The Impact of Self-Set Goal Attainment and Importance on Acculturation: An exploratory study on goal categories that facilitate the acculturation process for Eastern European migrants in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

Goals are essential pillars when building one's life. Like a compass, they can help find a direction, give action steps, and provide feedback on what has been achieved. Self-set goals are an apparent motivation for migration, as people migrate in search of advancing their potential. Previous research has shown that intrinsic goal pursuit can contribute to acculturation in migrants. In the current study, we investigated to what extent the attainment of certain goals would predict acculturation and whether acculturation can be seen as a result of the interaction between goal attainment and goal importance. We proposed that attaining self-set goals would positively predict migrants' level of acculturation, especially when migrants perceived these goals as important. We tested our hypotheses asking 288 participants to self-reflect on their goals and the individual level of achievement and importance. We can confirm a relationship between self-set goal attainment and acculturation for goals related to Achievement, Basic Human Striving, Migration, Personal Development, Professional, and Security. Furthermore, we found evidence that in the life domain of Professional the importance of the goal strengthens the relationship between goal attainment and acculturation. Nevertheless, we found a negative effect of goal importance on acculturation in the life domain of Achievement. In the end, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings and future research directions.

*Keywords:* migration, goals, acculturation,

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Migrants make up 3.6 percent of the global population, 281 million international migrants worldwide in 2020 with an increasing tendency (IOM, 2020). Even though every migrant's situation is individual, all migrants face difficulty being in a new environment and culture. Problems arise from parting from the old and well-known home culture, on the other hand from adjusting to and finding their place in the new culture. Be it a motivated student experiencing a semester abroad, a refugee seeking asylum in Europe, or an expatriate working abroad, they all undergo challenges that come with relocating and adjusting to the host country (Toth-Bos et al., 2019).

The current study examines how self-set goal attainment influences the acculturation process. There is little research on the relationship between goal pursuit and acculturation (Chirkov et al., 2007). We postulate that attaining goals in different life domains facilitates the acculturation process, especially when these goals are of subjective importance (see Figure 1 for our research model). As our research is of exploratory nature and our task is to explore the goal categories that might significantly facilitate the acculturation process, we employ the methodology of the Grounded Theory by Glaser and Straus (1967) to structure the operation of this research.

Figure 1

The proposed conceptual model of the interplay between self-set goal attainment and self-set goal importance on acculturation.
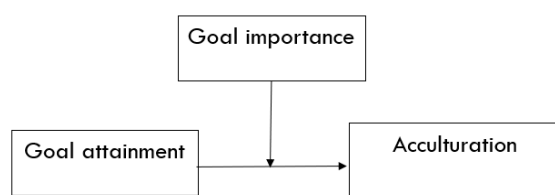
Acculturation

When individuals migrate, a dynamic and reciprocal relationship develops between migrants and the receiving party through which both sides experience internal and external changes. This process is known as acculturation (Berry, 1997). The theory of acculturation tries to capture the different attitudes and behaviors that influence migrants' relationship to the host and home culture, and vice versa (Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2006). People who migrate are usually driven by the desire to enhance their life quality and strive to fulfill their potential. According to Andresen (2014), one of the most common goals among migrants is to advance financially and expand professionally.

Searle & Ward suggested in 1990 that when looking at acculturation, it is important to consider two perspectives; the psychological and sociocultural adaptation. The psychological adaptation represents the satisfaction or discontentment with the challenges of the migration experience (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). Meanwhile, the sociocultural adaptation looks at how well the migrants cope with specific dimensions of the host culture, such as the cuisine or communication (Searle & Ward, 1990). It is essential to mention that in this particular study we evaluate first-generation migrants who moved voluntarily and have the freedom to return or stay indefinitely.

