Marginal and happy? The need for uniqueness predicts the adjustment of marginal immigrants

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Marginalization is often presented as the strategy associated with the worst adjustment for immigrants. This study identifies a critical variable that buffers marginal immigrants from the negative effects of marginalization on adjustment: The need for uniqueness. In three studies, we surveyed immigrants recruited on university campuses ($n = 119$, $n = 116$) and in the field ($n = 61$). Among marginal immigrants, a higher need for uniqueness predicted higher self-esteem (Study 1), affect (Study 2), and life satisfaction (Study 3), and marginally higher happiness (Study 2) and self-esteem (Study 3). No relationship between the need for uniqueness and adjustment was found among non-marginal immigrants. The adaptive value of the need for uniqueness for marginal immigrants is discussed.

Human beings are more mobile today than ever before in world history. According to the United Nations (2013), more than 214 million people were not living in the country in which they were born in 2010, compared to 155 million people only two decades earlier. It is unlikely that this trend in global migration will taper in the near future: Indeed, a Gallup poll indicated that more than 640 million people would move to another country if they could (Clifton, 2012). As a result of these migration trends, an increasing number of people face the consequences of being in extensive contact with at least two cultures and having to negotiate between different and often disparate cultural identities.

Negotiating these multiple cultural identities is a challenge for many immigrants. Failing to adopt the customs of the *mainstream culture* they live in may hinder their ability to successfully navigate their social reality, whereas failing to maintain the customs of the *heritage culture* they grew up in might result in a painful sense of loss. This might be why most immigrants *integrate* (i.e., have strong connections to both cultures), *assimilate* (i.e., only have a strong connection to their mainstream culture), or *separate* (i.e., only have a strong connection to their heritage culture). However, some immigrants have weak connections to *both* of their cultural groups (Berry, 1990). These immigrants experience *marginalization* – that is, they feel disconnected from both the *heritage* culture they grew up in and the *mainstream* culture of the society they live in.

The idea that marginalization is related to poor adjustment is widespread in the acculturation literature. Indeed, previous studies have found that marginal immigrants are

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not as well adjusted as other immigrants: They are more likely to experience poor mental health, such as high levels of stress and depression (Bhui *et al.*, 2005; Choi, Miller, & Wilbur, 2009; Nakash, Nagar, Shoshani, Zubida, & Harper, 2012). Some studies have found that marginalization is also associated with lower self-esteem (Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Pham & Harris, 2001; Virta, Sam, & Westin, 2004), which might signal both low self-evaluation and poor well-being (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004). Finally, marginalization has also been associated with lower subjective well-being: Marginal immigrants reported lower life satisfaction scores (Pfafferott & Brown, 2006) and lower positive and higher negative affect scores (Abu-Rayya, 2007) than non-marginal immigrants. Therefore, it is not surprising that marginalization has been repeatedly identified as the acculturation strategy associated with the worst outcomes for the adjustment of immigrants.

However, the association between adjustment and marginalization deserves further examination for two reasons. First, much emphasis has been placed on the association between marginalization and poor outcomes, yet some studies suggest that this pattern may not always apply. Although a large portion of marginal immigrants seems to have trouble adjusting, some empirical evidence suggests that many marginal immigrants are able to live happily, despite being detached from their cultural groups (de la Sablonnière, Debrosse, & Benoit, 2010; van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). For instance, many marginal immigrants have similar levels of self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and adjustment as other immigrants (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Nigbur *et al.*, 2008).

Second, marginalization is not fully understood. For instance, Rudmin (2008) proposes that results suggesting that marginal immigrants are not as well adjusted as other immigrants might be due to the use of problematic scales, such as the fourfold acculturation scale. Similarly, some researchers have suggested that evidence of marginalization outcomes can be difficult to interpret (Fosados *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, some researchers propose that the concept of marginalization might need further clarification. Specifically, some note that the definition of marginalization seems to have evolved across different papers (Rudmin, 2008). Others propose that the literature does not sufficiently take into account the influence of the mainstream cultural context or the relationships shared with members of the mainstream culture on the adjustment of immigrants, regardless of their acculturation strategy (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). Other researchers have emphasized the need to clarify the different ways in which individuals can be distant from a social group (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2000), especially for the purposes of predicting outcomes associated with such a distant position. For instance, certain marginal immigrants could have intentionally distanced themselves from a group that would have otherwise accepted them, whereas other marginal immigrants could unsuccessfully attempt to be included by a rejecting group.

Taken together, this body of research suggests that marginalization is in need of clarification. Little of the current theorizing attempts to explain why certain marginal immigrants adjust well, whereas others do not. Furthermore, the different types of distancing that group members may experience have been neglected. One notable exception to this trend is the work of Boski (2008), which suggests that marginalization can be a very positive and desirable acculturation strategy when lived as a form of detachment rather than alienation from one's cultures. Another notable exception to this trend is the work of Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, and Senécal (1997), which distinguishes between two types of marginalization strategies: 'Anomic marginalization' and 'individualism'. They propose that the experience of certain marginal immigrants is characterized by anomie – feeling alienated from the both their heritage culture and the mainstream culture. They

propose that the experience of other marginal immigrants is characterized instead by focusing on personal achievements and that the lack of connection and identification with their heritage and mainstream cultures is simply a reflection of this individualistic worldview. Interestingly, adopting the individualism strategy (vs. the 'anomic marginalization' strategy) was associated with more positive intergroup outcomes (Bourhis, Montaruli, El-Geledi, Harvey, & Barrette, 2010), such as more harmonious relationships with members of the host culture (Bourhis, Barrette, El-Geledi, & Schmidt, 2009).

