

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in International Journal of Psychology on April 12, 2012,  
available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00207594.2012.656129>

Ramelli, M., Florack, A., Kosic, A., & Rohmann, A. (2013). Being prepared for acculturation: on the importance of the first month after immigrants enter a new culture. *International Journal of Psychology*, 48, 363-373.

Being Prepared For Acculturation: On the Importance of the First Months After Immigrants

Enter a New Culture

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International Journal of Psychology (IN PRESS)

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We thank Johanna Palcu and Rouwen Hirth for their helpful comments on an earlier version of the manuscript and their support during data analyses.

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### Abstract

We hypothesized that perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and initial friendships with members of the receiving society during the first months after arrival in a new country have a long-term effect on the development of acculturation orientations and that this effect is pronounced for individuals with a high need for cognitive closure (NCC). We examined the hypotheses in a study with Spanish-speaking immigrants in Switzerland ( $n = 146$ ) and in Italy ( $n = 147$ ). We asked participants to indicate their current attitude toward contact with the receiving society and cultural maintenance and report retrospectively their perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and initial friendships. In line with the predictions, the perception of high communication effectiveness at arrival and friendships with members of the receiving society during the initial phase in the new culture were positively correlated with the current attitude toward contact with the receiving society assessed 7 years after arrival on average. Also, initial friendships with members of the receiving society were negatively correlated with present cultural maintenance. Moreover, with an increase in NCC, these correlations increased.

*Keywords:* acculturation, communication, contact, need for cognitive closure, anxiety

## Being Prepared for Acculturation: On the Importance of the First Months After Immigrants

### Enter a New Culture

When immigrants arrive in a new country, they are repeatedly confronted by situations unknown to their cultural perspective. As a result, immigrants often experience *anxiety* and a sense of *uncertainty* due to the invalidity of their old thinking-as-usual (Gudykunst, 2005a, b). However, recent research has shown that individuals differ considerably in whether they perceive the uncertainty in intercultural encounters as aversive, acceptable, or even as a challenge (Samochwiec & Florack, 2010). Consequently, immigrants also differ in how they cope with the changes in their environment and in whether they seek or avoid contact with members of the receiving culture (Berry, 1997).

For receiving societies, the successful management of uncertainty might be a source of the psychosocial prosperity of a society. Many governments have recognized these challenges and support social programs to facilitate the integration of immigrants. To identify promising starting points for such programs, knowledge is needed about the determinants of immigrants' acculturation orientations. The present paper focuses on determinants of acculturation orientations that may already be of primary importance within the first few months in a new culture, namely, perceived communication effectiveness and friendships with members of the receiving society. In a study conducted in Italy and Switzerland, we measured perceived communication effectiveness and initial friendships retrospectively, and examined the extent to which these variables shaped acculturation orientations at later stages of the acculturation process. Moreover, we tested whether the effects of these two variables on acculturation orientations were moderated by individual differences in the need for cognitive closure, which reflects an individual's tolerance to confront uncertainty (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Because individuals with a low need for cognitive closure feel comfortable with uncertain situations and do not adhere to the status quo, we expected their acculturation orientations to

be less affected by initial friendships and perceived communication effectiveness at entry compared to individuals with a high need for cognitive closure. The results of the studies were expected to provide insight into whether and for whom perceived communication effectiveness and friendships at entry into a new culture would be of particular importance.

### **Theoretical Background**

Even if acculturation researchers differ in the detailed conceptualizations of acculturation orientations (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Piontkowski, Rohmann, & Florack, 2002; van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006), many studies have revealed the importance of two basic attitudes (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Ben-Shalom & Horenczyk, 2003; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000): The attitude toward *cultural maintenance* and the attitude toward *contact with the receiving society*. The attitude toward cultural maintenance refers to individual behaviors such as retaining habits and ways of living from the heritage culture or speaking the heritage language. By contrast, the attitude toward contact with the receiving society refers to the willingness to participate in the life of the receiving society and openness to positive interactions with its members.

In the present studies, we examined the impact of initial friendships, perceived communication effectiveness, and need for cognitive closure on the two underlying acculturation dimensions on the level of individual orientations and behaviors (cf. Piontkowski, Florack, Hölker, & Obdržálek, 2000; Rohmann, Piontkowski, & van Randenborgh, 2008).

