# THEMATIC ARTICLES: CULTURAL VALUES, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS

## Migrant Acculturation: A Multidimensional Review

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**Abstract.** Literature on acculturation, which refers to the cultural adaptation of migrants to a new environment, is explored in the present article from a multidimensional perspective. This paper delineates the evolution of the concept, and touches upon the most used frameworks, related variables, and suggestions for future research. Humans are extremely adaptable and intelligent cultural entities, whose actions follow complex social behavior patterns. Scientific research based on human adaptation to new environments has evolved from the 'melting pot' metaphor to a social science field. Acculturation is vital for our understanding of not only migration-associated phenomena, but it represents the intertwining of psychology, sociology, anthropology, law, education, in a profoundly intercultural context.

**Keywords:** *acculturation, migration, conceptual implications, theoretical review, intercultural perspectives*

**Introduction**

Experiences of migration have evolved over time, have adapted to modern times, and pose new challenges to nations. The findings related to acculturation bear great practical significance and can help steer policies, implement support measures for migrants and local communities, and develop a better environment where cultural aspects are recognized and celebrated. This article outlines the historical importance of acculturation, some of the most significant variables associated with acculturation in research and the most relevant theoretical frameworks. Based on decades of psychology and sociology research, we distil the critiques brought to the concept and make suggestions for practitioners, academics and students. Our aim is to understand how the concept evolved through time and why acculturation is relevant in fields such as intercultural relations, physical and mental health, education, historical studies, law, language acquisition, developmental psychology,

substance use and many more. We focus on presenting the most relevant and frequently used frameworks, each unique in their way of looking at the process of migrant acculturation.

## 1. Migration and migrants in recent history

Recent wars and conflicts are forcing thousands of people to flee the affected countries and relocate. Historical events, such as the Syrian War, the continued war and subsequent Taliban occupation of Afghanistan, the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar or South Sudan, the natural hazards and conflict in Somalia and the Ukrainian war, have displaced millions of people. In 2011, the International Organization for Migration reported that 3% of the global population consists of migrants, while in 2020, the figure stands at 3.5% (272 million international migrants) (IOM, 2020).

Workforce migration has become one of the most prominent elements of globalization (Vîrgă & Iliescu, 2017), especially among European states. Migrants are recognized as being essential to the economies of both the receiving countries and their places of origin. Remittance i.e., money sent home by migrants, is one of the most important financial inflow a developing country can receive. The International Monetary Fund stated that remittances have overtaken foreign investments to developing countries and are now the biggest unrestricted capital source (IMF, 2019). Migrants can help reduce the receiving countries labor market imbalances, enrich the cultural heritage of a country, fight stereotypes, and bring in invaluable skills, knowledge and expertise (IMF, 2019). On the other hand, liabilities of migration cannot be ignored. The countries of origin suffer from a great drainage of work force, extremely well qualified people from sectors such as IT and health, to the essential less qualified workers on which agriculture and production industries rely on.

When examining migration and employment-related experiences, researchers should take into consideration the effects these bring on the individual's psychological well-being, and how they correlate with the adaptation process to the new work environment. We strongly believe that multicultural societies depend on the good integration of migrants, as this can help ease off the pressure put on sectors such as health, education, government funding and benefit system. A key concept that distils all of these aspects of migration is acculturation. The term was introduced in order to delineate "a process of bidirectional change that takes place when two

ethnocultural groups come into contact with another" (Bourhis et al., 1997). The study of migrant acculturation in the social sciences stems from political and cultural advancements at the end of the 19th century, social context that dictated the concept's evolution to the present day.

## 2. Acculturation - conceptual development over time

Contributions in "practical sociology" from the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory paved the way for research on race, religion, ethnicity, black sociology and minority communities (Wright, 2012). The Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, under the leadership of W.E.B. Du Bois, was the first American School of Sociology, soon after the discipline was introduced at Yale (1872-1873) and at the University of Kansas, to introduce objective and systematic cultural studies using method triangulation, insider researchers and data analysis (Wright, 2012). Pivotal work in cultural assimilation, migration, race and human behavior, conducted by urban sociologist Robert E. Park, led to the development of the Chicago School of Sociology (Park, 1950; Shils,1996). His theory, called "human ecology", a model of urban race relations about the *race relation cycle*, is comprised of four stages: Contact, Conflict, Accommodation and Assimilation. The historical environment of the time, the deeply negative associations with colonial projects accelerated the involvement of anthropologists and sociologists into the study of acculturation, field that is nowadays mostly dominated by psychological studies.

