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# Adaptation and social interaction among Africans in Hong Kong: The role of assimilation and integration

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**Abstract**

Promoting cross-cultural adaptation and social interactions among diverse cultural groups in multicultural societies has long been a focus of social and cross-cultural psychologists. However, such research is scant in an East Asian context where acculturation and intercultural encounters are now taking place. This study examines how acculturation expectations and strategies of assimilation and integration of the host majority (Hongkongers;  $N = 476$ ) and immigrant groups (Africans;  $N = 215$ ) shape adaptation and social interaction in the sociocultural context of Hong Kong. The mediation roles of perceived discrimination and multicultural ideologies were tested in these relationships. The results revealed that integration strategies are linked with psychological adaptation, whereas assimilation is linked with sociocultural adaptation difficulties for the immigrant group. For the host majority group, assimilation expectations were related to increased sociocultural adaptation difficulty, while a negative relationship emerged between integration expectations and sociocultural adaptation difficulty. Additional mediation analyses demonstrated that perceived discrimination and multicultural ideologies explain a significant proportion of variance in acculturation orientations and the intention to avoid interactions with the respective cultural groups. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings for Africans and

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Hongkongers relationship are discussed. Please refer to the Supplementary Material section to find this article's [Community and Social Impact Statement](#).

**KEYWORDS**

acculturation, adaptation, assimilation, integration, social interaction

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Increasing globalisation, such as through migration and lifestyle adjustments, has led to the interaction of different cultural groups in various life domains. Ultimately, these interactions influence the life experiences of members of migrant-receiving countries and immigrant groups. The issues stemming from the relationship between immigrants and host members have become a compelling topic in our increasingly multicultural communities (Gonzalez-Barrera & Connor, 2019). Social and cross-cultural psychologists have long been interested in promoting adaptation and social interactions among cultural groups in plural societies (Ward & Leong, 2006). Nevertheless, there is limited research integrating immigrants and the host majority members' perspectives in understanding intercultural encounters and psychological reactions. Unless there is a panoramic perspective from diverse intercultural settings (such as Asia, Africa, and the Gulf states), acculturation and intercultural relations would remain open for further research (Hui, Chen, Leung, & Berry, 2015; Sam & Berry, 2010). Therefore, this study examines how acculturation shapes adaptation and social interaction among a sample of African migrants and local Hongkongers in Hong Kong (HK). In doing so, the present study extends knowledge and contributes to psychological acculturation and intergroup relations research. Specifically, this study examined how integration and assimilation strategies and expectations affect the psychological and sociocultural adaptation difficulties of African migrants and local Hongkongers. Second, the study investigated the relationship between these acculturation ideologies and the intention to avoid interactions with the respective cultural group through the mediation roles of perceived discrimination (among immigrant groups) and multicultural ideologies (among the dominant group).

### 1.1 | Acculturation and cross-cultural adaptation

The process of adaptation is intricate and subjective in cross-cultural psychology. In psychological adaptation research, the two most frequent outcomes that have drawn the most attention are psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Research has found a correlation between psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Berry, 2005). However, these constructs are two distinct dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation. Theoretically, psychological adaptation denotes emotional satisfaction and a sense of well-being in adjusting to a new cultural environment (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Sociocultural adaptation difficulty occurs when the individual lacks the skills to successfully navigate life and social interactions in a sociocultural context (Ward et al., 2001). There has been increasing research on the effects of acculturation on adaptation outcomes and intercultural interactions between immigrants and host majority members (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006a; Sam & Berry, 2010). Such research is evolving in an East Asian context (Hui et al., 2015; Ng, Wang, & Chan, 2017). In the process of acculturation, the host majority members and immigrants undergo several psychological changes due to daily encounters. Although some authors argue that for the immigrant group, adaptation is more relevant (Hui et al., 2015) as they need to survive in the sociocultural domains, it is equally important to understand how these psychological processes affect the adaptation process of the host majority group. Thus, understanding the perspectives of the immigrant and the host majority members undergoing the cultural transition is crucial for acculturation research.

Psychological acculturation research suggests that an integration strategy leads to the best adaptation outcome (Berry et al., 2006a; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). For instance, among immigrants from Mainland China, integration predicted psychological and sociocultural adaptation and positively correlated with the psychological adaptation of members of the host majority group in HK. (Hui et al., 2015). Similarly, assimilation succours sociocultural adaptation to the new cultural environment (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). However, there is a caveat concerning the assimilationist way of acculturation. Evidence suggests that assimilation tends not to be favourable when pursued in the long term (Sam & Berry, 2010). While acculturation is a two-way process that affects both groups involved, little research is focused on the majority members' acculturation and consequent adaptation outcomes (Haugen & Kunst, 2017; Kunst, Lefringhausen, Sam, Berry, & Dovidio, 2021). Essentially, it is crucial to investigate how acculturation orientations affect the adaptation outcomes of both immigrant and non-immigrant group members in the cultural transition process.

