate how this background influences the content of perception.

The only behavior for which French-Canadian Ss showed a more favorable perception of lower-class actors than of middle-class actors was for behaviors involving success versus failure. The reason for the perceptual pattern for this behavior in opposition to the general trend for other behaviors would appear to result more from Ss' cognitive beliefs rather than from their general affective reactions to actors. The observed pattern for success-failure would appear to reflect a belief by French-Canadians that if lower-class actors are successful, then it is because of personal qualities on their part; success on the part of middle-class actors, on the other hand, may simply reflect in-role behavior.

The different reactions to the various classes by the two ethnic groups indicate a need for a more detailed analysis both of the objective class characteristics of Ss as well as of the subjective identifications which Ss make with various social class groups. The results also indicate that even when Ss from different social groups appear to have quite similar characteris-

tics, there may be major cultural differences in the ways in which members of these groups fulfill cognitive and affective needs in terms of content.

The multiple regression analyses indicate several important differences between the two ethnic groups concerning what cues were focused on for person perception. The pattern of responses by English-Canadians revealed that they placed more weight on social class trait as a basis for intergroup perception; this trend was indicated by the majority of responses in which the ratings made by Ss on the social class questionnaire served as better predictors of ratings on the combination questionnaire than did ratings on the ethnic questionnaire. In contrast to this trend, French-Canadian Ss placed more weight on the ethnic characteristic when judging actors described by a combination of ethnicity and social class. This different pattern suggests some important dimensions of intergroup identity in a Canadian setting. The responses of English-Canadian Ss suggest that for them, social class is a more important distinguishing trait than is ethnicity when judging the causes of behavior. The responses by French-Canadian Ss, on the other hand, suggest that for them ethnicity is a more important dimension of group identity. These different patterns by the two ethnic groups concerning which cues were given more emphasis in person perception clearly indicate that of the various characteristics of the "self" which serve as a basis for person perception, certain of these traits may be more important

than others in particular cultural settings. These results also indicate that since members of various social groups may be using different reference points in person perception, these differences may result in major differences in patterns of interpersonal interaction.

Besides the overall trends concerning which cues were most important for person perception, the multiple regression results also indicated some other important dimensions of intergroup identity. Results showed that the trait which was focused on as a basis for perceiving causality for an actor's behavior depended upon both the degree of similarity of the trait to the perceiver and the evaluative dimension of the behavior; thus, Ss tended to focus more on the similar trait when perceiving causality for actors' positive behavior, but on the dissimilar trait when perceiving causality for negative behaviors. It was found, for example, that when English-Canadian Ss were judging actors described as being English-Canadian lower-class, they focused on the English-Canadian (similar) trait for positive behaviors but on the lower-class (different) trait for negative behaviors. Similarly, when judging actors described as being French-Canadian middle-class, the English-Canadian Ss focused more on the middle-class (similar) trait for positive behaviors than for negative behaviors.

Concerning French-Canadians' responses, these Ss consistently focused on middle-class (similar) trait as a basis for judging positive behaviors, but in no situation did they focus on the middle-class trait for negative behaviors. Correspondingly,



while French-Canadian Ss did not focus on lower-class trait for positive behaviors (whether it was paired with either ethnicity), they did focus on this trait for negative behaviors when it was paired with English-Canadian ethnicity.

The above results seem to indicate that of the various social traits which may be used as a basis for perceptions of actors, certain of these cues are focused on more than others according to whether behaviors are positive or negative. Thus, in general, Ss tended to focus more on similar traits as a basis for judging causality for positive behaviors, but on dissimilar traits as a basis for judging causality for negative behaviors.

#### Summary and Implications

The results of the present study demonstrate that a functional theory of trait attribution can be applied to causal perception and yield hypotheses which appear to have some validity. Both English-Canadian and French-Canadian Ss in the present study did perceive causality in such a way as to fulfill affective needs. Thus, attributions of behaviors performed by members of various social groups generally followed a "similarity to self" principle by which positive behaviors were attributed more internally when performed by members of Ss' own social groups, and negative behaviors were attributed more internally when performed by "out-groups."

The present findings have important implications for an understanding of perceptual processes in general; specifically,

these findings provide an insight into the nature of social group prejudice. Clearly, the selective perception of the internal and external causes of the behavior of out-groups will ultimately result in stable negative attitudes (that is, prejudice) towards such groups. A causal attribution analysis of prejudice may be an important area for further research to determine the relationship between prejudice and daily behavioral interactions between members of different social groups.

Not all of the results of the present study could be fully explained by the "similarity to self" principle of self-enhancement. It was found, for example, that cognitive needs seemed to play an important role in Ss' perceptions of actors. These results indicate the need for further research on the ways in which these two kinds of needs interact to determine the content of perception. The present study also showed that the content of intergroup perception was influenced by the cultural characteristics of the social groups to which Ss belonged. These results indicate that future research in intergroup perception should be concerned with studying both the objective social characteristics of Ss as well as with their subjective group identifications. In addition, results indicate that the need to determine if Ss consider certain characteristics of the "self" as being more important than others as a basis for person perception.

