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Social judgment of Burkinabè immigrants by their peers in the country of origin

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to examine how Burkinabè who emigrated to France are evaluated and approved by their peers in their country of origin ($N = 266$), depending on the congruency between their acculturation strategies and those preferred by participants.

Participants read one of two fictional portraits about a Burkinabè who emigrated to France and who was presented either as having adopted the French culture (assimilation) or as having maintained his original culture (separation). In line with our hypothesis, the target was rated as more moral in the separation condition. In addition, participants who preferred the separation strategy approved more the target who chose the same strategy.

Please refer to the Supplementary Material section to find this article's Community and Social Impact Statement.

The impact of acculturation strategies on immigrants' evaluation has generally been studied in social psychology at intergroup level, by analyzing the interactions between immigrants and members of the majority group, in host societies (e.g., Roblain et al., 2017). Few studies have examined social interactions between immigrants themselves (e.g., Badea et al., 2011). In addition, most research examining immigrants' interactions were conducted in the post-migratory context (e.g. Anier et al., 2019). For example, Ouoba et al. (2023) investigated evaluations and social approval of an ingroup member among Malagasy and North-African immigrants. In this study, participants read a portrait describing a peer immigrant who maintained or not his original culture in the host society (i.e., separation vs. assimilation, Berry, 2001). Then, participants completed a survey measuring evaluations and social approval of the target immigrant, as well as their own acculturation preferences. Results showed a more favorable evaluation and a stronger approval of ingroup members when their acculturation strategies were congruent with those of the participants.

The pre-migratory context has been even more rarely examined in social psychology (e.g., Mähönen & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2012). The aim of this research is to examine how Burkinabè who emigrated to France are evaluated and approved by their peers in the country of origin, depending on the congruency between their acculturation strategies. The case of the social judgment of Burkinabè living in France by their compatriots back at home is interesting because of the conflicting diplomatic relations between Burkina Faso and France. Faced with an inability to put an end to terrorist movements, Burkinabè expressed their anger by blocking a French military convoy in transit to Niger in 2021 and by stopping the French "Sabre" operation in Burkina Faso in 2023.

In this political context, maintaining and enhancing their cultural identity should be valued by Burkinabè living in Burkina Faso. Consequently, Burkinabè immigrants who maintain their culture of origin and adopt a separation strategy in France, can be more

approved by their fellow Burkinabè citizens back at home. Moreover, the maintenance of their culture by Burkinabè immigrants can be perceived as a sign of "loyalty" to their country of origin and can be a criterion for their better evaluation.

This is consistent with the Behavioral Regulation Model (BRM, Ellemers, 2017), according to which the moral, and above all loyal, dimension of behavior influences social judgments. Indeed, people who belong to the same social group can evaluate each other on different traits of the dimension of competence (e.g. cultivated, intelligent), sociability (e.g. sympathetic, warm,) and morality (e.g. trustworthy, loyal). However, this model showed the primacy of morality over the other two dimensions. Individuals evaluate better ingroup members that they consider to be moral than those they consider competent or sociable (Leach et al., 2015; Pagliaro et al., 2011).

In this research we focus on the most contrasted acculturation strategies: the separation and the assimilation. This approach allows us to consider the influence of either adopting the host culture or retaining the culture of origin, and not a mixed strategy. We can assume that, in the current political context, immigrants inclined to separation will be more approved and will be perceived as more loyal by their peers than if they were more inclined to another strategy such as assimilation. Moreover, based on previous research, this should be particularly true for Burkinabè who would themselves prefer the separation strategy. Indeed, based on previous research (Ouoba et al., 2023), we assume that immigrants' social judgment by ingroup members can be influenced by the congruence between their acculturation choices and those of participants. On the one hand, immigrants who have chosen the separation strategy will be more approved and will be perceived as more moral than those who have chosen the assimilation, especially by participants who would prefer the same strategy if they were themselves immigrants. On the other hand, immigrants who have opted for assimilation will be better evaluated by participants who would prefer this acculturation strategy, as being

competent and sociable. Indeed, adopting a new culture demands a high level of competency and sociability (Rubin et al., 2012).

