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Too similar or too different: effect of acculturation strategies on judgments of a violent  
act committed by a Vietnamese offender

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## Too similar or too different: effect of acculturation strategies on judgments of a violent act committed by a Vietnamese offender

In the literature, several studies have shown that the perpetrator's ethnic origin and acculturation strategy are particularly influential extrajudicial factors, but authors have focused on highly stigmatized groups. The aim of this study was to examine how the participants' judgments were influenced by the acculturation strategy of a Vietnamese aggressor (member of a valued minority group in France), the consequences of the act for the victim, and their level of SDO. It was expected that assimilation, which reflects a strong similarity with the majority group, or separation, reflecting strong dissimilarity, would lead to negative judgments of the assault and its perpetrator and a harsher punishment. After reading a scenario describing a physical assault committed by a Vietnamese man, in which the perpetrator's acculturation strategy and the consequences of the act were manipulated, 196 French students completed a questionnaire.

The results confirm our hypothesis. Moreover, they show that when there were serious consequences for the victim, the act was considered to be more serious if the offender had not adopted French culture. However, when the consequences were minor, the act was considered to be more serious and a harsher punishment was recommended if the offender had adopted French culture. We explain how acculturation strategy is an important factor when judging transgressions, and how being too similar or too different to the majority group can increase the perceived threat. The status of SDO is discussed.

**Key Words:** Acculturation Strategies, Vietnamese, Offender, Judgment, SDO

## Too similar or too different: effect of acculturation strategies on judgments of a violent act committed by a Vietnamese offender

When judging an offending act such as an assault and its perpetrator, several factors come into play (Sabatier & Schadron, 2010). Some are directly linked to the offence (judicial factors), for example the consequences for the victim. Offences with serious consequences have been found to incur longer sentences than those with less serious consequences (Steffensmeier, Kramer, & Ulmer, 1995). The study by Mueller-Johnson and Dhimi (2010) on mock judges' sentencing decisions showed a main effect of offence severity on length of prison sentence. However, other factors, such as the aggressor's ethnic origin, which may at first glance be unrelated to the act, also affect the judgment (extrajudicial factors) (Beaton, Dovidio, & LeBlanc, 2011; Calverley, 2010; Devine, Clayton, Dunford, Seying, & Pryce, 2001). In public debate and in the media, offenders are more often depicted as members of an ethnic minority than of the majority group, in particular in cases of physical aggression or homicide (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Green, Thomsen, Sidanius, Staerklé, & Potanina, 2009). Generally, society associates criminality with the most undervalued minority groups, for example, African Americans in the United States, or North Africans in France (Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, 2006; Mucchielli, 2003). Immigrants from Arab-Muslim cultures are considered as a devalued group and are perceived by majority groups in Western societies as a threat (Lopez-Rodriguez, Cuadrado, Navas, 2017; McLaren & Johnson, 2007; Olsson, Matera, Tip, & Brown, 2019). In France, they are discriminated against (Brouard & Tiberj, 2005; Meurs, 2017).

By contrast, immigrants from Asia, particularly from former Indochina, such as the Vietnamese<sup>1</sup>, are positively stereotyped and judged to be discrete, silent, meticulous and docile (Simon-Barouh, 1999; Vidal, 1997). As a result, Vietnamese immigrants constitute an invisible population in France and are rarely the focus of scientific studies. They are also

invisible to most social services because they almost never seek social assistance (Gayral-Taminh, 2009). More generally, they are perceived in society as discreet and ordinary people (Vidal, 1997) and therefore not as a threat (Nann, 2007). They adopt integration strategies that are fairly consistent with the French cultural model, in which personal achievement through work and education is highly valued (Gayral-Taminh, 2009, 2010).

The aim of the present study was to examine the extent to which knowledge of the acculturation strategy adopted by a Vietnamese offender, a member of a minority group that is positively perceived in society, influences how he and his act are judged.

### **Similarity/dissimilarity between groups**

The extent to which a minority group is valued in society is a determining factor in intergroup relationships (Lopez-Rodriguez, Navas, Cuadrado, Coutant, & Worchel, 2014; Lopez Rodriguez, Cuadrado, & Navas, 2016). This may be associated with the level of perceived similarity. Although similarity/dissimilarity and valuation/devaluation are two clearly distinct dimensions, they can sometimes be linked. Thus, in some cases but not all, groups are valued because they are more similar to the majority group in certain respects, such as religion (Rohmann, Piontkowski, & Van Randenborgh, 2008; Olssen et al., 2019), or because they are relatively invisible and non-threatening (Gayral-Taminh, 2009). These minority groups are never associated in the media with delinquent behavior. As a result, they are closer to the ingroup. By contrast, minority groups perceived as being very different to the majority are sometimes associated with great threat (Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012), whereas greater similarity can lead to more favorable attitudes (Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2016). Moreover, in a judicial context, Bottom, Davis and Epstein (2004) found that participants do not judge ingroup and outgroup members in the same way; an outgroup member, who is perceived as different, is judged more harshly than an ingroup member, who is perceived as

being similar. The greater the dissimilarity between the group membership of the person judging and of the one being judged, the harsher the sentence will be (Chadee, 1996).