A majority of research has found that successful coping with challenges that arise from relocating, facilitates positive acculturation (Aldwin, 2007; Kuo, et al.; Zheng & Berry, 1991). Marsiglia et al. (2013) have found that acculturated migrants show stronger overall well-being than non-acculturated migrants. This means that acculturation contributes to migrants' well-being, which is beneficial for the hosting country. Different perspectives are explaining the process of acculturation. It could be a matter of personality and/or cognitive factors that determine the process of acculturation (Kuo, 2014), or social factors, such as social support (Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015). From a motivational perspective, people

actively create their happiness through setting and attaining goals that matter to them (Emmons, 2003; Lyubomirsky et al., 2011; Sheldon et al., 2010). Goals can be seen as a compass that informs us of where we are heading and what we must do to get there (Diener, 1984). Our quest is to investigate, whether goal pursuit also facilitates the acculturation process.

Goal pursuit and Acculturation

We understand goals as the end state that our efforts are directed towards (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Milyavskaya & Werner, 2018). As self-initiated migrants usually relocate to optimize their goal potentials, we posit that understanding the role of their goal pursuit can give insight into the mechanisms underlying their acculturation. Research has shown that achieving self-set goals, or self-concordant goals enhances well-being because these goals are built upon individual interests and values (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Furthermore, striving to achieve essential goals increases the likelihood of goal attainment and positively impacts well-being. It is an upward spiral process of working towards a specific goal, engaging in meaningful behavior, achieving it, and feeling empowered.

The self-determination theory (SDT) can help us understand the different motivations behind goals. Postulated by Ryan and Deci (2000) it offers an umbrella that can cover our understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and give insight into how our goals and their achievement can bring us closer to well-being. It assumes that all humans have a natural desire for growth and integration.

The cognitive evaluation theory (CET), which belongs to the umbrella of the SDT, contributes to our understanding of intrinsic motivation. It states that all humans have inherent psychological needs that should be met to engage in self-motivated and self-determined action. Namely, these psychological needs are competence, relatedness and

autonomy. If fulfilled, they are supposed to support individuals in achieving optimal functioning of their desire to grow and expand and support their social development and personal well-being. (Ryan and Deci, 2000)

Furthermore, the organismic integration theory (OIT), a sub-theory of the SDT, is concerned with explaining the nature of extrinsic motivation, dividing extrinsic motivation into different levels of external regulation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). It details the different contextual situations that can promote or hinder individual integration and internalization of specific goals and shows how certain types of extrinsic motivation can come close to intrinsic motivation.

Previous research by Toth et al., (2017) has shown that in the context of migration, intrinsic goal attainment positively correlated with well-being. Furthermore, they found an interaction effect between intrinsic goal attainment and goal importance to positively influence well-being, Research has also shown that the process of setting, striving for, and achieving goals can support migrants in their successful acculturation process by giving them a sense of meaning and life purpose. It strengthens their feeling of belongingness to the host society as a valuable member (Wassermann et al., 2017)

It seems like the content of goals (which can be measured by the Aspiration Index, see Kasser and Ryan, 1996) influences well-being. Various researchers (Schmuck et al., 2000; Sheldon, et al., 2004) have found that pursuing intrinsic goals would rather predict well-being than pursuing extrinsic goals. In our goal categorization, we want to look at goals in different life domains that would facilitate the process of acculturation.

Goal Categories and Acculturation

We aim to find out which specific self-set goal categories, when achieved, can contribute to migrants' acculturation. One element to successful acculturation can be language proficiency, it determines the migrant's ability to communicate with the host society

(Marsiglia et al., 2010). Other determinants of successful acculturation can be the desire to gain intercultural experience and skills, develop personally and professionally or broaden one's horizons (Doerschler, 2006; Udahemuka & Pernice, 2010). It is fascinating to consider the positive effect of self-determined and intrinsic motivation on overall well-being and acculturation (Chirkov et al., 2007; Yang et al., 2018; Zhou, 2014).

But it is not only the attainment of goals, their importance plays a role too. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) found that attaining important (intrinsic) goals is especially beneficial for well-being. Toth-Bos et al., (2019) revealed an interaction effect between intrinsic goal attainment and goal importance on well-being, mediated by acculturation. Indicating that attaining important goals leads to more substantial cultural adjustment and supports overall well-being.

We aim to test whether goal importance moderates the relationship between goal attainment and acculturation. We will approach this question by looking at goals in different life domains and how the achievement and importance of these influence the process of acculturation. Based on what has been said so far, our hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between self-set goal attainment and acculturation, where self-set goal attainment positively predicts acculturation.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between self-set goal attainment and acculturation is moderated by self-set goal importance, such that the relationship between the attainment of goal and acculturation is stronger, to the extent that these goals are perceived as important.

