

# INTRAREGIONAL MIGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA

Psychological Perspectives on Acculturation  
and Intergroup Relations



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# 4

## MY HOME, MY RULES

### *Costa Rican Attitudes Toward Immigrants and Immigration*

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Of all the countries in Central America, Costa Rica is generally regarded as having the most stable and democratic government. In the early 1950s, the Costa Rican Constitution abolished the army; gave women the right to vote; and provided several social, economic, and educational guarantees for all its citizens. The country has one of the highest literacy rates in the region and a relatively established educational system from the primary and secondary grades through university (Pérez, 2004). It also has one of the most universalized health care systems in Latin America (Saenz et al., 2010).

Thus, because of its favorable economic development and political stability, Costa Rica has become an important destination for immigrants, with around 10% of its population born abroad, mostly coming from Nicaragua (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos & Centro Centroamericano de Población, 2013). Costa Rica is also a key destination for refugees and asylum seekers. Currently, the country has approximately 12,500 refugees, coming mostly from Colombia. In this way, Costa Rica hosts the second-largest concentration of Colombian refugees in Latin America, after Ecuador (UN High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2016).

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In this specific context, this chapter examines Costa Rican attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Specifically, we focus on participants' expectations of how immigrants should acculturate. Informed by acculturation models (Berry, 2006, 2008) and theories from the intergroup-relations literature, this chapter reports the results of novel studies among Costa Rican adolescents, university students, and adult community members, in which attitudes toward immigrants' acculturation are linked with intergroup variables such as negative stereotypes (Fiske, 2000), intergroup emotions (Mackie et al., 2008), perceived threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), and intergroup contact (Pettigrew et al., 2011).

First, we begin with some basic theoretical considerations about attitudes toward immigrants, and immigration from the perspectives of the cross-cultural psychology of intercultural contact and acculturation, and the social psychology of intergroup relations.

Second, given the incipient research on acculturation in our context and the lack of validated research tools, we present a new measure of host community members' acculturation attitudes to capture three acculturation expectations: cultural preservation, assimilation, and separation: The Acculturation Expectation Scale was specifically developed for the studies included here (Smith-Castro, 2008).

Third, we describe the patterns of acculturation expectations and intergroup attitudes toward the two principal immigrant groups of the country: Nicaraguans and Colombians. Although there is no systematic comparative research on attitudes toward these immigrant groups, it is well known that both differ in several characteristics (e.g., social status, cultural capital, motives of immigration) that should be taken into account for a better understanding of Costa Rican's attitudes toward immigration (Sandoval-García, 2004)

Fourth, we test the relative contribution of intergroup variables to the prediction of each type of acculturation expectation, paying special attention to the potential moderating role of the target immigrant group (Nicaraguans vs. Colombians) on the relationship between intergroup variables and acculturation expectations.

In line with previous research, we hypothesize that positive intercultural contact and favorable intergroup attitudes will be associated with positive multicultural attitudes. But we also assume that receiving-society members have different reactions toward immigration depending on the specific groups they have in mind when considering how to live together in society. In our case, previous research has shown differential attitudinal patterns toward these important immigrant groups, showing more intergroup negativity toward Nicaraguan immigrants in comparison with Colombian

immigrants (Smith-Castro et al., 2009; Smith-Castro & Pérez-Sánchez, 2007). Therefore, we expect that the acculturation expectations will vary depending on the target group.

We conclude with some considerations about the need of understanding the complexities of acculturation and intergroup relations, considering the specific dynamics of the south-south migration, as well as the implications of our results for research on acculturation in other contexts.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION

When we ask people to think about immigrants coming to their countries, and to share with us their opinions about how to get along with them, we ask them to think along coordinates defined by social categories. In other words, we activate social categorization processes. The psychosocial foundations and consequences of such activation have been historically investigated by the field of the social psychology of intergroup relations (Allport, 1954; Sherif & Sherif, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and have been successfully applied in the field of cross-cultural psychology to study intercultural contact and acculturation (Berry, 2008; Brown & Zagefka, 2011; Horenczyk et al., 2013). Both traditions have produced a vast theoretical and empirical literature to understand the way in which individuals react to others in terms of their ethnic citizenship and to account for the psychosocial factors that affect these reactions (Verkuyten, 2018).

To this end, several models have been proposed to describe the expectations (also known as preferences, strategies, orientations, or modes) held by host society members (also referred to as majorities or dominant groups) in regard to how immigrant should adapt to their society (Berry, 2006, 2008; Bourhis et al., 1997; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). All these models share the basic idea that acculturation expectations emerge from two core dimensions: (a) the extent to which cultural maintenance is desired and promoted in a given society and (b) the extent to which cultural diversity is desired through regular interactions with individuals and groups of different backgrounds (Berry, 2006, 2008; Horenczyk et al., 2013). Derived from these two dimensions, four basic expectations have been widely studied:

- Pluralism or multiculturalism, which represents the expectation that the distinctive heritage culture of all ethnocultural groups in a society should be maintained, respected, and actively promoted. Therefore, immigrants are expected to *integrate* fully into the society while preserving their specific cultural identity.

- Assimilationism (the melting pot), which is based on the expectation that immigrants must relinquish their cultural idiosyncrasies and *assimilate* into the host society, adopting the values and practices of the dominant group.
- Segregation, which is grounded in the notion that the “coexistence” of groups with different ethnic citizenship is possible only if groups live physically separated. Therefore, immigrants are expected to *separate* from the host society members yet maintain their distinctive cultural heritage.
- Exclusion, which reflects the rejection both of cultural preservation and of social participation, forcing immigrants to *marginalization*.

Evidence suggests that members of multicultural host societies tend to expect immigrants to adopt primarily integration and secondly assimilation or separation strategies (Bourhis et al., 2009; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2003; Ljubic et al., 2012), with some important exceptions in which separation or assimilation is preferred (González et al., 2010). Research has also documented important sources of variability and specificity. For instance, some studies have shown that devalued or more culturally distant groups are expected to separate or assimilate more than valued or more culturally close groups (Safdar et al., 2008), whereas other studies have revealed that immigrants are expected to integrate in the domain of social relations and friendships but to assimilate in the domains of work, economics, and values (Navas et al., 2007).

## **ATTITUDES TOWARD IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION AS INTERGROUP PHENOMENA**

Several studies have documented that acculturation expectations are predicted by intergroup attitudes (for reviews, see Brown & Zagefka, 2011; Horenczyk et al., 2013; Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). Intergroup attitudes are evaluative responses to outgroup members by virtue of their belonging to a different social category (ethnic citizenship in our case), which include both hostile evaluative responses and positive and supportive orientations. As reactions, they arise from the interaction of cognitive and affective variables, the immediate context of the intergroup contact, and the structural conditions that regulate this contact (Hewstone et al., 2002).