The present research seeks to use a somewhat similar approach to Bourhis *et al.* (1997) to improve our understanding of marginalization. However, whereas their work focuses on the intergroup outcomes associated with two different types of marginalization strategies, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of marginalization by exploring the role of a factor that could potentially buffer adjustment. Specifically, we propose that having a high need for uniqueness might be adaptive when placed in a position in which it is difficult to experience strong feelings of group membership. This position is characteristic of marginal immigrants, no matter whether they adopt an individualistic or anomic approach. In exploring the role of the need for uniqueness, we aim to shed light on the conditions under which marginalization can be experienced more or less positively.

The need for uniqueness

The need to feel and to perceive oneself as distinct has been identified by many researchers (Brewer, 1991; Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; Vignoles *et al.*, 2000). Individuals need to differentiate themselves from others, for example by placing what they feel distinguishes themselves at the centre of their identities or by behaving in a manner that they believe sets them apart (Vignoles *et al.*, 2000). When the need for distinctiveness is threatened, people adopt cognitive or behavioural strategies to re-establish themselves as different (Leonardelli, Pickett, & Brewer, 2010).

Social identity theorists propose that belonging to a group and perceiving this group as distinct from other groups allow individuals to incorporate the distinctiveness of this group's identity into their personal identity, which in turn provides positive psychological benefits (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Supporting this assumption, many studies have found that belonging to a distinct group allows one to meet the need for distinctiveness (Jetten *et al.*, 2004). However, given that they feel distant from their two cultures, marginal immigrants might not as easily satisfy their need for distinctiveness through group membership.

When attempting to meet their need for distinctiveness, people may also feel the need to experience uniqueness – feeling unique as an individual, and perceiving that one's uniqueness is valued (Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). The drive to feel unique as an individual varies from one person to the next, as well as from one situation to another (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Furthermore, some research suggests that uniqueness is valued more highly in Western cultures, which are more individualistic, than in Eastern cultures, which are more collectivistic (Kim & Markus, 1999). Fulfilling the need for uniqueness is associated with high well-being, regardless of whether needing uniqueness is a chronic individual tendency or whether it has been induced by situational factors (Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Sheldon & Bettencourt, 2002).

Uniqueness and marginalization

Detached from both their heritage and mainstream cultures, marginal immigrants likely feel quite unique. Experiencing marginalization involves feeling that one does not fit

into either culture and therefore feeling different from others. For some marginal immigrants – specifically, those high on the need for uniqueness – this feeling of being different from others may be a source of well-being. For instance, because different cultures often promote very different sets of values and attitudes (Cheng & Lee, 2009; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009), marginal immigrants who are high on the need for uniqueness might feel that possessing a comprehensive understanding of two such cultures (especially without strongly identifying as a member of either) gives them the perspective necessary to critically evaluate both cultures and develop their own point of view. As such, their detachment from both cultures may provide them with a unique perspective and make their exceptionality quite salient. They may feel that being detached from both their heritage and mainstream cultures allows them to have a 'special' worldview.

In other words, most marginal immigrants are placed in a situation that emphasizes their individuality; for this reason, marginal immigrants who have a high need for individual uniqueness are especially well positioned to meet this need, and are thus able to benefit from the positive outcomes associated with meeting it. On the contrary, marginal immigrants who do not have a high need for individual uniqueness might not be able to capitalize as much on their individuality as a source of well-being. Indeed, if marginal immigrants do not have a high need for individual uniqueness, then feeling unique as an individual may not buffer them from the negative outcomes associated with being marginal. Perhaps feeling different from those around them may instead be a source of distress.

In short, the uniqueness of marginal immigrants should emphasize their individuality. Thus, the adjustment of marginal immigrants might be closely linked to the extent to which they perceive that they need to feel unique as individuals. For this reason, we hypothesize that marginal immigrants who have a high need for uniqueness are better adjusted than marginal immigrants who have a low need for uniqueness. Furthermore, as we do not expect that having a high need for uniqueness will play a role in the adjustment of non-marginal immigrants, we hypothesized that the interaction of marginalization and the need for uniqueness will predict adjustment.

Overview of studies

We investigated the role of uniqueness in the adjustment of marginal immigrants in three studies. In Study 1, we examined whether the need for uniqueness predicts the self-esteem of marginal immigrants and non-marginal immigrants. Self-esteem indicates how people feel about themselves and their resulting well-being (Pyszczynski *et al.*, 2004). As such, it is a good indicator of adjustment and of self-evaluation in a wide array of domains (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, & Kasser, 2001). Moreover, past research has suggested that marginal immigrants can experience lower self-esteem than other immigrants (Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Pham & Harris, 2001; Virta *et al.*, 2004). Self-esteem is used as an indicator of adjustment and has often been investigated among marginal immigrants; for these reasons, it was examined in Study 1.

