

Immigrants fusing with the host culture: Disgust shapes host-majority assimilation and integration preferences

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移民の文化融合に対する受け入れ社会の反応

—多数派住民の同化・統合志向におよぼす嫌悪感情の影響—

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要約

移民などに伴う異文化間接触の際に生じる文化変容には、移民の出身文化と受け入れ側文化の双方における、文化的および心理的な変容が含まれる。文化融合に関する研究結果によると、融合が望ましい帰結をもたらすこともあれば、文化的な汚染や脅威の知覚といった、望ましくない帰結をもたらすことも多い。本研究では、受け入れ側文化を象徴する代表的職業についての移民、すなわち融合的な移民と接した際に、受け入れ側がどのような文化変容スタイルを選好するかを吟味した。加えて、移民が所属する集団の相対的地位がその選好に与える影響を調べた。日本人参加者 530 名に、文化的代表性の高い職業（神職）あるいは低い職業（銀行員）に就いた移民に関するシナリオが呈示された。移民の出身国としては、高地位（アメリカ合衆国）または低地位（ナイジェリア）の国が設定された。結果は、神職に対しては同化主義が強く選好され、統合主義への選好は弱いことを明らかにした。また、嫌悪感情がこの効果を媒介しており、移民を文化的汚染と知覚するほど、彼らの文化を排除する意図が高まることが示された。一方、集団の地位の効果は見られなかった。文化融合としての移民という存在が文化的汚染の知覚をもたらし、それに伴う嫌悪感情が、支持される文化変容のタイプを左右することを示した本研究は、文化融合と受け入れ側文化の文化変容という異色の組み合わせによる、新たな観点の創出という貢献をもたらした。

Key words

acculturation preferences, immigration, culture fusion, disgust, symbolic threat

1. Introduction

Acculturation is the bidirectional process that takes place when the heritage culture brought by immigrants comes into contact with the host culture (Berry, 1997), thus leading to psychological and cultural changes in both the outgroup immigrant members and the ingroup host population. Acculturation impacts on various factors, such as changes in cultural practices and behaviors, values, identity, and intercultural interactions (Schmitz & Schmitz, 2022). Immigrant individuals hence must adjust themselves to the new reality by choosing how strongly they want to endorse each culture, which over time determines their acculturation strategy.

The acculturation strategy is a result of the combination of two axes: the degree to which the immigrant wants to *adopt* the new host culture, and the degree to which the individual wants to *maintain* the heritage culture (Berry, 1997; see Figure 1). Prior research on acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2016) has showed that immigrants prefer *integration*, which is described as adopting the host culture while keeping the heritage culture, over other types including *assimilation* (i.e., adopting the host culture but abandoning the heritage culture), *separation* (i.e., keeping

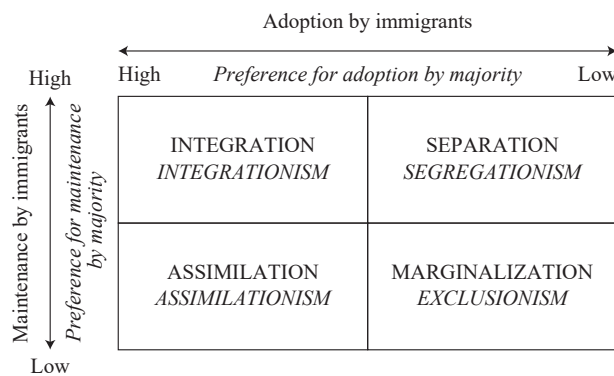


Figure 1: Acculturation strategies of immigrants and preferences for acculturation by the host majority (in italics), depending on the degree of adoption of the host culture and the degree of maintenance of the heritage culture

Source: Based on Berry's (1997) and the Interactive Acculturation Model (Bourhis et al., 1997).

the heritage culture but not adopting the host culture), and *marginalization* (i.e., having a weak attachment to both cultures). Importantly, integration is widely acknowledged as the most successful acculturation strategy, leading to greater overall well-being in comparison to other strategies (Berry & Hou, 2016).

1.1 Acculturation preferences of the host majority

On the other hand, even though immigrants have their own preference regarding how they want to acculturate, the Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM⁽¹⁾; Bourhis et al., 1997) proposed that the host majority may impose their own perspective on the immigrant minority (also see Figure 1) and independently endorse *integrationism* (i.e., preference for the integration of immigrants), *assimilationism* (i.e., preference for their assimilation), *segregationism* (i.e., preference for their separation) and *exclusionism* (i.e., directly rejecting immigrants and their heritage culture). Notably, prior research has shown that discordant acculturation preferences between the host majority and the minority outgroups may entail conflictual relational outcomes (Zagefka & Brown, 2002). In the current research we focused on the acculturation preferences of the *host majority*.