### **Perceived Communication Effectiveness During the Early Post-Entry Period**

Effectiveness in communication occurs when the meaning of a message is relatively similar to what was meant to be said, and when misunderstandings are minimized (Gudykunst, 1998; 2005a). According to anxiety/uncertainty management theory of effective

communication and intercultural adaptation (Gudykunst, 1998; 2005), *perceived* effectiveness in communication depends not only on *language skills* (i.e., knowing the meaning of the words and the grammar of a language), but concerns also the ability to manage anxiety (emotional phenomena) and uncertainty (cognitive phenomena) in interpersonal and intergroup encounters. Immigrants who perceive their own communication with strangers as effective are supposed to be able to manage anxiety and uncertainty in communication contexts (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001; Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Hubbert, Gudykunst, & Guerrero, 1999).

We assume that high perceived communication effectiveness at arrival influences attitudes toward contact with the receiving society in a positive way (Gudykunst, 2005a; Kim, 2005), and facilitates the identification with the receiving society (cf. Clément, 1986; Noels, Pon, & Clément, 1996). Furthermore, we assume that immigrants with low perceived communication effectiveness do not perceive themselves to possess the communicative tools to reduce uncertainty and anxiety in encounters with strangers. They should be likely to feel uneasy in interactions with members of the receiving society and to avoid communication with them in the long run (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b; Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

**Hypothesis 1.** The higher the perceived communication effectiveness at arrival, the more positive the attitude toward contact with receiving society members at later stages of the acculturation process will be.

### **Initial Friendships During the Early Post-Entry Period**

A further important source for reestablishing a feeling of certainty about one's own perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors are the people with whom immigrants have contact when they enter the new culture (Kosic, Kruglanski, Pierro, & Mannetti, 2004; Williams & Johnson, 2011). Therefore, we examined the role of initial friendships with members of the receiving society as a main reference group for immigrants. Friendships are associated with

frequent and close interactions. Research has shown that important and personally relevant contacts shape intergroup attitudes and relations (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Thus, immigrants who have initial friendships with members of the receiving culture should also tend to veer away from intergroup attitudes and relations corresponding to their original culture. Consequently, we assume that initial friendships determine the extent to which immigrants maintain their culture and appreciate contact with the receiving society at later stages of the acculturation process. Note that we do not assume that out-group contact is necessarily related to a detachment from one's cultural heritage. Rather we propose that initial friendships are a very close and influential form of contact and that initial friendships more than other forms of contact (e.g., contact during work) may lead to a gradual change in cultural habits.

**Hypotheses 2a and b.** The more friendships immigrants have with receiving society members at an early post-entry period, (a) the more positive the attitude toward contact with the receiving society at later stages of the acculturation process will be and (b) the less likely immigrants will be to maintain their culture at later stages of the acculturation process.

### **Individual Differences in Need for Cognitive Closure as Determinant of Acculturation Orientations**

A perception of high communication effectiveness and friendships with members of the receiving society may help individuals to reduce uncertainty and anxiety in contact with receiving society members. However, the reduction of uncertainty and anxiety may be more important for some individuals than for others. Indeed, anxiety uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 2005a, b) proposes that some immigrants are able to tolerate uncertainty and anxiety more than others. These individuals should be able to develop positive expectations toward contact with the receiving society in the long run, even if uncertainty

exists. For them, perceived communication effectiveness and reference groups should be less important.

An aspect of personality that refers to tolerance for uncertainty is the need for cognitive closure (NCC; Kruglanski, 2004). Individuals with a strong need for cognitive closure reveal a high desire for certainty and reduced openness to changes. The need for cognitive closure has been shown to be an important determinant of inter-individual differences in wide variety of domains (Kruglanski, 2004).

We assume that individuals with a high need for cognitive closure will avoid contact with members of the receiving society, who might represent a source of anxiety. Likewise, they will tend to adhere to their culture, which can be assumed to be a salient and available source of certainty.

**Hypotheses 3a and b.** The higher the need for cognitive closure, (a) the weaker the attitude toward contact with the receiving society, and (b) the higher the attitude toward cultural maintenance at later stages of the acculturation process will be.

#### **Need for Cognitive Closure as Moderator**

Studies have shown that the views and behaviors of a reference group do not affect all immigrants in the same manner. Some immigrants are more motivated than others to conform to a reference group (Roccas, Horenczyk, & Schwartz, 2000), or to freeze on cultural views gathered from an initial reference group (Kosic et al., 2004). For instance, in three studies with Polish and Croatian immigrant groups in Italy, Kosic et al. (2004) found that the reference group at entry had a stronger effect on contact at later stages of the acculturation process for immigrants with a high need for cognitive closure than for those with a low one. Immigrants with a high need for cognitive closure had more contact with receiving society members when their initial reference group consisted of receiving society members and not of immigrants. This effect was reduced for immigrants with a low need for cognitive closure.