In psychology, an early mention of *acculturation* was by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, who defined the concept as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (1936, p. 149). At the time, the three main results of the process of acculturation identified were: acceptance, adaptation and reaction (p. 152). In her work involving a Native American sample, Elizabeth Howe Chief is believed to have been the first to use an acculturation scale (Chief, 1940). Graves (1967) introduced the term *psychological acculturation* (henceforth *acculturation*) as the changes that occur for an individual who comes into contact with another cultural environment, both culturally (group), and psychologically (individually). Acculturation is regarded as "a multi-dimensional process, resulting from inter-group contact in which individuals whose primary learning has been in one culture take over characteristic

ways of living from another culture" (Hazuda et al., 1988, p. 690). In other words, it manifests as a process of adaptation to the standards of a new culture, an alteration that happens gradually, with changes that arise from "sustained, first-hand intercultural contact" (Gezentsvey & Ward, 2008, p. 213).

Building on Park's ideas, the American sociologist Milton Gordon (1964) defined acculturation as a linear process, a gradual replacement phenomenon in terms of social norms, language, traditions, which entails those individuals would abandon their native culture and replace it with a new one. This theoretical model is not used anymore, but it created an opportunity for acculturation to be further studied and understood (Szapocznik et al., 1980). By the end of the 1990s, acculturation was seen as "both multidimensional and nonlinear" (Bosher, 1998). The *bidimensional* approach has gradually replaced in reliability the unidimensional model, due to the limitations of the one-dimension model. The 21$^{st}$ century brought little changes to the way the concept is studied. Kang (2006) insisted the bidimensional approach is a "viable", more flexible and stable alternative to unidimensional acculturation, which offers the possibility to "embrace not only individuals with bicultural identities, but also people who are not attached to either culture" (p. 670). The $bidimensional\ model$ suggests that the two identifications (with the host and the native cultures) are independent, and represents a more valid operationalization of acculturation, compared to the unidimensional perspective (Ryder et al., 2000). Although this line of thinking clearly has advantages, such as facility to operationalize the variables in empirical research, flaws have been detected by some authors (Rudmin, 2003), critiques that we will touch upon below.

Before the 21$^{st}$ century, acculturation was rarely studied on ethnically diverse groups, focusing mainly on more homogeneous samples, but recent research focuses on people who live or work in a foreign country, such as immigrants, sojourners or refugees, groups with dissimilar characteristics, who may or may not choose to permanently reside in the host country (Schwarts, 2010).

## 3. Theoretical models of acculturation

Empirical literature offers a wide variety of theoretical approaches to acculturation, some that have endured the test of time and of empirical testing, and others who have been introduced in the last decades as corrections to previous versions. We will briefly discuss some of the most tested models that had the most

impact on empirical research over the decades, in order to draw conclusions on where contemporary research currently stands.

The Acculturation Framework (Berry, 1997) states that migrants, by getting involved into the social, political, educational life and having new social contacts with natives, will come across various understandings which will model their behavior and outlook of the host country and their perceived experiences. These could potentially determine acculturative stress or trigger a form of psychopathology in time (Malzberg & Lee, 1956). The framework evokes the changes a migrant might experience, from linguistic, economic, religious, social, to employment-related differences (Berry, 2003; Navas et al., 2007). The framework proposes four distinct categories of acculturation: (a) assimilation, (b) integration, (c) separation, and (d) marginalization (Berry, 1990, 2005).

According to Berry*, assimilation* involves renouncing a person's native culture as they adapt to a host culture; *integration* refers to maintaining the person's native culture but with a simultaneous movement towards the host culture; separation /*rejection* resorts to the separation from the new culture, which can be either self-imposed termination or imposed through segregation (by state authorities or other people); and *marginalization* implies the loss of cultural amalgamation with either group, developing a process of alienation and loss of cultural identity. It can be argued that the host culture facilitates choice, but other variables, such as the native culture typology (individualistic or collectivistic society) or language and economic level at migration point, could make the process different from person to person (Berry & Sabatier, 2010).