Overall, integrationism, transformation-integrationism and individualism are categorized as *immigration welcoming* acculturation orientations and are generally more favored than *immigration rejecting* orientations such as assimilationism, segregationism and exclusionism (Bourhis et al., 1997; Montaruli et al., 2011), especially in multicultural countries that promote immigration (Barrette et al., 2004; Berry, 2006). On the other hand, assimilationist views are more common in contexts that prioritize cultural uniformity to protect the ingroup cultural identity (Borooah & Mangan, 2009; Verkuyten, 2005). This divide is corroborated by the fact that welcoming orientations are negatively correlated to rejecting orientations (e.g., integrationism vs. assimilationism; Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001).

Assimilationist views may be rooted in the fact that immigrants maintaining the heritage culture can provoke negative responses from the host majority. For instance, immigrants who do not assimilate may be less accepted (Paxton & Mughan, 2006) and perceived as more symbolically threatening (Tip et al., 2002), which in turn may increase support for stronger assimilationist attitudes (Stephan et al., 2016). Notably, exposure to non-assimilating immigrants has also been linked to increased anti-immigration attitudes particularly among individuals with high disgust sensitivity, suggesting that foreign cultural elements may be perceived as contamination (Karinen et al., 2019).

In addition, research shows that those who have more negative outgroup attitudes endorse assimilationism more strongly (Rojas et al., 2014; Verkuyten, 2011). For instance, prejudice towards immigrant outgroups has been linked both to a stronger preference for immigrants to adopt the host culture and to a diminished preference for them to maintain their heritage culture (Zagefka et al., 2014). Moreover, a meta-analysis similarly showed that, while assimilationism is positively related to prejudice, multiculturalism (i.e., integrationism) is negatively associated to it (Whitley & Webster, 2019).

Nevertheless, not all the minority immigrant groups that arrive in a new country are treated in the same way. In fact, prior studies have found that the host majority endorse welcoming

strategies such as integrationism and individualism to a greater extent for immigrant outgroups with a “valued” status (Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001), which may be perceived more positively due to historical, economic, or cultural reasons (Bourhis et al., 2009). In contrast, host community members are more likely to endorse rejecting acculturation strategies, such as assimilationism and segregationism, toward immigrant outgroups with a “devalued” status, particularly when these groups differ ethnically, evoke perceived economic or security threats, or challenge dominant cultural norms. Such preferences may be driven by ethnocentric views that construct these groups as inferior, justifying cultural domination through assimilation (Zhao & Biernat, 2022). Moreover, while immigrants with a devalued status often face stricter assimilation demands, they may still be denied acceptance due to immutable characteristics like ethnicity or ancestry (Komisarof et al., 2020).

In the present study, we manipulated the status of the immigrant group (i.e., United States of America vs. Nigeria), which we conceptualized as the culturally shared value judgment about a group’s position within a social hierarchy, together with the prestige, respect, and evaluative judgments collectively attributed to it (Shaw, 1981).

Because we expected that host majority participants would reject the heritage culture of the immigrant group with a devalued status (i.e., Nigeria) to a greater extent, we predicted that they would endorse assimilationism to a greater extent and integrationism to a lesser extent for these immigrants:

- Hypothesis 1a (H1a): Host majority members will endorse assimilationism (i.e., a preference for immigrants to adopt the host culture while abandoning their heritage culture) to a greater extent for immigrants from a devalued status group.
- Hypothesis 1b (H1b): Host majority members will endorse integrationism (i.e., a preference for immigrants to adopt the host culture while maintaining their heritage culture) to a lesser extent for immigrants from a devalued status group.

Because immigrants possess certain physical attributes (e.g., ethnicity, appearance) and attitudes (e.g., acculturative) that the host majority may infer as representative of their foreign heritage culture (Waytz et al., 2010), we posited that some of these traits, especially when associated with a devalued status, may be perceived as incompatible or intrusive when the host culture is simultaneously highly salient. We explored how such perceptions arise by examining the psychological mechanisms underlying responses to culture mixing.

1.2 Connecting acculturation to culture mixing

Culture mixing is described as the presence of elements from two distinct cultures occupying the same space at the same time (Chiu et al., 2009), and it involves the synthesis of cultural representations such as symbols, values, and practices. These

elements can be juxtaposed, overlapped, or even fused to the point that the two cultural representations are blended into one new entity. Culture mixing can elicit negative emotional and cognitive responses, including negativity and aversion (Yang, 2011), perceived threats to the social and cultural identity (Chiu et al., 2011; Torelli et al., 2011), and even disgust in the event of *culture fusion* (e.g., the statue of Abraham Lincoln with his head replaced by a bust of Mao Zedong; Cheon et al., 2016; Cheon & Hong, 2020). Such fusion may be seen as compromising the purity of the heritage culture, triggering perceptions of cultural contamination (Rozin et al., 2009).