However, cultural similarity is not always associated with favorable intergroup relations (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). Drawing on Social Identity Theory, if minorities are perceived as too similar to the majority, they threaten its distinctiveness (Brown, 1984; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

### **Acculturation strategies**

The relationship that minority groups have with the majority group and culture, in other words their acculturation strategies, are likely to influence perceived similarities. Research in social psychology has been dominated by Berry's bi-dimensional model (1980, 1997), which distinguishes between four different acculturation "strategies" or orientations (integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization) on the basis of a combination of attitudes towards two issues facing acculturating immigrants: cultural maintenance and contact with the host population. These two issues constitute two orthogonal dimensions on which individuals can position themselves. Extending this approach, other models have replaced the "contact" dimension by "adoption" of the host culture (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997); by combining these two dimensions, the authors found the same acculturation orientations as Berry. However, there are differences between these two acculturation models, as the desire to have contact with the majority and to participate in the host society does not imply willingness to adopt the host culture (Liebkind, 2001; Snauwaert, Soenens, Vanbeselaere, & Boen, 2003). Nevertheless, several studies found no difference in the views of the host population when replacing "contact" by "adoption" (Matera, Stefanile, & Brown, 2012; Tip, Zagefka, Gonzalez, & Brown, 2012; Van Acker & Vanbeselaere, 2011). Majority members also have preferences regarding whether or not minorities should keep their original culture, have contact with the host population or adopt the host culture

(Piontkowski, Rohmann, & Florack, 2002; Zagefka & Brown, 2002). In several countries, host community members have been observed to prefer minority members to have contact and/or adopt the host culture (e.g., Barrette, Bourhis, Personnaz, & Personnaz, 2004; Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007; Tip et al., 2012). Majority members also have a preference for integration and occasionally for assimilation (Matera et al., 2011, 2012, 2015). Ultimately, the acculturation strategies adopted by minorities influence the perception of similarity/dissimilarity. Maintaining heritage culture accentuates dissimilarity between minority and majority groups. Conversely, the desire to establish contact with French people and the adoption of French culture lead to greater perceived similarity (Olsson et al., 2019). The results of recent studies carried out by Taillandier-Schmitt and Combalbert (2017), and by Dougez, Taillandier-Schmitt, and Combalbert (2018), show that acculturation strategies influence judgments in a judicial context. The influence of these acculturation strategies can be observed in the judgment of the act itself (the perceived gravity of the act and the recommended sanctions) and of the aggressor, particularly in terms of dangerousness. The authors show that offenders of North African origin, either male or female, was judged more severely and given a harsher sentence if they have not adopted French culture, and if they chose separation rather than another strategy.

However, adoption of the host culture encompasses aspects of both integration (retention of the original culture) and assimilation (non-retention of the original culture). Furthermore, as shown by Thomsen, Green, Sidanius (2008) and Guimond, De Oliveira, Kamiesjki and Sidanius (2010), assimilation can sometimes lead to negative attitudes towards immigrants. Not retaining one's original culture can blur boundaries between groups, particularly between the majority and the minority group. In some contexts this may be perceived as threatening the ingroup's distinctiveness. This would be particularly true for

people who value hierarchies between social groups, in other words, those who have a high level of social dominance orientation (SDO).

Drawing on social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), SDO is defined as the degree to which individuals desire and support group-based hierarchies and domination between groups and oppose social equality. SDO is one of the strongest predictors of intergroup attitudes and behaviour (Ho et al., 2012). High SDO individuals should particularly value situations that allow them to maintain difference with power over outgroups. Therefore, differential judgments of outgroup criminal offenders could be one strategy, among many others, to maintain, enhance or attenuate the social hierarchy. Majority members with high SDO denigrate immigrant perpetrators in order to legitimize the existing social hierarchy (Green, Thomsen, Sidanius, Staerklé, & Potanina, 2009). Social dominance is associated with support for harsh criminal sanctions (Sidanius, Mitchell, Haley, & Navarette, 2006).