We will separately access the effect of attainment and importance of different goal categories on acculturation to understand goals in various life domains that eventually play a more significant role in the process of acculturation.

Method

Participants and Design

A total of 334 first-generation migrants living in the United Kingdom participated in our study. After indicating their demographics, participants were asked to reveal their self-set goal attainment and self-set goal importance, as well as their level of acculturation, which was based on the Brief Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (BSAS) and the Brief Psychological Adaptation Scale (BPAS) by Demes and Geeraert (2014) People who failed on any of the attention checks or gave invalid reposes (e.g. no answer), were left out, leaving 288 participants ($N = 288$; 70% female, $M(age) = 34.6$, $SD = 10.43$). Participants were of Central and Eastern European origin (e.g., 61% from Poland, 11.8% from Hungary, 6.3% from the Czech Republic). On average, participants had been residing in the United Kingdom for almost 10 years ($M = 9.43$, $SD = 6.30$). Half of the participants had experienced living in a foreign country outside of their home country before moving to the United Kingdom. Eighty-four percent of the participants had a paid job at the time, and 57% had received a college degree or higher. Considering that all respondents were migrants in the United Kingdom, we acquired first-hand information on how attaining goals (with fluctuating levels of importance) contributes to migrants' cultural adjustment. The participants were recruited on the Qualtrics Panel platform and were financially compensated for their participation. Qualtrics Panel attentively controls data quality (Qualtrics, 2018) and is seen as a highly reliable online sampling source (Roulin, 2015) (ethical approval number is 17444-P).

Measures

Self-set goal importance

All respondents were asked to name three of their current goals in life and indicate their importance on a scale from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*very important*). The questions were open-ended, such as "I aspire to …" or "My goal is …". We computed a composite score for self-set goal importance from the average of the importance of the three self-set goals. The reliability analysis revealed a rather low Cronbach's alpha for self-set goal

importance ($\alpha =.6$), which is probably due to the nature of our open assessment of the

variables and the little number of items of the scales (Wanous & Hudy, 2001).

Self-set goal achievement

After pointing out the importance of their three goals, respondents estimated the extent

to which they had achieved each goal on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Then, we

computed a composite score for self-set goal attainment from the average of the attainment of

the three self-set goals. Similar to the self-set goal importance, the reliability analysis revealed

a rather low Cronbach α for self-set goal attainment ($\alpha = .7$)

Acculturation

To access the individuals' acculturation, we made use of a composite scale of the

psychological (BPAS) and sociocultural (BSAS) adjustment scales by Demes and Geeraert

(2014). Participants evaluated the extent to which they agreed with each statement (e.g.,

feeling "…excited about being in the United Kingdom" or "…sad to be away from the home

country"). Besides, the participants rated how difficult they found it to adapt to certain

situations in the United Kingdom (e.g., climate, food and eating, social environment) on a

scale from 1 (very difficult) to 7 (very easy). From the total of 22 acculturation items, we

calculated an average score for overall acculturation. The reliability analysis showed a

Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha=.8$ for the scale of the BPAS and a value of $\alpha=.9$ for the scale of

BSAS.

Strategy of Analysis

There has been little research done on acculturation through the perspective of goal

attainment (see Toth-Bos et al., 2019), mainly using fixed goal content categories. In contrast,

our research model focuses on *Self-Set Goals* asking all 288 individuals for three personal

goals, which results in a substantial qualitative sample and demands a special kind of

treatment. Therefore, we approach our research through the Grounded Theory (GT), which is

both, a structured and flexible design for the methodology of a study (Tie, et al., 2018). It is applicable when there is little pre-existing knowledge about a phenomenon and allows to produce or construct an explanatory theory that reveals the underlying mechanisms of the quest. This process involves a) the initial coding and category identification, b) selecting core categories and data saturation, and c) finding a storyline and final theoretical coding. All these stages must be constantly revised and compared to each other; we use the insight we gain from the latter categorization to edit and improve the former categorization. This continual process involves inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning. In other words, rather than approaching the hypothesis with particular theories, we aim to arrive at a theory after examining the data. Naturally, we have to be aware that this method is inherently subjective (Tie, et al., 2018).