Stereotypes are perhaps the most widely studied intergroup phenomena, especially the negative-laden ones. *Stereotypes* are consensual beliefs of

the traits that are supposed to be characteristic of social groups and their members (Fiske, 2000; Lippmann, 1922; Stangor, 2009). Research has shown that stereotypes of immigrants are linked to national-level debates about unauthorized immigration. Stereotypes that portray groups in positive ways predict positive attitudes toward the groups and more supportive attitudes toward policies that facilitate their immigration. Conversely, negative qualities predict negative attitudes toward the same group and support for policies that prevent the group from immigrating (Reyna et al., 2013).

Affective reactions to social groups are also important predictors of intergroup attitudes. Integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) has drawn attention to the role of anxiety (and the motivation to avoid it) as an important predictor of prejudice. According to this theory, anxiety occurs more frequently among group members who perceive large intergroup differences, assume a history of intergroup antagonism, know very little about the other groups, have very little intergroup contact experiences, are particularly ethnocentric, or perceive intergroup encounters as zero-sum interactions. Intergroup emotions theory (Mackie et al., 2009) highlights the role of group-based emotions (particularly anger, disgust, and guilt) in regulating intergroup behaviors, especially among those individuals who highly identify with their ingroups. This theory suggests that intergroup emotions direct and regulate specific intergroup behaviors. For instance, anger toward an outgroup increases desires to confront or attack or harm that outgroup, whereas intergroup fear motivates desires to move away from an outgroup and reduces desires to confront or attack the offending outgroup (Mackie et al., 2008). Intergroup emotions appear in several studies as important predictors of attitudes toward immigration and prejudice toward immigrants (Kessler et al., 2010; López-Rodríguez et al., 2016; Stephan et al., 1998).

Finally, intergroup contact (Allport, 1954) has long been regarded as a key strategy for improving intergroup relations. According to the intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew, 1998), depending on the structural characteristics of the intergroup contact and how it is perceived by the participants of the interactions, contact can be experienced as a threat or as an opportunity for personal enrichment. Thus, intergroup contact can diminish hostility when it occurs under the optimal conditions of institutional support, equal of status, cooperation, the pursuit of common goals, and the potential to develop intimate friendships. On the other hand, when contact is perceived as a threat, negative intergroup outcomes are expected. Threats are diverse, including those to the integrity of the ingroup (food, health), those to its position of privilege (economic and political power), and those to its cultural reproduction (symbolic threats).

Research has shown that both realistic and symbolic threats predict negative attitudes toward immigrant groups (Sirlopú & Van Oudenhoven, 2013; Włodarczyk et al., 2014). Data also indicate that contact is negatively associated with prejudice, especially when optimal conditions are present, across several types of outgroup targets including immigrants and that contact is effective among both children and adults, irrespective of gender and geographical area (Pettigrew et al., 2011). The existing studies on the contact–prejudice link suggest that positive intergroup contact decreases anxiety (and other emotions such as fear and anger), improves knowledge, and increases empathy when interacting with outgroup members, and these outcomes, in turn, have been shown to diminish prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

## **CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH**

Intraregional immigration flows are not new in the history of Costa Rica. Starting in the late 19th century, the development of banana plantations became a major factor drawing in foreign labor, mainly from Nicaragua and Jamaica (Echeverri-Gent, 1992). Immigration from Central America dramatically increased between 1984 and 2000 because of natural disasters, internal conflicts, and structural economic imbalances in the region. Since 2000, given the improved political and economic conditions elsewhere in Central America and Costa Rica's tighter immigration policies, immigration stabilized, and the proportion of migrants in the Costa Rica's population remained stable or fell (although the relative percentage of Colombians was growing; Cortés-Ramos, 2003).

Currently, the total immigrant population in Costa Rica is estimated to be about 422,000, or 8.8% of the population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos & Centro Centroamericano de Población, 2013), making Costa Rica, in relative terms, the country with the highest percentage of immigrants in Latin America. In absolute terms, Costa Rica ranks sixth in Latin America and first in Central America in number of foreign residents in the country. Most immigrants are between 18 and 40 years of age, and 52% are women. Their main occupations are trade (16%), agriculture (15%), domestic services (14%), and construction (10%). Most of them come from Nicaragua (75%), followed by immigrants from Colombia (4%), the United States (4%), Panama (3%), and El Salvador (2%).

In recent years, Costa Rica has seen increasing numbers of irregular migrants entering the country, mainly from Haiti and Cuba but also from

countries in Africa and Asia. Many migrants get stranded in the country on their way to the United States. The government has opened centers to provide basic assistance and shelter, but the capacity to host the increasing transit flows is insufficient (Acuña et al., 2013). The most recent crisis in Nicaragua produced a considerable flow of refugees from that country, with more than 23,000 applications by August 2018, increasing the number of refugees in the country; previously, most people had come from Colombia (UNHCR, 2016).

## MEASURING ACCULTURATION EXPECTATIONS IN COSTA RICA

Considering the immigration dynamics just described, we developed for the present studies a new scale to measure acculturation expectations held by Costa Ricans toward immigrants, with particular focus on the two major immigrant groups in the country: Nicaraguans and Colombians (Smith-Castro, 2008). The 18-item Acculturation Expectations Scale measures host community members' preferences regarding how immigrants should acculturate, focusing on cultural preservation, cultural assimilation, and separation, with six items for each type of expectation. The questionnaire instructs participants to rate their agreement with different ways to get along with immigrants on the basis of the following statement: "Many problems between Costa Ricans and Nicaraguan/Colombian immigrants could be solved if . . ." Example of the items are ". . . they adopt Costa Rican traditions and customs" (assimilation), ". . . each group keeps its own traditions and customs" (cultural preservation), and ". . . we live *together but not scrambled* to keep our ways of life" (separation). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). The complete scale is presented in the appendix.

The scale was first tested in a sample of 104 high-school students (59% women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 16$  years,  $SD = .75$  years) from the metropolitan area of the country. Students completed the questionnaires in their classrooms. Around half of them ( $n = 51$ ) reported their expectations toward immigrants from Nicaragua, and the rest ( $n = 53$ ) answered the items focusing on immigrants from Colombia. These two versions were randomly distributed.

Results of the exploratory factor analyses, internal consistencies, and descriptive statistics for the subscales are presented in Table 4.1. Factor analyses yielded three differentiated subscales across the two target groups: Separation, Cultural Preservation, and Assimilation, accounting for about 48% of the items' variance, with factor loadings ranging from .46 to .84 on each factor and adequate Cronbach's alphas around .80.



