Benefits over Threats Associated with Host Country Nationals’ Acculturation Preferences: Examining a Stereotype Content and Threat Benefit Model

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Keywords: acculturation; attitudes; stereotypes; threats; benefits; Hispanics
Introduction

The ways in which immigrants acculturate and adjust to their new cultural environments is an important topic in cross-cultural psychology. During acculturation, immigrants can adopt and retain the identities (among other aspects) of both their mainstream national and heritage cultures as a way of adjusting to and thriving within their multiple cultural settings. However, research has suggested that the way immigrants acculturate can be a function of host-country nationals’ (HCNs’) acculturation preferences. HCNs’ acculturation preferences refer to attitudes regarding the ways in which HCNs (i.e., those born and raised in the U.S. of any race and whose parents and grandparents were also born and raised in the U.S.) prefer immigrants to acculturate across different settings, such as at home or in public at work. Indeed, intergroup relations models suggest that immigrant acculturation may be dependent on HCNs’ acculturation preferences and expectations (Bourhis et al., 1997; Florack et al., 2003; Navas et al., 2005; Zagefka et al., 2011, 2022), with research pointing to several factors (e.g., individual-and-cultural-level differences) affecting such attitudes (e.g., Leong, 2008; Leong & Ward, 2006; Piontkowski et al., 2000; Zhao & Biernat, 2022).

More recent research in intergroup relations has relied on the Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske, 2018; Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske et al., 1999) and Integrated Threat Theory (ITT; Stephan & Renfro, 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 2000) as theoretical points of departure to frame and understand the effects of HCNs’ perceived stereotypes and threats from immigrants vis-à-vis HCNs’ acculturation preferences (e.g., Kil et al., 2019; Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007; López-Rodríguez & Zagefka, 2015, López-Rodríguez, Zagefka, et al., 2014). The SCM posits that different cultural and social groups, such as immigrants, may invoke ambivalent (mixed) stereotypes based on the group’s perceived social structure, leading to prejudices, discriminatory
tendencies, and overall negative attitudes (Fiske, 2015). ITT similarly posits that different
cultural and social groups may invoke a sense of “threat,” shaping intergroup attitudes based on
such perceptions. Extensive empirical work supports the validity and reliability of the SCM
(Fiske, 2018) and the ITT (Riek et al., 2006), suggesting their utility in helping to identify
predictors of HCNs’ acculturation preferences.

Despite the promise of the SCM and ITT in understanding HCNs’ acculturation
preferences, some questions remain. First, although a few studies have previously attempted to
integrate the SCM and ITT (e.g., Zhang, 2015; Kervyn et al., 2015), their integration in
predicting HCNs’ acculturation preferences in particular has, surprisingly, not received much
attention (for exceptions, see López-Rodríguez, Zagefka et al., 2014). Both the SCM and ITT are
useful and complementary in predicting intergroup attitudes. For example, the cognitive and
affective elements embedded in a group’s perceived social structure and consequent stereotypes
within the SCM may trigger perceptions of threats as per the ITT, influencing intergroup
attitudes such as acculturation preferences. In all, these models point to the influence of a
group’s perceived social structure, stereotypes, and threats in shaping intergroup attitudes.

Second, whereas ITT focuses on perceived threats as a consequence of stereotypes, more
recent research suggests the importance of considering perceived benefits in understanding
intergroup attitudes. For example, the Threat-Benefit Model (Tartakovsky & Walsh, 2016), an
extension of ITT, argues that stereotypes evoke not only perceptions of threat but also of
benefits. In other words, the Threat-Benefit Model considers both threats and benefits in
determining intergroup attitudes. Without considering the presence of both perceptions of threats
and benefits, our understanding of HCNs’ acculturation preferences may be incomplete.
And third, HCNs’ acculturation preferences towards Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. are understudied. HCNs’ acculturation preferences toward Hispanic immigrants are essential to study given that Hispanics represent the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority group in the U.S. (Batalova et al., 2020) and that Hispanics often face prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Avery et al., 2018; Lee & Ahn, 2012; Markert, 2010). For example, their rapid population growth and the associated spread of the Spanish language in the U.S. has been regarded as somewhat of a threat by many U.S. residents (Chavez, 2013; Hartman et al., 2014). Indeed, many U.S. citizens conflate Hispanic immigration with undocumented immigration (McCabe et al., 2021). As a result, Hispanics represent a particularly “threatening” immigrant group in the U.S. and provide a key opportunity to test hypotheses concerning HCNs’ perceived threats and benefits vis-à-vis immigration.

To address these aforementioned gaps, the purpose of the present study was to examine how HCNs’ perceived social structure, stereotypes, threats, and benefits towards Hispanic immigrants may be associated with HCNs’ acculturation preferences towards them. More precisely, we integrate SCM (Fiske, 2018; Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske et al., 1999) and the Threat-Benefit Model (Tartakovsky & Walsh, 2016), as an extension of ITT, to investigate how perceived social structure and resulting stereotypes may be associated with HCNs’ perceptions of both threats and benefits vis-à-vis Hispanic immigration, as well as how such perceptions may be ultimately associated with HCNs’ acculturation preferences regarding how, and to what extent, Hispanic immigrants should adopt a mainstream U.S. identity and retain their heritage identity (see Figure 1). We therefore contribute to the acculturation and intergroup relations literature in better understanding HCNs’ attitudes as demonstrated by their acculturation preferences.