### **Overview and hypotheses**

Numerous studies have shown that ethnic origin is a particularly influential extrajudicial factor (Beaton et al., 2011; Calverley, 2010; Devine, Clayton, Dunford, Seying, & Pryce, 2001). In the literature, authors have focused on highly stigmatized groups, because they are the ones that tend to be associated with criminality (Green, et al., 2009; Mucchielli, 2003). By contrast, there has been little interest in more highly valued immigrants, such as the Vietnamese in France, particularly in the judicial context. To gain a clearer understanding of why ethnic origin is such an influential factor, it would be interesting to examine acculturation strategy as an explanatory factor. Not adopting French culture and retaining the culture of origin would reduce perceived similarity with the ingroup and increase the perception of threat. This was shown by studies with an offender of North African origin (Taillandier-Schmitt & Combalbert, 2017). On the other hand, non-retention of the original culture and

adoption of the majority culture by a member of a valued minority group would increase the perception of similarity but would also threaten the distinctiveness of the ingroup. These two conditions are likely to lead to harsher judgments, particularly by those with a high level of SDO. SDO level is an important variable to consider here and could play a moderating role. Individuals with high SDO would be harsher in their judgment of an offender who belongs to the outgroup and threatens their group membership by too much similarity or dissimilarity.

The present study, involving a lay student population, examined the effects of the consequences of a physical aggression (low *vs* high impact) on a victim (factual variable), the acculturation strategy of a perpetrator of Vietnamese origin, and the participants' SDO level on their judgments of the act and the perpetrator.

We expected that the consequences of the assault on the victim would influence the way the participants judged both the act and its perpetrator. Thus, an act with minimal consequences would be judged less harshly and the perpetrator deemed to be less dangerous than one that has serious consequences for the victim (H1).

We expected to observe an interaction effect between retention of the original culture and adoption of French culture. More precisely, we expected that the Vietnamese perpetrator would be deemed to be more dangerous and his act judged more harshly if he had not retained his original culture and had adopted French culture (assimilation), or if he retained his original culture and rejected French culture (separation) (H2), especially by participants with high SDO scores, in order to maintain the distinctiveness of their ingroup (H3).

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

One hundred and ninety-six students (95 men and 100 women; one participant did not indicate his/her gender) aged 18 to 36 ( $M_{age} = 20.19$ ;  $SD_{age} = 2.47$ ) participated in the study. They were recruited through the libraries of a French University and were all French nationals. They came from different academic backgrounds: psychology, social sciences and humanities, law, medicine and pharmacy, sciences, languages, management, economy and geography.

### ***Material and procedure***

The research was presented as a study of “judgment and responsibility”. All the students volunteered to take part in this study and received no compensation. They were free to refuse to participate and could stop their participation or refuse to allow their responses to be used at any time during the research without justification. All aspects of the research were in line with APA ethical guidelines.

Participants were randomly allocated to one of eight experimental conditions, resulting in a 2 (consequences of the act: low *vs* high impact) x 2 (retention of original culture: no *vs* yes) x 2 (adoption of French culture: no *vs* yes) between-participants design. The variables were manipulated through scenarios, which were identical to those previously used by Taillandier-Schmitt and Combalbert (2017). All the scenarios had the same structure. In the first part, the criminal act was described; it took place in the afternoon in a street of a large French city. An altercation occurred between Chuong T., a Vietnamese man, and Christophe C., a Frenchman, in which Chuong T. clearly punched the other man several times. At this

point, the impact of the act on the victim was manipulated; the consequences were either minor (low impact: he got up and ran away) or serious (high impact: he lay unconscious on the ground). Chuong T. was arrested by the police. During the police interrogation he talked about his life, his relationships with Vietnam and France. In this second part of the scenario, Chuong T.'s acculturation strategy was manipulated. In each scenario, he behaved in line with one of the four acculturation strategies, in both family and occupational contexts, based on his adoption of the host culture and retention of his original culture<sup>2</sup>: assimilation (Y/N), separation (N/Y), integration (Y/Y), and marginalization (N/N) (Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007; Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998) (See Appendix).

### ***Measures***

After reading the scenario, participants were asked to respond to a number of items in a questionnaire using a 7-point Likert scale. After completing the questionnaire, participants were thanked and debriefed.

**Manipulation check.** The participants answered four questions designed to check that the manipulation of the acculturation strategies in the scenarios had been carried out correctly, in the desired direction: “In your opinion, does Chuong T. want to keep his original culture?”; “In your opinion, does Chuong T. have any relations with the Vietnamese population?”; “In your opinion, does Chuong T. want to adopt the host culture?”; “In your opinion, does Chuong T. maintain relationships with the French population?” (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *totally*).

