



## ACCULTURATION STUDIES IN SPAIN IN THE LAST DECADE

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*En un mundo globalizado, numerosos grupos de personas entran en contacto permanentemente y experimentan cambios de carácter psicosocial. A estos cambios producidos durante el contacto entre grupos culturalmente diferentes hace referencia la llamada aculturación. En este trabajo se presenta una revisión sistemática de 18 artículos sobre las investigaciones que han tratado este fenómeno durante la última década (2005-2015) en España. Los resultados de esta revisión indican que las líneas temáticas más estudiadas en la literatura han sido los ámbitos aculturativos periféricos y nucleares, el papel del prejuicio en la adopción de un estilo aculturativo u otro, la influencia de las estrategias de aculturación adoptadas en la salud mental de las personas y otras variables que condicionan el proceso de aculturación. Como conclusión, existe un acuerdo generalizado sobre la importancia de trabajar variables como la empatía, el manejo de emociones o las habilidades sociales para fomentar la solidaridad y la sensibilidad intercultural desde edades tempranas.*

**Palabras claves:** Aculturación, Contexto español, Inmigración, Relaciones interculturales.

*In a globalized world, numerous groups of people come into permanent contact with each other and experience psychosocial changes. These changes, produced during contact between culturally different groups, are called acculturation. In the present study, a systematic review was carried out of 18 journal articles that have researched this phenomenon over the last decade (2005-2015) in Spain. The results show that the main topics studied are the areas of nuclear and peripheral acculturation, the role of prejudice in the adoption of one acculturation style or another, the influence of the acculturation strategies adopted on people's mental health and other variables that influence the process of acculturation. To sum up, there is general agreement on the importance of developing variables such as empathy, managing emotions or social skills in order to promote solidarity and intercultural sensitivity from an early age.*

**Key words:** Acculturation, Spanish context, Immigration, Intercultural relationships.

**T**he constant migration that is occurring on a global scale, followed by the subsequent process of adaptation of migrant groups into host societies, is causing significant challenges for social research. Furthermore, these population movements involve significant adjustments in the different areas of a person's life, such as the family, social, educational or work spheres (Bronfenbrenner, 1987).

This process of cultural and psychological change that arises from contact between culturally different groups is called acculturation (Berry, 2003). Entering into contact with someone from a different culture to one's own can have a big impact on a person's quality of life, as their coping strategies must undergo change in order to adapt to the new sociocultural reality around them.

Although the first model of the processes of acculturation was produced by Gordon (1964), who proposed a

*unidirectional acculturation model.* Later, Berry (1974, 1980, 1984) concluded that acculturation was a *two-dimensional* process in which both the culture of the migrant group and that of the indigenous culture intervened. Thus, it was Berry who established that the two dimensions (maintaining one's own cultural values and participation in the host society) were independent and could be combined. Berry (1990) also recognized that it is normally the host society (the dominant group) that imposes its characteristics on the immigrant group (the dominated group) to a greater or lesser extent. And so the *Acculturation Model* was born, which consists of three elements: the preferences or *attitudes of acculturation*, specific changes in behavior or *acculturation strategies*, and the level of difficulty experienced by individuals in coping with the situation in the new society or *acculturative stress*. Although, initially, Berry uses the terms acculturation attitudes and strategies indifferently, subsequently he differentiates between the two. Firstly, the attitudes of acculturation, as indicated by Sabatier and Berry (1996), refer to the importance that

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groups or individuals attach to maintaining their own cultural identity and the desire to relate or maintain contact with people in the host society; while the acculturation strategies include the acculturation attitudes and the behaviors that are ultimately carried out.

However, now this clarification has been made, the combination of acculturation options (keeping one's own identity or not, and becoming an integral part of the host society) results in the following strategies:

The option of integration is the result of maintaining one's own cultural identity and simultaneously becoming part of the host society. Assimilation is the preference of abandoning the cultural identity of origin and becoming part of the host society. Separation (segregation from the point of view of the native people) refers to the absence of a relationship with the host society and the maintaining of the identity and traditions of the society of origin. Finally, marginalization (exclusion from the point of view of the indigenous people) neglects the cultural and psychological contact both with the society of origin (loss of cultural identity) and the host society (restricted access to becoming part of the host society).