Antecedents of HCNs’ Acculturation Preferences
HCNs’ attitudes towards immigrants, including acculturation preferences, may be triggered by a variety of factors (e.g., Leong, 2008; Leong & Ward, 2006; Piontkowski et al., 2000; Zhao & Biernat, 2022). Among the most examined factors is prejudice towards immigrants as a consequence of their perceived social structure, stereotypes, and perceived threats as specified within SCM and ITT (e.g., Florack et al., 2003; Leong & Ward, 2006; López-Rodríguez, Zagefka et al., 2014; Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007; Rohmann et al., 2008; Zagefka et al., 2012, 2014). Research suggests that HCN’s perceptions of, and resulting attitudes towards, immigrants are based on a given specific immigrant group and its perceived characteristics (Bourhis et al., 1997; López-Rodríguez, Navas et al., 2014; Piontkowski et al., 2000; Rohmann et al., 2008; Zhao & Biernat, 2022). In the present study, we focus on theoretically based predictors of U.S. HCNs’ acculturation preferences towards Hispanic immigrants.

Hispanic immigrants are the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority group in the U.S. (Batalova et al., 2020). Hispanic immigrants make up about 18% of the U.S. population and 9% of the U.S. labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Hispanic immigrants have traditionally experienced considerable discrimination in U.S. society (Avery et al., 2018; Lee & Ahn, 2012; Markert, 2010), due in part to their lower status and negative stereotypes and threats associated with popular discourse, such as criminality, illegality, poverty, lack of education, and the fear that the Spanish language will supplant English as the dominant language (e.g., Chavez, 2013; Hartman et al., 2014; Stephan et al., 1999; Wei et al., 2019). Given this social context, it seems important to examine HCNs’ acculturation preferences towards Hispanic immigrants through the SCM and Threat-Benefit Models. We next discuss these models and their integration along with the hypotheses tested here.

The Stereotype Content Model
According to the SCM (Fiske, 2018; Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske et al., 1999), different cultural and social groups may invoke different stereotypes. Within the SCM, stereotypes can be classified in terms of warmth (i.e., whether a group is perceived as friendly, trustworthy, sincere, or good-natured) and competence (i.e., whether a group is perceived as competent, skillful, or capable). Stereotypes may be ambivalent, meaning that individuals may hold different or mixed levels of warmth and competence about a social group (e.g., high warmth but low competence).

In the U.S., Hispanics and Hispanic immigrants are typically described in terms of low warmth and low competence (Fiske, 2018). Such stereotypes have historically characterized Hispanic immigrants as “devalued” immigrants (Wilson, 1996).

A group’s stereotypes regarding warmth and competence are theorized to result from their perceived social structure, which describes people’s perceived characterizations of outgroups such as their perceived competition (i.e., cooperative vs. competitive), and relative status (i.e., high vs. low status) of different groups, based on a given group’s characteristics (e.g., race, socioeconomic status) (Fiske, 2018; Fiske et al., 2002; Glick & Fiske, 2001; Lee & Fiske, 2006). More precisely, perceived competition is negatively associated with perceived warmth because people tend to attribute warmth to those not in direct competition with the ingroup. On the other hand, perceived status is positively associated with perceived competence because competence signals economic success and prestige, leading to an increased status. For example, the relatively low levels of perceived warmth and competence associated with Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. is said to be influenced by their perceived high competitiveness and lower status, respectively (Lee & Fiske, 2006). The relationships (a) of perceived competition with warmth and (b) of perceived status with competence have been well-documented (Fiske, 2018).

In sum, different immigrant groups may invoke different social structures such as perceived
competition and status, which may in turn trigger stereotypes in terms of warmth and competence, respectively (Binggeli et al., 2014). Thus, we hypothesize:

H1a: Perceived competition is negatively associated with perceived warmth.

H1b: Perceived status is positively associated with perceived competence.

The Stereotype Content Model and the Threat-Benefit Models

The Threat-Benefit Model (Tartakovsky & Walsh, 2016) is an extension of the ITT (Stephan & Renfro, 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). It posits that stereotypes, such as those depicted in the SCM, evoke not only perceptions of threat (Florack et al., 2003; Leong, 2008; Riek et al., 2006; Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Stephan et al., 2005; Stephan et al., 1999; Ward & Masgoret, 2006), but also perceptions of “benefits.” Perceived threats occur when people perceive an outgroup’s actions or characteristics as challenging the ingroup’s goals and societal status (Riek et al., 2006). The two main types of threats discussed in ITT (Stephan & Renfro, 2002) are realistic and symbolic threats. Realistic threats are related to political and economic power relations and to the economic and physical welfare of the ingroup (e.g., job competition, utilization of government services and taxes). Symbolic threats are related to the worldview of the ingroup, such as differences in values, beliefs, and ways of living. In general, the greater the realistic and symbolic threats that HCNs perceive from immigrants, the more likely HCNs are to hold negative attitudes towards immigrants. Realistic and symbolic threats are highly intertwined and thus are often combined into a single “perceived threat” concept (e.g., Tip et al., 2012; López-Rodríguez et al., 2014; Verkuyten, 2009). For these reasons and for parsimony purposes, we adopt such an approach in the current study.