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited on social media through a Qualtrics link. Two hundred sixty-six Burkinabè based in Burkina Faso ($M_{age} = 26.60$, $SD = 4.60$; 33.50% women) participated in the study. A sensitivity test conducted with G*Power showed that a Linear multiple regression fixed model, including five predictors, conducted with a sample of 266 participants ($\alpha = .05$) has 95% power to detect small effects ($f^2 = .07$).

Procedure

Materials and data basis are presented in detail in Supplemental materials on OSF, link: https://osf.io/p2r9v/?view_only=b92acdee60664b7a8952e94134f6488d. At the beginning of the study, participants read in French one of two fictional portraits about a Burkinabè named Larba who emigrated to France. He was presented either as having adopted only the French culture (assimilation condition) or as having preserved only his original culture (separation condition). After that, participants answered a set of questions on 7-point scales ranging from 1 “*strongly disagree*” to 7 “*strongly agree*”, except where indicated.

Measures

Measures included social judgment, social approval of the target and acculturative preferences of participants. In the social judgment, fifteen personality traits were proposed, five related to sociability (e.g., sympathetic), five related to competence (e.g., cultivated) and five others related to morality (e.g., loyal). For social approval, participants were asked to indicate “*whether they would communicate their support to Larba if they had the opportunity to speak with him*”. The measure of acculturative preferences of the participants focused on social activities, and cultural traditions, e.g. “*I would prefer to only have cultural traditions from*

France” (assimilation); “I would prefer only Burkinabè cultural traditions” (separation). We also controlled for participants’ attention and collected socio-demographic information (see supplemental material).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics and analysis are presented in Table 1. To test our hypotheses, we conducted a multiple regression analysis on each dependent variable separately and including as predictors the contrast between the two experimental conditions (separation = -0.5, assimilation = 0.5), the participants’ preferences for separation (centered), and for assimilation (centered), and the interaction between the experimental condition and each of these acculturation preferences. A t-test for independent samples showed no significant effect of the condition on participants acculturation preferences, assimilation $t(264) = 1.79, p = .075, d = .22$; separation $t(264) = 1.31, p = .191, d = .16$, allowing for testing the interactions. The results of the multiple regression analysis described above are presented for each measure.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics: Cronbach’s Alpha), means, standard deviations and correlations

	Alpha	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Sociability	.89	4.26	1.62							
2. Competence	.84	4.55	1.43	.741***						
3. Morality	.86	4.77	1.50	.282***	.522***					
4. Approval	.87	3.34	1.87	.253***	.296***	.338***				
5. Assimilation	.79	1.59	.74	.061	.064	.009	.191**			

6. Separation	.73	2.51	1.09	.004	-.112	.042	.126*	.143*		
7. Integration	.89	6.49	0.70	.041	.038	.029	-.063	-.218***	-.057	
8. Degree of religiosity	--	6.17	1.09	.052	-.014	.078	.021	-.048	-.047	.148*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Social judgement

Competence. Multiple regression analysis showed no significant effects involving experimental condition and preferences for assimilation or separation in participants.

Sociability. The analysis of the sociability dimension ($R^2 = .09$) indicated a main effect of the condition, $b = .94$, $SE = .19$, $t(260) = 4.89$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. In line with our hypothesis, participants in the assimilation condition rated the target as more sociable ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.42$) compared to those in the separation condition ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.67$). No other effects were significant.

Morality. The analysis of morality judgment ($R^2 = .20$) found a main effect of condition, $b = -1.30$, $SE = .16$, $t(260) = -7.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .19$. Participants in the separation condition rated Larba as more moral ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.20$) than those in the assimilation condition ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.50$). No other effects were significant.

We also conducted a 3 (personality dimension: competence, sociability, morality) x 2 (condition: separation vs assimilation) mixed ANOVA. Results showed a significant interaction between the two factors, $F(2,528) = 109.6$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .29$. In the assimilation condition, Larba was evaluated less moral ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.50$) than competent ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.43$) and sociable ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.42$). In contrast, in the separation condition, he was perceived as more moral ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.20$) than competent ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.41$) and sociable ($M =$

3.80, $SD = 1.67$), suggesting the primacy of morality over the other dimensions. All post hoc t test of these comparisons were significant, $p < .001$ (see OSF).