In our case, we first went through the data and put the goals into very specific categories to get an overview of what we are working with and get familiar with the responses. Second, we started to put goals similar in nature into more extensive categories, such as "having children", "getting married and having children" and "have a happy family" into the category of *family*. As we had 288 participants with three goals each, it was quite a lengthy process to agree on categories with the whole research team. For example, there was a discussion about whether "finding a partner" would go under the category of *family* or whether it was a distinct theme and would rather be *relationship*. In total, we agreed on 25 mid-goal categories. Lastly, we aimed to find broader categories that would allow us to have significant sample sizes per category, but still reflect the distinction between different goal themes. In the last stage, we embedded the mid-goal categories in seven broad goal categories, which are *Achievement, Basic Human Striving, Migration, Personal Development, Professional, Relationship,* and *Security.*

Results

The following result section contains an overview of the broad goal categories that we found in the process of breaking down the overarching themes of the participant's goals. This is followed by the preliminary analyses and hypothesis testing, which we present per category. Descriptives and intercorrelations per category are provided in tables 2-8. Table 9 provides the results from the hypothesis testing. We used Hayes' Process macro model 1 (Hayes & Little, 2018) to test our hypothesis to conduct a moderation analysis. Self-set goal attainment was entered as our independent variable, the dependent variable was acculturation and self-set goal importance was entered as the moderator variable.

Overview of Goal Categories

Each participant indicated three goals, which we treated as individual entities. We sorted the 864 answers into a total of 26 mid-goal categories which we further abstracted into seven broad goal categories. The broad goal categories are as follows.

Achievement category consists of 70 reported goals, containing three mid-categories (financial, success, achievement). Example items would be "make more money" or "be successful".

Basic Human Striving category consists of 128 reported goals, containing two mid-categories (state of being, health). Example items would be "be healthy" or "be happy".

Migration category consists of 24 reported goals, containing three mid categories (move, integration, staying in the UK). Example items would be "stay in the UK after Brexit" or "move abroad".

Personal Development category consists of 235 reported goals, containing seven mid-categories (travel, skill, impact, personal development, career, independence, and freedom). Example items would be "have a successful career", "be the best version of myself", "improve my English" or "travel more".

Professional category consists of 106 reported goals, containing three mid categories (educational, occupational, professional). Example items would be "have a good job" or "getting a degree".

Relationship category consists of 121 reported goals, containing three mid-categories (family, relationship, friendship). Example items would be "have a family" or "have good friends".

Security category consists of 146 reported goals, containing five mid categories (material, achievement, living comfortably, retirement, security, financial security). Example items would be "have a comfortable life", "buy a house" or "retire comfortably".

Preliminary analyses & Hypothesis Testing per Category

Achievement

The results (see appendix, Table 9) revealed a significant positive relationship of self-set goal attainment on acculturation ($b = 0.17$, $p = .02$), which supports the first hypothesis: There is a positive relationship between goal attainment and acculturation, where the attainment of achievement-related goals positively predicts acculturation. Further, a significant negative main effect for self-set goal importance on acculturation was found ($b = -0.26$, $p = .04$). However, we did not find a significant interaction effect of self-set goal attainment and self-set goal importance ($b = 0.05$, $p = .48$), which disconfirms our second hypothesis: The positive relationship between the attainment of achievement goals and acculturation is not stronger if these goals are perceived as important.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the Study Variables for the Goal Category of Achievement

	Mean	SD	ACCULT	SSG_IMP	SSG_ATT
ACCULT	5.02	0.94		-.19	.22
SSG_IMP	6.27	1.07	-.19		.24*
SSG_ATT	3.19	1.63	.22	.24*	

Note. *p < .05; ** < .01 (two-tailed significance).