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## APPENDIX

### Sample Questionnaire

#### DIRECTIONS

In any situation where we interact with other people, we want to know not only how they behave but also why they behave in that fashion. Thus, if a person is very polite and courteous to you, you want to know why he is being so polite in order that you may react accordingly. In most situations, the causes of the actions of a person are either internal or external; that is, they either reflect the relatively permanent personal traits of the actor (internal) or otherwise they reflect immediate situational pressure causing him to behave in that fashion (external). To return to our sample, if a person acts in a polite manner towards you, it may be because he is usually a polite person (internal cause) or it may be because he wants to ask a favor of you (external cause).

This questionnaire contains descriptions of a group of everyday behaviors which could be performed by any one. Your task is to determine the relative importance which you believe external and internal factors to be for each behavior. Below the description of each behavior, you will find a line labelled "internal" with "0%" at one end and "100%" at the opposite end: you are asked to indicate the degree to which you believe the behavior to be the result of internal characteristics. For example, if you believe that internal and external factors are

approximately equal determinants of the behavior then place your mark near the 50% level. If you believe that the importance of the internal characteristics is of the order of 60%, then place your mark near the 60% level; this would also indicate that the role of external factors is of the order of 40%.

The information you have about the actor is that he is a typical young man living in Montreal whose job as a junior executive places him in the middle class.<sup>1</sup> With this information in mind, try to form an impression of what kind of person this person might be: on this basis, judge the relative importance of internal causes in his actions.

#### Sociable (Positive)

This young man was among a group of friends and acquaintances who were gathered together for the evening. Most of the people present were having a good time, and he quickly joined in the spirit of the gathering. At one point during the evening, he found himself among a group of people whom he considered to be very boring. However, he made the best of the situation: instead of abandoning this group to join some friends, he talked and joked with the people in an effort to get them to enjoy themselves.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This is only one sample of the actors (middle class actor).

<sup>2</sup>Following the description of each behavior, a five-inch line marked "% Internal" was divided into ten equal sections ranging from 0 to 100; Ss were asked to indicate on this line the relative importance of internal traits in causing the behavior.



Successful (Positive)

This man was given an opportunity for advancement by his employer on the basis of whether he succeeded on certain tasks required for the new position. In order to determine whether he should be promoted, the employer gave him a trial period of one week to perform his new duties; these duties required some ability, but it should have been possible for this person to do these tasks on the basis of his past performance. At the end of the trial period, objective tests indicated that he would do extremely well on the new job, and therefore he was promoted immediately.

Tolerant (Positive)

In the course of his work, this young man often came into contact with a number of other people. One part of his work involved showing a group of people how to perform a certain skill. Although the skill was a very simple one which this person found very easy, it was one which many people had to become used to; as a result, many people took a fairly long time to learn this skill. Although this man often had to repeat his instructions, he was always more patient than he had to be, and he never lost his temper.

Brave (Positive)

This man was working at his job one day when he was faced with an emergency situation. An explosion occurred where he was working, and a fire started from the explosion. The fire would

place the lives of a number of people in danger, but if this person acted quickly, he could possibly prevent the fire from spreading; however, he would be risking his own life in doing so. He acted quickly, and although he suffered burns, he managed to extinguish the blaze.

#### Considerate (Positive)

On a week-end shortly before Christmas, this young man was asked by an organization near where he lived to provide some assistance. He was asked to distribute food and clothing to some people who would otherwise not be able to enjoy the usual benefits of the Christmas season. Although this man had already planned to spend the week-end in leisure activities with some friends, he cancelled his plan. He then devoted much of his week-end helping to distribute the food and clothing.

#### Non-sociable (Negative)

This young man was among a group of friends and acquaintances who were gathered together for the evening. Although most of the people present were having a good time, this man did not particularly enjoy the company of the other people. At one point during the evening, he found himself among a group of people whom he considered to be very boring. Instead of staying for a few minutes to talk to them, he rudely left this group and went to talk to a friend.

#### Unsuccessful (Negative)

This man was given an opportunity for advancement by his

employer on the basis of whether he succeeded on certain tasks required for the new position. In order to determine whether he would be promoted, the employer gave him a trial period of one week to perform his new duties; these duties required some ability, but it should have been possible for this person to do these tasks on the basis of his past performance. At the end of the trial period, objective tests clearly indicated that he would not do at all well on the new job, and therefore he was not promoted.

#### Intolerant (Negative)

In the course of his work, this young man often came into contact with a number of other people. One part of his work involved showing a group of people how to perform a certain skill. Although the skill was a very simple one which this person found very easy, it was one which people had to become used to; as a result, many people took a fairly long time to acquire this skill. When this man had to repeat his instructions quite often, he became very impatient and he often lost his temper.

#### Cowardly (Negative)

This young man was working at his job one day when he was faced with an emergency situation. An explosion occurred where he was working, and a fire started from the explosion. The fire would place the lives of a number of people in danger, but if this person acted quickly, he could possibly prevent the fire from spreading; however, he would be risking his own life in doing so. He did not attempt to extinguish the blaze, but rather escaped as quickly as possible.

Inconsiderate (Negative)

On a week-end shortly before Christmas, this young man was asked by an organization near where he lived to provide some assistance. He was asked to distribute food and clothing to some people who would otherwise not be able to enjoy the usual benefits of the Christmas season. However, this man had already planned to spend the week-end in leisure activities with some friends. Since he did not feel like changing his plans, he provided no assistance in distributing the food and clothing.