Following from Berry's framework, the Multi-Dimensional Individual Difference Acculturation (MIDA) model (Safdar et al., 2012) focuses on attitudes towards the host and the native culture. The model is based on three predictor variables: Psychosocial Resources, Connectedness, and Hassles. The individual level factors include Resilience, Self-perceived Cultural Competence, and perception of social support from the larger society, with acculturation strategies included in the design as intermediate variables. The model aims to analyze acculturation in different cultural settings, to predict outcome adaptation variables such as In-Group Contact, Out-Group Contact and Psychophysical Distress (Safdar et al., 2009). MIDA model was designed for adult immigrants or refugees, but Fathi et al. (2018) designed a version that can be applied to adolescent refugees, the Multidimensional Intercultural Training Acculturation model (MITA).

Padilla and Perez's framework (2003) brings together elements of "social cognition, cultural competence, social identity, and social stigma" when studying acculturation. Their model is based on the Social Identity Theory (see Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Padilla and Perez introduced the term "stigmatization" that refers to cultural competence as "learned ability to function in a culture in a manner that is congruent with the values, beliefs, customs, mannerisms, and language of the majority of the members of the culture" (2003, p. 42). The framework made an impact on the discipline because it raises awareness of the need to integrate empirical studies in a theory of culture and deviate from a sole focus on migrant behaviors.

There are other theoretical models which look at the reciprocal influence of the two populations coming into contact - the host and the migrant populations - and how acculturation unfolds as a result. These are the Interactive Acculturation Model- IAM (Bourhis et al., 1997) and the Relative Acculturation Extended Model- RAEM (Navas et al., 2007). The Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) looks at the relational outcomes which result from the interaction of host community and migrant elements, mediated by the state integration policies (Bourhis et al., 1997). The authors have sought to bring together acculturation orientations assumed by both host groups and migrant groups, and a combination of inter-group and inter-personal relational outcomes (Oerlemans & Peeters, 2010). Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM) has been designed by Navas et al. (2005) and "differentiates between acculturation strategies and attitudes" that is, between how acculturation happens in reality vs. how it would be ideal to unfold (Navas et al., 2007, p.70).

Another perspective, that of Rudmin's model (2009) of acculturation, states that a focus should be placed on the "motivation of utility" migrants have to acculturate. He explains that certain categories of immigrants ("successful diplomats, business agents, missionaries and spies"- Rudmin, 2009, p. 117) can adapt even if attitudes that surround them in the host culture have a negative or unfavorable valence. The model contains three steps, which are Acculturative motivations, Acculturative learning and Changes in individuals, meaning that motivations lead to acculturative learning which generate changes in social relations, skills, behaviors, beliefs and values, etc. There are two controlled variables, which are discrimination and socio-economic status (SES), but they do not generate acculturation on their own.

Recent meta-analyses and reviews summarize methodologies and theoretical frameworks used in in the past 20 years of research and their subsequent

research findings. For example, Celenk and Van de Vijver (2011) compiled a list of over 50 publicly available measures for acculturation, out of which 61% were directed to a specific ethnic group, especially from the USA. The authors found that the majority of measures - over 54% - included a single scale, and the rest contained two or more sub-scales. Matsudaira's (2006) review of acculturation instruments revealed the existence of over 51 scales, published between 1978 and 2004 (Akcan, 2017). This wide variety of frameworks, of theoretical models that are tested and corrected through empirical research over the course of decades of research, is an indication of both the importance and the need of refining the concept in the sphere of migrant integration and adaptation. The findings we can draw from meta-analyses and systematic reviews indicate that not all methods produce similar results, that measures can be reinterpreted by researchers even when not necessary, and that academics often fail to critique their own work if errors occur.

## 4. Acculturation studies – a context for empirical research

There is no doubt that the topic of acculturation is distinct, due to its complexity and implications. Research has shown that acculturation is influenced by age, gender, a person's educational background or other variables. Education correlates with acculturation, in the sense that the highest the educational level a person has attained, the smoother the process of adaptation to a new environment and the more reduced the level of stress perceived by the person (Berry, 1997). Expectations also bear a significant importance, as people who migrate with greater expectations in mind could be more easily disappointed than other who do not aim as high, if those opportunities do not materialize as expected (Berry, 1997, pp. 22-23). Navara and James (2002) state that realistic expectations in terms of cross-cultural experiences can facilitate the process of *adjustment* (p. 707). *Behavioral acculturation* is "based on the interaction of an individual's competencies and preferences with opportunities to engage in cultural activities in the surrounding community" (Birman & Trickett, 2001, p. 4). This type of behavioral adaptation can manifest in areas such as involvement in the social life (following daily news), speaking the local language, eating local food, etc. (Kim & Omizo, 2006; Maupomé et al, 2015).