## 1.2 | Intercultural relations

Significant relationships exist between several intergroup outcomes and acculturation strategies and expectations of immigrants and host majority members (Bourhis, Barrette, El-Geledi, & Schmidt, 2009; González, Sirlopú, & Kessler, 2010). Acculturation strategies and expectations strongly influence cross-cultural interactions. For example, college students who supported integration and belonged to the host majority group got along well with immigrant students. (Montreuil & Bourhis, 2004). In another study by Hui et al. (2015), integration strategy and expectations positively correlated with intercultural contact among immigrants from Mainland China and the majority group in HK. In another study, members of the host majority in Norway who endorse integrationist ideologies tend to live in places with more immigrants (Haugen & Kunst, 2017). Regarding the host majority group, Bourhis et al. (2009) reported that members of the host majority who endorse assimilationist, segregationist, and exclusionist ideologies reject cultural pluralism, avoid contact, and have unfavourable attitudes towards immigrants. On the contrary, immigrants who endorse assimilation ideologies tend to seek more contact and exhibit positive intergroup attitudes than separationists and marginalised immigrants. However, although assimilation leads to contact-seeking, individuals who endorse assimilation ideologies tend to avoid sustained contact, which leads to problematic relational outcomes with dominant majority members (Bourhis et al., 2009; González et al., 2010). Intercultural interactions are inevitable when different cultural groups meet. Thus, different acculturation strategies and attitudes would be expected between immigrants and the host majority group. Accordingly, it is reasonable to investigate immigrants' acculturation-specific attitudes, the dominant group's acculturation expectations and how they impact their intercultural relationships.

## 1.3 | Perceived discrimination

Perceived discrimination is among the most challenging processes of adjusting to living in another country. Discrimination is often experienced and perceived by immigrant minorities. Generally, discrimination perceived by immigrants is often associated with less adaptability, psychological distress and affects how immigrants acculturate and interact with the host community (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006b; Berry & Sabatier, 2010). Immigrants change their attitudes due to their interaction with the host society. Essentially, involvement in the receiving culture or interactions with majority members is likely to be discouraged due to feelings and experiences of discrimination. As reported by Jaspars and Buchanan-Smith (2018), the experiences of discrimination could potentially lead the immigrant minority to feel isolated and avoid interactions with members of the host group. Similarly, recent findings reveal that discrimination negatively affects immigrants' sociocultural and psychological outcomes (te Lindert, Korzilius, Stupar-Rutenfrans, & Van de Vijver, 2022) and mainstream culture adoption (Rizzo, Testa, Gattino, &

Miglietta, 2022). From a cross-cultural perspective, acculturation is more difficult for persons who must also cope with the stigma of being different because of skin colour, ethnicity, and language (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). Taking sub-Saharan African immigrants as an example, these groups often encounter more prejudice and discrimination than immigrants from other areas (Brinbaum, Safi, & Simon, 2018; Idemudia & Boehnke, 2020). Accordingly, the present study was interested in understanding Africans' perceptions of how HK Chinese have treated them in various domains.

Perceived discrimination may lead to poor adaptability and intergroup attitudes towards immigrants and the dominant groups. Therefore, investigations exploring the relationship between experiences of discrimination and immigrants' intention to interact with the host group in the present research context are needed to fully understand intercultural relations between Africans and Hongkongers. The current study thus makes the case that African immigrants' experiences of discrimination mediate the relationship between acculturation strategies and motivation to interact with the dominant HK population.

## 1.4 | Multiculturalism

In a multicultural society, the host majority members' attitudes regarding multiculturalism may affect how they interact socially with minority groups. Multiculturalism is simply the presence of cultural diversity in society. However, not all individuals support multicultural ideologies and engage in cross-group interactions. Support for multiculturalism among members of immigrant and non-immigrant groups differs from country to country. For example, the majority group in Canada endorses multicultural ideologies more than the minority group (Berry & Kalin, 1995). In the Netherlands, minority groups generally embrace multiculturalism more than members of the host majority groups. (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006). Intercultural interaction with immigrants from non-dominant groups is strongly linked with the dominant group's support for multiculturalism. (van der Noll, Poppe, & Verkuyten, 2010; Ward & Masgoret, 2006). Based on the preceding debate, this study focuses on the mediating role of the multicultural ideologies of the majority group on the relationship between acculturation expectations and motivation for subsequent interactions with immigrants.

### 1.4.1 | The present research

The population of Africans in HK compared to other non-Chinese ethnic minorities, such as Indians, Pakistanis, and Filipinos, are lower (see Census and Statistics Department, 2017). As a result, studies on Africans' experiences and their interactions with Hongkongers compared to other ethnic minorities are often ignored due to their invisible status.

