The Interaction Effect of Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Acculturation

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PSB3E-BT15: Bachelor Thesis 1a

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January 18, 2022

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Abstract

Setting steps into exploring relatively new grounds, our current paper aims to investigate and contribute to understanding the relationship between goal attainment, goal importance, and acculturation. Preceding research converges towards supporting the positive contribution of goal attainment to the process of acculturation. Simultaneously, goal importance seems to affect acculturation as well. We posit that there is a positive relationship between the attainment of goals and acculturation. Furthermore, we hypothesize that importance of goals moderates this relationship. Our mixed-method research used Grounded Theory methodology to build and structure the respondents' goal content. We conducted a regression analysis on a sample of 289 Central and East European migrants residing in the United Kingdom. The resulted goal categories were achievement, basic human striving, migration, personal development, professional, relationship, and security. As a result of the analysis, we replicated previous findings for six categories in the goal attainment-acculturation relationship and therefore confirmed our first hypothesis. The second hypothesis was confirmed solely in the professional category, with marginally significant interaction results. We further discuss the implications of our findings and address future directions for research.

Keywords: acculturation, migration, goal attainment, goal importance

The Interaction Effect of Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Acculturation

With migration being on the rise, cultural adjustment is a territory that could benefit from additional research. Refugees, asylum seekers, expatriates are examples of what can mean to be a migrant, together with the self-initiated ones. Therefore, the context determining migration can significantly vary and with this study, we focus on the self-initiated migrants. In the life of migrants, complex challenges are inevitable as adjustments on many levels are forced to take place. Common encountered difficulties are language barriers, discrimination, poverty or longing for family and friends (Toth-Bos et al., 2019; Zheng & Berry, 1991). The aim of this article is to understand better how attainment of goals can improve cultural adjustment, also known as acculturation (Berry, 1996; Searle & Ward, 2006).

Goals drive self-initiated migration. People usually move because they strive for better financial opportunities, career progress, or intercultural curiosity (Kruglanski et al., 2002; Winter-Ebmer, 1994). The importance of looking at the self-set goals and their influence on well-being in the migrant population is receiving attention in recent research. While this has brought to light a positive link between the attainment of goals and subjective well-being (Toth et al., 2018; Toth-Bos et al., 2020), the existing number of studies is limited (Toth-Bos et al., 2019). We want to study this relationship further and contribute to the body of research. Similarly, the interplay of self-set goal importance, goal attainment, and acculturation has not benefited from much ground for theoretical research (Chirkov et al., 2007). Therefore, we set out to understand this dynamic as well. Instead of using pre-existing categories, we approach goals with the help of Grounded Theory methodology and construct the categories based on the given answers. We want to comprehend what goal categories migrants consider important and if their achievement influences acculturation.

Acculturation

As a definition, geographical movement by crossing national borders constitutes a

migrant and implies a cultural exchange, a potentially beneficial transfer of knowledge and skills (Alexander, 2021). Various reasons can underlie migration, but the process itself can be challenging, aversive, dynamic, complex, and increased liability of mental health problems (Tóth et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2001). Acculturation refers to the environment where two individuals with different cultural backgrounds encounter each other. In this environment, changes for both the migrant and the host country take place. This dynamic is captured in the theory of acculturation (Berry, 1997). Successful acculturation is both psychological and sociocultural (Searle & Ward, 1990). Psychological acculturation occurs on an individual level, whereas sociocultural acculturation happens on a group's cultural level (Berry, 1997). Acculturation represents a highly complex area of research in cross-cultural psychology due to the implication of more than one cultural domain (Berry, 1997).

The success of acculturation is highly important as it is closely related to the optimal functioning of migrants (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000). For example, a discrepancy in health conditions seems to exist when the group of migrants as compared to the non-migrants or the host group (Scholaske et al., 2021). Migrants tend to display a higher prevalence of alteration in the biological response to stress, body max index, diabetes, psychological distress, cardiovascular disease, etc. (Scholaske et al., 2021). Further on, the literature suggests that psychological counseling might be beneficial among migrants and facilitate the process of setting realistic, attainable goals (Tóth et al., 2018). Thus, continuing exploring in this direction seems crucial, especially when migration numbers are increasing, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimating the total number at 281 million in 2020.