Hence, we assume that the anxiety and uncertainty reduction provided by initial friendships and perceived communication effectiveness should be particularly relevant for immigrants with a high need for cognitive closure. If at time of arrival, immigrants with a high need for cognitive closure have already developed friendships with members of the receiving society or are already able to communicate effectively, they should be more likely to form a positive attitude toward contact with the receiving societies. If they do not have initial friendships with members of the receiving society and if they are not able to communicate effectively, they should be likely to develop a negative expectation toward contact with the receiving society, resulting in the avoidance of further contact.

**Hypotheses 4a and b.** High perceived communication effectiveness (a) and initial friendships with members of the receiving society (b) at an early post-entry period are more likely to be positively related to the attitude toward contact with the receiving society at later stages of the acculturation process for immigrants with a higher need for cognitive closure than for those with a lower need for cognitive closure.

**Hypothesis 4c.** Initial friendships with members of the receiving society at an early post-entry period are more likely to be negatively related to cultural maintenance at later stages of the acculturation process for immigrants with a higher need for cognitive closure than for those with a lower need for cognitive closure.

### **The Study**

To test our hypotheses (see for an overview Table 1), we conducted a survey with Spanish-speaking immigrants in Switzerland and Italy. Although Spanish-speaking immigrants come from various countries, they share important characteristics such as language, religion, and various cultural aspects (e.g., values, music, type of family structure). Moreover, people from Latin America are often seen as a single group by out-group members: the so-called *Latinos*. We assumed that perceived communication effectiveness and

initial friendships are determinants of acculturation orientations that are not specific for a particular context of immigration and affect acculturation orientations across the two acculturation contexts.

We examined the impact of initial friendships, perceived communication effectiveness at arrival, and the need for cognitive closure on the two main underlying dimensions of acculturation orientations (i.e., attitude toward contact with the receiving society and cultural maintenance). Also, we examined the moderating impact of need for cognitive closure on the effects of initial friendships and perceived communication effectiveness.

## **Method**

**Participants.** Immigrants in Switzerland and Italy were contacted personally by a researcher and asked to fill in a questionnaire on immigration. Three hundred fourteen immigrants returned the questionnaire to the researcher. However, 21 questionnaires were largely incomplete. Hence, the final sample consisted of 293 Spanish-speaking immigrants living in Switzerland ( $n = 146$ ) and Italy ( $n = 147$ ). The participants came from different countries of origin where Spanish is the official language. The majority of the participants came from Colombia (25.6%), Peru (12.6%), Spain (10.6%), Bolivia (9.9%), Ecuador (9.2%), Mexico (8.2%), and Argentina (7.2%). The rest came from other Spanish-speaking countries, namely (in order of frequencies), Chile, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Venezuela, El Salvador, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Panama. One hundred ninety nine participants were women, 94 were men. The mean age of participants was 33.99 ( $SD = 9.10$ ). The mean length of residence in the new cultural setting was 83.38 months ( $SD = 101.08$ ). The majority of the participants had a university (49.8%) or college education (23.2%), some had at least a high school education (23.2%), and a few had only a primary education (3.1%). Participants indicated that they migrated because of work (36.2%), education (25.3%), a romantic relationship with a member from the receiving society (8.9%), or other reasons.

Most participants from the sample recruited in Switzerland had their permanent residence in the German-speaking part of Switzerland (25% indicated a residence in a different part). The participants recruited in Italy had their permanent residence in the city of Rome.

**Materials.** A questionnaire was used with items according to background and demographic information, friendships with receiving society members, perceived communication effectiveness, acculturation orientations, need for cognitive closure, and other topics not relevant to the objectives of the present paper.

**Background and demographic information.** Participants responded to questions referring to gender, age, marital status, level of education, reasons for immigrating, length of residence, country of origin, city of settlement, citizenship(s), and receiving country citizenship.

**Initial friendships with members of the receiving society.** Participants indicated how many of their friends during the first 3 months after their arrival were receiving society members (“Indicate how many of your friends were Italian / Swiss during the first 3 months in Italy/Switzerland.”), using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*almost all*).