Therefore, immigrants who choose the option of acculturation that dominates in the host society (for example, those who choose the option of assimilation in an assimilationist society) experience lower levels of conflict than those who choose different options from those in the host society. This clarification leads to another element when analyzing the processes of acculturation: *the stress of acculturation* or *acculturative stress* (Berry, 1990). This element has to do with the appearance of stress processes involved in the process of acculturation, and is linked to a dysfunctional adaptation to the host society. Subsequently, Bourhis, Möise, Perreault and Senécal (1997) developed the *Interactive Acculturation Model*, which has as a novelty the addition of a new strategy of acculturation, *individualism*. This option is based on both the immigrants and the host society favouring individual characteristics over group membership.

In Germany, we must highlight the work of Piontkowski and her research team (Piontkowski & Florack, 1995; Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdrzálek, 2000; Piontkowski, Rohmann, & Florack, 2002). The novelty this theoretical framework contributes is the introduction of a series of psychosocial factors that function as predictors in the implementation of acculturation strategies by both groups (the immigrants and the host society): *in-group favoritism*, *permeability of group boundaries* and *cultural enrichment*.

In the Spanish context, the *Modelo Ampliado de Aculturación Relativa* [*Expanded Model of Relative Acculturation*] (Navas et al., 2004) was developed, which contributes a number of important developments in the study of acculturation. Probably the most significant innovation is related to the proposal of various areas of the sociocultural reality in which one option of acculturation is implemented or the other. These areas are: *technological or work, economic, political, family, social, religious, and ways of thinking (principles and values)*. Therefore, this model suggests that the acculturation option chosen by immigrants and indigenous people generates greater consensus among the peripheral spheres (political, labor, economic), and less consensus in the *nuclear* fields (social, family, religious, ways of thinking). Subsequently, Navas and Rojas (2010) introduced two new features to the *Expanded Model of Relative Acculturation* (MAAR): first, they added a field called the *social welfare system*, which includes health, education and social services. And, secondly, they defined the content of each field of acculturation more specifically.

This article addresses two fundamental questions. Firstly, after conducting an extensive search of the acculturation studies in Spain in the last ten years, no systematic reviews were found on this phenomenon. And, secondly, knowledge of the phenomenon of acculturation helps to develop an understanding of the migration phenomenon in Spain, which may lead to other professionals designing interventions that are based on scientific research and that are appropriately tested.

In this paper, therefore, the main objective is to conduct a systematic review of the acculturation studies from the last ten years in Spain. In order to achieve this objective, a number of specific objectives arise: to identify the variables studied in relation to the process of acculturation, to compare and summarize the main results obtained in relation to the attitudes of acculturation, to highlight the most common limitations in the study of acculturation attitudes, to suggest lines of research for future work on the subject, and to understand the practical implications that acculturation researchers postulate for psychosocial intervention.

## METHOD

Following Petticrew and Roberts (2006), a systematic review was conducted based on the following steps: a) identifying the relevant studies on the proposed subject; b) selecting, evaluating and including/excluding the pertinent studies; c) locating and saving the selected



items; d) grouping the information collected; and e) using the narrative method to synthesize the information. In line with the explanation of the aforementioned authors, the reason we chose this method, rather than a meta-analysis, was due to the broad heterogeneity of the articles studied.

In order to prepare for this review, we used the following data sources: *Web of Science*, *PsycINFO*, and *Dialnet*. The descriptor *Acculturation* was used to start the search for the items. The search yielded a total of 538 items among the three databases consulted. After narrowing the results to the period between 2005 and 2015, the number of items dropped to 308. The next step was to read the titles (and, in case of doubt, also the abstracts) of these items using the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

- ✓ Inclusion criteria: work produced in the Spanish context; empirical studies; publications between 2005 and 2015 (inclusive); studies in which the acculturation variable was evaluated in relation to other variables; articles from journals
- ✓ Exclusion criteria: theoretical works; publications prior to 2005; works carried out in other countries; doctoral theses; book chapters

The final number of items for subsequent review and synthesis was 18 (Table 1).

The articles were grouped according to their thematic and conceptual similarity, with four categories being established: acculturation options (peripheral versus nuclear areas), acculturation and prejudice, acculturation and mental health, acculturation and other psychosocial variables.