Basic Human Striving

We found a marginally significant main effect for self-set goal attainment on acculturation ($b = 0.09$, $p = .09$). This indicates support for our first hypothesis: There is a positive relationship between goal attainment and acculturation, where goal attainment predicts acculturation. However, no significant main effect for self-set goal importance on acculturation was found ($b = 0.08$, $p = .57$). No interaction effect of self-set goal attainment and self-set goal importance was found either ($b = -0.01$, $p = .91$), which disconfirms our second hypothesis: The positive relationship between goal attainment and acculturation is not stronger if goals of this category are perceived as important.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the Study Variables for the Goal Category of Basic Human Functioning

	Mean	SD	ACCULT	SSG_IMP	SSG_ATT
ACCULT	5.05	.87		.09	.17
SSG_IMP	6.78	.60	.09		.20*
SSG_ATT	4.31	1.58	.17	.20*	

Note. *p < .05; ** < .01 (two-tailed significance).

Migration

We found a marginally significant main effect for self-set goal attainment on acculturation ($b = 0.02$, $p = .09$), which supports our first hypothesis: The attainment of migration goals positively predicts acculturation. However, no significant main effect of self-set goal importance ($b = -0.05$, $p = .83$) on our outcome variable acculturation was found. No significant interaction effect is present ($b = 0.11$, $p = .64$), which disconfirms our second hypothesis: The positive relationship of goal attainment and acculturation is not moderated by goal importance for goals belonging to this category.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the Study Variables for the Goal Category of Migration

	Mean	SD	ACCULT	SSG_IMP	SSG_ATT
ACCULT	4.64	.89		-.01	.37
SSG_IMP	6.29	.81	-.01		.07
SSG_ATT	4.00	1.50	.37	.07	

Note. *$p < .05$; ** $< .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Personal Development

Results (see appendix, Table 9) revealed a significant positive relationship of self-set goal attainment on acculturation ($b = 0.09$, $p = .01$), supporting our first hypothesis that there is a positive relationship of goal attainment and acculturation, where goal attainment positively predicts acculturation. No significant main effect of self-set goal importance on acculturation was found ($b = -0.06$, $p = .41$). We did not find a significant interaction effect between self-set goal attainment and self-set goal importance ($b = 0.02$, $p = .61$), which disconfirms our second hypothesis: Goal importance does not strengthen the positive relationship of goal attainment and acculturation for goals related to personal development.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the Study Variables for the Goal Category of Personal Development

	Mean	SD	ACCULT	SSG_IMP	SSG_ATT
ACCULT	5.07	.83		-.05	.17**
SSG_IMP	6.44	.89	-.05		.08
SSG_ATT	3.67	1.63	.17**	.08	

Note. *$p < .05$; ** $< .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Professional

The results (see appendix, Table 9) discovered a marginally significant positive main effect of self-set goal attainment ($b = 0.11$, $p = .06$), which supports the first hypothesis: There is a positive relationship and self-set goal attainment positively predicts acculturation. No significant main effect of self-set goal importance ($b = 0.03$, $p = .82$) on acculturation was

found. Further, we found a marginally significant interaction effect (see Figure 2) of self-set goal attainment and self-set goal importance on acculturation ($b = 0.12$, $p = .08$). Professional goal attainment predicted acculturation for people with high goal importance (effect = 0.17, 95% CI [0.04, 0.29]), but not for people with low goal importance (effect = 0.05, 95% CI [-0.08, 0.18]). The results indicate that specifically when the importance of the goal is rated high, goal attainment predicts acculturation (see appendix, Table 9, and Figure 2). This supports our second hypothesis: The positive relationship between self-set goal attainment and acculturation appeared to be stronger to the extent that goals were perceived as more important.
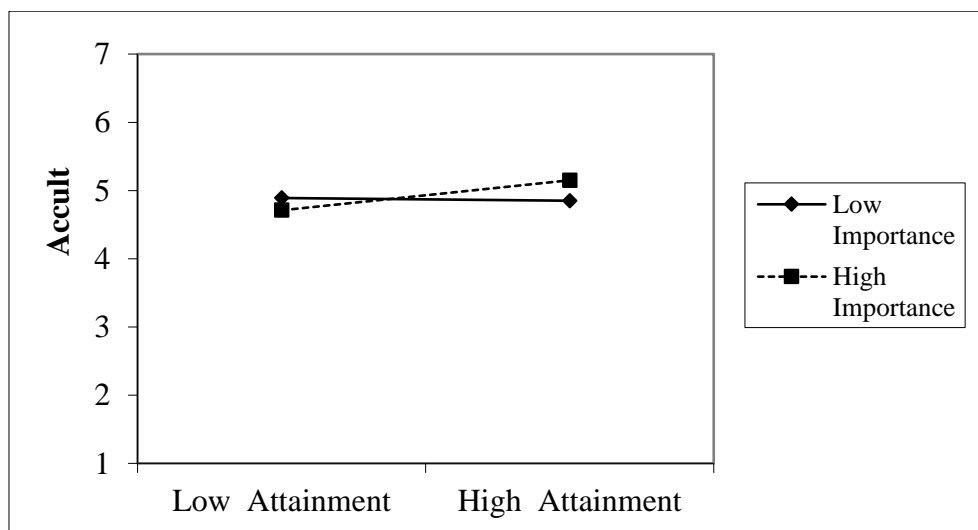
Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the Study Variables for the Goal Category of Profession