We turned to emotions in Study 2. Affect, a component of subjective well-being (Diener, 2000), is a good indicator of adjustment as it is associated with success in several areas of life (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005), flourishing mental health (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005) and enhanced coping (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). Finally, happiness is also related to adjustment. As such, we examined whether the hypothesis tested with self-esteem in Study 1 would replicate with affect and happiness in Study 2.

Finally, one limitation of Study 1 and Study 2 was that all the immigrants were recruited among university students. To extend the scope of our findings, participants in Study 3 were recruited in a community sample of adolescent immigrants. Study 3 aimed to replicate the results of Study 1, and extend the results of Study 2 by examining how uniqueness is associated with the other component of subjective well-being, life satisfaction. Life satisfaction measures capture the cognitive component of subjective well-being: They assess how an individual evaluates their life in terms of fulfilment and happiness (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Individuals who are very satisfied with their lives experience positive outcomes, such as success and health (Lyubomirsky *et al.*, 2005). For these reasons, and because marginal immigrants report lower life satisfaction (Pfafferott & Brown, 2006), we explored the relationship between marginalization, adjustment, and life satisfaction in Study 3.

STUDY 1

Method

Sample

Students (n = 122) who immigrated to Canada or whose parents did were recruited among students attending a university in Montreal, Canada; however, as three participants who did not follow the instructions were excluded from the analyses, the final sample consisted of 119 participants. Most of the participants constituting the final sample (77%) were female (M = 19.61 years old, SD = 1.59 years old). All participants were first- and second-generation immigrants originating from more than 50 different countries. For instance, 57% had East Asian or South Asian origins (e.g., Chinese, Sri Lankan), 13% had West European origins (e.g., Spanish, French), and 8% had East European origins (e.g., Polish, Romanian).

Measures

Marginalization

The Vancouver Acculturation scale was used to assess whether participants were marginal (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). In their review of the different measurement methods of acculturation strategies, Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2006) have recommended assessing the relationships with the heritage culture and with the mainstream culture separately. This scale is made of two identical sets of 10 items each, assessing the relationship with the mainstream culture and the heritage culture. Participants were asked to indicate on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 9 (Strongly Agree) the extent to which they behave in concordance with each culture (e.g., 'I often behave in ways that are typical of my heritage culture'). In this study, the Cronbach alphas of both the mainstream culture dimension (α = .84) and heritage culture dimension (α = .85) indicated satisfying reliability. Participants whose heritage and mainstream culture acculturation scores were under the median were considered marginal (n = 34; all the others were considered non-marginal, n = 85).

Need for uniqueness

Participants also completed the Self-Attributed Need for Uniqueness scale (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Lynn & Snyder, 2002). Participants chose the word missing in each of four items to

express the strength of their need for uniqueness. For example, 'I _____ intentionally do things to make myself different from those around me' can be answered from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). In this study, the Cronbach alpha of this scale (α = .83) indicated satisfying reliability.

Self-esteem
Participants completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). They indicated their agreement to 10 items (i.e., 'I feel that I am a person of worth'), on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 4 (Strongly disagree). In this study, the Cronbach alpha (α = .83) indicated satisfying reliability.

Results and discussion

Preliminary analyses
All variables were distributed normally, and no univariate or multivariate outliers were identified. We compared whether marginal and non-marginal immigrants reported similar need for uniqueness and self-esteem scores, on average. The need for uniqueness scores did not differ significantly among marginal (M = 3.13, SD = 0.60) and non-marginal (M = 3.05, SD = 0.72) immigrants, $t(117)$ = 0.53, p = .60. Similarly, the self-esteem scores did not differ significantly among marginal (M = 3.02, SD = 0.49) and non-marginal (M = 2.98, SD = 0.47) immigrants, $t(117)$ = 0.37, p = .71.

Principal analyses
We expected that the interaction of marginalization and need for uniqueness would best predict self-esteem. Specifically, we predicted that need for uniqueness would predict self-esteem for participants categorized as marginal, but not for those categorized as non-marginal (i.e., integrated, separated or assimilated).[1] Therefore, despite the fact that marginalization is the main independent variable, given that it is dichotomous, we computed a regression model in which the need for uniqueness was entered as the main independent variable and marginalization was entered as a moderator.

In line with our hypothesis, the regression model in which marginalization, need for uniqueness, and their interaction were predictors had a significant effect on self-esteem (R^2 = .07; p < .05). No main effect of need for uniqueness (β = −.08, p = .46) or of marginalization (β = .04, p = .86) was found, but the interaction of need for uniqueness and marginalization (β = .62, p < .01) significantly predicted self-esteem (see Figure 1). Testing for simple slope effects revealed the expected finding: The effect of the need for uniqueness on self-esteem was significant for marginal immigrants (β = .55, p < .01) but not for non-marginal immigrants (β = −.08, p = .46). In other words, the self-esteem of marginal immigrants was lower when their need for uniqueness was low, and higher