**Perceived communication effectiveness at arrival.** Participants rated their perceived communication effectiveness on items adapted from Gudykunst and Nishida (2001) using 5-point scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The questions were: “When I first arrived in Italy/Switzerland, my communication with the Italians/Swiss was mostly efficient”; “When I first arrived in Italy/Switzerland my communication with the Italians/Swiss was mostly unsuccessful”; “When I first arrived in Italy/Switzerland, I felt mostly competent when communicating with the Italians/Swiss”; “When I first arrived in Italy/Switzerland, I communicated mostly in an appropriate way with the Italians/Swiss”; “When I first arrived in Italy/Switzerland, my communication with the Italians/Swiss was

rather poor.” The items were averaged into a single scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .76$ ). High values indicate a high perceived effectiveness in communication at time of arrival.

**Need for cognitive closure.** We applied a translated version of the need for cognitive closure scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) that consists of 35 items (e.g., “I think that having clear rules and order at work is essential for success”; “I enjoy the uncertainty of going into a new situation without knowing what might happen”). Participants responded on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The items were averaged into a single score (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .76$ ). High values indicate a high need for cognitive closure.

**Acculturation orientations.** We measured the two acculturation orientations, current attitude toward cultural maintenance and contact with receiving society members, with 9 items adapted from Kosic et al. (2004). For all items, we used a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). We assessed current *attitude toward contact with the receiving society* with six items (e.g., “I like to spend time with Italians/Swiss”). We measured current *attitude toward cultural maintenance* with three items (e.g., “I would be happy if I could watch my country’s TV programs”). The items were averaged for attitude toward contact with the receiving society (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .72$ ) and cultural maintenance (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .63$ ). High values indicate a positive attitude toward contact with receiving society members and a positive attitude toward cultural maintenance.

## Results

**Preliminary analyses.** In preliminary analyses, we tested whether the measurement models of perceived communication effectiveness, contact with members of the receiving society, as well as cultural maintenance were invariant across the two subsamples.

Confirmatory factor analyses showed an acceptable fit of the proposed measurement models for the overall sample,  $CFI > .97$ ,  $RMSR < .09$ , as well as for the two subsamples,  $CFI > .94$ ,

RMSR < .08. Also, unconstrained models did not show a significant increase in fit compared to models for which we constrained the factor loadings to be invariant across the two subsamples,  $\Delta\chi^2 < 9.02$ ,  $ps > .10$ . To test the invariance of the factor structure of the need for cognitive closure scale, we applied the indicator model recommended by Mannetti, Pierro, Kruglanski, Taris, and Bezinovic (2002). The unconstrained model for the need for cognitive closure scale did not show a significant increase in fit compared to the constrained model,  $\Delta\chi^2(8) < 14.53$ ,  $p > .05$ . Confirmatory factor analyses showed an acceptable fit of the proposed measurement model for the overall sample, CFI = .94, RMSR < .07, as well as for the two subsamples, CFI > .94, RMSR < .08. The means and standard deviations for all measures and both samples are presented in Table 2.

**Tests of hypotheses.** To test our hypotheses, we computed multiple regression analyses<sup>1</sup> with the attitude toward contact with the receiving society and cultural maintenance as dependent measures. We included initial friendships, perceived communication effectiveness at arrival, need for cognitive closure, gender, age, and time in receiving country as predictors. Following the procedure recommended by Aiken and West (1991), all predictors were z-standardized. Thus, the regression coefficients can be directly interpreted as main and interaction effects. An overview of the regression results is presented in Table 4.

**Perceived communication effectiveness at arrival as predictor of the current attitude toward contact.** We expected perceived communication effectiveness at arrival to be positively correlated with the current attitude toward contact with the receiving society (Hypothesis 1). We further hypothesized that this correlation would be moderated by the need for cognitive closure (Hypothesis 4a). As predicted (Table 4), the higher participants assessed their communication effectiveness at arrival, the more positive was their current attitude toward contact with the receiving society,  $\beta = .18$ ,  $p = .001$ . The interaction between perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and need for cognitive closure did not reach

a conventional level of significance,  $\beta = .04$ ,  $p = .15$ . However, given the correlation between the two interaction terms (NCC x perceived communication effectiveness at arrival; NCC x friendships with members of the receiving society at arrival) which both included need for cognitive closure, we continued to conduct more specific analyses. First, we conducted a multiple regression in which we omitted the interaction between need for cognitive closure and friendships with members of the receiving society at arrival. In this regression, the interaction between need for cognitive closure and perceived communication effectiveness was significant,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $p = .04$  (Figure 1). Second, we computed correlations between perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and the current attitude toward contact with the receiving society at three levels of need for cognitive closure (low NCC:  $n = 95$ ; moderate NCC:  $n = 104$ ; high NCC:  $n = 94$ ). The correlation between perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and the attitude toward contact with the receiving society was significant for participants of the high NCC-group,  $r = .36$ ,  $p = .001$ , but not for those of the low and moderate NCC groups,  $r_s < .19$ ,  $p_s > .07$ . Importantly, the correlation between perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and the attitude toward contact with the receiving society in the high NCC-group remained significant when we controlled for initial friendships with members of the receiving society,  $r = .35$ ,  $p = .001$ . Thus, there is support for the hypothesis that the correlation between perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and current attitude toward contact with the receiving society increases with an increase in need for cognitive closure.

