

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Being Forced (or Free) to Adopt the Host Culture: The Influence of Mandatory Integration Programs on Majority Members' Evaluation of Immigrants

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Several European countries have introduced integration programs that oblige immigrants to adopt the host culture. While research has shown that members of national majority groups consider host culture adoption by immigrants as desirable, the effect of making host culture adoption mandatory on attitudes toward immigrants has so far not been investigated. We argue that perceiving host culture adoption as mandatory yields less positive evaluation of immigrants than voluntary adoption. Moreover, we contend that this effect is explained by a lower perception of identification with the host nation by immigrants in the former case than in the latter. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a first study in France ($N = 63$) and a second preregistered study in Switzerland ($N = 110$). In both studies, participants received information about an immigrant who adopted the host culture either voluntarily or as part of a mandatory integration program. As expected, granting civic rights to the immigrant is perceived as more legitimate in the voluntary adoption condition than in the mandatory adoption condition, and this effect was mediated by perception of host nation identification. These results highlight the role of the situational context of acculturation practices in social judgments about immigrants. Implications for mandatory integration policies are discussed.

Keywords: acculturation; integration; policies; dispositional inference; identification

Introduction

Over the last decade, several European countries have decided to force immigrants, who want to obtain nationality or to be granted certain civic rights, to adopt the host culture, or, at least, to prove through successful tests that they have learned the cultural norms and codes (Groenendijk, 2011). Although civic integration policies vary widely between countries in terms of both label and form (Bauböck & Joppke, 2010), these integration programs cover a similar content: the obligation for immigrants to acquire the language of the host society and to gain a detailed understanding of its political institutions, history, and culture (Joppke, 2017). In line with these integration policies, research has shown that national majority members favor immigrants who adopt the host culture (Matera, Stefanile, & Brown, 2012; Roblain, Azzi, & Licata, 2016). However, the effect of making host culture adoption mandatory on perception of immigrants by host nationals has never been investigated. More broadly, research on acculturation expectations has neglected to examine how majority members make sense of immigrants' acculturative practices and how this affects their

evaluation of immigrants. We reason that majority members evaluate immigrants by taking into consideration the situational context in which immigrants' acculturation strategies are endorsed and, more precisely, whether (or not) they are constrained by a mandatory integration program. The present paper examines this issue by experimentally assessing the influence of perceived host culture adoption, related (or not) to a mandatory integration program, on majority members' evaluation of immigrants and, more precisely, on their attitude toward granting them legal recognition (i.e. granting civic rights, nationality or residential permits).

Acculturation and Cultural Adoption

Acculturation can be defined as 'those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups' (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Research on acculturation converge on conceptualizations with two independent dimensions (Snauwaert et al., 2003). While the first is related to the maintenance of the culture of origin, the second focuses on the culture of the host country. The latter was conceptualized by Berry (1997) in terms of participation of immigrants in the host society, and by Bourhis, Moise, Perreault and Senecal

(1997) as adoption of the host culture. Moving toward a more complex approach, Schwartz et al. (2010) propose to differentiate six components of acculturation, including practices, values, and identification with the heritage culture as well as that of the receiving culture. The cultural practices component refers for instance to language use, cultural customs and traditions; the cultural values component comprises the belief systems associated with a specific context or group; and the cultural identification component relates with attachment to the origin or to the host cultural group. According to Schwartz et al. (2010), these components should be seen as a set of independent dimensions although cultural practices, values, and identification tend to be at least moderately interrelated (e.g. Berry, 1997).

Within this literature, a growing number of research has addressed the impact of immigrants' acculturation preferences on majority members' attitudes. This line of research has consistently shown that the adoption of the host culture is a key predictor of majority members' attitudes toward immigrants. Indeed, perception of host culture adoption was found to positively affect general attitudes toward immigrants (e.g. Matera et al., 2012), as well as the attribution of warmth and competence traits to them (López-Rodríguez et al., 2014; Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007). The present study will focus on perceived host culture adoption in terms of practices, because mandatory integration programs revolve mainly around this dimension (Goodman & Wright, 2015). It also implies that, in this research, we will not take the perception of immigrants' cultural maintenance practices into consideration.