Hence, the present study investigated the effect of acculturation strategies of assimilation and integration on adaptation and social interactions among Africans and HK Chinese. First, the study examines the impact of acculturation strategies (assimilation and integration) adopted by Africans and acculturation expectations held by Hongkongers on psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Second, the study examines whether the effects of assimilation and integration strategies/expectations relate to the individuals' intention to avoid or seek out interactions with the respective cultural group. Furthermore, the mediating role of the perception of discrimination by Africans and the mediation role of multicultural ideologies held by Hongkongers was tested.

Based on previous research (Sam & Berry, 2010), assimilation and integration acculturation strategies adopted by Africans were expected to predict psychological and sociocultural adaptations. No specific predictions were made for the HK sample regarding acculturation expectations and adaptation. Concerning the intention to avoid or seek interactions among the African sample, assimilation and integration were expected to be negatively related to the intentions to avoid interactions with Hongkongers. Perceived discrimination was expected to mediate these

relationships. Similarly, among Hongkongers, assimilation and integration expectations were expected to have a negative relationship with the intention to avoid interactions with Africans. Multicultural ideologies held by Hongkongers would mediate these associations.

## 2 | METHOD

### 2.1 | Participants and procedure

Ethics approval was obtained from the affiliated institution's research ethics committee before the study's commencement (Ref. no. EC005/2122). A total of 215 individuals identified as Africans (87 females and 125 males; age range 18–45 and over,  $M_{age} = 31.51$  years,  $SD = 8.29$ ) and 476 individuals identified as HK Chinese (264 females, 208 males, and four undisclosed; age range 18–45 and over,  $M_{age} = 37.07$ ,  $SD = 12.64$ ) participated in the study. The nationalities of the African participants comprised 24 countries. Of which 56, representing 26%, reported Ghana as their nationality, followed by Nigeria ( $N = 33$ , 15.3%), Uganda ( $N = 18$ , 8%), and the remaining originating from different African countries ( $N = 108$ , 50%). Participants whose data was missing were removed listwise. A sample size calculation (<https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html>) based on the respective population sizes (Hongkongers = 7.507 million; Africans = 3,144) indicated that about 267 Hongkonger participants and 248 African participants would give a sufficient sample size to draw an assumption at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error.

### 2.2 | African sample

African participants were recruited through a face-to-face interview (*a paper and pencil format*) by two independent researchers in the Tsim Sha Tsui vicinity in HK. This approach necessitated the recruitment of Africans who had adequate proficiency in English to respond to the questionnaire. The residence length of the African participants ranged from 6 months to 8 years and over. Regarding HK language ability of the African sample, 69 (32.1%) had no knowledge, 88 (40.9%) had very little knowledge, 35 (16.3%) had a moderate amount of knowledge, and 14 (6.5%) had a fair amount of HK language ability. Of the 215 African participants, 82 (38.1%) and 81 (37.7%) reported obtaining tertiary and post-graduate education, respectively. Eighty-nine (41.4%) reported being students, 57 (26.5%) reported working full-time, and the remaining were either working part-time or unemployed. Regarding the reason for being in HK, 93 (43.3%) indicated education purposes, 43 (24.2%) indicated others, 41 (19.1%) indicated migration and 29 (13.5%) indicated economic and greener pastures.

### 2.3 | Hongkonger sample

Hongkonger respondents were recruited from a market research firm (<https://insight.rakuten.com>) based in HK via an online survey. As such, I requested the market research firm target Hongkonger respondents on the radar near Tsim Sha Tsui<sup>1</sup> vicinity. In addition, as part of the eligibility criteria, Hongkonger respondents had to pass a quality control item ('Have you in any way had an interaction with an African in HK?'). Although the honesty of this response could not be guaranteed, HK respondents who selected 'no' were automatically directed to the end of the survey. Regarding Hongkongers' knowledge of Africans, generally, 420 (88.3%) Hongkongers reported having a fair knowledge of Africans, while 56 (11.8%) reported having no knowledge. A total of 347 (72.9%) reported having a fair amount of knowledge of African history, while 129 (27.1%) reported having no knowledge. A total of 154 (32.5%) reported having a fair amount of knowledge of African languages, while 322 (67.6%) reported having no knowledge.

A total of 292 (61.3%) reported having a fair amount of knowledge of African values, while 184 (38.7%) reported having no knowledge of African values.

## 2.4 | Measures

The measures were administered in bilingual (Traditional Chinese and English) for Hongkongers and in English for the African sample.

### 2.4.1 | Acculturation strategies

Immigrant acculturation strategies and host community acculturation expectations were assessed (assimilation and integration) (Berry et al., 1989). *Assimilation*: (African sample; 'To live in Hong Kong (HK) means we should give up our heritage culture for the sake of adopting mainstream HK culture'. Hongkonger sample: 'Africans in HK should give up their culture of origin for the sake of adopting HK's culture.'). *Integration*: (African sample; 'To live in HK means I should work to preserve my heritage culture while adopting mainstream HK culture. Hongkonger sample: 'Africans living in HK should maintain their own heritage culture while also adopting HK's culture').