These reactions, coupled with fears of cultural erosion, may motivate individuals to reject foreign cultural elements in an effort to protect and preserve their cultural identity (Chiu et al., 2011). For instance, Shi et al. (2016) demonstrated that exposing Chinese participants to a McDonald's logo superimposed on the Great Wall increased their implicit prejudice towards the intruding American foreign cultural group. Similarly, in a real-world case, a Starbucks store was removed from Beijing's Forbidden City because its presence, as a symbol of American culture, threatened the integrity of the local heritage (Rui, 2007). These findings suggest that culture mixing, particularly when perceived as intrusive, may heighten the rejection of foreign influences in defense of the heritage culture.

While most research has explored this phenomenon in the context of cultural representations, we argue that immigrants intruding on a cultural domain where the host culture is strongly salient may also be perceived as a case of culture fusion, because some physical attributes or inferred attitudes may evoke their foreign culture and hence lead to perceptions of cultural contrast and incompatibility. In fact, previous research by the authors (Lemaire Portillo & Karasawa, 2026) found that immigrants engaging in culturally representative occupations within the host Japanese culture (e.g., *Shinto* priest) were perceived as instances of culture fusion, eliciting stronger exclusionary responses including disgust, perceived symbolic threat, and opposition, in comparison to less culturally representative roles (e.g., bank worker). These findings suggested that culturally fused immigrants may trigger similar psychological mechanisms as those observed in responses to fused cultural representations.

Importantly, while the previous research focused on the effect of culture fusion on opposition towards immigrant individuals,⁽²⁾ the current study aimed to extend these findings by examining how exposure to culturally fused immigrants affects the acculturation preferences of the host majority. Whereas opposition reflects the rejection of immigrants, acculturation preferences instead capture expectations regarding how immigrants should adapt culturally. For instance, although assimilationism is often treated as an immigration rejecting orientation, assimilationist individuals may accept, and even support, immigrants who adopt the host culture, provided that they abandon their heritage culture. Because acculturation preferences are concep-

tually independent from immigrant rejection and instead capture the cultural attitudes expected of immigrants even when they are accepted, examining these preferences is crucial for a fuller understanding of the effects of culture fusion.

While conceptually independent, we predicted that emotional and cognitive mechanisms previously linked to culture fusion, particularly disgust and symbolic threat, would also influence acculturation preferences. Recall that disgust is an emotion characterized by feelings of revulsion and appraisals of potential contamination, which may prompt physiological, expressive, and behavioral responses aimed at avoiding or expelling the perceived contaminant (Rozin et al., 2009). Because the immigrant bringing the foreign into the host culture would be appraised as potential contamination, the corresponding behavioral impulse would be oriented toward eliminating it.

The sense of intrusiveness and incompatibility due to the perceived fusion may also activate symbolic threat to the majority groups' cultural identity because of an anticipation of the foreign influence (Chiu et al., 2011; Tip et al., 2002). This would similarly entail reactionary attitudes against the immigrant to preserve the integrity of the host culture (Stephan et al., 2016).

Since experiencing disgust and perceiving symbolic threat in response to culturally fused immigrants (i.e., performing a highly representative occupation of the host culture) would reinforce the strategies to remove their intruding foreign culture, to prevent it from coexisting with the host culture, we hypothesized that it would lead to an *increase* in assimilationism (i.e., the immigrant should adopt the host culture while *renouncing to the heritage culture*) and also a *decrease* in integrationism (i.e., the immigrant *can keep the heritage culture* while adopting the host culture), because we expected that both strategies would be inversely correlated with each other (Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001). Therefore, our main hypotheses were the following:

- Hypothesis 2a (H2a): Host majority members will endorse assimilationism (i.e., a preference for immigrants to adopt the host culture while abandoning their heritage culture) to a greater extent for immigrants working in an occupation highly representative of the host country's culture.
- Hypothesis 2b (H2b): Host majority members will endorse integrationism (i.e., a preference for immigrants to adopt the host culture while maintaining their heritage culture) to a lower extent for immigrants working in an occupation highly representative of the host country's culture.