Moreover, the present research also extends in (at least) two ways this existing literature. First of all, we consider the majority members' attitudes toward granting rights to immigrants (i.e. to grant civic rights, nationality or residential permits). Because cultural adoption often constrains access to certain rights in current integration policies, we do not focus on majority members' prejudice toward immigrants, but rather investigate the psychological processes leading majority members to support granting them legal recognition (Licata, Green, & Sanchez-Mazas, 2011). Studies have already addressed this issue and showed that majority members who feel threatened by Muslim minorities are less willing to grant them cultural, civic and social rights (e.g. Scheepers, Gijsberts, & Coenders, 2002). However, this legal dimension has been surprisingly neglected in the acculturation literature (for exception, see Politi et al., 2020). Secondly, we reason that majority members do not evaluate immigrants' acculturation practices in a decontextualized manner, but that they judge them in light of the situational context in which acculturation strategies are endorsed. More precisely, we expect that information about the voluntary vs. mandatory nature of these practices will lead to more positive vs. negative attitudes towards legal recognition granted to immigrants by majority members, and, as we will argue below, that this effect will be mediated by attribution of identification with the host nation (high vs. low).

Dispositional Inferences

According to Heider's causal attribution theory (1958), perceivers consider that the causes of human behaviors are situated either within the person or within the surrounding situation. Perceivers are likely to make dispositional inferences regarding the target person when the target's behavior is perceived as due to the person. On the contrary, if a behavior is perceived as caused by the situation, perceivers will not consider the behavior as a relevant indicator of the target person's general dispositions.

However, Heider's work (1958) is often mistakenly reduced to this categorization of behavioral causes. Indeed, he also emphasized the importance of reasons and motives in folk explanations of behavior (Malle & Ickes, 2000). Rather than 'simply' judging someone's behaviors and evaluating whether it is caused by the situation or by the target person, perceivers often wonder what the person is thinking, and which motives and reasons drive her behaviors (Malle, 1999). On the basis of Heider's work, Reeder et al. (2001) showed that, in constraining situations, perceivers take actor's motives or mental states into account to a lesser extent, but rather employ simple causal reasoning. As a consequence, in order to understand how majority members make sense of immigrants' cultural adoption practices, it is necessary to highlight both the situational context and the motivations and mental states explaining this acculturative decision.

As mandatory integration programs actually force immigrants to adopt the host country culture, it is reasonable to consider that, in such situations, majority members will perceive more constraints on host culture adoption practices than in contexts in which cultural adoption can be freely chosen. In line with Reeder et al. (2001), we expect that majority members will employ simple causal reasoning and will therefore infer less personal dispositions – here, perceived identification with the host nation – in immigrants adopting the host culture when they were involved in a mandatory integration program than when they were free to adopt the host nation's culture.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Identification With the Host Nation

So far, little is known regarding the nature of mental states inferred by majority members when they perceive immigrants adopting the host culture. Roblain et al. (2016) contended that, given that national identity is closely associated with national culture (Kymlicka, 2001; Reijerse et al., 2013), perception of immigrants adopting the national culture should facilitate perception of their identification with this nation. On the contrary, failing to adopt the host culture should be interpreted as a failure, or a refusal, to identify with the host nation. Indeed, in two experimental studies conducted in Belgium, they showed that majority members tended to infer immigrants' identification with the host nation from their adoption of the host country's culture.

Moreover, these studies demonstrated that perceived host nation identification was a key predictor of majority members' attitudes toward immigrants: immigrants who adopted the host culture were perceived as more strongly

identified with the host nation, which in turn led to more positive attitudes toward them. Anier et al. (2018) replicated this mediating role of perceived identification with the host nation and extended this result by showing that it also applies to discriminatory behaviors. In line with this research, we predict a positive link between perceived identification and support for the legal recognition of immigrants.