### 2.4.2 | Psychological adaptation

Psychological adaptation was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1995) and the life satisfaction scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The Rosenberg self-esteem scale comprised 10 items assessing the overall feelings of self-worth (e.g., 'I feel that I am a person of worth' African sample;  $\alpha = .79$ , Hongkonger sample;  $\alpha = .88$ ). Five questions were used to measure life satisfaction (e.g., 'I am satisfied with my life'. African sample;  $\alpha = .88$ , Hongkonger sample;  $\alpha = .88$ ). Life satisfaction and self-esteem scores were averaged into a composite measure of psychological adaptation.

### 2.4.3 | Sociocultural adaptation difficulty

Sociocultural adaptation difficulty was assessed by asking participants to report the difficulty they experienced in various domains (Sequeira Neto, 2014; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). The scale scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *difficult*, 7 = *extremely difficult*) consists of 20 items with a sample item 'How difficult is it to communicate with people of a different ethnic group'. (African sample;  $\alpha = .92$ , Hongkonger sample;  $\alpha = .93$ ).

### 2.4.4 | Perceived discrimination

African participants were instructed to report experiences of unfair treatment by Hongkongers in seven domains measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, seven = *very often*) (Williams, Yu, Jackson, & Anderson, 1997). Sample items include 'For unfair reasons, have others avoided physical contact with you (e.g., 'in the metro', 'public transport', 'have you been unfairly followed around in stores', have you received unfair treatment from service people' 'Have you been unfairly prevented from moving into a neighbourhood because the landlord or realtor refused to sell or rent you a house or apartment'  $\alpha = .83$ ).

### 2.4.5 | Multicultural ideology

Two items (Berry & Kalin, 1995) measured on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) were adopted to assess Hongkongers' multicultural ideologies (e.g., 'Adopting a multicultural perspective would improve relations in every society'  $\alpha = .71$ ).

### 2.4.6 | Intention to avoid interaction

Three items from Mackie, Devos, and Smith (2000) were adapted to assess respondents' intentions to avoid or seek interaction with the respective cultural group (1 = *not at all*, seven = *very much*). Sample items include 'to what extent do you intend to have nothing to do with Hongkongers/Africans' (African sample:  $\alpha = .91$ ; Hongkongers sample:  $\alpha = .93$ ).

## 2.5 | Analytical strategy

Data were first cleaned in SPSS (version 28.01.1), followed by descriptive and correlation analyses. Hierarchical regression analyses were then conducted to predict each group's psychological adaption and sociocultural adaptation difficulties. Additional mediation analyses were conducted in JASP (version 0.16.3) to test for the mediation roles of discrimination perceived by Africans and multicultural ideologies held by Hongkongers in the relationship between the two acculturation orientations and the intention to avoid interactions with the respective cultural group.

## 3 | RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the African and Hongkonger samples are reported in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

### 3.1 | African sample

First, hierarchical multiple regression was run to predict psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation difficulties. In the first step, age and sex were added as control variables. Length of stay and HK language ability were added to the second step. Assimilation and integration strategies were entered in the final block. Regression analysis indicated that assimilation and integration marginally explained a 5% proportion of the variance in psychological adaptation,  $F(6, 208) = 1.903, p = .082$  (see Table 3). Age, sex, length of residence, and HK language ability were insignificant,  $p = .915$ . Integration predicted psychological adaptation,  $\beta = .19, p = .006$ , while assimilation did not,  $\beta = -.104, p = .128$ .

Sociocultural adaptation difficulty was predicted using the same steps and predictor variables from the previous analyses. The results show that assimilation and integration explained a 16% significant proportion of variance in sociocultural adaptation difficulty,  $F(6, 208) = 6.489, p < .001$  (see Table 3). Similarly, Model 1, containing demographic variables age, sex, length of residence, and language ability, explained a significant proportion of the variance in sociocultural adaptation difficulty,  $R^2 = .12, F(4, 210) = 7.976, p < .043$ . Language ability  $\beta = -.34, p < .001$  and assimilation  $\beta = .15, p = .021$  predicted sociocultural adaptation difficulty.

**TABLE 1** Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among variables in the study (African Sample N = 215).

		M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Age	31.53	8.29	.15*	-.33**	.01	.06	.02	-.03	.18*	.08
2	YHK	2.77	1.60	-	-.12	-.06	-.02	-.03	.01	.04	.07
3	LA	2.12	1.11		-	.00	-.07	.05	.02	-.36**	-.01
4	ASS	2.49	1.59			-	-.04	.21**	-.11	.15*	.15*
5	INT	4.59	1.53				-	-.06	.19**	.09	-.10
6	PD	21.05	8.72					-	-.38**	.39**	.45*
7	PAD	69.74	11.64						-	.45**	-.32**
8	SAD	53.17	19.36							-	.45**
9	IAH	6.71	4.27								-

Abbreviations: 1AH, avoiding social interaction with Hongkongers; ASS, assimilation; INT, integration; LA, language ability; PAD, psychological adaptation; PD, perceived discrimination; SAD, sociocultural adaptation difficulty; YHK, years of stay in HK.