**TABLE 4.1. Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis Results, Cronbach's Alphas and Descriptive Statistics for the Costa Rican Acculturation Expectations Scale in Pilot Study 1**

Items	Factors		
	Separation	Preservation	Assimilation
13. There is "some distance" between the groups.	<b>.835</b>	.161	.037
17. They live far away from us.	<b>.790</b>	-.086	.041
8. Each group lives separately to maintain each culture.	<b>.786</b>	.057	-.030
4. We do not try to mix a lot in order to keep our cultural features.	<b>.695</b>	.170	.015
3. They live a little apart from us.	<b>.505</b>	-.021	.086
18. We live "together but not scrambled" to keep our ways of life.	<b>.491</b>	.310	.013
12. Each group retains and expresses its own way of life.	.075	<b>.822</b>	-.043
10. Each group maintains its specific cultural features.	.096	<b>.777</b>	.190
15. Each group preserves its mentality.	.231	<b>.692</b>	.014
6. Each group has the opportunity to maintain its own values.	-.016	<b>.546</b>	-.128
2. Each group keeps its own traditions and customs.	-.266	<b>.535</b>	-.154
9. Each group holds its own lifestyle.	.281	<b>.524</b>	.081
11. They adapt to Costa Ricans' lifestyle.	-.102	.057	<b>.761</b>
16. They embrace the Costa Rican culture.	-.121	.144	<b>.702</b>
14. They adopt the Costa Rican mentality.	.288	-.199	<b>.682</b>
5. They adopt Costa Ricans' values.	-.108	-.028	<b>.571</b>
7. They adopt the Costa Rican way of life.	.156	-.014	<b>.498</b>
1. They adopt Costa Ricans' traditions and customs.	.285	-.092	<b>.458</b>
Eigenvalues	3.36	2.85	2.41
% of variance	18.67	15.85	13.43
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.84	.82	.78
<i>M</i> scores ( <i>SD</i> )	3.83 (1.63) <sub>a</sub>	4.62 (1.45) <sub>b</sub>	3.62 (1.32) <sub>a</sub>
<i>M</i> scores ( <i>SD</i> ) toward Nicaraguans <sup>a</sup>	4.33 (1.52) <sub>b</sub>	4.69 (1.37) <sub>b</sub>	3.68 (1.36) <sub>a</sub>
<i>M</i> scores ( <i>SD</i> ) toward Colombians <sup>b</sup>	3.35 (1.60) <sub>a</sub>	4.55 (1.54) <sub>b</sub>	3.57 (1.30) <sub>a</sub>

Note.  $N = 104$ . Factor loadings over .40 appear in bold. Extraction is principal axis factoring. Rotation is Varimax.  $KMO = .74$ , Bartlett's Test of Sphericity,  $\chi^2(153) = 698.54, p < .001$ . Mean scores with different subscripts differ at  $p < .001$ , with Bonferroni's correction for multiple comparisons. <sup>a</sup> $n = 51$ . <sup>b</sup> $n = 53$ .

To examine differences between the acculturation expectations across target immigrant groups, we performed a mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with acculturation expectations as within-subjects factor, immigrant group as between-subjects factor, and Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons. Results showed significant differences across acculturation expectations,  $F(2, 204) = 15.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$ , and target immigrant groups,  $F(1, 102) = 4.97, p = .028, \eta^2 = .05$ , qualified by a significant interaction,  $F(2, 204) = 3.40, p = .035, \eta^2 = .03$ .

In general, students significantly endorsed cultural preservation more strongly than any other acculturation mode, followed by separation and cultural assimilation, although these last two did not differ significantly from each other. As indicated by the significant interaction, expectations varied as a function of the target immigrant group. Those participants rating their expectation toward Nicaraguans endorsed more separation than those reporting their expectations regarding Colombians (see Table 4.1).

In a second pilot study, 49 high school students (49% girls,  $M_{\text{age}} = 15.83, SD = .75$  years) completed our scale toward both Nicaraguans and Colombians (presentation order was counterbalanced). In this study, attitudes were measured across two waves, 2 weeks apart from each other. In Wave 2, five items adapted from the Canadian Multicultural Ideology Scale (Berry & Kalin, 1995) were also included. Examples of items are “We should recognize that the Costa Rican society consists of groups with different cultural backgrounds” and “A society that has a variety of cultural groups is more able to tackle new problems as they occur.” Items were rated on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). The scale yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .80.

Descriptive statistics, test–retest reliabilities and correlations with multiculturalism are presented in Table 4.2. For each subscale, test–retest scores significantly correlated across target groups, whereas multicultural attitudes were positively correlated with cultural preservation toward both Nicaraguans and Colombians, and negatively with separation toward Nicaraguans.

In Wave 1, a repeated measures ANOVA showed significant differences across acculturation expectations,  $F(2, 96) = 30.51, p < .001, \eta^2 = .39$ , and target immigrant groups,  $F(1, 48) = 4.29, p = .04, \eta^2 = .09$ , qualified by a significant interaction,  $F(2, 96) = 12.45, p < .001, \eta^2 = .21$ . Regarding Nicaraguans, students showed a higher preference for cultural preservation over any other acculturation mode, followed by separation, whereas assimilation was the less endorsed expectation, although there were no significant differences between the last two. Regarding Colombians, participants also endorsed cultural preservation over the other acculturation modes, but for this immigrant group, they significantly preferred assimilation over

**TABLE 4.2. Descriptive Statistics, Test-Retest Reliabilities and Correlations With Multiculturalism for the Costa Rican Acculturation Expectations Scales in Pilot Study 2**

Expectations	Time 1	Time 2	Test-retest	Multiculturalism
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	Spearman $\rho$ ( <i>p</i> )	Spearman $\rho$ ( <i>p</i> )
Toward Nicaraguans				
Preservation	4.73 <sup>a</sup> (1.48)	4.68 <sup>a</sup> (1.53)	.78 (< .001)	.54 (< .001)
Assimilation	3.16 <sup>b</sup> (1.54)	2.97 <sup>c</sup> (1.40)	.69 (< .001)	-.17 (.883)
Separation	3.36 <sup>b</sup> (1.65)	3.87 <sup>b</sup> (1.70)	.71 (< .001)	-.38 (.008)
Toward Colombians				
Preservation	5.11 <sup>c</sup> (1.35)	4.75 <sup>a</sup> (1.45)	.75 (< .001)	.43 (.002)
Assimilation	3.20 <sup>b</sup> (1.53)	2.93 <sup>c</sup> (1.22)	.79 (< .001)	-.12 (.423)
Separation	2.45 <sup>d</sup> (1.29)	2.98 <sup>c</sup> (1.48)	.56 (< .001)	-.11 (.448)

Note.  $N = 49$ . We computed Spearman rho correlations because of the small sample size and evidence of non-normal distribution of the scores. Within the same column, mean scores with different superscripts differ at  $p < .001$ , using Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons.

separation. Overall, participants expected Colombians to preserve their culture significantly more than Nicaraguans and expected Nicaraguans to separate significantly more than Colombians (see Table 4.2).

