

The double-edged effect of intergroup similarity: Muslim and Christian immigrants'
acculturation preferences on intergroup relations in Sweden

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Abstract

A 2x2x2 experiment examined effects of the acculturation orientations seen to be endorsed by immigrants (of two different religions) on intergroup relations in Sweden. Swedish majority participants ($N = 448$) read interviews with Iraqi immigrants in which the immigrants' religion (Muslim vs. Christian), desired level of contact with the host society (high vs. low) and desire to maintain their own culture (high vs. low) were manipulated. Overall, immigrants who were perceived to favour contact elicited more favourable intergroup attitudes. Desire for contact also interacted with immigrants' religion: contact among Muslim minorities increased majority members' support for multiculturalism. In addition, majority members identified more with being Swedish when Christian minorities appeared to endorse contact and reject their heritage culture, which corresponds to an acculturation strategy of assimilation. These findings demonstrate the complex role of religious similarity in intergroup relations. Implications for future research are proposed.

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In this article, we examine experimentally the effects on majority Swedes' perceptions of being presented with immigrants who appear to endorse different acculturation orientations. In doing so, we contribute to the existing literature linking acculturation strategies and intergroup relations (Brown & Zagefka, 2011). The particular focus is an investigation into whether prior research findings on intergroup relations and acculturating immigrants needs qualifying to take into account the religion of the immigrant group.

Acculturation processes

Berry (1997) conceptualised four acculturation orientations, related to immigrants' desire to seek contact (DC) with members of the receiving-society and maintain their own heritage culture (CM). These acculturation strategies are: *integration*, high desire for contact coupled with a wish to maintain their own culture; *separation*, little desire for contact and a wish to maintain their culture; *assimilation*, desire for contact and a rejection of their cultural heritage; and *marginalization*, when they relinquish both their culture and contact with the receiving-society. Integration, which is the orientation typically preferred by minority members (Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdržálek, 2000; Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012; Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998; Zagefka & Brown, 2002) has been argued to be the most adaptive; sometimes, but not always, resulting in the least acculturative stress and best psychosocial adaptation (Berry, 1997; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Brown & Zagefka, 2011; Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

However, psychological adaptation is not the only outcome of acculturation processes. Brown and Zagefka (2011), following Bourhis, Moise, Perreault and Senécal (1997) and Piontkowski et al. (2000), argue that intergroup relations are also an important

consequence of varying acculturation orientations, whether held by the minority or the majority. Both the respective acculturation preferences themselves and the mutually perceived acculturation preferences of the 'other', have been found to be associated with different intergroup attitudes (Matera, Stefanile, & Brown, 2011, 2012, 2015; Pfafferott & Brown, 2006; Piontkowski, Rohmann, & Florack, 2002; Zagefka & Brown, 2002; Zagefka et al., 2014). Research indicates that majority members generally favour minorities who show a preference towards integration or, occasionally, assimilation (Matera et al., 2011, 2012, 2015; Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001; Piontkowski et al., 2002; Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012; Van Oudenhoven & Eisses, 1998; Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998; Zagefka & Brown, 2002; Zagefka et al., 2014). Overall, these studies suggest that across contexts or for different groups, desire for contact is typically viewed favourably by members of the majority.

Perceived threat and intergroup relations: the role of minority members' religion

Indeed, research examining separately the roles of the contact and culture maintenance dimensions, has revealed that perceived desire for contact by the minority group is usually the main determinant of majority intergroup attitudes (Matera et al., 2011, 2012, 2015; Zagefka, Brown, & González., 2009). Research by Matera et al. (2011) showed that when minorities indicated a preference for a high level of contact, they were viewed more favourably by members of the majority, and a perceived desire for culture maintenance only enhanced favourable attitudes if paired with a preference for contact. This supports the commonly held assumption that 'integration' gives rise to the most favourable intergroup attitudes (Brown & Zagefka, 2011).

Further analyses by Matera et al. (2011) revealed that the relationship between desire for contact and positive attitude was partially mediated by symbolic threat (Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999a). Immigrants who expressed a desire for contact with members of the majority were seen to accept the normative standards and common values of the host-society.

This may have made them appear less threatening to majority members, which, in turn, generated more favourable intergroup attitudes. In addition to this, it has been postulated that where the minority desire contact, it may indicate to the majority that they are viewed favourably by the minority. This may reduce perceptions of intergroup anxiety, which is an anticipation of negative outcomes when interacting with members of other groups (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Stephan, Stephan, & Gudykunst 1999b).

Matera et al. (2011) also found that majority members reported viewing integrating immigrants more favourably, because they were perceived to facilitate multiculturalism (see also Celeste, Brown, Tip, & Matera., 2014). However, acculturation studies concerning majority members' support for multiculturalism has produced mixed results. While Matera et al. (2011) did not observe an independent link between culture maintenance and support for multiculturalism, Tip et al. (2012) found that majority members felt more threatened by minority members who were perceived to want to maintain their heritage culture and, as a result, showed less support for multiculturalism. Tip et al.'s findings suggested that majority members were most supportive of multiculturalism when minority members were perceived to reject, rather than conserve their heritage culture. This is ironic, as support for multiculturalism, by definition, means support for ethnic minorities to maintain their heritage culture (Schalk-Soekar & Van de Vijver, 2008).