Previous research has suggested an association between stereotypes held about immigrants and the threat they are perceived to pose (e.g., Lopez-Rodriguez, Zagefka et al.,
When HCNs associate immigrants with positive stereotypes, as depicted by high levels of warmth and competence, HCNs may perceive immigrants less likely to drain the sources of the country (i.e., realistic threats) or serve as a threat to its cultural values and norms (i.e., symbolic threat). Thus, it is reasonable to speculate that as perceptions of warmth and competence increase, perceptions of threat decrease (e.g., Lopez-Rodriguez, Zagefka et al., 2014). Research on Hispanic immigrants support this notion; their negative stereotypes as depicted by their low levels of warmth and competence (Fiske, 2018) have historically increased HCNs’ perceptions of threat to the mainstream American culture, resulting in prejudice and discrimination towards Hispanic immigrants (Berk & Schur, 2001; Stephan et al., 1999; Wilson, 1996).¹ Thus:

H2a: Perceived warmth is negatively associated with perceived threat.
H2b: Perceived competence is negatively associated with perceived threat.

Besides perceptions of threats, the Threat-Benefit Model also suggests that stereotypes may evoke perceptions of “benefits” associated with social groups such as immigrants. Realistic and symbolic benefits are examples of such benefits (Tartakovsky & Walsh, 2016). Realistic benefits refer to the economic (e.g., low labor costs and high motivation to work) and physical (e.g., interesting, good natured, clean, and attractive) benefits associated with immigrants. Similarly, symbolic benefits refer to the beneficial cultural diversity (e.g., enrichment of society through cultural aspects such as food and music) associated with immigrants. Similar to perceived threats, we combine realistic and symbolic into “perceived benefits” in general.

¹ It should be noted that, although here we propose that stereotypes affect threat, it is also simultaneously plausible that threat might also affect stereotypes, as suggested for example by Froehlich and Schulte (2019) and Kervyn et al. (2015). Indeed, as Tartakovky and Walsh (2016) highlight, to date the place of negative stereotypes in theory is unclear, and one a priori goal here was to test a potential alternative sequence. Our approach is in line with research in ITT, where negative stereotypes are shown distinct from threats, and where threats may act as mediators between perceived negative stereotypes and interracial attitudes as empirically shown by Stephan et al. (2002) and others (e.g., Lopez-Rodriguez, Zagefka et al., 2014; Zhang, 2015).
We posit that the more immigrants are associated with more positive stereotypes as depicted by high levels of warmth and competence, the more they will be perceived as bringing benefits to society. For example, attributes associated with warmth (e.g., friendly, trustworthy, sincere, or good-natured) are intrinsically considered beneficial attributes. Similarly, attributes associated with competence, such as greater contributions to society in the form of innovations (e.g., inventions, technology) or economic development, may lead to higher perceptions of benefits. Therefore, we propose:

H3a: Perceived warmth is positively associated with perceived benefit.

H3b: Perceived competence is positively associated with perceived benefit.

The Threat-Benefit Model and HCNs’ Acculturation Preferences

Threats and benefits can also be associated with HCNs’ acculturation preferences regarding the extent to which HCNs prefer that Hispanic immigrants adopt a mainstream national U.S. identity and/or retain their heritage identity. Related to threats, for example, Lopez-Rodriguez, Zagefka et al. (2014) found that perceived threat was positively associated with HCNs’ preference for immigrants to adopt aspects of the general mainstream national culture and negatively associated with HCNs’ preference for immigrants to retain aspects of their heritage culture. In addition, HCNs’ perceived threat served as a mediator between HCN’s perceived stereotypes of immigrants and HCNs’ acculturation preferences. Theoretically, when people experience perceived threat due to negative stereotypes they hold about an outgroup (e.g., immigrants), they are motivated to reduce the source of threat. In the case of immigrants, this may translate into HCNs preferring that immigrants reduce their heritage-cultural identity retention and encouraging the adoption of the mainstream national identity instead (Lopez-Rodriguez, Zagefka et al., 2014). Adopting the mainstream national identity may signal to HCNs
that immigrants are willing to identify with HCNs and with their nation, which may reduce HCNs’ threat perceptions (Roblain et al., 2016). Therefore, perceptions of threats from immigrants may result in HCNs’ preference that immigrants adopt the mainstream national U.S. identity and/or discard their heritage identity. Thus:

H4a: Perceived threat is positively associated with HCNs’ preference towards adoption of the mainstream U.S. identity.

H4b: Perceived threat is negatively associated with HCNs’ preference towards retention of the heritage identity.