In addition, we also expected that culture fusion involving a devalued status culture would lead to especially rejecting acculturation orientations, because it would be perceived as especially contaminating and threatening to the host culture, both due to cultural incompatibility and to existing historical, economic, or ethnic reasons (Bourhis et al., 2009). Prior research supports this notion, showing that culture fusion involving less

valued outgroups evokes stronger disgust (Cheon & Hong, 2020). Therefore, we hypothesized that culturally fused immigrants from devalued status outgroups would especially trigger increased support for assimilationism and decreased support for integrationism, as a means of minimizing the perceived cultural contamination:

- Hypothesis 3a (H3a): Assimilationism (i.e., a preference for immigrants to adopt the host culture while abandoning their heritage culture) towards immigrants working in an occupation highly representative of the host country's culture will be especially stronger for immigrants from a devalued status group.
- Hypothesis 3b (H3b): Integrationism (i.e., a preference for immigrants to adopt the host culture while maintaining their heritage culture) towards immigrants working in an occupation highly representative of the host country's culture will be especially weaker for immigrants from a devalued status group.

Building on prior research (Lemaire Portillo & Karasawa, 2026), we aimed to show that disgust would also mediate the relationship between host cultural representativeness and the acculturation preferences. As we discussed earlier, we expected that immigrants occupying culturally representative occupations would be perceived as instances of culture fusion and, consequently, as threats to the purity of the host culture (Cheon et al., 2016). Therefore, drawing on the disgust evaluation system, which functions to detect and reject potential contaminants (Rozin et al., 2009), we hypothesized that disgust would be the underlying mechanism detecting and rejecting the foreign cultural contamination to the host culture through increased assimilationism and reduced integrationism:

- Hypothesis 4a (H4a): Disgust will positively mediate the relationship between host cultural representativeness and assimilationism.
- Hypothesis 4b (H4b): Disgust will negatively mediate the relationship between host cultural representativeness and integrationism.

The present study also sought to extend prior findings (Lemaire Portillo & Karasawa, 2026) by examining whether symbolic threat would mediate the relationship between host cultural representativeness and the acculturation preferences. We proposed that perceiving the foreign physical traits or attitudes of a fusing immigrant as culturally contrasting, intrusive and incompatible, may be sufficient to trigger symbolic threat (Chiu et al., 2011; Tip et al., 2002). Given that symbolic threat has been linked to stronger support for assimilationism (Stephan et al., 2016), we hypothesized that it would serve as an additional mechanism through which the influence of the foreign culture

would be minimized:

- Hypothesis 5a (H5a): Symbolic threat will positively mediate the relationship between host cultural representativeness and assimilationism.
- Hypothesis 5b (H5b): Symbolic threat will negatively mediate the relationship between host cultural representativeness and integrationism.

1.3 Overview of the present research

The novel contribution anticipated for the present study was the proposition that reactionary attitudes toward immigrants could be conceptualized as responses to culture fusion, and that acculturation preferences of host-group members would reflect such attitudes. To test the hypotheses derived from this proposition, we conducted an experiment where participants were randomly exposed to a scenario and a photograph describing an immigrant character whose occupation was either representative of the host Japanese culture (i.e., a *kannushi*, priest of *Shinto*, which is Japan's autochthonous religion) or not culturally representative (i.e., a bank worker). Moreover, the immigrant was described as coming either from a devalued (i.e., Nigeria) or a valued status country (i.e., the United States of America). To our knowledge, this was the first attempt at examining the common influence of culture fusion and immigrant group status on the acculturative preferences of the host majority members.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

To calculate the required sample size, we performed an *a priori* power analysis using G*Power, with a 2×2 factorial design, medium to low effect size ($f = .20$), and criteria of 95% power, which resulted in a minimum required sample size of 327. In view that we planned a series of mediational analyses, we recruited a sample of 600 Japanese participants via Crowd-Works, a Japanese online crowdsourcing platform. Each participant received ¥100 for their participation. Seventy participants were excluded because of atypical responses on the questionnaire (e.g., extremely short or long response times, or scoring more than three standard deviations above or below the mean on any measure). This resulted in 530 participants (308 females, $M_{age} = 39.99$, $SD_{age} = 9.88$) subjected to the analyses.

2.2 Design and materials

The study used a 2 (host cultural representativeness: high vs. low) \times 2 (immigrant group status: devalued vs. valued) between-subjects factorial design. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of four conditions where they read a scenario introducing "Michael", a Black male immigrant working in Japan. Roughly one-half of the participants were assigned to the high host cultural representativeness condition, in which they read about the immigrant becoming a *kannushi* and saw the pic-

ture of him wearing a priest costume in a shrine. The remaining half of the sample were assigned to the low representativeness condition, in which they read about the immigrant becoming a bank worker and saw the picture of the same immigrant wearing a business suit in an office. Moreover, we manipulated the status of the immigrant group by describing the target immigrant as either coming from Nigeria (i.e., devalued status) or the United States of America (i.e., valued status).