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[1] *In this study, we report regression analyses comparing marginal immigrants with all non-marginal immigrants (i.e., integrated, separated and assimilated) placed in the same category. However, we have also performed regression analyses to examine whether the adjustment of integrated, separated, and assimilated immigrants could also be predicted by their need for uniqueness. In line with the analyses reported in this study, these regressions indicated that, in all three studies, the need for uniqueness does not predict the adjustment of integrated, assimilated, and separated immigrants. Ergo, for matters of simplicity, we have reported analyses comparing marginal and non-marginal immigrants.*
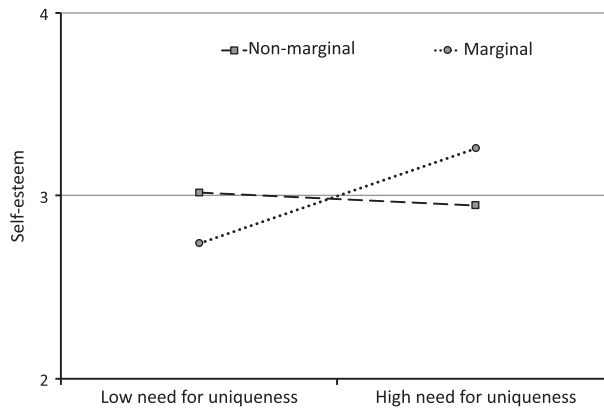
Figure 1. The need for uniqueness predicts the self-esteem of marginal immigrants.

when their need for uniqueness was high, but the self-esteem of non-marginal immigrants did not vary significantly with their need for uniqueness.

Discussion

Study 1 examined the relationship between marginalization, uniqueness, and self-esteem. We found that the need for uniqueness predicts the self-esteem of marginal immigrants, but not the self-esteem of non-marginal immigrants. Also, marginal immigrants were no more likely to be high on the need for uniqueness, or to experience low self-esteem, than non-marginal immigrants. Whereas Study 1 focused on self-esteem, Study 2 examined whether the need for uniqueness of marginal immigrants would influence emotions, measured with affect and happiness. As such, Study 2 was an attempt to replicate the results found in Study 1 with a similar sample but with different measures of adjustment.

STUDY 2

Method

Sample

Students (n = 116) who immigrated to Canada or whose parents did were recruited among students attending a university in Montreal, Canada (M = 20.28 years old, SD = 2.31 years old), on the condition that they had not participated in Study 1. Most participants were women (81.9%), and almost half were born in Canada (46.6%). Most participants had East Asian or South Asian origins (48%; e.g., Japanese, Korean), West European origins (25%; e.g., British, Luxembourgian), or East European origins (13%; e.g., Bulgarian, Ukrainian).

Measures

Marginalization

We used the same method as in Study 1 to assess marginalization. In this study, the Cronbach alphas of both the mainstream culture dimension (α = .82) and heritage culture

dimension (α = .87) indicated satisfying reliability. In this sample, 30 immigrants were marginal and 86 were non-marginal.

Need for uniqueness

We used the same scale as in Study 1 to assess the need for uniqueness. In this study, the Cronbach alpha of this scale (α = .82) indicated satisfying reliability.

Positive and negative affect

Participants were asked to report their affect by completing the positive and negative affect scale (PANAS, Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The PANAS is a widely used measure of positive affect (10 items, e.g., 'enthusiastic') and of negative affect (10 items, e.g., 'afraid'), which were combined in a single score in the present study (the negative items were reversed). Participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Very slightly or not at all) to 5 (Extremely) to what extent each item described how they felt at the moment. The Cronbach alpha of this scale indicated satisfying reliability (α = .87).

Happiness

Finally, participants answered the single-item happiness scale (Fordyce, 1988), thus indicating how happy they were on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (Extremely unhappy – utterly depressed, completely down) to 10 (Extremely happy – feeling ecstatic, joyous, fantastic!). Unfortunately, however, due to a technical defect, only 78 participants were presented this scale and answered it.

Results and discussion

Preliminary analyses

All variables were distributed normally, and no univariate or multivariate outliers were identified. We computed *t*-tests to compare the need for uniqueness and the affect of marginal and non-marginal immigrants. No significant differences were found between the scores of marginal and non-marginal immigrants, when we compared their need for uniqueness scores, M_{marginal} = 2.78, SD_{marginal} = 0.70; $M_{\text{non-marginal}}$ = 2.96, $SD_{\text{non-marginal}}$ = 0.69; $t(114)$ = 1.26, p = .21, their affect scores, M_{marginal} = 3.75, SD_{marginal} = 0.60; $M_{\text{non-marginal}}$ = 3.64, $SD_{\text{non-marginal}}$ = 0.53; $t(114)$ = 0.87, p = .39, and their happiness scores, M_{marginal} = 5.92, SD_{marginal} = 1.55; $M_{\text{non-marginal}}$ = 5.96, $SD_{\text{non-marginal}}$ = 1.56; $t(76)$ = 0.11, p = .91. In short, marginal immigrants yielded scores on the need for uniqueness, affect, and happiness that were as high as those of non-marginal immigrants.

Principal analyses

Similar to Study 1, we computed two regression models that tested for the interaction effects of marginalization and of the need for uniqueness on affect and on happiness. The regression model that predicted affect with marginalization, need for uniqueness, and their interaction yielded results that were in line with our hypothesis (R^2 = .07; p = .05).