Though research mostly focuses on threats in association with HCNs’ acculturation preferences, perceived benefits may also be meaningful in this context. For example, research on multiculturalism (i.e., a policy that emphasizes the benefits of cultural differences; Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Berry & Kalin, 1995) suggests that HCNs who see the value and benefit in cultural diversity tend to endorse ethnic minorities’ retention of their heritage identity and adoption of the mainstream national identity. Indeed, multiculturalism is frequently associated with integration (i.e., the simultaneous adoption of the mainstream national identity and retention of the heritage identity) and its facilitation (e.g., Berry, 2001; Breugelmans & Van de Vijver, 2004; but see Tip et al., 2012). In all, research on the perceived “benefits” of immigrants seems to indicate a positive effect of benefits on HCN support for both retention of the heritage identity and adoption of the mainstream national identity. Therefore, we propose the following:

H5a: Perceived benefit offered by immigrants is positively associated with HCNs’ preference towards adoption of the mainstream U.S. identity.

H5b: Perceived benefit is positively associated with HCNs’ preference towards retention of the heritage identity.
In sum, innovations facilitated by the present research include producing further insights into the integration of the SCM and ITT, to highlight the potentially vitally important effects of HCNs’ perceived benefits of immigration, in addition to the previously well-studied effects of threat.

Methods

Participants

Our sample consisted of HCNs (i.e., those born and raised in the U.S. of any race/ethnicity and whose parents and grandparents were also born and raised in the U.S.). Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (Mturk) was used to recruit participants, who then completed the electronic questionnaire containing our measures. A total of 881 HCNs completed the survey, but after removing any responses that did not pass the validity checks outlined below, a total of 647 HCNs participants remained. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the sample. Because acculturation preferences may vary based on context and we were interested specifically in settings where immigrants were notably present, we recruited participants from prominent immigrant receiving states, i.e., California, Texas, Florida, and New York. Most participants were non-Hispanic Whites, between 25-34 years old, were female, had some college education or graduated from college, had an overall total job tenure in the US of more than 15 years, and had been at their current job for 4 years or less.

Procedure

2 Given that our hypotheses are essentially about a collection of bivariate relationships in the form of linear multiple regression, we conducted a power analysis to test power in relation to bivariate correlations using GPower. We used a power value of .95 with an alpha level of .05 (Cohen, 1988) and an effect size of .15 as we believed this would be the smallest effect size of interest to researchers. This revealed that to detect a significant correlation one would need a sample size of 89, meaning that our convenience sample of 647 was clearly sufficient to achieve satisfactory power.
Several guidelines and best practices were followed to ensure validity and reliability of responses, including screening methods and attention checks throughout the survey, examining completion times and deleting participants who completed the survey too quickly, and providing fair monetary compensation (Cheung et al., 2017; Keith et al., 2017; Porter et al., 2019). Confidentiality was also assured, and the study was approved by the first author’s Institutional Review Board.

**Measures**

For the measures of perceived competition, status, and stereotypes, we asked participants to respond based not on their personal beliefs about Hispanic immigrants, but rather on how Hispanic immigrants are viewed by others in society. Such an approach is suggested by Fiske et al. (2002) and by work research on stereotypes (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske, 2018; Kil et al., 2019) to “reduce social desirability concerns and to tap perceived cultural stereotypes” (Fiske et al., 2002, pp. 884-885). This implies that “samples need not be representative, because everyone knows the society’s stereotypes of common groups” (Fiske, 2018, p. 69). The consistency of SCM theory using this method supports such approach (Fisk, 2018). The response scale for our main measures, excluding HCN’s acculturation preferences, ranged from 1 (“Not at all”) to 5 (“Extremely”).

**Perceived Competition and Status**

Three items from Fiske et al. (2002) and Lee and Fiske (2006) were used to measure competition and three items to measure status. Items were targeted towards Hispanic immigrants. An example of an item for perceived competition is “[based on the view of others in society…] If resources go to Hispanic immigrants, to what extent does that take resources away from the
rest of society?" (α = .90). An example of an item for perceived status is “How prestigious are the jobs typically held by Hispanic immigrants?” (α = .90).

**Perceived Warmth and Competence**

As previously mentioned, stereotypes were conceptualized in terms of both warmth and competence. We operationalized perceived warmth and competence with adjectives used by Fiske et al. (2002) and Lee and Fiske (2006). For example, adjectives associated with warmth included friendly, well-intentioned, trustworthy, warm, good-natured, and sincere (α = .95). Similarly, adjectives associated with competence included: competent, confident, capable, efficient, intelligent, and skillful (α = .92). Again, participants were asked to rate these adjectives based on the view of others in society.

**Perceived Threats**

Perceived threats were measured using three items representing realistic threats and three items representing symbolic threats designed by Kervyn et al. (2015) and derived from works in SCM and ITT (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Stephan & Renfro, 2002). A sample item for realistic threats includes “Hispanic immigrants dominate American society more than they should”, and a sample item for symbolic threats includes “Hispanic immigrants are undermining American culture.” (α = .91).

**Perceived Benefits**

Benefits were measured using three items for realistic benefits and four items for symbolic benefits provided by Tartakovsky and Walsh (2016), changing the words “immigrants” to “Hispanic immigrants” and “Israelis” to “U.S.” An example of realistic benefits included

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3 When measured individually, perceived symbolic and realistic threats were also highly correlated (r = .76) and possessed good reliabilities (symbolic threat, α = .83; realistic threat, α = .90). The same was the case when individually measuring symbolic and realistic benefits (r = .56; symbolic benefits, α = .91; realistic benefits, α = .85).
“Hispanic immigrants do important jobs that U.S. natives either cannot or do not want to do”, and an example of symbolic benefits included “Hispanic immigrants who are sports players, scientists, and artists bring national pride to the U.S.” (α = .89).

