

Majority Group Perceptions of Minority Acculturation

Preferences: The Role of Perceived Threat

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Abstract

Recently, there has been growing focus on the intergroup influences of acculturation preferences, and in particular majority members' perceptions of how minority members want to acculturate. This paper contributes to this emergent literature by examining the extent to which majority members in the UK perceive that minority members' preferences for heritage culture maintenance and majority culture adoption are conflicting, and whether this is moderated by perceived threat. One hundred and sixty-three participants who self-reported being white British completed an online survey. Participants were asked about their perceptions of minority acculturation preferences for two target groups living in the UK: Pakistani and German minority groups. Overall, perceived culture maintenance and perceived culture adoption were weakly negatively associated for both groups. Moreover, results confirmed the pre-registered hypotheses, but only for the Pakistani target group. At higher levels of perceived threat, perceived culture maintenance was related to less perceived culture adoption. However, when threat was low, there was no association between perceived heritage culture maintenance and perceived culture adoption. For the German target group, threat did not moderate the relationship between perceived culture maintenance and perceived culture adoption. Findings suggest that depending on levels of perceived threat and the minority group in question, majority members perceiving that minority members maintain their heritage culture has different consequences. Results are discussed in relation to implications for integration, intergroup relations in culturally plural societies, and the need to focus on specific minority groups when studying acculturation processes.

Keywords: acculturation, culture maintenance, culture adoption, majority members, perceived threat.

Majority Group Perceptions of Minority Acculturation Preferences:

The Role of Perceived Threat

The United Kingdom (UK) is an increasingly multicultural society today. Due to immigration and globalisation processes, many Western societies now include a variety of different ethnic and cultural groups. Such diversity inevitably raises important questions about the presence of different cultures and backgrounds and how these can impact intergroup relations in modern society. There has been much debate on the notion of Britishness, and the effect of immigration, with an increasing number of minority ethnic groups now living in the UK (Shabi, 2019). In particular, questions about whether particular groups can integrate into British society have dominated discourse in the media, and academic literature (Joppke, 2009; Parekh, 2005). This paper adopts an intergroup perspective of acculturation and explores British majority members' perceptions of how minority members living in the UK acculturate, and the intergroup variables that may influence these perceptions. Of particular interest is whether majority members perceiving that minority members want to maintain their original culture leads to majority members also assuming that minority members do *not* want to adopt the British culture. In other words, do majority members who believe that minorities value culture maintenance consequently also believe that minority members *do not* want to adopt the British culture? It is proposed that the relationship between perceived culture maintenance and culture adoption might be moderated by the extent to which majority members feel threatened by the presence of minority members. Another goal was to test whether processes would be similar across different minority target groups, which is why we studied white British majority members' perceptions of both Pakistani and German minority members in the UK.

Acculturation from an Intergroup Perspective

When people migrate to a new country, they undergo a process of change and adjustment, while members of the majority society also have to adapt, which has been labelled acculturation (Redfield et al., 1936). Although acculturation has been studied in various disciplines and conceptualised in a variety of ways, the most common framework of acculturation within psychology is Berry's (1999) bidimensional framework. According to Berry (1999), two underlying dimensions define how minority members may choose to acculturate into the majority society. The dimensions are a preference for heritage culture maintenance on the one hand, and a preference for intergroup contact on the other hand. In subsequent acculturation models, the dimension of intergroup contact has been replaced with a preference for adoption of the majority culture (also labelled majority culture adoption sometimes) as a more conceptually relevant dimension (Bourhis et al., 1997).

Although initial research in this area focused on minority members' own acculturation orientations and adaptation (e.g., Berry, 1997), there is now a growing interest on investigating the majority society's preferences for how minority members acculturate into the majority society (e.g., Arends-Tòth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Hillekens et al., 2019; Kunst et al., 2015; Tip et al., 2012; Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998; Van Oudenhoven & Esses, 1998; Zagefka et al., 2012) and how this, as well the societal climate, e.g., state policies or school context, can affect the adaptation of minority members and shape relations between majority and minority groups in society (Blinder & Richards, 2020; Bourhis et al., 1997; Grigoryev et al., 2018; Titzmann & Jugert, 2015). Whilst minority members generally prefer integration strategies (see Brown & Zagefka, 2011 for a review), from the perspective of the majority group, we see different patterns emerging. Most commonly, the literature has suggested that majority members prefer minority members to adopt the majority culture as opposed to maintaining their own culture (Arends-Tòth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998).