We might speculate that support for multiculturalism, being dependent on dynamic rather than static attitudes, may vary across host countries and for different minorities (Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012). Particularly, immigrants' desire for culture maintenance might be seen as facilitating multiculturalism depending on the relative 'fit' between the majority's and minority's culture. Specifically, degrees of similarity between the minority and the host society may explain why minorities' desire for culture maintenance is not always associated with public support for multiculturalism. Indeed, in a study on intergroup relations in the

Netherlands, in which Van Osch and Breugelmans (2012) asked majority members to rate the relative similarity between themselves and different minority groups, it was found that dissimilar minorities were associated with lower support for multiculturalism and greater perceptions of threat.

Research has indicated that a potentially important source of cultural difference is the minority's religion. Studies have shown that majority members tend to perceive minorities from predominately Muslim countries as more different than minorities from predominately Christian countries (Rohmann, Piontkowski, & Van Randenborgh, 2008; Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012). However, these studies have not verified whether minority groups are perceived as more or less similar to the host-population *because of* their religion. Following several acculturation researchers (e.g., Cohen, 2009; Güngör, Fleischmann & Phalet, 2011), we acknowledge that although minorities emigrate from the same country, they may not share the same culture, meaning they may not share the same traditions, values and norms. Moreover, in the current study we treat religion as a form of culture and propose that the minority's religion might have a central role in determining if the majority perceived the minority as a similar or dissimilar group. In a host-society which is founded on Christian values, Muslim minorities may be perceived as more culturally different from the host-society than Christian minorities, with whom the host-society share a religious background. Hence, desire for contact and culture maintenance may generate different reactions among the majority, if sought by Christian (i.e., similar) or Muslim (i.e., dissimilar) immigrants.

Religion is often used as a way to define group identities (Lichterman, 2008), and in Europe, (which is predominately influenced by Christian traditions and values), Muslim immigrants may be seen as a threat towards European majority members' identities (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). Indeed, in Western societies, Muslims are sometimes associated with symbolic threat (McLaren & Johnson, 2007), and subject to more prejudice,

as they are believed to threaten Western (Christian) values and beliefs (Velasco González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008).

Previous research has shown that perceptions of intergroup similarity may alleviate perceptions of threat to dominant values and worldview and increase majority members' support for multiculturalism (Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012). Thus, intergroup contact might be particularly appreciated if sought by Muslim (i.e., dissimilar) immigrants, since desire for contact may indicate that the Muslim minority is willing to adopt the beliefs and values of the host-society (Tip et al., 2012; Van Oudenhoven & Eisses, 1998).

Desire for cultural maintenance may, on the other hand, increase perceptions of dissimilarity between the minority and the majority. Maintenance of cultural traditions may be seen to represent maintenance of cultural values and norms. The cultural traditions of Muslims, in particular, may be perceived as incompatible with the cultural values and norms of a host-society founded on Christian values and beliefs (Awad, 2010). Thus, when culture maintenance is sought by a Muslim minority, it may be perceived as threatening to the host-society's unity and stability, and as an impediment to public support for multiculturalism (Ginges & Cairns, 2000).

Whilst differences on a cultural dimension can pose challenges to harmonious intergroup relations, it is important to point out that cultural similarity is not always associated with favourable intergroup relations (see, Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). We can speculate that similar minorities do not threaten the host-society's values and worldviews to the same extent as dissimilar minorities might do - indeed, similar outgroups are sometimes viewed more favourably (Brown, 1984a). However, from Social Identity Theory, one might also predict that intergroup similarity could enhance ingroup members' need for distinctiveness (Brown, 1984b; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thus, when Swedish majority members feel that their distinctiveness is threatened they may feel a need to affirm their own

specific national identity (Triandafyllidou, 1998). Since Christian minorities are more similar to the Swedish majority than Muslim minorities, the presence of this minority may pose more of a threat towards Swedish peoples' distinctiveness. This would be particularly salient if Christian immigrants declared their desire for intercultural contact coupled with culture relinquishment, since assimilation may be seen as an attempt to reduce intergroup differences, and ultimately to become more like the majority (Van Oudenhoven & Eisses, 1998).

Overview and hypotheses

Previous research typically shows that 'dissimilar minorities' are associated with more threat and less favourable intergroup relations than 'similar minorities' (Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012). There are many ways in which minorities with different national background may differ from the receiving host-society. The present study assesses whether prior research findings can be explained, not by how similar the minority is to the host-society, but by whether they share the same religion with the host-society. In addition to this, following other acculturation researchers, we propose that the majority may infer that minorities who desire contact are more motivated to become similar to them than minorities who refuse contact. Similarly, if the minority are perceived to desire culture maintenance, the majority may infer that minorities who reject their heritage culture are more motivated to be similar to them than minority members who maintain their heritage culture (Tip et al., 2012; Van Oudenhoven & Eisses, 1998; Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012).