In the context of migration, challenges are inevitable. Past research indicates that successful acculturation can result from victoriously facing the challenges arising along the migration process (Demes & Geeraert, 2014; Berry, 1997; Zheng & Berry, 1991). In

connection to this, research has also tied successful acculturation to increased well-being (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Zheng & Berry, 1991). Facilitating or hindering factors for cultural adjustment can emerge from personality differences (Berry, 1997), demographic characteristics (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000), language proficiency (Marsiglia et al., 2010). Additionally, the literature emphasizes motivation and goals among migrants as it is of high relevance for actively engaging in the process of acculturation and therefore achieving well-being (Toth et al., 2018).

Goal Pursuit and Acculturation

A meaningful life is guided by purpose. To create purpose, there is a need to set valued life goals. Tremendous efforts have been made in the past decades to identify clear paths on how goals can improve one's well-being. These efforts have come to illustrate that greater meaning in life has been connected to less prevalent psychological dysfunctions such as depression, anxiety, less heavy addictions, and their consequences and, therefore, on a more complex spectrum, increased general well-being (Mascaro & Rosen, 2005; Ostafin et al., 2006; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Additionally, living a meaningful life, having goals and motivations can potentially protect against aversive incidents by creating more resilience to stressors, thus fewer negative emotions (Debats, 1996; Mohseni et al., 2019). A prevalent determinant of migration is bettering one's life through more development opportunities. Thus, self-initiated migration comes from specific goal setting aimed at progressing in different life domains.

We can describe goals as internal representations of outcomes, processes, or events. Therefore, the desired states direct one's behavior towards achieving them. (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). The attainment of goals, thorough literature, illustrated to have a great potential to contribute to subjective well-being and successful acculturation (Monnot &

Beehr, 2021; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon et al., 2004; Toth et al., 2018; Toth-Bos et al., 2020).

However, goals are highly diverse, personal and can belong on the intrinsic (security, community, health, etc.) to extrinsic (power, materialism, fame, etc.) spectrum (Ryan & Deci., 2000). To properly understand goals, the motivations, and the proclivities behind human behavior, we use the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). In their theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) posit a natural tendency for humans to aspire for growth, evolve, and better themselves. This natural tendency, innate desire for progress, can be facilitated or hindered by the external environment. For these pre-established aspects of human motivation to develop ideally, Ryan and Deci (2000) consider three basic needs must be fulfilled: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) explains these three basic needs, a sub-theory within SDT concerning intrinsic motivation. If these are met, it is believed to promote optimal functioning of the innate propensities for growth and development. For example, intrinsic striving for loving relationships can make individuals feel more belonging, relatedness, and a higher sense of acculturation (Ward et al., 2001). Looking at extrinsic motivation, SDT proposes the Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) to explain it. Research on extrinsic goals, motivated by external rewards or demands, has highlighted that these are not necessarily related to increased well-being, but perhaps can even have the potential to negatively influence motivation and performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). Therefore, SDT helps us understand the basic needs for human motivation, their implication for goal pursuit and the different outcomes of intrinsic vs. extrinsic goals on acculturation.

Because goals have different valences and do not all offer the same level of well-being, we emphasize personally important goals. The goals that stream from one's own volition, genuine interest, desire, those targeted at personal growth, wellness areas, fulfill

psychological needs, are not shaped by external influences or perceived pressures, such as cultural norms (Pinto et al., 2012; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). The self-concordance model suggests that sustained effort increases when goals align with one's interests, convictions, and values (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). The reason for this is because inherent satisfaction sustains better the goal commitment and the effort invested than external rewards (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Vansteenkiste et al., 2008). Therefore, progress, attainment of self-concordant goals has the potential to lead to well-being and acculturation (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

Goals are dynamic and not fixed in the importance hierarchy. Pre-migration set goals can suffer during this stage, as more immediate goals can arise due to the circumstances, unforeseen challenges, and stressful situations (Sam & Berry, 2006). For example, motives such as safety, loving relationships, that were previously satisfied in the home country, might not be fulfilled in the new setting, thus impacting the progress on higher-motive goals and forcing reorganization (Kruglanski et al., 2002). Therefore, in the context of acculturation certain goals are perceived more important and these are at our interest and their contribution to the process.