In Wave 2, expectations followed a similar pattern showing the significant differences between acculturation expectations,  $F(2, 96) = 21.00, p < .001, \eta^2 = .30$ ; the effect of target immigrant group,  $F(1, 48) = 11.70, p = .001, \eta^2 = .20$ ; and the interaction,  $F(2, 96) = 8.95, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$ . Regarding Nicaraguans, participants significantly endorsed cultural preservation over separation, and separation over assimilation. Regarding Colombians, participants supported cultural preservation over the two other modes, but there were no significant differences between separation and assimilation. The expectation for more separation for Nicaraguans compared with Colombians also remained significant, but the expectation for more cultural preservation for Colombians compared with Nicaraguans was no longer significant 2 weeks later (see Table 4.2).

## INTERGROUP VARIABLES AND ACCULTURATION EXPECTATIONS IN COSTA RICA

The development of our scale showed that the patterns of acculturation expectations were target-group dependent, highlighting the need to explore how these expectations relate to intergroup attitudes. To this end, we conducted more field research.

## Method

Specifically, three studies using the survey method were developed to explore further the features of the acculturation expectations toward immigrants from Nicaragua and Colombia and their relationships with intergroup variables.

### Participants

Study participants consisted of high school students ( $N = 96$ , 53% girls,  $M_{\text{age}} = 16.40$  years,  $SD = 1.09$  years), university students ( $N = 335$ , 49% women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.86$  years,  $SD = 2.97$  years), and adult community members ( $N = 278$ , 50% women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 37.49$ ,  $SD = 12.73$  years).

In these studies, participants were recruited directly in their institutions (high school and university students) or their homes (community members) and were invited to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire about their opinions about immigration and immigrants. Around half of the participants across samples reported their expectations and attitudes toward immigrants from Nicaragua, and the rest answered the questionnaire focusing on immigrants from Colombia. The two versions of the questionnaire were randomly distributed.

### Measures of Intergroup Variables

Booklets included a brief demographic section, along with the Acculturation Expectations Scale and measures of stereotypes, intergroup emotions, perceived realistic threats and intergroup contact. Descriptive statistics, internal consistencies, and simple correlations of all measures are presented in Table 4.3.

**Stereotypes.** We used a variant of the trait assignment procedure proposed by Brigham (1971), in which participants are asked to rate, according to their personal beliefs, the percentage of individuals in a given group who possess a particular trait using a 10-point scale representing 10% increments from 10% to 100%. Participants rated 13 traits: hardworking, superstitious, honest, lazy, smart, ignorant, dishonest, peaceful, violent, neat, cheerful, arrogant, and dirty. Principal component (PC) analyses across samples suggested that the 13 items form a largely unidimensional measure with a strong first factor in which the positive traits loaded negatively (first eigenvalues = 3.75, 5.24, and 5.01; accounted variance = 29%, 40%, and 38%; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .78$ ,  $.86$ , and  $.85$  for high school students, university students, and community members, respectively). Therefore, we computed a single score of the percentage estimate for all traits, once the positive traits were reversed, so that higher scores indicate higher levels of negative stereotyping.

**TABLE 4.3. Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha, and Correlations for all Measures Among High School Students, University Students, and Community Members**

Measures	Total M (SD)	Nicaraguans M (SD)	Colombians M (SD)	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5	6
High school										
1. Preservation	4.62 (1.50)	4.76 (1.47)	4.48 (1.53)	.84						
2. Assimilation	3.59 (1.56)	3.71 (1.57)	3.46 (1.54)	.88	-.10					
3. Separation	4.16 (1.40)	4.22 (1.35)	4.09 (1.47)	.78	.32**	.33**				
4. Stereotypes	5.42 (1.36)	5.83 (1.17)	4.99 (1.43)	.78	.04	.06	.29**			
5. Emotions	3.07 (0.80)	3.50 (0.70)	2.62 (0.63)	.69	.08	.09	.16	.40***		
6. Threat	4.15 (1.27)	4.32 (1.21)	3.96 (1.32)	.79	.06	.04	.29**	.30**	.38***	
7. Contact	1.77 (0.69)	1.99 (0.72)	1.53 (0.56)	.73	.08	.20	-.08	-.03	-.30**	-.05
University										
1. Preservation	4.44 (1.46)	4.34 (1.47)	4.53 (1.45)	.85						
2. Assimilation	2.96 (1.35)	3.05 (1.37)	2.87 (1.34)	.86	-.15**					
3. Separation	2.93 (1.44)	3.23 (1.48)	2.64 (1.34)	.86	.09	.46***				
4. Stereotypes	4.59 (1.44)	5.07 (1.52)	4.11 (1.16)	.86	-.10	.28**	.46***			
5. Emotions	2.58 (0.84)	2.91 (0.84)	2.25 (0.70)	.79	-.08	.21**	.52***	.67***		
6. Threat	3.13 (1.40)	3.37 (1.42)	2.89 (1.34)	.86	-.00	.34***	.47***	.57***	.58***	
7. Contact	1.90 (0.72)	1.95 (0.73)	1.82 (0.70)	.72	.11*	.01	-.08	-.06	-.17**	-.05
Community										
1. Preservation	4.35 (1.48)	4.19 (1.51)	4.50 (1.44)	.86						
2. Assimilation	3.47 (1.46)	3.67 (1.49)	3.28 (1.42)	.86	-.17**					
3. Separation	3.40 (1.59)	3.59 (1.69)	3.22 (1.48)	.89	.34***	.32**				
4. Stereotypes	4.74 (1.60)	5.25 (1.49)	4.25 (1.34)	.86	-.24**	.18**	.28**			
5. Emotions	2.60 (0.82)	2.82 (0.82)	2.39 (0.76)	.77	-.17**	.13*	.34***	.58***		
6. Threat	4.61 (1.44)	3.63 (1.45)	3.17 (1.39)	.83	-.12*	.16**	.33**	.53***	.53***	
7. Contact	1.95 (0.72)	2.06 (0.73)	1.85 (0.69)	.71	-.04	.07	-.14*	-.09	-.22**	-.17**

Note. High school students, N = 96. University students, N = 335. Community members, N = 278.  
\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

**Emotions.** Following previous studies on intergroup emotions (Miller et al., 2004), we asked participants to rate how often they had felt sympathetic, uneasy, afraid, admiring, distrustful, and angry when encountering or thinking about Nicaraguans or Colombians. Items were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Following PC analyses, the six emotions were combined in a global index, after reversing positive emotions, in which high scores indicate greater levels of negative emotions (first eigenvalues = 2.50, 3.05 and 2.83; accounted variance = 41%, 50%, and 47%; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .69, .79, \text{ and } .77$  for high school students, university students, and community members, respectively).