Of course, from an intergroup perspective of acculturation, it is clear that it is not only actual majority preferences that are relevant, but also how majority members might perceive the acculturation preferences of minorities. Some past studies have shown that majority members are more likely to show negative intergroup attitudes when perceiving that minority members wish to maintain their own culture (Tip et al., 2012; Van Oudenhoven & Esses, 1998). For example, Tip et al. (2012) showed that perceived culture maintenance led to increased perceptions of threat and consequently less support for multiculturalism in the UK. In addition, studies across Europe have shown that majority members who perceive that minority members maintain their heritage culture are more likely to show negative attitudes towards said minority groups, and expect further mainstream culture adoption, and less culture maintenance as a result (Van Acker & Vanbeselaere, 2011a; Van Oudenhoven & Esses, 1998). The flipside of this is that majority members who perceive that minority members adopt the majority culture are likely to be more accommodating to integration (Zagefka et al., 2012), and think more positively about minority members (Van Acker & Vanbeselaere, 2011a), potentially due to a perception that minority members identify with the national identity (Roblain et al., 2016).

However, despite the studies highlighted above, studying majority members' perceptions of minority members' acculturation preferences remains a largely under-researched area in the acculturation literature. Importantly, sometimes majority groups' perceptions of minority acculturation preferences do not reflect that groups' own attitudes (Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998). Such misrepresentations of minority acculturation preferences can affect minority members' well-being and acculturative adaptation (Barreto et al., 2003; Roccas et al., 2000), and perpetuate negative intergroup relations (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2011).

Therefore, given the influence majority members' perceptions can have on not only the acculturative outcomes of minority members, but also intergroup relations between majority-minority groups, studying the factors that influence how majority members perceive minority members' acculturation preferences is especially important.

Integrating Two Cultures: Compatible or Conflicting

As part of the exploration into majority members' perceptions of how minority members acculturate, a key question relates to the extent to which majority members believe that participants who wish to maintain their heritage culture can also wish to adopt the majority culture.

A number of studies in a variety of different contexts have shown that minority members themselves tend to prefer integration over other strategies (Berry et al., 2006; Ghuman, 2003; Phinney et al., 2001, 2006). Relatedly, studies have also shown that minority members who identify highly with their ethnic group can identify with the national group as well (Nesdale & Mak, 2000) and also support multiculturalism (Verkuyten, 2005). Taken together, this suggests that among minority members, there is a common perception of compatibility between one's heritage culture and the majority culture. Many minority members do not seem to assume that endorsing their minority culture comes at the cost of adopting the majority culture.

But, since majority perceptions of acculturation preferences have an important role to play in intergroup relations, it is also of interest to explore compatibility from the perspective of the majority members. It remains an open question whether majority members perceive that minority members wish to simultaneously maintain their minority heritage culture and adopt the majority culture, or whether majority members by and large assume that these preferences are in fact conflicting.

Some research has already explored the compatibility of majority members own acculturation *preferences* (Hillekens et al., 2019; Moftizadeh et al., 2021), showing that often majority members find the two preferences as incompatible and see it as an ‘either-or’ choice. For example, Hillekens et al. (2019) showed that majority group adolescents’ preferences for heritage culture maintenance and mainstream culture adoption are conflicting over time. Also, Moftizadeh et al. (2021) found that essentialist beliefs about ethnic groups affect the relationship between own preferences for culture maintenance and adoption for majority members. Such findings of incompatibility between the minority and majority cultures are also corroborated by research on multiculturalism suggesting that majority members tend to show less support for multiculturalism and more support for assimilation (Arends-Tòth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Verkuyten, 2005). Conversely, one study showed that if majority members see majority and minority groups through a ‘common ingroup identity’ lens, they are more likely to support integration (Kunst et al., 2015), suggesting that majority members can indeed see the heritage and mainstream cultures as compatible.

However, to our knowledge, not many studies have directly explored majority members’ *perceptions* of whether acculturation preferences of minority members are conflicting or not. In one study, Van Acker and Vanbeselaere (2011b) showed that Flemish majority members believed that Turkish Muslim minority members who chose to maintain their heritage culture were less likely to adopt the majority culture. However, when majority members assumed that minority members did adopt the mainstream culture, they assumed that minority members were less likely to maintain their heritage culture. These findings suggest that majority members in this study may have had doubts in terms of minority members’ integration tendencies. When majority members think that minority members maintain their culture, they assume that minority members do not wish to participate in the majority society. This suggests that majority members may assume some form of

incompatibility between maintaining a minority culture and adopting the culture of the majority society. Of course, this is problematic in cases where minority members themselves see no problem with the combining of cultures, and as Bourhis et al. (1997) theorize, this mismatch may lead to problematic intergroup relations. Therefore, it is important to understand the motivations and drivers of such perceptions of incompatibility of culture maintenance and culture adoption. However, Van Acker and Vanbeselaere's (2011b) study did not consider intergroup factors that may influence such a perception of incompatibility. It may be that majority members perceive culture incompatibility only under particular conditions, or for particular target groups. Such intergroup particularities are important to study in the context of acculturation. Therefore, this present study explored perceived intergroup threat posed by minority members as a possible moderator of the extent to which a perception that minority members want to maintain their culture would preclude a perception that minority members also want to adopt the majority culture.