### ACCULTURATION OPTIONS: PERIPHERAL VERSUS NUCLEAR AREAS

Navas, García and Rojas (2006) conducted a study that replicated the original *Expanded Model of Relative Acculturation* (Navas et al., 2004). The first noteworthy result was that in all areas, the attitude of acculturation (the ideal plane) coincided with the strategy of acculturation (the real plane). In general, the strategy chosen by immigrants in the peripheral areas was assimilation, while in the core areas the strategy chosen was separation. In the economic and social areas, exclusively, the strategies chosen were assimilation and separation respectively.

In the same vein, Navas, Rojas, Pumares, Lozano, and Cuadrado (2010) conducted a study with similar results that supported the hypothesis of the same model. This study had the same objective as the previous study, although the samples were different.

The authors conclude that there are certain core areas that are difficult to change, even when one has lived for years within another culture. However, the peripheral areas are more volatile and are more exposed to the immigrants themselves establishing dichotomous options, and even conjunctions between aspects of the culture of origin and aspects of the host society. The lack of resources as well as barriers at the institutional level may also be influencing these results.

Thus, the authors explain that maintaining the culture of origin, without adopting any element of the host culture, has to do with the idea that human groups need to believe that their worldview is the most appropriate, which constitutes an attitude that is rather ethnocentric. However, in the case of the indigenous people, it is preferred that the migrants adopt elements of the host society (the locals avoiding adopting cultural elements of the migrant groups) as the cultural values of the host society are considered better, not only economically, but also in other areas. This idea is enhanced if one adds the fact that minority groups tend to assume the superiority of certain peripheral elements of the host society (political system, economic organization, social welfare) to the detriment of these elements from their own society.

### ACCULTURATION AND PREJUDICE

In the Spanish context, a number of studies have been conducted on the relationship between prejudice and attitudes of acculturation. Navas, García, Rojas, Pumares, and Cuadrado (2006) carried out a study in which the results indicated that high levels of prejudice (both manifest and subtle) were related to the preference for the attitude of exclusion, while low levels of prejudice were linked to the attitude of integration. Moreover, this study shows that there is a greater relationship between prejudice and attitudes of acculturation among indigenous people than among immigrants. Among other reasons, the explanation is due to a clear limitation in the instrument for measuring prejudice among immigrants: the instruments were designed for the majority group (the host society), so it is not possible to extract the contents of the attitudes of the minority group towards the majority group.

Retortillo and Rodríguez (2008a), as demonstrated in the study by Navas et al. (2006), found that low levels of prejudice were linked to choosing the option of integration.

In 2011, Navas, Rojas, and García found that a better match between what the locals prefer as an attitude of acculturation (the ideal plane) and the strategies that the



immigrants ultimately set in motion (the real plane) is related to lower levels of prejudice. The authors conclude

that this may be because immigrants are expected to act as society dictates, so the perception of difference