	Mean	SD	ACCULT	SSG_IMP	SSG_ATT
ACCULT	4.97	.93		.01	.19*
SSG_IMP	6.47	.78	0.13		.21*
SSG_ATT	3.88	1.64	.19*	.21*	

Note. *$p < .05$; ** $< .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Figure 2

Acculturation as a function of the importance and the attainment of 'Professional' goals.

Relationship

For this category, no significant main effect for self-set goal attainment on acculturation was found ($b = 0.07$, $p = .12$). This disconfirms our first hypothesis: There is no positive relationship between goal attainment and acculturation. Further, we did not find a significant main effect of self-set goal importance on acculturation ($b = -0.05$, $p = .76$). No significant interaction effect is present ($b = -0.04$, $p = .52$), which disconfirms the second hypothesis that goal importance moderates the relationship between goal attainment and acculturation.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the Study Variables for the Goal Category of Relationship

	Mean	SD	ACCULT	SSG_IMP	SSG_ATT
ACCULT	5.12	.81		.05	.15
SSG_IMP	6.72	.64	.05		.30**
SSG_ATT	4.29	1.84	.15	.30**	

Note. *$p < .05$; ** $< .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Security

A significant positive main effect was discovered for self-set goal attainment on acculturation ($b = 0.11$, $p = .00$), which supports our first hypothesis that goal attainment positively predicts acculturation. No main effect was found for self-set goal importance on acculturation ($b = -0.13$, $p = .12$). Also, no significant interaction effect for self-set goal attainment and self-set goal importance was found ($b = 0.06$, $p = .27$), which disconfirms our second hypothesis: Goal importance does not moderate the positive relationship between the attainment of security goals and acculturation.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the Study Variables for the Goal Category of Security

	Mean	SD	ACCULT	SSG_IMP	SSG_ATT
ACCULT	4.95	.90		-.12	.24**
SSG_IMP	6.54	.86	-.12		.05
SSG_ATT	3.29	1.90	.24**	.05	

Note. $*p < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance)

In sum, we found that six (*Achievement, Basic Human Striving, Migration, Personal development, Professional, Security*) of our seven categories support the first hypothesis: There is a positive relationship between self-set goal attainment and acculturation, where self-set goal attainment positively predicts acculturation. Only the category *Professional* supports our second hypothesis: The relationship between self-set goal attainment and acculturation is moderated by self-set goal importance, such that the relationship between acculturation and the attainment of professional goals is stronger, to the extent that these goals are perceived as important.

Discussion

Acculturation is an important aspect of migration and as migration is very much motivated by the enhancement of oneself and the achievement of specific goals, we investigated to what extent the attainment of certain goals would predict acculturation and whether acculturation can be seen as a result of the interaction between goal attainment and goal importance. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) have shown that achieving self-set goals is important for overall happiness in individuals. We were interested in how this applies to migrants' acculturation process and proposed that by attaining important self-set goals in certain life domains, migrants would feel more acculturated to the host society.

Our first hypothesis that the attainment of self-set goals would positively influence acculturation could be confirmed for six of the seven goal categories.