To check that the manipulation of the variable "consequence of the act" did indeed induce a differential perception in terms of gravity, participants had to indicate to what extent the act was serious (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *totally*).

**Judgment of the act.** The assault was judged in terms of the harshness of the proposed sanction (Chadee, 1996). Participants had to answer two questions about the punishment: whether they thought it was legitimate (1 = *Absolutely not* to 7 = *completely agree*) and its severity (1 = *Not at all* to 7 = *extremely*). These two items were positively correlated,  $r = .49$ ,  $p = .0001$ . A composite score was computed. Finally, participants indicated whether they would recommend a sentence of unconditional imprisonment (1 = *Absolutely not* to 7 = *completely agree*), widely seen as the most severe form of punishment (Jobard & Névanen, 2007). The notion of unconditional imprisonment was explained to the participants.

**Evaluation of the offender.** Participants judged the aggressor on two dimensions: an overall assessment and a measure of his dangerousness (Dougez et al., 2018; Taillandier-Schmitt & Combalbert, 2017). First, they rated their overall impression of Chuong T. on a scale of 1 (Very bad) to 7 (Very good), and then his level of dangerousness, also on a scale of 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Absolutely).

**Social dominance orientation.** SDO was measured using a 10-item version of the SDO scale (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) adapted for use with French-speaking participants by Duarte, Dambrun, and Guimond (2004). The 10 items were combined to form a composite SDO score (Cronbach's Alpha = .89). High scores indicate preference for hierarchies between social groups and little concern for equality.

## Results

### Manipulation check

An ANOVA carried out for each of the five manipulation-check items confirmed that the manipulation of the scenarios functioned correctly.

When Chuong chose integration or separation, he was seen as retaining his original culture (respectively,  $M = 6.57$ ;  $SD = .64$  and  $M = 6.81$ ;  $SD = .66$ ) more than when he chose assimilation ( $M = 2.38$ ;  $SD = 1.58$ ) or marginalization ( $M = 2.33$ ;  $SD = 1.45$ ),  $F(3, 189) = 238.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .79$ . When he chose assimilation and integration (respectively,  $M = 6.03$ ;  $SD = 1.46$  and  $M = 5.33$ ;  $SD = 1.48$ ), he was seen as adopting French culture more than when he chose separation ( $M = 1.25$ ;  $SD = .84$ ) or marginalization ( $M = 1.96$ ;  $SD = 1.20$ ),  $F(3, 189) = 168.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .73$ . In addition, he was perceived as having more relationships with Vietnamese people  $F(3, 192) = 173.9$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .73$  when he chose integration ( $M = 5.94$ ;  $SD = 1.19$ ) or separation ( $M = 6.5$ ;  $SD = .96$ ) than when he chose assimilation ( $M = 2.53$ ;  $SD = 1.56$ ) or marginalization ( $M = 2.14$ ;  $SD = 1.14$ ). He was perceived as having more relationships with French people  $F(3, 192) = 107.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .63$  when he chose integration ( $M = 5.67$ ;  $SD = 1.54$ ) or assimilation ( $M = 5.8$ ;  $SD = 1.64$ ) than when he chose separation ( $M = 1.79$ ;  $SD = 1.18$ ) or marginalization ( $M = 2.73$ ;  $SD = 1.16$ ).

No difference was observed between adoption of French culture and contact with French people under conditions corresponding to integration and assimilation. On the other hand, participants believed that Chuong had more contact with French people when he adopted French culture under conditions of separation and marginalization,  $F(3, 192) = 3.31$ ,  $p < .02$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .05$ . Scenarios were perceived as they were supposed to with respect to acculturation strategies.

Concerning the consequences of the act on the victim, when the consequences were serious, the score for gravity of the act was higher ( $M = 5.28$ ;  $SD = 1.33$ ) than in the “minor consequences” condition ( $M = 4.88$ ;  $SD = 1.36$ ),  $F(1, 194) = 4.48$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .02$ .

## Data analyses

We first verified that the manipulated variables had no effect on participants' level of SDO. To this end, we conducted a 2 retention of the original culture (No vs yes) x 2 adoption of the host culture (No vs yes) x 2 impact for the victim (low vs high) ANOVA, with participants' level of SDO (composite score) as dependent variable. No significant effects were observed,  $F_s(1,182) < 1.12$  and all  $p$ 's  $> .29$ . We were therefore able to use SDO as a predictor in our analyses.