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ .

**TABLE 2** Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among variables in the study (Hongkonger sample N = 476).

		M	SD	2	3	5	6	7	8
1	Age	37.07	12.64	.18**	.07	-.10*	.17**	-.03	.16**
2	ASS	2.76	1.54	-	-.17**	-.29**	.02	.20**	.36**
3	INT	5.50	1.20		-	.40**	.06	-.16**	-.09
5	MI	10.54	2.06			-	.07	-.25**	-.30**
6	PAD	62.62	14.42				-	-.32**	-.05
7	SAD	58.71	20.87					-	.23**
8	IAA	8.49	4.21						-

Abbreviations: ASS, assimilation; IAA, avoiding social interaction with Africans; INT, integration; MI, multicultural ideology; PAD, psychological adaptation; SAD, sociocultural adaptation difficulty.

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ .

### 3.2 | Hongkonger sample

Similar statistical analyses were conducted to predict psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation difficulty in the Hongkonger sample (see Table 4). Age and sex were entered in the first model as control variables. Assimilation and integration were entered into the final model. The regression analysis indicates that assimilation and integration explain a 3% significant proportion of the total variance  $F(4, 471) = 3.858, p = .004$ . The first model (age and sex) was significant,  $R^2 = .03, F(2, 473) = 7.277, p < .001$ . Psychological adaptation was predicted by age,  $\beta = .17, p < .001$ . None of the acculturation expectations predicted psychological adaptation in the Hongkonger sample.

Next, sociocultural adaptation difficulty was predicted using the same steps in the same model. Results indicate that assimilation and integration significantly explain 6% of the total variance of sociocultural adaptation difficulty,  $F(4, 471) = 7.311, p < .001$ . The effects of demographic variables were not significant,  $p = .737$ . Sociocultural adaptation difficulty was predicted by assimilation,  $\beta = .19, p < .001$ , and integration,  $\beta = -2.74, p = .006$ .



**TABLE 3** Hierarchical regression model for variables predicting psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation difficulty ( $N = 215$  African sample).

Variables	Psychological adaptation		Sociocultural adaptation difficulty	
	Block 1 $\beta$	Block 2 $\beta$	Block 1 $\beta$	Block 2 $\beta$
Age	-.03	-.03	.06	.06
Sex	.07	.05	-.01	-.01
Length of residence	.02	.01	-.01	.01
Language ability	.01	.02	-.34**	-.34**
Assimilation		-.10		.15*
Integration		.19*		.07
$R^2$	.01	.05	.13	.16
$\Delta R^2$	-.01	.03	.12	.13
$F_{change}$	.24	5.21*	7.98**	3.18*
$\Delta df$	4/210	6/208	4/210	6/208

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ .

**TABLE 4** Hierarchical regression model for variables predicting psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation difficulty ( $N = 476$  Hongkonger sample).

Variable	Psychological adaptation		Sociocultural adaptation difficulty	
	Block 1 $\beta$	Block 2 $\beta$	Block 1 $\beta$	Block 2 $\beta$
Age	.17**	.17**	-.03	-.06
Sex	-.01	-.01	.01	.12
Assimilation		.01		.19**
Integration		.04		-.13*
$R^2$	.03	.03	.01	.06
$\Delta R^2$	.03	.02	-.03	.05
$F_{change}$	7.28**	.46	.31	7.311**
$\Delta df$	2/473	4/471	2/473	4/471

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ .

### 3.3 | Mediation analysis

Mediational analyses were conducted to test the mediating roles of perceived discrimination and multicultural ideologies on the relationship between assimilation and integration and the intention to avoid interactions with the respective cultural group. The indirect effects were calculated based on 1,000 bias-corrected bootstrapped samples with maximum likelihood estimation.

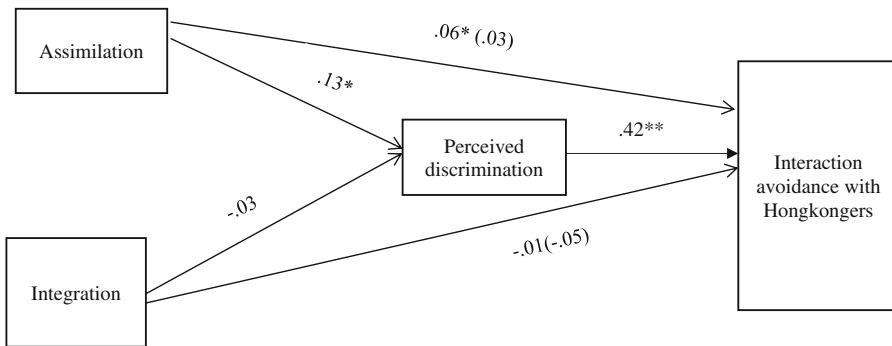
### 3.4 | African sample

Assimilation was a significant predictor of perceived discrimination ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $p = .002$ , 95% CI = 0.05, 0.23), and perceived discrimination was a significant predictor of intention to avoid interactions with Hongkongers ( $\beta = .43$ ,