Hitherto, no study has used an experimental methodology to compare whether, in the same context, different intergroup relations emerge for immigrants of different religions who are seen to adopt different acculturation orientations. To accomplish this, this experiment manipulates levels of religious similarity (Christian vs Muslim) whilst holding constant nationality (Iraq). Iraqis make up the biggest immigrant group in Sweden, the context for this

research. Sweden has a long tradition of championing a multicultural agenda, being ranked at the top by the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), which evaluates countries on their integration policies. However, in recent years it has experienced an increase in right wing discourse, which propagates that Muslim minorities, in particular, pose a threat to Swedish identity. Whilst being multicultural may, in many ways, be an important aspect of *being* Swedish, we propose that people nevertheless feel threatened by Muslim culture, and therefore associate Muslims with low support for multiculturalism. From a majority perspective, the idea that Muslims can have contact with host-society, while holding on to the values and beliefs of their heritage culture, may be seen as incompatible. Thus, if Muslim minorities are perceived to desire intergroup contact, it may suggest to the majority that they also want to adopt their cultural values, which in turn may increase public support for multiculturalism (Tip et al., 2012).

Although Muslim minorities may be perceived to pose a threat to the host-society's identity by threatening their cultural norms and values, research has also shown that minorities may pose a threat to the majority's identity by threatening the majority's sense of distinctiveness. In comparison to Muslim minorities, Christian minorities share their religious culture with the host-society. Thus, if Christian minorities are perceived to desire intergroup contact and relinquish their heritage culture, they may be seen as too similar to the majority, which may pose a threat to the Swedish majority's sense of distinctiveness.

We predict that the perceived acculturation orientation and religion of minority members will influence intergroup relations. When minority members are perceived to value contact with members of the receiving society, the whole group will be viewed more favourably by members of the majority (**H1**) and associated with less threat (**H2**).

Whilst desire for contact is generally favoured by the host-society, we predict that desire for contact will be particularly appreciated if sought by Muslim minorities, as this

might make the minority appear willing to become similar to the host-society, which in turn may reduce perceptions of threat, increase positive attitudes and support for multiculturalism (**H3**). Furthermore, we predict that both contact and culture maintenance will interact with immigrants' religion in influencing intergroup relations (perceptions of threat, attitudes, support for multiculturalism). For Muslim minorities, intergroup contact may reduce perceptions of threat and increase favourable intergroup relations, whereas culture maintenance may have the opposite effect (by increasing perceptions of threat, which will result in less favourable intergroup relations). In other words, the majority will show a preference for Muslim minorities to adopt an acculturation strategy of assimilation. The culture of Christian minorities, on the other hand, may not be perceived as incompatible with Swedish culture. Thus, the majority will show a preference for the Christian minority to desire contact and culture maintenance (which corresponds to an acculturation orientation of integration) (**H4**).

In contrast, Christian immigrants who are perceived to appreciate intergroup contact, but reject their heritage culture, may be perceived as too similar to the host-society. We hypothesise that this will pose a threat to the majority's sense of distinctiveness, which will enhance the majority's need to affirm their national identification. We do not anticipate Muslim minorities to pose this kind of threat, because even though they relinquish their heritage culture, they differ from the host-society on a religious dimension, and will therefore never be viewed as too similar. (**H5**).

Method

Participants

Six hundred and nine people volunteered to take part in the study for a chance to win £25. Participants were recruited via social media platforms. Data collection was conducted during two periods of time, in 2014 and 2016. The same recruitment process was used at each

time point¹. To ascertain if there were significant differences in the data collected in each period, we conducted a multiple regression with time of data collection included as a moderator. This revealed no significant differences in the dependent variables, so it was therefore appropriate to collapse the data across time points. To create a homogenous sample, 161 people who did not report Christianity as their religion were excluded from the data set². The remaining sample consisted of 448³ participants ($M = 142$, $F = 303$; 3 participants identified as other; $M_{\text{age}} = 41.73$ years, range 16-83).

Design

Participants were randomly allocated to one of eight conditions, resulting in a 2 (Contact: High, Low) x 2 (Culture Maintenance: High, Low) x 2 (Religion: Christian, Muslim) between-participants design, with 49-61 participants in each cell of the design. This built upon procedures previously used by Matera et al. (2011, 2012, 2015), Celeste et al. (2014) and Tip (2012).

Procedure and measures

The participants were randomly assigned to one of eight fictitious but apparently real articles (adapted from Celeste et al., 2014), formed by combining levels of Desire for Contact (DC) (High vs Low) and Desire for Culture Maintenance (CM) (High vs Low) as expressed by Muslim or Christian Iraqis (see Appendix). The articles and questionnaire were translated from English to Swedish by the first author and subsequently translated back to English by a fellow scholar. After completing the questionnaire online, the participants were thanked and debriefed. The questionnaire included the following measures:

Manipulation checks. The first manipulation check assessed the underlying dimensions of perceived outgroup acculturation preferences (Zagefka & Brown, 2002): ‘I believe that the person described in the newspaper article finds it important to have Swedish friends’ (DC), and ‘I believe that the person described in the newspaper article wants to

maintain his/her own religion, language and clothing' (CM). The second manipulation check (Piontkowski et al., 2000), assessed the perceived similarity between the participants own group and the other group: 'Are Sam's and Zainab's religious beliefs similar to the religious beliefs amongst the majority of Swedish people?' (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

Intergroup attitudes. Eight items, adapted from Zagefka, Brown, Broquard and Martin (2007), assessed attitudes towards immigrants. Sample item: 'Sweden should accept all immigrants who are similar to the ones described in the newspaper article' (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .83$).