**Initial friendships as predictor of the current attitude toward contact and cultural maintenance.** We hypothesized that initial friendships with members of the receiving society would be positively correlated with the current attitude toward contact with the receiving society, and negatively with the current attitude toward cultural maintenance (Hypotheses 2a and 2b). In addition, we predicted that need for cognitive closure would

moderate these correlations (Hypothesis 4b and 4c). The results of the multiple regressions supported the predictions (Table 4). The more initial friendships with members of the receiving society immigrants had, the more positive their attitude toward contact,  $\beta = .35, p < .001$ , and the less positive their attitude toward cultural maintenance was,  $\beta = -.15, p = .005$ . Moreover, the correlations of initial friendships with the current attitude toward contact,  $\beta = .11, p = .041$ , and cultural maintenance,  $\beta = -.24, p < .001$ , increased with an increase in need for cognitive closure (Figures 2 and 3). A comparison of the correlations in the high and low NCC-groups illustrates this relationship. For the low NCC-group, there was a moderate correlations of initial friendships with the current attitude toward contact,  $r = .23, p = .026$ , and no correlation with the current attitude toward cultural maintenance,  $r = -.08, p = .434$ . For the high NCC-group, the correlations of initial friendships with the current attitude toward contact,  $r = .48, p = .001$ , and cultural maintenance,  $r = -.32, p = .002$ , were considerably higher.

**Need for cognitive closure as predictor of the current attitude toward contact, and cultural maintenance.** We expected need for cognitive closure to be negatively correlated with the current attitude toward contact with the receiving society (Hypothesis 3a), and positively correlated with the current attitude toward cultural maintenance (Hypothesis 3b). Congruent to our prediction, the current attitude toward contact decreased,  $\beta = -.16, p = .004$ , and the current attitude toward cultural maintenance increased,  $\beta = .17, p = .003$ , with an increase in need for cognitive closure.

**Stability of the reported effects across the samples.** We assumed the predicted effects to be stable across the two receiving countries. To detect possible differences, we computed a multiple regression including all main effects and interactions, and added the respective interactions with the Italian or Swiss immigration context (coded as a dummy

variable). There were no significant differences for the reported effects between the two receiving countries,  $ps > .05$ .

### **Discussion**

To respond to the challenge of increasing immigration, it is important to collect knowledge about the determinants of acculturation orientations. The present study shows that factors that already affect immigrants within the first few months after arrival may have a significant impact on acculturation orientations at later stages of the acculturation process, on average, more than 7 years after arrival in our sample. We found that perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and initial friendships with members of the receiving society predicted attitudes toward contact with the receiving society and cultural maintenance of immigrants at the time the study was conducted, and that these relations were more pronounced for immigrants with a high need for cognitive closure.

The finding that perceived communication effectiveness fosters contact with the receiving society is in line with predictions made by the anxiety / uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b). This theory predicts that individuals who perceive themselves as able to manage uncertainty and anxiety in interactions with strangers are more likely to approach contexts in which communications with strangers can occur. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that the self-assessment of being able to communicate effectively makes it more likely that immigrants will approach receiving society members, perceive communications with them more positively, and will be more likely to continue such communications for a longer time. Previous communications may then sow the seeds for further communications with receiving society members in the long run.

The same holds true for initial friendships with members of the receiving society, which can be assumed to reduce anxiety and uncertainty, as well. Immigrants can learn a lot about the new culture from such initial contacts, and as a hub within the receiving society



network, the initial contacts can provide the opportunity for further contacts with receiving society members and an adoption of the new culture.