We found that migrants who attained goals in the life domain of achievement are more likely to acculturate. This could be because achieving success-related goals in the host country can reduce the uncertainty that many migrants face (Brett, 1980), it can help to feel valuable to the society (Wassermann, et al., 2017) and create overall stability in migrant's lives (Lyons, et al., 2005). This, on the other hand, can facilitate the process of acculturation.

Personal Development has been shown to enhance the acculturation process of migrants by several researchers (Chirkov, Safdar, de Guzman, & Playford, 2008; Gong, 2003; Gong & Fan, 2006; Pinto et al., 2012; Tartakovsky & Schwartz, 2001; Yang, Zhang, & Sheldon, 2018; Zhou, 2014; Zimmermann, Schubert, Bruder, & Hagemeyer, 2017), our results can support that evidence. Pursuing and attaining goals in the life domain of personal development shows that a migrant is open to go through personal identity challenges, reflect on self-relevant information and eventually change accordingly. This on the other hand facilitates their existence in a foreign cultural context (Ozer, 2017).

The attainment of security related goals predicted acculturation, which is not surprising. Attaining a stable and somewhat comfortable life surely helps migrants find their place in the host society and might give them the mental space to engage in interpersonal activities.

Furthermore, we found a marginally significant effect of the attainment of professional goals on acculturation. This fits with Andresen et al.., (2014) findings that the strongest motivation for migrants to leave their home country is to advance professionally and financially. Migrants who achieve their initial ambitions probably feel more overall satisfaction with their lives and can enjoy the interaction with the host culture in more depth.

Many researchers have found that acculturation has a positive effect on migrant happiness (Marsiglia et al., 2013, Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), our results show that this is true the other way around as well. According to our findings, the goal category of basic human striving has a marginally significant effect on acculturation, this goal category included goals striving for happiness and health. We see that when migrants strive for happiness, they are more likely to feel acculturated. Similarly, attaining health goals allows migrants to actively engage in social situations, building and maintaining social connections through friendships, leisure activities, and work (Ward et al., 2001).

We also found a marginally significant relationship between goals related to migration and acculturation. This goal category had the smallest sample size from all categories with n=24 and still had a somewhat significant effect, demonstrating our goal categorization accuracy. Doerschler (2006) found that migrants who have long-term plans for staying in the host country are more likely to engage in societal matters, which helps with the acculturation process.

Our second hypothesis was that there would be an interaction effect of self-set goal attainment and self-set goal importance on acculturation. We solely found evidence for an interaction effect between attainment and importance for the goal category of professional. This means that the attainment of professional goals predicts acculturation especially when these goals are deemed important. This is in line with Toth-Bos et al., (2017) findings on the relationship between career importance and acculturation, mediated by career success. They found that accomplishing important professional goals for migrants high in self-efficacy facilitates their sociocultural adaptation (BSAS).

Unexpectedly, we found a negative main effect between self-set goal importance and acculturation for the goals related to achievement. Maiser et al., (2008) found that when

migrants strive for goals related to achievement without realizing them, a sense of longing arises that their needs are not met.

Finally, the attainment or importance of the goal category relationship did not show a significant effect on acculturation.

The person-environment fit theory (see Theory of Work Adjustment, Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Dawis, 2005) can give some perspective on these results. It assumes that there is always an interaction between the characteristics of an individual and the environment, which means both influence and affect each other. In this case, it could be that migrants who attained their goals found themselves in a host environment that could offer them opportunities that supported and valued their success, which positively influenced the acculturation process.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Direction

We consider the size of the portfolio and the high number of working-age, self-initiated migrants, who usually have a low representation in paid online sampling panels (Qualtrics, 2018), to be the strength of the present paper. In addition, we included nearly 288 participants and limited our focus to the specific group of Central and Eastern European migrants living in the United Kingdom, which heightens the validity of our results for this specific population. However, in future migrant-goal-pursuit studies, it would benefit to include different types of migrants.

By using a qualitative toolset and asking migrants to describe their personal goals, we had the opportunity to account for goal categories that might not have been present if we had used prefixed goal categories. Nonetheless, by assessing each individual's three self-set goals, we had to find a way to meaningfully categorize and merge the 864 goals into overarching themes by leaning onto the Grounded Theory method. This approach invariably leads to results that are tinted by the subjective perspective of the research team.