The interaction of the need for uniqueness and marginalization significantly predicted affect ($\beta = .46, p < .05$; see Figure 2). Analysing the simple slopes revealed that the effect of the need for uniqueness on affect was significant for marginal immigrants ($\beta = .48$, $p < .01$), but not for non-marginal immigrants ($\beta = .02, p = .85$). Neither the need for uniqueness ($\beta = .02, p = .85$) nor marginalization ($\beta = -.28, p = .18$) had a significant main effect on affect.

The regression model that included marginalization, need for uniqueness, and their interaction as predictors of happiness yielded results that were also in line with our hypothesis ($R^2 = .08$; $p = .09$). The interaction of the need for uniqueness and marginalization had a marginally significant effect on happiness ($\beta = .44, p = .06$; see Figure 3). Analysing the simple slopes revealed that the effect of the need for uniqueness on happiness was significant for marginal immigrants ($\beta = .49, p < .05$), but not for non-marginal immigrants ($\beta = .05, p = .72$). Furthermore, neither the need for uniqueness ($\beta = .05, p = .72$) nor marginalization ($\beta = .03, p = .90$) had a significant main effect on happiness. In other words, marginal immigrants who possessed a high need for uniqueness felt happier than marginal immigrants who had a low need for uniqueness. However, the happiness of non-marginal immigrants did not vary based on the level of their need for uniqueness.
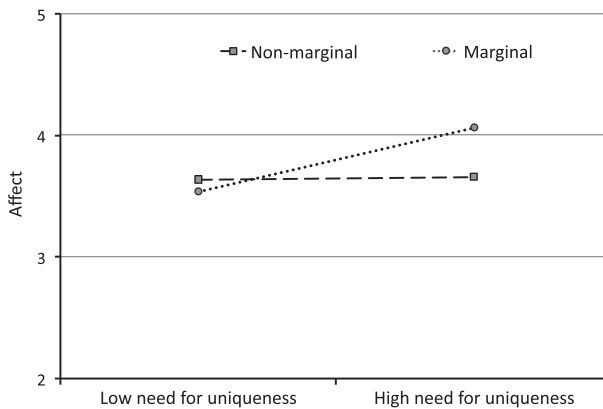

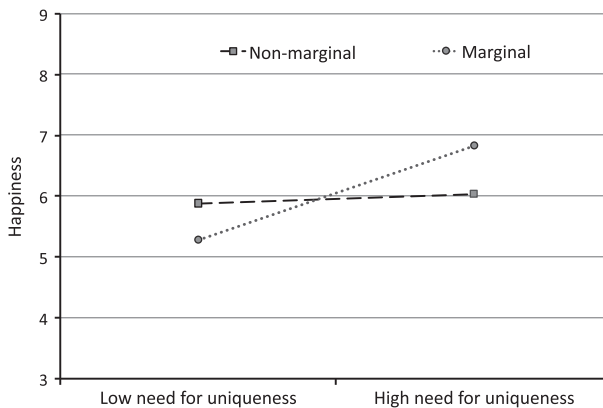**Figure 2.** The need for uniqueness predicts the affect of marginal immigrants.

Figure 3. The need for uniqueness marginally predicts the happiness of marginal immigrants.

Discussion

Whereas Study 1 investigated the association between the need for uniqueness and self-esteem, Study 2 examined the association between the need for uniqueness and emotions. Preliminary analyses indicated that marginal and non-marginal immigrants did not differ in measures of affect, happiness, or need for uniqueness. However, in concordance with our hypothesis, the results indicate that the higher marginal immigrants' need for uniqueness, the better their affect. The results further suggest that the more marginal immigrants need uniqueness, the happier they are.

Both Study 1 and Study 2 examined the association between the need for uniqueness and the adjustment of marginal immigrants recruited among the university student population. However, many have underlined the overrepresentation of 'WEIRD' populations, that is Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic, in psychological research (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Although their bicultural background might not make of the participants of Study 1 and Study 2 typical 'WEIRD' participants, we deemed important to examine whether our hypothesis was also supported among a population that would not be constituted of university students. As such, the goal of Study 3 was to replicate the association between uniqueness, marginalization, and self-esteem found in Study 1, and to extend the scope of Studies 1 and 2 by examining whether similar results can be found among marginal immigrants from a community sample.

STUDY 3

Method

Sample

We recruited 61 first-generation and second-generation immigrants in the youth programme of a community centre located in a highly multicultural neighbourhood in Montreal. This sample was comprised of 42 girls and 19 boys ($M = 17.78$ years-old, $SD = 4.11$ years old). The community centre where we recruited participants welcomes many immigrants who recently arrived in Canada as well as many students who face difficulties in school – as such, 56% reported that their last school year was spent in Middle School and, on average, their last school year was the 10th grade ($M = 10.4$th grade, $SD = 2.7$ grade). Approximately half of the participants (49.2%) were born in Canada, and about a third of the participants (31.1%) moved to Canada before 12 years of age.