In order to better understand how acculturation is used in empirical research, we have to look at the variables that are studied alongside acculturation.

### 4.1 Acculturation and associated variables in empirical research

Acculturation was identified both at a *group-level* and at an *individual-level* (Kuo, 2014). The process entails those individuals gradually change their attitudes, behaviors and values at the contact with a host /dominant culture (Berry, 1990), with a wide variety of variables which are involved. A "dynamic, multifaceted and complex" process (Lopez-Class et al., 2011), acculturation is studied on a multitude of groups of different ages (Bowe, 2020; Guerra et al., 2019; Keles et al., 2018; Tartakovsky, 2012), ethnicities (Becker et al., 2010; Obasi & Leong, 2010; Rogler et al., 1991) and locations (Ferguson et al., 2015; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011; Rojas et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2019).

Acculturation is studied in connection to variables such as enculturation (Yoon et al., 2013), development (Juang & Syed, 2019; Oppedal, 2006), well-being (Samnani et al., 2012; Vîrgă & Iliescu, 2017), resilience (Reyes et al., 2018), need for cognitive closure (Ramelli et al., 2012). There is also a diversity in terms of the field of study in which acculturation is included, such as health (Schmitz, 1992; Suinn, 2010), mental health - depression (Cobb et al., 2017b; Markova et al., 2020), acculturative stress (Falavarjani et al., 2019), education (Portes & MacLeod, 1996), emotional expressions (Tsai & Lu, 2017), language acquisition (Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 2007), ethnic development /ethnic identity (Bourhis & Dayan, 2004; Phinney & Baldelomar, 2011; Phinney & Ong, 2007), ethnic group differences (Areba et al., 2020), coping and intercultural competence (Torres & Rollock, 2004) or naturalization (Maehler et al., 2019; Vink et al., 2013). Resilience, marital quality and adaptation-related stress were examined alongside language acculturation (Hou et al., 2018). Researchers also spoke about identity and how this concept related to acculturation (Adams & van de Vijver, 2017; Dimitrova et al., 2014). Meca et al. (2017) noted that "positive identification with one's ingroup is essential for fostering an individual's psychological well-being" (p. 18).

Another form of the variable is *remote acculturation*, a more modern concept which stems from globalization and where cultural elements of foreign cultures are adopted by individuals who have never interacted directly with them (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2015; Ferguson et al., 2015). It is associated with social change (Silbereisen & Chen, 2010), although "social change focuses more on examining group-level changes" (Ferguson et al., 2015, p. 2). It can be argued that access to technology and the advancement of online communication and

information dissemination shifts people's views and life experiences and subjects them to foreign cultural elements.
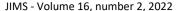
We can therefor conclude that the mediation, moderation and interaction relations that appear between the aforementioned variables posit both an advantage to researchers, as new interaction effects are found and new causality relations revealed, but can also be a methodological trap. There is no doubt that personality variables, cultural aspects, cognitive and demographic particularities, all play a part in the historical evolution of the term and the perception scholars gain as a result of research and empirical observations.

### *4.2 Is age of migrants relevant for the process of acculturation?*

Age and migrant acculturation form a unique relation that can influence empirical research results. Age as a variable can significantly influence the relation between migrant adaptation and various outcome variables, therefor we will dedicate a short sub-section to it.

Adult migrants are considered first-generation migrants, while second-generation migrants are born in the host country and have not gone through the migration process per se. For the latter, there is a mixture of both the native and the adoption cultural elements, which transpire from the beginning of their lives onwards, and so it becomes hard to define where enculturation ends and acculturation starts (Birman & Simon, 2014). Third generation immigrants, born in the host country (same as their parents who are second generation), but who have at least one grandparent of migrant origin, exhibit even less influences from the first generation's native cultural background and are usually excluded from empirical research on migrant adaptation.

Adult migrants speak their native language, follow traditions, cultural practices and norms specific to their home country and "can appreciate, practice, or identify with two different cultures independently of one another" (Rudmin, 2003 p. 3). On the other hand, for children, acculturation is a nuanced phenomenon (Birman & Simon, 2014; Ruble et al., 2004). Migrant children who are subjected to migration are labelled as 1.5 generation-immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996), whose acculturation is studied in connection to variables such as ethnicity, their parents' socio-economic status/ role of class and school context (Portes & MacLeod, 1996). At the time of migration, it is assumed that they enculturation is not complete, and so

the effect on their future development will not be similar to older migrants' experiences. Children between 8-11 years old seem to prefer an integrationist acculturation strategy (Brown et al., 2013), although children younger than 8 years old are not likely to develop "multiple social category memberships" (p. 2). For adolescents, acculturation to other cultures is boosted by the use of technology, media, through globalization (Jensen & Arnett, 2012). Their young age makes them more receptive to new ideas and more open to diverse experiences, as they are building their cultural identity (Ferguson et al., 2015).