As we dealt with Eastern European migrants living in the United Kingdom, we have to consider the possible language barrier and the bias coming from self-assessment tools that likely have shaped the participants' answers. Knowing and reflecting on one's authentic goals and aspiration is an achievement in itself and not everyone can truthfully communicate their self-concordant goals (see Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Nevertheless, we got to know the innermost goals of nearly 300 migrants, which is a unique achievement in the field of migrant goal pursuit.

Conclusion and Practical Implications

This study contributes to the small body of research that addresses goal pursuit in the context of migration. We tested whether the attainment of important goals helps migrants to acculturate to their host society. Goals are important pillars in people's lives as they offer feedback on their progress and help organize their efforts. In the context of migration, people strive to enhance their potential and expect to achieve certain goals to the extent, that they leave their home country behind in search of their fortune. Considering the findings of this paper, we have to emphasize how important it is to support migrants in believing in and realizing their self-set goals. This would mean that host countries create an environment that gives migrants the opportunities to settle, have a stable income, grow personally, and be successful.

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Appendix

Table 9

Model Estimation Results for Assessing Moderation Wherein Self-Set Goal Attainment and
Self-Set Goal Importance Interact to Influence Acculturation for the different Goal
Categories

Achievement (N=70)

Predictor	B	SE	t (66)	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	5.06	.11	45.55	.00	4.83	5.28
Self-set goal Attainment	.17	.07	2.46	.02	.03	.31
Self-set goal Importance	-.26	.12	-2.16	.04	-.49	-.02
Int. GoalAtt x GoalImp	-.05	.07	-.70	.49	-.19	.09

Basic Human Striving (N=128)

Predictor	B	SE	t (124)	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	5.05	.08	63.98	.00	4.90	5.21
Self-set goal Attainment	.09	.05	1.73	.09	-.01	.19

Self-set goal Importance	.08	.15	.56	.57	-.21	.38
GoalAtt x GoalImp	-.01	.11	-.12	.91	-.22	.20

Migration (N=24)

Predictor	B	SE	t (20)	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.64	.18	25.76	.00	4.26	5.01
Self-set goal Attainment	.22	.12	1.79	.09	-.04	.47
Self-set goal Importance	-.05	.23	-.22	.83	-.53	.42
Int. GoalAtt x GoalImp	.11	.23	.48	.64	-.37	.58

Personal Development (N=235)

Predictor	B	SE	t (231)	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	5.07	.05	94.70	.00	4.97	5.18
Self-set goal Attainment	.09	.03	2.76	.01	.03	.16

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Self-set goal Importance	-.06	.07	-.82	.41	-.19	.08
Int. GoalAtt x GoalImp	.02	.04	.51	.61	-.06	.10

Professional (N=106)

Predictor	B	SE	t (102)	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.93	.09	54.55	.00	4.76	5.12
Self-set goal Attainment	.11	.06	1.89	.06	-.01	.22
Self-set goal Importance	.03	.12	.23	.82	-.21	.27
Int. GoalAtt x GoalImp	.12	.07	1.78	.08	-.01	.25

Conditional effects of Goal Attainment at values of Goal Importance for Professional

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
GoalAttof GoalImp low	.05	.06	.76	.45	-.08	.18
GoalAtt if GoalImp high	.17	.06	2.65	.01	.04	.29

Relationship (N=121)

Predictor	B	SE	t (117)	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	5.13	.08	66.60	.00	4.98	5.28
Self-set goal Attainment	.07	.04	1.58	.12	-.02	.15
Self-set goal Importance	-.46	.15	-.30	.76	-.34	.25
Int. GoalAtt x GoalImp	-.04	.07	-.65	.52	-.18	.09

Security (N=146)

Predictor	B	SE	t (142)	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.95	.07	68.49	.00	4.80	5.09
Self-set goal Attainment	.11	.04	2.89	.00	.04	.19
Self-set goal Importance	-.14	.09	-1.54	.13	-.31	.04
Int. GoalAtt x GoalImp	.06	.05	1.11	.27	-.044	.157