Hence, SDT theory helps us understand how basic need satisfaction promotes motivation and goal setting. The self-concordance theory (SCT) explains that the pursuit and attainment of self-concordant goals contribute to better acculturation (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). The degree of importance has the potential to enhance this relationship. Self-concordant goals' relevance regards optimal functioning in individuals and indicates a longer-lasting effect (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Similar research by Toth et al. (2018) suggests that well-being increased when goal attainment and goal importance were in agreement. For that reason, we propose that goal importance will moderate the relation between goal attainment and the level of acculturation.

Goal Categories and Acculturation

Trying to organize and categorize goals as intrinsic or extrinsic makes it very difficult to understand the underlying motivation, and therefore study it (Kasser & Ryan, 1996, Rijavec et al., 2011; Srivastava et al., 2001). For example, wealth can be desired for different reasons. It can be motivated by securing the family's need for food and safety whereas same goal in another individual can be directed in a materialistic and status direction, to buy clothes and impress the others (Srivastava et al., 2001). For this reason, underlying motivations are hard to determine and the classification of goals as extrinsic or intrinsic is redundant.

Throughout the research done for SDT, emphasis has been added on the goal content (Vansteenkiste et al., 2008). Goals' content is relevant to the extent that this orientates instinctively to assure the well-being of individuals by satisfying the evolved psychological needs (Monnot & Beehr, 2021). Goal content refers to the life's domain the goal addresses and the ulterior motive (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). Therefore, we focus to constructs the goal categories based on the respondents' input rather than the underlying motivations.

Previous research has illustrated some common goals, in the context of migration, which determined successful acculturation. Exploration, intercultural curiosity, and learning motives seemed to contribute to cultural adaptation, especially when compared to escape motives by satisfying competence needs (Udahemuka & Pernice, 2010). Financial motivated migration processes are underlined by the need for autonomy and have the highest prevalence, but the contribution of well-being depends on various other factors. (Winter-Ebmer, 1994).

Therefore, with this paper we suggest that the attainment of self-concordant goals has the potential to contribute to high levels of acculturation, by means of satisfying basic needs which subsequently fuel the natural tendency for improved aspirations. Further on, we suggest that the importance of goals will act as a moderator on the relationship between goal

attainment and acculturation. We set not to use pre-fixed goal categories but rather to determine them based on the observed trend in the participants' answers and with the help of Grounded Theory Methodology.

Based on the above, our resulting hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: 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 is stronger, to the extent that these goals are perceived more important.

Altogether, we predict that self-set goal importance will have an effect on the relationship between goal attainment and acculturation, therefore a moderation effect. The predicted model can be observed in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Moderation model of self-set goal importance on the relationship between self-set goal attainment and acculturation
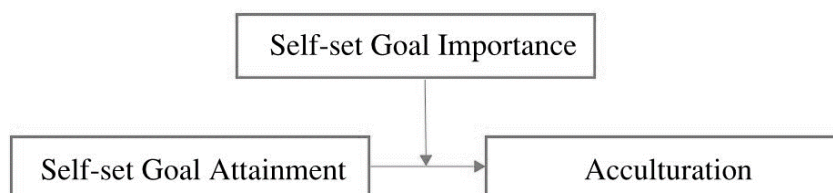
Methods

Participants and Procedure

Initially, a sample of 334 first-generation, living in the United Kingdom was selected to participate in this study. After filtering out incomplete, unserious answers, the final sample was reduced to 289. The respondents were recruited through the Qualtrics Panel platform and received monetary compensation for their participation.

The participants had to answer a series of demographic questions, and they had to state their three most important current goals and rate the perceived level of importance for these, as well as the level of attainment of these. We obtained a cumulative 867 goals from the respondents altogether. Despite having three goals listed by each respondent, we treated these goals individually, and this aspect did not influence our data.

The participants' age averaged 35 years, with the youngest of 18 and the oldest participants' age of 63. About 70,2% of the respondents were females, while the rest of 29,8 were males. Nationalities also varied. Most participants migrated from Poland (60.8%), Hungary (11.8%), Czech Republic (6.3%), while the least came from Albania (4.2%), Estonia (1%), or Romania (1.4%). Their education level was at least high school graduation. Around 48% had a bachelor's degree or Professional. Further, 6.9% finished a master's, and 2.45 obtained a Doctorate Degree. A little more than half of the participants had excellent language proficiency, 45,1% good or moderate, and 2.4 % basic. The rate of employment resided at 83.7%.