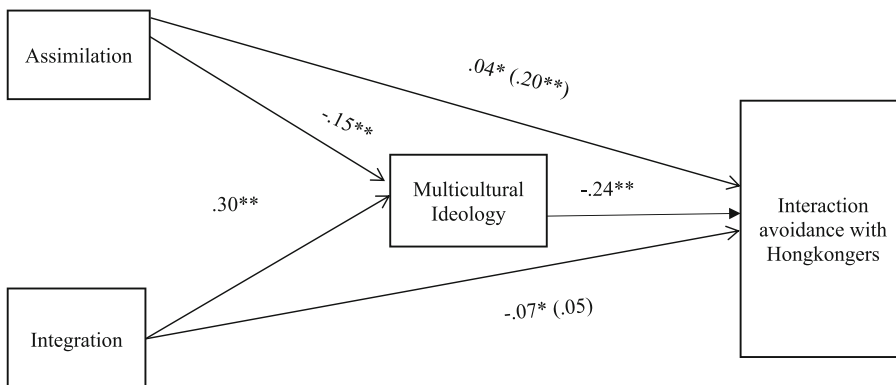
$p < .001$ , 95% CI = 0.31, 0.57). The mediation model explained 21% of the variance in intention to avoid interactions with Hongkongers and 5% of the variance in discrimination (see Figure 1). The relationship between assimilation strategy and intentions to avoid interactions with Hongkongers was totally mediated by perceived discrimination ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $p = .004$ , 95% CI = 0.02, 0.10). The indirect effect of integration ( $\beta = -0.01$ ,  $p = .469$ , 95% CI =  $-0.05$ , 0.03) through perceived discrimination on intention to avoid interactions with Hongkongers was insignificant, as integration did not predict perceived discrimination ( $\beta = -0.03$ ,  $p < .467$ , 95% CI =  $-0.12$ , 0.06).

### 3.5 | Hongkonger sample

The last set of analyses tested the mediating role of multicultural ideology by using assimilation and integration as predictors of intention to avoid interactions with Africans. Multiculturalism ideology ( $\beta = -0.24$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI =  $-0.36$ ,  $-0.130$ ) and assimilation ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 0.14, 0.27) were significant predictors of intention to avoid interactions with Africans. Assimilation ( $\beta = -0.15$ ,  $p < .002$ , 95% CI =  $-0.21$ ,  $-0.09$ ) and integration



**FIGURE 1** Mediation model representing perceived discrimination as a mediator of the relationship between assimilation, integration, and interaction avoidance with Hongkongers. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ . Standardised coefficients in parentheses illustrate the direct effect before controlling for the mediator.



**FIGURE 2** Mediation Model Representing Multicultural Ideology as a Mediator of the Relationship Between Assimilation, Integration, and Interaction Avoidance with Africans. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ . Standardised coefficients in parentheses illustrate the direct effect before controlling for the mediator.

( $\beta = .30, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.21, 0.39$ ) were significant predictors of multicultural ideologies. The mediation model accounted for 18% of the variance in intention to avoid interactions with Africans and 21% of the variance in multicultural ideology (see Figure 2). The indirect effect indicates that multicultural ideology mediated the relationship between assimilation ( $\beta = .04, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.02, 0.07$ ), integration ( $\beta = -0.07, p < .002, 95\% \text{ CI} = -0.11, -0.04$ ), and the intention to avoid interactions with Africans.

## 4 | DISCUSSION

This study investigated the effects of acculturation attitudes on adaptation and social interactions among Africans and Hongkongers. Findings showed that integration and assimilation strategies are linked with psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation difficulties among African immigrants, respectively. For the Hongkonger sample, assimilation was linked to increased sociocultural adaptation difficulty, while a negative relationship emerged between integration expectations and sociocultural adaptation difficulty. Additional mediation analyses demonstrated that perceived discrimination explains a significant proportion of the variance in the effect of assimilation strategy on Africans' intentions to avoid interactions with Hongkongers. Furthermore, multicultural ideologies underlying the effect of assimilation and integration on Hongkongers' intentions to avoid interactions with Africans. The theoretical and practical implications of the findings are substantial for understanding African and Hongkonger relations.