To examine the respective effects of "retention of the original culture" and "adoption of the host culture" (Bourhis et al., 1997) and the moderator effect of SDO level, we carried out a 2 (retention of the original culture, coded -1 and +1) x 2 (adoption of the host culture, coded -1 and +1) x 2 (impact, low vs. high, coded -1 and +1) x SDO (centred at the mean) factorial regression analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2013).

### Effect of the consequences for the victim

We expected that the consequences of the assault on the victim would influence the way the participants judged both the act and its perpetrator (H1). Unfortunately, no main effect of this variable was observed. Conversely, several interaction effects between the consequences for the victim and the adoption of French culture were observed, but only on the judgment of the act. Concerning the gravity of the act,  $F(1, 174) = 15.67$ ,  $p = .0001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .05$ , when there were major consequences for the victim, the act was considered more serious if the offender did not adopt French culture ( $M = 5.56$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) than if he did ( $M = 5$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ). If the consequences were minor, the opposite was true; the act was considered more

serious if he adopted French culture ( $M = 5.33$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) than if he did not ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ , see Table 1).

Insert Table 1

The other interaction effect,  $F(1, 174) = 13.53$ ,  $p = .0003$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .07$ , shows that when the consequences were minor, the recommended punishment was harsher when the offender adopted French culture ( $M = 5.28$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) than when he did not ( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ). By contrast, when the consequences were serious, the recommended punishment was harsher when the aggressor did not adopt French culture ( $M = 5.31$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) than when he did ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) (see figure 1).

Insert figure 1

### **Effect of SDO**

No main effect of this variable was observed. However, the analyses revealed two interaction effects between adoption of the host culture and the SDO score. The first concerned the recommendation of unconditional imprisonment,  $F(1, 174) = 4.98$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .03$ . The higher the participants' SDO score, the more they advocated this type of sentence when the offender did not adopt French culture,  $\beta = .24$ ,  $t(100) = 2.45$ ,  $p = .02$ , 95% CI [.04; .43]. When the offender adopted French culture, there was no difference between low and high SDO participants ( $p > .12$ ).

The second effect concerned the overall impression of the offender,  $F(1, 173) = 6.09$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .03$ . To examine this interaction further, we conducted simple regression analyses for “no adoption” and “adoption” conditions. The results revealed that level of SDO positively predicted the overall impression only in the “adoption” condition,  $\beta = .21$ ,  $t(86) =$

1.95,  $p = .05$ , 95% CI [-.004; .42]. The results were not significant in the “no-adoption” condition.

Insert Table 2

### **Effect of acculturation strategies**

The second and main hypothesis concerned the effect of the offender’s acculturation strategy on the participants' judgments of the act and the offender. We expected to observe an interaction effect between retention of the original culture and adoption of French culture (H2). The analyses revealed results that are broadly consistent with this hypothesis.

The first finding concerned the severity of the sentence,  $F(1, 174) = 7.67$ ,  $p = .006$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .04$ . When the offender did not retain his original culture, the recommended sentence was harsher when he adopted French culture (assimilation,  $M = 5.34$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) than when he did not (marginalization,  $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). The other differences were not significant. Furthermore, there was no difference between the assimilation and the separation profiles ( $M = 5.17$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ).

We then conducted planned contrasts to test more specifically the hypothesis that participants would propose harsher sanctions for offenders with assimilation and separation profiles than those with integration and marginalization profiles. The analysis confirmed this hypothesis, showing a significant difference between assimilation and separation on the one hand and marginalization and integration on the other,  $F(1, 182) = 9.04$ ,  $p = .003$ .

The same effect was observed for the assessment of the offender's dangerousness,  $F(1, 182) = 7.98$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .04$ ; the integrationist profile ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 1.71$ ) was considered less dangerous than the other profiles, and an offender with an assimilationist

profile ( $M = 4.65, SD = .95$ ) was considered to be as dangerous as one with a separatist profile ( $M = 4.52, SD = 1.42$ ). Planned contrasts again confirmed the significant difference between assimilation and separation on the one hand and marginalization and integration on the other,  $F(1, 182) = 7.98, p = .005$ . Contrary to our hypothesis, no moderating effect of the participants' SDO level was observed (H3).