**Threat.** We included seven items to tap into realistic threats adapted from the Blatant and Subtle Prejudice Scale by Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) and a Realistic Threats measure developed by Stephan et al. (1998). Some sample items are "Nicaraguans/Colombians have jobs that Costa Ricans must have," "Most Nicaraguans/Colombians living here who receive support from welfare could get along without it if they tried," and "Nicaraguans/Colombians are increasing the amount of crime in Costa Rica." Items were rated in a 7-point-Likert scale from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). Following results of PC analyses, we combined all items in a single threat score (first eigenvalues = 3.15, 3.82 and 3.64; accounted variance = 45%, 55%, and 51%; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79, .86, \text{ and } .83$  for high school students, university students, and community members, respectively). High scores indicate higher levels of perceived realistic threat.

**Contact.** Based on previous studies (Smith-Castro, 2003; Zick et al., 2001), we asked participants to rate their frequency of contact with Nicaraguans or Colombians in the following domains: among family and relatives, at school (university or work), in the neighborhood, among the circle of acquaintances, among the circle of close friends, in church or at other religious activities, and at sport activities. The answering scale ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Items were combined in a general contact index, with higher scores indicating more intergroup contact (first eigenvalues = 2.85, 2.65 and 2.63; accounted variance = 40%, 38%, and 38%; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .73, .72, \text{ and } .71$  for high school students, university students, and community members, respectively).

## Results

We present our results following four major goals: (a) to test whether the acculturation expectations vary according to the immigrant group that

participants had in mind when surveyed (i.e., Nicaraguans vs. Colombians), (b) to examine if intergroup variables also vary depending on the target group, (c) to explore the relationship between acculturation expectations and intergroup variables, and (d) to test whether these relationships are moderated by the target immigrant group.

### **Are Acculturation Expectations Target-Group Specific?**

We performed a series of mixed ANOVAs with acculturation expectations as within-subjects factor and the immigrant target group as between-subjects factor to test differences between acculturation means across the two target groups. Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons was used (see Table 4.3 for means and standard deviations).<sup>1</sup>

For high school students, results showed significant differences between acculturation expectations,  $F(2, 188) = 15.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$ , but neither the main effect of target group nor its interaction with expectations were significant (all  $F$ s < 1.16). Overall, the participants expected primarily cultural preservation, followed by separation, whereas cultural assimilation was the less endorsed expectation.

Among university students, differences between acculturation expectations were statistically significant,  $F(2, 662) = 143.53, p < .001, \eta^2 = .30$ , but qualified by a significant interaction with the target group,  $F(2, 662) = 7.382, p = .001, \eta^2 = .02$ . Those rating their acculturation expectations regarding Nicaraguans showed a significantly higher preference for cultural preservation over any other acculturation mode, followed by separation and cultural assimilation, although there were no significant differences between the last two. Those reporting their expectations toward Colombians endorsed cultural preservation primarily as well, but it was followed by cultural assimilation, rather than separation, and separation was the last endorsed expectation, although the last two means did not differ significantly. Additionally, those rating their expectations toward Nicaraguans endorsed separation significantly more than those rating their expectations regarding Colombians.

Among community members, differences between acculturation expectations were also statistically significant,  $F(2, 548) = 40.90, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$ , and qualified by a significant interaction with the target group,  $F(2, 548) = 5.88, p = .003, \eta^2 = .02$ . Again, cultural preservation was significantly more endorsed than the other acculturation mode regardless of the target group,

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary analysis including sex as between-subject factor and age as covariable showed no significant effects for these variables across samples (all  $F$ s < 2.47).

followed by cultural assimilation, which in turn was closely followed by separation, with no significant differences between the last two expectations. Those reporting their expectations toward Nicaraguans endorsed significantly more assimilation than those rating their expectations regarding Colombians.

### **Do Intergroup Variables Vary According to Target Immigrant Groups?**

To test whether intergroup variables also differ depending on the target group, we performed a one-way multivariate ANOVA on the intergroup variables with the target group as between-subject factor in each sample separately (see Table 4.3 for means and standard deviations).<sup>2</sup>

In high schools, results revealed a multivariate effect of the target group on the combined intergroup variables: Hotelling's trace,  $F(4, 88) = 12.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .387$ . Follow-up univariate ANOVAs showed significant target group effects for stereotypes,  $F(1, 91) = 8.49$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ; emotions,  $F(1, 91) = 42.00$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .32$ ; and contact,  $F(1, 91) = 11.53$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ . Those rating their attitudes toward Nicaraguans expressed significantly more negative stereotypes, expressed more negative emotions, and reported more intergroup contact than those reporting their attitudes toward Colombians.

For university students, results also yielded a multivariate effect of target group on the combined intergroup variables: Hotelling's trace,  $F(4, 323) = 20.88$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .20$ . Follow-up univariate ANOVAs showed significant target group effects for stereotypes,  $F(1, 326) = 40.75$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ ; emotions,  $F(1, 326) = 63.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .16$ ; and threat,  $F(1, 326) = 9.96$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Those students rating their attitudes toward Nicaraguans showed significantly more negative stereotypes, showed more negative emotions, and perceived more threat than those rating their attitudes toward Colombians.

Among community members, the significant multivariate effect of target group on the combined intergroup variables was also found: Hotelling's trace,  $F(4, 266) = 13.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ . Follow-up ANOVAs showed significant target group effects for stereotypes,  $F(1, 269) = 36.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .12$ ; emotions,  $F(1, 269) = 19.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ; threat,  $F(1, 269) = 7.88$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ; and contact,  $F(1, 269) = 6.35$ ,  $p = .012$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . Those participants rating their attitudes toward Nicaraguans attributed significantly more negative traits, expressed more negative emotions, perceived

<sup>2</sup>Also, preliminary analysis including sex as between-subject factor and age as covariable showed no significant effects for these variables across samples (all Hotelling's trace  $F$ s  $< 2.09$ ).



more threat, and reported more contact than those rating their attitudes toward Colombians.

### **Do Intergroup Variables Relate to Acculturation Expectations?**

Table 4.3 shows the simple correlation matrix between all variables under study for high school students, university students, and community members, respectively. A general look at the correlation matrix reveals modest inter-correlations among the variables, which are statistically significant in most cases (especially in university and community samples) and highly consistent with previous research and theory.

Concerning acculturation expectations, cultural preservation correlated negatively with assimilation among university students and community members and positively with separation in high schools and communities, whereas assimilation correlated positively with separation across all samples.

Regarding intergroup variables, negative stereotypes, negative emotions, and perceived threat related positively to each other across samples, whereas intergroup contact correlated negatively with negative emotions across samples and negatively with threat among community members.