**HCNs’ Acculturation Preferences**

As previously mentioned, HCNs’ acculturation preferences describe the way HCNs prefer immigrants to acculturate across cultural settings, in this case in terms of adopting the mainstream U.S. identity and retaining the heritage identity. The two dimensions of acculturation (i.e., adopting the mainstream U.S. identity and retaining the heritage identity) were measured independently, ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”). We decided to assess these two dimensions in work and nonwork settings to check for any differences in acculturation preferences. That is, questions were related to work settings (i.e., in the workplace, to what extent would you generally like Hispanic immigrants to…), followed by nonwork settings (i.e., with family and friends, to what extent would you generally like Hispanic immigrants to…). Although acculturation may also include other domains such as behaviors and values, we specifically chose identities because of their affective and cognitive components, which are central to both SCM (Fiske, 2018; Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske et al., 1999) and ITT (Stephan & Renfro, 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Preferences toward heritage identity retention were measured using the three ethnic affirmation identity items from the revised Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney & Ong, 2007). For example, participants were asked to respond to the extent they would generally like Hispanic immigrants to “feel a strong attachment towards their own ethnic group” (α = .92 in work settings and .94 in private settings). Preferences towards U.S. identity adoption was assessed using three items from the American Identity Measure (Schwartz et al., 2012), which is parallel to the Multigroup Ethnic Identity
Measure but substitutes “the U.S.” instead of “my ethnic group.” For example, participants were asked to respond to the extent they would generally like Hispanic immigrants to “feel a strong attachment towards the U.S.” (α = .91 in work settings and .92 in private settings).

**Covariates**

Education and HCNs’ race/ethnicity were used as covariates. We include education as a covariate because education is considered one of the strongest predictors of attitudes towards immigrants (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010). Specifically, education is a correlate of racial prejudice (including against immigrants; e.g., Margaryan et al., 2019), where individuals with lower levels of education tend to espouse more prejudice and less tolerance (Case et al., 1989; Hello et al., 2002; Maykovich 1975; Quillian, 1995). Education was measured categorically, including those who had completed at least a high school education (0), those who had less than a high school degree (1), those who had some college but no two-year associate degree (2), those who had a college degree (3), and those who completed a postgraduate or advance degree (4).

We also include HCNs’ race/ethnicity as covariate because different subgroups of HCNs, such as racial minorities like Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians, may view Hispanic immigrants differently based on shared cultural similarities (e.g., cultural background) or societal experiences (e.g., discrimination). Because our sample included only a relatively small and uneven number of various racial/ethnic minorities (see Table 1), we decided to categorize race/ethnicity using a dichotomous variable comparing Whites (race = 0) vs. non-Hispanic Whites (race = 1).

**Results**

Table 2 provides means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among the study variables. We employed structural equation modeling in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). First, we constructed our measurement model by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis
(CFA). Second, we estimated a structural model using robust standard errors to test our main-path hypotheses (H1-H5).

Our measurement model consisted of our main latent factors for perceived status, competition, warmth, competence, threats, benefits, and HCNs’ acculturation preferences. Threats and benefits were parameterized as second-order factors based on their theoretical subcomponents (i.e., symbolic and realistic threats loading on threats, and symbolic and realistic benefit loading on benefits). We similarly loaded work and nonwork settings as second-order factors for both HCNs’ preferences towards adopting the U.S. identity (work and nonwork settings, \( r = .79 \)) and retention of the ethnic identity (work and nonwork settings, \( r = .78 \)) given their high correlation. All individual items were allowed to load on their respective latent factors, and latent factors were allowed to covary. Our measurement model provided good fit to the data \((\chi^2(824) = 2138.02, p < 0.001, \text{CFI} = .95, \text{TLI} = .94, \text{RMSEA} = .05, \text{SRMR} = .04)\).

Our structural model containing our latent factors provided an acceptable fit to the data \((\chi^2(900) = 2201.33, p < 0.001, \text{CFI} = .93, \text{TLI} = .92, \text{RMSEA} = .05, \text{SRMR} = .07)\), and is shown in Table 3 and depicted in Figure 2. Because it might be also possible that the social structure predicts threats and benefits as previously mentioned (e.g., Kervyn et al., 2015), we also estimated an alternative model where social structure predicted threats and benefits, which then

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4 As suggested by some authors (e.g., Spector, 2019; Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2018), we use casual language when outlining our hypothesized theoretical model in our introduction and theoretical development sections but refrain from casual language in the results and discussion sections given our data and methods design.

5 We also assessed a second measurement model that included all our study variables without separating those with their theoretical subcomponents (i.e., competition, status, warmth, competence, real threat, symbolic threat, real benefit, symbolic benefit, U.S. identity adoption in work and nonwork setting, ethnic identity retention in work and nonwork settings). Although this model also showed good fit \((\chi^2(794) = 2046.61, \text{CFI} = .95, \text{TLI} = .94, \text{RMSEA} = .05, \text{SRMR} = .04)\), we opted for the model with second-order factors (i.e., threats, benefits, adoption of U.S. identity and retention of ethnic identity) and the single-loading factors of competition, status, warmth, and competence as it represents a more theoretically parsimonious model.
predicted stereotypes and ultimately acculturation preferences. However, this alternative model did not fit our data.