The result was slightly different for participants' overall impression of Chuang. The analysis revealed several effects. First, we observed a main effect of adoption of French culture,  $F(1, 173) = 8.41, p = .004, \eta^2_p = .05$ ; participants had a more positive impression of an offender who adopted French culture ( $M = 3.47, SD = 1.33$ ) than one who did not ( $M = 2.88, SD = 1.21$ ). An interaction effect was also observed between retention of the original culture and adoption of French culture,  $F(1, 173) = 6.74, p = .01, \eta^2_p = .04$ ; when the offender did not retain his original culture, there was no difference if he adopted French culture or not (for marginalization and assimilation, respectively,  $M = 3.12, SD = 1.21$  and  $M = 3.18, SD = 1.32$ ). On the other hand, when he retained his original culture, the impression was more positive if he adopted French culture than if he did not (for integration and separation, respectively,  $M = 3.63, SD = 1.31$  and  $M = 2.65, SD = 1.17$ ). Moreover, the post-hoc analyses (Fisher's LSD) revealed that an offender with an integrationist profile was judged more positively than one with an assimilationist profile.

## **Discussion**

A possible explanatory factor for the influence of ethnic origin on how offenders are judged could be related to their acculturation strategy. The aim of this study was to extend earlier work (Taillandier-Schmitt & Combalbert, 2017) on the influence of the aggressor's

acculturation strategy, the consequences of the act for the victim, and participants' level of SDO.

In this experimental study, the consequences of the act and acculturation strategy were manipulated through scenarios, in which the dimensions of "contact" (Berry, 1980, 1997) with the host population and "adoption" of the host culture (Bourhis et al., 1997) were closely intertwined. Although the objective of this study was not to compare the contact and adoption models, the control measures revealed a difference between the participants' perceptions of contact and adoption under the separation and marginalization conditions, but not assimilation or integration. Under the latter conditions, it can be assumed that adoption of French culture inevitably involves contact with French people. Adoption is a more psychologically demanding concept than intergroup contact (Lewis & Dupuis, 2008; Safdar, 2008), illustrating in some way the principle of "the who can do more can do less"; intercultural contacts can be developed without adopting the culture of the host country, but the opposite seems difficult.

We expected that the consequences of the assault on the victim would influence the way the participants judged both the act and its perpetrator. Surprisingly, no main effect of this variable was observed. However, several interaction effects can be highlighted, particularly regarding adoption of French culture. When the consequences were serious, non-adoption of French culture led participants to perceive the act as being more serious and to recommend a harsher punishment. The same results were obtained on the measure of the severity of the sentence. These results are consistent with those obtained by Taillandier-Schmitt and Combalbert (2017) with a North-African offender. More surprisingly, adopting French culture was in some way seen as an aggravating circumstance, but only when the consequences for the victim were minor. We observed how factual elements directly linked to the offence were taken into account differently depending on other factors, in this case, those

related to acculturation strategy. Committing a serious act would *de facto* place the individual in the outgroup, and not adopting French culture, regardless of ethnic origin, would increase the distance between groups. On the other hand, the process may be somewhat different when the consequences are minor. Participants will be more severe in their judgment of an aggressor who belongs to a valued group, who adopts French culture and is therefore closer to the ingroup, but who behaves counter-normatively. This resembles the "black sheep effect" (Marques, Abrams, & Serôdio, 2001; Marques & Paez, 1994), whereby group members are harsher towards an ingroup member in order to preserve a positive image of their group.

The main hypothesis of this study concerned the effect of the acculturation strategy adopted by the offender on the participants' judgments about the act itself and the offender. We expected that the Vietnamese perpetrator would be deemed more dangerous and his act judged more harshly if he did not retain his original culture and adopted French culture (assimilation), or if he retained his original culture and rejected French culture (separation). The results confirm this hypothesis. Assimilation and separation could be considered threatening by members of the majority group. When the aggressor was North African, only the separatist profile appeared as threatening (Taillandier-Schmitt & Combalbert, 2017). Caution is required when interpreting this result, but it may be assumed that the Vietnamese are perceived as a valued group in France, with little visibility and posing minimal threat as they are never associated with criminal behavior (Gayral-Taminh, 2009); from this point of view they are similar to the majority group. In addition, retention of their culture of origin and adoption of the majority culture (integration) allows this similarity to be maintained and the majority group to have some distinctiveness; "*Being similar while being different*". On the other hand, rejection of the culture of origin accompanied by adoption of the host country (assimilation) leads to a loss of the majority group's distinctiveness and hence to the perception of the Vietnamese as a threat to the identity of the majority group (Guimond et al.,

2010; Jetten et al., 2004). Not adopting French culture, together with retention of cultural heritage, would also lead to the perception of greater dissimilarity, and therefore a greater threat. Being too similar or too different will have a negative impact on the attitudes of the majority group.