When considering whether acculturation preferences are seen as conflicting or not, one approach is to consider the correlation between the two (Hillekens et al., 2019; Moftizadeh et al., 2021). If there is a strong negative correlation between the two dimensions, it suggests that the acceptance of one implies the rejection of the other (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2006). In contrast, no strong negative correlation, or a positive correlation, implies that the dimensions are not mutually exclusive but possibly complementary or orthogonal to each other. This is the approach taken in the present study: we investigated in a sample of white British majority members whether a perception that minority members maintain their heritage culture is negatively associated with perceptions of mainstream culture adoption, at different levels of perceived threat.

Perceived Threat as a Moderator

According to the integrated threat theory, perceiving an outgroup as threatening is a key antecedent to negative attitudes towards that particular group (Stephan et al., 1998). This framework presents two key types of threat which may be relevant. On one hand, symbolic threat relates to a perception that the system of values, morals and beliefs endorsed by the ingroup is being undermined by a particular outgroup. The other form of threat concerns realistic threats, whereby outgroup members pose a threat to the power, well-being and resources of the majority group.

Empirical evidence broadly supports the predictions of integrated threat theory, linking threat not only to more negative intergroup attitudes but also – crucial for the present context - showing that threat affects the way outgroup members are perceived (see Riek et al., 2006 for a review). For example, studies across various cultural contexts have shown that majority groups who perceive immigrants as threatening are more likely to think in stereotypical ways and exhibit negative attitudes towards these groups (e.g., Makashvili et al., 2018; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007; Stephan et al., 1998; Velasco González et al., 2008). Perceptions of threat can also impact the ways in which majority members think about minority members' behaviours and attitudes in relation to acculturation. Croucher (2013) showed that when majority members of society perceive threat from Muslim minority members, they are less likely to believe that those minority members assimilate to the majority culture. This work suggests that perceived threat increases 'binary thinking' when it comes to outgroup members who are perceived as a threat, and that it leads to a tendency to stereotype, and think of others in more simplistic and categorical ways.

If feeling threatened prompts people to think of others in stereotypical, simplified, and categorical terms, it should also reduce proclivity to acknowledge that minority members might strive to belong to two groups at the same time, as it prompts 'either-or' thinking. Threat should lead to minority members being perceived as either having a positive

orientation towards their heritage culture, *or* towards the mainstream culture. Therefore, if majority members believe that minority members want to maintain their culture, and if they simultaneously feel threatened, they are liable to concluding that minority members may adopt the majority culture less. In contrast, under low threat majority members will be more amenable to the idea that minority members can belong to two cultures simultaneously, and under this condition perceived culture maintenance endorsement would *not* lead to a perception of less majority culture adoption.

Although on the basis of the above argument theoretically it might be the case that perceived culture maintenance affects perceived culture adoption or vice versa, we chose mainstream culture adoption as the outcome variable for the following reason: theoretically it is more interesting to predict perceived culture adoption rather than perceived culture maintenance, because this is the variable that is more likely to be associated with negative intergroup outcomes and intergroup conflict. We had no particular prediction on how perceived culture adoption would interact with threat and be associated with perceived culture maintenance. As highlighted by the literature above, we predict that a perception of heritage culture maintenance may be the factor that is associated with stereotypical thoughts about a minority group – including the possibility that they may not want to adopt the majority culture.

The UK Context and Choice of Minority Groups

As highlighted previously, when studying acculturation from an intergroup lens, it is important to consider the particularities of the intergroup context when drawing conclusions about how one group might perceive the preferences of an outgroup. The growing diversity of in different societies, and the different nature of various immigrant groups settling in

receiving societies calls for context-driven acculturation research that attempts to address the questions arising from such diversity (Titzmann & Fuligni, 2015).

We tested the processes described in this study in the British cultural context. Post-war and EU expansion has led to increased diversity in the UK. Approximately 14% of the UK population is foreign born, and the annual number of babies born in the UK to foreign-born mothers is on an upwards trend (ONS, 2020). In 2019, the three biggest minority groups living in the UK were from India, Poland and Pakistan (Vargas-Silva & Rienzo, 2020). In the UK, residents with an ethnic minority background often report experiencing discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity (Fernández-Reino, 2020).

While some studies in the acculturation literature have shown that people can hold acculturation attitudes about minority members in general (e.g., Tip et al., 2012), there is variation in attitudes towards different minority groups, based on their origin (Ford, 2011) and other factors, e.g., whether they are perceived to be a drain or an asset (Savaş et al., 2021), or ‘valued’ or ‘devalued’ (Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001). To be able to test generalisability of the hypothesised processes across different target groups, this study considered attitudes towards two minority groups in the UK: German and Pakistani minority members.