Considering the relationship between acculturation expectations and intergroup variables, significant correlations were found only in university students' and community members' samples. In the former, cultural preservation was slightly correlated with more intergroup contact, whereas assimilation and separation were both positively correlated with negative stereotypes, negative emotions, and perceived threat. In the latter, cultural preservation was negatively correlated with stereotypes, emotions, and threat. Assimilation was positively correlated with negative stereotypes, negative emotions, and perceived threat, whereas separation related negatively with stereotypes, emotions, and threat and negatively with intergroup contact.

### **The Moderating Role of Target Immigrant Groups in the Prediction of Acculturation Expectations**

A series of hierarchical moderated regression analyses were run on each acculturation expectation to test for differences in the relationships between intergroup variables and acculturation expectation across target groups. Analyses were run for each sample separately. In Step 1, we included negative stereotypes, negative emotions, threat, contact, and the target group as predictors. In Step 2, we included the two-way interaction terms for each intergroup variable and the target group. All continuous variables were standardized. The binary predictor was dummy coded (0 = Colombians, 1 = Nicaraguans). A summary of the results is presented in Table 4.4.

**TABLE 4.4. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Assimilation and Separation Expectations Among University Students**

Predictors	Cultural preservation			Assimilation			Separation		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Step 1									
Stereotypes	-.16	.11	-.11	.24	.10	<b>.18*</b>	.19	.09	<b>.13*</b>
Emotions	-.05	.12	-.04	-.08	.11	-.06	.41	.10	<b>.28***</b>
Threat	.14	.10	.09	.39	.09	<b>.28***</b>	.33	.09	<b>.23***</b>
Contact	.16	.08	.11	.04	.07	.03	-.03	.07	-.02
Immigrant group	-.08	.18	-.03	-.04	.16	-.02	.04	.15	.01
R <sup>2</sup>	.03			.13			.32		
F(5, 322)	1.86			10.07***			30.34***		
Step 2									
Stereotypes	-.29	.16	-.20	.04	.14	.03	.01	.13	.01
Emotions	.00	.17	.00	.11	.15	.08	.63	.14	<b>.44***</b>
Threat	.27	.14	.18	.40	.12	<b>.30**</b>	.32	.12	<b>.23**</b>
Contact	.21	.12	.14	-.04	.10	-.09	.10	.06	.06
Immigrant group	-.07	.18	-.02	-.02	.16	-.05	.05	.15	.02
Stereotypes × Group	.34	.23	.18	.50	.20	<b>.28*</b>	.44	.19	<b>.23*</b>
Emotions × Group	-.17	.25	-.08	-.07	.18	-.03	-.51	.20	<b>-.26*</b>
Threat × Group	-.32	.21	-.16	-.02	.15	-.00	-.04	.17	-.02
Contact × Group	-.12	.17	-.06	.17	.14	.09	-.22	.14	-.11
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	.01			.03			.02		
F(4, 318) for ΔR <sup>2</sup>	1.20			2.57*			2.40†		

Note. N = 335. Statistically significant beta weights are bold. Preservation, Assimilation, Separation, Stereotypes, Emotions, Threat, and Contact were standardized. Immigrant group was dummy coded (Colombians = 0, Nicaraguans = 1).  
 †p < .050. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

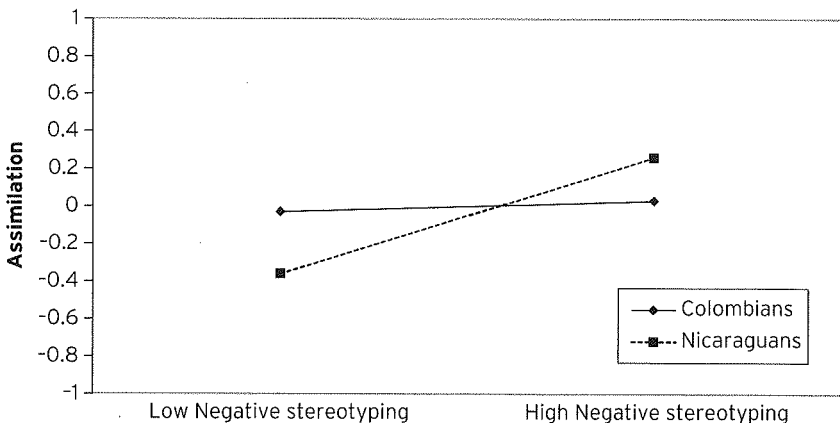
For high school students and community members, none of the models yielded statistical significance: Step 1, all  $R^2$ s < .10, all  $F$ s(5, 87) < 2.29, all  $p$ s > .053; Step 2, all  $\Delta R^2$ s < .09,  $F$ s(4, 83) < 2.17, all  $p$ s > .080.

For university students, the model for predicting cultural preservation was also nonsignificant—Step 1,  $R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(5, 322) = 1.86$ ,  $p = .102$ ; Step 2,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(4, 318) = 1.20$ ,  $p = .347$ —but for assimilation and separation, results showed significant main and interaction effects. A summary of the results for these two dependent variables is presented in Table 4.4. Interactions are depicted in Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3.

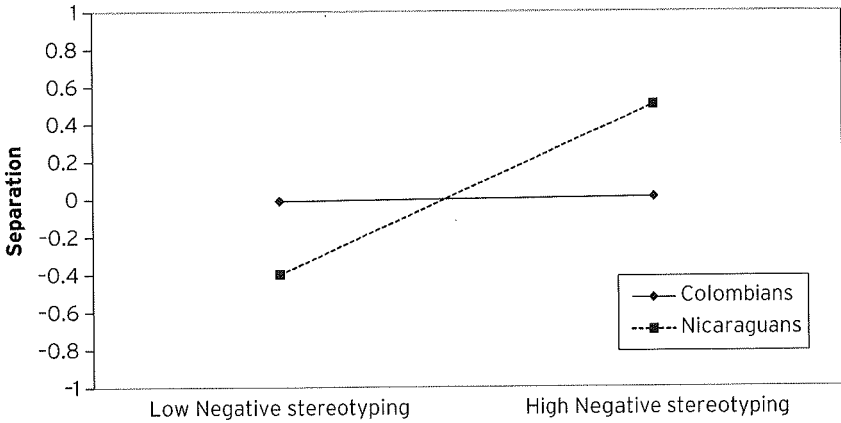
For assimilation, the significant effect of intergroup variables in Step 1 was qualified by a significant effect of the interaction with target ethnic group in Step 2, accounting for a significant increase in explained variance. Specifically, in Step 1, stereotypes and threat significantly predicted assimilation expectations. In Step 2, threat remained as significant predictor of assimilation, indicating that the more threat is perceived, the more separation is expected, but the association of stereotypes with assimilation was moderated by the target group. Simple slope analyses revealed that assimilation was significantly predicted by negative stereotypes for those participants rating their expectations toward Nicaraguans ( $\beta = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ) but not for those participants rating their expectations toward Colombians ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $p = .791$ ).