However, it should be noted that with regard to participants' overall impression of the aggressor, adoption of the host culture remained a determining factor; an offender who adopted French culture was perceived more positively. In line with the results obtained in the literature (Matera et al., 2011, 2012, 2015), it is the integrationist profile that is judged most positively. The dimensions on which the individual is judged thus involve different processes.

Guimond et al. (2010) found that this was particularly apparent in people with high SDO. This effect was not replicated in our study; level of SDO was a significant determinant of judgments when the aggressor was North African (Taillandier-Schmitt & Combalbert, 2017), but not in the current case (except for unconditional imprisonment). This discrepancy raises questions about the status of SDO (Kteily, Sidanius, Levin, 2011). Rather than evaluating general orientation towards intergroup inequality and group-based hierarchy, measures of SDO index attitudes towards the specific groups that the participants have in mind while completing the scale (Sibley & Liu, 2010). Questioning people about a North-African offender is not the same as questioning them about a Vietnamese offender; these two ethnic minorities are not valued in the same way in France. In this study, the level of SDO was not measured *a priori* but after reading the questionnaire.

### **Contributions and limitations**

The main contribution of this study is that it sheds more light on the determining role of acculturation strategies when judging a transgressive act. Acculturation strategies provide information about immigrant populations' relationships with the host community and the

dominant culture. They influence the perceived similarity between groups and allow inferences to be made about what can be expected from members of minority groups. However, their influence can only be truly understood by taking into account the ethnicity of the target group. Therefore, it was particularly important to focus on relatively little studied ethnic minorities. Differential judgments of outgroup offenders according to their ethnic origin or acculturation strategy play a significant role in understanding the immigrant-crime association, and the underlying processes may be vital to promote fair treatment of immigrants.

While the results obtained in this study are interesting, future studies should focus on a number of points that constitute obvious limitations of this study. The first concerns our sample size, which makes it difficult to generalize the results. Future studies should involve larger samples.

The second limitation concerns the number of dimensions chosen to judge the offender. We wanted to have an overall measure and also a measure of dangerousness in a situation involving physical aggression. There is no doubt that there were insufficient measures, and it would be interesting in future studies to use items related to the two dimensions proposed in the Stereotype Content Model, namely warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). This would be a way of examining the content of the stereotype associated with a group that has been little studied in the literature.

We have seen that too much perceived similarity or dissimilarity with the outgroup can lead to judging this group as threatening (Olsson et al., 2019); measures of perceived threat should thus be included in future studies to distinguish between realistic threats, particularly with regard to physical safety, and symbolic threats (Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005).

In France, the Vietnamese are valued more than other minority groups such as North Africans. We show that they can be perceived as similar to the French because they are not associated with delinquent behaviour and are not thus considered to be very threatening. However, they differ on other dimensions. A clear distinction should be made between similarity/dissimilarity and between valued/devalued, and the links between these two dimensions require further investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> Vietnamese are often confused with Cambodians and Laotians who are nationals of the former French colonies of Indochina. They are categorized as an "Asian" phenotype.

<sup>2</sup> Our scenarios, inspired by Maisonnette and Testé (2007), involve both the contact and the adoption dimensions. Some elements relate to the desire for contact with the host population (e.g., "In the occupational setting, Mr. Chuong T. says he prefers to work with French rather than Asian colleagues"), but most of the elements relate to adoption of the host culture (e.g., "it is especially essential to speak French fluently and to learn, above all, to know and respect the traditions and values of the French culture"). We have taken care to include two separate control measures, one relating to contact with members of the majority group, the other relating to adoption of French culture.