Pakistani people make up the third largest immigrant group in the UK, with substantial immigration following WWII. This means that not only are there a large number of non-UK born Pakistani people living in the UK, but also 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants (Vargas-Silva & Rienzo, 2020). This ethnic group also makes up a large proportion of the Muslim community in the UK, and they have often been subject to islamophobia and hate crime (Abbas, 2005, 2019; Ghaffar & Stevenson, 2018; Law et al., 2019). Past research into British majority members’ perceptions of Pakistani minority members’ acculturation

preferences has found that British majority members find Pakistani minority members culture maintenance as threatening (Tip et al., 2012), and that how Pakistani minority members are perceived to acculturate impacts British majority members' own preferences (Zagefka et al., 2012).

German born people are the 6th largest foreign born minority group (3%) currently settled in the UK (Vargas-Silva & Rienzo, 2020). This group is of interest as they are white just like white British majority members, with similar cultural values (Ford, 2011). Also, to our knowledge, no prior research on acculturation in the UK has looked specifically at German target groups. However, since Ford (2011) showed that historically immigration from Western Europe had less negative reactions than immigration from Asia, we wanted to explore whether the intergroup processes described in this study are specific to particular target groups or whether they may generalise.

Although often research in the acculturation field looks specifically at first generation 'immigrants' and the 'host' society, there is now research on different types of minority groups, e.g., indigenous groups or second-generation immigrants (Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Brown & Zagefka, 2011). We prefer to use the term 'minority member' over the term 'immigrant' when studying minority populations who might be seen to have a migration background but who might not necessarily have migrated anywhere themselves. In fact, calling a second or third generation immigrant an 'immigrant' might be offensive to some (Fernández-Reino, 2020), which is why we were keen to use a more neutral label.

This Present Study

Overall, this study explored, among a sample of majority participants, whether a perceived desire on the part of minority members for heritage culture maintenance is negatively associated with perceived majority culture adoption, at different levels of

perceived threat. We hypothesized that the association between perceived heritage culture maintenance and perceived majority culture adoption is moderated by perceptions of threat, such that the more majority members perceive that Pakistani/German minority members want to maintain their own culture, the less they will perceive that Pakistani/German minority members want to adopt British culture, but under conditions of perceived threat. Conversely, when perceived threat is absent, we predicted that there would be no particular association between perceived culture maintenance and perceived culture adoption. This hypothesis was pre-registered on the OSF platform, and is available here: <http://bit.ly/3r63Dpx>. The open access data can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/37V9wOz>.

Method

Participants

Participants were 145 women and 17 men ($N=163$; 1 participant reported their gender as being neither male nor female) who self-reported being white British. Participants were recruited from a pool of undergraduate students at a single university, using a research participation scheme. Participants were aged from 18 to 59 ($M=19.42$, $SD=3.42$). Ethical approval was obtained by the university ethics committee, and all aspects of the research were in line with BPS and APA ethics guidelines. The number of participants was selected based on a G*Power a-priori power analysis (Faul et al., 2007). Based on small to medium effect sizes found in previous acculturation research in the UK (Tip et al., 2012), and aiming for a power of .8, we aimed for a minimum of 114 participants and a maximum of 200.

Design & Materials

This study was a cross-sectional survey study. Participants were provided with a link to an online survey on the Qualtrics website. To ensure that participants constituted the ethnic majority group in the UK, only participants who self-identified as white British completed the

survey. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The measures used in the current study are described below.

Perceptions of Minority Groups' Acculturation Preferences

Items were measured by six items each for both the Pakistani and German minority target groups, and were based loosely on measures from Zagefka and Brown (2002). Participants were asked about the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with the following statement 'I think that [Pakistani/German] people in the UK want to...' and presented with three items for perceived culture maintenance, and three items for perceived culture adoption. For perceived heritage culture maintenance, the items were: 'speak their original language often', 'keep as much as possible their culture of origin' and 'maintain their own traditions'. For the questions relating to the Pakistani minority group, $\alpha = .74$, and for the questions relating to the German minority group, $\alpha = .68$. For perceived majority culture adoption, the items were: 'speak English often', 'take on as much as possible the British culture', and 'adopt British traditions'. For the questions relating to the Pakistani minority group, $\alpha = .70$, and for the questions relating to the German minority group, $\alpha = .62$.