Perceptions of threat. Two items of symbolic threat and intergroup anxiety were combined into a single measure of threat: 'Immigrants from Iraq, similar to the ones described in the article, are undermining Swedish culture' (Stephan et al., 1999a) and 'How threatened would you feel if meeting immigrants similar to those described in the article?' (Rohmann et al., 2008). Responses were measured on a scale which ran from 1 to 7 (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, $\alpha = .59$).

Multiculturalism. Five items were selected and adapted to the Swedish context from the Canadian Multicultural Ideology Scale (Berry & Kalin, 1995). Sample item: 'Ethnic minorities should be helped to preserve their cultural heritage in Sweden'. Responses were measured on a scale which ran from 1 to 7 (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, $\alpha = .80$).

National identification. Five items were used to measure national identity, adapted from Brown, Condor, Matthews, Wade and Williams (1986). Sample item: 'I feel good about being Swedish' (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .84$).

Religiousness. One item assessed participants' levels of religiousness: 'How religious are you?'. Responses were measured on a scale which ran from 1 to 7 (*not very religious* to *very religious*).

Results

Firstly, 2 X 2 X 2 univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed to test the effectiveness of our experimental manipulations (see Table 1). Secondly, 2 X 2 X 2 analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs)⁴ were conducted to test the effects of our manipulations on intergroup attitudes, perceived threat, support for multiculturalism and national identity (religiousness of majority members was the covariate⁵). Mean scores and interrelationships between independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively.

Manipulation checks. Perceived outgroup preference for contact was successfully manipulated⁶. On the DC check measure there was a main effect of perceived desire for Contact in the predicted direction ($F_{(1, 440)} = 502.64, p < .001, \eta^2 = .53$; Contact_{high} $M = 6.49$ versus Contact_{low} $M = 3.79$). Although there was also a significant main effect of Culture Maintenance ($F_{(1, 440)} = 69.66, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$; Maintenance_{high} $M = 4.63$ versus Maintenance_{low} $M = 5.64$), the size of this effect was relatively small compared to that for intergroup contact. Culture maintenance further qualifies the Contact main effect $F_{(1, 440)} = 20.71, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$. Simple effects analysis showed that in both the low ($F_{(1, 444)} = 85.76, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$) and high ($F_{(1, 444)} = 6.54, p = .011, \eta^2 = .02$) contact conditions, minorities low in culture maintenance ($M_s = 4.56, 6.71$) were perceived as desiring more intergroup contact than minorities high in culture maintenance ($M_s = 3.01, 6.27$).

Perceived outgroup preference for culture maintenance was also successfully manipulated. On the CM measure there was a significant main effect of Culture Maintenance in the expected direction ($F_{(1, 440)} = 909.75, p < .001, \eta^2 = .67$, Maintenance_{high} $M = 6.35$ versus Maintenance_{low} $M = 2.70$). In addition, there was a main effect of Contact ($F_{(1, 440)} = 16.74, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$, Contact_{low} $M = 4.77$ versus Contact_{high} $M = 4.27$). Again, this effect was relatively small compared to that caused by culture maintenance.

As predicted, participants reported higher levels of religious similarity with the immigrants in the Christian condition ($M = 4.49$) than in the Muslim condition ($M = 2.84$), $F_{(1, 440)} = 92.81, p < .001, \eta^2 = .17$. There was also a significant main effect of Maintenance: specifically, immigrants who were low in culture maintenance ($M = 4.14$) were seen as more religiously similar than those who were high in culture maintenance ($M = 3.19$), $F_{(1, 440)} = 30.79, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$. In addition to this, there was a significant Religion X Culture Maintenance interaction, $F_{(1, 440)} = 7.66, p = .006, \eta^2 = .02$. Simple effect analyses revealed that in both the low culture maintenance condition ($F_{(1, 444)} = 23.76, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$) and the high culture maintenance condition, ($F_{(1, 444)} = 77.43, p < .001, \eta^2 = .15$), the Muslim minority ($M_s = 3.55, 2.12$) was perceived as significantly less similar to the majority than the Christian minority ($M_s = 4.73, 4.25$). In line with our expectations, the size of this effect was greater in the high culture maintenance condition.

Intergroup attitudes. A three-way ANCOVA with intergroup attitudes as the dependent variable was run. The effect of participants' level of religiousness was not significant, $F_{(1, 440)} = .30, p = .59, \eta^2 = .001$. A main effect of the immigrants' desire for Contact on intergroup attitudes was observed, $F_{(1, 440)} = 5.35, p = .02, \eta^2 = .01$. As predicted, respondents' attitudes were more favourable towards those immigrants who were perceived as appreciative of ($M = 5.79$) rather than refusing ($M = 5.56$) intergroup contact (**H1**). The predicted interactions between Contact x Religion ($F_{(4, 440)} = .71, p < .40, \eta^2 = .002$) on attitudes (**H3**), and between Contact x Culture Maintenance x Religion ($F_{(4, 440)} = 1.32, p < .25, \eta^2 = .003$) on attitudes (**H4**), were not statistically significant.