As we reasoned above, majority members should infer less mental states in immigrants adopting the host culture when they are constrained to participate in an integration program than when they freely choose to do so. In other terms, perceiving external constraints on acculturation practices should lead majority members to consider the adoption of the host culture as less indicative of attachment to the host nation. As a consequence, they should perceive them as less identified with the host nation than immigrants who have freely chosen to adopt this culture. In turn, majority members should judge that granting rights to immigrants is more legitimate when cultural adaptation is presented as related to a personal initiative than to a mandatory integration program.

To test this hypothesis, summarized in **Figure 1**, we conducted two successive studies in two different national contexts, France and Switzerland. These two countries are similar with regard to the issue at stake. First of all, in both countries, immigrants' cultural knowledge and practices are tested during the naturalization process (Ossipow & Felder, 2015). Moreover, from a political perspective and according to the Multiculturalism Policy Index (MPI) ranks, both Switzerland and France have highly assimilationist policies (Banting & Kymlicka, 2013). However, important distinctions must be highlighted. The French Republican model rests on a colorblind model (Badea, 2012). Whereas the assimilationist ideology advocates the homogenization of the population, the ideology of colorblindness is based on the ignorance of group belongingness, which means that all citizens should be treated equally regardless of their race or ethnicity (Guimond, 2019). With regard to the Swiss context, integration policies are especially characterized by a high degree of selectivity and a strong emphasis on confederal identity (D'Amato, 2015). According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX; Huddleston et al., 2015), requirements to become a citizen or long-term resident in Switzerland are some of the most restrictive among the 38 MIPEX countries. French policies

appear more contrasted on this specific index. The country ranks 11th when it comes to access to nationality, but 36th regarding access to a permanent residence permit. Despite these two different political contexts, we expect that the same psychological processes will underlie participants' answers, so that the same model should be replicated.

It is worth noticing that in line with the notion of *minimalism* in public opinion research, which refers to the tendency of individuals to have limited knowledge on most political issues and to hold inconsistent opinions about them (Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1993), we contend that lay people in Western countries have very little knowledge of the contents of integration policies. As a consequence, it is possible to influence their representations of their country's integration policies through experimental manipulations.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Seventy-two participants completed an online questionnaire. Participants were all French nationals and had at least one parent born in France. Nine participants were excluded from the analyses because they did not fulfill both criteria. The analyses were therefore carried out on a sample of 63 respondents (15 women and 48 men; $M_{age} = 31.82$; $SD = 10.43$). All of the participants were recruited on Crowdfunder (www.crowdfunder.com), an online service platform allowing the recruitment of participants in exchange for a small amount of money.

Procedure

Participants were told that we were interested in their perceptions and reactions to a social interaction between two individuals where they would be asked to read a print screen of a conversation and to answer some questions about it. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions: 'mandatory' condition ($N = 33$) and 'voluntary' condition ($N = 30$). The experimental manipulation was introduced through the print screen of a conversation between two individuals on a fictitious discussion forum. A Quebecois, who recently arrived in France and requested information regarding the integration in France, launched this discussion. The experimental manipulation was operated through the response given to this man by the second speaker. Inspired by Roblain et al. (2016), the

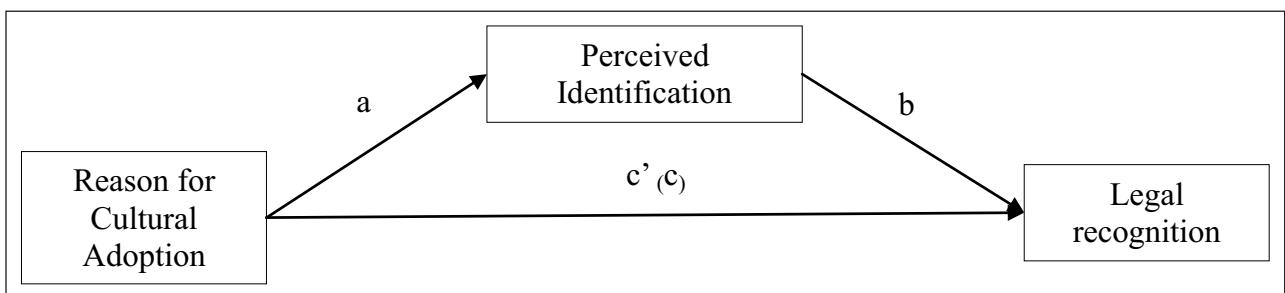


Figure 1: Mediation model of the effect of reason for cultural adoption (mandatory versus voluntary adoption) on support for legal recognition.