Perceived Threat

Perceived threat was measured based on six items used by Velasco González et al. (2008) adapted to the UK context, tapping into both symbolic and realistic threats. Once again, the questions were asked in relation to both the Pakistani and German minority groups. Participants were presented with the following statement: 'Because of the presence of [Pakistani/German] people in the UK...' and were asked to report the extent to which they agree/disagree with the following items. For symbolic threat the items were: 'British identity is being threatened', 'British norms are being threatened' and 'British culture is being threatened'. For the questions relating to the Pakistani minority group, $\alpha = .92$, and for the

questions relating to the German minority group, $\alpha = .94$. For realistic threat the items were: ‘British people have more difficulties in finding a job’, ‘British people have more difficulties in finding a house’ and ‘Unemployment in the UK will increase’. For the questions relating to the Pakistani minority group, $\alpha = .87$, and for the questions relating to the German minority group, $\alpha = .88$.

As well as the above measures, some demographic questions such as age and gender were included. Some other measures were also included but were not the focus of the current study and so will not be mentioned further. None of these measures were relevant to the present hypotheses, e.g., they are not alternative measurement approaches to tap into the same theoretical constructs.

Data Analysis

The hypotheses were analysed using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression-based path analysis using the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2017). This tool provides a simple way to test and interpret interactions. Model 1 from the macro was used in this study, and continuous variables were mean centred prior to analysis. To interpret any potential interactions, simple slope analysis was conducted (Aiken et al., 1991) at the 16th, 50th and 84th percentiles as recommended by Hayes (2017).

Results

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations between measures for both Pakistani and German target groups are presented in Table 1, along with some exploratory comparisons of the German and Pakistani target groups on the variables included in this study.

Factor Analysis of Threat Items

First, factor analyses were conducted on the items relating to perceived threat. One analysis included all threat items pertaining to the German target group, and the other analysis included all threat items pertaining to the Pakistani target group. The purpose of this analysis was to decide whether to treat symbolic and realistic threat as separate constructs, or whether to combine them into an overall measure of threat. Given some previous research has suggested that symbolic and realistic threat can be treated as one single measure of threat in research related to immigration (Tip et al., 2012; Verkuyten, 2009), we had no strict prior predictions on how the items in this study would load. We used Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation.

For items relating to the Pakistani minority group, two factors emerged. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 4.00 and explained 66.69% of the variance. The three items relating to symbolic threat loaded strongly onto this factor, with factor loadings ranging from .83 to .92. The second factor had an eigenvalue of 1.03 and explained 17.15% of the variance. The three items relating to realistic threat loaded strongly onto this factor .84 to .86.

For the second factor analysis that included items relating to the German target group, again, two factors emerged. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 4.13 and explained 68.78% of the variance. The three items relating to symbolic threat loaded strongly onto this factor, with factor loadings ranging from .85 to .93. The second factor had an eigenvalue of 1.01 and explained 16.85% of the variance. The three items relating to realistic threat loaded strongly onto this factor .82 to .88. There were no cross-loadings over the common threshold of .4 for any of the items. Given that for both target groups two clearly distinct factors emerged for type of threat, in subsequent analyses symbolic and realistic threat were treated as separate constructs.

Perceived Threat as a Moderator

Four models were tested with Hayes' (2017) PROCESS Macro on SPSS, using Model 1. Analyses were conducted separately for the two different minority target groups, and separately for each type of threat.

Pakistani outgroup, symbolic threat. First, the responses for the Pakistani outgroup were analysed, using symbolic threat as the moderator. Perceived culture maintenance was entered as the predictor variable, perceived culture adoption was entered as the outcome variable, and symbolic threat was entered as the moderator. The model was significant, $F(3, 159) = 8.86$, $R^2 = .14$, $p < .001$. Perceived culture maintenance was not a significant predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.17$, $t = -1.83$, $p = .07$, $SE = .09$), symbolic threat was a significant negative predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.20$, $t = -3.63$, $p < .001$, $SE = .05$), and the interaction between perceived culture maintenance and symbolic threat was a significant predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.20$, $t = -2.34$, $p = .02$, $SE = .08$) indicating that a moderation effect was present. In line with the preregistered hypothesis, at low levels of symbolic threat perceived culture maintenance was not a significant predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = .007$, $t = .06$, $p = .996$, $SE = .13$), but at the median ($B = -.20$, $t = -2.11$, $p = .04$, $SE = .09$) and at high levels of symbolic threat ($B = -.40$, $t = -3.17$, $p = .002$, $SE = .12$), perceived culture maintenance predicted less perceived culture adoption (see Figure 1).