Perceived threat. A three-way ANCOVA with perceived threat as the dependent variable was performed. The effect of participants' level of religiousness was not significant, $F_{(1, 440)} = .04, p = .84, \eta^2 < .001$. An unexpected main effect of immigrants' desire for Culture Maintenance was observed, $F_{(1, 440)} = 7.36, p < .007, \eta^2 = .02$. Perceptions of threat were

higher towards those immigrants who were perceived as maintaining ($M = 2.02$) rather than rejecting ($M = 1.75$) their heritage culture. In line with **H2**, the ANCOVA also revealed a main effect of Contact $F_{(1, 440)} = 30.77, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$. Immigrants who desired contact with the majority ($M = 1.60$) were associated with less threat than immigrants who rejected contact ($M = 2.17$). Contrary to expectations, neither the Contact x Religion ($F_{(1, 440)} = .55, p = .46, \eta^2 = .001$) (**H3**), nor the Contact x Culture Maintenance x Religion ($F_{(1, 440)} = 2.15, p = .14, \eta^2 = .01$) (**H4**) interaction effects were significant.

Support for multiculturalism. A three-way ANCOVA with support for multiculturalism as the dependent variable was run. The effect of participants' level of religiousness was significant, $F_{(1, 440)} = 5.65, p = .02, \eta^2 = .01$. An unexpected main effect of immigrants' desire for Culture Maintenance was observed, $F_{(1, 440)} = 7.71, p = .006, \eta^2 = .02$. Majority members reported greater support for multiculturalism when minorities were perceived to maintain ($M = 5.10$) rather than reject their culture maintenance ($M = 4.79$). In regard to majority members' support for multiculturalism, the ANCOVA identified the predicted Contact x Religion interaction, $F_{(1, 440)} = 3.92, p = .05, \eta^2 = .01$ (**H3**). This effect was subsequently explored using simple effects: majority members reported greater support for multiculturalism when Muslims were shown to desire high levels of contact ($M = 5.10$) than when they rejected intergroup contact ($M = 4.69$), $F_{(1, 439)} = 6.45, p = .01, \eta^2 = .01$. In contrast, the effects of Christian minority's desire for contact ($M = 4.97$) or refusal of contact ($M = 5.01$) on majority support for multiculturalism were negligible, $F_{(1, 439)} = .06, p = .81, \eta^2 < .001$. Contrary to **H4**, the Contact x Culture Maintenance x Religion interaction effect was not significant, $F_{(1, 440)} = 1.22, p = .25, \eta^2 < .003$.

National identity. A follow-up three-way ANCOVA with national identity as the dependent variable was performed. The effect of the covariate was not significant, $F_{(1, 440)} = .39, p = .54, \eta^2 = .001$. In regard to national identification, the ANCOVA identified the

predicted three-way interaction, $F_{(1, 440)} = 5.42, p = .02, \eta^2 = .01$. The interacting effects of Contact and Culture Maintenance on national identification were examined separately for Christians and Muslims. In the Muslim condition, no significant interaction was evident. However, in the Christian condition, a significant Culture Maintenance x Contact interaction ($F_{(1, 223)} = 6.53, p = .011, \eta^2 = .03$) was identified. Simple main effects analysis revealed that the effect of Contact was significant for Low Maintenance ($F_{(1, 223)} = 6.58, p = .01, \eta^2 = .03$; $M_s = 5.00, 5.56$) but not for High Maintenance ($F_{(1, 223)} = 1.05, p = .31, \eta^2 = .01$; $M_s = 5.41, 5.19$). In addition to this, the effect of Culture Maintenance was non-significant both for Low Contact ($F_{(1, 223)} = 3.67, p = .06, \eta^2 = .02$; $M_s = 5.00, 5.41$) and for High Contact ($F_{(1, 223)} = 2.91, p = .10, \eta^2 = .01$; $M_s = 5.56, 5.19$). These findings show that majority members' national identification is greater when Christian minorities are perceived to adopt an acculturation strategy of assimilation than when they adopt an acculturation strategy of marginalization (**H5**).

Discussion

This study compared the *causal* role of perceived Christian and Muslim minorities' acculturation orientations on intergroup relations. In line with **H1**, the results revealed that when minority members were perceived to desire contact, it generated positive intergroup attitudes among members of the majority. In addition to this, when both minorities sought contact, majority members reported lower levels of threat (**H2**) (Celeste et al., 2014; Matera et al., 2011). Majority members also associated both the Christian and Muslim minority who wished to maintain their culture with increased threat. Culture maintenance was further associated with greater support for multiculturalism. It may seem counterintuitive that majority members support policies that accommodate cultural maintenance, whilst finding cultural maintenance threatening. However, these findings indicate that multiculturalism receives passive consent rather than active support from majority members. In other words,

the Swedish majority may be more willing to accommodate cultural diversity, if they perceive the minority to desire culture maintenance (to comply with multicultural ideals), than they are to actively encourage minorities to maintain their culture. This is worrisome as a lack of *active* public support for multiculturalism may have an accumulative influence on the likelihood of minorities adopting an integrationist acculturation strategy (Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006).