**TABLE 1**  
**ARTICLES SELECTED FOR REVIEW**

Author(s)	Variables	Methodology	Samples
Navas, García, & Rojas (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation attitudes and strategies</li> <li>✓ Nuclear and peripheral areas</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 813 migrant persons (the majority from Maghreb countries)
Navas, Rojas, Pumares, Lozano, & Cuadrado (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation attitudes and strategies</li> <li>✓ Nuclear and peripheral areas</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 992 native persons</li> <li>✓ 975 migrant persons (Ecuadorians and Romanians)</li> </ul>
Navas, García, Rojas, Pumares, & Cuadrado (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Subtle and blatant prejudice</li> <li>✓ Acculturation attitudes</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 783 native persons</li> <li>✓ 740 migrant persons (from Maghreb and Sub-Saharan countries)</li> </ul>
Retortillo & Rodríguez (2008a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Subtle and blatant prejudice</li> <li>✓ Acculturation attitudes</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 180 native persons
Rojas, Navas, Sayans-Jiménez, & Cuadrado (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Prejudice</li> <li>✓ Acculturation attitudes</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 499 native persons</li> <li>✓ 500 migrant persons (Romanians)</li> </ul>
Sánchez & López (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation style</li> <li>✓ Anxiety levels</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 43 migrant persons (from Maghreb and Latin American countries)
Mestre, Guil, López, & Picardo (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation strategies</li> <li>✓ Emotional intelligence</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 218 native persons
Retortillo & Rodríguez (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation options</li> <li>✓ Psychological adaptation</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 165 migrant persons (from countries in the Maghreb region, Latin America, and Eastern Europe)
Ramos, García, & García (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation options</li> <li>✓ Emotional depletion</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 204 native persons</li> <li>✓ 182 migrant persons (the majority from Latin America)</li> </ul>
Sobral, Gómez-Fraguela, Luengo, Romero, & Villar (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation strategy</li> <li>✓ Antisocial behavior</li> <li>✓ Alcohol consumption</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 750 migrant persons (Ecuadorians and Colombians)
Sobral, Gómez-Fraguela, Luengo, Romero, & Villar (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation strategy</li> <li>✓ Antisocial behavior</li> <li>✓ Family conflict</li> <li>✓ Impulsiveness</li> <li>✓ Sensation seeking</li> <li>✓ Empathy</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 750 migrant persons (Ecuadorians and Colombians)
Vallejo & Moreno (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation strategies</li> <li>✓ Self esteem</li> <li>✓ Satisfaction with life</li> <li>✓ Perceived social support</li> <li>✓ Social identity</li> <li>✓ Valuation of host and own cultures</li> <li>✓ Perception of valuation</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 285 migrant persons (the majority from Latin America)
Martínez, Paterna, López, & Martínez (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation attitudes</li> <li>✓ Collective self-esteem</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 107 migrant persons (Ecuadorians)
Retortillo & Rodríguez (2008b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation strategies</li> <li>✓ Work values</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 160 migrant persons (Latin Americans, Eastern Europeans and Maghrebis)
Zlobina, Basabe, & Páez (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation attitudes</li> <li>✓ Behavioral orientations</li> <li>✓ Personal values</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 1252 migrant persons (Brazilians, Colombians, Ecuadorians, Eastern Europeans, people from Arab and Sub-Saharan countries)
Rojas, Sayans-Jiménez, & Navas (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation strategies</li> <li>✓ Intergroup perceived similarity</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 992 native persons</li> <li>✓ 975 migrant persons (Ecuadorians and Romanians)</li> </ul>
Álvarez-Valdivia & Vall (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation options</li> <li>✓ Sociodemographic variables</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 456 native persons</li> <li>✓ 226 migrant persons (the majority from Latin America)</li> </ul>
López-Rodríguez, Navas, Cuadrado, Coutant, & Worchel (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acculturation strategies</li> <li>✓ Stereotypes of warmth and competence</li> <li>✓ Perceived threat</li> <li>✓ Intergroup perceived similarity</li> </ul>	✓ Quantitative	✓ 307 native persons



between the two groups is reduced and, consequently, there is less prejudice.

Rojas, Navas, Sayans-Jiménez, and Cuadrado (2014) confirmed the assumptions of the Expanded Model of Relative Acculturation (Navas et al., 2004), with the results showing that both natives and immigrants chose acculturation options according to whether it was the public or private sphere. Thus, the Romanian immigrants who were less prejudiced against the indigenous people preferred assimilation in the public sphere, and integration in the private sphere. Those with more prejudice against the indigenous people preferred separation in the private sphere, and integration in the public sphere. Meanwhile, the natives who were less prejudiced against Romanian immigrants preferred the latter to retain elements of their culture of origin. Those who were more prejudiced against Romanian immigrants preferred a strategy of assimilation in both spheres.

### ACCULTURATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

On this point, it is notable to start with two studies that, while not yielding statistically significant results, have opened new avenues of research in the field of acculturation. The first of these studies (Sánchez & López, 2008) analyzed the levels of anxiety and the acculturation strategy that was chosen. The authors acknowledge that the lack of statistically significant results may be due to the small sample size. The second study worth considering for its novelty is that of Mestre, Guil, López, and Picardo (2009), which aimed to assess the relationship between the acculturation strategies adopted and emotional intelligence. In this case, we observed a positive relationship between the appropriate regulation of emotions and opting for the strategy of integration.

Retortillo and Rodríguez (2010) attempted to test the relationship between acculturation choice and *psychological adjustment* in a group of immigrants. Firstly –in descending order– the strategies used were: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. Consequently, they showed that integrated immigrants experienced the fewest psychological difficulties, followed by separate and marginalized individuals. The authors suggest a number of interpretations that explain the results, such as the fact that immigrants who choose integration develop greater flexibility in their social relations and in maintaining their customs, showing the existence of a balance between the original values and new ones. On the other hand, immigrants who choose separation maintain the original culture and their values

interfere with the behavior in the new culture and in the social relations with the natives, so they have poorer psychosocial adjustment. Marginalized immigrants experience great psychological difficulties, since the lack of social support and connections with another community, and the lack of a sense of belonging to a group, cause problems of anxiety, depression, etc.