second individual (Mehmet, a Turkish name) provided information about his good mastery of French as well as about his adoption of the customs of the host country. To manipulate the reason for cultural adoption, Mehmet added to the discussion that he did it either voluntarily ('I decided by myself to attend French classes, and learn French history and culture') or because he was forced by a mandatory program ('I attended French classes and learned French history and culture because I was forced to do it by the mandatory integration program'). The experimental vignette did not provide any other information on Mehmet, except for the number of years since his arrival in France (i.e. five years), as well as his country of origin (i.e. Turkey). After filling in the questionnaires, the participants were debriefed.

We used Turkish nationality in the experimental vignette because integration programs tend to target migrants from devalued communities (Joppke, 2017). According to Joppke (2017), this is manifested by restrictive policies targeting unwanted migrants from mostly Muslim countries, and by exemptions that are allowed in several Western countries for migrants from developed Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states (see also FitzGerald et al., 2018).

Measures

All variables were measured on 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (Don't agree at all) to 5 (Totally agree).

Manipulation Check

We checked the perception of reason for host culture adoption with one item: "To what extent do you consider that Mehmet adopted French culture because he was forced to do it?"

Perceived Identification with the Host Nation

In line with Roblain et al. (2016), we used seven items adapted from the identification scale (Self-Investment component) of Leach et al. (2008) (e.g. 'Mehmet feels attached to the French society'; 'Mehmet feels loyal toward the French society'). This scale showed good reliability ($\alpha = 0.86$).

Support for Legal Recognition

Three items were used for assessing support for the legal recognition of the immigrant (i.e. To what extent do you consider that Mehmet should have French nationality, obtain a permanent residence permit, be granted the same rights as French citizens). This scale also showed a good reliability ($\alpha = 0.88$).

Results

Manipulation Check

As expected, participants perceived more coercion in the mandatory ($M = 4.00$; $SD = 0.79$) than in the voluntary cultural adoption condition ($M = 2.30$; $SD = 1.15$), $F(1, 61) = 47.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .43$.

Descriptive Statistics

Participants reported, on average, a relatively high perception of Mehmet's identification with the host country ($M = 3.70$; $SD = 0.71$) and generally found it legitimate to grant him citizenship rights ($M = 3.74$; $SD = 1.04$). The bivariate correlation between these two variables was also high and significant ($r = 0.69$, $p < 0.001$).

Effect of the Situational Context on Support for Legal Recognition

As expected, participants found it less legitimate to grant citizenship rights to Mehmet in the mandatory ($M = 3.45$; $SD = 1.05$) than in the voluntary cultural adoption condition ($M = 4.06$; $SD = 0.96$), $t(61) = 2.37$, $p = 0.02$, $d = 0.60$.

Support for Legal Recognition

Using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018, Model 4), we tested the following mediational model: Reason for Cultural adoption (experimental manipulation) was the independent variable, Perceived identification was the mediator, and Support for legal recognition was the dependent variable. As expected, results showed that Cultural adoption had a significant positive effect on Perceived host nation identification, which in turn had a significant positive effect on Support for legal recognition (see **Table 1**). Moreover, while

Table 1: Results for mediational model explaining the effect of the experimental manipulation on support for legal recognition (Study 1).

	<i>b</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>95%C.I.</i>
Total Effect			
Cultural adoption to Support for legal recognition (c)	0.30	0.13	[0.05, 0.55]
Direct Effect			
Cultural adoption to Support for legal recognition (c')	0.03	0.10	[-0.17, 0.24]
Path from IV to mediator			
Cultural adoption to Perceived identification (a)	0.26	0.08	[0.10, 0.43]
Path from mediator to DV			
Perceived identification to Support for legal recognition (b)	0.99	0.15	[0.70, 1.29]
Indirect Effect			
Mediation through Perceived identification	0.26	0.10	[0.09, 0.47]

Note: $N = 63$.