A further important assumption of anxiety/uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 2005a) is that anxiety and uncertainty are not equally important for all individuals, but that some individuals are more susceptible to uncertainty and anxiety than others. Our studies revealed, in fact, that perceived communication effectiveness and initial friendships with members of the receiving society are less important for immigrants with a low need for cognitive closure (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996)—a variable that is directly linked to the acceptance of ambiguity and uncertainty. In addition, we found a direct effect of need for cognitive closure on the current attitudes toward contact and cultural maintenance. This finding complements recent research that has shown that individuals with a high need for cognitive closure are more likely than those with a low need for closure to center on their own group and to be less open to changes (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Shah, Kruglanski, & Thompson, 1998). Future research might examine whether the same processes apply to the management of anxiety and uncertainty of members of the receiving society (c.f., Florack, Piontkowski, Rohmann, Balzer, & Perzig, 2003).

### **Limitations**

The results of the present study are completely in line with the proposed causal influences of perceived communication effectiveness and initial friendships on acculturation strategies. But there are two caveats with regard to the interpretation of the results.

First, we measured perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and initial friendships with members of the receiving society retrospectively. Even if it is very likely that immigrants remembered interpersonal relations they had when they immigrated, we cannot rule out that current experiences shaped their retrospective views. Future studies could rely on

a longitudinal design to test the long-term influences of perceived communication effectiveness and initial friendships on acculturation strategies.

Second, we focused on perceived communication effectiveness and initial contact as determinants of acculturation strategies in an early phase of acculturation. It was not the objective of the present study to examine the interrelation between these constructs during acculturation. It is important to note that it is reasonable to assume that perceived communication effectiveness influences contact as implied by Gudykunst's anxiety uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 2005a) and that the frequency of positive contact influences perceived communication effectiveness as proposed by Clement's model of second language communication (Clement, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003). Thus, it is very likely that a circular causality between contact and perceived communication effectiveness exists.

Finally, the study was based on the assumption that the need for cognitive closure scale measures a personality trait that is stable across different contexts. Indeed, Webster and Kruglanski (1994) tested the stability of the measure across 8 weeks and found a high reliability ( $r = .86$ ). But even if we do not know about a study that has shown that the need for cognitive closure changes with acculturation, we have to stress that changes during the process of acculturation cannot be ruled out.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the present studies provided evidence that the early phase of acculturation is important in setting up acculturation orientations, particularly for immigrants with a high need for cognitive closure. The results suggest that interventions with the goal of enhancing perceived communication effectiveness or host contact are worthwhile, and are more likely to have promising effects if they are applied in an early stage of the acculturation process.

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Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Missing values on single scales were replaced by the mean of the whole sample.

Table 1

*Research Hypotheses*

Perceived Communication Effectiveness		
H1	Positive correlation of perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and current attitude toward contact with the receiving society.	Supported
Friendships with members of the receiving society		
H2a	Positive correlation of friendships with members of the receiving society at arrival and current attitude toward contact with the receiving society.	Supported
H2b	Negative correlation of friendships with members of the receiving society at arrival and current attitude toward cultural maintenance.	Supported
Need for Cognition		
H3a	Negative correlation of need for cognitive closure and current attitude toward contact with the receiving society.	Supported
H3b	Positive correlation of need for cognitive closure and current attitude toward cultural maintenance.	Supported
Moderation		
H4a	The positive correlation between perceived communication effectiveness at arrival and current attitude toward contact with the receiving society increases with an increase in need for cognitive closure.	Supported
H4b	The positive correlation between friendships with members of the receiving society at arrival and current attitude toward contact with the receiving society increases with an increase in need for cognitive closure.	Supported
H4c	The negative correlation between friendships with members of the receiving society at arrival and current attitude toward cultural maintenance increases with an increase in need for cognitive closure.	Supported



Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for the Two Samples*

Measure	Receiving country			
	Switzerland		Italy	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Need for cognitive closure	3.71	0.51	3.92	0.49
Initial friendships with members of the receiving society	2.48	1.21	2.41	1.19
Perceived communication effectiveness at arrival	2.80	1.04	2.52	0.68
Attitude toward contact with the receiving society (current)	3.98	0.70	3.40	0.74
Attitude toward cultural maintenance (current)	3.26	0.94	3.68	0.91

Table 3

*Correlation Matrix for Variables Included in the Regression Analyses*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Initial friendships with members of the receiving society	-				
2. Need for cognitive closure	.06	-			
3. Perceived communication at arrival	.15*	-.09	-		
4. Attitude toward Cultural maintenance (current)	-.17**	.14*	-.14*	-	
5. Attitude toward contact with the receiving society (current)	.36**	-.15*	.25**	-.32**	-