Regarding the link between integration and adaptation, the present finding indicates that the success of integration as an acculturation strategy promotes the psychological adaptation of immigrants (Berry et al., 2006b; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). However, the integration hypothesis emerged unsupported regarding the sociocultural adaptation of African immigrants, as the results showed no link between African integration strategy and sociocultural adaptation difficulty. In contrast, the acculturation expectation of integration was negatively related to the Hongkongers' sociocultural adaptation difficulty. A positive relationship emerged between assimilation and sociocultural adaptation difficulties. This relationship was consistent in both the immigrant and the host majority samples. Although a recent meta-analysis has cautioned that the link between acculturation and adaptation is significantly weaker than previously argued (Bierwaczzonek & Kunst, 2021), the conclusions reached by Berry et al. (2006a) regarding the link between acculturation and adaptation are partially supported by the current findings. However, these relationships vary depending on the cultural setting and between immigrants and the host majority groups (Abu-Rayya & Sam, 2017).

The association between assimilation and sociocultural adaptation remains inconsistent and varies between studies. Whereas assimilation relates to greater sociocultural adaptation (Berry et al., 2006b), the current findings insinuate that assimilation way of acculturating relates to lower sociocultural adaptation, or, in other words, greater sociocultural adaptation difficulty for both immigrants and host majority group. Thus, it is important to emphasise that individuals who orient themselves to the integration way of acculturation adapt better than those who acculturate by orienting themselves to assimilationist attitudes (Sam & Berry, 2010). It was observed that assimilation and integration orientations held by the dominant group have nothing to do with their sense of well-being and psychological welfare. Essentially, acculturation expectations may not be relevant to the host majority groups' psychological adaptation. Compared to other non-Chinese ethnic minorities, the present findings warrant some discussion. Considering the acculturation and adaptation processes of other ethnic minority groups, Tonsing, Tse, and Tonsing (2016) previously reported that the challenging acculturation processes caused low sociocultural adaptation among south Asian immigrants in HK. Similarly, Bhowmik (2021) more recently found among Pakistani youth that their acculturation experiences influence their psychological well-being and identity in HK. Thus, the adaptation processes of different minority groups in HK might not necessarily be distinct or addressed in isolation.

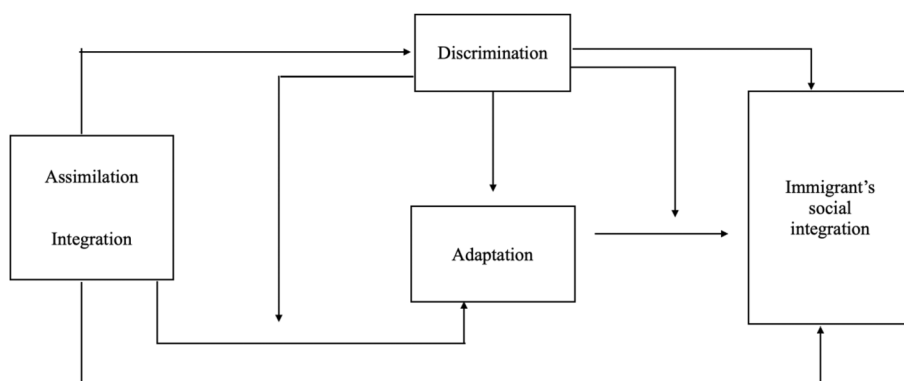
Acculturation has important implications for intercultural interactions in the present analysis. For the African sample, assimilation predicted intentions to avoid interactions with Hongkongers, and this path was fully mediated by

perceived discrimination. Regarding immigrants' acculturation and intercultural relations, the role of discrimination is crucial (Sam & Berry, 2010), as experiencing high levels of discrimination leads to negative outcomes. In particular, the assimilation strategy positively relates to perceived discrimination; similarly, perceived discrimination positively relates to Africans' intention to avoid interactions with Hongkongers. A possible explanation for this finding is that assimilationist individuals orient themselves towards mainstream culture as a strategy to be accepted by the dominant group. Unfortunately, the interactions between immigrants and host majority members are not always reciprocal (González et al., 2010) or yield positive outcomes, as intergroup bias in most cross-cultural contexts is unlikely to disappear. Consequently, assimilated immigrants are more likely to avoid interaction with the host majority despite being oriented towards the mainstream culture. For example, when immigrants are rejected by the host society where they have settled, they are more likely to reject the host society in return (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Solheim, 2009).