Standardized coefficients indicated that perceived competition was negatively associated with perceived warmth ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < .001$) and that perceived status was positively associated with and competence ($\beta = 0.80$, $p < .001$), supporting hypotheses 1a and 1b, respectively. Interesting, results also show that perceived competition was negatively associated with perceived competence ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < .001$) and perceived status was positively associated with perceived warmth ($\beta = 0.75$, $p < .001$). Hypotheses 2a and 2b suggest perceived warmth and competence were negatively associated with perceived threat, respectively. Results did not support such associations for 2a ($\beta = -0.04$, $p = .64$) or 2b ($\beta = -0.21$; $p = .06$). Similarly, Hypotheses 3a and 3b suggest perceived warmth and competence would be positively associated with perceived benefits, respectively. Results again did not support 3a ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = .16$), but marginally supported 3b ($\beta = 0.27$, $p = .05$). Hypotheses 4a and 4b suggest that perceived threat should be positively associated with HCNs’ preference towards adoption of the mainstream national culture and negatively associated with HCNs’ preference towards retention of the heritage culture, respectively. Results did not indicate a significant association between perceived threat and preference for adoption of the mainstream national culture ($\beta = .10$, $p = .28$) nor preference for retention of the heritage culture ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = .17$), thereby not supporting hypotheses 4a and 4b. On the other hand, perceived benefit was positively associated with both HCNs’ preference for mainstream national culture adoption ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < .001$) and heritage culture retention ($\beta = 0.46$; $p < .001$), supporting hypotheses 5a and 5b, respectively.

We conceptualized the effects we were interested in as a series of independent bivariate effects. We did not have any a priori hypotheses about serial mediation. This is why we did not
present any hypotheses about mediation in our theorizing. However, one might of course wonder whether a series of bivariate effects, if ordered sequentially, might imply mediation. Because of this possibility, we tested the potential significance of indirect effects in a post hoc manner. We bootstrapped indirect effects to 1000 samples with bias-corrected confidence intervals. Indirect effects are statistically significant when the confidence interval does not include 0. As can be seen in Table 4, the results showed that none of the indirect effects in these post hoc analyses were significant.

**Discussion**

Overall, some support was found for the hypothesized effects. As predicted, HCNs’ perceived social structure of Hispanic immigrants in terms of perceived competition and status were associated with stereotypes about these immigrants. More precisely, perceived competition was negatively associated with perceptions of warmth, whereas perceived status was positively associated with perceptions of competence. Such findings align with research on SCM (Fiske, 2018). Additionally, and similar to other correlational studies (e.g., Kil et al., 2019), perceived competition was also negatively associated with perceived competence and perceived status was positively associated with warmth. In all, immigrants are stereotypically perceived more positively in terms of warmth and competence when they are perceived as less competitive and of higher status.

Contrary to our hypotheses, stereotypes in terms of warmth and competence, in turn, were not related to either perceived threats posed by Hispanic immigrants and to perceived benefits offered by these immigrants. Although perceived competence was positively related to perceived benefits, this association was not statistically significant. Instead, perceived competition emerged as a stronger predictor of both perceived threat and benefits, with perceived
competition positively related to perceived threats and negatively related to perceived benefits. That is, the more competitive immigrants are perceived as being, the greater threat they pose and the fewer benefits they are perceived as bringing, regardless of their perceived status and the stereotypes that HCN’s hold about them. This is an important finding, as it suggests that the key factor that may determine immigrants’ associated benefits or threats is not whether immigrants are perceived as warm, competent, or of high status (i.e., professionals or high-skilled immigrants), but rather hinges on whether they are perceived as competition for HCNs. As long as perceptions of competition exist in terms of resources and power, immigrants may be perceived as more threatening and less beneficial.

Perhaps the most interesting paths, however, emerged on the right-hand side of our hypothesized model: here, a clear pattern emerged where the hitherto not well-studied perceived benefits exhibited significantly stronger effects compared to previously well-studied perceived threats. Perceived benefits associated with immigrants were positively related to more support both for mainstream U.S. identity adoption and for heritage identity retention. In other words, a perception that immigrants bring benefits was positively associated with an overall preference for the integration acculturation strategy. Additionally, perceived competition and status were also secondary predictors of HCNs’ acculturation preferences: perceived competition was positively associated with, and perceived status was negatively associated with, preference for both mainstream U.S. identity adoption and heritage identity retention. These results suggest that, although greater perceptions of benefits emerged as the strongest predictors of integration in terms of mainstream U.S. identity adoption and heritage identity retention, perceptions of competitiveness and lower status might also play a role in such attitudes. It is possible that HCNs may prefer that immigrants perceived as beneficial adopt an integration strategy (as opposed to
remaining marginalized) as a way of enhancing the status of the national ingroup, while at the same time also preferring that those perceived as competitive to integrate as a way of reducing ingroup threat as competition is positively associated with threat. Maybe the most puzzling result is HCNs’ preference for integration among immigrants perceived to be of lower status and for marginalization among those of higher status. It may be that higher-status immigrants, such as those with advanced degrees, may be viewed as competition rather than as an asset to the country. Indeed, Guerra et al. (2015) found that immigrants who were culturally similar to the HCN group were viewed as worthy of inclusion in the national ingroup – but only among HCN’s who viewed the nation in terms of shared identity rather than in terms of shared ethnicity and culture (e.g., casting the U.S. as an Anglo-Protestant nation and seeking to exclude people who do not fit into that profile; Buchanan, 2011). Because we did not assess HCNs’ view of the nation in terms of shared identity versus shared ethnicity, we do not know the extent to which such an explanation is applicable to our sample and results. Overall, our results suggest the importance of perceived competition, status, and benefits in predicting HCNs’ acculturation preferences in terms of immigrants adopting the mainstream U.S. identity and retaining the heritage identity.