Measures

Marginalization

To assess whether or not the participants adopted the marginalization strategy, they indicated their agreement with six items. The three-first items evaluated the relationship with the heritage culture (i.e., 'I identify with the members of my heritage culture', 'Being a member of my heritage culture is an important characteristic of my person', 'I find it important that others identify me as a member of my heritage culture'), and its internal reliability was adequate ($\alpha = .82$). The three last items were almost identical, but pertained to the relationship with the mainstream culture (i.e., 'I identify with the members of the Quebec culture', 'Being a Quebecker is an important characteristic of my person', 'I find it important that others identify me as a Quebecker'); its internal reliability was also satisfying ($\alpha = .90$). Immigrants whose heritage and mainstream culture scores

were under the median were considered marginal (n = 13), whereas the others were considered non-marginal (n = 48).

Need for uniqueness

Participants also self-reported their need for uniqueness by indicating their agreement with this single item adapted from the Self-Attributed Need for Uniqueness scale (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Lynn & Snyder, 2002): 'I prefer being very different from other people' on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Highly disagree) to 7 (Highly agree). Many authors found using single items is appropriate (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001), notably because it reduces participants' fatigue (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007), which is critical when conducting research among populations that are less used to formal questionnaires (de la Sablonnière, Auger, Taylor, Crush, & McDonald, 2012).

Satisfaction with life

Participants also completed the 5-item Satisfaction With Life scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), which had a satisfying internal reliability in the present study (α = .77). Participants rated their agreement to all items on Likert scales ranging from 1 (Highly disagree) to 7 (Highly agree).

Self-esteem

Finally, participants completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). In this study, the Cronbach alpha (α = .85) indicated satisfying reliability.

Results and discussion

Preliminary analyses

All variables were distributed normally, and no univariate or multivariate outlier was identified. We computed *t*-tests to compare the need for uniqueness, self-esteem, and life satisfaction of marginal and non-marginal immigrants. We found no significant difference of the need for uniqueness scores of marginal (M = 4.62, SD = 1.45) and non-marginal (M = 4.81, SD = 1.61) immigrants, $t(59)$ = 0.40, p = .69. Also, we found no significant difference in the self-esteem scores of marginal (M = 5.06, SD = 0.93) and non-marginal (M = 5.36, SD = 1.04) immigrants, $t(59)$ = 0.94, p = .35. However, we found a significant difference in their life satisfaction scores, $t(59)$ = 2.24, p < .05. Marginal immigrants (M = 4.51, SD = 1.14) reported lower life satisfaction than non-marginal immigrants (M = 5.25, SD = 1.04).

Principal analyses

Similarly as in Study 1 and Study 2, we computed two regression models that tested for the interaction effects of marginalization and of the need for uniqueness on self-esteem and on life satisfaction. A regression model in which marginalization, need for uniqueness, and their interaction were entered as self-esteem predictors presented results that were in line with our hypothesis (R^2 = .10; p = .10). The interaction of the need for uniqueness and marginalization marginally predicted self-esteem (β = .62, p = .07; see Figure 4). The
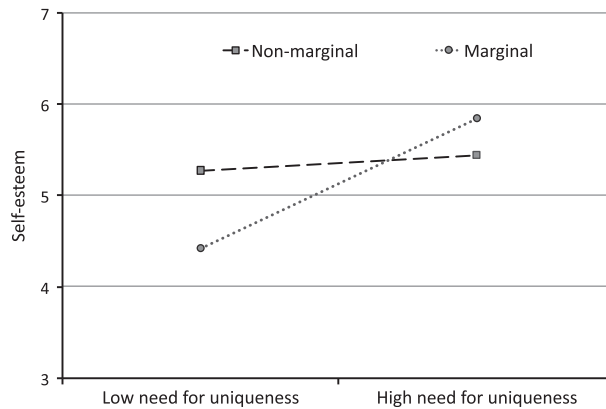
Figure 4. The need for uniqueness marginally predicts the self-esteem of marginal immigrants.

effect of the need for uniqueness on self-esteem was significant for marginal immigrants ($\beta = .70$, $p < .05$), but not for non-marginal immigrants ($\beta = .08$, $p = .55$). Therefore, marginal immigrants who had a high need for uniqueness reported higher self-esteem, whereas marginal immigrants who had a low need for uniqueness reported lower self-esteem.

Furthermore, the need for uniqueness alone had no effect ($\beta = .08$, $p = .55$), which indicates that the self-esteem of non-marginal immigrants did not significantly vary with a high or low need for uniqueness. Also, being marginal did not have a significant main effect ($\beta = -.22$, $p = .47$) on self-esteem.