The study received ethical approval from the ethics committee of the university's psychology department (17444-P).

Measures

Self-set goal attainment. While being asked to state three of their current goals, under the form "I aspire to…" or "My goal is to…", participants were also indicated to rate, from a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*), their self-perceived attainment of these. The questions for the perceived attainment looked like: "How much have you already attained this goal?". A composite score was computed after averaging the importance values of the three listed goals. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .69 (see appendix, Table 1)

Self-set goal importance. Participants were also asked to list three of their current life goals. On a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*), they had to rate the importance of each

listed goal individually. The question was, "How important is this goal to you?". A composite

score was computed here, similar to the first measure. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale

was .6 (see appendix, Table 1)

Acculturation. To measure acculturation, psychological and sociocultural adaptation

were assessed with the Brief Psychological Adaptation Scale (BPAS) and, respectively, with

the Brief Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (BSAS) scale (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). An

example statement of the items found on BPAS is: "how often, in the last two weeks, have

you felt…". On BSAS, participants had to indicate the extent to which certain life situations

were easier or harder to adapt. The items were rated from 1 (*very difficult*) to 7 (*very easy)* on

BASA and 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always)* on BPAS. An average score of these was obtained. The

Cronbach's alpha for the BPAS scale was .75 and .89 for the BSAS scale (see Table 1).

Strategy of Analysis

Intending to answer the research question in our mixed-method study, we adopted the

grounded theory method (GT) as a framework. Created by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, GT

methodology allows for inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning. It allows more

flexibility while still offering structure. In the first step, purposive sampling, data gathering

occurs (Tie et al., 2019). Continuing this research, the three further coding stages are

essential: initial coding, intermediate coding, and advanced coding. These coding stages help

observe patterns in qualitative data and offer the possibility of readjustment after each one

(Tie et al., 2019). Initial coding allowed for a primary observation of patterns in the data. We

compared goal to goal and looked for similarities and differences. For example, we noticed

quite fast the high recurrence of goals containing the words "happy", "success" or "job". The

identical and similar given answers were then grouped into small, specific categories. During

the intermediate coding stage, we further deducted mid-categories, or core categories, based

on the ones that resulted in the initial stage. The process was not linear, and the theory gave

us the flexibility to readjust some of the initial coding if necessary. Memoing helped keep track of our decisions during the coding stages, especially in the case of the goals that were more difficult or composed from multiple goals. For example, "be healthy" would fit into the mid-category "Health" and "be happy" into "State of being". A goal such as "live healthy and happy" required a revision of previous categories and, perhaps, a check of the other given answers by the participant for taking a more in-depth look at the underlying motivation. During the final coding stage, advanced coding, broader categories emerged after analyzing which core categories can be colligated based on their common proprieties. These broader categories were more abstract, conceptual, vague. Thus, this methodology offers the possibility of conceiving a conceptual theory based on observations of behavioral patterns (Tie et al., 2019). The goal categories were established based on the participants' stated goals rather than fitting them into existing taxonomies.

Results

Goal Categories

After the final step of advanced coding, we obtained seven broad categories for the listed goals. These, together with the mid-categories, 26 in total, and example items, are described further.

1. *Achievement* category consisted of 70 reported goals and three mid-categories (financial, success, achievement). "Make more money" was a prevalent goal in this category together with "to be successful".

2. *Basic human striving* category consisted of 128 reported goals divided into two mid-categories (state of being, health). Representative of this category were items "be healthy" and "be happy". Participants almost exclusively oscillated between these two aspired goals.

3. *Migration* category consisted of 24 reported goals and three mid-categories (move, integration, staying in the UK). Participants were reporting goals concerning integration (e.g., "fit in culture"), moving (e.g., "move abroad"), or remaining in the UK (e.g., "stay in the UK after Brexit).

4. *Personal development* category consisted of 235 reported goals and seven mid-categories (travel, skill, impact, personal development, career, independence, and freedom), thus being the broadest category of the seven. Items such as "have a successful career", "be the best version of myself", "improve my English," or "travel more", were predominant in the respondents' listed goals.

5. *Professional* category consisted of 106 reported goals and three mid-categories (educational, occupational, professional). Themes in this category were represented by items like "have a good job" or "getting a degree".