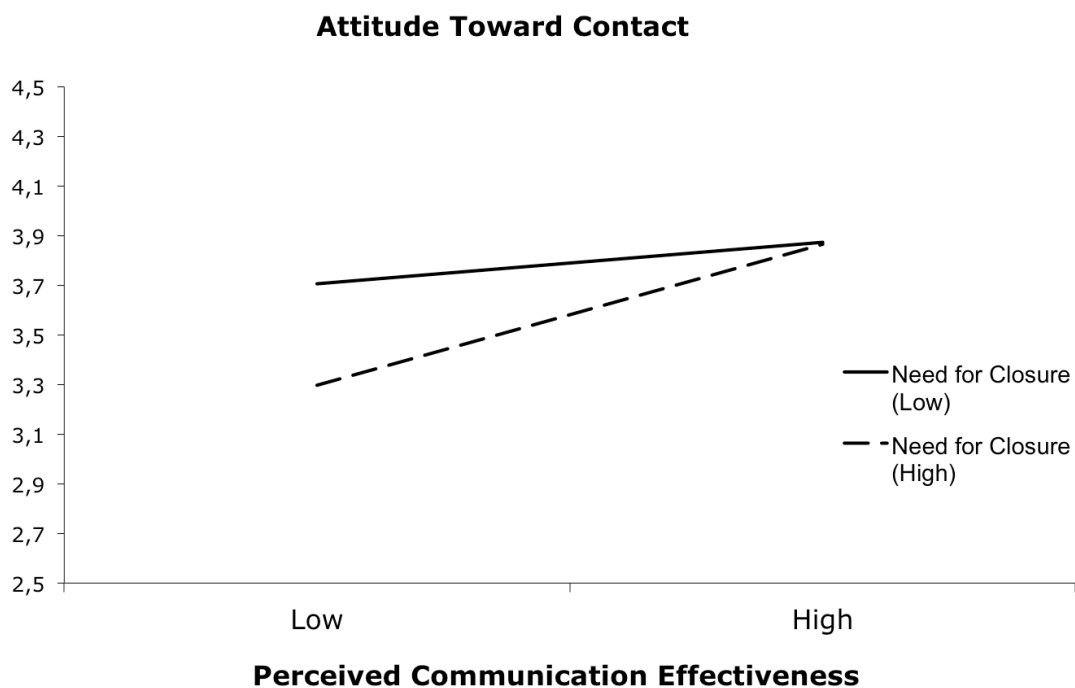
\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 4

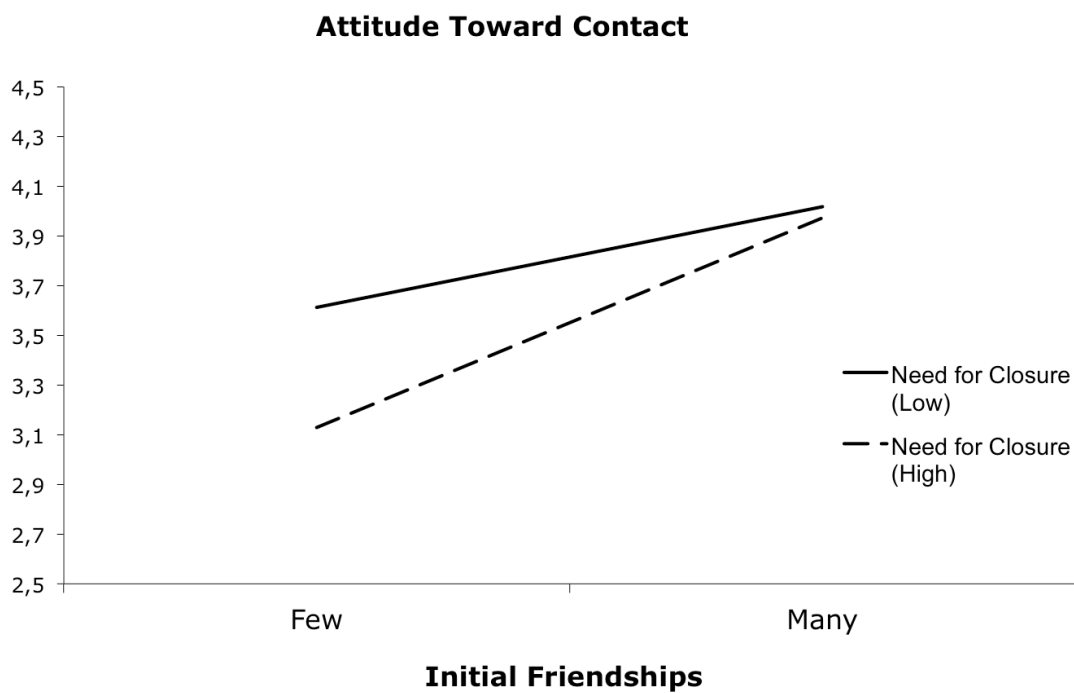
*Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Attitude Toward Contact with the receiving society, and the Attitude Toward Cultural Maintenance, and All Predictors Included in the Regression Equations*