In line with our hypothesis, a regression model that included marginalization, need for uniqueness, and their interaction as predictors significantly predicted life satisfaction ($R^2 = .16$; $p < .05$). The interaction of the need for uniqueness and marginalization significantly predicted life satisfaction ($\beta = .67$, $p < .05$; see Figure 5). We then performed simple slope analyses to examine the effect of uniqueness for marginal and non-marginal immigrants. For immigrants who adopted the marginalization strategy, the effect of the need for uniqueness on life satisfaction was significant ($\beta = .68$, $p < .05$). However, for non-marginal immigrants, the need for uniqueness had no effect on life satisfaction ($\beta = .00$, $p = .97$). Finally, in this model, the need for uniqueness alone had no effect ($\beta = .00$, $p = .97$), whereas being marginal had a significant main effect ($\beta = -.61$, $p < .05$) on life satisfaction. In sum, marginal immigrants who had a high need for uniqueness reported higher life satisfaction than those who had a low need for uniqueness.[2]

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[2] *Following the excellent suggestion of our reviewers, we computed supplementary analyses examining whether generation was a moderator in our models. No effect, or even marginal effect, of generation, or of interactions that included generation in their term, was found in Study 2 or in Study 3. In Study 1, however, one significant effect of generation was found. More precisely, marginal immigrants from the first and second generations both benefitted from a higher self-esteem when their need for uniqueness was higher; however, the effects were stronger for the first generation.*

We also computed supplementary analyses examining whether the level of individualism (vs. collectivism) of the heritage culture was a moderator in our models. No effect, or even marginal effect, of culture, or of interactions that included culture in their term, was found in Study 1 or in Study 3. In Study 2, however, a significant effect of culture was found on happiness (but not on affect). In this case, marginal immigrants from collectivistic and individualistic heritage cultures both benefited from a higher happiness when their need for uniqueness was higher; however, the effects were slightly stronger for immigrants whose heritage culture was collectivistic.
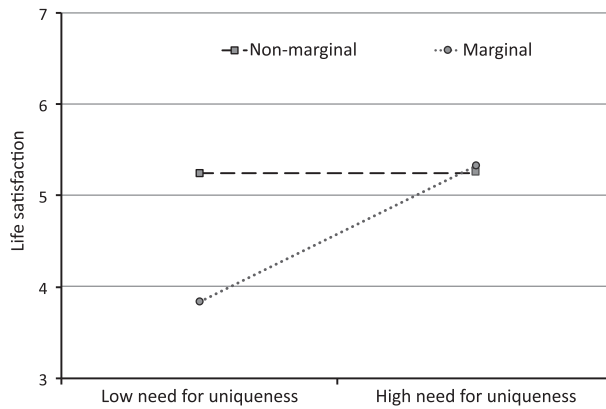
Figure 5. The need for uniqueness predicts the life satisfaction of marginal immigrants.

Discussion

Study 1 and Study 2 examined whether marginalization and uniqueness predicted the happiness, affect, and self-esteem of university students; Study 3 attempted to extend their scope by examining the self-esteem and the life satisfaction of youths recruited in the community. In Study 3, marginal immigrants who had a higher need for uniqueness reported significantly higher life satisfaction and marginally higher self-esteem, but did not predict the life satisfaction or the self-esteem of non-marginal immigrants. Furthermore, the self-esteem scores of marginal and non-marginal immigrants did not differ significantly; however, lower life satisfaction scores were found among marginal (vs. non-marginal) immigrants. This was the only instance in which we found a difference between the adjustment of the marginal and non-marginal immigrants across the three studies. This finding might suggest that, although our main hypothesis was replicated in a community sample, the association between adjustment and marginalization might present variations across different groups of immigrants.

On the whole, Study 3 is in line with Study 1 and Study 2; marginal immigrants are better adjusted when they have a high need for uniqueness.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Although marginalization is often presented as the strategy associated with the worst adjustment for immigrants, research has not provided a clear understanding of how marginalization and adjustment are related. We propose that having a high need for uniqueness may allow well-adjusted marginal immigrants to overcome some of the difficulties associated with dual cultural group membership.

In three studies, a consistent pattern of results emerged that supported our main assertion: Marginal immigrants who reported a high need for uniqueness experienced significantly higher self-esteem (Study 1), marginally higher self-esteem (Study 3), better affect (Study 2), marginally higher happiness (Study 2), and higher life satisfaction (Study 3) than those reporting a low need for uniqueness; whereas this pattern did not exist for non-marginal immigrants. These trends held for a range of adjustment measures and were found both among university students and a community sample. In other words, having a high need for individuality may allow marginal immigrants to respond positively to the feeling of being marginal.

The results of all three studies suggest that marginal immigrants are able to experience better adjustment when they need to feel unique as individuals. Uniqueness could partially explain why some marginal immigrants are better adjusted than others. Adding to previous work suggesting that marginal immigrants might be isolated and might not benefit from the social networks of their cultural groups (Berry, 1990), the present studies suggest that the extent to which one needs to experience uniqueness might also have a critical impact on the adjustment of marginal immigrants.

Perhaps surprisingly, considering the work on acculturation suggesting that marginal immigrants should be the least adjusted, we only found a difference between the adjustment of marginal and non-marginal immigrants when assessing their life satisfaction, in Study 3. This trend would be contrary to what many researchers have found; however, similar to what we found and as noted earlier, several studies also found no differences. Although we cannot fully explain these results in the present paper, we believe that they underline the necessity to deepen the understanding on marginalization, notably by examining the potential moderators that can explain when marginal immigrants are well or not so well adjusted.