To determine the occupations used in the host cultural representativeness manipulation, a pilot study was conducted. Results indicated that *kannushi* was perceived as highly representative of the Japanese culture ($M = 4.81$ on a 5-point scale), whereas bank worker was rated as low in cultural representativeness ($M = 2.01$). Similarly, countries used in the status manipulation were selected based on pilot data indicating that the United States was relatively less disliked ($M = 2.11$), whereas Nigeria was rated as more disliked ($M = 2.60$). Accordingly, to control for ethnic variability across conditions, all stimulus photographs featured the same immigrant character from a Black ethnic group. Full details of the scenarios and stimulus materials are provided in the Appendix.

2.3 Procedures

After giving informed consent, reading the scenario and seeing the photograph of the immigrant working, participants initially answered one item assessing disgust towards the contents of the picture (i.e., “After seeing this picture, do you feel disgust?”) (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*: all subsequent measures employed the same 7-point response scale). They then answered the following measurements in a randomized order, including one item measuring assimilationism (i.e., “Do you think that American immigrants like Michael should give up their original culture for the sake of adopting Japanese culture?”) and another item measuring integrationism (i.e., “Do you think that Nigerian immigrants like Michael should maintain their original culture while also adopting Japanese culture?”), both adapted from Bourhis & Montreuil (2016). As expected (Montreuil & Bourhis,

2001), assimilationism and integrationism were negatively moderately correlated ($r = -.47$). Furthermore, participants answered an eight-item scale evaluating the perception of symbolic threat (e.g., “Do you think that American immigrants like Michael are a threat to Japanese values?”; $\alpha = .87$), adapted from Stephan et al. (1999). After completing all the measures, participants answered the host cultural representativeness manipulation check, which included two items (e.g., “How much do you think that a *kannushi* represents Japanese culture?”; $r = .77$). Further, after watching the experiment picture once again, they also answered a two-item measure of perceived culture fusion (e.g., “Do you think that there are two cultures mixed in this picture?”; $r = .84$). Finally, they responded to demographic questions (i.e., age, gender, and nationality).

3. Results

3.1 Manipulation check

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed a significant main effect of host cultural representativeness on the perception of host cultural representativeness, $F(1, 526) = 254.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .33$, clearly indicating that participants perceived a *kannushi* as a more culturally representative occupation of Japan ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.40$) than a bank worker ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.46$). The effect of immigrant group status was not significant, $F(1, 526) < 1$, $p = .783$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$, and neither was the interaction, $F(1, 526) = 1.56$, $p = .212$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$.

3.2 Perceived culture fusion

Moreover, we aimed to ascertain that the presumed perception of culture fusion occurred in the expected conditions. Importantly, the two-way ANOVA on perceived culture fusion revealed a main effect of host cultural representativeness, $F(1, 526) = 42.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, hence indicating that the *kannushi* immigrant was perceived as more culturally fused ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.73$) than the bank worker ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.35$) (see Table 1). There was no main effect of immigrant group status, $F(1, 526) < 1$, $p = .709$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$, nor a significant interaction, $F(1,$

Table 1: Means and standard deviations for assimilationism, integrationism, disgust, symbolic threat, and perception of culture fusion by host cultural representativeness and immigrant group status

	Host Cultural Representativeness			
	High		Low	
	Immigrant Group Status			
	Devalued <i>N</i> = 131	Valued <i>N</i> = 136	Devalued <i>N</i> = 133	Valued <i>N</i> = 130
Assimilationism	2.39 (1.25)	2.34 (1.37)	2.11 (1.13)	2.18 (1.02)
Integrationism	5.11 (1.23)	5.27 (1.22)	5.44 (1.26)	5.36 (1.09)
Disgust	1.82 (1.25)	1.98 (1.52)	1.35 (0.72)	1.38 (0.77)
Symbolic Threat	3.15 (1.08)	3.09 (1.01)	3.26 (0.83)	3.21 (0.86)
Perception of Culture Fusion	3.52 (1.77)	3.39 (1.70)	2.56 (1.35)	2.59 (1.36)

Note: *N* = number of participants associated with each condition.

$526) < 1, p = .560, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

3.3 Assimilationism and integrationism

To test our main Hypotheses 1a through 3b, we ran a two-way ANOVA, which showed a main effect of host cultural representativeness on assimilationism, $F(1, 526) = 4.38, p = .037, \eta_p^2 = .01$, indicating that participants expressed stronger preferences for cultural assimilation when immigrants became a *kannushi* ($M = 2.36, SD = 1.31$) compared with a bank worker ($M = 2.15, SD = 1.07$). In contrast, the main effect of immigrant group status was not significant, $F(1, 526) < 1, p = .571, \eta_p^2 = .00$, and neither was the interaction, $F(1, 526) < 1, p = .961, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

Similarly, the ANOVA results for integrationism revealed a main effect of host cultural representativeness, $F(1, 526) = 4.18, p = .041, \eta_p^2 = .01$, showing that participants expressed weaker preferences for cultural integration when immigrants became a *kannushi* ($M = 5.19, SD = 1.23$) relative to a bank worker ($M = 5.40, SD = 1.18$). Again, neither the main effect of immigrant group status, $F(1, 526) = 1.31, p = .254, \eta_p^2 = .00$, nor the interaction, $F(1, 526) < 1, p = .721, \eta_p^2 = .00$, were significant.