Pakistani outgroup, realistic threat. The second model tested realistic threat as a moderator for the Pakistani outgroup. This model was also significant, $F(3, 159) = 4.32$, $R^2 = .08$, $p = .01$. Perceived culture maintenance was not a significant predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.19$, $t = -1.92$, $p = .06$, $SE = .10$), and perceived realistic threat was not a significant predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.07$, $t = -1.24$, $p = .22$, $SE = .05$). However, the interaction between perceived culture maintenance and realistic threat was a significant predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.23$, $t = -2.44$, $p = .02$, $SE = .09$),

indicating that a moderation effect was present. At low ($B = .07, t = .44, p = .66, SE = .15$) and median levels of realistic threat ($B = -.16, t = -1.58, p = .12, SE = .10$), perceived culture maintenance was not a significant predictor of perceived culture adoption. However, at high levels of realistic threat ($B = -.44, t = -3.31, p = .001, SE = .13$), in line with the preregistered hypothesis perceived culture maintenance predicted less perceived culture adoption (see Figure 2).¹

German outgroup, symbolic threat. Next, items relating to the German outgroup were tested. The first model tested moderation by symbolic threat. This model was significant, $F(3, 159) = 3.51, R^2 = .06, p < .02$. Perceived culture maintenance was a significant negative predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.18, t = -2.34, p = .02, SE = .08$), symbolic threat was a significant negative predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.11, t = -2.00, p = .05, SE = .05$), but contrary to the hypothesis, the interaction between perceived culture maintenance and symbolic threat was not a significant predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = .03, t = .27, p = .79, SE = .10$), indicating that no moderation effect was present.

German outgroup, realistic threat. Furthermore, the second model on the German target group with realistic threat as a moderator was not significant, $F(3, 159) = 2.45, R^2 = .04, p = .07$. Perceived culture maintenance was a significant negative predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.19, t = -2.40, p = .02, SE = .08$), but realistic threat was not a significant predictor of perceived culture adoption ($B = -.04, t = -.97, p = .33, SE = .04$). Finally, the interaction between perceived culture maintenance and realistic threat was not significant ($B = .001, t = .01, p = .99, SE = .07$), indicating no moderation effect was present.

Discussion

This paper investigated whether majority members think that minority members want to maintain their heritage culture at the same time as also adopting the majority culture, or

whether there is a perception that participation in the minority culture might hinder a desire among minority members to adopt the majority culture. In this study, perceived threat was studied as a potential moderator of the relationship between perceived culture maintenance and perceived culture adoption. Results were in line with the preregistered hypotheses in relation to the Pakistani minority group. When participants perceived higher levels of threat from the Pakistani target group, perceived heritage culture maintenance was associated with less perceived majority culture adoption. This finding emerged consistently for both symbolic and realistic types of threat. The findings are important as they show that majority members may doubt the integration intentions of Pakistani minority members, if majority members perceive that Pakistani people are a threat to British culture.

These findings extend the existing acculturation literature in some important ways. First, they support previous research showing that majority members of a society who perceive Muslim minority members as threatening are more likely to harbour doubts over how minority members intend to acculturate in the majority society (Croucher, 2013). The present findings also build on previous research on perceptions of compatibility of heritage culture maintenance and majority culture adoption conducted in Belgium with a Muslim minority group (Van Acker & Vanbeselaere, 2011b). This present study investigated the perceived compatibility of culture maintenance and adoption in a novel cultural context, that of the UK, and with two novel minority groups, Pakistanis and Germans. The findings also build on previous work showing that preferences for simultaneous culture maintenance and culture adoption preference are attenuated by third factors (Moftizadeh et al., 2021). The present study goes beyond these previous findings in demonstrating that whether majority members *perceive* minority members' acculturation preferences to be compatible also depend on third factors.

In this study, threat emerged as a significant moderator of the culture maintenance – culture adoption relationship for only the Pakistani target group but not for the German target group, although overall for both groups the direct association between perceived culture maintenance desire and perceived culture adoption desire was weakly to moderately negative (around $-.20$), which could be argued to point to an incompatibility between perceived culture maintenance and perceived culture adoption for both target groups. Our findings however, highlight the possibility that such a perception of incompatibility might depend on threat for the Pakistani group, but not for the German target group. It is possible that the effect is further dependent, at higher level, by yet other variables such as perceived cultural similarity or familiarity with the outgroup. Recall that the prediction was that perceived threat would be associated with minority members being perceived in more dichotomous, simplified and categorical terms, rendering an appreciation that people can belong to more than one group or cultures less likely and fostering an ‘either-or’ mindset. From interpersonal research we know that familiarity with a target makes it more likely that the target will be perceived in more nuanced terms. For example, an established fact is that people are less likely to fall prey to the fundamental attribution bias when it comes to explaining their own behaviour compared to explaining other people’s behaviours, because they have greater insights into their own personal circumstances (Ross, 1977). It is possible that the white British participants were (or at least felt) more familiar with German minority members compared to Pakistani minority members, possibly because of greater perceived cultural similarity with that group. In fact, examining the mean differences between the target groups suggests that British majority members perceive that German minority members are less threatening, want to maintain their culture less, and adopt the British culture more, which may be due to more familiarity with this group as opposed to the Pakistani target group. Therefore, it is possible that greater perceived familiarity with an outgroup target overrides the moderating effect of threat on the

culture maintenance – culture adoption relationship. It should be acknowledged, however, that these are post-hoc explanations and that evidence would need to be collected to substantiate the idea that the two outgroups differ from each other in terms of perceived cultural similarity or familiarity. Future research could follow up the different patterns found for the Pakistani and German outgroups, and test whether perceived cultural similarity or perceived familiarity with the outgroup plays a role.