On marginalization, individuality, and Western mainstream cultures

Certain cultures seem to place a higher value on distinctiveness and individuality than other cultures. For instance, some research suggests that the uniqueness of individuals is valued more highly in Western cultures than in Eastern cultures (Kim & Markus, 1999). Perhaps paradoxically, certain marginal immigrants who have a high need for uniqueness might be inadvertently adhering to the values and enacting behaviours typical of their Western mainstream cultures (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004).

Are Western marginal immigrants who experience a high need for uniqueness truly distant from their mainstream culture? Past research suggest that individuals who identify highly with a North American culture are more likely to embrace individualism than low identifiers (McAuliffe, Jetten, Hornsey, & Hogg, 2003). Thus, one could expect that marginal immigrants are not particularly likely to embrace individualism, or at least not more than most people. Yet, one could expect that living in a Western culture might allow marginal immigrants who endorse individualistic values such as uniqueness to feel particularly well adjusted, which could reconcile our findings with the work of Bhatia and Ram (2001), who argued that one cannot use acculturation strategies to explain the adjustment of immigrants without considering the mainstream societal context.

Would marginal immigrants who have a high need for uniqueness and live in an Eastern mainstream culture also experience better adjustment? If the expression of the need for distinctiveness in Eastern cultures has received less attention than it deserves, the work of Becker *et al.* (2012) is one notable exception to this trend. Their data, which were collected among 4,751 people in 21 cultures, indicated that the need for distinctiveness is expressed differently but is as strong in collectivistic cultures as in individualistic cultures. These findings underline the importance of exploring whether the need for uniqueness also plays a role in the adjustment of marginal immigrants living in Eastern contexts.

Conceptualizing and assessing marginalization

Some researchers have underlined the issues inherent with using a fourfold scale to assess acculturation strategies, especially when assessing marginalization (Rudmin, 2008). To answer these concerns, many researchers have noted the importance of measuring

acculturation using two dimensions and crossing them to obtain four acculturation strategies (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006; Ryder *et al.*, 2000), which is what we decided to do in the present studies. One of the two common ways to derive acculturation strategy is to use a scalar mid-point split, but it often results in unequal groups that can be difficult to compare to each other (Pfafferott & Brown, 2006; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) and there is disagreement regarding how to interpret the neutral point (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2007).

Notably, for these reasons, many acculturation researchers use a median split (Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008; Zagefka, González, & Brown, 2011), which facilitates comparisons across acculturation strategies (Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009). Some researchers go as far as computing results using both techniques, but it was not possible to perform such analyses with our studies, considering the small number of participants/cell.[3] One of the limits associated with the median-split technique is that it does not allow categories as 'pure' as those created using scalar mid-point splits: One could argue that only the participants labelled as marginal using a scalar mid-point split are truly marginal. As such, this technique makes the generalization of results more difficult, and it is possible that using median splits prevented us from obtaining major differences on outcome variables across strategies.

While we acknowledge that the use of the median split has its limits, there is no ideal technique (Berry & Sabatier, 2010) and no consensus on the one that should be chosen to derive the four acculturation strategies. Finally, and although the use of the median-split technique might have not allowed to find 'pure' marginal immigrants, we labelled marginal immigrants those that had the weakest ties to their groups and that thus displayed the most a tendency to be marginal – a tendency which interacted with the need for uniqueness to significantly predict their adjustment. As such, using median split allowed us to inform research on immigrants who tend to be the most detached from their heritage and host cultures.

Conclusive remarks: Intervening with marginal immigrants

The present paper identifies a factor that may buffer marginal immigrants from the negative effects of marginalization on self-esteem, life satisfaction, and affect. However, it presents several limitations. Notably, the use of a single-item measure to assess the need for uniqueness in Study 3, and of different items to measure marginalization is Study 3, makes it difficult to compare the findings of Study 3 to the findings of Study 1 and Study 2. Furthermore, although the community sample of Study 3 enriches the scope of the present paper, one should take into account its small size when interpreting the results. Also, despite the fact that all five regressions showed a similar pattern aligned with our hypothesis, two of them produced marginally significant results. As mentioned earlier, the use of median split and the impossibility of computing scalar mid-point split as a comparative may undermine the potential to generalize from the findings. Finally, although possessing a high need for uniqueness was associated with the adjustment of marginal immigrants, we have not assessed the influence of experiencing the fulfilment of the need for uniqueness (i.e., actually feeling unique), which we hope will be addressed in future studies.

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[3] There were < 10 participants per study who would have been labelled marginal when using the scalar mid-point split technique to compute acculturation strategies. Unfortunately, for this practical reason, we could not compare the use of the median-split technique with the use of the scalar mid-point split technique.

Despite these limitations, these studies allow us to identify the need for uniqueness as an individual difference that seems to play a role in the adjustment of marginal immigrants. It is our hope that these results provide a first step to help these at-risk marginal immigrants who are low on the need for uniqueness to cope with the lack of group identity they feel. For instance, future studies may test interventions designed to improve the adjustment of marginal immigrants by helping them foster a high need for uniqueness. Interventions could emphasize the advantages that stem from developing a unique worldview or explain how to use the distance one feels from both cultures to adopt a special perspective. We hope that such interventions, by helping to reconcile immigrants low on the need for uniqueness with their marginalized position, might increase their adjustment and well-being.

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