Overall, these results indicated that immigrants in a highly culturally representative role (i.e., *kannushi*) elicited greater assimilationism and lower integrationism scores than those in a less representative role (i.e., bank worker), reflecting stronger demands for abandoning their heritage culture and reduced tolerance for its maintenance.

3.4 Mediations

To assess the hypothesized mediation effects of disgust and symbolic threat (H4a through H5b), we conducted 2×2 ANOVAs to examine whether host cultural representativeness significantly influenced the proposed mediators, as required for mediation analysis (Hayes, 2022).

Importantly, a two-way ANOVA revealed a main effect of host cultural representativeness on the emotion of disgust, $F(1, 526) = 29.93, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$, which indicated that the immigrant working as a *kannushi* elicited more disgust than the bank worker. The main effect of immigrant group status was not significant, $F(1, 526) < 1, p = .343, \eta_p^2 = .00$, as was the interaction, $F(1, 526) < 1, p = .480, \eta_p^2 = .00$. On the other hand, the two-way ANOVA did not show a significant effect of host cultural representativeness on symbolic threat, $F(1, 526) = 1.94, p = .165, \eta_p^2 = .00$. Further, neither the effect of immigrant group status, $F(1, 526) < 1, p = .514, \eta_p^2 = .00$, nor the interaction were significant, $F(1, 526) < 1, p = .960, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

Consequently, we only tested whether disgust mediated the relationship between host cultural representativeness and either of the acculturation preferences (i.e., assimilationism and integrationism), as predicted in Hypotheses 4a and 4b. We used PROCESS 4.1 (Hayes, 2022; Model 4) for our bootstrapping analyses (10,000 iterations), and a robust standard error (HC4) for heteroskedasticity-consistent inference (Cribari-Neto & Lima, 2014).

For assimilationism, the indirect effect of disgust was posi-

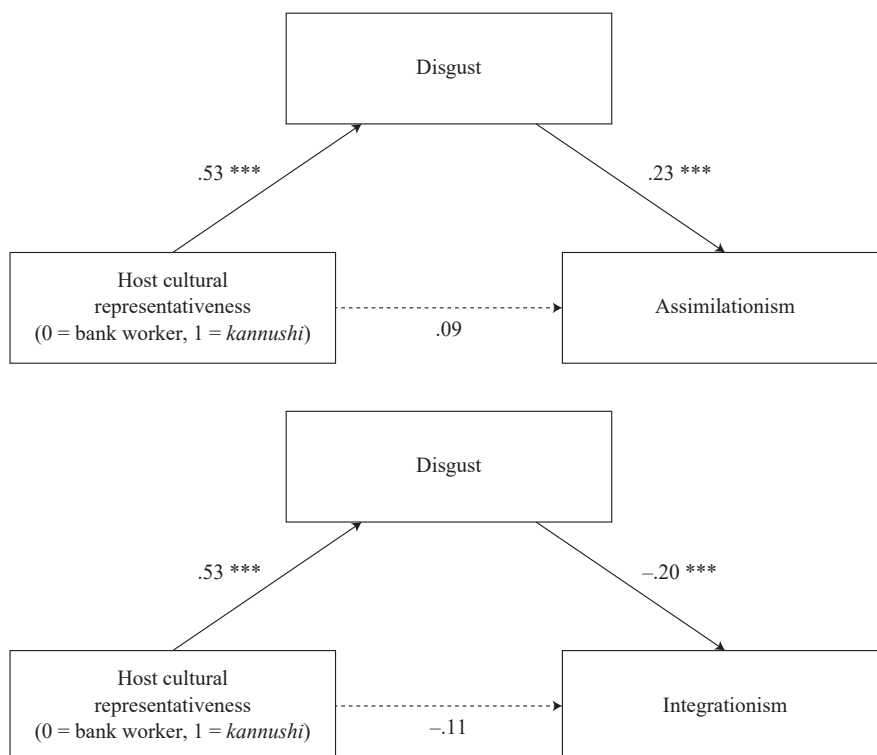


Figure 2: Regression coefficients for the relationship between host cultural representativeness and assimilationism (or integrationism) as mediated by disgust

Note: *** $p < .001$.

tive and significant ($b = .13$, $SE = .03$, $95\% CI = [.07, .19]$), while the direct effect was not significant ($b = .09$, $SE = .10$, $95\% CI = [-.11, .30]$), indicating full mediation by disgust (see Figure 2). Similarly, for integrationism, the indirect effect of disgust was negative and significant ($b = -.11$, $SE = .03$, $95\% CI = [-.17, -.05]$), with a non-significant direct effect ($b = -.11$, $SE = .11$, $95\% CI = [-.32, .10]$), also supporting full mediation. These findings suggest that disgust fully mediated the relationship between host cultural representativeness and both acculturation preferences, highlighting its central role in shaping acculturative responses to cultural fusion.