One thing this divergent pattern does underscore quite clearly is that it is important to consider different minority groups separately, rather than measure attitudes towards ‘ethnic minority members’ in general. This is clearly important, because the psychological processes seem to differ with regard to different minority groups. In this sense, the present findings confirm, and add further weight to, previous contributions which have emphasised the importance of looking at specific minority groups rather than global categories, because there are substantial differences between groups on important dimensions such as the extent to which they are valued (Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001) and the extent to which they are seen as a burden or asset (Savaş et al., 2021).

In fact, much of the research on perceptions of acculturation preferences in the past has been conducted with salient minority groups, for instance Muslims living in Western Europe. On the back of our divergent findings, we suggest that future research on intergroup perspectives to acculturation and cultural identity should consider more closely a range of different minority groups, including those that may be seen to be racially and culturally more similar to the majority society. Doing so may shed more light on majority members’ reactions to how a wide range of different minority groups acculturate, and the particular drivers behind specific negative attitudes.

Of course, some important limitations of the design used for this present study have to be considered. Firstly, although we were theoretically interested in how perceived culture maintenance is associated with perceived culture adoption, this study was correlational in nature and therefore no causal or directional conclusions can be made. It may be that threat described here as a moderator may also be an outcome variable of particular acculturation perceptions. Therefore, future studies should consider studying compatibility of outgroup acculturation perceptions with experimental manipulations, and moderation via perceived threat within such a design. As well as this, future longitudinal studies exploring how the association between perceived heritage culture maintenance and perceived culture adoption might change over time; whether this is impacted by changes in perceptions of intergroup threat would also represent an important advancement in this area.

A further limitation of the study design concerns the acculturation measures used in this present study. Like much of the previous research in the acculturation field (e.g., Tip et al., 2012; Van Acker & Vanbeselaere, 2011b; Zagefka et al., 2012; Zagefka & Brown, 2002), the acculturation measures used here captured *overall* acculturation attitudes. However, acculturation preferences might differ depending on context, e.g., for behaviour that is displayed in public and for behaviour that happens in the privacy of one's home (Navas et al., 2005). Moreover, the reliability of the acculturation scales used here were at the lower end of the acceptable range, particularly for the German target group. To our knowledge, the acculturation of Germans in the UK has not previously been investigated. The domains used in this study (traditions, language and culture of origin) may not cluster together as well as for some other minority groups. One reason could be the generally very high English language competence of Germans, which might make this group stand apart from some other minority groups. Indeed, this calls for more comprehensive measures that capture a wider range of domains (e.g., Navas et al., 2005), as such measures might better capture attitudes

towards acculturation across various contexts. Going even further than this, qualitative explorations of a particular culture prior to devising a questionnaire can inform the selection of domains to study (e.g., Haugen & Kunst, 2017). This may be useful when studying new target groups. Similarly, some scholars have called for more qualitative explorations of acculturation, in order to better capture a full picture of what is considered a complex and non-uniform phenomenon (Ozer, 2013). Future research in this area should consider such approaches to further enhance understanding of the processes involved in acculturation.

Further, another limitation of the present study concerns the sample that was used. Participants were all recruited from the same university and were mostly female psychology undergraduates. Therefore, future research should consider more representative samples, perhaps from online platforms (Palan & Schitter, 2018), which could allow access to somewhat more diverse populations. As well as this, some important variables were overlooked in this study, for example the effect of socio-economic status, and existing levels of prejudice – such variables should be considered in future studies.

Another interesting avenue to explore in future research concerns whether identity/culture is essentialised and how this might impact how people think about integrating two different cultures. It may be that majority members' perceptions that minority members wish not to combine their heritage culture with endorsement of the mainstream culture is associated with essentialised representations of identity. Past research has shown that essentialist perceptions of identity may make integration more difficult (Moftizadeh et al., 2021; Verkuyten, 2003; Zagefka et al., 2013). A further interesting question for future exploration would be to probe more specifically, also among minority participants, the distinction between having 'low desire' for culture maintenance/adoption, and 'no desire' for it. It is possible that not caring much about (low desire) something might have quite different consequences to actively rejecting it (no desire). Future research could clarify this distinction

further. Finally, another interesting question would be whether the processes replicate in intergroup contexts other than that of the UK. Given that differences were found between the same majority group's views of two different minorities, it stands to reason that differences might also emerge between different majority groups, in different countries.