For separation expectation, results yielded a significant main effect of intergroup variables and a marginal significant effect for the interactions. In Step 1, stereotypes, emotions, and threat significantly predicted assimilation

**FIGURE 4.1. Moderating Effect of the Target Group on the Association Between Negative Stereotypes and Assimilation Among University Students**

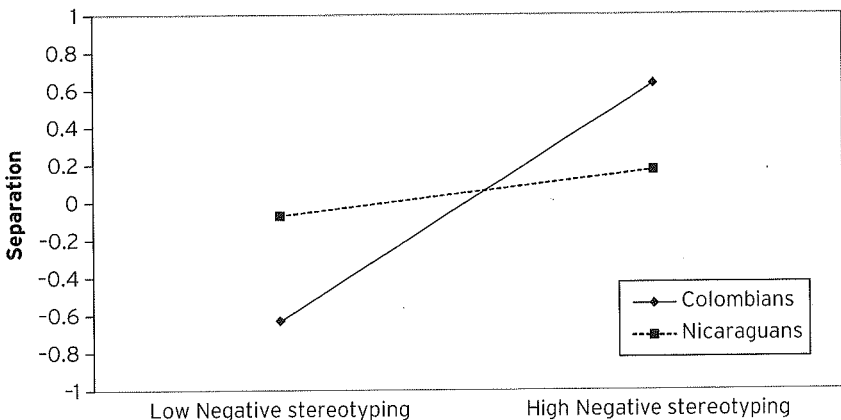


**FIGURE 4.2. Moderating Effect of the Target Group on the Association Between Negative Stereotypes and Separation Among University Students**



expectations. In Step 2, threat remained as significant predictor of separation expectations, showing that higher scores on threat predict higher scores on separation, but the effects for stereotypes and emotions were moderated by significant interactions with the target group. Simple slope analyses showed that separation was significantly predicted by negative stereotypes for those participants rating their expectations toward Nicaraguans ( $\beta = .32$ ,  $p = .001$ ), but not for those participants rating their expectations toward Colombians ( $\beta = .01$ ,  $p = .931$ ), and was predicted by more negative emotions

**FIGURE 4.3. Moderating Effect of the Target Group on the Association Between Negative Emotions and Separation Among University Students**



among participants rating their expectations toward Colombians ( $\beta = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but not among participants rating their expectations toward Nicaraguans ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $p = .401$ ).

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter was twofold: (a) to describe the patterns of acculturation expectations and intergroup attitudes toward immigrants in Costa Rica and (b) to test the relative contribution of intergroup variables to the prediction of acculturation expectations. In doing so, we paid special attention to the moderating role of target immigrant group (Nicaraguans vs. Colombians) on the relationship between intergroup variables and acculturation expectations. To this end we developed a culturally sensitive measure of the acculturation expectations held by host community members in a developing economy as Costa Rica, which exhibits adequate stability and internal consistency, and some convergent and discriminant validity with well-known measures of multicultural ideologies.

Regarding the first goal, our data show, in line with previous research, that participants more strongly endorsed cultural preservation for immigrants than other acculturation modes, followed by assimilation or by separation (Bourhis et al., 2009; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2003; Ljujic et al., 2012). As expected, however, the appreciation for cultural preservation and the demand for cultural assimilation or separation are target-group specific. Costa Ricans seem to value cultural preservation more for Colombians than for Nicaraguans and tend to expect more separation for Nicaraguans than for Colombians.

Our data also suggest that differences in expectations are rooted in differential attitudinal profiles toward specific immigrant groups, as shown by other studies (Brown & Zagefka, 2011; Rohmann et al., 2008). In our samples, intergroup attitudes also varied greatly depending on the immigrant group, exhibiting more negativity toward Nicaraguans than Colombians.

Regarding our second goal, our studies show—in concordance with previous research—that intergroup variables significantly predict acculturation expectations (Kessler et al., 2010; López-Rodríguez et al., 2016; Reyna et al., 2013; Sirlopú & Van Oudenhoven, 2013; Stephan et al., 1998; Włodarczyk et al., 2014). We observed the following general pattern: Participants attributing more negative traits, experiencing more negative emotions, and feeling more threat expect immigrants to separate or assimilate more than those participants with fewer negative stereotypes, fewer negative emotions, and

less perceived threat. However, the specific predictors and their relative contribution in the prediction of expectations varied across target immigrant groups.

The question remains: Why do Costa Ricans perceive Nicaraguans and Colombians differently, and why do we expect them to acculturate differently?

Several scholars have pointed out to the role of intergroup similarity (or distance) as the underlying factor explaining the moderating effects of target immigrant group (Brown & Zagefka, 2011). Although we gathered no data on perceived cultural distance in our studies, our findings suggest that intergroup bias might be operating here, as both cultural groups share core cultural features with Costa Ricans (i.e., language, religion, values). Differential attitudes might also arise from differential social status and prestige of these groups within the host society, as well as differences in their socio-economic background. Finally, the moderating effects of the target immigrant groups might be associated to structural and historical factors.

In our case, we believe that the differential perceptions of Nicaraguans and Colombians are partially due to the specific history of intraregional migration across these countries, the historical relationships between them, and the particularities of Costa Rican immigration policies.

First, it should be acknowledged that until recently, immigration from Nicaragua has been considered to have an economic origin, whereas immigration from Colombia is predominantly forced because of the violent conditions prevailing in the country (UNHCR, 2016). In fact, motives and reasons for immigration are mixed in nature: economic and political. However, the idea of the economic nature of Nicaraguan immigration might raise more feelings of threat in the minds of the host community members because of perceived competition (e.g., social security access), whereas the image of immigrants from Colombia coming to the country to escape from the endemic violence in their country might lower perceptions of threat because of humanitarian concerns (solidarity) and/or because their presence in the country is supposed to be temporary. These differential perceptions can also be understood in terms of the human and social capital that immigrants bring to the country. Most immigrants from Colombia are highly qualified and work in the commerce and service sector, whereas Nicaraguan immigrant workers present lower levels of education and are mainly concentrated in low-skilled occupations (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2018).

Second, the tense history of the bilateral relationships between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, marked by disputes around the San Juan River, the natural border between the two countries, should be considered. This tension is

reflected in reciprocal negativity, which can be traced to the media discourses and the public opinion in both countries (Sandoval-García, 2014).