In line with **H3**, majority members' support for multiculturalism varied depending on whether Muslim or Christian minorities desired intergroup contact: when Muslims were perceived to desire contact, they were associated with greater support for multiculturalism. Similarly, in a study by Tip et al. (2012) it was found that Muslim minorities who sought intercultural contact were associated with greater support for multiculturalism. Their findings showed that intercultural contact was associated with adoption of the host-society's culture and relinquishment of heritage culture, which suggests that support for multiculturalism was greater when cultural diversity was less likely. Contrary to our expectations (**H4**), we did not observe an interaction between contact and culture maintenance on threat, intergroup attitudes and support for multiculturalism. Our depictions of culture maintenance did not refer to cultural practices other than the celebration of religious events. Hence, it is plausible that other aspects of Muslim culture (which were not explicitly mentioned in the manipulations of culture maintenance), may explain the lack of association between culture maintenance on behalf of the Muslim minority and the host-society's support of multiculturalism. For example, Van Oudenhoven et al. (2006) postulate that whilst the minority may relinquish certain aspects of their culture (clothing, cultural habits, food preferences), they may nevertheless identify with their cultural identity. When Muslim minorities are perceived to identify with their heritage culture, it may be seen as particularly threatening because their values and norms may be seen as incompatible with that of the host-

society. Our results support the idea that the Swedish majority may have viewed desire for intercultural contact by the Muslim minority as representative of a rejection of their heritage culture's norms and values in favour of adopting Swedish values. This line of argument is further supported by the lack of a statistically significant association between public support for multiculturalism and acculturation attitudes held by the Christian minority. The Swedish majority may perceive the Christian minority to share their values and norms. Thus, our results indicate that public support for multiculturalism varies, depending on perceptions of threats to the host-society's values and norms.

As predicted, Swedish majority members reported greater national identification when they perceived Christian minorities to relinquish their heritage culture and desire contact (H5). In accordance with previous research, people self-define in group-terms and view their group more positively when its distinctiveness is threatened (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996). Our findings seem congruent with the notion that similar outgroups can sometimes pose a threat to the ingroup's distinctiveness (Brown, 1984b). However, there are alternative interpretations for this effect, which ought to be considered. For example, Jetten et al. (2004) suggest that attempts to positively differentiate their own group from similar outgroups can be particularly likely when the outgroup is seen to pose a realistic threat. In this case, the Swedish majority may have perceived the assimilating Christian majority as a threat to economic and political power. The majority might also have engaged in downward comparison with the 'similar', but in other ways 'worse-off', minority (Wills, 1981). Finally, it is, of course, possible that the Swedish majority identified more with their nationality because they viewed assimilation by the Christian minority to validate their worldview. However, if this was the case then it raises the question of why assimilation would not be appreciated if adopted by a Muslim minority. Thus, future research should verify whether this effect is indeed driven by threat towards one's identity (as proposed by the similarity-

differentiation hypothesis, Brown, 1984b), or by any of the alternative processes outlined above. Moreover, although Christian minorities are more similar to Swedish majority members than Muslim minorities, Iraqi culture (not taking religious culture into account) differs from Swedish culture. Therefore, it would be interesting to assess whether a stronger effect would emerge if the design was replicated with a more culturally similar minority.

These findings show that Muslim and Christian minorities are subject to different acculturation expectations by members of the majority. In line with previous literature, these findings imply that being *too* different as well as being *too* similar may give rise to different intergroup relations with members of the host-society. However, exactly what greater national identification among the Swedish majority means for intergroup relations between majority members and Christian minority members needs to be investigated by future research.

Limitations and perspectives for future research

Whilst previous research has raised the issue of minority members' religion, the current design provides a promising format for evidencing the impact of the minority's religion on intergroup relations. Moreover, the findings support the approach of measuring the dimensions of acculturation separately (Matera et al., 2011), as contact and culture maintenance gave rise to different intergroup climates for Christian and Muslim immigrants. The findings have empirical implications for how future studies should design their manipulations and which variables to include. Firstly, future studies that examine different intergroup attitudes toward different religious minorities ought to emphasise further religious aspects of culture maintenance in their manipulations. This might involve exploring beyond religious celebrations and activities (perhaps by aligning culture maintenance with religious beliefs and values, Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). Secondly, research should investigate whether majority members' national identification and support for multiculturalism vary

following depictions of high versus low levels of minorities' identification with their heritage culture (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). Finally, whilst combining intergroup anxiety and symbolic threat can generate a more robust measure of threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), moderating factors may have caused intergroup anxiety to polarize in the opposite direction to symbolic threat with respect to different minorities' desire for contact (Stephan, 2014). Although it made theoretical sense to hypothesise that symbolic threat and intergroup anxiety would show a coherent pattern, the threat scale's low alpha indicated that this may not have been the case. Thus, future research may extend the current findings by measuring symbolic threat and intergroup anxiety independently.