4. Discussion

The main goal of this research was to, building on previous findings, explore the relationship between culturally fused immigrants—belonging to either valued or devalued status outgroups—and the host community's acculturation preferences toward those immigrants (i.e., assimilationism and integrationism). The primary findings of the study are outlined in the following five key points.

First, the results of the current study revealed that an immigrant engaging in a culturally representative occupation of the host culture (i.e., *kannushi*) was perceived as a form of culture fusion, suggesting that the host majority members inferred some of the immigrant's physical traits or attitudes as intruding into the host culture and fusing with it. This result is consistent with previous research exploring culture fusion in the context of immigration (Lemaire Portillo & Karasawa, 2026).

The second main finding in the current research is related to the role of disgust. Importantly, perceiving the immigrant as culturally fusing the foreign and heritage cultures led participants to feel disgust to a greater extent, which was consistent with previous studies exploring reactions to both culturally fused representations (Cheon et al., 2016; Cheon & Hong, 2020) and immigrants (Lemaire Portillo & Karasawa, 2026). Moreover, disgust fully mediated the relationship between host cultural representativeness and the acculturation preferences (H4a and H4b), suggesting that the detection of cultural contamination through the disgust evaluation system (Rozin et al., 2009) led to rejecting the foreign culture to preserve the purity and integrity of the local one.

Third, the analyses on our primary dependent variables (assimilationism and integrationism) revealed that exposure to a culturally fused immigrant influenced the acculturation preferences of host majority members by increasing assimilationism, as well as reducing integrationism, supporting both Hypotheses 2a and 2b. These results imply that, when the integrity of the host culture is in jeopardy due to the intrusion of foreign cultural elements, the host majority would endorse acculturation preferences reinforcing the host instead of the foreign culture to preserve the ingroup identity (Verkuyten, 2005). Given the consistent mediating role of disgust, these acculturative prefer-

ences may be interpreted as a response aimed at avoiding or expelling the immigrant as the perceived carrier of the foreign contaminant culture into the host one (Rozin et al., 2009). While these results show that acculturation responses were influenced by the perception of culturally fused immigrants, it is important to point out that integrationism was, nonetheless, generally preferred over assimilationism, as is frequently described in the host majority acculturation literature (Montaruli et al., 2011).

A fourth key finding was that host cultural representativeness did not significantly affect symbolic threat, and thus no mediation was observed for assimilationism or integrationism (Hypotheses 5a and 5b). This pattern may reflect perceptions of the *kannushi* immigrant as highly assimilated, reducing symbolic threat. However, persistent effects on acculturation preferences suggest that certain foreign cues, such as ethnicity, may influence responses independently of perceived cultural threat (Komisarof et al., 2020).

Fifth, contrary to Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 3a, and 3b, immigrant group status had no significant effect on any of the dependent variables. This finding stands in contrast to prior research showing that devalued immigrant groups are typically met with greater rejecting acculturation preferences and perceived symbolic threat (Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001; Stephan et al., 2016). Notably, however, the effects of host cultural representativeness on assimilationism and integrationism remained consistent regardless of the immigrant group's perceived status.

The theoretical contribution of the present research lies in its distinction between general opposition to immigrants and acculturation preferences. Whereas opposition captures a broad form of anti-immigrant sentiment (Lemaire Portillo & Karasawa, 2026), acculturation preferences provide a more fine-grained account of the cultural dynamics within the host society, which is particularly relevant for understanding responses to culturally fused immigrants. Moreover, although assimilationism is typically classified as an immigration rejecting orientation (Bourhis et al., 1997), individuals who endorse assimilationism may nonetheless support immigrants who adopt the cultural norms and practices of the host majority, provided that expressions of the heritage culture remain limited. This distinction highlights the conceptual divergence between opposition and assimilationism.

From an applied perspective, assessing host majority acculturation preferences offers valuable insight into national integration policies, given the reciprocal influence between policy frameworks and public attitudes (e.g., multicultural policy contexts fostering stronger integrationist preferences; Bourhis & Montreuil, 2016). Beyond this, the present findings demonstrate that measuring acculturation preferences also facilitates understanding of how salient societal changes, such as increased immigration and greater immigrant presence in culturally representative roles, may reshape these orientations. Monitoring such acculturative shifts in Japan, where immigration is expected to

increase over the coming decades, may inform the development of integration policies that more effectively address the needs and expectations of both the host majority and immigrant populations.