Predictors	Attitude toward contact with the receiving society		Attitude toward cultural maintenance	
	$\beta$	$p$	$\beta$	$p$
Time in receiving country	.18	.004	-.09	.195
Age	-.10	.120	-.10	.152
Gender	-.05	.303	.16	.003
Need for Cognitive Closure (NCC)	-.16	.004	.17	.003
Initial friendships with members of the receiving society	.35	.000	-.15	.005
Perceived communication effectiveness at arrival	.18	.001	-.093	.091
Initial friendships with members of the receiving society $\times$ NCC	.11	.041	-.24	.000
Perceived Communication Effectiveness at Arrival $\times$ NCC	.08	.150 <sup>1</sup>	.02	.792

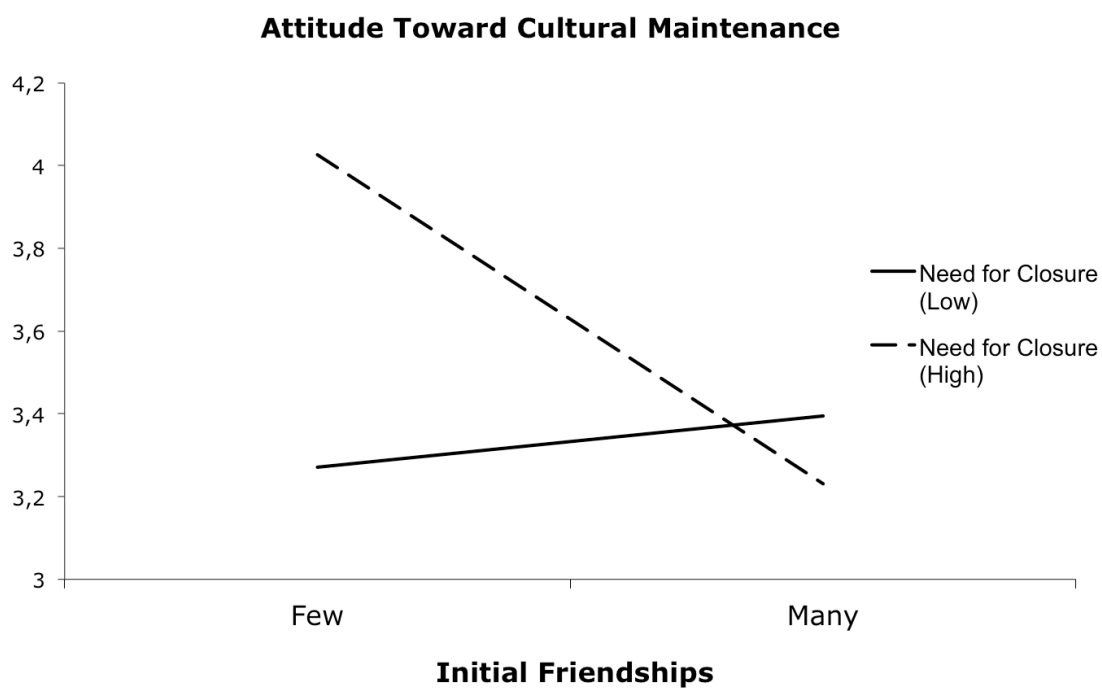
<sup>1</sup> The interaction is significant,  $p < .05$ , if the interaction between initial friendships with members of the receiving society and NCC is removed from the regression equation.



*Figure 1.* Regression lines predicting the current attitude toward contact with the receiving society as a function of need for cognitive closure and perceived communication effectiveness at arrival. High values indicate a positive current attitude toward contact with the receiving society.



*Figure 2.* Regression lines predicting the current attitude toward contact with the receiving society as a function of need for cognitive closure and initial friendships with members of the receiving society. High values indicate a positive current attitude toward contact with the receiving society.



*Figure 3.* Regression lines predicting current maintenance of cultural heritage as a function of need for cognitive closure and initial friendships with members of the receiving society. High values indicate a positive current attitude toward cultural maintenance.