Although the study generated some noteworthy findings, it is important to note that the effect sizes are small. The small mean differences in majority members' support for multiculturalism across conditions may be influenced by social desirability, the desire to respond in line with societal expectations. Such small mean differences may, on the other hand, correspond with greater differences in real life, where social desirability may be less influential. Furthermore, the relatively large variance ratios for the manipulations of low culture maintenance and low contact may also have had an effect on the mean differences across conditions. Participants would have had varying amounts of contact with members of these minorities, which may have influenced whether they thought the article, which depicted the minority's acculturation preferences, was realistic or not. According to the 'contact-hypothesis', the positive effect of contact on intergroup relations is also subject to certain criteria being met (e.g., equal status, common goals, personal interactions and institutional support; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Future studies may identify larger effect sizes if they control for these factors.

In addition to this, as noted earlier Sweden is ranked high in international comparisons of integration policies. Integration may thus be perceived by Swedish majority

members as more successful in comparison to other European countries, which, in turn, may have influenced our findings. Thus, whilst Muslim culture is typically associated with threat by majority members in western societies (e.g., McLaren & Johnson, 2007), we should consider the possibility that Swedish nationals may not experience Muslim culture as any more threatening than Christian culture because of successful integration of both these minorities into Swedish society. However, our representation of culture maintenance, which depicted participation in religious celebrations, does not align with how Muslims have been portrayed in Swedish media as “a grey mass slavishly following the harsh laws of Islam” (Larsson, 2006, p. 1). The fact that the manipulations only depicted minorities in everyday non-threatening scenarios, but that they nevertheless gave rise to effects (albeit small), suggests that religion plays a role in the majority’s perception of the minority. In real life, such differing perceptions of different minorities (solely based on information regarding their religious affiliation) may materialise in vastly different intergroup relationships between the host-society and different minorities. Nevertheless, future research should replicate these findings before they can be implemented, to guide intervention and policy.

To conclude, different intergroup climates were identified with respect to minorities’ desire for intercultural contact and culture maintenance, which highlights the importance of measuring the acculturation dimensions separately. This research addressed a gap in the literature by examining the role of the acculturating minorities’ religion in determining intergroup climates. The current study built upon literature that suggested being *too* different as well as being *too* similar might be associated with different types of threat, resulting in different reactions among members of the host-society. Based on our findings, future research on acculturation preferences and intergroup relations needs to take into account religious similarity between the majority and the minority, when extrapolating findings from one acculturative context to another.

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Footnotes

¹ At the first time point, the first author invited friends via Facebook and by email, then recruited other participants through their contacts. At the second time-point, participants unknown to the first author were recruited via Twitter and Facebook groups.

² In the demographic section, people were asked to provide information about their religion. They could choose between Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Atheism and No religion.

³ A power analysis using the G*Power computer program (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996) indicated that a minimum sample of 314 would be needed to detect small to medium effects (Cohen's $f = .2$; based on results by Matera et al., 2012) with 95% power using an ANCOVA with alpha at .05.

⁴ A 2 X 2 X 2 multivariate analysis of covariance was also conducted to test the omnibus effect of our manipulations on intergroup attitudes, perceived threat, support for multiculturalism and national identity (religiousness of majority members was the covariate). A three-way MANCOVA was run with three independent variables (contact, culture maintenance and religion) and four dependent variables (intergroup attitudes, perceptions of threat, support for multiculturalism and national identity). There was a statistically significant effect of religiousness on the combined dependent variable, $F_{(4, 436)} = 3.99, p = .003$, Wilks' $\Lambda = .97, \eta^2 = .04$. There was also a statistically significant main effect of contact ($F_{(4, 436)} = 9.10, p < .001$, Wilks' $\Lambda = .92, \eta^2 = .08$), and of culture maintenance ($F_{(4, 436)} = 7.20, p < .001$, Wilks' $\Lambda = .94, \eta^2 = .06$), on the combined dependent variables. The interaction effects between contact and religion ($F_{(4, 436)} = 1.13, p < .34$, Wilks' $\Lambda = .99, \eta^2 = .01$), and contact, culture maintenance and religion ($F_{(4, 436)} = 1.84, p < .12$, Wilks' $\Lambda = .98, \eta^2 = .02$), on the combined variables were not statistically significant. Inter-correlations between dependent variables show that national identity is not significantly correlated with the other dependent variables. According to Tabachnick & Fidell (2007), a MANCOVA is not suitable with

uncorrelated variables. Therefore, we conducted multiple ANCOVAs to test the effect of our manipulations on all of our dependent variables.

⁵ At time point 2, participants reported higher levels of religiousness. In order to control for influence of this variable, religiousness was included as a covariate.

⁶ Levene's test was significant for the manipulation check of perceived religious similarity, $F_{(7, 440)} = 3.59, p = .001$. However, given the large sample and the size of the variance ratio: $(2.15/1.52 = 1.41)$, the variance did not undermine the manipulation (Field, 2005). Also significant were Levene's for manipulation checks of perceived *desire for contact* $F_{(7, 440)} = 15.38, p < .001$, variance ratio $(1.57/.51 = 3.37)$ and *culture maintenance* $F_{(7, 440)} = 21.23, p < .001$, variance ratio $(1.79/.63 = 2.84)$. Descriptive statistics for perceived *desire for contact* and *culture maintenance* show that participants' responses were more heterogeneous when minorities were perceived as low rather than high in contact and culture maintenance, respectively. Levene's test was significant in respect to perceptions of threat, $F_{(7, 440)} = 7.62, p < .001$, variance ratio $(1.41/.60 = 2.35)$. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Table 1. Means (*SDs*) of control variables