Another study found on the relationship between acculturation and psychosocial adjustment is that of Ramos, García, and García (2011), who produced a comparative analysis of the relationship between the acculturation options and emotional exhaustion of indigenous and migrant workers. Among the local people, the highest levels of emotional exhaustion were found among those who chose the strategy of assimilation (assumed to be the most adaptive), and the lowest levels of emotional exhaustion were found among those who chose segregation. The explanation comes from Zlobina, Basabe and Páez (2008) who indicate that the strategy of segregation is an avoidance strategy, since local people are less exposed to emotional exhaustion as they avoid interacting with immigrants. The strategy of assimilation is also more related to the particular interests of each individual with regards to being open to new experiences.

Two studies on acculturation and social deviance in adolescents deserve special mention (Sobral, Gómez-Fraguela, Luengo, Romero, & Villar, 2010, 2012). In their 2010 study, the results confirmed that, regarding anti-social behavior, a positive and statistically significant relationship was observed with the adolescents who chose separation and interpersonal aggressions, rule-breaking behavior, drug problems, and occasional alcohol consumption. The first reason that the authors suggest is a likely accumulation of the effects of acculturative stress in this group of adolescents. Nevertheless, they attempt to go further and claim that antisocial behavior may be due to a reaction to the loss of cultural elements, which has a greater significance if one takes into account the complex life period with which these adolescents have to cope. In addition, the attitude of rejection of the host society increases the vulnerability to fall into gangs or groups. At the same time as it helps them to reaffirm their rejection from the host society, being part of a gang fulfills the function of protection, provides a group to which one belongs, and reinforces the ties of identity with teenagers from the country of origin. On the other hand, the group of marginalization showed less antisocial behavior, which may be because there is a greater distance with the environment, and less involvement with peer groups (whether immigrant or native). Thus one of the main



sources of contact with problematic/anti-social behaviors in adolescence is avoided.

In the 2012 study, it was shown that empathy, whether in its cognitive component or affective component, had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the preference for the option of integrating. On the other hand, those who chose marginalization showed low levels of empathy. With regard to family conflict, there is a significant association between the strategy of separation in males and low parental supervision, the levels of supervision being very different from the group that opted for integration. The findings suggest that an increase in empathic capacities increases the likelihood of integration (given the two-way nature of acculturation), improves self-control and therefore reduces the risk of committing antisocial behavior. Regarding the degree of family conflict, the needs of the adolescent, such as for greater family cohesion, the opening of fluid communication channels or closeness with other family members, lead to behavioral problems in the family itself and in areas that are external to it.

To conclude this section, Vallejo and Moreno (2014) conducted an analysis that highlighted the relationship between *life satisfaction* and the acculturation strategy chosen. Taking into account the results obtained, there are certain significant variables that influence life satisfaction after the experience of migration: self-esteem and social support on the one hand, and the approach and the valuation of the host culture on the other. Social support includes elements such as the possibility of sharing problems, accessing information offered by the different services, obtaining affection, participating socially or the feeling of belonging to a particular group. This is why this variable is one of the most important in life satisfaction in the migration process, as it helps to establish new links with the indigenous people and learning the skills necessary to function in the new sociocultural context presented.

### ACCULTURATION AND OTHER PSYCHOSOCIAL VARIABLES

The first of these studies (Martínez, Paterna, López, & Martínez, 2007) was aimed at relating collective self-esteem to the processes of acculturation in Ecuadorian immigrants. The results reported that the Ecuadorian women who participated in this study maintained their cultural model to a greater extent than the men, who showed a greater desire to behave like the Spanish. In addition, the influence of age and level of studies on the desire to maintain the culture indicated that young people

with lower levels of education were more attached to their cultural model, while they were also the ones that most perceived cultural distance. What is relevant is that the desire for contact is common to all Ecuadorians, regardless of age, sex or educational level. On the other hand, the public collective identity (how we think others evaluate our group) does maintain a relationship with the desire for contact with the local population.