Historically, family relationships were studied among different migrant generations in connection to acculturation, and results show less conflict and improved levels of mental health over time (Smokowski et al., 2008). As time passes and adjustment follows its course, the gaps between parents and their children is greater, with adults preserving more elements of their native culture (Ranieri et al., 1994).

### 4.3 Acculturation contexts

Being a dual-process that triggers cultural and psychological change (Berry, 2005), acculturation can happen at the *individual* or *group level*. Individual level implies changes of behavioral nature (Van de Vijver & Phalet, 2004) that can take years or even longer, spanning over generations. The group variation is also accompanied by disparities within a smaller group, such as families where the process "proceeds at different rates, and with different goals, sometimes leading to an increase in conflict and stress and to more difficult adaptations" (Berry, 2005, p. 700).

In the 20th century, it was believed that having civil and political rights, a legal status in the host country and a general sense of security will influence the acculturation orientations of migrants (Castles, 1984). People who lack these conditions could be "prevented from participating fully in society. They do not have the opportunity of deciding to what extent they want to interact with the rest of the population, and to what extent they want to preserve their own culture and norms " (Castles, 1984, p. 161). Naturalization was viewed as a pre-requisite and not an option when becoming integrated into the host country of residence and avoiding isolation. Current findings extend beyond this frame of thinking, and support free choice, migrant integration, inclusivity and openness to the values and advantages of diversity.

### *4.4 Acculturative Stress*

Acculturation endures for long periods of time, especially when there are culturally different groups in continuous interaction with each other, generating various levels of adaptation, resistance and stress (Berry, 2005). Social status and social context are integral parts of the formative process of a migrant's identity and in setting the degree of stress caused by the acculturation process (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Specific acculturation strategies used by a group of migrants can be regarded as *coping strategies* (Schmitz, 1992). Early research on coping reference the cognitive and behavioral efforts of this process used by individuals to manage stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Berry (1997, 2006) detected those individuals use coping methods in order to respond to acculturative stress, and this process shapes their adaptation journey. Nonetheless, scholars support the need for more research that can analyze the relationship between coping and acculturation (Kuo, 2014).

Acculturative stress draws its stressors from the migrant adaptation process, with stressors defined as "the stimuli the immigrant encounters" (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010, p. 234). It was defined as a "reduction in health status (including psychological, somatic and social aspects) of individuals who are undergoing acculturation" and even "feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level, and identity confusion" (Berry et al., 1988, pp. 491- 492). Language difficulties and conflict of cultural rules were identified as major sources of stress and education (Poppitt & Frey, 2007). Among the factors that can protect against acculturative stress and mental health problems, authors note culturally integrated friendship choices, such as relationships of adolescents in a sample of multi-ethnic students (Bhui et al., 2005).

Socio-demographic and psychological variables, such as age, gender, economic status or external negative events such as discrimination, influence levels of acculturative stress (Berry, 2008; Kuo & Roysircar, 2004). Studies show that at greater risk are married immigrants who have children, or that Asian ethnics experience more stress than Europeans (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010). Hispanic populations living in the US experience acculturative stress not only based on factors such as "gender, age, family cohesion and social networks", but also due to "the contexts of migration exit, the age at the time of migration and native language proficiency" (Lueck & Wilson, 2011, p. 186). Social networks and relations with family members predict acculturative stress in Latino populations, especially if they are first-generation immigrants (Caplan, 2007; Lueck & Wilson, 2011).

**5. Critiques of acculturative studies**

Combining cultural elements with a multidimensional, multidisciplinary approach to the 21ˢᵗ century research on acculturation can enable the advancement of knowledge in this field of study. Chirkov (2009) explained that "the complex nature of the acculturation process requires very diverse thinking about the subject, an application of various epistemological and methodological approaches, inter- and multi-disciplinarily, intellectual flexibility, and the willingness to critically analyze achieved results and obtained knowledge" (p. 94). This assertion is a more diplomatic version of Rudmin's critique, who portrayed acculturation theories as using "varied and inconsistent terminology, poor citation of earlier research, conflicting and poorly tested predictions of acculturative stress, and lack of logic" (2003, p. 3). Indeed, acculturation studies often fail to analyze cultural aspects such as norms and beliefs, focusing on behaviors instead.