Religion	CM	DC	<i>N</i>	Religious similarity	Perceived CM	Perceived DC
Christian	Low	Low	55	4.78 (1.64)	2.91 (1.58)	4.58 (1.57)
		High	55	4.67 (1.70)	2.47 (1.55)	6.81 (.51)
	High	Low	61	4.08 (1.95)	6.67 (.63)	3.00 (1.52)
		High	57	4.42 (2.15)	6.14 (.90)	6.46 (.78)
	Low	Low	57	3.65 (1.91)	2.96 (1.79)	4.54 (1.57)
		High	57	3.46 (1.86)	2.44 (1.50)	6.61 (.62)
Muslim	High	Low	57	2.04 (1.52)	6.53 (.76)	3.02 (1.72)
		High	49	2.22 (1.57)	6.04 (.99)	6.06 (1.20)

Table 2. Means (*SDs*) of main dependent variables

Religion	CM	DC	<i>N</i>	Attitudes	Threat	National identity	Multiculturalism
	Low	Low	55	5.63 (1.11)	1.92 (1.07)	5.00 (1.18)	5.04 (1.21)
		High	55	5.72 (.93)	1.56 (.74)	5.56 (1.16)	4.72 (1.18)
Christian	High	Low	61	5.70 (.80)	2.24 (1.14)	5.41 (1.03)	5.00 (1.09)
		High	57	5.90 (1.19)	1.61 (1.09)	5.19 (1.23)	5.22 (1.49)
	Low	Low	57	5.36 (1.21)	2.16 (1.41)	5.21 (1.11)	4.50 (1.18)
		High	57	5.86 (.84)	1.35 (.60)	5.28 (1.01)	4.91 (1.21)
Muslim	High	Low	57	5.54 (1.30)	2.36 (1.22)	5.07 (1.07)	4.89 (1.13)
		High	49	5.69 (1.03)	1.89 (1.10)	5.33 (1.06)	5.26 (1.05)

Table 3. Correlations between the independent and dependent variables

	CM	DC	Religion	MC	Attitudes	Nat ID	Threat
CM	-	-.03	.04	.12**	.03	-.01	.13**
DC	-.03	-	.01	.07	.11*	.07	.26**
Religion	.04	.01	-	.05	.06	.03	-.04
MC	.12**	.07	.05	-	.69**	-.07	-.45**
Attitudes	.03	.11*	.06	.70*	-	-.08	-.64**
Nat ID	-.01	.07	.03	-.07	-.08	-	.03
Threat	.13**	-.26**	-.04	.45**	-.64**	.03	-

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix

An example vignette: Muslim immigrants, high desire for intergroup contact, high desire for culture maintenance.


ANALYSIS AIR DATE: December 10, 2010


Iraqis in Sweden and their preferences: Balancing two Cultures

SUMMARY

This is a recent look at Iraqi immigrants in Sweden and their views about adjusting to life in Sweden.

Based on recent studies conducted by the Swedish Research Board of Immigration, current research shows that Muslim Iraqis in Sweden want to live a Swedish lifestyle, while maintaining their heritage culture. Further findings show that Muslim Iraqis want to have contact with Swedish people, and balance their two cultures in Swedish society. According to Torbjörn Anderson, a specialist in immigration research at the University of Lund, this is the opinion of the majority of Iraqis in Sweden. The reason why Iraqis choose to live their lives this way is not yet clear. PBS interviewed two Muslim Iraqis living in Sweden to find out what this means to them.

 9 Comments and 32 Reactions

 Listen: MP3

 Like

Transcript

Interviewer: Tell us, Zainab and Sam, you both are Muslim immigrants from Iraq. You live in a new country, away from your own customs. What does living in Sweden mean for you and your cultural customs?

Sam: As for cultural customs, in my family we celebrate Eid al-Adha (which is a Muslim celebration), and keep some other Iraqi traditions too.

Interviewer: So you prefer to balance parts of both Iraqi and Swedish cultures while living in a Swedish society. How do you feel about having friends from both cultures? What types of people do you spend your time with?

Sam: I have some Iraqi friends but I've made friends with some Swedish too. But yeah, I'd say I spend time with Swedish and Iraqis about the same amount of time.

Interviewer: Do you feel the same Zainab? What do you think of having friends with different cultural backgrounds?

Zainab: Yeah, I'm exactly the same. I have both Swedish and Iraqi friends and I also keep my original Iraqi traditions, like the importance of family togetherness. We always have big family get-togethers to celebrate any holiday or Iraqi weddings or other celebrations.

Interviewer: So you both prefer to keep your own cultural habits but also spend time with Swedes. What would you say has helped you balance these two cultures?

Zainab: Well my mom has been teaching me how to cook some of our traditional foods, but I've also joined a women's group and Friskies and Svettis, which helps me meet and spend time with both Swedish and Iraqis.

Sam: True, I mean I still listen to Iraqi music and watch some Iraqi TV, but I play football with some of my Swedish friends too. I think my time is pretty balanced between the two cultures.

- **PBS** thanks Sam and Zainab for their time and cooperation with this interview.