Acculturation has also been linked to value systems. Retortillo and Rodríguez (2008b) carried out an exploratory study of the relationship between acculturation strategies and work values. In the study, they found that extrinsic work values are basic for anyone, no matter which acculturation strategy they have adopted. Furthermore, those who opt for the strategy of integration are those that place more value on the intrinsic aspects of work. This may be because, according to the authors, integrated people have a better sociocultural and psychological adjustment and, most likely, many of their basic needs are also covered. Thus, they are in a better position to assess the intrinsic aspects of work. As for the emphasis on extrinsic values for all groups of people, this was explained by the greater urgency involved in getting the basic needs covered (e.g., protection or security), which require satisfiers included within extrinsic work values, such as income or some job stability.

Zlobina et al. (2008) analyzed *personal values* in different immigrant groups based on the acculturation strategies they chose. These values come from the transcultural theory of personal values by Schwartz (1992) and, according to this author, they are classified as individualist (Achievement, Power, Self-Direction, Stimulation, and Hedonism), collectivist (Conformity, Tradition, and Benevolence), and mixed (Security and Universalism). The separation strategy was distinguished as clearly collective, while that of assimilation was individualistic. Within the collective strategies, separation appeared as more conservative and faithful to the traditions of the culture of the ancestors. And integration, more individualistic, was more oriented towards self-direction. The results are explained as follows: people who choose the strategy of separation are more likely to follow their own cultural patterns and avoid adopting the cultural patterns of the host society. They are also less oriented towards achievement and experiences that have to do with openness to change. On the other hand, people who chose the strategy of integration presented the opposite behavioral pattern to those who opted for separation.



Another psychosocial variable that has been studied in relation to the processes of acculturation is the *perceived intergroup* similarity (Rojas, Sayans-Jiménez, & Navas, 2012). The results confirmed that, since both integration and assimilation involve more contact with the outgroup as well as the adoption of cultural elements of the host society, there will be a greater perception of intergroup similarity. This means that if immigrants consider themselves to be similar to the indigenous people in certain areas, they consequently prefer to integrate or assimilate into the host society. On the other hand, if they perceive themselves as different from the host society, there will be a greater predisposition not to adopt its cultural elements, opting for separation or marginalization.

Álvarez-Valdivia and Vall (2013) tried, as an objective, to describe a statistically significant relationship between sociodemographic variables and strategies of acculturation. The results did not find this to be the case, although the study does contribute a novel approach to acculturation studies.

Finally, the relationship was evaluated between two other psychosocial variables with regards to acculturation choices: *perceived warmth* and *perceived threat* (López-Rodríguez, Navas, Cuadrado, Coutant, & Worchel, 2014). The dimension of perceived warmth includes features such as friendship, good intentions, trust and sincerity; while the threat is essentially symbolic and is linked to the erosion of cultural values due to contact with different cultural groups. The results revealed that there are certain variables, such as stereotypes toward immigrant groups and perceived intergroup similarity that are linked to whether immigrants are seen as adapted to the host society or not. Therefore, if a group is perceived as warm and/or competent, and similar to the ingroup, it is perceived as adapted to the host society. However if they are seen as a threat in areas such as work, health or personal safety, the perception that they should adapt to the host society will be greater.

## CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this work was to carry out a systematic review of the studies of acculturation from the last ten years in Spain. To this end, specific objectives were established, namely, to identify the variables studied in relation to the process of acculturation, to compare and summarize the main results obtained in relation to the attitudes of acculturation, to highlight the most common limitations in the study of acculturation attitudes, to propose research topics for future work on the subject,

and to understand the practical implications that acculturation researchers propose for psychosocial intervention.

Firstly, and considering both the variables studied and the results obtained, it is important to note that there are four notable directions or lines in the study of acculturation in the Spanish context in the last ten years.

The first has to do with the replication of the *Extended Model of Relative Acculturation* in different immigrant groups, as well as the inclusion of samples of native people in the studies. As has been seen in the corresponding section, the nuclear spheres are less likely to be modified when acculturative processes occur, both by locals and by immigrants. This is not the case with the peripheral spheres, where flexibility is seen, particularly in groups of immigrants who opt for the strategy of integration or assimilation.

The second line of research encompasses studies that took prejudice as a relevant psychosocial variable in relation to the processes of acculturation. From the publications it can be seen that prejudice is an important psychosocial variable to be considered when studying the adaptation of immigrants to the host society. Specifically, high levels of prejudice of the native population are linked to the preference for the attitude of assimilation; while low levels of prejudice of the native population are related to attitudes of integration. Moreover, as Navas et al. (2004) report, there are not yet enough studies that have analyzed this relationship, because the psychosocial study of acculturation is still fairly new and taking into account the perspective of indigenous in the process of acculturation is even more novel.