Bootstrap samples = 1000.

the direct effect was not significant, 95% CI [-0.17, 0.24], the indirect effect was significant, 95% CI [0.09, 0.47]. The total effect of the model was also significant, 95% CI [0.05, 0.55]. The effect of Reason for cultural adoption on Support for legal recognition was thus fully mediated by Perceived identification.

Study 2

Because the sample size of Study 1 was admittedly low and therefore could be potentially statistically underpowered, Study 2 was designed to be a close and registered replication (<https://osf.io/49qdm>) of Study 1 in another context (i.e. Switzerland).

Method

Participants

The Monte Carlo power analysis for indirect effects application was used to determine an appropriate sample size (Schoemann, Boulton, & Short, 2017). This power analysis revealed that a sample of 93 participants was needed to achieve .80 power, considering the correlations that we obtained in Study 1. One hundred thirty-two participants completed an online questionnaire. Participants were all Swiss nationals and had at least one parent born in Switzerland. Twenty-two participants were excluded from the analyses because they did not fulfill both criteria. The analyses were therefore carried out on a sample of 110 respondents (70 women and 40 men; $M_{age} = 27.16$; $SD = 4.67$).

Procedure

The same procedure as in Study 1 was used. However, we slightly changed the experimental manipulation in order to overcome some methodological limitations of Study 1. Firstly, in Study 1, the experimental vignettes explained that Mehmet was forced to adopt the host culture or that he had freely chosen to do it. Admittedly, the 'mandatory cultural adoption' condition was framed in a more negative way than the 'voluntary cultural adoption' condition, which might have influenced participants' evaluation of Mehmet. Therefore, we have slightly modified the vignettes in Study 2 and used a more neutral formulation. Secondly, while, in Study 1, Mehmet explicitly mentioned his motivation to adopt the host culture (i.e. 'because I was forced'), he uses a more indirect formulation in Study 2. In the 'mandatory' condition ($N = 48$), he states: 'As part of the integration program that is mandatory for people wishing to settle in Switzerland, I [Mehmet] have taken French courses as well as training courses in Swiss history and culture. Now I [Mehmet] speak French fluently and I am completely open to the values of the country.' In the 'voluntary' condition ($N = 62$), Mehmet says: 'Without having been forced to do so by the Swiss administration, I now speak French fluently and I have become completely open to the country's values.'

Measures

We used exactly the same measures as in Study 1: Manipulation Check, Perceived identification with the host nation ($\alpha = 0.89$), support for legal recognition ($\alpha = 0.91$).

Results

Manipulation Check

As expected, participants perceived more coercion in the mandatory ($M = 3.58$; $SD = 1.23$) than in the voluntary cultural adoption condition ($M = 2.31$; $SD = 1.17$), $F(1,108) = 30.76$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.22$.

Descriptive Statistics

As in Study 1, participants self-reported, on average, a perception of Mehmet as highly identified with the host country ($M = 3.48$; $SD = 0.67$), and generally found it legitimate to grant him citizenship rights ($M = 3.80$; $SD = 1.10$). The bivariate correlation between these two variables was also high and significant ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$).

Effect of the Situational Context on Support for Legal Recognition

As expected, participants found it less legitimate to grant citizenship rights to Mehmet in the mandatory ($M = 3.40$; $SD = 1.10$) than in the voluntary cultural adoption condition ($M = 4.10$; $SD = 1.00$), $t(108) = 3.50$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.67$.

Mediation Analysis

Using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018, Model 4), we tested the same mediational model as in Study 1: Reason for Cultural adoption (experimental manipulation) was the independent variable, Perceived identification was the mediator, and Support for legal recognition was the dependent variable. Results showed that, as expected, Cultural adoption had a significant positive effect on Perceived host nation identification, which in turn had a significant positive effect on Support for legal recognition (see **Table 2**). Furthermore, the indirect effect was significant: The 95% confidence interval for the indirect path lay between 0.03 and 0.25 (i.e., zero was not included in it). The total effect of the model was significant, 95% CI [0.15, 0.55]. However, the direct effect remained significant. These results show that the effect of Reason for cultural adoption on Support for legal recognition was partially mediated by Perceived identification.