6. *Relationship* category consisted of 121 reported goals, three mid-categories (family, relationship, friendship) and is comprised of items such as "have a family", "be a good mom," and "have good friends".

7. *Security* category consisted of 146 reported goals and five mid-categories (material achievement, living comfortably, retirement, security, financial security). Security goals can be summarized by items like "have a comfortable life", "buy a house," and "retire comfortably".

Preliminary Analysis and Hypothesis Testing per Category

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the model variables are provided in a table for each category (see Table 2-8). In order to measure the internal consistency between our items from different scales, we used Cronbach's alpha (see appendix, Table 1). To test our hypothesis, we used Hayes' Process macro model 1 (2017) to conduct a moderation analysis (see appendix, Table 9). 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.

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 supported 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 disconfirmed 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	0.93		-.190	.22
SSG_IMP	6.27	1.06	-.19		.23*
SSG_ATT	3.19	1.62	.22	.23*	

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 indicated 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 disconfirmed 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	.86		.091	.16
SSG_IMP	6.78	.60	.09		.20*
SSG_ATT	4.31	1.57	.16	.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 supported 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 disconfirmed 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	.88		-.01	.36
SSG_IMP	6.29	.80	-.01		.07
SSG_ATT	4.00	1.50	.36	.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 ($b = 0.09$, $p = .01$), which supported our first hypothesis that

there is a positive relationship between 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 disconfirmed 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	.82		-.04	.17**
SSG_IMP	6.44	.88	-.04		.07
SSG_ATT	3.67	1.63	.17**	.07	

*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 supported 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.
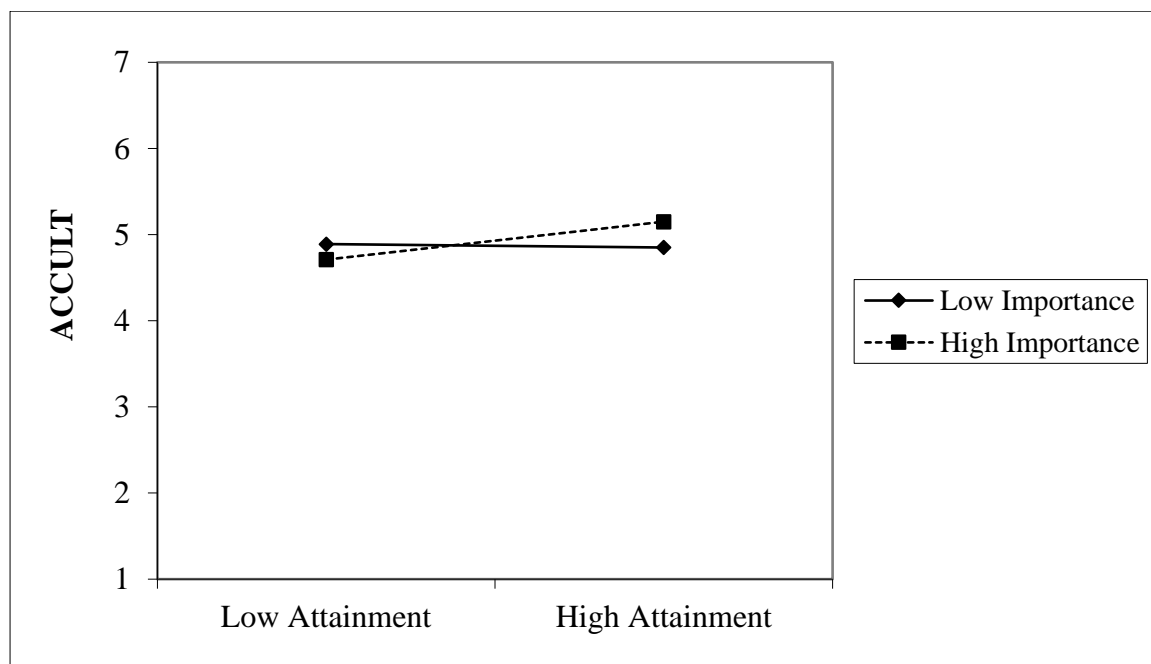
Table 6

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		.013	.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 disconfirmed 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 disconfirmed 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	.80		.05	.14
SSG_IMP	6.72	.63	.05		.29**
SSG_ATT	4.29	1.84	.14	.29**	

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 supported 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 disconfirmed 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	.89		-.12	.23**
SSG_IMP	6.54	.84	-.12		.05
SSG_ATT	3.29	1.85	.23**	.05	

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

In sum, we found that six categories (achievement, basic human striving, migration, personal development, professional, security) out of the total seven 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 supported 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. We did not find any support for either hypothesis in the relationship category.