The third line of research has to do with the relationship of variables grouped under the label of mental health and acculturation. This line includes variables such as anxiety, disruptive behavior, psychological adaptation to a new cultural environment, life satisfaction, and even emotional exhaustion in the work environment. All of these variables speak of the scope of the consequences of the acculturation process, both at the individual and the group level. Also, since the studies are merely correlational, it can also be said that these variables, in turn, influence the choice of acculturation strategy by natives and immigrants.

The fourth line of research is presented as a heterogeneous field in which variables are included such as collective self-esteem, the value system, warmth and the perceived threat from the ingroup towards the outgroup. Here a wide range of possibilities opens up in search of moderating psychosocial variables in relation to the



acculturation process, and many of them are in response to old research proposals in this field.

As for the limitations, the first conclusion has to do with the domain of quantitative methodology in all of the publications reviewed. In the study of acculturation, outgroup perception plays an important role in the choosing of one acculturation strategy or another, which makes the social desirability skyrocket. Discussion groups or other qualitative techniques would enrich and expand the knowledge about the psychological processes associated to acculturation (Zlobina et al., 2008). Given the problems in comprehension and written production of the Spanish language that some immigrants have, the resources of qualitative methodology could resolve some of these limitations. Another important limitation has to do with the lack of studies with larger samples. The reason for this, according to some authors such as Sánchez and López (2008), is that many of these people do not have legal residence or work visas, which can cause resistance and avoidance of participation in such investigations.

With regard to proposals for the future, the duration of residence of the immigrants is one of the variables that could come into play in relation to acculturation in future studies. In addition, we must transcend the correlational analysis and seek more clarifying relationships regarding what actually happens when a person comes in contact with another person from a different culture.

As for the practical implications of the publications reviewed, Navas et al. (2011) indicate that a strategy of intervention in the local population could focus on the knowledge of the cultural characteristics of immigrant groups. The aim of this would be to seek similarities between the two cultures (indigenous and immigrant), promoting respect for intergroup differences and helping to reduce the perception of threat from the outgroup.

Moreover, in the educational arena, Sobral et al. (2012) speak of the need for focused interventions for young people who choose separation. While they recognize that much of the failure in choosing this style of acculturation resides in the host society, they promote a flexible integration: i.e., that the young people should be open to new experiences, their empathic ability encouraged, their self-esteem strengthened, and their cognitive and social skills developed. All this, of course, should be combined with maintaining appreciation for their own characteristics from the culture of origin. However, since the acculturation process is not unidirectional, but rather bidirectional, it is also important to work with teachers, families and the community to facilitate the quality of life of these adolescents (Berry, 2001). Another intervention

proposal could be aimed at a review of how information is presented in the mass media. The ecological model proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1987) speaks of the need to intervene in the areas surrounding the person, transcending the individual approach and aiming for a comprehensive intervention that works on the structures and institutions that also influence the actions of human groups.

The findings of this systematic review have to do with several facts: firstly, systematic reviews provide a synthesis of knowledge on a subject to researchers who are interested to venture further into this field. In a quick and accessible way, one can gain an idea of the state of a question in the field of empirical research. Then, once this knowledge has been obtained, the professional can make use of it and implement intervention programs to fill a specific need in the community (as in the case of the psychologists of social intervention regarding this topic). The third novelty of this research is derived from the first, and it is that, based on the knowledge gained in a particular field, new research lines may appear that continue to expand the scientific production and do not fall into the trap of merely accumulating publications on the same subject. The fourth novelty has a more applied aspect and is related to the possibility that this work can be used to spotlight a subject that has been researched for relatively few years. Although acculturation was born within the field of anthropology, as its first conceptual definition shows, it has been incorporated progressively into topics of interest to researchers studying social psychology. Finally, the fifth novelty refers to the historical moment in which this review takes place. Scientific production (and especially research in social areas) is no stranger to the social and cultural avatars that occur at any given time, so knowing how to integrate what they are working on in acculturation in this area serves to guide responses to the phenomenon of migration and the psychosocial consequences that underlie it.

#### AUTHOR DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No competing interests exist.

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