General Discussion

These two studies were conducted in order to assess the influence of the attribution of cultural adoption either to coercion or to free choice on majority members' judgments of immigrants. As expected, results showed that majority members evaluated an immigrant adopting the host culture voluntarily as more deserving to be granted rights than one portrayed as doing so for mandatory reasons. These results suggest that majority members do not solely evaluate immigrants' acculturation orientation and practices *per se*, but that they evaluate immigrants in light of the situational context in which acculturation strategies are endorsed. Moreover, we provide evidence that this effect can be explained by the perception of the immigrant's identification with the host nation. In other words, our results are compatible with the interpretation that adopting the host culture voluntarily led majority members to perceive the immigrant as being more identified

Table 2: Results for mediational model explaining the effect of the experimental manipulation on Support for legal recognition (Study 2).

	<i>b</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>95%C.I.</i>
Total Effect			
Cultural adoption to Support for legal recognition (c)	0.35	0.10	[0.15, 0.55]
Direct Effect			
Cultural adoption to Support for legal recognition (c')	0.21	0.09	[0.04, 0.39]
Path from IV to mediator			
Cultural adoption to Perceived identification (a)	0.17	0.06	[0.04, 0.29]
Path from mediator to DV			
Perceived identification to Support for legal recognition (b)	0.82	0.13	[0.55, 1.08]
Indirect Effect			
Mediation through Perceived identification	0.13	0.06	[0.03, 0.25]

Note: *N* = 110.

Bootstrap samples = 1000.

with the host nation, which, in turn, led them to perceive him as deserving to be granted rights. These results are consistent with and extend previous research showing the influence of perceived acculturation practices on perceived host nation identification and the effect of this perceived identification on majority members' attitudes towards immigrants (Anier et al., 2018; Roblain et al., 2016).

We observed that the direct effect ceased to be significant once the mediator was introduced in the model in Study 1, while it only decreased and remained significant in Study 2. This slight divergence of results between the two studies might be attributed to the difference in the sample size between Study 1 and Study 2. Indeed the smaller the sample, the more likely the results will show full (as opposed to partial) mediations (Ruckeer et al., 2011). It might also be due to differences between the two national contexts, or to differences in the vignettes used for the experimental manipulation. Notwithstanding this divergence, both studies yielded the predicted mediation effect.

One methodological limitation should be pointed out. We used, in both experimental vignettes, an immigrant belonging to a minority that tends to be devalued both in France and in Switzerland. Even if Roblain et al. (2016) did not find any moderating effect of immigrant group's status – valued versus devalued origin – between perceived acculturation orientation and perceived identification to the host nation, further research could also try to investigate whether an immigrant from a valued minority would be perceived as less identified with the host nation when he or she is involved in a mandatory integration program.

The present paper exclusively focused on perception of immigrants' host culture adoption. However, majority members may also take the situational context into account for interpreting practices related to the maintenance of their culture of origin, which could also be constrained or freely chosen. Further studies should address this issue.

Although a more general reflection on the political objectives or interests underlying the implementation

of mandatory integration programs in European countries is needed (Joppke, 2017), this study highlights the negative influence that these policies could have on the perception of immigrants. As our results suggest, the adoption of these policies could undermine the positive effects induced by immigrants' perceptions of their host culture. This paradoxical effect of these policies is particularly unfortunate given that several studies have shown that the host culture is generally well perceived and voluntarily adopted, whether by immigrants from historically established minorities (e.g., Berry & Sabatier, 2010) or by immigrants who have recently arrived in their host country, such as Syrian and Iraqi refugees (Roblain et al., 2017).

Data Accessibility Statement

Databases and measures are publicly available at: https://osf.io/34svz/?view_only=6af0772704104f55a00adfdb659ccea9

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Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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