Discussion

The success of acculturation seems to happen as a result of setting and attaining a self-concordant goal, and it is detrimental to the well-being of migrants (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Monnot & Beehr, 2021; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon et al., 2004; Toth et al., 2018; Toth-Bos et al., 2020). This paper investigated if goal attainment positively predicts acculturation in seven different goal categories. Results confirmed this hypothesis in six categories (achievement, basic human striving, migration, personal development, professional, security). In addition, we also decided to investigate if the relationship between goal attainment and acculturation is moderated by goal importance. This was confirmed in one out of the seven categories, professional.

Looking at the results for our first hypothesis, attainment of goals has a significant main effect in the achievement category. This can possibly reduce uncertainty, create a stronger sense of stability, and help with societal integration, therefore enhancing acculturation. (Gardner & Clément, 1990; Wassermann, et al., 2017). We found a marginally significant attainment effect on acculturation in the professional goals category. Increasing economic and career opportunities is a common goal among migrants (Andresen et al., 2014),

therefore our results are concordant. In achieving these goals high satisfaction and interaction with the host culture are probable.

Researchers have repeatedly shown that acculturation positively contributes to well-being (Marsiglia et al., 2013, Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Our findings indicate that this is also true if we reverse the two. The basic human striving category included goals directed at health and happiness and revealed a marginally significant effect on acculturation. When migrants display a quest for happiness, we observe that they show more intense feelings of acculturation. Likewise, when migrants strive for better health, they are more prone to engage in social interactions, leisure activities and to create and maintain friendships (Ward et al., 2001). Moreover, the personal development category results are in line with previous findings. Literature suggests that goals directed at personal development increase acculturation (Chirkov et al., 2008; Gong, 2003; Gong & Fan, 2006; Pinto et al., 2012; Tartakovsky & Schwartz, 2001; Yang et al.,2018; Zhou, 2014; Zimmermann et al., 2017). This category reflects goals related to personal identity challenges, reflection on information that is self-relevant, openness to change, and learning the country of living's language (Udahemuka & Pernice, 2010). In return, this openness aids adaptation in the face of the challenges that come with living in a foreign country (Ozer, 2017).

In the security category, we observed a positive, significant, main effect of goal attainment on acculturation. The results confirm previous findings, according to which financial earnings increase well-being by means of satisfying the basic need for autonomy (Srivastava et al., 2001). We also found support for our results in a recent paper by Toth-Bos et al. (2020). They explored if goal attainment predicts well-being using the mediating role of acculturation. The results suggested, indeed, that the attainment of self-concordant goals is positively tied to acculturation, well-being and negatively to ill-being. Therefore, we infer

that attaining security goals contribute positively to cultural adjustment and is further enhanced by well-being.

Looking at the results for the migration category, these consist of limited support in favor of our first hypothesis. With the smallest sample size, n=24, these results are encouraging and indicate that our goal categorization is accurate. Zhou (2014) explains that migrants who had a high interest in their work, perceived it utile, were motivated to obtain residence and assessed the social quitting cost as high were more prone to persist integration in the face of challenges. Therefore, attainment of integration is a challenging process, requires a lot of determination, and the positive impact on acculturation is consequently limited. Lastly, no significant effect was found for the relationship category regarding our first and second hypothesis. The attainment or importance of the goals in this category does not seem to influence acculturation.

Support for the moderating effect of self-set goal importance on the self-set goal attainment-acculturation relationship was found only for the goals belonging to the category professional. Therefore, we confirm our second hypothesis for this category and disconfirm it for the remaining six. Attainment of professional goals predicts acculturation stronger if these goals are perceived as highly important. One of the main reasons for migration is to increase career opportunities (Andresen et al., 2014); it is thus not very surprising to attribute high importance to professional goals. Additionally, the results align with the findings of Sheldon and Elliot (1999), according to which attainment of goals predicts well-being, particularly when perceived as personally important. Therefore, high importance can enhance the attainment effects for goals related to happiness and satisfaction.