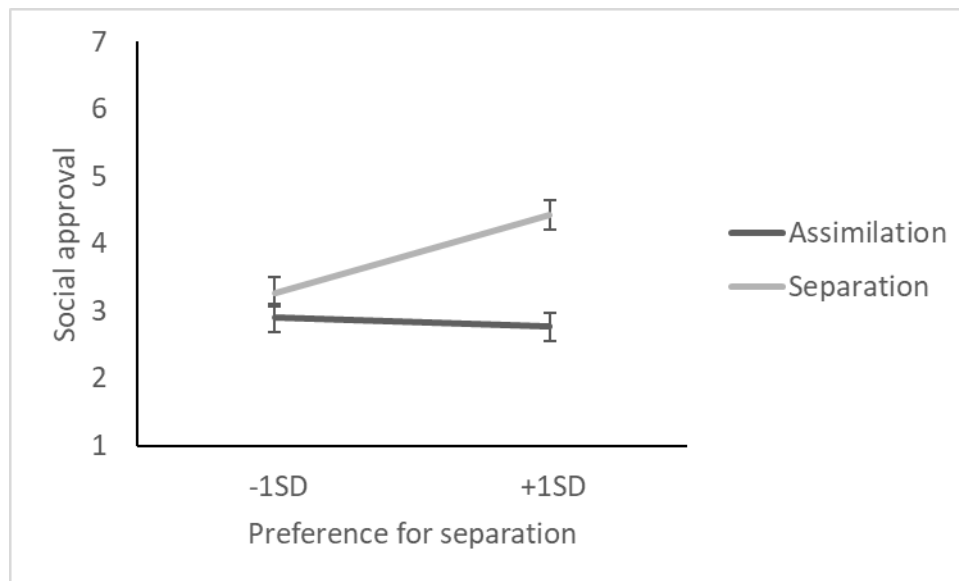
Social approval

Analyses of social approval ($R^2 = .15$) indicated a main significant effect of the experimental condition, $b = -1.01$, $SE = .21$, $t(260) = -4.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. Participants were more supportive of Larba when he chose separation ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.98$) than when he chose assimilation ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.63$). In line with our hypothesis, we observed a significant interaction between the experimental condition and the participants' preference for separation, $b = -.58$, $SE = .20$, $t(260) = -2.93$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$ (see Figure 1). When the target chooses separation, the more participants prefer this strategy themselves, the more they approve of Larba, $b = .52$, $SE = .15$, $t(260) = 3.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. When the target chooses assimilation, the link between social approval and the participants' tendency for separation is not significant, $b = -.06$, $SE = .13$, $t(260) = -.46$, $p = .645$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$. No other effects were significant¹.

Figure 1

Approval of the target as a function of the experimental condition and participants' preference for separation

¹ Main effects of participants' preferences for assimilation and separation are presented in supplemental materials.



Discussion

This study contributes to the literature on the social judgment of ingroup members, by confirming the primacy of morality in this evaluation (see Ellemers, 2017; Leach et al., 2007). Furthermore, this study shows the need to consider not only the target's characteristics in social judgment, but also the congruence between these characteristics and those of the evaluator (Ouoba et al., 2023). Specifically, when it comes to the approval of immigrants, we observe an effect of congruency between the acculturation strategy chosen by the participant (non-immigrant evaluator) and that of the target (portrayed immigrant). This effect is significant in the case of separation strategy, which presupposes the maintenance of one's culture of origin solely. In a conflict context such as the current diplomatic relations between France and Burkina Faso, this might be a sign of loyalty (Ellemers, 2017). Finally, this study examines immigrants' social judgments and approval by their peers back at home, thus contributing to the scarce literature examining the pre-migration context.

An important limitation of this study is that we did not measure participants' intentions to emigrate themselves. Preparing for the experience of immigrating to France could influence how Burkinabè perceive their immigrant peers. Furthermore, we did not measure the perception

of diplomatic relations between France and Burkina Faso. The degree of perceived conflict could also influence the pattern of results, with a clearer preference for separation when conflict is assessed as important. Future research should investigate these aspects.

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