Out of the four categories in Berry's framework, *marginalization* has been criticized for lacking construct validity (Del Pilar & Udasco, 2004). The authors explain how it fails to elucidate "the effects on people of immigration, culture clash, and other transitional situations, such as status, role, or class changes" (Del Pilar & Udasco, 2004, p. 3), yet Meca et al. (2017) found marginalization as being the first salient approach in their research. This profile will likely be found in a small percentage of migrants who experience unique circumstances in the host country (see Cobb et al., 2017a for more details on the SIT- Social Identity Theory).

Methodological errors still occur to this day in articles, where we find the response bias, attribution errors, poor validity of scales, erroneous construct operationalization, misused terminology and psychometric confusion (Rudmin, 2003). Acculturation, as a key concept in sociology, psychology and other sciences, is at the forefront of academic research and yet cultural psychologists do not build on prior research and try to innovate, leaving room for errors, interpretations and operationalization mistakes.

**6. Suggestions for future research and conceptual implications**

Although little information is known about the costs of long-term migration, such as financial implications or psychological and well-being consequences (Vîrgă & Iliescu, 2017, p. 2), the topic is worthy of in-depth empirical research. Acculturation

studies are necessary due to the accelerated increase in the number of people migrating to escape war, depression, instability, or diseases in the coming decades (Garcia-Ramirez et al., 2010). The changes that occur during the acculturation process impact every aspect of their lives, from the educational, economic, or social point of view, to health and psychology (Birman & Trickett, 2001). But there are numerous aspects that the current literature should look at in more detail, such as the way in which acculturation manifests in different areas of one's life, across spheres that involve culture, language, social connections and more (Navas et al., 2007).

Meca et al. (2017) suggested implications for creating more inclusive policies and improvements for refugee and migrant counselling practices. Policy development (promoting cultural diversity, fair multicultural societies and migrant integration), especially in societies with higher levels of social inequality, can be a step forward with impact on all aspects of society. Legislators and scholars should encourage awareness of past events where race stood at the core of the issues, promote transparency and enable communication.

Being a dynamic process that reflects constant variations in people and societies means that there is a need for researchers to "examine temporal changes" (Castro et al., 2010, p. 669). It is imperative to identify the variations in different populations or situational contexts, in order to accurately measure acculturation (Lopez-Class et al., 2011). While it is a temporal process that happens over time, it should be mainly studied using longitudinal designs, as the majority of the existing acculturation studies consist of cross-sectional surveys. Long-term empirical investigations are desirable from a methodological point of view (Kuo, 2014), as is the use of control groups, qualitative methodologies and replications within studies (Rudmin, 2003).

As scholars and educators, we encourage the focus on the history of migration, from the views on citizenship in ancient times, to ethnic identity and race in the Middle Ages, to the slave trade and imperialistic views on people, states and legislation.

A final suggestion for future empirical studies is to look at both the native and migrant populations. Changes implied by the process regard not only migrants, but also the native population, as noted by Arends-Toth and van de Vijver (2003): "acculturation processes involve both the migrant and the dominant population, the changes are most consequential for the migrant group members" (p. 250). Studies

must include a greater focus on subcultures, while at the same time avoiding the sole focus on minority research, as acculturation "occurs regardless of minority or majority status" (Rudmin, 2003, p. 30).

## Conclusion

The current review provides evidence that the study of migrant acculturation is extremely complex. Our review attempts to fuse historical theoretical perspectives and acculturation frameworks, with current research results and methodologies. Previous findings argue that acculturation can be studied in cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, alongside numerous variables that measure psychological, social, cognitive and developmental traits across diverse groups of individuals. The study of acculturation has major implications in policy development, law, in education, mental health, refugee rights, race, and future research should focus more on longitudinal studies that analyze the relationship between acculturation and other variables of interest. The topic is also extremely sensitive to both historical aspects that shape the narrative around migration, and to the methodological means of capturing raw data and disseminating results. Finally, we encourage openness to in-depth research of the history of migration, a sustained effort to refine methods of data collection, and an open mind to reflect on the status of acculturation research, with the clear aim for the field to progress.

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