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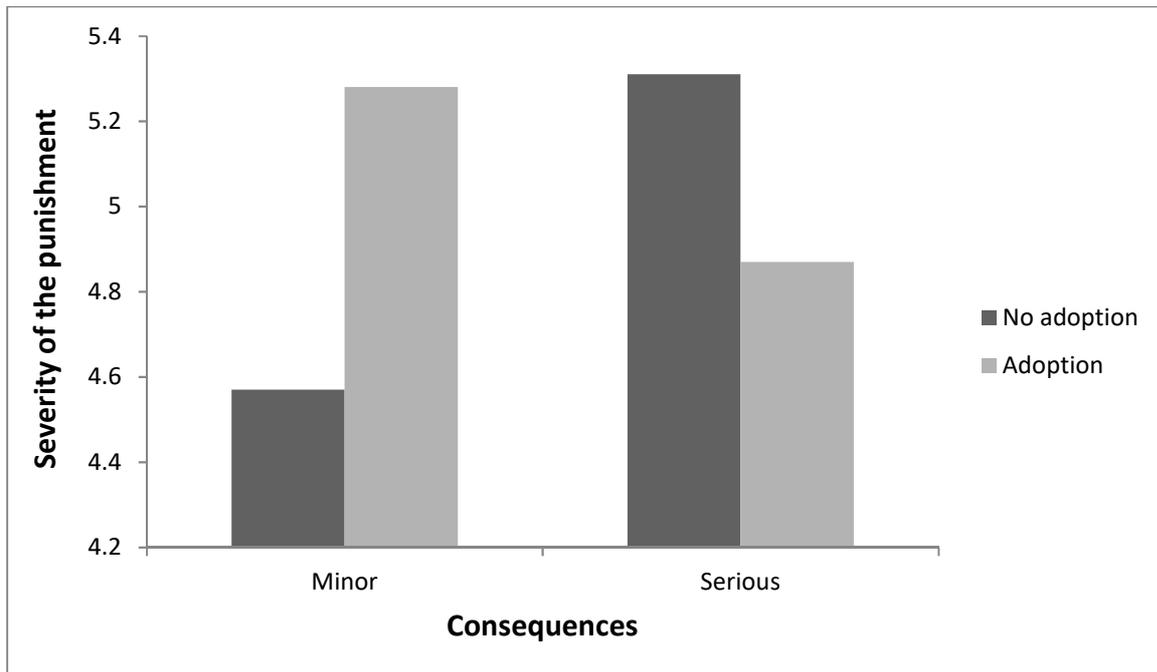
**Table 1:** Means and standard deviations of measures related to the original culture and adoption of French culture.

	<b>No retention</b>		<b>Retention</b>	
	<b>No adoption</b> <i>(marginalization)</i>	<b>Adoption</b> <i>(assimilation)</i>	<b>No adoption</b> <i>(separation)</i>	<b>Adoption</b> <i>(integration)</i>
Severity of the sentence	4.67 (1.27)	5.34 (.83)	5.17(1.24)	4.85 (1.13)
Unconditional imprisonment	2.35 (1.55)	2.15 (1.35)	2.42 (1.54)	2.37 (1.72)
Overall impression	3.12 (1.21)	3.18 (1.32)	2.65 (1.17)	3.69 (1.31)
Perceived dangerousness	4.1 (1.37)	4.65 (.95)	4.52 (1.42)	3.92 (1.71)

**Table 2.** Regression analysis in No Adoption and Adoption conditions with level of SDO scores as predictor.

	<b>No Adoption</b>	<b>Adoption</b>
	$\beta$	$\beta$
Severity of the sentence	-.04	-.17
Unconditional imprisonment	.24*	-.17
Overall impression	-.08	.21*
Perceived dangerousness	.04	-.14

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$



**Figure 1.** Interaction effect between consequences of the act for the victim and adoption of French culture by the offender.

**Appendix I:** Presentation of the altercation scenario in the “minimal consequences” and “assimilation” condition.

Story of the assault with minimal consequences:

On March 12, around 3 pm, in the Rue Marais in Bordeaux, several people witness an altercation between two men. Chuong T. repeatedly punched the other man, Christophe C. in the face without having exchanged any words with him. Very quickly, Christophe C. manages to escape by running away.

Chuong T. is immediately apprehended by the police. During his hearing at the police station, he says he does not know the victim. He claims that Christophe C. had looked at him “aggressively” and that he could not tolerate it.

Assimilation strategy

Chuong T. is Vietnamese. He has lived in France for about ten years. During the investigation, he said that when he arrived, he wondered how things would work out, his country and France being very different. He explained that he and his wife are Vietnamese, but since they have lived in France, their original culture is no longer really important to them. He added that they no longer participate in activities related to their home culture (special food on holy days, etc.). By contrast, they are very open to the French culture to which they attach great value and they try to know as much as possible about it. They only have French friends and no Vietnamese friends. He said that it is very important for them to live in the culture of the country in which they live.

Chuong T. said that he does not want his children and grandchildren to learn to speak their mother tongue. He said that it is very important to speak French fluently and to learn and respect the traditions and values of French culture. They no longer go to their home country because they have no connection with their family or their culture. He stressed that he would prefer his daughter to marry a French boy than an Asian man.

In the professional context, Chuong T. said that he prefers to work with French than Asian colleagues. In fact, he thinks that these professional relations are more harmonious and enriching than with Asian colleagues. He added that he can cooperate and communicate more easily with French colleagues. Chuong T. wishes to obtain French nationality and has started to take the necessary steps.