Our results are important and theoretically innovative in several ways. First, they help shed further light on how models of stereotype content (particularly related to perceived competition and status) and intergroup threat and benefit (particularly related to perceived benefits) may be integrated with each other to depict a more complete picture of how HCNs react to immigrants’ acculturation. Although previous studies have examined the association among stereotypes, threats, and HCNs’ acculturation preferences and attitudes, not many have studied them together despite their theoretical overlap.
Second, our findings also help to test and compare some relationships previously found in different contexts. For example, the relationships previously found by López-Rodríguez, Zagefka, et al. (2014) in Spain, by López-Rodríguez and Zagefka (2015) in Britain, and by Kil et al. (2019) in Canada were not fully replicated in a very different cultural setting, that of reactions to Hispanic immigrants to the U.S. More precisely, these prior studies suggest different associations between stereotypes and threats with HCNs’ acculturation preferences than what we found. This inconsistency might speak to a lack of the cross-cultural generalizability of psychological reactions to immigrants, or the need for more theoretical and methodological robust studies along with greater specificity. For example, we examined HCNs’ acculturation preferences in terms of adoption and retention of the mainstream and heritage “identity,” which is related yet different to other cultural concepts such as behaviors (e.g., social contacts or affiliations) or cultural values (e.g., individualism-collectivism) (Schwartz et al., 2010). Similarly, HCNs from specific ethnic groups may hold different acculturation preferences, but our sample for each ethic group was not large enough to allow such comparisons. Results might have been different if phrasing acculturation preferences in such other ways with specific HCNs ethnic groups and characteristics (e.g., level of education), specific characteristics of Hispanic immigrants (e.g., documented vs. undocumented), or utilizing other methodological techniques (e.g., longitudinal analysis). Future research might examine these relationships further.

With that said, perhaps the third and most exciting way in which the present findings add to the existing literature is that they support the idea that perceived benefits that immigrants bring are of pivotal importance vis-à-vis predicting HCNs’ acculturation preferences. These results support arguments advanced by Tartakovsky and Walsh (2016), and they also suggest a potential need to refocus the research attention away from perceived threats and towards
perceived benefits of minority groups. Such an emphasis on benefits has begun to gain traction in other fields. For example, in management research, Li and Kung (2021) recently argued for the need to include both perceptions of threats and benefits (or contributions) associated with immigrants to understand attitudes and behavioral outcomes towards them more accurately both within and outside business organizations. These results may also have implications for HCNs, as such attitudes (toward immigrant integration in this case) may increase their positive emotional and behavioral intentions towards Hispanic immigrants, further strengthening intercultural relations between the two groups (e.g., Abu-Rayya & Brown, 2021). We hope that our research and current trends examining the effects of both threats and benefits on attitudinal outcomes towards immigrants keep stimulating future research in other disciplines as well.

**Limitations**

Some limitations to this work should be acknowledged. First, our results should not be generalizable outside our examined sample of U.S. HCNs regarding their perceptions about Hispanic immigrant groups. It is well-regarded that attitudes and perceptions about stereotypes and threats may differ based on the immigrant group in question and the context (country) in which they reside. Second, the cross-sectional design that we used does not allow us to draw conclusions about directionality or causality vis-à-vis the observed effects. This limitation is particularly important because, and as previously mentioned, the order of stereotypes, threats, and benefits may be debatable, but our comparison of alternative models suggested greater support for our hypothesized model. Third, this paper aims to combine theoretical ideas provided by both the SCM and the ITT, and in this context, it is important to acknowledge the distinction between personal and cultural stereotypes. SCM typically focuses, as we do here, on cultural stereotypes (i.e., how people themselves perceive things), whereas ITT inspired research
typically focusses, as we do in our measurement approach here, on personal stereotypes and perceptions (i.e., how people themselves perceive things). Although one’s stereotypes and perceptions of culturally shared stereotypes will often be highly correlated, they are not identical, and the framing/measurement approach has been demonstrated to affect responses (e.g., Findor et al., 2020; Jussim et al., 2015; Kotzur et al., 2020). Particularly, cultural stereotypes tend to evoke more negative stereotypes than personal stereotypes. It is therefore possible that a different pattern of results might have been found if we had focused all our measures on individual level stereotypes, or all our measures of perceptions of cultural stereotypes. Whether this might be the case could be a matter for further study, but for now we would like to acknowledge this issue as a limitation.