How the majority group wants immigrants to acculturate influences their intercultural relations. In the present study, assimilation and integration expectations held by Hongkongers played a crucial role in their intentions to avoid interaction with Africans through the mediation role of multicultural ideologies. Assimilation expectations had a negative relationship with multiculturalism, whereas integration expectations had a favourable relationship with multiculturalism. Multicultural ideologies held by Hongkongers were negatively related to their intentions to avoid interaction with Africans. The negative link between Hongkongers' assimilationist expectations and multiculturalism and intentions to avoid interactions with Africans aligns with previous research (Bourhis et al., 2009; Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdržálek, 2000). For instance, host majority members who endorse assimilationist ideologies tend to avoid contact and have unfavourable attitudes towards immigrant groups (Bourhis et al., 2009). Likewise, as the results show, the host majority group's expectation of assimilation was found to be a positive predictor of socio-cultural adaptation difficulty. Perhaps the host majority group's expectations of the immigrant group to forsake their heritage culture and assimilate is a strategy to avoid clashing with the immigrants' unfamiliar heritage culture. After all, assimilation is not ideal for acculturating, as its consequences tend not to be positive when pursued (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Theoretically, integration fosters successful intercultural relations. However, the present study could not provide evidence to support this claim. In both samples, no link between integration and the intention to avoid interaction with the respective cultural group was found. Similarly, although research suggests a connection between integration and perceived discrimination (Berry et al., 2006a), neither the current study nor other research on Mainland Chinese immigrants to HK found evidence to support this premise (Hui et al., 2015). The non-significant indirect effect of the integration strategy through perceived discrimination resulted from the insignificant relationship between integration and discrimination and the intention to avoid interactions with Hongkongers. However, in the Hongkonger sample, an indirect effect of integration on the intention to avoid interaction with Africans was observed after controlling for multicultural ideologies. This effect was in a negative direction. This result indicates that acceptance of multiculturalism has a more important impact on host majority members' intercultural interactions with immigrant groups (van der Noll et al., 2010).

The role of discrimination in acculturation and adaptation has gained prominence in literature. However, research on immigrants' acculturation and social integration ignores contextual aspects, such as discrimination, that make the acculturation and adaptation processes difficult. The present finding points to acculturation and discrimination as the pathways through which immigrants integrate and interact with the host society. Indeed, discrimination helps explain immigrants' adaptation and social integration into a host society. Essentially, the model in Figure 3 offers conceptual direction towards a more complex understanding of immigrants' adaptation and motivation to interact with the host community. As acculturation and intergroup research grow in HK, researchers must focus on the experiences of discrimination to fully understand minorities' social integration and interaction with the host majority as they acculturate into HK society. To this end, as this body of research grows, it is vital to highlight the role of discrimination in social integration among minority populations.



**FIGURE 3** A conceptual model for understanding assimilation, integration, discrimination, adaptation, and immigration social integration.

The present study brings evidence from a non-western society by offering unique perspectives regarding acculturation and intercultural relations between Africans and Hongkongers from an East Asian context. Given the call that more research and evidence are needed from intercultural settings (Sam & Berry, 2010) where acculturation is evolving (Hui et al., 2015; Karim, Hue, & Ullah, 2021; Ng et al., 2017), the present research has contributed to the intercultural relations literature. On the one hand, integration strategies are linked to the psychological adaptation of Africans, whereas assimilation emerged as a predictor of sociocultural adaptation difficulty and intentions to avoid interaction with Hongkongers. On the other hand, assimilation and integration expectations are key acculturation indicators for Hongkongers' sociocultural adaptation and are essential in their intercultural interactions with African immigrants.

While the results shed light on the complexities of immigrants' and majority members' acculturation experiences, their mutual adaptation, social relations and social interactions, it is important to note several caveats in the evidence presented here. First, the present study focused on assimilation and integration and did not examine other acculturation orientations that might be essential for adaptation and intercultural relations. Thus, research on acculturation, adaptation, and intergroup relations remains open for further study, particularly in the East Asian context. Second, acculturation is a process, and intergroup relations are influenced by many other variables and change over time. Since single-group and cross-sectional studies dominate the acculturation literature (te Lindert et al., 2022), longitudinal studies are highly recommended to help provide a broader perspective on these issues among other ethnocultural groups (such as Nepalese, Filipinos, Pakistanis, and Indians) and Hongkongers in HK's acculturative context. Moreover, since immigrants and non-immigrant groups undergo intercultural transformation in multicultural settings, research that enhances our understanding of how foreign cultural values and practices influence local HK Chinese adaptation processes would enhance our understanding of psychological acculturation. Lastly, since most of the acculturation theories emerged from Western settings and have been criticised, applying these models to an Asian context is contentious. Thus, intercultural researchers are admonished to exercise caution and pay critical attention to the local context when working with immigrant and host community members in multicultural societies (Karim et al., 2021).

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest in the research or the manuscript to declare.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Mendeley Data at <https://data.mendeley.com/v1/datasets/publish-confirmation/w8msskkp9n/1>.

## ETHICS/INFORMED CONSENT

All procedures performed in the reported studies were in accordance with the ethics committee of Lingnan University.

## PRE-REGISTRATION STATEMENT

The study was not pre-registered.

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## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Tsim Sha Tsui is an urban area in southern Kowloon in Hong Kong. The area is a major tourist hub with many high-end shops, bars and restaurants. Tsim Sha Tsui is frequented by many ethnic minorities.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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