Although the findings of the present study suggest that the culture fusion framework may also be useful to interpret acculturative preferences among the host majority, they also underscore important limitations of this approach and point to several unresolved questions that warrant further investigation. A notable limitation is that the manipulation of the immigrant group status was too weak to entail any differences. A way to make the foreign culture more salient, for instance, would be extending each scenario by adding relevant cultural cues regarding each immigrant group. In fact, in the current scenario, the only information that was given about the immigrant group was the name of their country (i.e., either Nigeria or the United States of America), which may not have been a strong enough priming stimulus for participants, especially since the picture was the same Black immigrant character. Future experiments should thus consider presenting more information about the immigrant group to make the cultural differences more distinguishable (e.g., a short article regarding the immigrant group's religion, ethnic background, cultural practices, values, etc.) to increase the perceived incompatibility between the host and foreign cultures.

Another limitation of the study was that some of the measures used in this research had only one item (i.e., assimilationism, integrationism, and disgust). Therefore, future studies should consider increasing the number of items of each measure in order to enhance their reliability. Finally, the external validity of the current findings is also limited by the study's focus on African American and Nigerian immigrant groups in a narrow range of occupations within Japan, a country with a relatively low proportion of foreign residents as of 2026. To improve generalizability, future research should examine a wider range of immigrant characteristics, including ethnicity, gender and nationality, as well as other occupations.

Despite these limitations, the present research may be seen as the first step towards integrating two lines of research, culture mixing and acculturation preferences of the host majority, that, to our knowledge, have not been linked previously. Notably, the present findings replicate prior evidence that culturally fused immigrants can be perceived as sources of cultural contamination (Lemaire Portillo & Karasawa, 2026), while also extending this work by demonstrating that the disgust evaluation system (Rozin et al., 2009) may significantly influence host society members' acculturation preferences.

As globalization accelerates and the movement of people and cultures becomes increasingly widespread, the implications of culture fusion for immigration and acculturation processes are likely to intensify. Understanding the antecedents of culture fusion, identifying individuals most sensitive to it, and examining its potential negative social consequences are critical steps

toward fostering multicultural societies in which cultural diversity contributes to social enrichment rather than division.

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Notes

- ⁽¹⁾ The IAM also proposed two additional orientations: transformation-integrationism (i.e., support for adapting the host culture to better integrate immigrants) and individualism (i.e., emphasis on viewing immigrants as individuals rather than as group members).
- ⁽²⁾ Although opposition to immigration was also measured in the present study, it did not yield any significant findings and will therefore not be discussed further.

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Appendix (scenarios and pictures)

The following text presents the English translation of one of the four experimental scenarios used in the survey. Depending on the host cultural representativeness condition, bank worker (low level) was used instead of *kannushi* (high level). Similarly, depending on the immigrant group status condition, Nigeria (devalued) was used instead of the United States of America (valued). The original Japanese scenario is obtainable upon request.

“During the last years, many immigrants from the *United States of America* have been arriving to Japan. Some of them, after the proper training, are now working as a *kannushi*. For example, Michael is an immigrant from the *United States of America* and is the *kannushi* of a Shinto shrine in Aichi prefecture.”

Subsequently, participants were shown a stimulus picture depicting either the *kannushi* or the bank worker, depending on the experimental condition (see Figure 3). In the survey, facial features were not blurred. The images were created by digitally modifying source photographs using Adobe Photoshop. They constitute original research materials and should not be reused or distributed. © Pol Lemaire Portillo and Minoru Karasawa. All rights reserved. Prior written permission is required for any reuse or redistribution.

For reference, we adapted the following photographs:

- *African American-Nigerian Face*: “_MG_2384” by Philip McMaster is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0. Retrieved March 20, 2019, from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dragonpreneur/9034926243/in/album-72157634106614063/>.
- *Kannushi and Shrine Background*: “A Shinto priest” by thaths is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0. Retrieved March 19, 2019, from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/34816987@N00/23658427971>.
- *Office Background*: “Oppen office in Las Vegas” by Cholakov-Gongalov Architects, Dimitar Gongalov, & Viktor Cholakov is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. Retrieved March 19, 2019, from <https://www.behance.net/gallery/29314739/Oppen-office-in-Las-Vegas/modules/189182969>.
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Figure 3: Stimulus pictures of the immigrant individuals as portrayed in the high host cultural representativeness (*kannushi*, in the left) and the low host cultural representativeness scenarios (bank worker, in the right)