Fourth, the present hypotheses were not preregistered, so the results should be treated as exploratory. However, we hope that the findings presented here can inspire future research, and should this future research replicate the pattern including pre-registration and evidence from different contexts, then the importance of perceived benefits of immigrant groups can be concluded with greater certainty. One of the most important avenues for future work that may emerge from the present findings is therefore to attempt to replicate the effects of perceived benefits on acculturation preferences of majority members in a preregistered format.

Should such a replication succeed, the present findings would also carry potentially applied implications that would be important to consider in the context of interventions designed to improve HCNs’ attitudes towards immigrants. Messaging could focus particularly on highlighting the benefits that immigrants bring. This seems like a potentially fruitful endeavor because increasing perceived benefits may be more easily accomplished compared to reducing perceived threats. Perceived benefits, therefore, might turn out to be a valuable tool to tap into
when trying to turn receiving societies into more welcoming, and less hostile, environments for immigrants. We hope that our study inspires further work in this direction.
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Table 1. Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>HCNs n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>647</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td></td>
<td>179 (27.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td></td>
<td>149 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td></td>
<td>169 (26.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
<td>150 (23.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>640</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td>456 (71.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Asian American, or Oriental</td>
<td></td>
<td>36 (5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
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<td>61 (9.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
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<td>71 (11.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed; parents are from two different groups</td>
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<td>16 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>641</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td></td>
<td>62 (9.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td></td>
<td>277 (43.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td></td>
<td>170 (26.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td></td>
<td>83 (12.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td></td>
<td>43 (6.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>290 (45.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>351 (54.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
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<td>2 (.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>High school graduate or GED</td>
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<td>53 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td></td>
<td>188 (29.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td></td>
<td>304 (47.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate or advanced degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>100 (15.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total job tenure in the US</td>
<td>647</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 4 years</td>
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<td>82 (12.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 – 9 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>147 (22.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 – 14 years</td>
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<td>204 (31.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 15 years</td>
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<td>214 (33.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current job tenure in the US</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>0 – 4 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>336 (51.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 9 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>176 (27.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 14 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>95 (14.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 15 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>40 (6.2)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note. HCNs = Host-country nationals.
Table 2. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Education</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Competition</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>-.10**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Status</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Competence</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>.68**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Warmth</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Threats</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>-.08*</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Benefits</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>-.58**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Heritage identity at work</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. US identity at work</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Heritage identity at nonwork</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.78**</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. US identity at nonwork</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.79**</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. SD = standard deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha.
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Warmth (Education)</th>
<th>Competence (Race)</th>
<th>Threats (Competition Status)</th>
<th>Benefits (Warmth Competence Threats Benefits Adoption Retention)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.04(.03)</td>
<td>-.05(.03)</td>
<td>-.03(.04)</td>
<td>.01(.05) .00(.04) - .01(.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>-.06(.03)</td>
<td>-.05(.03)</td>
<td>.02(.04)</td>
<td>.13(.04)** - .12(.05)* .00(.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>-.18(.04)***</td>
<td>-.15(.04)***</td>
<td>.61(.04)***</td>
<td>-.41(.06)*** .16(.08)* .25(.07)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>.75(.03)***</td>
<td>.80(.03)***</td>
<td>.20(.11)</td>
<td>-.02(.13) -.40(.11)*** -.23(.10)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmth</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.04(.09)</td>
<td>.13(.10)</td>
<td>.24(.10)* -.09(.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.21(.11)</td>
<td>.26(.14)</td>
<td>.06(.12) .10(.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.10(.08)</td>
<td>-.08(.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.39(.09)*** .46(.09)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Standard errors are given in parenthesis.

***p < .001. **p < .01. *p < .05.
Table 4

*Standardized indirect effects and confidence intervals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paths</th>
<th>Indirect effect</th>
<th>95% CIs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>competition → warmth → threats → adoption</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>[-0.002, 0.007]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competition → warmth → threats → retention</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>[-0.007, 0.002]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competition → warmth → benefits → adoption</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>[-0.029, 0.003]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competition → warmth → benefits → retention</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>[-0.033, 0.003]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status → competence → threats → adoption</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>[-0.076, 0.011]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status → competence → threats → retention</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>[-0.004, 0.066]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status → competence → benefits → adoption</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>[-0.005, 0.199]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status → competence → benefits → retention</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>[-0.013, 0.222]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 647. Standardized indirect effects are reported with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs). All CIs are based on 1,000 empirical bootstrap samples. Indirect effects are significant when the CI does not include zero.*
**Figure 1.** Theoretical model including stereotypes, threats and benefits, and HCNs' acculturation attitudes.

![Diagram](image)

*Note:* It is important to note our predictions were about bivariate associations between variables, not about indirect effects. We present our hypothesized predictions in one comprehensive model in order to present predictions in a parsimonious way.
Figure 2. Results for the theoretical measurement model (standardized coefficients).

*Note*: Only significant path coefficients are shown. Non-significant path coefficients, paths involving control variables, (education, race/ethnicity), and covariations are omitted for parsimony and clarity purposes.

***p < .001. **p < .01. *p < .05.