A negative effect of goal importance on acculturation was observed in the achievement category. It suggests that the process of acculturation can be negatively impacted by placing too much importance on certain goals. As mentioned previously,

increasing economic opportunities is a predominant goal among migrants (Andresen et al., 2014). Still, its process comes with existential challenges, which helps to understand the subjective importance of those goals (Ward et al., 2001). Striving for those goals without achievement can create a longing state (Mayser et al., 2008), which impedes the road towards successful acculturation. Similar results are displayed by Toth et al. (2018), where intrinsic goal importance and well-being showed a curvilinear relation. This suggests that high goal importance can have a negative effect on well-being.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

The current study highlights the importance of research on the topic of acculturation-goal attainment-goal importance and strengthens some of the findings. It is of value, as the research on the cultural adjustment factors is limited as of today and not well-developed methodologically and conceptually (Chirkov et al., 2007). Replication is therefore of solid importance. Finding significant results in six out of our seven categories, we consider this study important for replication for the role of goal attainment on acculturation. This research greatly profits from a significant sample size, 289 respondents, who provided the study with their underlying motivations. It comprised first-generation, self-initiated, Central and East European migrants, which helped heighten the validity of the research.

On the other hand, respondents were financially compensated for their participation which can have implications for their attitude. We could notice that, at times, they did not treat the questions with utmost seriousness. For example, when asked to list their three most important goals, some of the answers given were: "nobody", "Jake Paul", or "be done this". Even though we filtered out such responses, it still leaves room for questioning the verisimilitude of the given answers. This aspect is a limitation of the self-report measure we used, therefore not directly of our study.

We did not have pre-fixed categories for the participants to fit in their goals. It allowed the participant to think freely of the most important goals instead of looking at categories and trying to deduct them based on these. Grounded Theory (Tie et al., 2019) methodology helped us build categories for participants' goals. It offered the necessary structure and flexibility while also suiting the qualitative nature of the study. We chose to look at the goal content for organizing the categories based on the literature. Other researchers could arrive at a different categorization. As a consequence, the qualitative nature and the coding process are inherently subjective. On the other hand, the results also suggest that our goal categories were successful, and future research might build on this. We found a marginally significant result in the category with the smallest sample size, indicating that future research might shed more light on this.

Even though we look at self-initiated migration, the importance of the replication is evidenced by looking at forced migration. Reports from The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2019) set the striking number for forced relocation at 68.5 million. Therefore, with future investigations, it could be interesting to foster the exploration of the dynamics between migration, goal, and acculturation in other contexts such as other nationalities and different migration scenarios (e.g., forced migration, migration between the same vs. different levels of development). This would allow for observation in the differences between geographical areas, goal content, acculturation levels, and, subsequently, the identification of contributing factors.

Previous research converges towards supporting the positive relationship between goal attainment and acculturation, and our study confirms this hypothesis. Therefore, we manage to strengthen the previous findings (Chirkov et al., 2007), according to which goal attainment has a positive contribution in the process of acculturation. Furthermore, it calls attention to the potential implication of goal importance in the professional goal category.

Throughout the other categories, it appears that goal importance does not have an effect, and the mere achievement of these is sufficient to enhance acculturation. With future research focusing on this specific dynamic, we might possibly resolve why and how the high importance of professional-oriented goals has an implication for low levels of acculturation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study looked at whether the attainment of goals in migrants helps with cultural adjustment. We also observed if self-set goal importance holds implications for the relationship. Based on SDT and SCT, our results substantially contribute to supporting previous findings. Although the relationship between goal attainment and acculturation was established in previous research, our study revealed great support for our first hypothesis, according to which there will be a relationship. It appears that goal importance plays a role in goals related to the profession, such that the more important they are, the more acculturation one experiences. Professional opportunities have been the main determinants of migration (Andresen et al., 2014), therefore the highly attributed importance. As a further matter, the ground becomes less clear and unexplored when looking at the role of goal importance on the other goal categories. In line with previous findings, the results obtained throughout this study are promising, especially with the magnitude of the sample. Suggestions are that future research is needed, which could also elevate the methodological approach.

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Appendix

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Self-Set Goal Attainment	.698	3
Self-Set Goal Importance	.585	3
Acculturation		
BPAS	.751	10
BSAS	.894	12

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	.032	.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

Predictor	B	SE	t	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
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