The findings in this paper are important, as they may have some applied implications for practitioners and policy makers. If majority members have preconceptions over how minority members might choose to acculturate – particularly driven by intergroup threat, then it is important to target heightened perceptions of threat to bypass the potential damaging consequences of such perceptions on intergroup relations. In actual fact, since government policy is particularly important in shaping acculturation preferences of both minority and majority members in society (Bourhis et al., 1997), sometimes policy and/or media platforms can perpetuate a dualist perspective of majority and minority cultures through discourse, for example by using the term integration to actually refer to assimilation (Bowskill et al., 2007; Lewis & Neal, 2005). Departing from this can be a good starting point in encouraging more compatible perceptions of minority and majority cultures. Additionally, encouraging a common ingroup identity (Dovidio et al., 2007; Kunst et al., 2015), or a 'civic' rather than an 'essentialist' based identity (Pehrson et al., 2009; Reijerse et al., 2015) through policy can have positive implications for minority integration into the wider society (Reijerse et al., 2015).

To conclude, this present study shows that pre-existing beliefs about whether a particular ethnic minority group is threatening is associated with the extent to which minority members are perceived to want to simultaneously maintain their own culture and adopt aspects of the majority culture. However, this only seems to be true for some minority target groups, and further research will need to explore the nuances of this pattern. Of course, perceptions of threat, and indeed perceptions of acculturation preferences, may not reflect

reality. Therefore, any society seeking to encourage integration of minority members, and harmonious intergroup relations in society, may need to go beyond just the minority group and consider the intergroup nature of acculturation attitudes. Reducing majority groups' inaccurate or stereotypical perceptions of acculturation attitudes can go a long way to improving relations.

Footnotes

¹ When including age as an additional control variable in the analyses, this did not substantially change the pattern of the pre-registered interaction. No other unreported control variables were included in the analyses presented.

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Table 1*Bivariate Correlations, Means and Mean Differences for Both German and Pakistani Targets Groups*

Variable	Pakistani Minority Mean	Pakistani Minority SD	German Minority Mean	German Minority SD	F(1,162)	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Perceived Culture Maintenance	3.87	0.51	3.55	0.56	41.12**	-	-.18*	.07	.09
2. Perceived Culture Adoption	3.05	0.65	3.30	0.55	21.66**	-.20*	-	-.30**	-.11
3. Symbolic Threat	1.88	0.89	1.76	0.80	6.58**	.04	-.16*	-	.59**
4. Realistic Threat	2.10	0.99	2.10	1.01	.06	.10	-.09	.61**	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. SD = standard deviation. Correlation coefficients above the diagonal relate to the Pakistani outgroup, and values below the diagonal relate to the German outgroup. F-scores relate to an exploratory repeated measures ANOVA conducted to test mean differences between the two minority targets on all variables.

Figure 1

The Relationship Between Perceptions of Minority Culture Maintenance and Perceptions of Majority Culture Adoption at Different Levels of Symbolic Threat for the Pakistani Outgroup

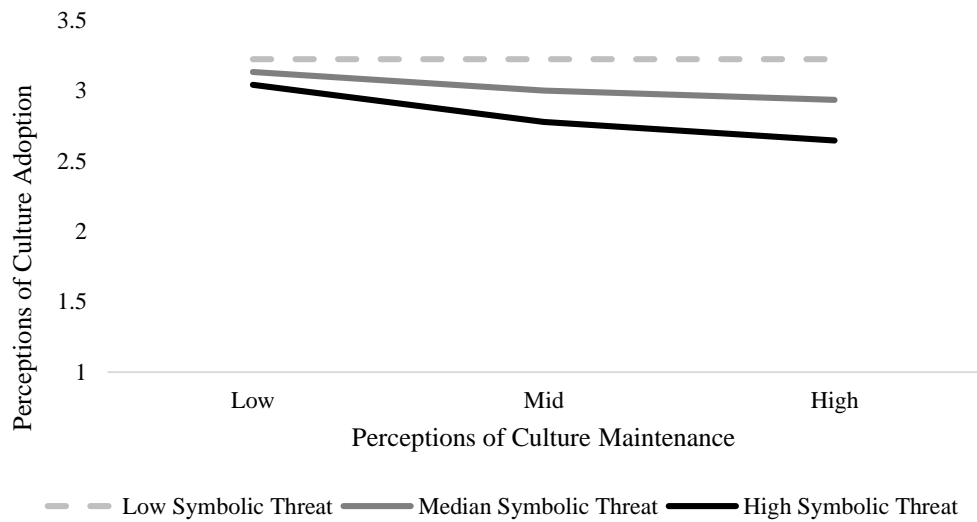


Figure 2

The Relationship Between Perceptions of Minority Culture Maintenance and Perceptions of Majority Culture Adoption at Different Levels of Realistic Threat for the Pakistani Outgroup