Nationalistic hostility toward Nicaraguans in the public debate includes comparing immigration to “a cancerous tumor” (Sandoval-García, 2004, *The Fight Against the Chaos* section, para. 2). In national polls, around 20% of Costa Ricans perceive Nicaraguans as the central problem Costa Rica faces, and 60% favor deporting undocumented Nicaraguans (Mahler, 2000). More recently, the country witnessed unprecedented anti-immigrant protests and violent attacks against Nicaraguans, surrounded by a series of fabricated social media posts portraying Nicaraguans as a threat to the security of the country (Stanley, 2018).

Thus, we believe that acculturation expectations toward Nicaraguans and Colombians also respond to the specific climate of intercultural relations that prevail in the country, which is (in general) reluctant to acknowledge cultural diversity, and (these days) particularly hostile toward Nicaraguans.

Finally, the role of the legal framework for immigration implemented by the Costa Rica government should be taken into account. Costa Rica has reformed its legal framework for immigration a number of times. In 1986 a strict Migration and Aliens Law was introduced, followed in 1992, 1994, and 1999 (in response to Hurricane Mitch) by amnesties to regularize undocumented migrants. In 2005 a new, even more strict legal framework was introduced. One of the most controversial features of this law was the strength of measures to control undocumented immigration (including rejections and deportations) and the establishment of criminal penalties for unauthorized immigrants (Sandoval-García, 2015; Voorend, 2014). Although in 2009 the executive branch reformed some of the more controversial measures of the law, the general legal framework regulating migration in Costa Rica has been heavily criticized because of the lack of specific measures to facilitate regularization, guarantee the access to public services, and promote safe and secure working environments for all immigrant workers, especially those in vulnerable employment (Sandoval-García, 2015; Voorend, 2014).

Thus, we believe that restrictive migration policies influence and legitimize the way in which host society members expect (or demand) immigrants to adapt to our country, which, together with the historical negativity toward Nicaraguans, explains the pattern of acculturation expectations in our studies and the negative bias against Nicaraguans.

In sum, our data highlight the fact that attitudes toward immigrants and immigrants are culturally shared theories about how people from different ethnocultural backgrounds and citizenships should live together

in a particular country. Thus, to understand acculturation, we must understand the interactional context in which it occurs, which includes the characteristics of the host societies (i.e., the policies and legal frameworks adopted by the national states to regulate immigration and social integration) as well as the characteristics of the migrants themselves (i.e., legal status, causes of immigration, social prestige; see Bornstein, 2017, for a similar argument).

Our studies have some limitations that highlight the need to take a closer look at what cultural preservation, assimilation, and separation means for majority members.

First, we need to acknowledge the highly normative quality of the cultural preservation option itself and its consequences for response tendencies that might partially account for the high scores in this option among host community members. This is especially relevant in collectivistic societies as Costa Rica, in which harmony is highly regarded (Oyserman et al., 2002). Future research on acculturation in our Latin American countries will benefit from methodological and psychometric research programs addressing (among other important measurement problems) social desirability issues in our measures.

Second, there is a consensus among acculturation scholars in thinking that if majority members endorse culture maintenance for immigrants, it implies an acceptance of immigrants and their cultural particularities, reflecting more positive intergroup attitudes. However, as Brown and Zagefka (2011) pointed out, in some contexts the majority's desire for a minority to preserve its culture can get distorted into forms of cultural or physical ghettoization, which is the opposite of positive intergroup relations. In our case, we should notice that cultural preservation correlated positively with separation in some samples, suggesting that this might be the case in this particular situation, which leaves us with the challenge of carrying out more studies for a more precise interpretation of the psychological meaning of cultural preservation in our contexts (see Schwartz et al., 2010, for a similar discussion).

Third, our results show that separation and assimilation share common variance and share common predictors. This pattern of relationships might be seen counterintuitive and has even been highly criticized by some scholars as evidence of construct validity problems in acculturation models (Rudmin, 2003). However, previous research has revealed that acculturation expectations can be located along a unidimensional continuum, with integration on one extreme and assimilation/segregation on the other (Zick et al., 2001). Some theorists suggest that host community members might view the desire of immigrants to maintain their original culture as



a threat to the mainstream culture and the unity of society as a whole (Schalk-Soekar & Van de Vijver, 2008). Following this line of thinking, we speculate that in the minds of some of our participants, such a threat could be alleviated only if the immigrants abandon their cultural specificities (so that they become more culturally similar to Costa Ricans) or both groups live apart (so that migrants do not “contaminate” Costa Rican culture). Our data cannot adequately respond to this apparent paradox but suggest interesting hypotheses for futures studies on the meaning of assimilation in our countries.

Finally, contrary to our expectations, intergroup contact presented only weak associations with acculturation expectations, which might be due to the impressive low levels of contact with immigrants reported by participants, but also might be a hint for the indirect effect of contact on expectations via intergroup variables as previous research has shown (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). This raises the need for the promotion of an exciting line of research on the role of intergroup contact in predicting acculturation expectations in a context of intraregional migration, in which despite the proximity of the groups, the actual optimal contact does not take place. This also points to the need of measuring intergroup contact more comprehensively. We measured only the frequency of contact, which is only one of the different aspects of intergroup contact that might affect intergroup attitudes. In fact, reports of frequency of contact do not provide information of the essential conditions for contact to produce positive outcomes, and therefore reports of frequent contact can be found to be related with negative intergroup attitudes, as in the case of one of our samples.

Despite these limitations, our data illustrate the complex interplay between intergroup variables and acculturation expectations in a less studied social context. We hope that this effort helps to strengthen this line of research in our countries and helps to increase our understanding of the psychological consequences of migration, not only in our region but also around the world.

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## APPENDIX

### **The Costa Rican Acculturation Expectations Scale**

In this section we want you to think about immigrants from Nicaragua.\* Please give us your opinion on how they should live with us. We give you several sentences describing different forms of getting along together. Tell us if you disagree or agree with each sentence using the scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means *totally disagree* and 7 means *totally agree*.

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**"Many problems between Costa Ricans and Nicaraguan immigrants\* could be solved if . . ."**

1. They adopt Costa Ricans' traditions and customs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Each group keeps its own traditions and customs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. They live a little apart from us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. We do not try to mix a lot in order to keep our cultural features.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. They adopt Costa Ricans' values.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Each group has the opportunity to maintain its own values.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. They adopt the Costa Rican way of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Each group lives separately to maintain each culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Each group holds its own lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Each group maintains its specific cultural features.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. They adapt to Costa Ricans' lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Each group retains and expresses its own way of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. There is "some distance" between the groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. They adopt the Costa Rican mentality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Each group preserves its mentality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. They embrace the Costa Rican culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. They live far away from us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. We live "together but not scrambled" to keep our ways of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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\*The immigrant group might vary according to the goals of the study.

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